MANAGEMENT STYLES AND TEACHER MOBILITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KAKAMEGA CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

**Maiyo K. Julius,
Siro Teresa,
Cecilia K. Tecla**

Abstract

High rates of teacher mobility in terms of transfers and job change remains a very critical development in the education sector worldwide prompting various attempts to mitigate a possible crisis in the sector and in Kenya's Western Province, teacher transfer requests have been notably high compared to the national average. The purpose of this study was to establish the link between school leadership and management styles and teacher mobility in primary schools in Kakamega Central sub-county and also to determine their roles in influencing the situation. Specifically the study aimed: to assess the school management styles; to examine how management styles affect teacher mobility; to determine how school management corresponds to the modes of teacher mobility. Studies done in this area have not expressly linked the management styles adopted in schools to the growing problem of teacher mobility hence, necessitating investigation. Theories of workplace leadership and management and their effect on occupational mobility of the subordinate workers guided the study. Descriptive survey study design was adopted for the study targeting 2149 primary school teachers within the study area. Systematic random sampling was used to draw 196 teachers including head teachers from the study population. The respondents comprised the teaching staff and head teachers to who questionnaires and interview schedules were administered after pilot testing. The data was analyzed using descriptive methods and results presented in tables, pie charts and graphs. The findings indicated that schools still uses the traditional authoritarian model of leadership, the school management styles in this case the authoritarian was responsible for teacher transfer requests to other schools and also to other

jobs. The study found that the management styles adopted in the schools were indeed critical to the retention of the teachers in the schools. The study recommends change in management schools to be more inclusive in their leadership and managerial approach as an incentive to retain teachers.

Key words: *Management styles, Teacher Mobility*

Introduction:

According to the study findings most teachers were often involved in other management assignments in the schools beyond their normal teaching duties but were also not actively involved in school management planning probably due to nonexistent departments in many primary schools. The findings also revealed that majority of the teachers felt that the management styles currently adopted in the schools were responsible for the transfer requests to other schools and change of jobs to non-teaching occupations. Majority of the teachers favored the idea of involving teachers in decision making away of retaining them in the teaching profession and their respective schools. It was also established that school management had the greatest bearing on the teachers desire to change schools rather than to change jobs. The study findings also revealed that pupils took time to adjust to the loss of teachers and since suitable replacements were not immediately effected the pupils found it difficult to cope with the syllabus. Thus, the study concluded that the management styles adopted in the schools were indeed critical to the retention of the teachers in the schools. It is recommended that; the school management in the area need to be more inclusive in their leadership and managerial approach as an incentive to retain teachers in their schools as they were already losing some of their best teachers to other schools and other professions; also it is important that the government steps in and addresses the teacher mobility problem in the schools especially by helping promote better school leadership by using it as a criterion for promotion. More studies should be done on the effect of bureaucracy in the teachers' service commission on the teacher mobility and the effect of employee reward system on the performance of primary school teachers

Teacher quality is the most important schooling input in the determination of student achievement given the central role the teacher plays in the education sector. High rate of teacher mobility impacts negatively on school improvement efforts for it disrupts the stability

and continuity of teaching (Feng and Sass, 2008). High quality teachers possess transferable skills that are valued in other occupations, then attrition will tend to erode average teacher quality. Given that this is a global phenomenon, governments all over the world are setting up measures to contain the situation using several incentives and policies (Mulkeen, 2005).

Developed countries such as the United States, employs different strategies which include reduction in school size to improve the learning environment with other incentives to deal with teachers mobility (Feng, 2005). Developing countries countries are also employing different incentives to increase teacher retention; Mozambique for example employs a system of financial bonuses for teachers who locate in rural areas and teachers who teach two shifts; in Lesotho, a flat bonus is paid per month to teachers who locate in the mountainous hardship zones; similarly, in Uganda a hardship allowance of 20% of basic salary is given to teachers working in 'hard-to-reach' areas (Mulkeen, 2005). Hedges (2002) study reveals that in Ghana, a policy of posting newly qualified teachers in pairs is beginning to bear fruit as well as the strategy of linking rural deployment with a teacher education outreach program, with the aim of helping female teachers to feel safe and have a greater sense of control over their deployment (Hedges, 2000). In Malawi a strong association between the availability of housing in an area and the retention of teachers in schools and more so female teachers has been reported (Mulkeen, 2005). In addition to some of the incentives mentioned above, a bonding policy which restricts newly recruited teachers from transferring before the end of five years has also been put in place in Kenya since 2001(Republic of Kenya, 2003a).

Effective leadership and management in schools can serve as a powerful incentive for teacher retention if its power is fully exploited. Studies, for example Ariko and Simatwa (2011) reveal that while teacher transfer requests are largely driven more by the effects of the leadership styles like motivation and career growth. For instance, many teachers prefer working in a collegial environment where they can conveniently articulate their views and even implement them. However, most schools in the country are one-man- managed. The issue of promotion is also critical and contributes significantly to mobility. For example, in government schools leadership roles have traditionally been filled by teachers progressing up through the ranks of posts of responsibility, such as Department Head for a particular academic subject area, or Senior Mistress responsible for guidance and counseling of girls within the school. Teachers like other professionals need to be promoted so as to actualize themselves in the profession in order to become more effective (Sperandio and Kagoda, 2009).

Teacher quality is the most important schooling input in the determination of student achievement given the central role of teacher plays in the education sector. There is growing concern, however, over the impact of teacher job change on both the overall level of teacher quality and the distribution of teacher quality across schools. Teacher mobility which causes attrition in the teacher quality has been reported to be high in the western parts of the country compared to the national average of 5% (Ariko and Simatwa, 2011). Specifically, do the best teachers quit teaching to pursue other professions and does teacher mobility within the profession exacerbate differences in educational quality across schools? Does the school leadership and management style contribute in any way to teacher mobility? Determining the answers to these questions has informed the design of various policies, incentives and school management approaches to increase teacher retention and to promote student achievement and reduce achievement gaps across students from different socio-economic backgrounds (Feng and Sass, 2008). Replacing teachers as is the current practice is not an economically viable option as opposed to encouraging teacher retention by use of incentives. Monetary and other incentives though common have only registered partial success in resolving the problem as even some of the best paid teachers still change jobs or transfer to other schools. The study done by Ariko and Simatwa (2011), pointed out in passing that school leadership and management practices was a significant factor in teacher mobility but did not elaborate and this needs to be investigated in depth. Linking the two in detail could be instrumental in shaping the learning environment in terms of education management and consequently lead to cost reduction in the sector. Hence, it is against this premise that the present study seeks to determine the Relationship of School Leadership and Management Styles to Mobility among Primary School Teachers in Kakamega District.

Objectives of the Study
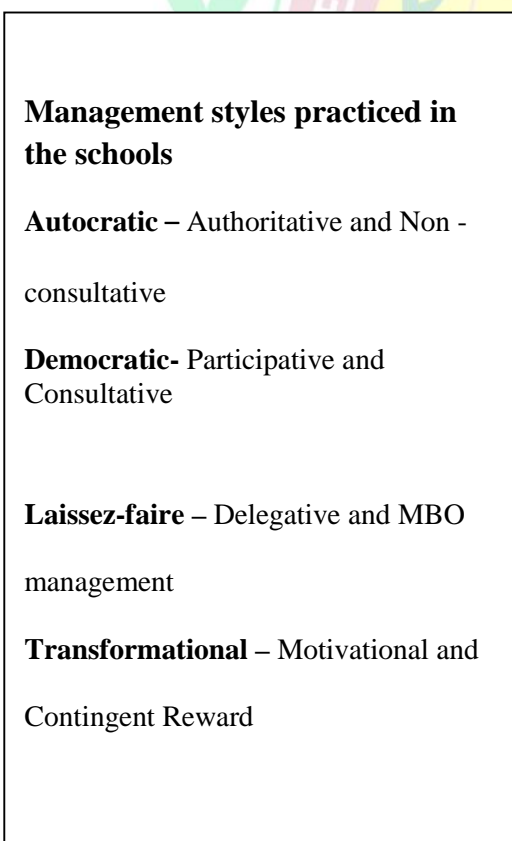
This study was guided by the following objectives

  i) To assess the school management styles in primary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County

  ii) To examine how management styles affect teacher mobility in primary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County

  iii) To determine how school management corresponds to the modes of teacher mobility in primary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County
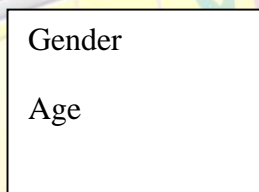
Scope of the Study

This study was restricted to the teacher mobility problem and its relationship with the management styles being practiced in primary schools in Kakamega Central sub-county. Data was collected on the teacher mobility prevalence and compared with the leadership styles practiced in these schools.
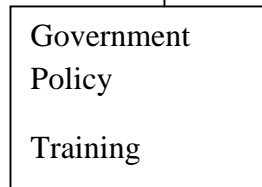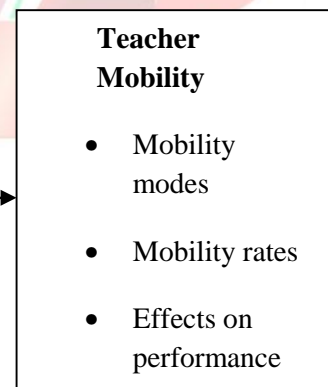
Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables

Intervening Variables

Gender

Age

Dependent variable

Management styles practiced in the schools

Autocratic – Authoritative and Non - consultative

Democratic- Participative and Consultative

Laissez-faire – Delegative and MBO management

Transformational – Motivational and Contingent Reward

Teacher Mobility

- Mobility modes

- Mobility rates

- Effects on performance

Government Policy

Training

Moderating Variables

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher 2013

The conceptual framework showing the relationships between the independent and dependent variables is given in Fig 1. The independent variables are the various management styles practiced in the schools which are autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire and transformational. Their associated management styles are also given as the indicators. The dependent variable is the teacher mobility patterns in the schools concerned, the indicators of this are; mobility modes, that is, whether teachers opt to transfer to other schools or change jobs altogether; mobility rates, that is, the numbers of teachers seeking either to be transferred to other schools, districts or even those leaving the profession. The study seeks to establish the degree of association between the two variables using their indicators. For instance, it is desirable to know which school management style is most practiced, which is more desirable in building congruent relationships between the management and teaching staff and whether it increases teacher loyalty and retention in the schools in the area. It is also desirable to know which management styles had the most impact on mobility rates and modes and finally how all these contributed to the performance of the school. Hence, it is expected that the objectives of the study will be realistically achieved. Gender and age serve as the intervening variables that need to be controlled for as they also have causal effect to mobility although not necessarily related to management styles. Policy and training which are moderating variables do not necessarily influence the variables in a causal way but rather create an environment for the interaction of the variables and, hence, do not need to be controlled for.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive research design and involved both qualitative and quantitative methods. This research design was chosen because of its ability to gather in depth data over a wide area with different demographics (Kothari, 2004). It was also adopted for this study as its research instruments are fairly easy to design, reliable and cost effective.

Sampling Techniques, Design, Size and Procedures

Stratified random sampling was used in this study due to its ability to yield more reliable and detailed information from the sample population which is divided into several homogenous subgroups (KIM, 2009). Hence, the population in this study was divided into the subgroups of area, that is, urban, peri-urban and rural. This helped characterize mobility patterns and provide in-depth knowledge about the subgroups. The unit of analysis consisted of the teachers and the head teachers. In order to draw a representative sample population from the target population, this study adopted the Krejcie-1970 model generated by Morgan in 1990 that shows sample sizes corresponding to given populations. Table 1 gives the population estimates and their corresponding sample sizes. It can be seen that for a given teacher population of 2000, the required sample size would be 322, the teacher population of 2149 lies within this range in the table ,hence, its required sample size at the same confidence level (95%) would be 322. This sample was distributed into subgroups as shown in the sampling frame given in Table 3.2

Table 1: Sampling Frame

Area	Number of schools	Percentage of schools	Proportion of teachers sampled out of the sample
Urban	49	43	140
Peri-Urban	38	34	108
Rural	26	23	74
Total	**113**	**100**	**322**

From the sampling frame it will be noticed that urban areas had proportionately more schools in the area and this could be attributed to among other factors the high population and infrastructure in the urban areas.

Data Collection and Instruments / Procedures

Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as the research instruments. Questionnaires were given to the subordinate teachers while the interview schedules were administered both to the teachers during focus group discussions and to the school heads separately. The former was instrumental in capturing both qualitative and quantitative data while the latter was used to collect only qualitative data. Both primary and secondary types of data were used for this study. The instruments were pilot tested to ensure their precision and ease of response for the respondents prior to being administered. This was done in a neighboring private primary school and was not included in the study findings.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Data was analyzed using descriptive methods where frequencies and percentages were used. The analyzed data was presented in bar graphs, pie charts and tables. Quantitative data was obtained from the questionnaires and was analyzed by coding and weighting the responses to increase their level of accuracy. Qualitative data was transcribed and edited alongside the themes of study then coded for analysis using statistical methods. The responses were also used to explain quantitative data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Management Styles in Primary Schools

There is no clear guideline on the management style that ought to be adopted by the school heads in public primary schools. This is left at the discretion of the school management; however, the style adopted is critical to determining the teacher mobility patterns in the schools. This study sought to find out the leadership management style adopted by the schools in the study area and the findings are discussed in the following sub sections.

Participation in decision making and other management roles

The teachers were asked whether apart from their teaching roles they did participate in other decision making and management roles within their schools. The findings of these are given in Figure 2.
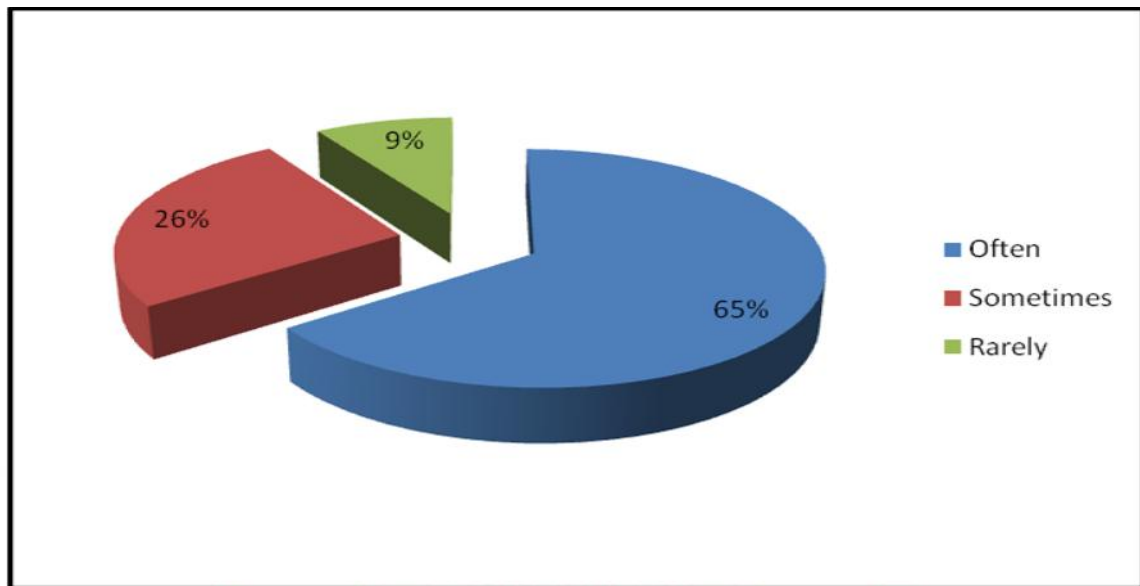
Figure 2: Participation in decision making and other management roles

According to the findings in Figure 2, it can be observed that most teachers (65%) were often involved in other management assignments in the schools beyond their normal teaching duties; however, this could be in form of duty weeks, disciplinary work, and other areas that fell within their role as teachers. It was not clear whether they participated in decision making activities related to the school management.

Involvement of teachers in management and planning

The findings on whether the teachers were involved in school management planning roles are given in Figure 3.
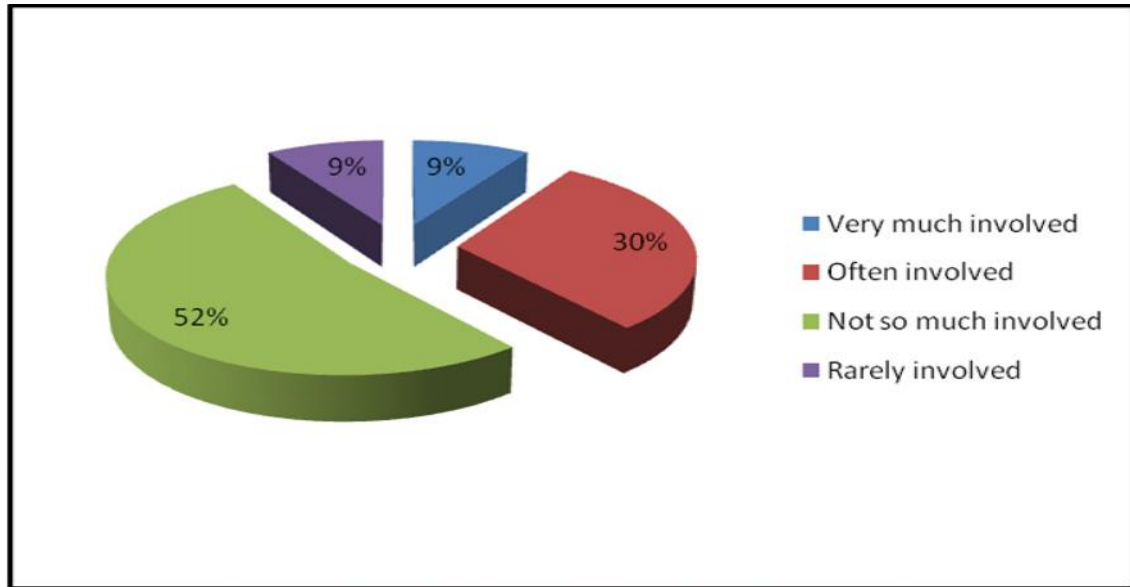
Figure 3: Involvement of teachers in planning

From the findings in Figure 3, it can be deduced that majority (61%) of the teachers were not actively involved in school management planning. This could be due to the fact that at the primary school level departments are largely nonexistent in many schools and, as such, much planning is usually done by the heads and the school management committees.

It was also important to establish whether the teachers were involved in the monitoring of the implementations of the school plans. The findings on these, are as given in Table 2.

Table 2: Colleagues involvement in monitoring implementation of school plans

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very much	18	9
Often	25	13
Average	59	30
Rarely	76	39
Not at all	18	9
Totals	**196**	**100**

According to the findings in Table 2, majority (78%) of the teachers felt that they were not involved in the monitoring of the implementations of the schools plans. This could be due to the fact that, since they were not involved in the planning, the school management committees found it imprudent to involve them in the monitoring of the implementations because monitoring requires one to be familiar with the objectives.

Use of Management By Objectives

The study findings on whether the management encouraged the teachers to independently set objectives on the responsibility assigned to them and then follow them through are given in Figure 4.
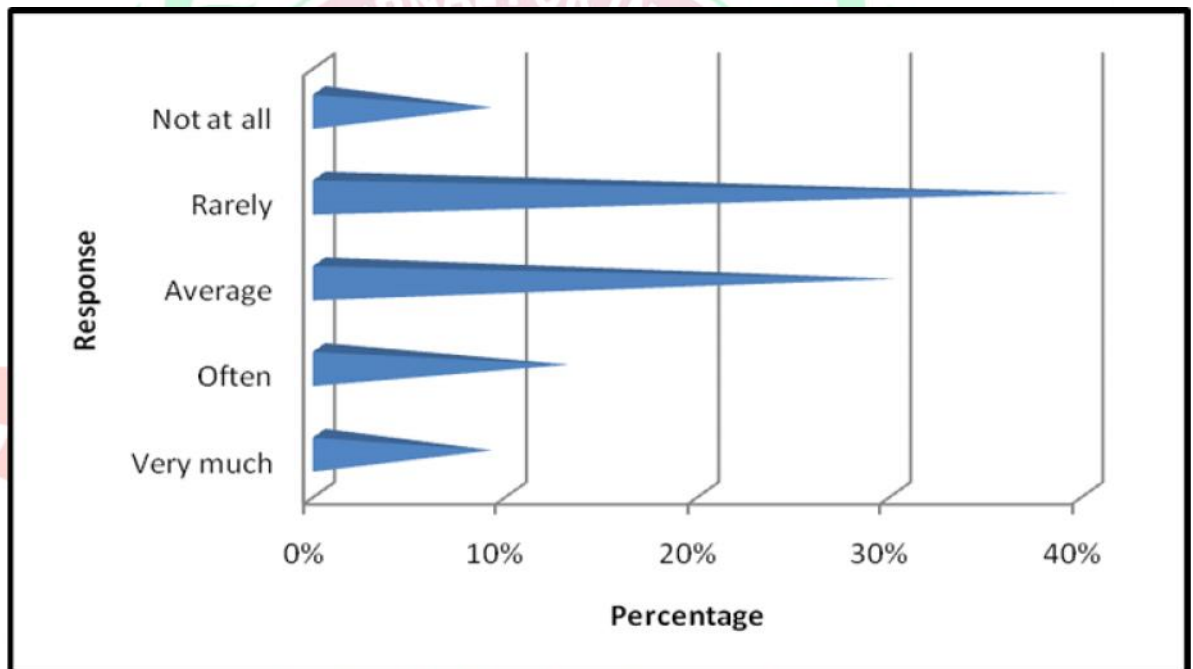

Figure 4: Management of schools using management by objectives

According to the findings in Figure 4, it can be deduced that majority (75%) of the schools did not pursue management by objectives approach. This means the management rarely delegated the work and preferred to work using directives, however, this was only with regard to other work except teaching work.

The study also determined from the teachers whether they felt that the school management was patronizing and the findings are as shown in Figure 5.
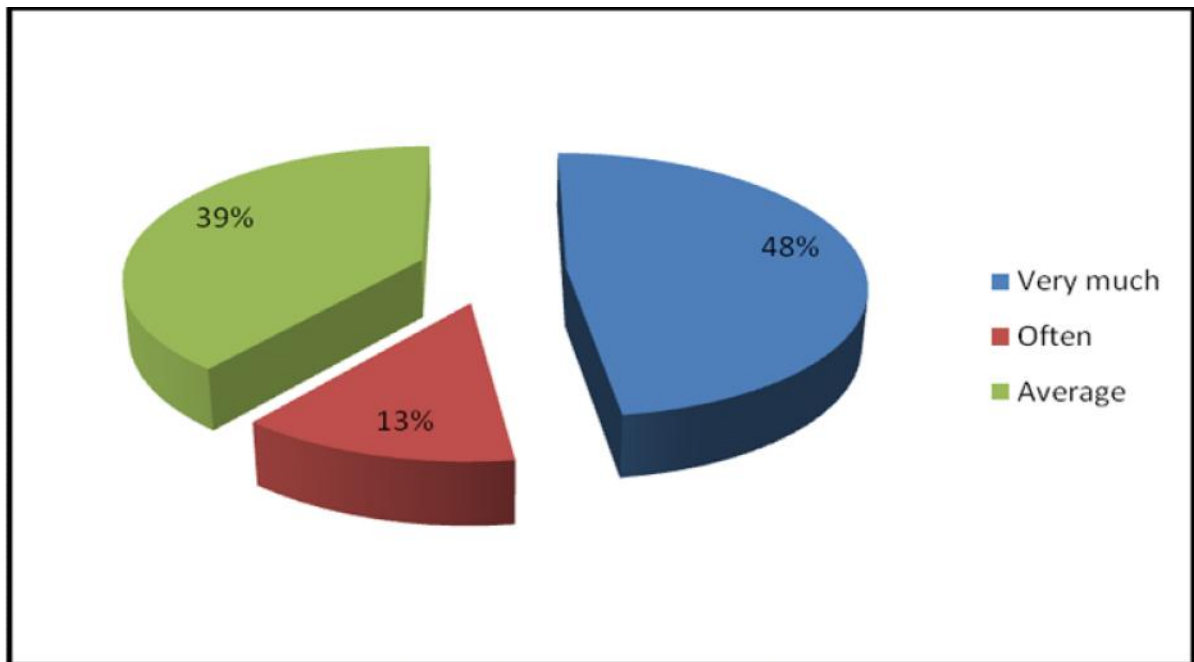
Figure 5: Teachers view of patronizing nature of school management

The findings in Figure 5 suggest that majority (48%) of the teachers thought that the management of their schools was patronizing. This is to say that the management tended not to entrust the teachers fully with the responsibilities given instead preferring to do most of the planning and organization and only bring in teacher when it is necessary. This paternal nature of leadership is akin to the paternal management style frequently used in Asian organizations (Woods, 2010).

Management styles observed in the schools

The findings on the leadership and management observed in the schools are as shown in Figure 6.
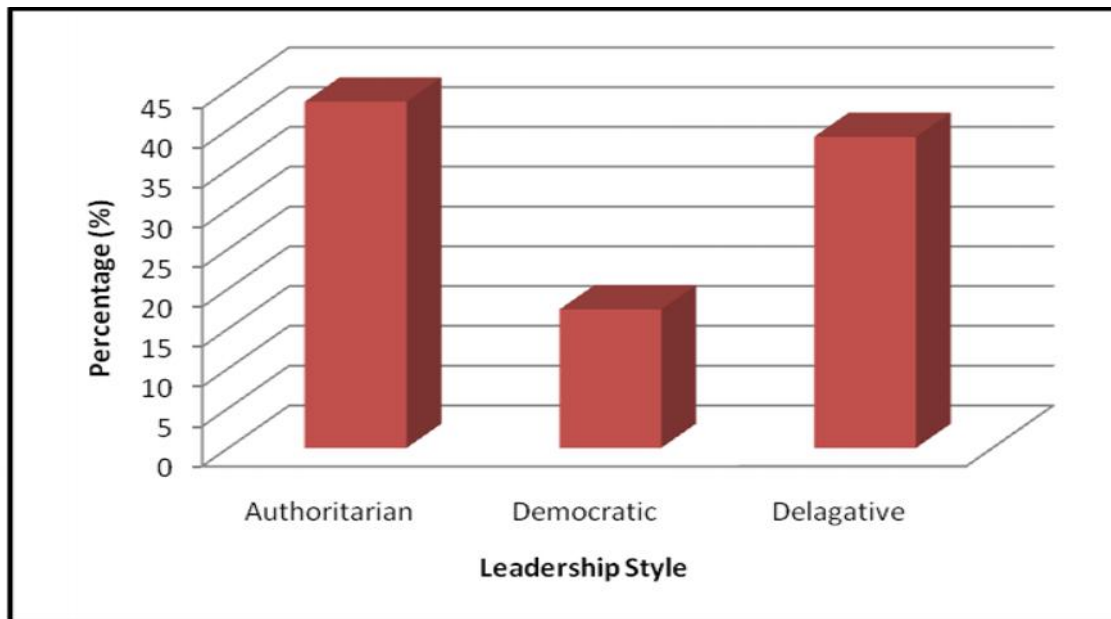
Figure 6: Leadership styles observed in the school

According to the findings in Figure 6, majority (42%) of the schools adopted the authoritarian style of leadership where the school head and the deputies were responsible for all the decisions. However, the findings also reveal that the schools were now adopting a more delegative and democratic approach to school management and leadership. This approach was favoured as it involves more consultation and increases the level of accountability over the school resources.

Effect of Management styles on Teacher Mobility

The leadership and management styles of various organizations have been linked to the mobility of employees in the work places. Some of these have been in the form of transfers and others in the form of job change. The present study sought to find out whether school leadership and management in public primary schools could be linked to the mobility patterns of teachers in the schools. The findings on this are discussed as follows.

Management style and teacher transfer to other schools

The study findings whether the teachers sought to transfer to other schools as a result of management styles adopted in the schools are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Management style and teacher transfer to other schools

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	49	25
Agree	94	48
Neutral	18	9
Disagree	18	9
Strongly disagree	18	9
Totals	**196**	**100**

According to the findings in Table 3, majority (73%) of the teachers felt that the management styles currently adopted in the schools were responsible for the transfer requests to other schools. This was so because the teachers were intent on building careers in the schools and, as such, they wanted to participate in more management activities. However, the management was not willing to accommodate teachers in these positions.

Similarly, the study also sought to determine whether the management styles adopted was in any way responsible for the teacher job change. The findings on this are shown in Figure 7.
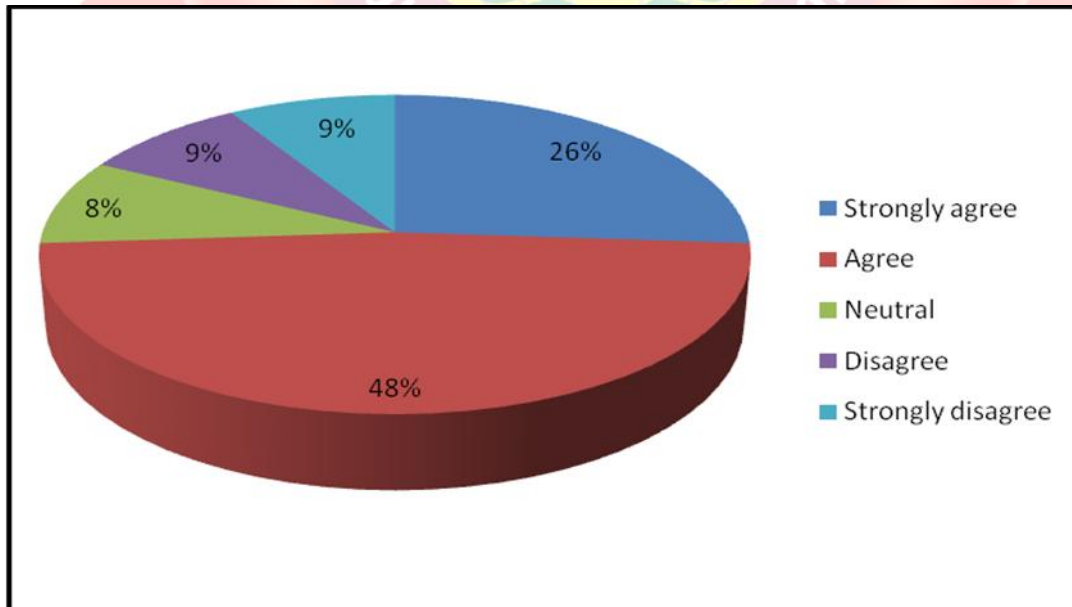
Figure 7: Management style and teacher job change

According to the findings in Figure 7, majority (74%) of the teachers felt that the management styles adopted in the schools was partly responsible for the teacher job change in the area. This could be attributed to the fact that many teachers were now gaining better qualifications and were demanding to be assigned better roles in the school management. However, given that the non-teaching sectors had more openings with increased responsibilities and better pay the teachers opted to switch jobs altogether.

Teachers participation in decision making and staff retention

The study sought to find whether involving the teachers in decision making at the managerial levels in the schools had any bearing on staff retention. The findings on these are as shown in Figure 8.
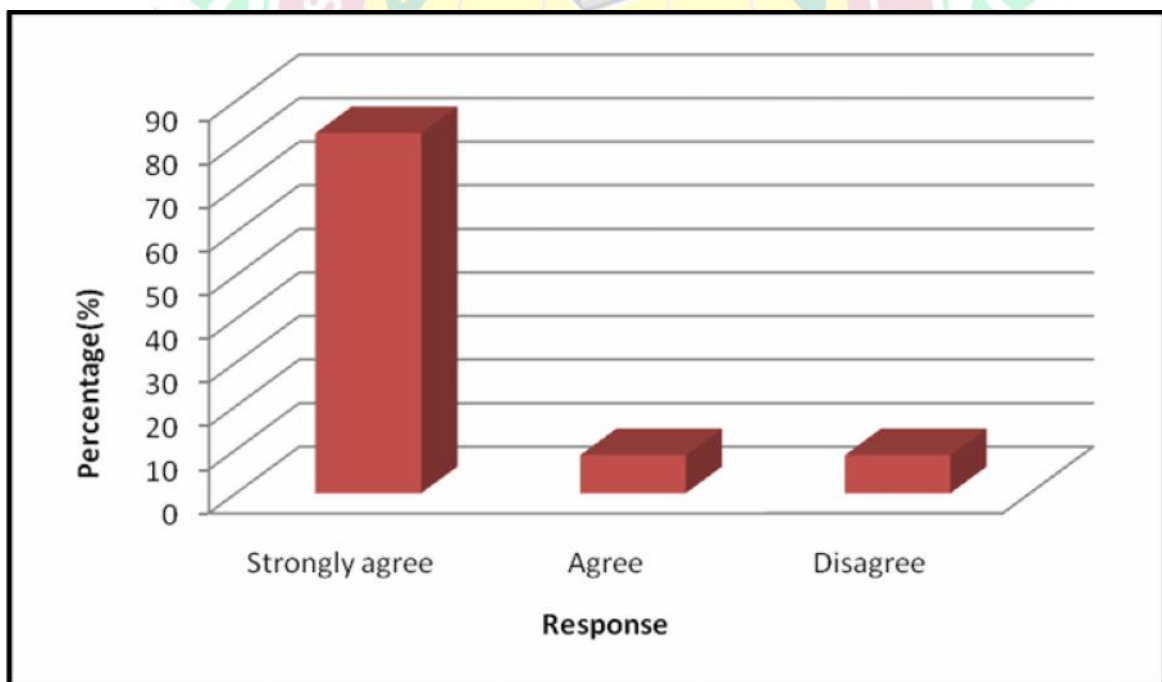

Figure 8: Teachers participation in decision making and staff retention

From the findings in Figure 8, majority (78%) favoured the idea of involving teachers in decision making as a way of retaining them in the teaching profession and their respective schools. Allowing teachers to participate in decision making at the management level made many experienced and good teachers actualize themselves in the profession as a result would tend to want to be more involved in the school management and teaching as opposed to changing jobs.

Relationship between school management and goal setting and communication

The findings on the relationship between school management and goal setting are as given in Table 4.

Table 4: School management and goal setting

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	18	9
Agree	94	48
Neutral	33	17
Disagree	51	26
Totals	**196**	**100**

According to the findings in Table 4 majority (57%) of the teachers strongly felt that the school management should encourage goal setting and facilitate their achievement through leadership initiatives. These meant that the teachers wanted to grow in the teaching profession by being given assignments on management hence, goal setting could be instrumental in getting the teachers more involved in the school activities and reduce the tendency to seek other employment opportunities elsewhere.

In line with the above the study also sought to establish whether the school leadership encouraged open communication between them and the staff. The findings on these are given in Table 5.

Table 5: Open communication in school

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	18	9

Agree	41	21
Neutral	69	35
Disagree	51	26
Strongly disagree	18	9
Totals	**196**	**100**

According to the findings in Table 5, majority (70%) of the teachers felt that open communication was not being encouraged in the schools by the management. This confirms that the management was not democratic and to a considerable extent was not accessible on all issues. Further, the findings also suggests that the management systems in the schools were inflexible and this could actually contribute to mobility as staff members sought opportunities where they could express themselves with regard to their work environment.

Correspondence between management Styles and the Modes of Teacher Mobility

Modes of teacher mobility refer to the type of mobility the teachers opt for. In this study, the mobility modes considered are transfers and job change. This is so because in the former there are career teachers who want to be in the profession for life and in the latter case there are those who seek opportunities in other professions to actualize themselves. According to a study done by Feng (2008), schools were losing their best teachers to other professions which they felt recognized their qualifications and on the other hand more qualified teachers who preferred to remain on the teaching profession tended to seek to work in teaching environment which they considered better in terms of class sizes and other managerial roles pertinent to school work. In this section, the effect of the management style on the preferred mode of teacher mobility is discussed.

Effect of management style on teaching staff mode of mobility

The findings on the effects of school management on the mode of teacher mobility are as shown
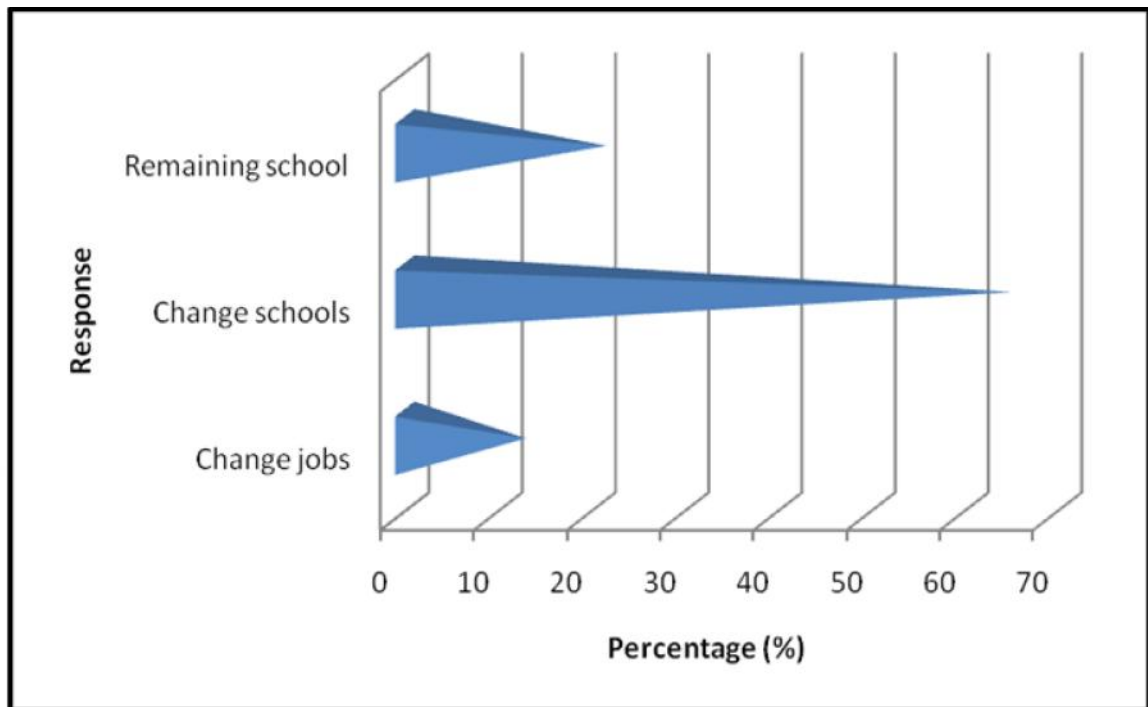
Figure 9: Effect of management on teaching staff mode of mobility

From Figure 9, it can be deduced that school leadership and management had the greatest bearing on the teachers desire to change school rather than to change jobs. This means that the teachers did not find the profession as unworthy and preferred to remain in the profession, however, the kind of leadership in the school motivated them to want to practice the profession in a different environment and hence, there was a reported higher than national average transfer requests in the area.

Loss of best Teachers to Non-Teaching Profession

The findings on whether the teachers felt that they were losing some of the best teachers to non-teaching professions are as shown in Figure 10.
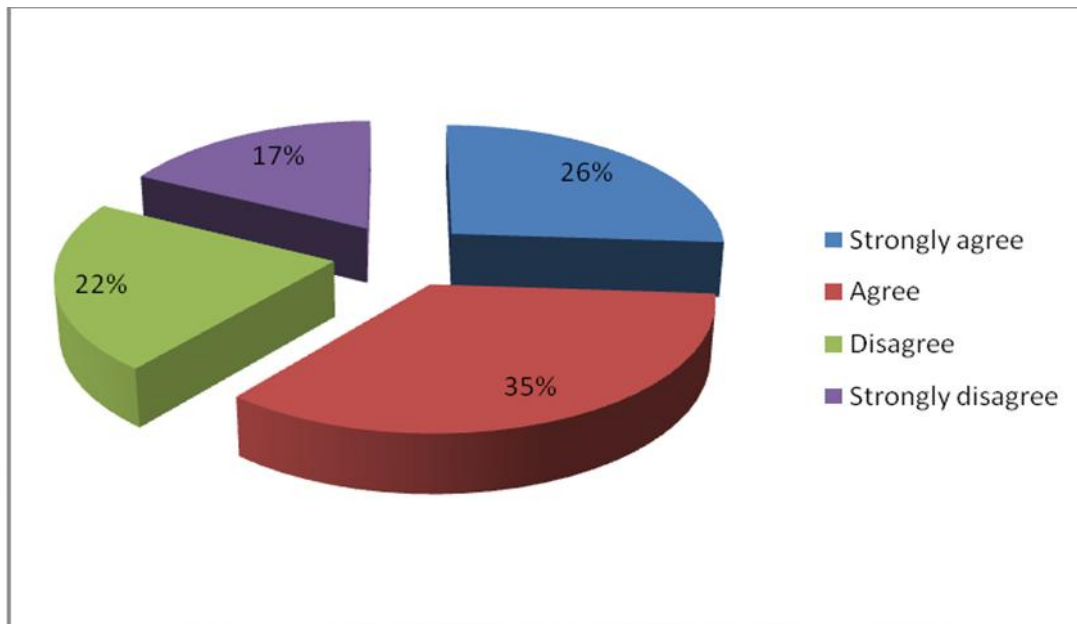
Figure 10: Loss of best Teachers to Non-Teaching Profession

According to the findings shown in Figure 10 majority of the teachers felt that they were losing some of their best teachers to other non-teaching professions in other sectors. Most of those who are going to other sectors were those with higher education qualifications who had been by-passed in school management roles and promotions and felt that other occupations both recognized them and were better paying like in the business, management and finance sectors. This could also result in the delays of effecting transfer requests which meant that since they did not feel accommodated in the school environment any longer the only logical thing for them to do was to change profession altogether.

Conclusions

The study draws the following conclusions based on the study findings. First the schools in the area were still using the traditional authoritarian model of leadership and this also had many features of the paternal leadership style implying that the school heads preferred loyalty over broad consultation from the teachers. Second, the school management styles in this case the authoritarian was responsible for teacher transfer requests to other schools and also to other jobs where the former was not forthcoming. This was also accelerated by the increasing number of teachers acquiring graduate and post graduate qualifications. Finally most of the teachers had a desire to continue in the profession and would not necessarily seek other

alternatives if the conditions in the schools especially the management styles were more accommodative.

Recommendations

In line with the study findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made.

i) The various schools management in the area needs to change and to be more inclusive in their leadership and managerial approach as an incentive to retain teachers in their schools as they were already losing some of their best teachers to other schools and other professions.

ii) The stakeholders in the teaching profession need to facilitate training of the school management on the various types of management that are effective in reducing teacher mobility as it was impacting negatively on the schools performance. Follow ups should also be made by the stakeholders to ascertain that the new management styles are being followed.

iii) It is important that the government also steps in and address the teacher mobility problem in the schools especially by helping promote better school leadership by using it as a criterion for promotion.

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