

Principals' Management Practices of Institutional Working Conditions of Teachers and Students' Academic Performance in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of principals' management practices of institutional working conditions on students' academic performance in public day secondary schools in Kitui West Sub-County, Kenya. The study objective sought to establish the influence of principals' management of teachers' working conditions on students' academic performance. Such conditions included the provision of adequate teaching and learning resources, essential facilities, and supportive environments. Additionally, the study explored challenges such as inadequate facilities, long commutes, and poor working conditions that hinder effective school operations and academic success. The study used descriptive survey research design to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. The target population for this study consisted of all 26 principals from the 26 public day secondary schools and all 249 teachers in Kitui West Sub County. The study used census and systematic sampling technique to obtain a sample of 26 principals and 38 teachers respectively. The study used questionnaires as data collection tools. Instrument reliability was determined by a test re test technique. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse data. Quantitative data was analysed and presented using frequency distribution tables and cross tabulation tables. Qualitative data was analysed by organizing it into themes in line with the research objective and presented narratively. The study found that 80% of principals and 86.9% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that effective management of working conditions, including adequate teaching resources and addressing facility deficiencies, positively influences academic performance. However, challenges like long commutes, lack of facilities, and poor working conditions hinder school responsibilities and achievement. The study concluded that effective principals' management of teacher working conditions positively influences student performance. However, issues such as institutional deficiencies hinder academic success. The study recommends that principals and school management to prioritize on improvement of working conditions, address infrastructural deficiencies and providing adequate resources and support the motivation of teachers in order to enhance students' academic performance.

Keywords: Management practices, working conditions, strategic actions, leadership styles, quality education

INTRODUCTION

Principals' management practices refer to the strategic actions, behaviors, and leadership styles employed by school leaders to create and sustain an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. Institutional working conditions of teachers are shaped significantly by the management practices of school principals. These practices encompass strategies aimed at creating an environment where teachers feel supported, valued, and equipped to deliver quality education. Principals' management practices act as a catalyst that shapes teachers' working conditions, which, in turn, directly affect students' academic performance. A principal who ensures timely provision of textbooks and offers teacher support creates an environment conducive to effective teaching, thereby improving student performance. Conversely, poor management practices, such as neglecting teacher welfare or failing to address infrastructural challenges, negatively impact teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

Globally, principals play a central role in fostering teacher collaboration, professional development, and curriculum design. In New Zealand, school leaders enjoy autonomy over curriculum decisions, while in other

regions, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, principals have limited involvement in curriculum matters. These variations influence how schools address teachers' working conditions and ultimately affect student performance. Research from the 2024 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report highlights that 57% of educational systems expect principals to provide feedback to teachers based on classroom observations, a practice that positively correlates with teacher efficacy and student achievement. However, this expectation is more prevalent in high-income countries than in low-income settings, reflecting systemic disparities (UNESCO, 2024). Mulford and Silins (2003) examined the relationships between leadership practices, organizational learning, and student outcomes in Australian schools. The study found that fair workload management helps prevent burnout and improves teacher satisfaction. The research provided insights into how effective leadership contributes to creating a learning environment that supports both teacher and student success.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya included, the role of school principals often extends to resource mobilization and community collaboration due to resource constraints. Studies suggest that leadership styles, such as transformational leadership, are effective in improving teacher job satisfaction and student performance in African contexts (UNESCO, 2024). Chantal and Cyprien (2022) conducted a study which sought to examine the working circumstances of teachers and the academic achievement of students in Rwandan public schools. The study demonstrated a substantial correlation between instructors' working circumstances and students' academic achievement in Rwandan public schools. A study in Nigeria showed that schools with supportive and resourceful leadership recorded significantly higher academic performance than those without (Eze & Eze, 2018). In Ethiopia, effective principal management practices, including supervision and resource allocation, were linked to improved teacher commitment and student performance (Teshome, 2019). Another study done in Tanzania found that principals who focused on professional development for teachers and provided timely resources enhanced teacher morale, which translated into better academic performance by students (Nguni et al., 2006).

Orodho (2014) found that Kenyan schools with proactive principals often have better teaching resources, which positively impacts teachers' morale and effectiveness. Academic performance in Kitui West is often affected by factors like poverty, lack of infrastructure, and limited parental involvement. Principals who actively engage in instructional supervision—monitoring lesson plans, offering teacher feedback, and fostering a culture of academic excellence—are associated with better student outcomes. For example, schools led by principals who prioritize early syllabus coverage and ensure resource availability tend to perform better in national examinations like KCPE and KCSE (Republic of Kenya, 2023).

Statement of the problem

Improving the working environment for teachers is a key global concern. Studies suggest that enhancing working conditions can boost teacher morale, which often leads to improved job performance (Sogoni, 2017). A poor working environment for teachers can significantly impact students' academic performance. Teachers play a vital role in shaping students' academic outcomes and futures, as evidenced by data from Kitui West Sub-County, which reported fluctuating KCSE results. These fluctuations are partly attributed to challenging working environments which included; heavy workloads, large class sizes, and long commuting distances due to limited staff housing. These conditions can contribute to burnout, lower job satisfaction, and reduced teaching effectiveness. Additionally, limited access to professional development, inadequate teaching resources, and poor physical infrastructure, such as overcrowded or poorly maintained classrooms, further hinder teachers' ability to provide quality education. KCSE performance of Day secondary schools in Kitui West Sub-County has remained below expectations. Data from the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) reveals the sub-county's mean scores over the past four years have consistently fallen below the national average grade. This trend, averaging below the minimum C+ benchmark, suggests that working environment management practices might be affecting performance outcomes. While various institutional working conditions management practices impact academic performance, there are limited empirical studies which have focused on Principals' Management practices of institutional working conditions of teachers and students' academic performance in public day secondary schools. This study specifically explored Principals' Management practices of institutional working conditions of teachers and its influence on students' academic performance in order to address a gap in the current research within Kitui West Sub-County's public day

secondary schools.

Study objective

The study was based on the following study objective;

To determine the influence of Principals' management practices of institutional working conditions of teachers on students' academic performance in public day secondary schools in Kitui west Sub County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective Principals' management practices in educational institutions have a profound influence on the working conditions of teachers, which in turn affect their motivation, job satisfaction, and overall effectiveness in the classroom. Furthermore, the manner in which the working conditions are managed directly impact the quality of teaching and learning, thereby influencing students' academic performance. The literature review explores the interplay between management practices and institutional working conditions, highlighting their impact on teachers' professional experiences and students' academic outcomes.

Management practices of institutional working conditions of teachers and students' academic performance

Teachers working conditions can influence students' academic performance in two fold. Allen (2014) conducted a study to identify the changes concerning teachers' perceptions of working conditions within Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools in US (United States). The District 180 Priority Schools comprises of 41 secondary schools that ranked in the bottom fifth percentile on the Kentucky School Report Card. Schools were divided into two categories, static or improving, based upon student achievement changes from 2009 until 2013. The study utilized results from the 2011 and 2013 TELL Kentucky Survey to determine whether changes in teachers' perceptions of working conditions were statistically significant from 2011 to 2013 in the areas of instructional time, availability of facilities and resources, community support and involvement, student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support. The study was quantitative and used a one-way ANOVA to identify changes over time within groups and between groups. Results indicate that teachers' perceptions in static schools did not change significantly; however, changes in teachers' perceptions in improving schools were statistically significant. The reviewed study differs from the current study in terms of study location in that it was not done in Kenya, the period of the study is also different. The current study sought to establish the influence of teachers working conditions as opposed to what the reviewed study investigated.

Shonje (2016) conducted a study to assess the influence of working conditions on teacher's job satisfaction in Kisarawe district public Secondary school teachers in Tanzania. Maslow's motivation theory of Need, and Herzberg's Hygiene Theory were used to guide the study. The study used descriptive survey design with case study approach. Data collection was done using a questionnaire, interview guide, observation checklist and documentary review. The sample size consisted of 107 respondents who were selected using purposive sampling and stratified simple random sampling strategies. The study found that teachers work in poor conditions with lack of in-service training, promotion and necessary facilities like chairs and housing. Most of them live a long distance from schools where they teach hence affecting them to fulfill their day to day responsibilities which leads to lowering their morale of work. This results into teacher absenteeism and lateness which leads to lower students' academic performance. The reviewed study is different from the current study in that the current study investigated the management of working conditions versus students' academic performance, the reviewed study was done in Tanzania while the current study was done in Kenya.

Ouma and Munyua (2018) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between teachers' working conditions and students' academic performance in public day secondary schools in Nyando Sub-County. This was in the light of the concern that most public day secondary schools in Nyando Sub County had been posting poor grades between 2011 and 2015. The study adopted a correlational research design. The target population was all public day secondary schools in Nyando Sub-County. A sample of fourteen schools, which comprised

50% of the total population, was used in the study. Stratified random sampling was used to allow full participation of the schools. Four teachers were randomly sampled in each sampled school to fill the questionnaire, which was the data collection instrument. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to present the results of the study. This involved tabulating, graphing and describing data. Linear regression was used to test the hypothesis. The study findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between teachers' working conditions and students' academic performance. It was further revealed that poor working conditions and inadequate teaching and learning materials were the major de-motivators of teachers towards good students' academic performance. The reviewed study is different from the current study in terms of sample size and the sampling techniques hence the need to conduct the study in order to fill a research gap.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey research approach to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. A research design constitutes the framework of the study (Kombo & Tromp, 2013). Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) asserted that a descriptive survey research methodology allows the researcher to gather and report information without manipulating the variables. The descriptive survey research approach was appropriate for this study as it facilitated the collection of data on Principals' Management practices of institutional working conditions of teachers and students' academic performance in public day secondary schools in Kitui west sub-county, Kitui County, Kenya

The target population for this study consisted of all 26 principals from the 26 public day secondary schools and all 249 teachers in Kitui West Sub County. The study used census and systematic sampling technique to obtain a sample of 26 principals and 38 teachers respectively. The study used questionnaires as data collection tools. Face and content validity was employed to validate the research instrument by ensuring that the tools were content valid. Expert judgement was done by engaging expert opinion from the assigned supervisors. A pilot study was also done in schools which were excluded from the main study. Instrument reliability was determined by a test re test technique. Once data were collected it was analysed using descriptive statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Quantitative data was analysed and presented using frequency distribution tables and cross tabulation tables. Qualitative data was analysed by organizing it into themes in line with the research objective and presented narratively.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Principals' management practices of institutional working conditions and students' academic performance

The third objective in this study sought to determine the influence of Principals management practices of institutional working conditions on students' academic performance. The findings are as indicated in Table 4.15 and 4.16

Table 1.0 Principals response on management practices of institutional working conditions and students' academic performance

Statement	SD (F%)	D (F%)	N (F %)	A (F %)	SA (F %)	Total
The management of working conditions in my school is effectively done and influences students' academic performance positively	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (10%)	16 (53.3%)	8 (26.7%)	30 (100%)
Adequate teaching and learning resources have a positive effect on academic performance	2 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	4 (13.3%)	13 (43.3%)	11 (36.7%)	30 (100%)

Statement	SD (F%)	D (F%)	N (F %)	A (F %)	SA (F %)	Total
Lack of necessary facilities like housing, sitting space can affect performance of school responsibilities hence academic performance	1 (3.3%)	0 (0%)	2 (6.7%)	13 (43.3%)	14 (46.7%)	30 (100%)
Distance travelled from school has an effect on fulfilment of day-to-day responsibilities hence an effect on academic performance	2 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)	14 (46.7%)	13 (43.3%)	30 (100%)

The data in Table 1.0 reveal that 53.3% and 26.7% of the principals concurred and strongly concurred, respectively, with the assertion that the management of working conditions in their schools is conducted successfully and favorably impacts students' academic performance. Conversely, 3.3% and 6.7% of the principals strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively, with the assertion that the management of working conditions at their school is conducted successfully and favorably impacts students' academic performance. Nonetheless, 10% of the principals exhibited neutrality. It was determined that 43.3% and 36.7% of the principals concurred and strongly concurred with the assertion that sufficient teaching and learning resources positively influence academic performance. The study noted that 6.7% of the principals strongly disagreed with the statement, while 13.3% remained indifferent. The study revealed that 43.3% and 46.7% of the principals concurred and strongly concurred, respectively, with the assertion that the absence of essential facilities, such as housing and seating space, adversely impacts the execution of school obligations, hence affecting academic achievement. Nevertheless, 3.3% of the principals expressed severe disagreement with the message, while 6.7% remained neutral. The study revealed that 43.3% and 46.7% of the principals concurred and strongly concurred, respectively, with the assertion that the distance traveled from school impacts the fulfillment of daily obligations. Nonetheless, 6.7% of the principals expressed severe disagreement with the message, whereas 3.3% remained indifferent.

The teachers' replies regarding the impact of principals' management strategies on working conditions and students' academic performance are included in Table 4.16.

Table: 1.2 Teachers' response on principals' management of institutional working conditions and students' academic performance

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %
Working conditions in my school are effectively managed	0 0	2 8.7	1 4.3	13 56.5	7 30.4	23 100
Adequate teaching and learning resources have a positive effect on academic performance	0 0	1 4.3	3 13	9 39.1	10 43.5	23 100
Lack of necessary facilities like housing, sitting space can affect the performance of school responsibilities hence academic performance	0 0	1 4.3	2 8.7	10 43.5	10 43.5	23 100
Distance travelled from school has an effect on fulfilment of day today responsibilities hence an effect on academic performance,		2 8.7	1 4.3	11 47.8	9 39.1	23 100

The results in Table 1.2 indicated that 56.5% of teachers agreed and 30.4% strongly agreed with the assertion that the institutional working conditions in their school are properly controlled. The study revealed that 8.7% of the teachers opposed the statement, whilst merely 4.3% remained neutral. It was determined that 39.1% and

43.5% of the teachers concurred and strongly concurred, respectively, with the assertion that sufficient teaching and learning resources positively influence academic performance. Only 4.3% of the teachers expressed disagreement with the remark, while 13% remained neutral. The study revealed that 43.5% of instructors agreed and 43.5% strongly agreed with the assertion that the absence of essential facilities and resources, such as housing and seating space, might adversely impact the execution of school tasks and, consequently, academic achievement. Nonetheless, 4.3% and 8.7% of the educators expressed disagreement with the remark, while 8.7% remained indifferent. It was determined that 47.8% and 39.1% of teachers concurred and strongly concurred with the assertion that the distance traveled from school influences the fulfillment of daily obligations, hence affecting academic achievement. Nevertheless, 8.7% of the educators opposed the declaration, and merely 4.3% remained indifferent.

Other institutional working condition aspects that are considered to have an effect on students' academic performance

The respondents were asked to give their opinion on other working condition aspects that are considered to have an effect on students' academic performance. The principals said that those other aspects included; the school location near a noisy environment which affects academic performance; home environment; lack of commitment among learners; the school immediate environment cultures which negatively affects the school; Poverty, family conflicts, ailments ; having a friendly environment; uncooperative teaching staff; indiscipline among students; the home environment because many learners come from within; learners are not committed and not focused on what is ahead of them; humble background, drug influence; inadequate finances, limited parental involvement, school programmes; lack of dining hall, lack of science lab; Lateness, absenteeism, illness and social background.

The other institutional aspects as said by the teachers included; students absenteeism; drugs and substance use by pupils; unfriendly environment; family background; teacher pupil relationships; unfriendly learning environment ; lack of enough facilities and resources for teaching ;parental involvement in learning; lateness and absenteeism ; having staff houses in school to curb the problem of long distance and have enough time to interact with students ; provision of meals in the school and having staff houses in the school ; teachers who come from far reside within the school; lack of enough classrooms; lack of school laboratory; drug and substance abuse by the students; lack of enough food over lunch hour, inadequate teachers, inadequate support staff.

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

Principals' management practices of institutional working conditions and students' academic performance

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of principals' management of working conditions of teachers on students' academic achievement. The results are as presented in Table 1 indicated that 53.3% and 26.7% of the principals concurred and strongly concurred, respectively with the assertion that the administration of institutional working conditions in their schools is conducted successfully and favorably influences students' academic performance. Those principals who concurred with the statement constituted 80%. Conversely, 3.3% and 6.7% of the principals strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively, with the assertion that the management of working conditions at their school is conducted successfully and favorably influences students' academic performance. Nevertheless, 10% of the principals exhibited neutrality. It was also noted that 43.3% and 36.7% of the principals concurred and strongly concurred with the assertion that sufficient teaching and learning resources positively influences students' academic performance. This also amounts to 80% of the principals who concurred. The study noted that 6.7% of the principals strongly disagreed with the statement, while 13.3% remained indifferent. The study revealed that 43.3% of the principals agreed and 46.7% strongly agreed with the assertion that the absence of essential facilities, such as housing and seating space, adversely impacts the execution of school obligations, hence affecting academic achievement. This signifies that 90% of the principals concurred. Nonetheless, 3.3% of the principals expressed severe disagreement with the message, while 6.7% remained neutral. The study revealed that 43.3% and 46.7% of the principals concurred and strongly concurred, respectively, with the assertion that the distance

traveled from school impacts the fulfillment of daily obligations. This also signifies that majority 90% of the principals concurred with the statement. Nonetheless, 6.7% of the principals expressed severe disagreement with the message, while 3.3% remained indifferent. On average, 85% of principals concurred that management policies regarding working conditions affect pupils' academic achievement.

Table 2 indicates that majority 56.5% of teachers agreed and 30.4% strongly agreed with the assertion that the institutional working conditions in their school are properly managed. This matches with 86.9% of the teachers who concurred with the statement. The study revealed that 8.7% of the teachers opposed the statement, whilst merely 4.3% remained neutral. It was found that 39.1% of the teachers agreed and 43.5% strongly agreed with the assertion that sufficient teaching and learning resources positively influences students' academic performance. This equates with majority 82.6% of the teachers who concurred with the statement. Only 4.3% of the teachers expressed disagreement with the remark, while 13% remained neutral. The study revealed that 43.5% of the principals agreed, and 43.5% strongly agreed that the absence of essential facilities and resources, such as housing and seating space, can adversely influence the execution of school tasks and, consequently, academic achievement. This indicates that 87% of the educators concurred with the statement. Nonetheless, 4.3% and 8.7% of the principals expressed disagreement with the message, while 8.7% remained indifferent. Additionally, it was determined that 47.8% and 39.1% of the principals concurred and strongly concurred with the assertion that the distance traveled from school impacts the fulfillment of daily tasks, hence affecting academic achievement. Nevertheless, 8.7% of the principals expressed disagreement with the statement, whereas only 4.3% maintained a neutral stance. This indicates that, on average, 85.85% of the teachers concurred with the statement.

The findings highlight the critical role of principals' management of working conditions in shaping students' academic achievement. The overwhelming agreement among principals (80%) and teachers (86.9%) regarding the positive influence of well-managed working conditions suggests that effective leadership practices are essential in educational settings. The consensus on the importance of sufficient teaching and learning resources reflects a recognition that these elements directly impact the ability to deliver quality education. Furthermore, the strong acknowledgment of the adverse effects of inadequate facilities, such as housing and seating space, underlines the need for school administrations to prioritize infrastructure improvements to support both teachers and students effectively.

The emphasis on the distance traveled to school as a factor affecting academic performance points to logistical challenges that can hinder student engagement and participation. This insight calls for a closer examination of school locations and transportation options, which could facilitate better access for students and ultimately improve academic outcomes. Additionally, the alignment in perceptions between principals and teachers indicates a shared understanding of the challenges faced in the educational environment, which is vital for fostering collaborative approaches to problem-solving.

The results align with the research undertaken by Ouma and Munyua (2018) which examined the correlation between teachers' working circumstances and students' academic performance at public day secondary schools within Nyando Sub-County. The research findings indicated a substantial correlation between teachers' working circumstances and pupils' academic performance. It was additionally disclosed that substandard working conditions and insufficient teaching and learning resources were the primary deterrents affecting teachers' motivation regarding students' academic success.

The analysis in Table 1 revealed that 47.8% of the principals responded affirmatively when asked about the influence of additional working situation factors on pupils' academic performance, whereas an equal 47.8% provided a negative reaction. The outcomes of the principals varied from those of the teachers. In Table 2, a majority of 71.1% of teachers responded affirmatively regarding the existence of additional working condition factors that were perceived to influence students' academic performance, while 23.7% of teachers responded negatively to the same inquiry.

The respondents were requested to provide their opinions on additional working condition aspects which were believed to influence students' academic achievement. The results generated using open ended questions as gathered on qualitative data indicated that the additional factors encompassed the school's proximity to a

noisy environment, which detrimentally impacts academic performance; the home environment; a lack of commitment among students; the surrounding cultural influences that adversely affects the institution; poverty, family conflicts, and health issues; the presence of a supportive environment; lack of commitment among teachers; student indiscipline; the home environment in that many learners originate from nearby areas; a lack of focus and commitment among students regarding their future; humble socio economic backgrounds; drug influences; insufficient financial resources; limited parental involvement; inadequacies in school programs; absence of a dining hall; lack of a science laboratory; tardiness, absenteeism, illness, and social background.

The additional aspects identified by the teachers included: student absenteeism; drug and substance abuse among pupils; an unwelcoming environment; family background; teacher-student relationships; an inhospitable learning atmosphere; insufficient teaching facilities and resources; parental engagement in education; tardiness and absenteeism; the necessity for staff housing on campus to mitigate long commutes and enhance student interaction; provision of meals at school; the requirement for teachers residing on campus; inadequate classroom space; absence of a school laboratory; substance abuse by students; insufficient food during lunch; a shortage of teachers; and inadequate support staff. This means that by addressing these school environments' working conditions, stakeholders in Kitui West can create conditions more conducive to academic success, offering a sustainable path to tackling the region's challenges with performance.

These results align with Shonje (2016) who conducted a study to evaluate the impact of working conditions on teachers' employment. Research on teacher satisfaction in public secondary schools in the Kisarawe district of Tanzania revealed that educators operate under substandard conditions, characterized by insufficient in-service training, limited opportunities for promotion, and inadequate facilities such as seating and accommodation. Many of them reside far from the schools where they teach, which hampers their ability to meet daily tasks and diminishes their work morale. This results in teacher absenteeism and tardiness, which adversely affects kids' academic performance.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that effective management practices by principals of institutional working conditions of teachers particularly by ensuring the availability of adequate teaching and learning resources, positively influence students' academic performance. However, factors such as inadequate facilities such as housing and seating, long distances to school and unfavorable working conditions hinder effective school operations and academic success. Additionally, challenges like student indiscipline, lack of commitment, cultural influences, poverty, family conflicts, health issues, drug abuse, limited parental involvement, and insufficient financial resources also negatively impact performance. Institutional inadequacies, such as the absence of key facilities like science laboratories and dining halls, further contribute to these challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends prioritization by principals and school management on improving working conditions by providing adequate teaching resources, essential facilities like staff housing, and sufficient sitting space. Measures to address long commutes, such as transportation support or nearby accommodations are also suggested. The School Board of Management should implement comprehensive strategies to address infrastructural deficiencies, logistical needs and resource allocation, creating a supportive environment that motivates teachers and enhances students' academic performance.

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