

## Effectiveness of Head Teachers' Leadership Styles on the Management of Public Primary School Curriculum Implementations in Bomet County, Kenya

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to determine the influence of head teachers' leadership styles on their effectiveness in public primary school curriculum implementation in Bomet Sub-County, Kenya. A correlation research design was used in the study. A sample of 120 head teachers was selected from a population of 174 head teachers of public primary schools in the Sub-County using proportionate and simple random sampling techniques. Questionnaires for head teachers were used to collect data. Data were analysed with the aid of a computer programme, the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.5. Frequencies and percentages were computed to determine head teachers' effectiveness in managing curriculum. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between head teachers' leadership styles and their effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation. The study found that there was no statistically significant relationship between head teachers' leadership styles and their effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation in public primary schools. The author recommends that the government intensify school-based in-service trainings at the divisional level to benefit head teachers on the strengths and limitations of the various leadership styles in primary school management in order to realize good results among learners in national examinations. Education officers can utilize this information to intensify school-based in-service trainings at the divisional levels to benefit head teachers on the strengths and limitations of the various leadership styles in school management. Further, the Education Officers, among other stakeholders, may see the need of getting head teachers and teachers to undergo in-service trainings on their roles in managing pupils and curriculum implementation.

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**Keywords:** effectiveness, head teachers, leadership styles, management curriculum implementation, public primary schools

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### INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the role of head teachers in curriculum implementation in public primary schools, and the relationship between selected head teachers' leadership styles and their effectiveness in curriculum implementation based on a study in Bomet Sub-County, Kenya.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### The Role of Head Teachers in Curriculum Implementation in Primary Schools

The word curriculum refers to all that is taught in a school, including the time table subjects and; all those aspects of its life that exercise an influence in the life of the school (Farrant, 2004). Curriculum for public schools in Kenya is uniform throughout the country, and the head teachers are expected to be aware of all policies that guide the management of curriculum (MOE & HR, 1999). Curriculum involves all subjects taught and all activities provided by the school and may include the time devoted to each subject and activity. Curriculum should be dynamic and impress on the philosophy and educational purposes of the school and the nation. Other

considerations in the management of the curriculum are: allowing for Special Education Needs (SEN), providing practical experience and learning, taking into consideration culture, customs/traditions of the local people, soliciting support for implementation, the learning ability of the pupils, and gender issues pertaining to the community or school environment (MOE & HR, 1999).

Curriculum may be seen as the sum total of all the experiences the learner undergoes for which the school accepts responsibility. It includes both the planned academic programme and all co-curricular activities and other events, as well as that which pupils learn through the major and quality of the school ethos. The main task of the head of each school is to provide and deliver effectively and appropriate curriculum using all the resources, namely: human, material and financial resources, which are readily available. This involves mobilizing all possible resources including those from the Ministry of Education, the community and other organizations, and then ensuring their full and effective use (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997).

Curriculum delivery involves guidance in the professional preparation of lessons, effective teaching/learning strategies, appropriate methods of assessment and effective mode of supervision. Timetabling is the programme by which the curriculum is delivered. The resources required for curriculum delivery include: teachers, teaching areas, finance, time, supplies and instructional materials. The head teacher uses the timetable to mobilize resources to provide the greatest possible educational opportunities for student in the most cost-effective manner. The time-table should be student-centred. Allowance has to be made to cover all activities within the school, namely assemblies, registration, pupil guidance and welfare, staff development (MOE & HR, 1999).

Through the effective supervision of instruction, head teachers can reinforce and enhance teaching practices that will contribute to improved student learning. By skilfully analyzing performance and appropriate data, head teachers can provide meaningful direction to teachers that can have a profound effect on the learning that occurs in classroom. Because student learning is the primary function of the schools, the effective supervision of instruction is one of the most critical functions of the head teacher. If schools are to provide equal access to quality educational programmes for all learners, head teachers must hold teachers accountable for providing an appropriate and well-planned program. These programmes include a variety of teaching strategies designed to meet the diverse needs of all learners in our complex society (Education Watch, 2004).

The head teacher should encourage enrolment and retention of both boys and girls in school and sensitize the staff and the community on gender issues affecting the performance of all learners. In particular, head teachers should be familiar with issues related to gender and education, especially the Ministry's policies on access, equity, retention and quality education for girls and boys, and be able to advise teachers on the choice of teaching and learning materials that are gender friendly. They should be able to discourage classroom practices that are gender blind and gender biased (MOE & HR, 1999). It is important that the head teacher encourages and assists the staff to identify learners with Special Education Needs (SEN). Special Education Needs in integrated schools may include partial blindness, partial deafness, mild physically handicapped pupils, gifted, talented and slow learners, long and short sightedness, partial mental retardation and emotionally disturbed learners.

Children with special needs may display certain anti-social behaviour such as truancy, bullying, lateness or drug abuse as a way of attracting attention. Such behaviour should be properly investigated and

corrective strategies put in place. Such strategies include group work, peer teaching, remedial teaching, guidance and counselling, among others (MOE & HR, 1999). Special Needs in Education (SNE) are conditions or needs that hinder normal learning and development of individuals. They may be temporary or life-long. These conditions may include disabilities as well as social, emotional or health needs. They may be referred to as barriers to learning and development and they may be a major cause of repetition and related problems (MOEST, 2004).

The head teacher should see that the school calendar is collected from the Ministry of Education and ensure that all school activities coincide with the school calendar. The head teacher must see that textbooks, stationery, furniture, games equipment and library books are ready before school resumes. Syllabuses of all the classes must be available and; with the assistance of the deputy head teacher, teachers will be helped to prepare schemes of work. The head teacher should ensure that lesson notes are made daily and that teachers teach according to the lesson notes no Assignments, tests and examinations should be marked and recorded promptly and correction done where necessary (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997).

Teachers should do corrections with their pupils so that pupils can understand their mistakes. This will help to improve effectiveness in teaching (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997). Records of work provide information on what has been covered in a given subject area. These records help head teachers and the substitute teachers to keep track of work done. At the same time, keeping up-to-date records on pupils is equally valuable. This will show the growth and progress of each pupil. Records on each pupil should include; continuous assessment tests (CAT), responsibilities, termly class reports, special incidents and other normal data pertaining to the student. The head teacher needs to maintain proper books and documents to record learners' information, and that the information is accessible when required (MOE & HR, 1999).

For the school to implement curriculum effectively, the head teacher should adhere to the punctuality and discipline of both teachers and pupils; and school examinations should be used to measure pupils' progress throughout their school life (MOE & HR, 1999). Head teachers should ensure that the subject teachers are carrying out continuous assessment of the learners work (MOEST, 1987). Tests provide a means of determining the extent to which understanding and skills have been achieved. There is a great variety of classroom testing procedures. Some short tests may be given daily to test pupils' recall of work covered. Some may be more elaborate for example: fortnightly, monthly,

termly or yearly exams to assess deeper understanding. Continuous assessment of learners' achievement and progress will provide important information to the learners, teachers, parents and education authorities. Such information will assist in motivating staff to improve their performance and benefit pupil learning achievement and promote discipline among staff and pupils (MoEST, 1987)

Any form of assessment must be learners-centred, tests should be standardized and relevant, clear guidance should be available for all syllabuses. All efforts must be made to create satisfactory conditions for assessment, which will lead to an overall evaluation of the school's performance (MOE & HR, 1999). Head teachers should determine if teachers are using the numerous formative and summative diagnostic processes available to assist in planning meaningful instruction. Formative measures include on-going teacher monitoring of student progress during the lessons, practice sessions and on daily assignments. Measures administered periodically like criterion-reference tests that are teacher-made also provide helpful information on the status of learners instruction progresses. As managers, head teachers are expected to ensure efficiency in performance and proper utilization of teachers under them, as well as effective management and implementation of curriculum and prudent use of resources. They are required to embrace a result-oriented management to achieve the desired education goals and targets (Education Watch, 2004).

It is important for the head teacher to supervise the curriculum implementation and provide effective advice on programmes that will improve teaching and learning in schools. This is by identifying specific curriculum needs and preparation of a supervisory plan that would promote teacher/student achievement. The head teacher is responsible for ensuring syllabus coverage, and establishing and maintaining the quality of teaching/learning. It is important for the head teacher and staff to measure teaching and learning achievement by means of agreed performance indicators. These include success rates in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), and/local examinations; and low repetition and dropout rates, among others (MOE & HR, 1999).

Apart from in-school supervision, the head teacher can determine areas that require improvement by referring to subject panel review, reports and feedback from Quality Assurance and Standard Officers, learners, parents, community and Education Officers, and school management committee (SMC) and other information available. To improve performance of the staff and the learning achievement of learners, the head teacher in collaboration with teachers should initiate school-based support

programmes, which will improve the performance of staff and enhance learners' achievement, involve parents in the process of improving learners' performance, and encourage formulation of functional subject panels. Once the needs have been identified, it is the responsibility of the head teacher to organize support programmes to improve performance (MOE & HR, 1999). Ngaroga (1996) states that the head teachers are responsible for the overall running and control of the school and maintenance of the tone and of all-round standards, and has the responsibility for creating a healthy environment conducive for effective teaching and learning. To enhance the professional effectiveness of the teaching staff, it must be killed in these areas: (a) What to evaluate, (b) how to observe and analyse classroom information and other data, and (c) how to translate the results of observations and the summary of data into meaningful conference feedback that guides and encourages teacher to improve instruction (Education Watch, 2004).

A school library offers children an additional choice of reading material with a variety of reading levels and topics. Through instructed and controlled use of the library, learners are encouraged to develop life-long reading habits and skills which will support their own self-development. A school library does not have to be a purpose-built building; it can consist of an adapted classroom or series of boxes containing books kept by different classroom teachers. The main purpose is that learners have access to books and related materials, which will enhance individual reading, advance knowledge and stimulate the imagination (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997). The head teacher must emphasize the need for teachers and learners to make use of the school library or class library as a resource centre. The library offers learners and teachers an additional selection of reading material with different levels of reading materials and topics. To contribute to improved performance, a library should be a centre for active learning to supplement specific subject areas taught in the curriculum, a centre to develop pupils/teachers reading skills etc. For proper use of the library, the head teacher must ensure that learners are trained in the care and use of library books and other reading materials. The school library should be open for use during and after school to encourage reading enjoyment and supplement specific subjects in the curriculum (MOE & HR, 1999).

The head teachers should verify that teachers are preparing and maintaining adequate and accurate records of student progress. This will include the regular and systematic recording of meaningful data regarding student progress or specific concepts and skills related to the standards for each subject for the grade level or course they are teaching. Once learners' success levels have been

identified from the records, the teacher uses the information to plan instruction and any necessary remediation and enrichment. By utilizing on-going information on achievement, teachers can maintain consistent and challenging expectations for all learners.

Where weaknesses in learners' performance in different areas of the curriculum may be identified, the head teachers in collaboration with teachers should set up appropriate remedial programmes rather than intensive coaching or whole class teaching. Remedial teaching should form an integral part of teaching specifically designed to address the needs of individual pupils and should take into consideration lesson presentation, personal capabilities of the pupils, and their individual differences and varying attitudes to work (MOE & HR, 1999). Remedial work is part and parcel of syllabus coverage. It is a continuous process and can come after subtopic, topic or end of syllabus. However, teachers are advised to conduct both short and long-term remedial work. This can be done weekly and monthly on short-term basis to avoid pile up of work. Also this should be done termly, annually, and at the end of syllabus coverage to create a coherent mastery and comprehension of work covered. In remedial work, one assesses how much has been achieved or retained from the work covered. If any anomaly is identified, then the work must be revised. Both the teacher and learner have to look again at the work already covered, diagnose the problem and then find a solution (Otula, 2007).

#### **Importance of Head Teachers' Leadership Styles in Curriculum Implementation**

Fielder (in Hoy & Miskel, 1996) submitted that leadership behaviour denotes the specific acts of a leader in directing and coordinating the work of group members. For instance, the leader can direct, commend, make helpful suggestions and show consideration for the well-being of group members. In contrast, leadership style refers to the underlying need structure of the leader that motivates behaviour in various interpersonal situations. In essence, leadership style is personality characteristics, it does not describe a consistent type of leader behaviour. Yukl (1994) notes that leadership influence the interpretation of events for followers, the choice of objectives for group or organization, the organization of work activities to accomplish objectives, the motivation of followers to achieve the objectives, the maintenance of cooperative relationships and teamwork and enlistment of support and cooperation from people outside the group or organization.

Leading is the influence of people so that they will contribute to organization and group goals; it has to do predominantly with interpersonal aspect of managing. Most important problems to managers

arise from people –their desires and attitudes; their behaviour as individuals and in groups. Hence effective managers need to be effective leaders. There is widespread belief that leadership and management are critical for an organization to flourish. In the school, the tendency is to view leadership and management as the major determining factors essential in improving school management and thus raising educational attainment and standards of education (Wango, 2009). For purposes of this study the conventional leadership styles, namely; Democratic, Autocratic, Laissez-faire and contingency styles were studied. Maicibi (2005) contends that, without a proper leadership style, effective performance cannot be realized in schools if the school has all the required instructional material and financial resources and physical facilities; It will not be able to use the effectively; If the learners are not directed in their use, or if the teachers who guide in their usage are not properly trained to implement effectively.

Researchers have attempted to quantify the leadership process and establish relationships between dimensions of leadership, school climate, teacher effectiveness, and student learning (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Maehr, 1990; Waters *et al.*, 2004). Early research by Brookover (1979), Edmonds (1979), and Rutter *et al.* (1979) have found that correlates of effective schools include strong leadership, a climate of expectation; an orderly but not rigid atmosphere, and effective communication. These researchers suggest that the presence or absence of a strong educational leader; the climate of a school, and the attitudes of the teaching staff can directly influence student achievement. Further, research has related effective school leadership to significant increases in student achievement.

Waters *et al.* (2004) conducted a meta analysis of 70 studies on education leadership and established 21 leadership responsibilities that are significantly related to their levels of student achievement. Blake and Mouton (1985) indicate that leaders who fully understand leadership theory and improve their ability to lead are able to reduce employee frustration and negative attitudes in the work environment. As educational leaders, head teachers can foster an understanding of the school vision, facilitate implementation of the mission, and establish the school climate. Ubben and Hughes (1992) state that head teachers could create a school climate that improves the productivity of both staff and students and that the leadership style of the head teacher can foster or restrict teacher effectiveness.

Hersey and Blanchard (1988) have discussed leadership in relationship to several factors namely; preferred style of leadership; maturity of followers; expectations of followers, and task at hand. They

have developed the well-known situational leadership model that identified four styles of leadership namely; autocratic, democratic, Laissez-faire and contingency styles. These leadership behaviours range from very leader-directed to non-directive approaches. Situational leaders must analyze the various skills, needs, and strengths of the faculty and respond to many situations, and that the appropriate response depends on the situation and circumstances. The effectiveness of a leader's behaviour is expected to increase when there is a match between leadership styles and situations. Leadership effectiveness can be measured by the degree to which the manager meets both the organizational goals and satisfies the employees' needs (Bateman *et al.*, 1993).

An effective head teacher demonstrates professional competence and has wide-ranging and up-to-date knowledge and skills including the ability to initiate, direct, communicate and delegate. Such head teachers demonstrate good relations and work for the development of the school through teamwork (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997). Successful head teachers are expected to develop and use leadership styles, personal qualities, knowledge and skills that will enable them to understand and successfully achieve their effectiveness in curriculum, people and resources management in schools (MOE & HR, 1999).

According to the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2007), pupil enrolment increased by 21.46% between the year 2003 and 2007 in Bomet Sub-County as a result of the introduction of Free Primary Education. Despite the fact that the Government provided teaching and learning materials to public schools, the Sub-County's mean score between the year 2003 and 2007 was 246.94 marks out of a possible 500 marks. This was below average. Therefore, this study sought to determine head teachers' effectiveness in the implementation of curriculum in schools, and to find out if there could be any relationship between head teachers' own leadership styles and school management and their effectiveness in the implementation of curriculum.

The findings of the study are likely to provide useful information on the influence of head teachers' leadership styles and their effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation. The Education Officers can utilize this information to intensify school based in-service trainings at the divisional levels to benefit head teachers on the strengths and limitations of the various leadership styles in school management. Further, the Education Officers, among other stakeholders, may see the need of getting head teachers to undergo in-service training on their roles in managing pupils, staff and curriculum implementation. Effective management of schools leads to improved performance of pupils in their

National examinations. This paper will hopefully contribute to the existing pool of knowledge on public primary school management. It is also hoped that the findings will be used by the government in the formulation of education policies which would focus on effective management of curriculum implementation in primary schools.

#### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Due to the fact that the research study targeted head teachers of public primary schools in Bomet sub-county, generalization of the findings to other counties will only be done with a lot of caution.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The population of the study comprised all head teachers in public primary schools in Bomet Sub-County. The sample size comprised 120 head teachers selected from public primary schools. A proportionate sampling technique was used to select a sample of head teachers in public primary schools in each Education division in the sub-County. Simple random sampling was then used to select the specific number of head teachers from each education division to be included in the sample using random number tables. The head teacher of the school corresponding to the number picked was included in the sample. The head teachers were targeted because of the key roles they play in the management of public primary schools.

The research instruments used included head teachers' questionnaire and interview schedules for Education Officers. The data collected from head teachers was approximately coded, scored and keyed into the computer. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.5 was used to analyse the data. Frequencies and percentages were also used to determine head teachers' effectiveness in school management in performance of their assigned roles in managing curriculum implementation as required by the Ministry of Education. Pearson's product moment correlation co-efficient was used to establish relationship between the head teachers' leadership styles and their effectiveness in curriculum implementation. To make reliable inferences from the data, the correlation was subjected to tests of significance at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

##### **Head Teachers' Leadership Styles and Effectiveness in Managing Curriculum Implementation**

Head teachers' effectiveness was determined by whether or not they had performed their assigned roles in managing curriculum implementation in public primary schools as required by the Ministry of Education. Head teachers were considered effective if they indicated positively that they had performed their assigned roles in managing curriculum

implementation in schools. Table 1 shows head teachers' responses on their effectiveness in performing their assigned roles managing curriculum implementation in public primary schools.

The findings in Table 1 shows that all the head teachers were effective in assessing pupils' achievement and progress in class work. This is because all head teachers (100%) ensured that Continuous Assessment Tests (CATs) were in place at their schools at the end of every month during the school terms. This is in line with the Ministry of Education (MOE & HR, 1999) requirement that CATs be given to pupils because such Continuous Assessment of pupils' achievement and progress will provide important information to the pupils; teachers, parents and education authorities. Such information

will assist in motivating staff to improve their performance and benefit pupil learning achievement and promote discipline among staff and pupils. Nevertheless, in an interview schedule with the District Education Officer (DEO), the study found that though Continuous Assessment Tests were in place in schools, this has not translated to improved performance in KCPE in the Sub-County. This was blamed on lack of adequate teaching staff in public primary schools. Therefore, tests given to pupils may not be standardized and pupil-centred as is required. This will definitely undermine the quality of such tests; and such tests may not provide a means of determining the extent to which understanding and skills have been achieved.

Table 1: Head teachers' Responses on their Assigned Roles in Managing Curriculum Implementation in Public Primary Schools

N=103

Head teachers' Assigned Roles in Managing Curriculum Implementation	Responses			
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Are there any relevant learning/teaching materials?	97	94.2	6	5.8
Is there delegation of duties to other teachers to enhance effective implementation and supervision of curriculum?	94	91.3	9	8.7
Is the subject allocation and time-tabling pupil-centred and NOT teacher-centred?	93	90.3	10	8.7
Do teachers prepare professional teaching documents?	101	98.1	2	1.9
Have gender issues been addressed at the school level?	34	33	69	67
Are Special Education Needs Pupils catered for in the school?	46	44.7	57	45.3
Are there cases of pupils repeating classes?	82	79.6	21	20.4
Does the school participate in co-curricular activities?	101	98.1	2	1.9
Are Continuous Assessment Tests in place at school?	103	100	00	00
Are pupils trained in the care and use of library books and other reading materials?	79	76.7	24	23.3
Are remedial teaching programmes in place for weak learners?	63	61.2	40	38.8
Are there cases of pupils dropping out of school?	66	64.0	37	35.92

Source: Field Data, 2010

Thirty-four head teachers (33%) reported that gender issues in their schools had been addressed. Head teachers are required to encourage enrolment and retention of boys and girls in primary schools, and sensitize the staff and the community on gender issues affected the performance of all pupils. The fact that 33% of the head teachers had addressed gender issues may suggest that most of them were not familiar with issues related to gender and education, especially the government's policies on access, equity, retention and quality education for boys and girls. Therefore, most head teachers were not effective in advising teachers on the choice of teaching and learning materials that are gender friendly, and may be unable to discourage classroom practices that are gender blind and gender biased, as is required of them by the government.

Eighty-two head teachers (79.6%) reported that there were cases of pupils repeating classes in public primary schools. According to the head teachers, the causes of pupils repeating classes included poor

performance in class work and frequent absenteeism. Pupils were frequently sent home to collect levies required to pay teachers on contract employed by PTA. Furthermore, sixty six head teachers (64.08%) reported that there were cases of pupils dropping out of school. This was blamed on poor performance in class work and the inability of parents to pay required school levies. From the foregoing, it is clear that most head teachers were not effective in implementing government policy of achieving 100% enrolment for primary education by year 2010. The government expects head teachers to make deliberate efforts to increase enrolments and set strategies which will enhance retention and minimizing dropout rates (MOE & HR, 1999).

Sixty-three head teachers (61.2%) confirmed that there were remedial teaching programmes in place for weak learners in their schools. This is in line with Otula's (2007) recommendations that remedial teaching should form an integral part of teaching specifically designed to address those needs of

individual pupils and should take into consideration lesson presentations, personal capabilities of the pupils and their individual differences and varying attitudes to work. This can be done weekly, monthly, termly, annually and/or at the end of syllabus coverage comprehension of work covered. Therefore, most head teachers were effective in managing remedial teaching programmes for weak learners.

**CORRELATION RESULTS**

The study sought to determine if there were any significant relationship between head teachers' leadership styles and their effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation in public primary schools. Table 2 shows the output of the Pearson product moment.

Table 2: Correlation between Head teachers' Leadership Styles and their Effectiveness in Managing Curriculum Implementation in Public Primary Schools N=103

Variables	Head teachers effectiveness in curriculum implementation	
Head teachers Leadership styles	pearson correlation coefficient (r)	-0.122
	P value sig 2 sided	0.221
	N	103

Source: Field Data, 2010

Since the *p* value > 0.05 significance level, there was no statistically significant relationship between head teachers' leadership styles and their effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation in public primary schools. This suggests that head teachers are required to use various leadership styles in order to realize their effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation in schools. The Ministry of Education (MOE & HR, 1999) asserts that an effective head teacher will find himself/herself switching instinctively between styles according to people and work they are dealing with. This is because the curriculum of a school includes not just the planned academic programmes but also all co-curricular activities and other events, as well as that which pupils learn through the nature and quality of the school ethos.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the foregoing, it is clear that most head teachers were not effective in implementing government policy of achieving 100% enrolment for primary education by year 2010. The government expects head teachers to make deliberate efforts to increase enrolments and set strategies which will enhance retention and minimizing dropout rates (MOE & HR 1999). In addition, there is no statistically significant relationship between head teachers' leadership styles and their effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation in public primary schools. In order to realize effective management of public primary schools, head teachers are expected to develop and

use the various leadership styles in school management because no one leadership styles is suitable for all situations.

There is need, for the Ministry of Education officers to intensify school based in-service trainings at the Divisional level to benefit the head teachers on the strengths and limitations of the various leadership styles in primary school management. Further, the government should adequately train head teachers on their roles in managing curriculum implementation for effective academic output of public primary schools.

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