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# INFLUENCE OF HEADTEACHER AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN UASIN GISHU COUNTY, KENYA

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**INFLUENCE OF HEADTEACHERS' AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE ON  
IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS  
IN UASIN GISHU COUNTY, KENYA**

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## ABSTRACT

Kenyan schools have been encouraged to the pressure of inclusion to embrace integration of all learners including those with disabilities. The problem is that, despite the adoption of this policy in Kenya (2009), realization of this noble idea remains dismal, with most schools hardly achieving the basic objective of inclusion. Unpublished report from Uasin Gishu County (2015) indicates a low level of implementation of inclusive education primary schools. The role of head teachers in the implementation of inclusive education remains crucial. They are undoubtedly the central person in all the leadership and team work exhibited in any inclusive school. The purpose of this study therefore was to establish the influence of autocratic leadership style on the implementation of inclusive education in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The study was anchored on Lewin's leadership theory. The study adopted Concurrent triangulation design within the mixed method approach. The target population for the study comprised 4909 teachers in public primary schools and 464 senior teachers totaling up to 5373. The sample size comprised 491 teachers stratified sampled, 10 senior teachers systematically randomly sampled and a sample size of 501 was used. Data collection instruments were questionnaires and interview schedules. Content, construct and face validity was ensured by expert judgment. Reliability was ensured by Cronbach Alpha method and reliability coefficients were all above 0.7. Quantitative data was analyzed by descriptive statistics and inferential statistics such as Pearson correlation and liner regression while Qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The results indicated a statistically significant negative correlation between the head teachers' Autocratic leadership style and implementation of inclusive education ( $n=368$ ;  $r = .401$ ;  $p = .001$ ). The study recommended that ministry of education through Quality Assurance and Standards Officers shoulder sensitize teachers on better leadership practices that can encourage implementation of inclusive education.

***Key words; implementation, inclusive, education, autocratic, leadership***

## **1.0: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

A number of researchers agree that inclusive education is both a policy and a philosophy and above all, a practice. Fakolade, (2009) believes that the practice anchors on the notion that every child should be an equally valued member of the school culture. Hooker (2007) view inclusive education in terms of a diversity of needs and believes it is the process of addressing and responding to the diversity of such needs. But according to Windyz (2010), the term inclusion could be well understood if we reflect on its antonym 'exclusion' where questions like who is excluded will be involved. Within Brazilian context, she identifies various social groups that are at risk of exclusion, the poor, those with disabilities, the black child, and children with terminal illness and thus defines inclusion as a process of identification and removal of barriers that prevent any pupil at risk of exclusion from accessing the curriculum content.

The period between 1900 and 1970's has been typically referred to as the "isolation phase". Children with disabilities were segregated from their non-disabled peers for centuries (Barton & Tomlinson, 2007). In today's schools students with disabilities who receive special education services are included in general education classrooms with their developing peers. Special education is not a place but rather a set of instructional services. It is a philosophy of education that integrates children with disabilities into educational settings in which meaningful learning occurs (Osgood, 2005). The guiding principle of inclusive education is that ordinary schools should accommodate all children regardless of physical, social, emotional, mental and other conditions. Vittelo and Mithaug (2003) argued that inclusion fosters institutional strategies to increase the participation and learning of children who are perceived to be vulnerable within existing educational arrangement.

Mc'Crimmon (2014) in Canada established that inclusive education is widely adopted in Canadian education system. However, few Canadian universities still required students in under graduate teacher preparation programs to complete course work on the topic inclusive education to prepare future teachers to work in inclusive classrooms with students with diverse exceptional learning needs. While every single child can have access to education under the current framework in Japan, the law dictates children with disabilities to go to the specified type of school, and does not allow them to choose the ones of their preference (Kaneko, 2010). Enrolment in special schools often limits their opportunities to come into contact with non-disabled children.

South Africa has adopted an inclusive education policy in order to address barriers to learning in the education system. However the implementation of this policy is hampered by the lack of teachers' skills and knowledge in differentiating the curriculum to address a wide range of learning needs (Dalton, Kahonde & Mickenzie 2012). In a report by the Human Network, a consortium of Non-Governmental Organizations working on human rights, it was noted that while Uganda promoted inclusive education, there were no special needs teachers and limited teaching aids which made it impossible for children with disabilities to get quality education (Okwany, 2011). Moreover, Nyende (2012) indicated that accommodation of children with disabilities in the present implementation of UPE programme in Uganda is far from real.

Kenya is a signatory to several international conventions and agreements and has ratified a number of them thus committing herself to the implementation of the recommendations there in (MOE, 2008). Some of these conventions and declarations include convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (2006) and Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All 'EFA' (2000) which was supposed to have been achieved fully by the year 2015 (MOE, 2008). Mwangi & Orodho (2014) in Kenya established that there were inadequate specialized teachers to handle special needs education curriculum. Finally, the study indicated that there were several socio- economic and cultural variables that constraints effective teaching and learning in an inclusive classroom.

Leadership has a direct cause and effect relationship upon organizations' and their success. Leaders determine values culture, change, tolerance and employee's motivation (Giri & Santra, 2010). They shape institutional strategies including their execution and effectiveness. Successful leaders however have one thing in common; they influence those around them in order to reap maximum benefit from the organization's resources (Germano, 2010). Cooke (2012) highlights the relationship between leadership strategies, the impacts leaders have on others and effectiveness in the role. This impact he reiterated has enormous significance in helping understand organizational culture and the role that norms and expectations play in organizational effectiveness. Thus the way in which a head teacher makes decisions, delegates responsibility and interacts with teachers can affect all programs in the entire school (Root, 2015). Schools therefore require leadership just like any other organization.

The national special needs education policy (2009) provided a framework for the planning and implementation of special needs education devoid of all barriers that inhibit access to quality and relevant education. However an unpublished report by Uasin Gishu Curriculum Support Officers in charge of Special Needs Education (2015) indicates that there are quite a number of challenged children who are out of school in Uasin Gishu County and this has derailed the achievement of EFA as enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals that was to be achieved in Kenya by 2015. This indicates that there is low level of implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Uasin Gishu County.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The National Special Needs Education Policy (2009) provided a framework for the planning and implementation of special needs education devoid of all barriers that inhibit access to quality and relevant education. However Uasin Gishu County experiences a problem of low access of children with special needs in regular public primary schools. An unpublished report by Uasin Gishu Curriculum Support Officer in charge of Special Needs Education (CSO, SNE), (2015) indicates that there are quite a number of challenged children who are out of school in Uasin Gishu County and this has derailed the achievement of EFA as enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals that was to be achieved in Kenya by 2015. This indicates that there is low level of implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Uasin Gishu County. It is against this background that the researcher was compelled to investigate the influence of head teachers'

autocratic leadership style on the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Uasin Gishu County.

### **1.3: Theoretical Framework**

The study was anchored on behavioral leadership theory. Proposed by Kurt Lewin and his colleagues in (1939), behavioral leadership theory identified three different styles of leadership, in particular around decision making. Autocratic leadership style, in this style the leader takes decisions without consulting with others. The decision is made without any form of consultation, in Lewins' experiment he found that this caused the most level of discontent. An autocratic style works when there is no need for input on the decision, where the decision would not change as a result of input, and where the motivation of people to carry out subsequent actions would not be affected whether they were or were not involved in the decision making (Lewin, Lippit & White 1939).

Democratic leadership style, here the leader involves the people in decision making, although the process for the final decision may vary from the leader having the final say to them facilitating consensus in the group. Democratic decision making is usually appreciated by the people, especially if they have been used to autocratic decisions with which they disagreed. It can be problematic when there are a wide range of opinions and there are is no clear way of reaching an equitable final decision (Kendra, 2016). Laissez-Faire leadership style, this minimize the leaders involvement in decision making , and hence allowing people to make their own decisions, although they may still be responsible for the outcome. Laissez-faire works best when people are capable and motivated in making their own decisions, and where there is no requirement for a central coordination. (Dixion & Hart, 2010).The theory is appropriate for this study as it captures most of the variables of the study. In Lewin's experiment he discovered the most effective style was democratic. Excessive autocratic styles led to revolution, whilst under Laissez-faire approach, people were not coherent in their work and did not put in the energy that they did when being actively led. (Root, 2015).

As adopted in the study leadership theory view implementation of inclusive education as a process that all teachers must be intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to undertake. In Autocratic leadership style the leader takes decisions without consulting with others. The decision is made without any form of consultation, in Lewins' experiment he found that this caused the most level of discontent. An autocratic style works when there is no need for input on the decision, where the decision would not change as a result of input, and where the motivation of people to carry out subsequent actions would not be affected whether they were or were not involved in the decision making (Lewin, Lippit & White 1939).

### **2.0: Literature Review**

Autocratic leadership style is the kind of leadership where a leader takes decisions without consulting with others (Moberg, 2013). In Canada, Bhatti (2012) investigated the impact of

autocratic and democratic leadership styles on job satisfaction in private and public primary schools. Questionnaires were used as the study instruments with a sample size of 205 teachers. Mean, standard deviation, T-test, ANOVA correlation and regression analysis were employed in data analysis. The study found out that autocratic leadership style has a negative impact on job satisfaction while democratic leadership style has a positive impact on job satisfaction. The above reviewed study only employed questionnaire as data collection instrument hence it left out the rich in depth information got from interviews. The current study bridged this gap by using both questionnaire and interview schedule to collect data thereby adding literature to the existing body of knowledge.

In Pakistan, Natasha (2010) conducted a study to compare between collaborative and authoritarian leadership styles of special administrators. The study indicated that staff members are more likely to become motivated to serve the students which are satisfied with their work environment and relationship with administrators. Results showed that practicing a collaborative leadership style compliment the characteristic needed as a special education supervisor. The above reviewed study only targeted school administrators not teachers who are implementing inclusive education in classroom situation. The current study bridged this gap in literature.

In South Africa, Pontso and Bangani (2016) investigated school district leadership styles and school improvement. Mixed method research was employed and data was collected through the use of questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with school principals. The finding revealed prevalence of more authoritarian top down leadership styles which tend to have negative effects on school improvement. The reviewed study was conducted in secondary schools where students are a bit mature unlike the current study which was conducted in primary schools where learners are predominantly young children.

Educational leaders play important role with the intension to make teaching and learning more effective and to give quality education to all students (Mirkamali, 2011). In Nigeria, a study was conducted by Adeoti (2012) on the influence of principals' leadership styles on students' academic achievement in secondary schools. Descriptive survey design was employed in the study. A simple random sampling technique was used to select twenty secondary schools and fifty school principals from randomly selected schools formed the participants of the study. Data was collected through questionnaires and analyzed using Pearson Chi-square statistical analysis. The findings of the study revealed that autocratic leadership style had a negative influence on students' academic achievement while democratic leadership style however had a positive influence on students' academic achievement. The reviewed study was conducted in secondary schools leaving out primary schools, the current study bridged this gap by conducting a study in primary schools thereby filling gap in literature.

Naidoo & Botha (2012) conducted a study in South Africa to investigate management and leadership in secondary schools. Structured questionnaires were used as the data collection instruments. A total of 84977 educators were the target group for the study while 1500 participants were randomly selected to participate in the study. Data was analyzed by use of Pearson correlation

coefficient and exploratory factor analysis. The study established that the nature of leadership has evolved from the traditional autocratic and bureaucratic styles to the contemporary styles. The study further indicated that transformational leadership is well suited to the challenges of current school restructuring as has the potential for building high levels commitment to the complex and uncertain nature of the school reform agenda. The above reviewed study was conducted in secondary schools in South Africa leaving a gap in in primary schools. The current study bridged this gap by conducting a study among primary school in Kenya thereby adding literature to the existing body of knowledge.

In Uganda Kalule & Bouchamma (2014) conducted a study to investigate teacher supervision practices and characteristics of school supervisors. A quantitative survey on instructional supervision was conducted among in-school supervisors in 45 secondary schools in three rural schools. A total of 106 supervisors responded to the questionnaires. Results indicated that the supervisory practices most used were a differentiated model, a three hundred and sixty degrees supervision model, a supervision phase prior to class observation and a phase following classes' observation as well as directive and collaborative professional development guidelines. The above reviewed study was conducted in Uganda but not in Kenya. The current study bridged this gap thereby filling gap in literature.

Mboya, Were and Otieno (2017) investigated effects of autocratic leadership style on quality assurance in institutions of higher learning in Kenya. The study focused on 19 public chartered universities and 18 private chartered universities. Using stratified sampling 249 leaders were selected to represent the total population. The study adopted a mix method approach of exploratory and descriptive design. Questionnaires were used to gather relevant information from the respondents. Data analysis was done both descriptively and inferentially. The findings revealed a positive correlations between autocratic leadership style and quality assurance in institutions of higher learning. The reviewed study only collected quantitative data hence it lacked the rich in-depth information from qualitative data. The reviewed study was also conducted in institution of higher learning (universities) where students are young adults unlike the current study which was conducted in primary schools where learners are generally young children. The current study bridged these gaps in literature.

Maiyo, Siro & Tecla (2014) investigated management styles and teacher mobility in primary schools. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The study targeted 2149 primary school teachers within the study area. Systematic random sampling was used to draw 196 teaching staff and head teachers from the study population. Data was analyzed using descriptive methods and results presented in tables, pie charts and graphs. The findings revealed that schools still use the traditional authoritarian model of leadership, the school management styles in this case the authoritarian was responsible for teacher transfer request to other schools and also to other jobs. The above reviewed study only employed a descriptive statistics analysis leaving out inferential statistical analysis which could allow generalization of findings. The current study bridged this gap

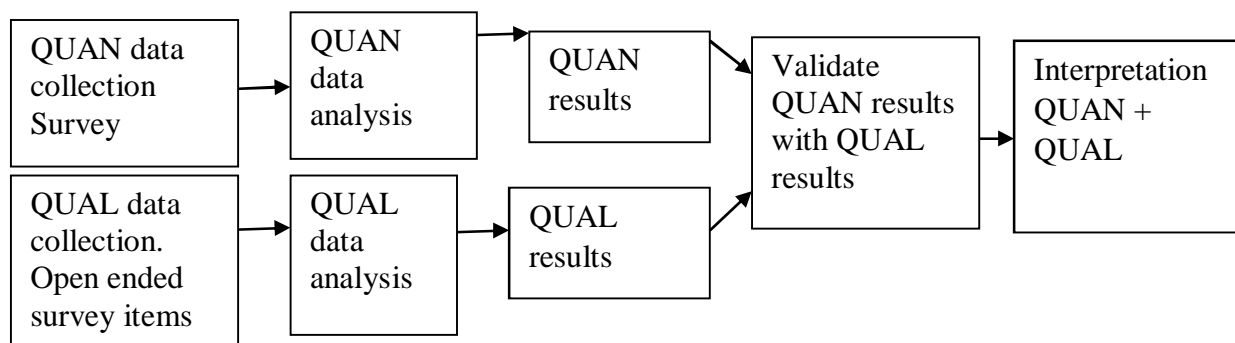


by employing both descriptive statistical and inferential analysis thereby adding literature to the existing body of knowledge.

From the reviewed studies, most of them were carried out in contexts that were different from the primary school level contexts. Moreover, in majority of studies, the approaches used were either qualitative or quantitative. The present study filled in these gaps in literature by focusing on influence of head teachers transformational leadership style and implementation of inclusive education.

### 3.0: Research Methodology

A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure (Kothari, 2011). It is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions. The study adopted concurrent triangulation design within the mixed method approach. The design converges or merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. In this design, the investigator typically collects both forms of data at roughly the same time and then integrates the information in the interpretation of the overall results (Creswell, 2014). Contradictions or incongruent findings are explained or further probed in this design. The purpose of this design is to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic. The intent in using this design is to bring together the differing strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses of quantitative methods with those of qualitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The design was found appropriate for this study because the study directly compared and contrasted quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings. The design is presented in Figure 3.0



**Figure 3.0: Concurrent Triangulation Design: Source; Creswell, 2014)**

### **3.1: Study Participants**

Population means all objects and people who share one or some common quality in a special geographical scale, Cooper and Schindler (2009). It is a complete set of individuals, cases or objects with some common characteristics that differentiate it from other population, while target population is the population to which the researcher wants to generalize the results of the study (Orodho, 2005). The target population for the study was 5373 teachers consisting of 491 primary school teachers and 464 senior teachers in primary schools in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

### **3.2 Research Instruments**

Both Questionnaire and Interviews were used to collect data. A Questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire were administered to the primary school teachers since they are directly involved in the implementation of inclusive education in classroom. Likert's scale was used where the respondents were asked to make a choice based on their opinion whether they Strongly Agreed, Agree, Neutral Disagree or Strongly Disagree based on the question asked. The questionnaires had two parts; the first with closed questions which sought to gather demographic information, and the second with closed questions which sought to establish opinions from respondents and gather more of the quantitative data about the influence of head teachers transformational leadership style on the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools. In addition, semi structured interviews was used to collect qualitative data from some senior teachers. This was because the number that was sampled under this group was manageable. The interview schedule was appropriate for the study as it provided in-depth information and a detailed understanding of the issue under research. The information on the interview schedule was tape recorded for validity purposes. The researcher ensured validity of questionnaires through expert judgment that is with the help of experts from Masinde Muliro University. Moreover, the items in the questionnaire were made clearer and also arranged from simple to complex. In this study Reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha. In the interpretation of the reliability results, the closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0, the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. According to (Oso and Onen, 2014), a questionnaire has good internal consistency if the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of a scale is above 0.6 but not more than .9. All the subscales reached a threshold and were within the range and therefore considered reliable.

### **4.0 Findings**

The study explored the influence of head teachers' autocratic leadership style on the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Uasin Gishu County. The assessment was done using a five point Likert scaled autocratic leadership indicators questionnaire for teachers. The items of the questionnaire rated the indicators of autocratic leadership indicators. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed to test null hypotheses, with the level of the head teacher's autocratic leadership style orientation as the independent variables and

level of inclusive education implementation as dependent variable. Autocratic leadership scale was measured in continuous scale ranging from 1.00 to 2.74, as computed from the teachers' ratings on autocratic leadership orientation. Equally, the level of implementation of inclusive education was measured in continuous scale, in the continuum of 1 to 5. The SPSS output Table 4.0 shows the correlation results.

Table 4.0: *Correlation between the Level of Autocratic Leadership Orientation and the Level of Implementation.*

			Leadership Score	Level of Implementation of Inclusive Education
Autocratic Leadership Score	Pearson Correlation		1	-.401**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.001
	N		62	62
Level of Implementation of Inclusive Education	Pearson Correlation		-.401**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	
	N		62	62

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 4.16 indicates a statistically significant negative correlation between the head teachers' Autocratic leadership style and implementation of inclusive education ( $n=62$ ;  $r = .401$ ;  $p = .001$ ). Therefore, given that the p-value was less than .05, the null hypothesis which stated that "There is no statistically significant relationship between the level of Autocratic leadership style and implementation of inclusive education" was rejected. Hence, it was concluded that there is significant negative correlation between the level of Autocratic leadership style and the level of implementation of inclusive education, with higher level of Autocratic leadership orientation associated with lower level of implementation of inclusive education in primary schools and vice versa. This finding concurs with Naidoo & Botha (2012) in South Africa which established that the nature of leadership has evolved from the traditional autocratic and bureaucratic styles to the contemporary styles.

Finding from qualitative data revealed the same, with most study informants agreeing that autocratic leadership style negatively influence the implementation of inclusive education. One senior teacher reported that;

*"If head teachers can bring everybody on board on issues of inclusive education, then it will work. As things stand now, with his authority alone, the implementation of inclusive education in our schools will still remain a hard nut to chew.....(SNR. TR. 4)*

This means that schools whose head teachers practice higher level of Autocratic leadership are likely to have lower implementation of inclusive education than the schools whose head teachers practice lower Autocratic leadership style, assuming other factors constant. This finding agrees with Wadesango (2012) in Zimbabwe which established that insignificant teacher participation in critical school issues results in low staff morale and this culminate in stressful school governance.

However, to estimate the level of influence of the level of autocratic leadership style on implementation of inclusive education, a coefficient of determination was computed. This was done using of a regression analysis and the results were as shown in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: *Model Summary on Regression Analysis-Level of Autocratic Leadership Style and Implementation of Inclusive Education*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.401 <sup>a</sup>	.161	.147	.40254

a. Predictors: (Constant), Autocratic Leadership Score

The model shows that the Level of Autocratic Leadership Style of the head teacher explain 16.1% ( $R^2=.161$ ) of the variation in the level of implementation of inclusive education. This was a sizeable amount of effect by one predictor on the dependent variable. This finding agrees with Mboya, Were and Otieno (2017) in Kenya whose study revealed a positive correlations between autocratic leadership style and quality assurance in institutions of higher learning

## 5.0: Conclusion and Recommendation

The study explored the influence of head teachers' autocratic leadership style on the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Uasin Gishu County Kenya. The study concluded that although autocratic tendencies among the head teachers in Uasin Gishu County varied, it was largely to a moderate extent. This means that head teachers have overwhelming control on all decision regarding the implementation of inclusive education and hence allows no input from teachers. Hence autocratic leadership style does not encourage the implementation of inclusive education. This finding was also confirmed by correlation results which indicated a statistically significant negative correlation between the head teachers' Autocratic leadership style and implementation of inclusive education. Based on these findings the study recommended that; The teachers service commission human resource department should sensitize head teachers on better leadership practices for primary schools so that the head teachers can practice leadership styles that encourages the implementation of inclusive education. The ministry of education should consider re-training head teachers who practice autocratic leadership style so that they can acquire better management practices that promote the implementation of inclusive education.

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