

PRINCIPALS' MANAGEMENT OF TEACHERS MOTIVATION AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KITUI WEST SUB-COUNTY

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Abstract: This study sought to investigate the influence of principals' practices in motivating teachers on students' academic performance in public day secondary schools in Kitui West Sub-County. The study objective sought to determine the influence of principals' teacher motivation practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kitui west sub county, Kitui county Kenya. The study was based on Job Demands–Resources theory and used descriptive survey research design. The target population for the study comprised of all the 26 secondary school principals and 249 teachers in public secondary schools in Kitui west sub county. Census sampling was used to select 26 principals. Systematic sampling was used to select a sample of 38 teachers. Data was collected by use of questionnaires. A test re test technique was used to establish instrument reliability. Both qualitative and quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The results of quantitative data were presented using frequency distribution and cross-tabulation tables. Qualitative data was organized in themes based on the research objectives and presented in a narrative form. It was also revealed that on average, majority 95.6% of the principals and 77.06% of the teachers respectively were in agreement with the statement that Principals motivation management practices influences students' academic performance. The study recommends enhanced awareness creation among stakeholders on the importance of teacher motivation and their involvement in decision-making as well as ensuring full support for school programs by the school administration.

Keywords: Teacher motivation, principals' motivation practices, academic performance, culture of motivation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of school leadership, particularly that of principals, is crucial in shaping the educational environment and influencing the performance of both teachers and students. Recent studies have highlighted that effective school leadership is associated with improved teacher morale, greater job satisfaction, and enhanced instructional quality (Klar & Brewer, 2013). When principals employ motivational strategies, such as providing professional development opportunities, recognizing and rewarding teachers' efforts, and fostering a supportive school culture, they can create an environment conducive to high academic performance (Louis et al., 2016).

According to recent studies, motivated teachers are more likely to employ effective teaching strategies, engage students actively and commit to continuous improvement, all of which contribute to better student outcomes (Lavigne &

Chamberlain, 2017; Sezer, 2018). Thus, understanding the specific practices employed by principals in Kitui west sub County to motivate their teachers is essential for identifying best practices and areas for improvement.

Globally, in countries like Finland, which is known for its high-performing education system, principals prioritize teacher training and professional development. This approach not only keeps teachers updated with the latest pedagogical strategies but also empowers them to take on leadership roles within the school (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In Singapore, principals implement robust reward systems that acknowledge teachers' hard work and accomplishments. This recognition can come in various forms, such as awards, public acknowledgment, or opportunities for career advancement. Such practices boost teacher morale and motivate them to excel in their teaching practices, ultimately leading to improved student performance (Ng, 2017).

Effective principals in the United States often engage teachers in the decision-making process. This fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility. As such, this is a collaborative approach which helps in building a strong school community where teachers feel valued and motivated to contribute to the school's success. Research has shown that schools with collaborative leadership tend to have higher student achievement levels (Leithwood & Azah, 2016).

Creating a positive school culture is essential for motivating teachers. Principals in Canada focus on building a supportive and inclusive school environment. They emphasize the importance of relationships, trust, and respect among all school members. A positive school culture encourages teachers to take risks, innovate in their teaching methods, and engage more deeply with their students, leading to better academic outcomes (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015).

Regionally, principals' motivational practices in Nigeria include recognizing and rewarding teachers' efforts and achievements. Recognition can come in the form of awards, certificates, and public acknowledgment, which significantly boost teachers' morale and encourages them to excel in their duties (Adeniji & Adekunjo, 2010). Additionally, Principals in South Africa engage in transformational leadership, which includes inspiring and motivating teachers through a shared vision and goals. This leadership style fosters a sense of purpose and commitment among teachers, leading to higher levels of motivation and better student outcomes (Mestry & Singh, 2007). Additionally, principals who provide support and professional development opportunities help teachers enhance their instructional practices, which positively impacts on student achievement (Naicker & Mestry, 2011).

In Ghana, principals' leadership practices focus on creating a positive school climate and providing professional development. A positive school climate, characterized by trust, respect, and open communication, has been shown to enhance teacher motivation and job satisfaction (Sarpong, 2016). Furthermore, professional development initiatives, such as workshops and training programs, help teachers improve their skills and stay motivated, ultimately benefiting student performance (Osei, 2011).

The role of school principals in Kenya is pivotal in shaping the educational environment and influencing the performance of both teachers and students. Participatory decision-making is one of the key motivational practice among Kenyan principals. Principals' Involvement of teachers in the decision-making process fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among staff. This inclusive approach enhances teacher morale and encourages a collaborative school culture, which positively impacts student performance (Waweru & Orodho, 2014). Teachers who feel valued and included are more likely to be committed to their work and motivated to implement effective teaching strategies.

Similarly, recognition and reward systems are critical in motivating teachers in Kenyan schools. Principals who acknowledge and reward teachers' efforts and achievements create a positive and motivating work environment. This can be in the form of formal awards, public recognition, or opportunities for career advancement. Such practices have been shown to boost teacher morale and motivation, ultimately enhancing their performance and benefiting students' academic achievement (Simatwa, 2011). In the context of public day secondary schools in Kitui West Sub-County, the practices adopted by principals can significantly impact teachers' motivation, which in turn affects students' academic outcomes. Therefore, this study was conducted in order to fill a research gap on principals' management practices of teacher motivation and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kitui west sub county Kenya.

1.1. Statement of the problem

The academic performance of students in public day secondary schools in Kitui West Sub-County has been a growing concern, with numerous factors influencing the quality of education. Among these factors, is the role of school principals in motivating teachers which emerges as a critical area of interest. Effective motivational practices by principals can significantly impact teachers' job satisfaction, instructional quality, and commitment, which in turn affects students'

academic outcomes. Despite the recognized importance of school leadership in educational success, there is limited empirical research specifically addressing how principals' motivational practices influence teachers and, subsequently, students' academic performance in this region. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the specific motivational practices employed by principals in Kitui West Sub-County, assess their effectiveness in enhancing teacher motivation and analyze the resultant impact on students' academic performance. This study was conducted to fill a gap in existing literature and to provide insights that can inform policy and practice for improving educational outcomes in public day secondary schools in the region.

1.2 Study objective

This study sought to determine the influence of principals' teacher motivation practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kitui west sub county, Kitui county Kenya.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teacher Motivation management practices and students' academic performance

Work environment in terms of management of teacher motivation can influence students' academic performance. If school principals promote a culture of motivation and support among teachers, schools can establish an environment that empowers students to excel academically and achieve their fullest potential. Erroll (2018) conducted a quantitative study to investigate how teacher motivation affects academic performance amongst African American male pupils at an urban middle school in Northeast North Carolina. A sample group of fifty seventh- and eighth-grade students, as well as eight teachers who included 4 science and four math teachers, both male and female completed the Teacher Efficacy Scale. The study found no significant association between teacher motivation and academic achievement among African American male students.

Mohamed (2020) conducted a study in Somalia to investigate the effect of teacher motivation on performance in private secondary schools located in Hodan district, Mogadishu. The study found that rewards and recognition had a significant effect on school performance with a p-value of 0.003 which indicated a positive correlation between rewards and recognition and school performance. In addition, the study established that workplace conditions influenced school performance with p value of 0.002, that is below 0.05 which shows that there is a positive relationship between working conditions and school performance.

A study by Wambugu (2018) was done to investigate the impact of motivation of teachers on (KCSE) Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination performance of students in Kinangop Sub County, Nyandarua County, Kenya. The study was anchored on the Herzberg's two factor theory and Maslow's theory of motivation. A triangulation design which simultaneously incorporated both quantitative and qualitative analyses was used. The study had 338 respondents. The target population consisted of 28 headteachers and 310 teachers. Interview guides and questionnaires were utilized to collect data. The study indicated that certain dimensions of teacher motivation, including empowerment, appreciation, collaboration, and self-efficacy, are associated with increased teaching quality and learning outcomes, which in turn leads to higher student performance on the KCSE. It was discovered that empowered teachers result in good changes, as they achieve competency in the curriculum and develop new talents. According to the study, rewarding and incentivizing instructors for their performance improves their devotion to work and student involvement, which leads to improved academic performance. Subsequently it was discovered that only a small percentage of teachers participate in collaborative lesson planning.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design that was used in this study is descriptive survey research design. A research design according to Kombo and Tromp (2013) is the structure of the research. The design was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) stated that a descriptive survey research design enables the researcher to collect information and report without controlling the variables. Descriptive survey research design is suitable for this study since it enhanced the collection of data on principals' motivation management practices of teachers and students' academic performance without manipulating the variables.

The target population for this study consisted of 26 principals and 249 teachers. Kothari (2011) noted that target population is the entire group of individuals to which a researcher is interested in generalizing the conclusions. According to Kitui County Education Office (2023) there are 26 Public day secondary schools consisting of 26 principals and 249 teachers. A

sample of 26 principals and 38 teachers was selected from using census and systematic sampling procedure. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2019) in systematic sampling, every kth case in the population frame is selected for inclusion in the sample. To obtain a true random sample, using systematic random sampling technique, all the members in the sampling frame must be randomized.

This study used a questionnaire as a data collection tool. According to Orodho (2005) a questionnaire could help collect immense information within a short time. Validity of research instruments was done by use of face and content validity. According to Johnson (2013) validity refers to the extent to which a tool appears to measure what it is intended to measure. Face validity was enhanced through expert judgment. According to Abidemi (2016) expert judgment is a method of making decisions that depends on knowledge from authorities within a specific branch of knowledge. Thus, expert judgment in this study was done by university supervisors who gave opinions on adjustments to be input in the study. Validity was enhanced further by a pilot study. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) stated that a pilot test is a technique applied in testing the research instruments prior to carrying out the research. The questionnaires were admitted to 3 principals and 4 teachers who did not participate in the main study.

Instrument reliability was determined by a test re test technique. A measuring instrument is reliable if it provides consistent results (Kothari, 2011). Once data was collected, it was sorted, cleaned, coded and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively using descriptive statistics with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (Version 25), a computer software package version 25. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) states that data analysis is the process of bringing meaning to the collected raw data. Quantitative data was analyzed and presented using frequency distribution tables and cross tabulation tables. Analysis of qualitative data was done by organizing it into themes based on the research objectives and presented in a narrative form.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Principals’ motivations management practices and students’ academic performance

The second objective in this study sought to determine the influence of principals’ teacher motivation management practices on students’ academic performance. The principals and teachers were asked to tick the Likert scale figure which best described the extent to which principals’ management of teacher motivation influenced students’ academic performance. The findings are as indicated in tables 4.1 and 4.2 respectively.

Table 4.1: Principals response on teacher motivation management practices and students’ academic performance

Statement	S	D	N	A	SA	total
	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	
Principals teacher motivation like offering constructive feed back influences academic performance	0 0	0 0	1 4.3	10 43.5	12 52.2	23 100
Teacher motivation in form of recommendation letters and praises influences students academic performance	0 0	0 0	1 4.3	9 39.1	13 56.5	23 100
Provision of various form of support among teachers can positively influence students academic performance	0 0	1 4.3	0 0	9 39.1	13 56.5	23 100

The outcomes in table 4.1 found that 43.5 % and 52.2% of the principals agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that Principals’ teacher motivation practices like offering constructive feedback influences academic performance. However, 4.3% of the principals were neutral. The study also established that 39.1 % and 56.5 % of the principals agreed and disagreed irrespectively with the statement that Teacher motivation in form of recommendation letters and praises influences students’ academic performance while 4.3 % of the principals were neutral. The study in addition revealed that 39.1 % and 56.5% of the principals agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that Provision of various form of support among teachers can positively influence students’ academic performance. Only 4.3% of the principals disagreed with the statement.

When the teachers were asked to specify how they best described the extent to which principals’ management of teacher motivation practices influenced students’ academic performance, the findings from teachers are as indicated in table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Teachers response on principals’ teacher motivation management practices and students’ academic performance

Statement	S	D	U	A	SA	Total
	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %
Principals teacher motivation practices influences academic performance	0	0	0	18 47.4	20 52.6	38 100
Teachers are motivated in form of recommendation letters	2 5.3	7 18.4	3 7.9	13 34.2	13 34.2	38 100
Teachers appreciation in form of praises influences students academic performance	3 7.9	8 21.1	3 7.9	9 23.7	15 39.5	38 100

The study in table 4.2 found that 47.4% and 52.6% of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement that Principals teacher motivation practices influences academic performance. The study also found that 34.2% and 34.2% of the teachers respectively agree and strongly agreed with the statement that Teachers are motivated in form of recommendation letters. However, 5.3% and 18.4% of the teachers disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively with the statement that Teachers are motivated in form of recommendation letters. The study also found that 39.5 % and 23.7% of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement that teachers’ appreciation in form of praises influences student academic performance. However, 7.9% and 21.1% of the teachers disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively with the statement.

4.2 Other motivation practices believed to have had an effect on students academic performance

Principals and teachers were asked to respond with either a "Yes" or "No" answer on whether there were other motivation practices that were believed to influence students' academic performance in their schools. The results are presented in Tables 4.3 and 4.4, respectively.

Table 4.3: Principals response on other motivation practices considered to have had an effect on students’ academic performance

Statement	Frequency	%
Yes	17	73.9
No	3	13.0
No response	3	13.0
Total	23	100

The study in table 4.3 indicated that majority 73.9% of the principals gave a Yes response when asked to give a Yes or No response concerning other motivation practices which were considered to have had an effect on students’ academic performance. However, 13.0% of the principals gave a No answer while 13.0 % of the principals gave no response.

The responses from the teachers on other motivation practices which were considered to have had an effect on students’ academic performance are as indicated in table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Teachers response on other motivation practices that had an effect on students’ academic performance

Statement	Frequency	%
Yes	33	86.8
No	5	13.2
Total	38	100

The study in table 4.4 found that 86.8% of the teachers gave a Yes response when asked to respond on whether there were other motivation practices that had an effect on students’ academic performance whereas 13.2% of the teachers gave a No response.

4.3. Details of other motivation practices considered to have an effect on students academic performance

The principals and teachers were asked to give more details on other motivation practices which were considered to have an effect on students’ academic performance. The responses for the Principals from the open-ended items for those principals who gave a Yes answer revealed that ; they gave cash prizes for recognition of good academic performance ; they

took teachers for retreats; supporting the teachers through provision of learning resources personnel in form of recruitment of Board of management teachers (BoM) and provision of teaching facilities; career guidance and rewarding the performing leavers; taking teachers for trips; offering free tea and lunch; giving certificates to those who do well; giving special responsibilities as a sign of recognition; having education days or prize giving days; invitation of motivational speakers; promotion of well performing teachers on grade or rank to motivate them to continue working hard; giving social or financial support to teachers where possible.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study sought to establish the influence of principals' teacher motivation management practices on students' academic performance. The findings in Table 4.1 on Principals' response on teacher motivation management practices and students' academic performance found that 43.5% and 52.2% of the principals agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that Principals' teacher motivation practices like offering constructive feedback influence academic performance. However, 4.3% of the principals were neutral. The study also established that 39.1% and 56.5% of the principals agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement that Teacher motivation in form of recommendation letters and praises influences students' academic performance while 4.3% of the principals were neutral. The study also found that 39.1% and 56.5% of the principals agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that Provision of various forms of support among teachers can positively influence students' academic performance. Only 4.3% of the principals disagreed with the statement. On average, a majority of 95.6% of the principals were in agreement with the statement that Principals' motivation management practice influences students' academic performance.

The findings from teachers on the influence of Principals' teacher motivation management practices on students' academic performance also concurred with the results of the principals. The teachers supported the results of the principals in that in table 4.12 it was found that 47.4% and 52.6% of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement that Principals' teacher motivation practices influence academic performance. This translated to 100% of the teachers who agree with the statement. The study also found that 34.2% and 34.2% of the teachers respectively agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that Teachers' motivation in form of recommendation letters influences students' academic performance. This also translates to 68.4% of the majority of teachers who supported the statement. However, 5.3% and 18.4% of the teachers disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively with the statement that Teachers are motivated in form of recommendation letters. The study also found that 39.5% and 23.7% of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement that teacher motivation in form of praises influences students' academic performance. However, 7.9% and 21.1% of the teachers disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively with the statement. This means that an average majority of 77.06% of the teachers were in agreement with the statement.

However, 5.3% and 18.4% of the teachers disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively with the statement that Teachers are motivated in form of recommendation letters. The study also found that 39.5% and 23.7% of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement that teacher motivation in form of praises influences students' academic performance. However, 7.9% and 21.1% of the teachers disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively with the statement. This means that an average majority of 77.06% of the teachers were in agreement with the statement.

The principals and teachers were asked to give details of other motivation practices which were considered to have had an effect on students' academic performance. The principals who gave a Yes response revealed that; they gave cash prizes for recognition of good academic performance; they took teachers for retreats; they supported teachers through the provision of learning resources; they appreciated any performed task; provision of enough resources personnel in form of recruitment of Board of Management (BoM) and provision of teaching facilities; career guidance and rewarding the performing leavers; taking teachers for trips; offering free tea and lunch; giving certificates to those who do well; giving special responsibilities as a sign of recognition; having motivational speakers; giving social or financial support to teachers where possible. These findings concur with Wambugu (2018) who investigated the influence of teachers' motivation on students' performance in KCSE in Kinago Sub County, Nyandarua County, Kenya. From the study outcomes it was evidenced that there were a number of elements of motivation of teachers including collaboration, appreciation, empowerment and self-efficacy which translates to enhanced learning and teaching. This, in turn, leads to improved students' performance in the KCSE.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Principals' teacher motivation practices like offering constructive feedback; recommendation letters and praises Provision of various forms of support among teachers can positively influence students' academic performance. It was also found that there were other teacher motivation practices which were considered to have an effect on students' academic performance.

Recommendations of the study

The study recommends sensitization of all stakeholders on the importance of teacher motivation and involvement of all stakeholders in making decisions on handling motivation and that school principals to fully support school programmes.

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