Title: **Challenges faced by Academic Heads of Department in the management of public secondary schools in Ndia Division, Kirinyaga District, Central Province**

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Abstract: An organization is an integrated system of independent structures and functions. It is constituted of groups and a group consists of persons who must work in harmony. Organizations can only achieve their goals and objectives by coordinated efforts of their members and it is the task of management to get their work done through other people. In tire late 1980s, the government of Kenya, through the Ministry of Education, saw the need to introduce the Heads of Department to assist in the management of public secondary schools. Heads of Department are senior teachers who are appointed to carry out specific functions in a certain unit/department within a public secondary school. The unit can be related to a subject or a set of "common" subjects, games and sports, boarding, guidance and counseling. Heads of department can be all important link between the teachers and the top level managers in a school. These middle-level managers are important in areas of curriculum and instruction. In some public secondary schools, their presence can be very fruitful, while in other schools, the head of department can be a challenge rather than a benefit. This project focused on two main objectives; determining roles faced by academic HODs and the challenges' that they encounter in discharging the roles. Boge (2008) study oil challenges faced by HODS in Shinyalu division reviewed that the main challenges in managing departmental staffs included; lack of recognition by TSC for those HODs appointed internally by BOGs. (Boge: 54) Labrecque (2007) research shows that assuring the mantle of leadership and challenging department members to move ahead or wrestle with difficult issues does not seem to be a natural step (Labrecque: 43). The research used the path goal theory and it also has a conceptual framework with challenges faced by academic MOD's forming the core. In relation to research methodology the population of this study consisted of 120 academic HODs In 24 schools. Purposive sampling was used to arrive at the sample size. The sample size was 80 academic HODs from 16 schools. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. This involved using the descriptive survey design which meant data were collected from the sample of respondents chosen to represent HODs. A HOD questionnaire was the main instrument of collecting data. The researcher was able to collect data from 71 academic HODs. On research findings, it was established that most academic HODs do not carry out their management roles. Those who were actively carrying out their management roles had a mean score of 24.9 out of 71 academic HODs while those who were not actively carrying out their management roles had a mean score of 40.1 out of 71 academic HODs. The HODs were most active in instructional leadership (16 percent), maintaining records (15 percent) and forecasting (14 percent). They were most inactive in planning (12 percent), supervision (13 percent) and innovations (14 percent). On challenges, Mathematics HODs had the highest scores (51 percent) and they were also having the highest scores (69 percent) on managerial ineffectiveness. Challenges like lack of facilities low motivation and role strain were established to have a negative influence on the managerial effectiveness of an academic HOD. On recommendations, the yearly (Heads of Public Secondary Schools Association Magazine (Principal's 2008) suggests that the education act should be overhauled. I believe that this can go along

way in creating a legal framework for HODS. Early and Fretcher (1989) agree that shortage of time is a major challenge for academic HODs and this can be rectified by reducing some of their responsibilities. The government of Kenya can also make more effort of bringing more funds to public second dry school to cater lot facilities. The education magazine Elimu News (2009) acknowledges that we need to establish internal quality mechanisms in our education institutions and this can be done by intensifying training. In relation to the path goal theory of leadership by House (1970), supportive leadership styles are the best for academic HODs, future prospects of HODs should be broadened, co-ordinators of HODs should be employed, proper budgeting in relation to departments done and a proper legal framework showing job descriptions of HODs should be laid out. In conclusion it is important for top level managers to recognize the roles played by the middle-level managers (in this case academic HODs). This is because most organization are today placing greater emphasis on team work and co-ordinated efforts of its workforce. This is the case which is likely to be emphasized more in the future by successful institutions. This is the first research in Kenya that specifically targets academic HODs. A variety of questions for interested scholars abound for farther research it) this area, such as a comparison between academic HODs in private secondary schools and academic HODS in public secondary schools.