

Influence of Personnel Management on Students' Academic Performance in Meru Central Sub-County, Kenya.

Purity Makena Kiogora¹, Dr Dorcas Wambugu Njeru²

¹Master of Education Mount Kenya University, Kenya

²School of Education Mount Kenya University, Kenya

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.701170>

Received: 16 October 2023; Accepted: 19 October 2023; Published: 23 November 2023

ABSTRACT

Management is a concept concerned with making decisions and taking corrective actions to achieve an organization's long-term targets, objectives, and goals. Firms obtain a sustained competitive advantage through exploiting internal strength by responding to environmental opportunities while neutralizing external threats and avoiding internal weaknesses. The purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of personnel management on students' academic performance in Meru central sub-county, Kenya. The study was anchored under Contingency theory, and it adopted mixed method research with a target population of 432 respondents. The investigator used Slovin's formula to get a sample size of 207 respondents drawn from 20 public secondary schools comprising of 20 principals, 40 PTA/BOM chairpersons, 20 students council representatives and 127 HoDs, who were selected using both purposive for principals, BOM and PTA chairperson, and simple random sampling for students councils and HODs. Data collection was conducted through the administration of questionnaires to student's council representatives, HODs, BOM and PTA chairpersons and interview schedule for the principals. A pilot study was carried out in 2 public secondary schools who were not included in the main study. To validate the researcher made use of supervisor's comments and test the reliability of the research instruments by administering the questionnaire twice over different periods and calculate the reliability coefficient prior to the study. This study abided by the ethical practices in the field of research such as confidentiality, seek authorization from the relevant authorities, informed consent among others. Data in this research were gathered through the administration of surveys and were subsequently processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20. The overall response rate from the entire pool of respondents was 73.91%. The investigation revealed that school principals frequently employed multiple leadership approaches, with the instructional and transformational styles being the most favored. Moreover, a substantial 78.4% of the participants strongly believed that the leadership of principals significantly impacted students' academic achievements. The study also determined that close monitoring had a notable effect on student academic performance, indicated by a mean score of 4.36 (standard deviation = 0.61). Additionally, the research found that 67.3% of the respondents expressed reservations about the influence of motivation on students' academic performance. Notably, the study revealed that target setting had a positive impact on students' academic performance, with an overall mean of 4.61 (standard deviation = 0.49). In conclusion, the study indicates that school principals adopted adaptable leadership strategies. Furthermore, it underscores the high impact of leadership, target setting, and monitoring on students' academic performance. Consequently, it is recommended that the Teachers Service Commission should ensure an adequate supply of teachers in public secondary schools to allow principals to focus on school administration rather than teaching. Collaboration between political leaders and school management is also advised for the benefit of both students and schools. Finally, the study suggests that principals should continue employing instructional and transformational leadership styles in their school environments.

Keywords: Management practices, Contingency theory, academic performance

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

The determinants of students' academic performance and policies that improve performance have been documented, particularly in education systems where academic achievement is measured on final best grade attainment rather than the acquisition of skills and knowledge. School performance is also evaluated through output measures such as wastage rates, completion rates, progression rates, and complete examination classification (Sarrico, Rosa, & Manatos, 2012). Although there are many aspects with the potential of negatively affecting educational standards, a fundamental factor to be considered is the school management practices of the principals as the person in charge of the institution. Despite numerous literature providing detailed discussions on school performance measures, gaps still exist and warrant investigation concerning factors influencing performance as far as school managerial practices are concerned (Sarrico et al., 2012).

Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) associates better school management with improved pupil academic achievement in both the developed and the developing countries (Lemos, 2014). Lemos (2014) further revealed that school management practices, compared to other factors such as teaching quality, competition, and class size, have a superior impact on students' academic outcomes. Liberto, Schivardi, and Sulis, (2013) classified management practices under five specific vital areas: incentive/personnel management, leadership, target setting, monitoring, and operations. However, these practices differ from one nation to another, depending on their adoption.

In the United States of America (USA), many districts and states are spearheading reforms to make principals accountable for school performance (Heck, 2011). This was necessitated by the realization that strong leadership by the principal indirectly affects school academic performance. A similar agitation was started in Australia, where for over 30 years, they pursued educational reforms to raise the achievement standards of students (Cruickshank, 2017). Much emphasis was laid on school leadership. England, too, has, over a couple of years, witnessed a remarkably consistent effort in education reforms that are aimed at holding school principals accountable for improving student performance on national or state tests (Leithwood & Day, 2008). The much interest in school leadership demonstrates the seriousness with which it is considered to be influencing student academic outcomes.

In Chile, tutors working in well-performing schools are rewarded collectively by the National Performance Evaluation System of Subsidized Schools (OECD, 2017). This forms part of the critical specific management area (incentive/personnel management). Equally, there is a need to sanction tutors for underperformance because, in as much as those producing better results are appreciated and rewarded, school management and teachers mustn't fail to be blamed or fail to take a portion of blame when the learners perform poorly. Keller, Neumann, & Fischer (2016) noted that in Germany and Switzerland, teacher motivation predicts student interest in a subject and, subsequently, their overall academic performance.

In Brazil, Performance monitoring has been established to positively impact mathematics subject scores in public secondary schools in Sao Paulo (Tavares, 2015). In monitoring, principals have to exhibit such behaviors as individually meeting with teachers and discussing student progress with parents.

Target setting motivates individuals to exert effort, persist and focus their attention to produce the desired outcome. Idowu, Chibuzoh, & Louisa (2014) noted that target setting for the students in Nigeria showed an improvement in their performance when closely monitored. Where targets are set, students usually observe,

judge, and react to their inner perception of target progress and commitments made. It becomes a base against which comparison can be made between performance and the set targets.

The Kenyan education system is one in which teachers have limited chances of being extrinsically rewarded. Perhaps it could be a cause for the poor performance of students in their national examinations. It is worth noting that human resources are the chief resource in any sector. Therefore, the hallmark of school success and progress is dependent on the adoption of best practices in personnel management (Mugera, 2015). According to Muiruri (2019) school leadership has a great influence on academic performance. The study further noted that Student academic performance in KCPE in Kirinyaga County is better though the same is not reflected in their performance in KCSE after four years in secondary school.

In Meru central sub-county, the trend is not different from the situation mentioned above. An investigation by the sub-county education Board in (2019) as they were rolling out 100% transition revealed that the average entry behavior of students in the sub-county who were joining form one was 59.2 percent at KCPE level. However, this mark continually declined to 45 percent when the students undertook their KCSE examinations (SCEO Meru central Report, 2019). This revelation inspired the researcher to investigate why these student performance decline after joining post-primary education. In most cases, these schools have admitted students from the same locality. The education stakeholders perceive school performance to be directly influenced by its leadership, as evidenced by their dissatisfaction whenever the school registers poor performance.

In some cases, the parents storm the school to eject the principal from the office and the Teacher service commission (TSC) would punish the teacher through demotion or transfer and to some extent teacher promotion is pegged to some set performance appraisal. The fact that these students score significantly in primary school leaves room to hold that they can do the same in secondary school. Studies by Bundi (2020) and Kilaku (2019) touched on relevant issues which could affect students' academic performance, however, their studies fell short of examining the role of a fundamental and overarching factor of the principals' management practices in influencing the students' academic performance. It is against this argument that the study sought to determine the influence of principal's management practices on students' academic performance. Specifically, the study assessed the influence of leadership, monitoring, target setting and personnel management on students' academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the primary schools in Meru central Sub-County performing well in KCPE examinations, the same performance is not translated in KCSE examinations as the performance in almost all the schools is below average. Table 1 shows the comparison between the KCPE and KCSE students' performance in Meru central sub county.

Table 1: KCPE/KCSE performance comparison for the last three years

SUB COUNTY	2018		2019		2020		AVERAGE	
	KCPE	KCSE	KCPE	KCSE	KCPE	KCSE	KCPE	KCSE
Meru central	5.79	2.82	5.86	3.55	5.99	3.48	5.88	3.48

This data indicates a great disparity between the KCPE performance and the KCSE performance. The average performance in KCPE in the three years as indicated in the Table 1 was at 5.88 (C Plain). This

figure is not reflected in the KCSE average for the three years where the sub county managed a mean score of 3.48 (D+) which is a drop compared to the KCPE performance. Several studies have been carried out to establish the reasons for this gap in performance. For instance, Bundi (2020) established that peer pressure, mass media and drug abuse as some of the factors contributing to students' indiscipline and dismal academic achievement. Kilaku (2019), investigated the influence of Board of Management (BOM) practices on academic performance in public day secondary and found out that little emphasis was being attributed to principal's management practices. Unless these practices are studied, the student's performance could continue to deteriorate and spark an uproar among concerned educational stakeholders. This is supported by the fact that Some Studies by kimacia (2013) Kabuchi and Gitau (2015) and Mugambi (2015) all show that principals management has an influence on students' performance. However, none of those studies has been carried out in Meru central. It is against this background of below-average performance and the less-studied concept of principal management practices in Meru Central that this study sought to investigate principals' management practices and their effects on students' academic performance.

Research Objective

The general objective of the study was to examine the influence of personnel management on students' academic performance in Meru central sub-county, Kenya.

Significance of the Study

The researcher considered this study vital because it was anticipated that its findings would greatly help several stakeholders in the education sector. The findings, if adopted, would help the Government in formulating education policies aimed at improving learner performance in Public Secondary Schools in areas similar to Meru Central Sub-County.

Secondly, on the likely event that management practices are considered the possible cause of poor performance, the findings of this study would be of great significance to the school management and administration personnel as they would understand the influence of management practices on students' performance. Hence correctional strategies would be taken by the school managers to improve the students' academic performance.

Thirdly, the study might be of significance to the teachers. The study results may allow the teachers to improve their decision-making strategies. It might serve as an eye-opener to the teachers involved in the school decision-making to prioritize the activities at the forefront of enhancing student performance.

Fourthly, to the researchers who would be interested in conducting studies in the related field, it might provide literature that may form the basis of their work and comparison purposes. The study may also provide the foundation for further research among scholars in the education field through suggestions provided in this work.

The study is needed to unearth the policy gaps in terms of principal's management practices and the students' academic performance. This research is needed to establish how principals' leadership style, academic monitoring, personnel management and goal setting influences students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Meru central sub county. This study will further add value into the body of literature in principal's management practices and students' academic performance in the secondary schools in Kenya.

Lastly, to those interested in general knowledge on the influence of school management practices on students' academic performance in Meru central sub-county, the study will provide enriched literature.

Scope of the study

The study was confined in public secondary schools in Meru central sub-county in Kenya. The study limited itself in investigating the influence of principal's management practices, precisely school leadership, academic monitoring, personnel management, and target setting on students' academic performance. The study targeted 432 respondents drawn from all the 42 public secondary schools in Meru central sub county, comprising of BOM chairpersons, PTA chairpersons, students' council chairpersons, HODs and the principals. The study adopted a descriptive research design and utilized questionnaire and interview guide for data collection. The study used KCSE performance for period of five years to describe student's academic performance (2018 – 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical literature review Contingency Theory

Contingency is a theory profound by Fieldler (1958) on leader attitudes and group effectiveness. This theory centers on the notion that there is no single best approach to manage organizations, people, or work best in every situation. In other words, organizations should not be managed by a one-size-fits-all approach. Still, they should work out unique managerial strategies depending on the particular condition of the situation they are facing. This perspective encourages managers to study individual and situational differences before deciding on a course of action. The course is due to the different environmental and organizational needs and structures that affect an organization, coupled with differing resources and capabilities about an individual organization.

The situation concept of this theory comprises three factors that determine the favorableness of the various situations in an organization. The first factor is the leader-member relations which generally deal with the group atmosphere and feelings such as confidence, loyalty, and trust that the group has for its leader. Similarly, in the school scenario, the relations between the principals and the parents, staff, students, and the community are integral in ensuring the effective and successful management of the schools. School managers must inspire confidence, loyalty, and trust among their members.

The second factor related to the concept of the situation in contingency theory is the task structure. According to Fiedler, task structure refers to the clarity of tasks and the means to accomplish the tasks. The teachers' tasks have to be clearly explained and structured by the school principals. A high degree of task structure increases employee motivation, which could probably be observed in the students' academic achievement.

The third factor is position power which refers to the amount of reward-punishment authority the leader can exercise against the group members. School principals possess the inherent power to direct their members and provide punishment or reward. The reward and punishment system could aid the members to perform better in fear of sanctions or strive towards being rewarded. This could essentially be seen in the students' performance. This theory was appropriate as it particularly deals with how managers have to approach situations about management. Numerous situations are bound to occur in a school setup. In recognition that there is no single best way to manage the school situations, it will be incumbent upon the principals to use the contingency perspective. The principal has to determine the managerial approach that would be the most effective in handling a given situation. Principals need to understand situational differences, avoid the classical "one best way" arguments, and respond appropriately to these situations given their management roles. This management approach means that the principals must depend on their judgment and experience in responding to any situation.

Empirical Literature

Personnel Management and Student Academic Performance

Managing the school, including human resources, solely rests with the principals and the deputy principals. Their management practices can potentially impact the student's performance either positively or negatively. The management of a school is comparable to the management of a state. Principals must be sociologists, psychologists, economists, and politicians (Farah, 2013). The tasks of principals are unique and extra knowledge and standards are required to apply it. Just like citizens are after deliverables in managing a state, the principals must also have deliverables in the management of schools evaluated through academic performance.

Quality education through school management cannot be achieved when the school managers and administrators are not trained and their skills in personnel management are wanting. In order to acquire managerial skills and competently implement them, school managers need training in not only school management but also personnel management. The need of the principals to undertake training in educational management cannot be overemphasized.

According to DuFour (2013) instructional leaders provide quality personnel development. Further, the principal as staff developer is an integral part of the concept of the principal as instructional leader. DuFour (2013), indicate that one of the best indicators of leader is a programme of an on- going staff development and a climate which that programme can flourish. DuFour (2013) further indicates that, according to Race to the Top guidelines, more rigorous supervision process should influence teachers' professional management. Motivation, rewards, and sanctions are among the personnel management managerial practices that principals perform to ensure the desired outcomes are achieved. Spelling out the motivation, rewards, and sanctions will help teachers know what is expected in the unlikely event they perform otherwise than expected.

In Nigeria, Olufunmilola (2020) on Relationship Between Personnel Management and Students' Academic Performance in Ondo State Public Secondary Schools, the study adopted a descriptive survey research design with a target population of consisted of 16,563 public secondary school teachers in 304 public secondary schools in Ondo state. The study findings revealed a positive significance relationship between personnel management in Ondo State and the students' academic performance. This study was carried out in Nigeria and targeted teachers only, the current study will be conducted in Kenya and will include principals, teachers and students from the selected schools, to establish the relationship between personnel management and students' academic performance the study will adopt the embedded mixed methods research design.

Mose (2015) in Nyamira County examines the effect of motivating teachers on the performance of students in public secondary schools. The study findings showed that in high-performing schools, all teachers, including those recruited by the Board of Management (BoM), are motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically.

Also Jerotich (2015) conducted a study in Elgeyo Marakwet County on the influence that motivation of Kiswahili teachers has on student academic performance. The study collected data through document analysis and questionnaires. The study found a statistical significant relationship between levels of Kiswahili teacher motivation and student performance in Kiswahili subject. The study solely examined the Kiswahili teachers. Perhaps there could be differences on the influence that motivation may have on different subjects. This study will therefore examine the influence that teachers' management has on the student academic performance in general without delimiting to any specific subject or group of subjects.

Sobe (2013) examined the motivational practices of principals in Kuria West and their effect on teacher performance in selected primary schools. The study targeted head teachers and the class teachers. The study identified motivational practices such as recognizing teachers’ efforts through material incentives, tours, and verbal praises. The study also identified motivational practices such as sharing of co-curricular activities and sharing of responsibilities like those of guidance and counseling.

Ocham (2010), on the other hand, postulates that recommendations from principals on attending workshops and seminars as well as participating in decision making in the school tended to motivate the teachers. Whereas the study by Sobe (2013) examined the primary school’s principals, the current study seeks to examine the principals in secondary schools with an expanded sample size from different target population that will include students’ council leaders, HODs, BOM and PTA chairpersons.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual frame work presented in figure 1 shows the interrelationship between variables in the influence of principals’ management practices and students’ academic performance. It gives a summary of the principal’s management practices as the independent variable and the students’ academic performance as the dependent variable of the study.

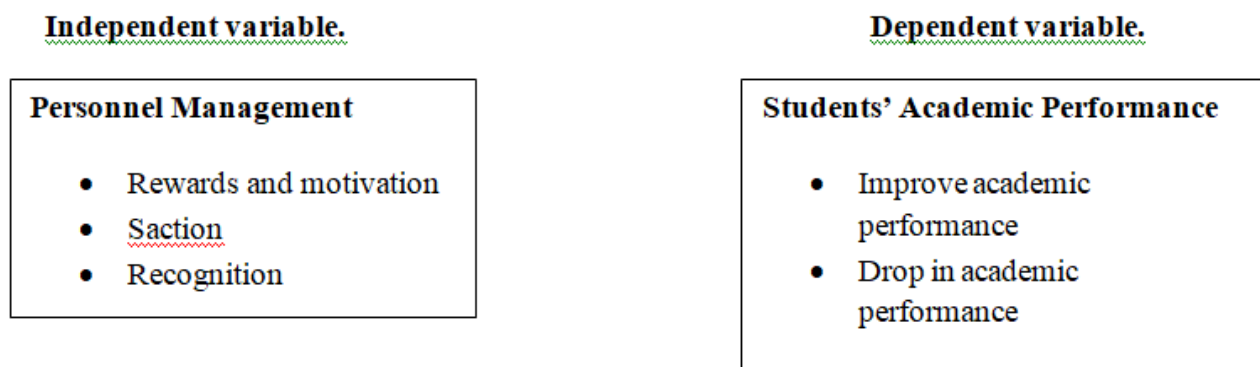


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Design

Research design refers to a strategy that the researcher employs to seek for answers to the research questions. This study adopted mixed method research design. Specifically, the study adopted the embedded mixed methods research design to collect both the qualitative and quantitative data concurrently to allow broad and deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. In this study embedded research design will involve a small number of qualitative aspects integrated into the main quantitative study (Creswell, et al. 2011).

Therefore, the quantitative approach was dominant while qualitative aspects was less dominant in the study. For instance, most items in the questionnaire was structured. However, there were unstructured items which yielded qualitative data that helped in explaining the quantitative findings. As a result, qualitative aspects were embedded in the quantitative approach to enable comprehensive explanation of the relationships between variables. This research design was premised on Pragmatism research paradigm. According to this world of thought, truth is a function of an active process of engagement with the world and verification. In this study, the researcher engaged the participants in order to get findings on principal’s management practices and academic performance in public secondary schools in Meru central sub county. Pragmatists argue that truth cannot be discovered by just sitting in a room and thinking about it but rather through research.

Target Population

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2013), a population is a group of individuals, items, or objects with at least one characteristic in common and from which samples are drawn. The target population for this study included 432 respondents drawn from all the 42 public secondary schools in Meru central sub-county. The population comprised 42 BoM chairpersons, 42 PTA chairpersons, 42 student council chairpersons, 264 HODs, and 42 school principals. The BoM, PTA, student councils' chairpersons, and HODs were included in the study as they were deemed to be privy to the management practices of the school principals.

Sampling Procedures and Techniques

Sampling is the process of choosing units of the target population that are to be included in the study so that the selected elements represent the population (Sarantakos, 2012). The purpose of sampling was to select a representative group, enabling the researcher to gain information about the entire population (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). Mertler *et al*, (2021) recommend using the largest sample possible because a study will learn about the population from which the sample was drawn.

To attain a sample with satisfactory size comparative to the purpose of the study, the investigator implemented Slovin's formula (Dionco-Adetayo, 2011) given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where n = desired sample size at 95% confidence interval

N= Target Population

e = Confidence level of 5% (decimal equivalent is 0.05)

Thus the desired sample size for this study will be given as

$$n = \frac{432}{1 + 432 \times 0.05^2} = 207$$

$$n = 207$$

In this study, simple random sampling was applied to select 20 public secondary schools from the targeted 42 secondary schools. From the sampled 20 schools, all 20 principals, 20 PTA chairpersons, 20 BoM chairperson, 20 student council chairpersons were purposively sampled. From each of 20 sampled schools 127 HODs were selected through simple random sampling. From a total population of 432 participants, 207 respondents were sampled.

Research Instruments

A questionnaire was developed to capture the various variables investigated in this study. The information addressed the dependent and independent variables captured in this study (Mugenda, 2013). A research questionnaire is a research instrument that gathers data over a large sample to translate research objectives into specific questions and answers for each question provided. The researcher used a questionnaire in this study because the data can be collected from a large sample with minimal biasness since the respondents fill it without the researcher's presence; hence confidentiality was maintained. The questionnaire was divided

into five sections where section A covered respondent’s demographic data, section B covered questions relating to principal’s leadership styles, Section C Influence of academic Monitoring, Section D covered personnel management, and section E covered target setting. Respondents were expected to tick the right responses from likert scales with keys ranging from: SA-

Strongly Agree, A -Agree, N – Neutral, D – Disagree and SD – Strongly Disagree. The keys will be assigned 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 mark respectively.

Data Analysis

General Information and Return Rate

This study was conducted in 20 secondary schools in Meru central Sub-County with a total a sample size of 207 respondents. The data were collected from principals, HODs, student council chairpersons, BoM chairpersons and PTA chairpersons. The researcher thoroughly examined all the collected filled in questionnaires to ascertain their completeness. Any questionnaire that would be have been more than 10% incomplete would have been discarded as they would have had missing data that could mar the quality of the research. Category of respondents by size based on their response is as presented in Table 3 based on proportional representation of each category of the sample size.

Table 2: Categories of Respondents by Size

Respondent’s categories		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Principals	13	8.5
	HODs	98	64.1
	Student’s council chairperson	17	11.1
	BoM chairpersons	9	5.9
	PTA chairpersons	16	10.5
	Total	153	100

Table 2 illustrates that 13 (8.5%) of the individuals who completed and returned the questionnaires held the position of principals, while 98 (64.1%) were Heads of Departments (HODs). Additionally, 17 (11.1%) of the responses came from chairpersons of student councils, and 9 (5.9%) were from chairpersons of the Board of Management (BoM). Another 16 (10.5%) responses were provided by Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) chairpersons.

Considering the total number of responses across all respondent categories, the cumulative response rate as a percentage of the sample size amounted to 73.91%. To assess the acceptability of this completion rate, it adhered to the guidelines established by Gordon (2002), which categorize response rates as follows: “60% – Marginal, 70% – Reasonable, 80% – Good, 90% – Excellent.” With an overall rate of 73.91%, the return rate was deemed reasonable and therefore suitable for this study. It is worth noting that the researcher encountered difficulties in collecting the remaining questionnaires. At the time of collection, some respondents were unavailable at their designated locations, and they had not entrusted anyone else with their filled-in questionnaires for collection by the researcher.

Respondents’ Highest Educational Qualifications

The investigator aimed to determine the most advanced level of education attained by school principals, heads of departments, board of management chairpersons, and parent-teacher association chairpersons. This inquiry was deemed crucial since a solid theoretical grounding in managerial techniques is fundamental to

effectively overseeing any educational institution. The results are outlined in Table 4.

Table 3: Academic Qualifications of Respondents

Academic qualification		Frequency	Percent
Valid	PhD	2	1.5
	Masters	72	52.9
	Bachelor's degree	56	41.1
	Higher diploma	4	3
	Certificate	2	1.5
	Total	136	100

Table 3 reveals that 136 respondents participated in the study, as opposed to 153, as the chairpersons of the student council did not respond to this particular question. The results indicate that 72 individuals (52.9%) held master's degrees, 56 (41.1%) held bachelor's degrees, and 4 (3.0%) had their highest qualification as a higher diploma. 2(1.5%) of the participants held a Ph.D. and certificate as their highest qualification each. It is noteworthy that out of the school principals, who are responsible for school management, 2 had PhD, 9 had master's degrees, while only 2 held bachelor's degrees as their highest educational attainment. This underscores the importance of educational qualifications in the field of education, providing professionals with the opportunity to engage in systematic and analytical exploration of leadership and management in education. The knowledge and skills acquired through educational programs can significantly enhance their performance in managerial roles within educational institutions.

The findings of this study indicate that the respondents are well-equipped to critically assess educational institutions and systems, ultimately benefiting stakeholders. Achieving positive academic outcomes in a school requires collaborative efforts beyond the sole responsibility of principals. Moreover, the pursuit of PhD and master's degrees by some respondents reflects their desire to broaden their understanding of the managerial skills and practices demanded by today's learning environments. Kulkarni, Lengnick-Hall, and Martinez (2015) emphasize the significance of educational qualifications in managerial positions. Progressing in educational qualifications, especially in curriculum development, further broadens the scope of management, encompassing embedded elements of management.

Respondents' Length of Service in their Current Position

The researcher sought to find out how long the respondents had held their current positions. This was necessary as the respondents would be more informed of the managerial practices of the principals since they occasionally met to discuss matters concerning their schools. The findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 4: Length of Service of Respondents

Length of Service	Category of Respondent				Total	
	Principals	HODs	BoM Chairpersons	PTA Chairpersons	f	%
Less than 1 year	0	7	0	9	16	11.8
Between 2-3 years	1	27	0	7	35	25.7
Between 4-6 years	8	23	3	0	34	25
Above 7 years	4	41	6	0	51	37.5
Total	13	98	9	16	136	100

Note n = 136

Table 4 presents data indicating that there were a total of 136 respondents. It’s important to note that student council chairpersons were not included in this survey. The results reveal that 16 individuals (11.8%) of the respondents had held their current positions for less than a year, while 35 individuals (25.7%) had been in their roles for 2-3 years. Furthermore, 34 individuals (25%) had been in their current positions for 4-6 years, and 51 individuals (37.5%) had been in their current positions for at least 7 years. It is worth mentioning that Board of Management (BoM) chairpersons have a three-year term that can be renewed once, for a maximum of 6 years, while Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) chairpersons serve for 1 year but can be reelected for a maximum of 4 years.

These findings suggest that the respondents, particularly Heads of Departments (HODs), BoM chairpersons, and PTA chairpersons, have had a substantial amount of time to gain experience with the management practices of the school principals in their respective schools. With the exception of one principal, all other principals have been in leadership positions for a minimum of four years. This duration can be considered sufficient for them to become well-acquainted with school management and administrative procedures. Based on the study’s findings, it can be inferred that, given their years of service in their positions, the respondents would be well- equipped to provide informed responses to the survey questions, as they are familiar with their school principals and all aspects of school management they exhibit.

Descriptive Analysis of Study Variables

Influence of Personnel Management on Student Academic Performance

The third aim of this research focused on assessing how personnel management impacts the academic achievements of students within Meru Central Sub-County, situated in Meru County. This investigation was deemed significant due to the crucial role that human resources play in any organizational setting. Participants were asked to express their opinions regarding the degree to which they believed personnel management affected students’ academic performance, utilizing a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” The outcomes are visually represented in Figure 2.

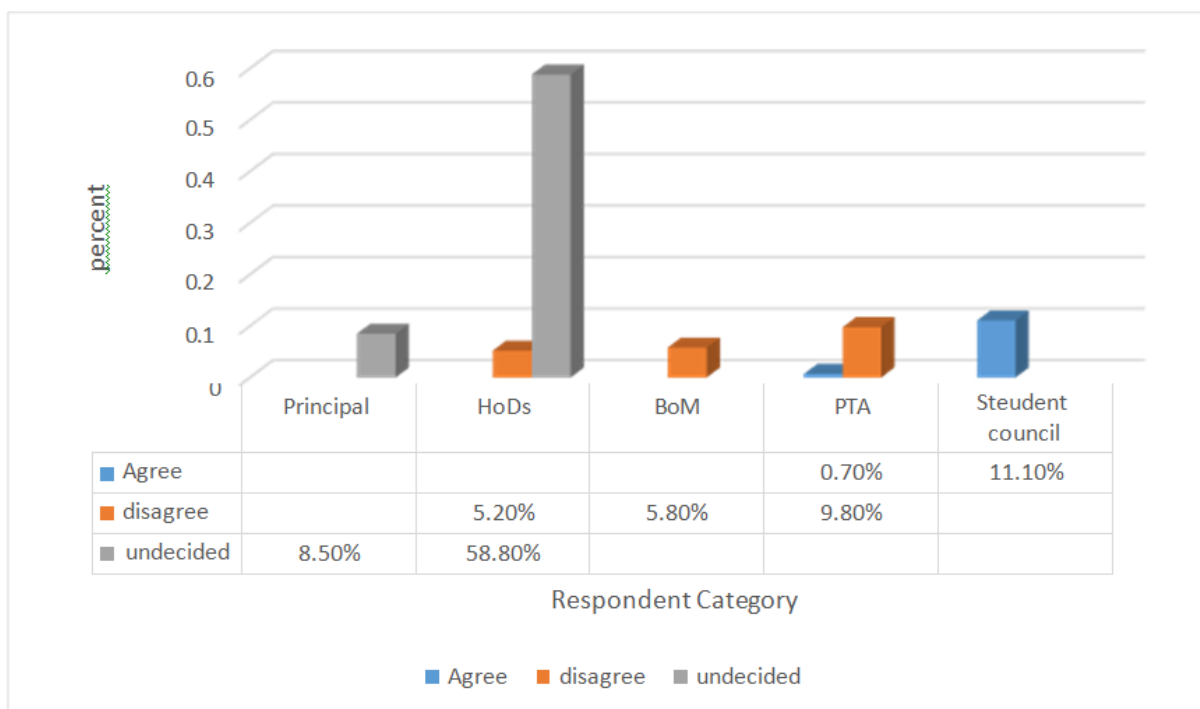


Figure 2 : Influence of Incentives on Students’ Academic Performance

Figure 2 illustrates that a portion of school principals and Heads of Departments (HODs) in Meru central Sub-County had uncertainties about the impact of incentives on students' academic performance. Specifically, 8.5% of principals and 58.8% of HODs remained undecided in this regard. Moreover, 5.2% of HODs and 5.8% of Board of Management (BoM) chairpersons disagreed with the notion that incentives provided by principals influenced students' academic achievements. Conversely, 0.7% of Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) chairpersons concurred with this belief, while 9.8% disagreed. A substantial 11.1% of respondents affirmed that incentives played a role in students' academic performance.

These results suggest a prevailing skepticism among the participants regarding the influence of incentives or teacher motivation on students' academic performance. While teacher motivation may exert some impact on academic outcomes, it may not be as significant as other managerial practices. Notably, these findings diverge from the views of several researchers, such as Mose (2015), Jerotich (2015), and Sobe (2013), who argue that teacher motivation strongly influences students' academic performance. This variance may be attributed to the fact that many teachers in this study lacked motivational incentives in their schools, which could have affected their awareness of the relationship between motivation and school performance. It is crucial to consider both motivating and holding accountable underperforming teachers. Furthermore, an overreliance on material incentives may lead to reduced efforts from teachers in enhancing students' academic performance over time.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

The primary aim of this research was to examine the influence of incentives and personnel management on student academic performance. The research established that the majority of respondents (67.3%) were uncertain about whether teacher motivation affected students' academic performance. This uncertainty may be attributed to the prevalent lack of teacher motivation by principals in many schools.

CONCLUSIONS

The followings are the conclusions made from the study findings. First, the study concludes that the principals adopted contingency measures in their leadership styles. The principals did not only depend on one leadership style, but a variety of styles with the widely preferred styles being instructional and transformational styles. Secondly it is concluded that the principals' leadership had influence on the academic performance of the students. Thirdly, the study concludes that monitoring has a significant influence on students' academic performance.

Finally, the study also concludes that target setting highly influences the academic performance of students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing discussion, the following are recommendations made by the study.

Teacher Service Commission

The Teachers Service Commission should recruit adequate teachers in the public secondary schools so as to ensure adequate staffing which would relieve the principals of some classroom duties and assume full managerial duties.

Political leaders

The political leaders should support the school principals in their management duties as opposed to

interfering with them. As constituent leaders, the political leaders should have meaning engagement with school principals through structured discussions in order to have a common goal. The principals should as well create links in order to harmoniously work with the political leaders.

School principals

The principals should continue setting both short and long term targets in order to aid the incoming principals easily adjust to the targets set by their predecessors.

Suggestions for Further Research

The following recommendations emerge from this investigation, inviting future inquiries:

1. An examination of the underlying factors and consequences of political intervention in school administration.
2. An exploration of the factors contributing to diminished teacher motivation in secondary schools within Meru Central Sub-County.
3. An investigation into the extent of the impact of different leadership styles on the academic achievements of students.

REFERENCES

1. Andrew, P. (2012). *Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education*. Nashville, Tennessee. Vanderbilt University.
2. Bundi, R. (2020). *Factors that contribute to student indiscipline in public secondary schools in North Imenti Constituency Meru County Kenya* (Unpublished Ed Thesis). Gretsia University.
3. Bursalı, N., & Öz, H. (2018). *The role of goal setting in metacognitive awareness as a self-regulatory behavior in foreign language learning*.
4. Cruickshank, (2017). The Influence of School Leadership on Student Outcomes. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(9), 115–123. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2017.59009>
5. GoK. (2014). A policy framework for education, training and research. Meeting the challenges of education, training and research in Kenya in the 21st century. Nairobi: *Government printers*.
6. Heck, R. H. (2011). Principals' Instructional Leadership and School Performance: Implications for Policy Development. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 14(1), 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1164525>
7. Hendriks, M. A., & Scheerens, J. (2013). School leadership effects revisited: a review of empirical studies guided by indirect-effect *School leadership & management*, 33(4), 373-394.
8. Hill, C., Rowan, B., & Ball, D. L. (2015). Effects of Teachers' Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching on Student Achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*.
9. Idowu, I., Chibuzoh, I. G., & Louisa, M. L. (2014). Effects of goal-setting skills on students 'academic performance in English language in Enugu Nigeria. *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, 3(2), 93–99.
10. Kaffash, , Kargiban, Z., Kargiban, S. & Ramezani M. (2011). A Close Look In To Role of ICT in Education. *International Journal of Instruction*, 3(2).
11. Kafyulilo, A. C., Rugambuka, I. B. & Moses, I. (2014). *The implementation of competency based teaching approaches in Tanzania: The case of pre-service teachers at Morogoro teacher training college*. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University College of Education.
12. Karen, L. & Kenneth, L. (2014). *Learning from Leadership: Student Learning*. USA: University of Minnesota and University of Toronto.
13. Keller, F. S. (1968). Good-Bye, Teacher. *Journal of Applied Behaviour Analysis*, 10. Kennewell, , Parkinson, J., & Tanner, H. (2012). *Developing the ICT capable school*. London: Routledge Falmer.

14. KICD. (2012). Summative Evaluation of the secondary School Education Curriculum. Nairobi. Kenya: *Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development*.
15. Kilaku, J. M. (2019). *Board of management practices influencing day secondary schools' academic performance in KCSE in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya* (Unpublished M.Ed Thesis). University of Nairobi.
16. Kothari, C. R. (2014). *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*. (2nd Ed.). New Delhi: New Age International Publishers.
17. Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., & McElheron-Hopkins, C. (2006). The development and testing of a school improvement model. *School effectiveness and school improvement*, 17(4), 441-464.
18. Lemos, (2014). *In brief: Does management matter in schools?* (No. CEPCP424). Centre for Economic Performance, LSE. Retrieved November 5, 2018, from http://cep.lse.ac.uk/_new/publications/abstract.asp?index=4434
19. Liberto, D., Schivardi, F., & Sulis, G. (2013). Managerial practices and students' performance. Retrieved from https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/conferences/2014-world-management-survey/Documents/Managerial_Practices_and_Students_Performance_DiLiberto_et_al.pdf
20. Maya, (2015, September 2nd). Kenya Examination System, Daily Nation.
21. Mertler, A., Vannatta, R. A., & LaVenja, K. N. (2021). *Advanced and multivariate statistical methods: Practical application and interpretation*. Routledge.
22. Mlozi, R.R. S. (2013). *Factors Influencing Students' Academic Performance in Community and Government Built Secondary Schools in Tanzania: A case of Mbeya Municipality*. (MBA), Chuka University, Kenya.
23. Morgan, E. (2010). *Benefits of Professional Development*. Austin: ACT Inc. Mugenda, & Mugenda, G. (2013). *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. Nairobi. ACTS Press.
24. Mugeru, H. M. (2015). Role of principals in human resource management in public primary schools in Suba Sub-County. *African Research Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 2(1), 9–21.
25. Muiruri, N. (2019). *Influence of school management practices on students' performance in Kenya Certificate of secondary education examination in Kirinyaga county, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation,
26. Ocham, L. A. (2013). *Effects of Head Teachers Motivational Practices on Teacher Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Koibateck District*, Electronic.
27. OECD. (2017). the teaching workforce in Chile. In *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Chile 2017* (pp. 227–283). Paris: OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264285637-9-en>
28. Sarrico, C. S., Rosa, M. J., & Manatos, M. J. (2012). School performance management practices and school achievement. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 61(3), 272–289.
29. Tavares, P. A. (2015). The impact of school management practices on educational performance: Evidence from public schools in São Paulo. *Economics of Education Review*, 48, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2015.05.002>