

**THE ROLE OF HEAD TEACHERS IN IMPROVING ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BARINGO
NORTH SUB COUNTY, BARINGO COUNTY, KENYA**

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**A Thesis Submitted in the School of Education and Social Sciences in
Partial Fulfillment for the Conferment of Degree of Master of Education
in Leadership and Education Management of Kenya Methodist
University**



AUGUST, 2018

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2018

ABSTRACT

Since the introduction of Free Primary Education in 2003, academic performances in secondary schools in Kenya have seriously been compromised owing to the mass transition of learners from primary schools. Several factors are noted to contribute to such poor results, including resource allocation and school management practices. This study examined the contribution of head teachers in improving academic performance in secondary schools in Baringo North sub-county. The objectives of the study were: to determine the strategies put in place by head teachers towards student academic achievement, to determine the head teachers' preparedness in improving academic performance and to examine the challenges faced by head teachers. The study was guided by Lezotte's effective schools model in exploring key phenomena. Due to the nature of this study, descriptive survey research design was utilized. Units of analysis were all public secondary schools in Baringo North sub-county. The respondents included; District Quality Assurance Officer, head teachers, teachers of the particular schools, PTA members. The sample was identified through census on public secondary schools in Baringo North sub-county while purposive sampling technique was used on individual teachers and in getting District Quality Assurance Officer. The study used questionnaires to collect data which were administered to 150 respondents in 30 schools within the area. In addition, interviews were conducted on representatives of parents' association. The overall response rate was 67 percent. Content and face validity were ensured while reliability of research instruments was determined using Crochbach alpha. Quantitative data was analyzed using IBM SPSS version 20 to while thematic analysis was used on qualitative data. The results were then presented using frequency tables, charts and narratives accompanied by appropriate interpretations. The study found that majority of head teachers had attained the minimum professional requirements but did not have additional courses to enhance their service delivery as figurehead. In most public secondary schools in Baringo North sub-county, besides normal routine, fewer strategies had been put in place to ensure improved academic performance. It emerged that principals were faced with various challenges including financial constraints and interferences from the community. The study concluded that the head teachers played a significant role in improving academic performance. It recommended that head teachers should commit themselves to formulating and implementing deliberate strategies geared towards improving academic performance. Measures should be put in place to ensure that they are skillfully prepared to undertake administrative tasks before appointment to the position. Policy review is needed to accord head teachers the autonomy and the support for effective performance of their duty as academic leaders in their schools. However, measures such as auditing should be strengthened to ensure accountability. The findings of this study have enormous implications on administrative practices and policies that are geared towards improving academic performance in public secondary schools in Kenya.