



Analysing Leadership Roles in Incentivising Teacher Performance Among Principals, Deputies, and HODs in Kenya

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Abstract

The study aimed to examine the various approaches utilized by educational administrators, including Principals, Deputies, and Heads of Departments (HODs), to motivate and enhance teacher performance within the context of Kuresoi Sub-county, located in Nakuru County, Kenya. Utilizing a quantitative research approach, the study employed closed-ended questionnaires as a data collection method. A sample size of 266 participants was chosen for the study, consisting of 38 principals, 38 deputy principals, and 190 heads of departments (HODs). The results of the study indicated that there were notable differences in the inclination towards specific strategies depending on the leadership position. Deputies primarily employed formal acknowledgement strategies, such as conducting meetings and sending out memos, while Principals showed a greater inclination towards recognizing individuals through personal commendations. The significance of Heads of Departments (HODs) was particularly highlighted by their emphasis on recognizing teacher achievements through individualized memoranda. This study presents a new perspective by offering valuable insights into the nuanced strategies employed by various leadership positions within the educational landscape of Kenya. It highlights the importance of implementing customized strategies for acknowledgement that align with each post's distinct responsibilities and inclinations. The findings of this study have significant implications for educational policy and leadership training programs, intending to optimize teacher motivation and performance.

Keywords: Leadership Roles, Teacher Incentivisation, Recognition Strategies

Introduction

Background to the study

Leadership's significant importance in influencing teacher performance and overall institutional achievement is recognised worldwide in educational contexts. A recent study by Jamali et al. (2022) provides insights into the interconnected nature of leadership styles and organisational culture within academic environments, specifically focusing on the Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET), Jamshoro. The study suggests a strong positive relationship between transformational leadership and faculty performance, whereas transactional leadership is associated with a negative effect. Implementing this transformative approach has been found to boost the performance of teachers through the provision of autonomy, the cultivation of mutual trust, the encouragement

of creativity, and the facilitation of collaboration. On the other hand, the laissez-faire leadership style, which is widely observed, has demonstrated a positive yet constrained influence on faculty performance. This impact is contingent upon the organisational culture, which moderates the relationship between leadership style and faculty outcomes, particularly in the context of the laissez-faire approach (Jamali et al., 2022).

Ford et al. (2018) conducted a study to investigate the correlation between supportive teacher assessment experiences and teachers' job satisfaction within the context of the United States. The research conducted by the authors is based on the data obtained from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) in 2013. The findings of their study reveal a clear and positive relationship between the perspectives of secondary teachers in the United States regarding supportive teacher assessment experiences and their overall job satisfaction. Notably, teachers who viewed their evaluations as catalysts for facilitating positive changes in their teaching practice exhibited increased satisfaction. Additionally, it is essential to highlight that selecting the primary evaluator, whether a peer or a principal, substantially impacted teacher satisfaction. Specifically, peer evaluations tended to be associated with higher satisfaction levels (Ford, Urick, & Wilson, 2018).

In the European educational context, Vanblaere and Devos (2016) underscored the multifaceted nature of professional learning communities (PLCs) and the significance of transformational and instructional school leadership in shaping them. The study conducted by the researchers utilised survey data collected from experienced teachers in Flemish primary schools. The study's findings revealed a direct relationship between instructional leadership and the level of engagement in deprivatised practice and reflective discourse within professional learning communities (PLCs). Additionally, the study emphasised the importance of adapting leadership styles to the unique characteristics of professional learning communities (PLCs), thus emphasising that the importance of leadership may differ based on specific traits exhibited by PLCs. A study conducted in New Zealand schools focused on the changing role of middle-level leaders in instructional leadership. The findings revealed that although these leaders generally displayed a high level of confidence in carrying out their responsibilities, there were still areas where their skills were lacking, such as engaging in difficult conversations (Cardno et al., 2018).

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The studies mentioned above collectively emphasise the intricate intricacies inherent in the leadership dynamics of educational institutions within various global contexts. The significant variations in leadership styles, evaluation techniques, and management of professional communities underscore the necessity of conducting context-specific research to comprehend the influence of leadership on motivating teacher performance. This is particularly relevant when considering the distinct circumstances of Kuresoi Sub-county in Nakuru County, Kenya.

Purpose of the study

This study aimed to examine the intricate aspects of leadership dynamics in educational institutions, particularly emphasising the responsibilities of Principals, Deputies, and Heads of Departments (HODs) in acknowledging and motivating teacher performance.

Research Objective

The objective of this study was to analyse distinct strategies employed by Principals, Deputies, and Heads of Departments (HODs) in incentivising the Teacher performance.

Significance of the study

The study revealed that principals, Deputies, and HODs have different leadership styles. According to the study, teachers' motivation and satisfaction with their work depend on proper recognition. The research on how and how often leadership roles recognise teacher accomplishments revealed areas for Teacher performance.

The analysis also revealed the best incentive approaches for educational leadership to embrace to foster a positive and progressive institutional climate by identifying the most effective methods.

Finally, leadership recognition trends study insights may contribute to the design of leadership training programs.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study focused on principals, deputies, and heads of departments at educational institutions. The study examined the several ways great leaders motivate teachers. This included publicly reinforcing excellent teaching, giving private compliments, writing memos highlighting exceptional efforts, offering professional recognition, and initiating professional growth opportunities for significant institution contributions. The study also meticulously recorded how often these recognition and reward strategies were used, from "Almost Always" to "Almost Never". This research focused on incentives and recognition for teachers based on their professional success and unique contributions to education.

The primary limitation is generalizability; the findings may only apply to the institutions or regions under study, not other educational settings or cultural contexts. Subjective data collection is another drawback. The research relies mainly on self-reported data, making it prone to biases, preconceptions, and memory errors. The study focuses on Principals, Deputies, and HODs but doesn't examine other key educational jobs like school board members or administrative employees. Finally, performance-based incentives dominate the study. This implies it doesn't include incentives based on tenure, extracurricular involvement, or community service.

Statement of Problem

The function of educational leadership in shaping the performance and productivity of teachers, and consequently, the pupils, is of significant importance globally (Mwesigye Elisado, 2022). In the specific setting of East Africa, with a particular focus on Tanzania, scholarly research has recognised the significance of leadership styles in shaping teachers' performance within primary schools (Aunga & Masare, 2017). Rutttoh (2019) has noted comparable findings in Kenya, where the impact of leadership is acknowledged not just in the overall county administration systems but also within educational institutions. These findings indicate that the presence of strong leadership has the potential to influence academic outcomes and enhance teacher productivity positively.

A significant issue of concern is evident within the particular context of public schools in Kuresoi Sub-county of Nakuru County, Kenya. The significance of leadership roles is widely recognised. However, there is a lack of comprehensive exploration of the approaches utilised by Principals, Deputies, and Heads of Departments (HODs) to motivate and enhance teacher performance within this particular region. The study conducted by Baraza (2017) emphasises the significance of management-related elements concerning teacher stress, which can indirectly affect

their interpretation. Given the importance of teacher performance concerning student results, it becomes crucial to comprehend the tactics employed for incentivisation. The primary aim of this study was to examine the various approaches these leaders utilise in motivating and enhancing teacher performance.

The rationale for doing this research arises from teachers' substantial impact on children's academic performance in public schools within Kuresoi Sub-county. The educational outcomes of a significant proportion of students can be significantly influenced by several factors that impact their performance. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the existing leadership roles and tactics not only facilitates the comprehension of present practices but also presents opportunities for enhancement, guaranteeing the maintenance of optimal teacher performance.

Theoretical framework

Leadership plays a crucial role in the educational context of Kuresoi Sub-county schools, shaping the trajectory and results for both teachers and students. This study aims to investigate the strategies employed by key educational leaders, including Principals, Deputies, and Heads of Departments, to enhance teachers' performance. The Transformational Leadership Theory is identified as the fundamental basis to guide this investigation.

The Transformational Leadership Theory, initially proposed by Burns in 1978 and further developed by Bass in 1985, posits that exceptional leadership can transcend mere transactions. Leaders of this calibre can mobilise their followers to exceed established standards. The study conducted by Moradi Korejan and Shahbazi (2016) sheds light on the potential of transformational leaders to inspire unwavering dedication, loyalty, and drive among organisational members, leading to profound and lasting transformations and exceptional performance outcomes.

Upon further examination, the crux of this leadership style centres around four fundamental elements. Firstly, the 'Idealised Influence' concept pertains to leaders who serve as ethical exemplars, commanding respect and generating admiration. Subsequently, the next stage is characterised by 'Inspirational Motivation,' when leaders instil optimism and invigorate individuals by articulating a progressive and visionary outlook. "Intellectual Stimulation" calls for reassessing long-standing customs, creating a conducive environment that nurtures innovative thought. Finally, the concept of 'Individualised Consideration' embodies the essence of personalised leadership, wherein the unique requirements of each follower are recognised and addressed (Bass, 1985; Moradi Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016).

Integrating leadership tactics with transformational features can enhance teacher performance in Kuresoi Sub-county's education system, as demonstrated in Ruttah's (2019) study.

However, possessing a theoretical understanding alone is insufficient. It is crucial to comprehend its utilisation within the practical context of the educational environment. Berkovich (2016) emphasises the importance of re-evaluating the implementation of transformational leadership in educational settings, highlighting the complex nature of its application. Therefore, it is imperative to design this study using methodologies that align with the fundamental tenets of transformational leadership, guaranteeing a comprehensive range of facts. This encompasses a wide range of factors, including the strategies employed by school leaders to motivate teachers and the impact of these strategies on the overall school environment. Integrating theoretical, conceptual, and empirical domains is

crucial in academic research, as it facilitates the transformation of abstract ideas into tangible indicators grounded in specific contexts.

In summary, situating this study within the framework of the Transformational Leadership Theory provides a robust conceptual framework. It highlights the intricate relationship between various leadership styles and teacher effectiveness. This perspective was to analyse and gain a deeper understanding of the intricate leadership aspects prevalent in contemporary times.

Research Methodology and Design

Selecting a research technique serves as the fundamental framework for a study, establishing the trajectory for inquiries and the derivation of results. A quantitative methodology was used for our inquiry to examine the influence of leadership strategies employed by Principals, Deputies, and Heads of Departments (HODs) on teacher performance. This approach, advocated by renowned scholars such as Creswell (2014), demonstrates proficiency in precisely and quantitatively examining specific research inquiries.

Research design

This study opted for a quantitative research design to examine the leadership tactics employed by Principals, Deputies, and Heads of Departments (HODs) to incentivise teacher performance. The design highlighted by Creswell (2014) facilitates efficient and accurate research inquiries, guaranteeing the collection and analysis of data systematically. Using a survey research strategy, a widely recognised technique in quantitative research has significant importance in this investigation. According to Bryman (2016), surveys are an effective method for collecting data from large populations, which makes them particularly important when seeking results that can be generalised. The research aimed to investigate the diverse strategies of influential educational leaders using structured surveys.

The justification for opting for a quantitative research design is its exceptional ability to investigate precise and targeted inquiries using a methodical and standardised methodology. Considering that the fundamental objective of this study is to identify and examine the distinct approaches employed by educational administrators, the quantitative research paradigm is very appropriate due to its proficiency in generating numerical data that can be subsequently analysed and transformed into significant statistical findings. According to Muijs (2011), this particular methodological technique is unrivalled in its ability to obtain unbiased insights, particularly concerning the connections between leadership strategies and outcomes in teacher performance.

In light of the research aims, using a quantitative design enabled the examination of leadership positions, the understanding of developing patterns, and the discovery of potential links, all within the framework of enhancing teacher performance. The careful method employed in this context facilitated clarity and is supported by empirical facts, enabling the formulation of evidence-based conclusions.

This study aims to shed light on the intricate methods employed by school leaders to enhance teacher performance by combining the advantages of quantitative design and survey methodology. The findings derived from this data-driven endeavour hold significant potential to shape the trajectory of leadership paradigms in the education sector of Kenya, particularly within the specific context of Nakuru County.

Research instruments

The primary research tool utilised in this study was a closed-ended questionnaire specifically designed for principals, deputy principals, and heads of departments (HODs). The questionnaires were carefully designed to collect instructional and transformational leadership data.

Due to the critical importance of acquiring genuine and consistent data, it was imperative to prioritise the validation and dependability of the instruments. The questionnaires were subjected to a validation procedure that included the participation of specialists in educational leadership. Additionally, pilot research was undertaken using a limited sample size derived from a school beyond the main study region. The data obtained from the pilot test was analysed to determine the reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Sampling procedures and sample size

In this study, the utilisation of purposive sampling was implemented due to its appropriateness for smaller populations that require in-depth analysis of certain features (Kothari, 2011). The study primarily targeted principals, deputy principals, and heads of departments (HODs) from educational institutions within Kuresoi Sub-County. The selection criteria were established by considering the schools' notably inadequate performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) since 2008, after the implementation of subsidised Secondary Education. This assessment was made concerning other sub-counties within Nakuru County.

The objective of the study was to gather viewpoints from important academic departments. As a result, the heads of five central departments, namely Mathematics, Languages, Humanities, Science, and Applied/Technical, were selected as participants. Incorporating these departments was of utmost importance since they assume a pivotal function in the execution of the curriculum and exert a substantial impact on students' scholastic achievements in nationwide assessments.

By the year 2013, a total of 39 out of the 43 public secondary schools in Kuresoi Sub-County had candidates who participated in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination. Hence, the investigation solely focused on the aforementioned 39 educational institutions. Therefore, the study's sample size consisted of 38 principals, 38 deputy principals, and 190 heads of departments (HODs), resulting in 266 participants.

Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected from the Principals, Deputy Principals, and Heads of Departments (HODs) was methodically categorised, evaluated, and tabulated. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was employed for data analysis. Quantitative analysis was conducted to calculate frequencies, percentages, and tables to illustrate the degrees of transformational and instructional leadership exhibited by principals and the prevailing school climate in the research area.

Results and Discussions

This study aimed to investigate the approaches employed by Principals, Deputies, and Heads of Departments (HODs) to motivate and enhance teacher performance. The examination of the data presented in Table 1 reveals several noticeable patterns.

Table 1

Providing Incentives for Teachers

Strategy/Method	Role	Almost Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never
Reinforce superior performance by teachers in staff meetings, newsletters, and/or memos	Principal	10(26.3%)	15(39.5%)	5(13.2%)	6(15.8%)	2(5.3%)
	Deputy	9(23.7%)	12(31.6%)	11(28.9%)	5(13.2%)	1(2.6%)
	HODs	59(31.1%)	52(27.4%)	37(19.5%)	22(11.6%)	20(10.5%)
Compliment teachers privately for their efforts or performance	Principal	7(18.4%)	19(50%)	7(18.4%)	3(7.9%)	2(5.3%)
	Deputy	12(31.6%)	12(31.6%)	6(15.8%)	7(18.4%)	1(2.6%)
	HODs	55(29%)	69(36.3%)	24(12.6%)	26(13.7%)	16(8.4%)
Acknowledge teachers' exceptional performance by writing memos for their personal files	Principal	6(15.8%)	7(18.4%)	16(42.1%)	7(18.4%)	2(5.3%)
	Deputy	7(18.4%)	9(23.7%)	8(21.1%)	9(23.7%)	5(13.2%)
	HODs	32(16.9%)	42(22.1%)	52(27.4%)	31(16.3%)	33(17.4%)
Reward special efforts by teachers with opportunities for	Principal	6(15.8%)	11(28.9%)	14(36.8%)	5(13.2%)	2(5.3%)

professional recognition						
	Deputy	14(36.8%)	7(18.4%)	7(18.4%)	4(10.5%)	6(15.8%)
	HODs	46(24.2%)	52(27.4%)	51(26.8%)	24(12.6%)	17(8.9%)
Create professional growth opportunities for teachers as a reward for special contributions to the school	Principal	10(26.3%)	17(44.7%)	7(18.4%)	2(5.3%)	2(5.3%)
	Deputy	16(42.1%)	10(26.3%)	4(10.5%)	3(7.9%)	5(13.2%)
	HODs	62(32.7%)	54(28.4%)	33(17.4%)	26(13.7%)	15(7.9%)

The acknowledgement of exceptional performance by deputies was expected, with a significant proportion of 31.6% adopting various techniques such as conducting meetings, distributing newsletters, or sending memoranda to fulfil this objective. In contrast, the Heads of Departments (HODs) exhibited a notable level of consistency, as around 31.1% consistently acknowledged it through comparable approaches. It is worth mentioning that a significant proportion of Principals, specifically 39.5%, frequently utilise this particular strategy (GHAVIFEKR, RADWAN, & VELARDE, 2019).

Within the specific context of expressing direct compliments towards teachers, it was observed that Principals played a prominent role, with a notable 50% frequently opting for personalised acknowledgements. The Heads of Departments (HODs) also conformed to this trend, with a significant majority of 36.3% implementing this approach. The deputies demonstrated an equitable methodology, as 31.6% consistently and predominantly opted for private praise.

The method of acknowledging exceptional performance with personal memoranda was intermittently utilised by 27.4% of Heads of Departments (HODs) and 42.1% of Principals. In contrast, it was seen that Deputies exhibited a proclivity for employing this particular approach, with a notable 23.7% consistently utilising it.

Concerning the official acknowledgement of outstanding endeavours, it is observed that a significant proportion of Heads of Departments (HODs) and Principals, specifically 27.4% and 28.9% respectively, frequently chose this approach. The deputies exhibited a consistent pattern, favouring this form of recognition with a rate of 36.8%.

Moreover, concerning rewards in the form of professional advancement opportunities, Heads of Departments (HODs) were at the forefront, consistently offering these chances to a significant extent, accounting for approximately 32.7% of the cases. The majority of principals, accounting for 44.7%, often advocated for this strategy, whilst deputies, comprising 42.1% of the sample, exhibited a strong tendency towards it.

Engaging with relevant academic literature provides additional perspectives and understanding. Ghavifekr, Radwan, and Velarde (2019) emphasised a modest level of perspective on the duties of instructional leadership, specifically concerning establishing a school's mission. This finding aligns with the evidence that indicates a frequent occurrence of principals acknowledging performance.

Comighud and Arevalo (2021) underscored the significance of motivation in shaping teacher performance in a separate investigation. The research's emphasis on existential requirements and social connectedness is consistent with the observed findings, particularly in Deputies and Heads of Departments' robust implementation of recognition and incentive tactics.

In summary, Levačić (2009) comprehensively analysed the difficulties associated with developing optimal performance-based compensation schemes, which involve effectively managing the interplay between altruistic and self-interested incentives within the teaching profession. The findings of this study demonstrate the intricate nature of the incentivisation strategies employed by educational leaders.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

A comprehensive investigation into how leadership in public secondary schools, including the positions of Principals, Deputies, and Heads of Departments (HODs), motivates teachers reveals a range of well-developed strategies to enhance teacher effectiveness. There are discernible variations in the inclination towards particular strategies, contingent upon individuals' roles. For example, the typical approach employed by Deputies tends to prioritise recognition through official means such as meetings and mailings. Conversely, principals demonstrate a tendency to provide individual commendations. The significance of Heads of Departments (HODs) becomes particularly evident in their responsibility to acknowledge the outstanding achievements of teachers through individualised memoranda. A captivating narrative unfolds by juxtaposing these findings with influential studies such as Ghavifekr, Radwan, & Velarde's (2019) key work and the research conducted by Comighud & Arevalo (2021). The text discusses the symbiotic relationship between the tactics of recognition and the fundamental principles of instructional leadership. The integration of recognition strategies, which serve as motivators and plaudits, is crucial in fostering an environment supporting teacher success.

Recommendations

Based on all of the findings, various courses of action become apparent. The primary consideration is acknowledging the distinct dispositions of each leadership position. Customising acknowledgements of these unique preferences might infuse them with genuineness and significance. Moreover, although a wide range of techniques exists, it is crucial for them to be unified by the principle of consistency. Consistently providing genuine praise, regardless of its specific format, can stimulate positive teaching behaviours.

Highlighting the inclination of Heads of Departments (HODs) to foster professional development is evidence of the advantageous outcomes of allocating resources towards these endeavours. Educational institutions have the

potential to benefit significantly by not just utilising these symbols of gratitude but also by employing them as instruments to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

Furthermore, drawing inspiration from Levačić's (2009) study, it becomes evident that educational institutions have a compelling obligation to incorporate a diverse range of incentives, effectively combining both internal and extrinsic motivators. This approach guarantees a comprehensive appeal to the motives of teachers. The instructors themselves might provide periodic feedback, which would act as a guiding tool for refining recognition strategies and ensuring they remain aligned with the teachers' changing requirements and ambitions.

Lastly, cultivating a culture centred around collaborative decision-making presents the potential for a more comprehensive and enhanced strategic approach. By harnessing the aggregate knowledge and expertise of several leadership levels, including Principals, Deputies, and Heads of Departments (HODs), it is possible to adopt a comprehensive and perceptive strategy.

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