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Influence of Teachers' Professional Development on Performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Public Secondary Schools in Nyandarua County, Kenya

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Abstract:

Gaps in teacher's professional development is a worldwide problem. Professional development covers a wide range of activities, including, conferences training courses, tertiary study, study groups and observed practices. This implies that not all professional developments take place in a course. Shallow coverage of INSET teacher professional development content is a major challenge facing in-service education programs, particularly those that use the cascade model. When teachers achieve deeper knowledge of the content of various subjects, this does not only improve their confidence in teaching but also ensures students get quality knowledge that translates to improved performance in KCSE. The aim of this study was to examine the effect of teacher professional development on academic performance of public secondary schools in Nyandarua County in Kenya. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was anchored on Leadership Practices and Classroom Instruction Theory. Questionnaires were used to collect data from principals, teachers, and students. The study targeted all public secondary schools in Nyandarua County. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select individual respondents. The study sample was a total of 384 principals, teachers, and students, equally drawn from the 167 public secondary schools in the county. Descriptive analysis was used in conducting data analysis. This study found that there exists an association between the academic performance of a school and teachers' professional development.

Keywords: Strategic leadership, motivation, performance

1. Introduction

Sustainable instructional leadership concept takes in to account of needs in the school that retains institutional strengths and long-term goals even if the principal departs. Devoid of effective planning for subsequent school leadership, the school is prone to losing tough-earned improvement in every leadership transition. School leaders, who are effective, do invest in planning for succession by taking time in grooming replacements through encouragement of career development among prospective teachers and distributing leadership responsibilities among the teaching staff. Moreover, efforts of retaining principals who are effective is integral in sustaining school improvements (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006).

Principals who practice instructional leadership are characterized by participating in professional development that is designed to bolster performance outcomes (Berube *et al*, 2010). Moreover, in order to address specific responsibilities and roles professional development is the only solution for principals (King, 2011). Teachers professional development can take place in varied scenarios. Numerous academic experts are of the opinion that principals may not have enough professional development that relates to school leadership.

Activities concerning teaching staff professional development have an improved chance of success where the status leader enters fully into the situation as a learner and not just as an observer. When the leader merely tolerates a staff development activity or sets it in motion and then remains aloof from it, subordinates note lack of spirit and little is gained (Finch & Mc Gough, 2009). This study investigates the significance of teacher professional development for example through group discussions, seminars and workshops. The principals too should access professional development at their level because they are also allocated subjects in selected classes. This will contribute to a symmetric performance in KCSE because all the teaching staff has access to professional development equally.

This implies that INSET focus should emphasize on achieving certain learning outcomes rather than ensuring class attendance. The aforementioned proposals will ensure improved academic performance as it will guarantee expertise in teaching practice as well as scholarly excellence among teacher educators. Specifically, this will enable teacher educators to be consistent in their respective fields of specialization that is academic productive as well as being consistent with the curriculum.

2. Leadership Practices and Classroom Instruction Theory

In responding to accountability policy push, numerous recommendations and theories have been postulated to bolster instructional and/or leadership practices. One of the theories that anchor this study is Reeves' (2004) Theory of Leader Practices and Classroom Instruction. The theory is a development of Marzano's (2003) works concerning accountability that is student centered and school effectiveness.

One aspect, Reeves posits that student-centered accountability system strongly depends on leadership supervision. In the present study, the proposed supervision encompasses principals strategically examines teacher's leadership practice as well as supervision in connection to students' KCSE academic achievements. According to Reeves (2004) the second central aspect concerning student centered accountability, is that the teaching staff must commit to a comprehensive implementation of curriculum and particularly in the basic subjects such as math, reading and writing. The education leaders need to examine whether a country's instructional materials centered to student achievements correlate with KCSE performance as part of their supervision practice.

It is the researcher's opinion that according to the student-centered accountability model, educational leaders need to establish whether grade-level curriculum can be mastered by students. This will be supported by using headings in the curriculum, otherwise support should be provided to students and teachers as required in goal accomplishment. Marzano (2003) argues that perspective of Reeves' (2004) theory suggests that through student centered accountability improved success can be achieved especially when the educators employ best practices through psychological congruence with the curriculum. This is facilitated by involving teachers in professional development planning and strong development planning.

Reeves (2004) averred that leaders must be versed with adequate knowledge pertaining to curriculum assessment and instructions. For instance, educational leaders should prioritize instructional practices as well as student achievement in their faculty meeting. Moreover, parents' contacts should be initiated in the light of academic achievement. Reeves' (2004) theory is applied in this study to assess how teachers prepare psychologically and technically. This enhances the quality of knowledge transfer to the students. In addition, this theory ensures that teachers are accountable in complying with course content in their lesson's preparation. This makes it possible for the students to cover the requisite syllabus for the KCSE. The principals therefore must give leadership and direction for these to be achieved.

3. Literature Review

According to Mehrotra (2005) professional development encompasses varied range of activities that encompass tertiary study, conferences, study groups as well as training courses. This implies in a course not all professional development does take place. According to (Morki, 2012), observing colleagues having opportunity to meet peers and reading of relevant literature forms the foundation of professional development. Improved standardized educational improvement is dependent on the knowledge depth in respective subjects and effective pedagogy in a subject. School districts are therefore responsible for establishment of spearheading programs on professional developments that supports improvement of teacher's preparedness sponsored by federal funding. When teachers achieve deeper knowledge of the content of various subjects this does not only improve their confidence in teaching but ensures students get quality knowledge that translates to improved performance in KCSE.

Another sporadic challenge that is faced by teachers is de-contextualization. According to Jones (2013), de-contextualization is the provision of professional development in school when students are present of professional development away from workplace. The whole concept encompasses improving teachers' effectiveness in classrooms, teachers' preparation as well as ongoing teachers' professional development (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2009). The leader comes in to strategically examine their leadership practices and supervision to relate those practices to student achievement in national examinations.

Killion (2012) notes educators work can only be made effective by efficient through professional development. In Kenya, learning has taken precedence over teaching, specifically towards knowledge and skills learners ought to develop as opposed to skills and knowledge teachers must teach (Levine, 2006). According to Hurd (2007) the transition from learning paradigm to instruction paradigm according to (Barr and Tagg, 1995) may only be of success when educators actively engage in professional development formally, reinforced by institutions reward. Instructional leaders in a school are the principals who are mandated to execute professional development for their respective teaching staff and subsequently support its outcomes (Berube *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, principals depend on the professional development outcomes in order to address their responsibilities and roles (King, 2011). In separate avenues professional development can occur. However, many educational experts argue that principals are devoid of enough professional development access relating to their roles in schools as leaders.

Activities concerning teaching staff professional development have an improved chance of success where the status leader enters fully into the situation as a learner and not just as an observer. When the leader merely tolerates a staff development activity or sets it in motion and then remains aloof from it, subordinates note lack of spirit and little is gained (Finch & Mc Gough, 2009). This study investigated the role of the principals in initiating and encouraging teacher

professional development. The role of the principals includes paying subscription fees for the teachers and ensuring that the teachers attend the trainings and benefit from them. Proactive principals go further to enroll themselves for the same courses as a means of motivating the teachers to also see the need to be part of the whole process.

According to Hargreaves and Goodson (2005) educational programmes whereby teachers provide mutual assistance and share with each other are can promote accomplishment of prime objectives as compared to those programmes which do not separate teachers work. In service programmes are more likely to benefit teachers because they are able to select activities and goals for themselves rather than preplanned activities and goals. Therefore, there is urgent need for secondary all school's leadership, to facilitate an environment that is enabling that fast tracks training needs, participation of teachers in staff professional development programmes and implementation of the knowledge learnt.

In a study in USA, Squire-Kelly (2012) examined association between students' academic achievement and teacher's empowerment. In order to establish the existing relationship, a Person Correlation was computed by comparing student academic achievement and six sub scales. The findings revealed that there is a slight association between students' achievement and one of the six sub scales, more over no correlation between student achievement and teachers' empowerment was established. It is the main objective of the present study was to explain the association between teacher professional empowerment and student performance in national examinations in Kenya.

Professional development of teachers is determined by principals who decides on who is in the front and back banner. If teacher's professional development is not prioritized as front banner by the principal then it might not take place. Principals must therefore be in the front line in advocating for teacher's professional development. It is not just giving permissions, this not enough. Principals must be able to provide training time as well as participate so that teachers become knowledgeable as they are (Berube *et al*, 2010). Finch and Mc Gough (2009) sum up that the success of any staff development program is in many respects, a function of leader's involvement in its design, development and execution. To manage a professional staff development effectively, the head teacher must take an active role in its operation. This study therefore sets out to determine the appropriate leadership practices that favor professional training aimed at improved academic performance. The present study also sought to evaluate the contribution of teacher empowerment on academic performance

4. Research Methodology

The study targeted 167 principals, 1,660 teachers, 67,840 students in Nyandarua County. The study was carried out through a descriptive research design. A descriptive research design is a research design that describes a phenomenon or subject population characteristics through estimation of population proportion, as well as discovering relationships between varied variables (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). Stratified random sampling technique was employed at all the school levels in Nyandarua County. Respondents were sampled individually through simple random sampling. The study used Neuman (2011) formula in determination of the sample size in large populations, normally above 10,000, to arrive at the sample size of 384 principals, teachers and students as shown below.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where n = the required sample size, when the target population is more than 10,000

Z = is standard normal deviate at the required confidence level, 0.05, which gives 1.96

p = is the proportion of the target population estimated to have the characteristics being measured when one is not sure, so one takes middle ground (0.5)

q = 1-p (1 - 0.5 = 0.5)

d = is the level of statistical significance, which is a standard set at 0.05

Therefore $n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} = 384$

The study sampled a total of 384 students, teachers and principals equally drawn from the 167 public secondary schools in Nyandarua County. The study gave equal chance to 167 principals, 167 teachers in each school and a random chance to 50 students.

The study used primary data which was largely quantitative in nature. Data was collected from students, teachers and principals by use of structured questionnaires.

5. Study Findings

5.1. Influence of Principal's Strategic Management on Classroom Supervision

This study sought to determine whether classroom instruction has improved as a result of principal's strategic management styles. Principals were asked to comment on the same and the data presented in figure 1.

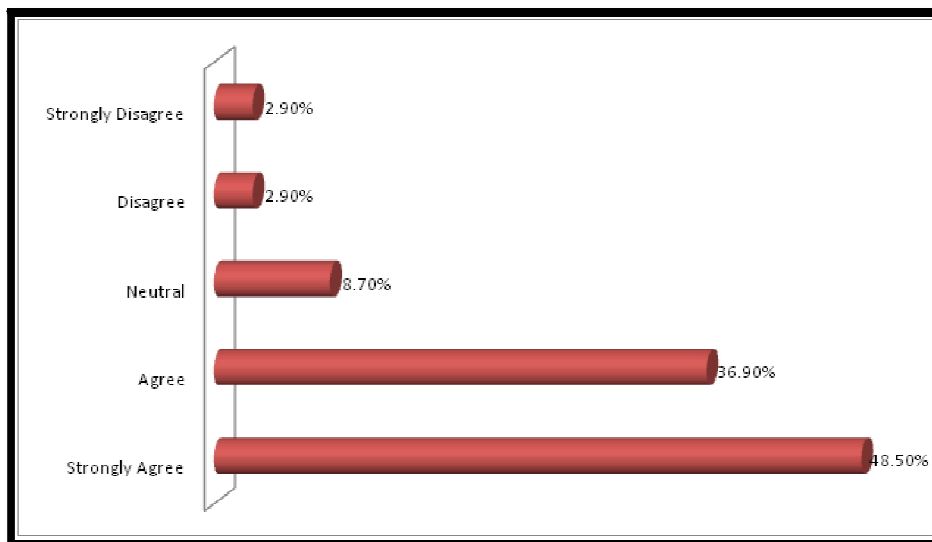


Figure 1: Influence of Strategic Management on Classroom Supervision

The study established that 48.5% strongly agreed that principals' strategic management influence classroom supervision, while 36.9% agreed principals' strategic management influence classroom supervision. This was closely followed by 8.7% who were neutral of the statement principals' strategic management influence classroom supervision, while 2.9% disagreed principals' strategic management influence class room supervision. Another 2.9% strongly disagreed principals' strategic management influence classroom supervision. A majority of 85.4% of the principals agreed that classroom supervision is influenced by principals' strategic management. In this regard principals should be a fountain of solutions to predicaments that arise periodically in unexpected scenarios. Hence, principal's supervision efforts should be buttressed by an adaptive capacity that has a variation in leadership styles in different demanding situations. Instructional supervision style is dependent on contingency at hand as well as its suitability. Leadership theory asserts leadership style dictates the effectiveness of subordinate performance; this calls for the leader to select a leadership style that encourages it. Leadership theory further posits if situational style is adopted performance becomes effective.

6. Discussions

The main objective of the study was to determine the effect of teacher professional development on academic performance of public secondary schools in Nyandarua County in Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to establish the effects of the principal's strategic management regarding teacher's professional development. The principals' opinions were therefore sought in relation to strategic plans and goals follow up and control relationship between strategic management and teaching staffs' commitment. The study sought to establish whether the schools' strategic plan includes teachers' professional development. A majority of 75.4% of the principals agreed that strategic plan aligns with professional-learning activities and goals. The findings imply that strategic plan aligns with school goals and other professional-learning activities in public secondary school in Nyandarua County, hence significantly impacts on academic performance. The findings agree with Chebet (2013) who found a statistically relationship between performance of private secondary schools and teacher empowerment in private secondary schools in Bomet County.

7. Conclusion

The study concludes that numerous approaches in learning and teaching supervision are utilized by the teachers. The approaches that have been identified include ensuring that teachers have professional documents such, lesson notes, records of work, schemes of work, class visits to assess students work, assessment of HODs syllabus coverage reports, asking HODs to supervise class attendance when absent. However, very few principals ask class prefects to visit classrooms to monitor teacher's lessons as well as attendance.

That principals support of staff professional development and students' academic achievements are correlated. This therefore means that school principals should embrace ways of improving professional learning for educators as this is critical in improving students' academic achievement. The study further concludes that teacher's knowledge in enhancing pedagogical skills and teaching specified contents to learners is enhanced by professional development which is relative to their theoretical understanding since academic skills improve students' achievements.

The study concludes that school decisions are made by school principals; this includes setting of school rules, selection of learning/teaching materials as well as budgeting in consultation with teachers, deputies and HODs. Furthermore, the study concludes that in Nyandarua County, principals face numerous challenges encompassing admission of students with low KCPE marks, inadequate teaching/learning materials, teachers not completing syllabus, inadequate trained teachers, teacher's failure to attend all classes and principals do not have adequate time to check on students work. However, challenges in admission of students with low KCSE marks and inadequate trained teachers were high in low performing schools. Academic performance has been therefore undermined by these challenges.

8. Recommendations

The Ministry of Education, Teachers Service Commission, and Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should come up with a policy to ensure that schools have adequate creative arts teachers and the principals also should come up with an internal staff development policy to ensure school has creative arts teachers at all times.

Principals should promote their teacher's professional development by sponsoring attendance of professional development seminars that are in tandem with improving school's academic goals. Moreover, information on teacher's professional development is shared with the teachers who did not attend seminar sessions. In addition to, principals should provide continuous in-house professional development activities, by inviting professional speakers to facilitate in-house teacher's professional development. This is appositive activity that should be encouraged for all schools in the County.

The analyzed data revealed that monitoring classroom practices to maintain high visibility has been ensured by the principals. However, principals should ensure classroom monitoring practices are consistent with schools instructional goals, allocating time for informal talks with teachers and students about approaches that can better learning and teaching by involvement of management by walking around strategies to interact with students and teachers in their work place, giving feedback and holding staff briefs frequently, There is need to analyze overall influence of these activities on students' academic performance in national examinations.

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