

## Role of the Headteacher in Academic Achievement in Secondary Schools in Vihiga District, Kenya

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**Abstract:** The headteachers' role is to promote academic performance. The success of what is done in the school is attributed to the headteacher. He or she is the pivot around which many aspects of the school revolve, being the person in charge of every detail of running the school, be it academic or administrative. Schools can make a difference to student achievement and the headteachers' leadership is one factor determining that success. It is therefore important that the performance of a school is appraised against the performance of the person who leads it. The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of the headteacher in academic achievement in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations in Vihiga district in Western province. The study was occasioned by the continued poor performance by most secondary schools in Vihiga district. The findings of the study showed that headteachers used quality improvement measures, teamwork and ensured that the staff was well established as organizational skills that influenced academic achievement. The headteachers were also involved in academic activities by observing and checking the students' and teachers' work, monitoring students' discipline and helping in eradicating cheating in examinations.

**Key words:** Academic achievement, effectiveness, efficiency, headteacher, high performing schools, horizontal teaching, instructional supervision, performance, school size staffing, supervision and vertical teaching

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### INTRODUCTION

The education system in Kenya is largely examination oriented. The quality of education tends to be evaluated in terms of the number of students passing national examinations (Eshiwani, 1993). Educators and the general public have time and again expressed concern over factors that influence student performance in examinations. The most outstanding factor has to do with the organizational management of schools. For instance, Rutter *et al.* (1979) and Wekesa (1993) note that to improve students' performance headteachers are required first to improve the management of the schools. This can be done by setting a clear vision for the schools and communicate this vision to students, support its achievement by giving instructional leadership, provision of resources and being visible in every part of the institution.

Lack of vision in the management of schools often leads to imbalance in the allocation and use of resources. This is why Ayot and Briggs (1992) point out that, poor results in education are related to the resources allocated to it. If this parameter is not recognized, it becomes very difficult to understand why a school continues to perform poorly in national examinations. For example in schools where parents are doing their best in providing school facilities, such as science equipment, textbooks and physical structures, the blame for poor performance is shifted to teachers.

Both the government and parents expect teachers to perform better at their present levels of training. The whole issue of students' performance should be considered from the broad framework of input and output. One of the core functions of schools is to take human raw material (students) and convert them into something more valuable, as in employable adults. Of paramount importance, therefore, is the proper management of teachers for its absence will invariably lead to low productivity on the part of the teachers (Republic of Kenya, 1988). Head teachers as schools' chief executives, are charged with this daunting task of managing teachers among other school resources. Toward this end, Ayot and Briggs (1992) are of the view that input-output studies should be done using learning achieved as seen from student examination performance. The impact of school management is an essential element in such studies.

Although the ability level of a school's form one intake coupled with availability of learning resources are significant factors in performance, some bright students have performed poorly in the absence of good management and organization in various schools (Griffins, 1994). According to Chitiavi (2002), there is no doubt that every Head teacher's dream is to get his school ranked among the best in national examinations results. When results are eventually released, schools with good investments reap good results over which they celebrate jubilantly. Statistics reveal that some schools perform exceptionally well while others perform poorly. A closer investigation reveals that good performance does not just

happen. It is a result of good teaching and overall effective headship.

The quality of leadership makes the difference between the success and failure of a school (Millette, 1988). He further explains that research and inspection clarify the extent to which the quality of leadership is crucial to improvement. In highly effective schools, as well as schools which have reversed a trend of poor performance and declining achievement it is the headteacher who sets the pace, leading and motivating pupils and staff to perform to their highest potential.

Schools can make a difference to students' achievement and headteachers' leadership is one of the factors which contribute to success or failure. Other school factors that the headteacher ought to address due to their influence on students' behaviour and scholastic achievement include: Amount of teaching and degree of academic emphasis; the extent and nature of ability groupings; teacher expectation; styles of teaching and classroom management; size of the school; patterns of discipline and characteristics of school climate (Rutter *et al.*, 1979). Headteachers in effective schools therefore involve themselves in improving instruction and training and are responsible for day-to-day assignment of duties and supervision of the teachers (Republic of Kenya, 1988). Teachers are nominally required to follow the directions given by the headteachers of which they are liable for disciplinary action.

According to Sushila (2004), the headteacher is the leader in a school, the pivot around which many aspects of the school revolve, and the person in charge of every detail of the running of the school, be it academic or administrative. The headteacher should be involved in making most of the decisions of the school. It is therefore important that the headteacher is a leader, a thinker and a decision maker. A discreet headteacher will employ teamwork as a working strategy. He will set up committees and smaller groups of members of staff to investigate ideas or strategies. It therefore behoves the headteacher to be a good team player. It is important that the performance of a school is appraised against the performance of the person who leads it.

Research findings reveal that school improvement and effectiveness can be realized through contributions made by various inputs. According to Mingat (cited in Chitiavi, 2002), the inputs displayed in Table 1 are crucial in the academic performance of a school. The inputs in Table 1 that contribute to good results are appropriately applied when the headteacher is keen on academic achievement and is prepared to provide effective leadership. It is therefore evident that a headteacher who properly exercises his or her leadership responsibility will enable his or her school to realize good academic achievement. This augments the fact that effective management and organization is a prime contributory factor in achievement (Chitiavi, 2002).

Indeed, the better education one is exposed to, the higher his/her chances are of future success. This is perhaps why the public debate about educational quality is largely reduced to a consideration of the effectiveness

Table 1: Contributions made by various inputs for academic achievement

Inputs	% Contribution to good results
Effective teaching	75
Adequate textbooks/tuition and equipment	15
Good physical facilities effectively used	9
Others e.g. supervision, inspection and community support	1
Total	100

Source: Chitiavi (2002)

of schools as production units. The concern for efficiency by the clients of education reflect an interest in minimizing inputs to achieve a maximum level of output and that schools should be viewed as units of production whose performance is regulated by the mechanism of consumer choices based on information about their efficiency (Norris, 1993). The Minister for Education in 1987 observed that poor performance in some of the schools is not as a result of lack of learning resources. It is rather lack of commitment to the task, the school personnel were called upon to perform (Republic of Kenya, 1988).

Kwakwa (1973) describes the headteacher as the keeper of keys, the director of transportation, the coordinator of correspondence, the quartermaster of stores, the divisor of intricate schedules, the publisher of handbooks, the director of public relations and the instructional leader. The headteacher is therefore a key person in any education system. He takes care of the final arrangements for the education of students in a school. His role cannot be taken for granted if he is expected to give the right kind of education to students, hence this sets the focus of the study. Konchar (1988) states that:

Schools are bad or good, in a healthy or unhealthy mental, moral and physical condition, flourishing or perishing, as the principal is capable, energetic of high ideals or the reverse. Schools rise to fame or sink to obscurity as greater or lesser principals have charge of them. It is said 'the school is as great as the principal, because of everything in the school, the plant, the staff, the curriculum methods and techniques of teaching...human relationships, bear the impress of his or her personality'. Schools do not become great because of magnificent buildings but because of magnificent principals (p.13).

The quality of education as measured by student achievement in national examinations is considered as below average standards (Ongiri and Abdi, 2004). This fact concurs with

what the government of Kenya noted in its Master Plan on Education and Training (1997-2010) that the majority of schools fall short of providing for the learning needs of their students, leading to poor academic performance (Republic of Kenya, 1998). Ongiri and Abdi (2004) reported that many of the country's 4,000

secondary schools post bad examinations results year in year out and that there are only about 600 schools that excel and if a student is not in any of these schools he or she is not expected to get a credible grade.

Wandiba (1996) remarked that schools in Western Kenya, once the pride of the nation in academic excellence, have dropped drastically in educational standards. He attributed these poor standards to unpreparedness among members of the teaching fraternity, rampant absenteeism and drunkenness. Something is wrong as far as teacher competency and instructional matters are concerned and only those headteachers who are keen on good performance will resolve this problem. It is against this background that a research need arose to determine the role of the headteacher in academic achievement in Vihiga District.

**Statement of the Problem:** Performance in national examinations in secondary schools in Vihiga district is poor. The performance of the district in national examinations between the years 2000-2003 was examined. Table 2 gives a comparison of Vihiga district with other districts in the province.

Poor performance has persisted despite the fact that the schools in the District are assumed to be having adequate and well-trained teachers, fairly well qualified pupils from primary schools, trained and qualified head teachers. The reasons for poor performance cannot be easily discerned without focused investigation. Surveys on examination performance have shown that a majority of schools which display good results each year have adequate facilities and good human resources. Certainly, the same cannot be said of Vihiga district. This is because the district has consistently posted poor examination results in the previous years as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that 8.33 percent are high performing schools, 20.24 percent are average performing schools and 71.43 percent are low performing schools. The high percentage of poor performing schools reflects the poor performance in Vihiga district. The problem of poor performance in examinations is costly for any country since education is a major contributor to economic growth (Atkinson, 1987). Headteachers play a significant role in determining academic performance in a school due to their tasks and roles.

**Purpose and Objectives of the Study:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of the headteacher in academic achievement in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination in Vihiga District. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

- (i) Investigate the headteachers' organizational skills that influence high academic achievement of students in secondary schools.
- (ii) Identify the academic activities the headteacher participates in that help to improve academic performance.

Table 2: Western Province KCSE performance per district for the period 2000-2003

District	Mean score for			
	2000	2001	2002	2003
Butere/Mumias	5.61	5.36	5.25	5.38
Lugari	New	5.17	4.81	4.94
Teso	5.24	5.12	5.03	5.42
Bungoma	5.37	4.79	4.58	5.38
Busia	4.9	5.21	5.43	5.76
Mt.Elgon	4.55	4.81	4.41	4.67
Vihiga	4.50	4.60	4.45	4.46
Kakamega	4.65	4.73	4.87	4.55

Source: PDE's Office Kakamega (2004)

Table 3: Vihiga District K.C.S.E performance for the period 2000-2003

Category	No	%
High performing schools	7	8.33
Average performing schools	17	20.24
Low performing schools	60	71.43
Total	84	100.00

Source: DEO's Office Kakamega (2004)

**Research Questions:** The following specific research questions guided the study:

- (i) What are the headteachers' organizational skills that influence academic achievement?
- (ii) Which academic activities does the headteacher participate in to help improve academic performance?

**Assumptions of the Study:** Basic assumptions of the study were that:

- (i) The Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination is a reliable and accurate instrument for measuring student achievement at the secondary school level.
- (ii) Headteachers are trained and qualified persons in management of school curriculum.
- (iii) Head teachers ensure that human and material resources are provided for and effectively used for teaching.
- (iv) Headteachers supervise and provide for academic and professional guidance to the teachers.
- (v) All secondary schools in Vihiga district offer similar curriculum as required by the Ministry of Education.
- (vi) All schools are adequately equipped and staffed.
- (vii) The head teacher is the central factor determining academic achievement in the school.

**Significance of the Study:** The study confirms that head teachers' leadership style has an influence on school performance. When other factors are held constant it was found that the head teachers who were involved in academic activities, provided adequate teaching and learning facilities achieved better results than those who did not. The findings of this study therefore would be significant in various ways: first on the theoretical value, they would provide greater insight to the administrators and managers of schools into the factors that contribute to

high academic performance in schools in Vihiga district. Second on the practical value, the findings would serve as reference points for headteachers of schools in Vihiga district on management skills that would lead to improvement of students' performance in national examinations. Besides, the findings would also enlighten school headteachers in order to address the problem of how to improve students' achievement in national examinations. The findings of the study would also benefit Kenya Education staff Institute (KESI) with regard to salient training needs for headteachers that need to be addressed in Vihiga district.

**Scope of the Study:** The study included a sample of high performing schools, average performing schools, and those that performed poorly in Vihiga district. The study focused on the role of the headteacher in academic achievement of secondary schools in Vihiga district. The headteachers and teachers of the sample schools were the respondents. They provided information on the role of the headteacher in relation to the two variables assumed to be the major contributors to performance in KCSE examinations.

**Limitations of the Study:** The study was limited to only two variables namely: organizational skills and participation in academic activities. Other relevant variables that have not been covered will form the basis for further research. Given that the study covered Vihiga District only the findings can not be generalized for the whole country. Performance was only limited to KCSE examination results. Formative evaluation was not put into consideration. Determination of the relationship between the head teachers' role and academic achievement was inferred from the head teachers' involvement in these two variables which are attributes of effective schools. Therefore this relationship was not based on statistical analysis.

**Conceptual Framework:** The study was conceptualized basing on the variables that were used in the study. In this conceptual framework it was conceptualized that high academic achievement was influenced by a combination of various variables, namely organizational skills and participation in academic activities. The focus was on the headteacher who was the central independent variable. Organizational skills and participation in academic activities depended on the headteacher and eventually determined the kind of results. An effective head teacher ensures that he employs organizational skills which lead to effective teaching resulting into high academic achievement. Organizational skills that influence academic achievement include the head teachers' organizational strategies, quality improvement measures, and skills in curriculum based establishment and teamwork. The conceptual framework is useful to the study in various ways. First the study is based on the premise that headship plays a significant role in determining academic performance. Second, headship

encompasses a variety of tasks and roles whose effective operationalisation positively affects academic achievement. Given the fact that the study investigated these factors, the conceptual model is invaluable.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Research Design:** The study design used was descriptive analysis. Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) describe descriptive analysis as that method that involves asking a large group of people questions about a particular issue. Information is obtained from a sample rather than the entire population at one point in time which may range from one day to a few weeks. The study employed descriptive analysis to establish opinions and knowledge about the role of the headteacher in academic achievement. Any research undertaking involves lots of cost implications hence this design was deliberately selected for the study because it allows for quick data collection at a comparatively cheap cost (Grinnel, 1993).

**Area of study:** Vihiga district formed the study area. It was carved out of Kakamega district in 1991. It borders Kakamega district on the North, Nandi to the East, Kisumu district to the South and Siaya to the Southwest. The district is divided into six administrative divisions namely Vihiga, Sabatia, Tiriki East, Tiriki West, Emuhaya and Luanda. According to the National Population census of 1989, the district had a total population of 460,538 (Republic of Kenya, 1997).

**Study Population:** The study focused on the 84 secondary schools in Vihiga District with a population of 26,979 students, 84 head teachers and 1,280 teachers. The high performing schools were seven, average performing schools were 17 and the remaining 60 were poor performing schools. It had 13 girls' boarding schools, seven boys' boarding schools and 64 mixed boarding and day schools. The district had more mixed day than single sex boarding schools. That could be attributed to the high poverty levels in the district that made boarding fees too high for most parents to afford. The secondary schools that met the conditions of the study were those that had presented candidates for the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) between 2000- 2003.

**Sample and Sampling Technique:** The secondary schools were stratified into high performing with a mean score of 6.00 and above in KCSE examinations, average performing with a mean score of 5.00 to 5.9 in KCSE examinations and low performing schools with a mean score of 4.9 and below in KCSE examinations (of 2000 to 2003). The identification of schools was based on the mean examination scores posted in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations for the four years of study.

Saturated sampling method was used to select the high and average performing schools, while stratified random sampling method was used to select the poor

performing schools. There were seven high performing schools, 17 average performing schools and 60 poor performing schools. A third of the poor performing schools were randomly sampled. A sample of 44 schools was selected based on the above stratification. The principals of the 44 sampled schools participated in the study. Similarly, 8 teachers from each school were sampled to participate. In total 396 respondents were selected for the study. The population and the sample of the study are shown in Table 4.

**Instruments for Data Collection:** The data were collected using questionnaires, interviews and document analysis guide. The questionnaire was preferred for its suitability to this study. It was suitable as a method of data collection because it allowed the researcher to reach a larger sample within limited time. It also ensures confidentiality and thus gathers more candid and objective replies. The questionnaires were prepared both for head teachers and class teachers.

The document analysis method focused on the observation of documents that are relevant such as lesson books, schemes of work, school attendance registers and records of work covered and stores ledgers with a view to obtaining information on the headteachers' role in academic achievement in secondary schools of Vihiga district. Face to face interview was also used because it helped to enlist the cooperation of respondents and establish a rapport with them. Borg *et al.* (1993) observe that questionnaires are often used to collect basic descriptive information from a large sample while interviews are used to follow up questionnaires, responses in-depth with a smaller sample. The three instruments, that is, questionnaire, interviews and document analysis guide were used in the study for the purpose of triangulation and confirming information collected from various respondents.

**The Head teachers' Questionnaire (H/TQ):** The headteachers' questionnaire had two sections. Section A of the questionnaire comprised general information from the schools in Vihiga District and Section B comprised open-ended questions related to the role of the headteacher. The questions included the headteachers' role in curriculum implementation and supervision, motivation and evaluation. The number of respondents was seven from the high performing schools, 17 from the average performing schools and 20 headteachers from the low performing schools.

**The Teachers' Questionnaire (C/TQ):** The teachers' questionnaire was used to collect data on the headteachers' role in academic performance in Vihiga District. It sought information on education inputs prevailing in schools that affected performance. This included the headteachers' organization, provision of facilities, internal supervision and motivation. In part two of the section the teachers were asked to give their views

Table 4: Schools stratified by performance and sample selection

Schools mean score	Girls	Boys	Mixed	Total	Sample
6.00 and above	3	3	1	7	7
5.00-5.993	4	10	17	17	
1.00-4.997	nil	53	60	20	
Total	13	7	64	84	44

Source: District Education Office Vihiga: 2003

on how the headteachers would promote academic achievement in the schools. The number of respondents was 56 from the high performing schools, 136 from the average performing schools, and 160 from the low performing schools.

**Interviews:** Face to face interviews of 44 headteachers of the schools involved in the study were conducted. The headteachers were better placed to give detailed information on the study. The interviews were administered to the principals of high, average and low performing schools with an aim of getting more information on the role of the headteacher in academic achievement. Responses from interviews were recorded under headings emerging from interviews with the interviewees. It was hoped that this would give a deeper insight into the inputs that would be associated more with examination performance.

**Document Analysis:** School documents that are relevant, namely lesson books, schemes of work, registers, records of work covered, and attendance records were examined. This was done with a view to obtaining the headteachers' supervisory role in curriculum implementation in the selected schools. In examining the records the researcher used a document analysis proforma.

**Validity and Reliability of the Instruments:** It was necessary to ascertain the validity and reliability of the instruments used to collect data so that the research findings could be reliable. In order to ascertain content and face validity, the questionnaires and in-depth interviews were presented to three lecturers in the Department of Educational Management and Foundations at Maseno University who are authorities in the area for scrutiny and advice. The contents and impressions of the instruments were improved based on the authorities' advice and comments. The questionnaire and interview items were then constructed in a way that they related to each question. That ensured that all research questions were covered.

Grinnel (1993) observes that reliability measures the degree of accuracy in the measurements an instrument provides. It ensures that the instruments generate similar data when used by independent researchers. He further observes that to remove possible errors, every instrument should be tested before it is formally administered. To ensure reliability of the instruments the researcher conducted a pilot study in two secondary schools in Vihiga district before the actual study. The two schools were not included in the main study. The main purpose of

the pilot study was to check on suitability and the clarity of the questions on the instruments designed, relevance of the information being sought, the language used and the content validity of the instruments from the responses given.

**Methods of Data Analysis:** The data collected from questionnaires was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). The descriptive analysis was appropriate for this study because it involved the description, analysis and interpretation of circumstances prevailing at the time of study. Basic statistical techniques were used to analyze various items of the questionnaire. These included averages, percentages, frequencies and totals. This study used frequencies and percentages because they easily communicate the research findings to majority of readers (Gay, 1992). Frequencies easily show the number of subjects in a given category. A number of tables and charts were used to present data findings. Data collected was analyzed according to the nature of the response. Once the coding was completed, the responses were transferred into a summary sheet by tabulating. This was then tallied to establish frequencies, which were converted to percentage of the total number. Responses from open-ended questions were recorded. To determine the frequencies of each response, the number of respondents giving similar answers was converted to percentages to illustrate related levels of opinion.

Interviews were carried out in the sampled schools. Responses from in-depth interviews were transcribed. The transcribed data was then organized in themes and categories that emerged. Information from the records on the role of the headteacher was used to complement and to cross check data collected using the main instruments.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**The Head teachers' Quality Improvement Measures:** The headteachers were asked to state the quality improvement measures they employed to influence the performance of their schools. Table 5 shows the various quality improvement measures used by the headteachers.

The head teachers' use of quality improvement measures influenced results of schools. From Table 5 it is evident that the high performing schools indicated that they strongly put into consideration frequent testing and giving of feedback, remedial teaching, and controlled entry mark for students joining the school and provision of learning resources as measures to improve students' performance in the KCSE examinations. Most of the schools had established facilities and this was a priority issue. On the other hand in the low performing schools, these measures had not taken root adequately.

Testing and feedback involved having target mean scores for each class and measuring on the level of achievement. Remedial learning was used to help the slow learners catch up with the others. The entry mark of a

student was important since those with high entry marks tended to perform better than those with low entry marks.

Interviews revealed other important variables that influenced examination performance. Frequent testing was carried out by 6 out of 7 headteachers of high performing schools while 5 out of 7 headteachers mentioned that they had thorough revision prior to the start of national examinations. These headteachers also viewed teacher experience as a good indicator of good results. Among the headteachers of the average and low performing schools, 8 out of 17 and 9 out of 20 respectively carried out these activities. The rest of the teachers in these two categories said that they did not have ample time to cover the syllabus in order to carry out frequent tests and remedial teaching.

A grim picture of schools that performed poorly was presented. The headteachers of the low performing schools cited admitting students with low marks, thus 15 out of 17 and 17 out of 20 said that they had no students' books except reference material for the teachers. This agreed with the view of Sweeney (1982) that the headteachers' organizational skills influenced performance. Also Sweeney (1982) figures that the direct responsibility for improving instruction and learning rested in the hands of the school principal who must be resourceful in terms of organizational acumen. This acumen is usually expressed in the effective school philosophy. There was strong evidence from studies that schools' organizational management greatly influenced student academic outcomes. For example Rutter *et al.* (1979) found a number of differences in student outcomes in secondary schools in pupils' behavior, attendance, examination success and delinquency based on management characteristics of the schools. What teachers do in schools has a real effect on the welfare of the pupils.

**Team Building:** The head teachers were asked to indicate how they fostered team building in their schools. Their responses are summarized in Fig. 1.

From Fig. 1 it is evident that over 70 percent of the headteachers in the high performing schools encouraged teamwork in schools by having a get together to celebrate and review any achievement, ensuring regular staff meetings and constant briefings and consultation, appreciating each others' contribution and participation in decision making. However only 57.14 percent of the headteachers took into consideration vertical teaching. The headteachers in the average performing schools put into consideration exam coordination (70.59 %) and delegation of responsibilities (76.47%). However less than 65 percent of the average performing schools' headteachers had regular staff meetings, vertical teaching, conflict resolution and get together to foster team building in their schools. It is also evident that high performing schools encouraged teamwork; get together, regular staff meetings, exam coordination and conflict resolution leading to better performance. This is in comparison with those in the average and low performing categories whose

Table 5: Summary of responses on quality improvement measures

Control measures	High performing		Average performing		Low performing	
	N=7	%	N=17	%	N=20	%
Controls entry mark	5	71.42	12	70.59	12	60
Teachers' clear roles	6	85.71	9	52.94	3	15
Frequent testing and feedback	6	85.71	8	47.06	9	45
Remedial learning	4	57.14	8	47.06	11	55
Syllabus coverage	5	71.42	6	35.29	3	15
Checking teachers' and students' work	4	57.14	7	41.18	5	25

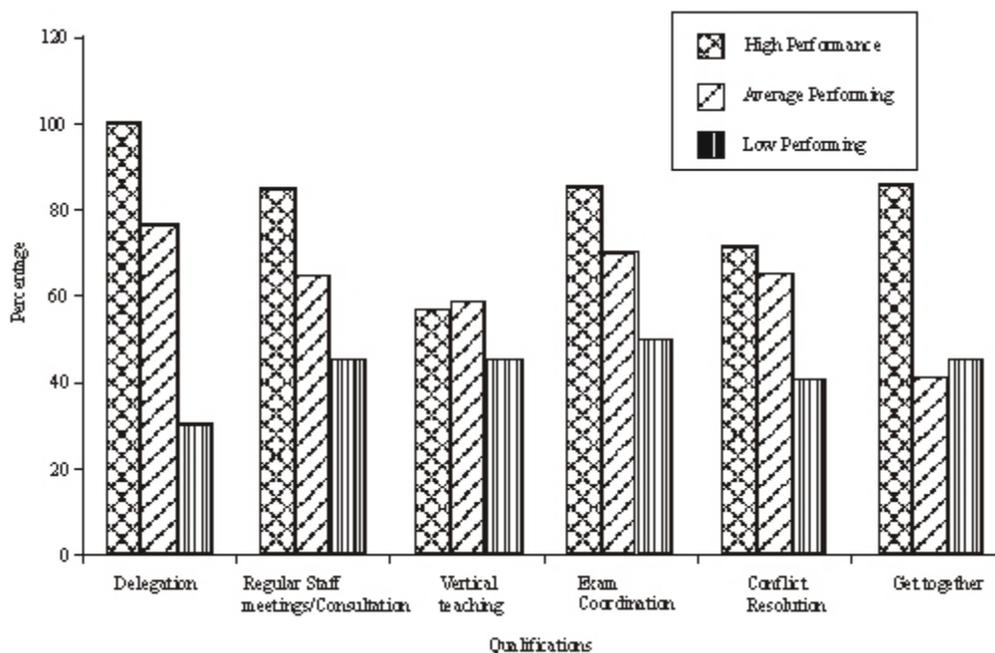


Fig. 1: The head teachers' strategies used in teamwork

performance was lower. Team building is therefore an important aspect in performance.

The study revealed that skills in curriculum deployment of teachers, the head teachers' quality improvement measures and team building were the organizational skills that influenced performance in schools.

**The Head teachers' Involvement in Academic Activities:** The question responded to was:

What academic activities does the headteacher participate in to help improve academic performance?

The teachers were asked to appraise their headteachers with regard to variables such as observing and checking students' and teachers' work, ensuring that all departments had enough teachers, participation in internal classroom supervision, eradicating cheating in examinations among students and monitoring students' discipline. Their responses were as summarized in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2 shows that over 70 percent of the headteachers in the high performing schools checked the teachers' and students' work, ensured that all departments had enough teachers, were involved in internal classroom supervision, helped in eradicating cheating among students, and also

monitored students' discipline. The average performing schools' headteachers ensured that all departments had enough teachers (65.44%), had internal classroom supervision (71.32%), and helped eradicate cheating (80.14%). Less than 50 percent of them checked teachers' and students' work and monitored students' discipline. On the other hand, less than 65 percent of the headteachers in the low performing schools participated in these activities except for discouraging cheating among students in which 75 percent were said to participate. It was evident that headteachers who check teachers' and students' work, ensured that all departments had enough teachers, carried out internal classroom supervision, helped in eradicating cheating among students and were keen on monitoring students' discipline thus leading to good performance.

From Fig. 2 it can be observed that schools in the high performing category had a high percentage of headteachers who checked teachers' and students' work, ensured that all departments had enough teachers, organized for internal classroom supervision, helped in eradicating cheating in examinations and monitored students' discipline. The average and low performing schools' percentages were also reflected in the results of the two categories.

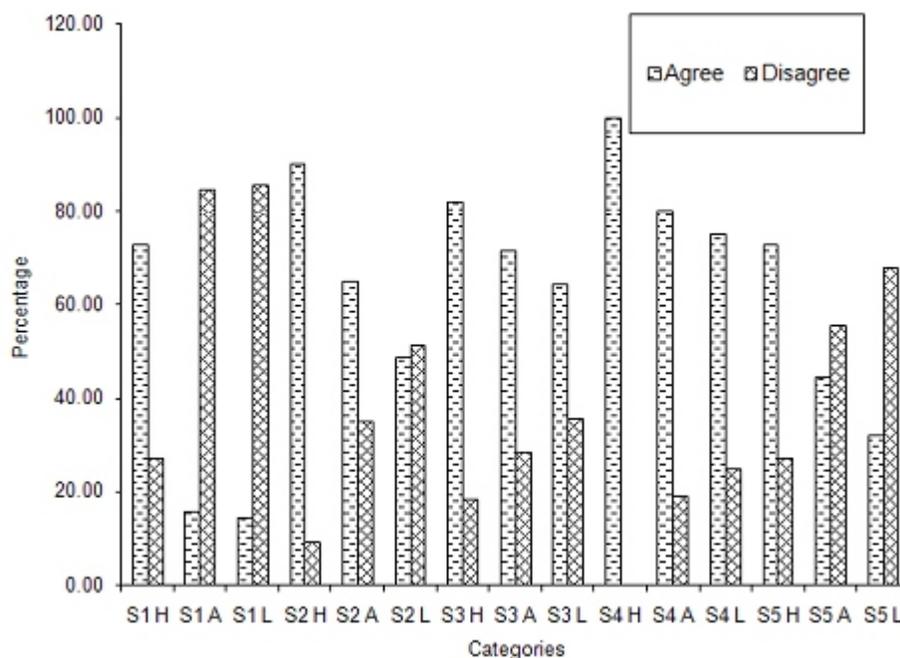


Fig. 2: The teachers' evaluation on the headteachers' involvement in academic activities

Key: S1 - checks teachers' and students' work

S2 – ensures that all departments have enough teachers

S3 – Organizes for internal classroom supervision.

S4 - helps in eradicating cheating in examination.

S5 – Monitors students' discipline.

### CONCLUSION

What are the head teachers' organizational skills that influence academic achievement?

The study revealed that one of the organizational skills that the headteachers used was to ensure that the staff was well established. This skill was practiced by all the headteachers in the schools. The headteachers ensured that the departments had enough teachers by employing teachers in subjects they were not adequately staffed. Another skill used by the headteachers was the quality improvement measures. The study revealed that the quality improvement measures headteachers employed included entry mark of students to form one, syllabus coverage, remedial learning, testing and feedback and having clear roles for teachers.

The study also revealed that the headteachers' use of teamwork was another organizational skill used to influence performance in their schools. In teamwork delegation of duties ensured that work was done effectively. They also had regular staff meetings where planning and decisions were made jointly and policies well communicated. Vertical teaching was used instead of horizontal teaching.

Which academic activities does the head teacher participate in that help improve academic performance?

The head teachers' involvement in academic activities included observing and checking teachers' and students' work, monitoring students' discipline, helping in eradicating cheating in examinations among students, internal classroom supervision and ensuring that all departments had enough teachers.

The main purpose of the study was to find out the role of the head teacher in academic achievement in secondary schools of Vihiga district. Percentages for high, average and low performing schools were worked out. The headteachers' use of the five variables determined the schools' performance. This was reflected in the high percentages of the high performing schools, followed by average performing schools and lastly low percentages from the low performing schools. Conclusions are based on the five research questions.

The following conclusions were reached:

- 1 The head teachers' organizational skills that influenced high academic achievement of students in secondary schools included skills in curriculum based establishment, quality improvement measures and teamwork. The results of a school were determined by the application of these skills.
- 2 The head teachers' involvement in academic activities such as checking of teachers' and students' work, helping in eradicating cheating among students

in examinations, internal classroom supervision and monitoring students' discipline contribute towards the academic performance of a school.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**Policy Recommendations:** The findings of the study have implications for policy. Therefore the following is recommended emanating from the findings of the study:

- 1 Head teachers should employ organizational skills such as teamwork and various quality improvement measures so as to influence the performance of the schools.

**Practice Recommendations:** The findings of the study have implications for practice

- 1 Head teachers should be actively involved in academic activities so as to influence the school academic performance.

**Recommendations for Further Research:** The study did not exhaust all matters related to it. Other issues emanated from the study that require further investigation. These are as follows:

- 1 More comprehensive studies should be undertaken to include a larger population in order to ascertain or not whether the problem transcends other district

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