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Influence of Teacher's Instructional Practices on Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Mwatate Sub-County

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There has been a concerted effort by the government to improve students' academic performance in secondary schools. Thus, the purpose of the study was to examine the influence of teacher efficacy on secondary school students' performance in the Mwatate Sub-County. The information provided by this research will benefit policymakers, community members and academicians. It adopted a descriptive survey research design, with a target population of 350 persons, comprised of 21 Headteachers and 329 teachers. The sample size of 176 persons was determined using the Krejcie & Morgan table (1970). The researcher collected data using questionnaires and interview guides. The instruments were validated by the supervisors. This was presented by the use of quotations. The study established that there is a statistically significant association between teacher efficacy influence secondary school students' performance. It was therefore recommended that head teachers, administration, policymakers, and other stakeholders should consider incorporating teachers' motivation in various practices such as teacher instruction, classroom management, motivation, and interpersonal relationships, as this will enhance secondary school students' performance.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the great appeals of teacher efficacy for researchers is that it is one of the few teacher characteristics that are related to student achievement (Woolfolk et al., 2005); teachers can make self-judgment about their teaching based on the achievements their students produce. Teacher efficacy is a self-perception of competence rather than a measure of actual competence. Dellinger et al. (2008) reports that when the definition of teacher efficacy in educational literature incorporated Bandura's definition, the instruments that were being used at the time did not validly assess teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Based on her review of the literature (Dellinger et al., 2008.) defined teachers' self-efficacy as the teacher's individual beliefs about his/her own abilities to successfully perform specific teaching and learning tasks within the context of the classroom. For some time, the terms teachers' self-efficacy and teacher efficacy have been used interchangeably.

Teacher efficacy is defined by several researchers as teachers' beliefs in their abilities to affect student performance (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Furthermore, teacher efficacy, as defined in the literature, overlooks the role played by teachers' beliefs in their ability to perform a wide variety of teaching tasks in various teaching and learning contexts.

Van Tartwijk et al. (1998) observe that teaching is a very complex activity that is affected by the subject matter, the time available, the teacher's factors, the disposition of the learners and resources. A distinction can be made between the pedagogical, methodological perspective of teaching, which includes the selection and organisation of teaching materials, methods of instruction and assessment, as well as the interpersonal perspective, which focuses on the interpersonal relationship between teacher and student (Wubbels & Levy, 1993). There are essential interpersonal relationships between the teacher and the students. Different teachers advocate different levels of control over their students.

According to Bennett (1988) and Brophy (1988), research in education provides mixed theories and evidence on skills and competencies required for effective classroom teaching. According to the proponents of effective classroom teaching, major teaching functions include instruction, classroom management, student socialisation, and disciplinary intervention (Brophy, 1988). In addition to the intellectual competencies needed by the teacher, Davis (1973) contended that an effective teacher "is concerned with the content of the learning task to be achieved and the social as well as the psychological processes which enable the content to be successfully imparted" (p. 43). Good teachers are caring, supportive, concerned about the welfare of students, knowledgeable about their subject matter, able to get along with parents, and genuinely excited about the work they do (Cruickshank et al., 2003).

According to Baber (2007), an effective teacher possesses strong cognitive skills, desirable personal characteristics, and knowledge of pedagogy and subject. He/ she has to be motivated and possess skilful classroom operations. Teachers have to use a variety of methods to enable students to easily acquire knowledge and skills. Indeed, the qualities of a teacher are ideal in Sub-Saharan Countries, but the reality is quite the opposite (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2013). Other than using traditional methods, poor training is also a factor. For example, according to Vavrus and Bartlett (2013), despite the different initiatives to improve the quality of education in Tanzania, the training of teachers has not improved. Some teachers in Secondary schools are ill-prepared and lack effective methods of teaching. Thus, initiatives to improve the quality of teaching in secondary schools have to start with improving teacher education.

In Kenya, the school curriculum is purely academically oriented, with cutthroat competition among schools to excel in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). Secondary schools have been characterised by poor performance in national examinations, especially in core subjects such as mathematics and sciences. The teacher factor is important in explaining the

poor performance. An added dimension relates to secondary school teachers' training which combines teaching methodology and subject matter. This is an overburdened programme. Furthermore, teachers' promotion has not been based on performance but on qualifications, which contributes to internal inefficiencies leading to poor performance.

Mwatate Sub-County has not been performing well in national examinations since 2010. According to Mwatate Sub-County Education Office (2015), out of the 6330 candidates who have sat for the KCSE exam in the last four years, only 65 scored a mean grade of A and A-, representing 1.03%, while 1469 candidates scored between C+ and B+ representing 23.2%. This implies that only 24.23% joined or could join the university. In addition, a total of 4796 candidates scored grades C and below, representing 75.77%. This kind of statistic paints a grim picture of the future performance of the current students and hence makes a number of them lose hope in excelling in their academics. This study therefore, stems from an understanding that the presence of students who have no hope of excelling in class has always been a challenge for teachers, and such a challenge has a direct effect on teachers' motivation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Instructional practices refer to the clarity of instructional goals, decision-making about curricula content, choice of instructional strategies, uses of instructional time, grouping practices, and classroom instructions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). There is a general consensus in educational literature that teachers' instructional practices do impart student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi 2006). Some instructional practices are reportedly more effective in improving students' performance than others. Instructional practices are broadly categorised into learner-centred and teacher-centred approaches, the latter being referred to as the traditional approach.

Learner-centred instructional practices emphasise high-order skills of discovery, reasoning, and collaborative learning and draw on students' past experiences and knowledge, while the traditional practices confer the owners of knowledge transmission on the teacher with students playing the passive role of memorising and reciting concepts (Cruickshank, Jenkins, & Metcalf, 2003). There is unanimous agreement among educational scholars and practitioners that learner-centred practices positively influence student performance (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). On the other hand, McCaffrey et al. (2001) report finding no significant relationship between the traditional approach and improved achievement in Mathematics, a core subject.

Top-performing school systems recognise that the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction: Learning occurs when students and teachers interact, and thus to improve learning implies improving the quality of that instruction. They have understood which interventions are effective in achieving this – coaching classroom practice, moving teacher training to the classroom, developing stronger school leaders, and enabling teachers to learn from each other – and have found ways to deliver those interventions throughout their school systems (Cheng & Watanabe, 2004). The quality of the outcomes for any school system is essentially the sum of the quality of the instruction that its teachers deliver. You could define the entire task of a school system as ensuring that when a teacher enters the classroom, he or she has the materials, the knowledge, the capacity, and the ambition to raise the standards of every child every day. Ensuring that teachers have that knowledge and capacity is not easy. Delivering excellent instruction requires teachers to develop a highly sophisticated set of skills. They need to assess practically the strengths and weaknesses of each individual student they teach, select the appropriate instructional method to help them to learn, and deliver instruction in an effective and efficient manner (Baber, 2007).

An effective secondary school teacher therefore has to possess the required qualities to be able to

handle students of their varying characteristics. Teachers need to be well prepared, with a personality that is approachable (Brisk, 2006). They have to use a variety of methods to enable students to easily acquire knowledge and skills. Gibson & Dembo (1984) urged that most teaching in African classrooms is not effective, as are characterised by rigidity, “Chalk and talk”, teacher dominance and lectures. Similar findings were also found by Sifuna (2007), who stated that lectures are the most dominant method of teaching and students in Tanzania and Kenya hardly receive any attention from their teachers; hence learning becomes difficult. Dominance in using lectures is not only because teachers lack knowledge of other teaching methods but also because of other factors like lack of teaching materials which result in combining classes and overcrowding.

In Kenya’s case, instruction in secondary schools is dominated by traditional instructional practices (Sifuna (2007). Consequently, most Kenyan studies have recommended changing instructional practices as a way of improving performance (Githua & Nyabwa, 2008). These studies have proposed interventions that target the teachers’ classroom activities.

Many educational specialists associate outcome-oriented approaches to curricula with incentive teaching and learning (Moreno, 2006) and present them as important tools in the hands of teachers to develop autonomous, critical, and assertive citizens (Operlti & Duncombe, 2008). Teaching practices are expected to address the development of subject-specific fields; transversal skills and personal development of learners are more demanding. Independent learning, project work, group work, peer learning and action learning are slowly making their way into teaching practices in Europe, and there are still few observations and studies on how these pedagogies manifest in the actual learning environment (Psifidou, 2010).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted through a descriptive survey research design. Thus, the descriptive

survey research design was chosen so that data on teacher efficacy could be collected from teachers and head teachers in their natural working environment. The target population was 350 persons, which comprised 21 Headteachers and 329 teachers. Headteachers were the ones appointed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) to manage schools. The target population for teachers and Form Four students will be 329 and 1465, respectively. The study focused on teachers because it was their efficacy that was seen to enhance the performance of the students.

The sample size was determined using the Krejcie & Morgan table (1970). According to the table, the target population of 350 head teachers and teachers corresponded to a sample size of 186 persons. To gain data, the researcher utilised a questionnaire for teachers and a semi-structured interview schedule for head teachers. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Thereafter, descriptive and inferential statistics were used for quantitation data analysis. For descriptive statistics, frequencies, %ages, and mean were used, while for inferential statistics, the researcher used Chi-square to establish the association. The quantitative statistical analysis was then presented in tables. Additionally, according to Burns and Grove (1999), qualitative research is a systematic, subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning. Thus, the common themes were identified, qualitative data extracted, organised, and then discussed under the main objective areas of the study.

RESULTS

Response Rate

A total of 165 questionnaires were sent out to the respondents to fill out. Of these questionnaires, 146 were returned for analysis. The returned 146 questionnaires accounted for an 88.5% response rate. A response rate of 70% and above is adequate (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999); therefore, a response rate of 88.5% was satisfactory for data analysis.

Table 1: Response rate

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Administered	165	100.0
Returned	146	88.5

Source: Researcher, 2023

Teacher’s Instructional Practices on Students’ Academic Performance

The study adopted descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. This helped to determine the influence of teachers’ instructional practices on

students’ academic performance in public secondary schools in Mwatate Sub-County. For analysis, descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and mean distribution) for the level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale of the variable teacher’s instructional practices.

Table 2: Influence of teacher’s Instructional practices on students’ academic performance

Statements	f	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean
Teachers’ instructional input efficacy improves students’ academic performance	17	11.6	8	10	59	52	3.83
Teachers’ instructional feedback efficacy improves students’ academic performance	2	1.4	21	8	59	56	4.00
Teachers’ communication efficacy improves students’ academic performance	4	2.7	3	24	45	70	4.19
Teachers’ knowledge of subject matter efficacy improves students’ academic performance	3	2.1	15	7	44	77	4.21

Source: Researcher, 2023

Table 2 shows that 59(40.4%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that teachers’ instructional input efficacy improved students’ academic performance, 52(35.6%) strongly agreed, 17(11.6%) strongly disagreed, 10(6.8%) were undecided, and 8(5.5%) disagreed with the statement. The study findings suggested that the respondents tended to agree (Mean=3.83) that teachers’ instructional input efficacy improved students’ academic performance. This implies that teachers’ instructional input efficacy improves students’ academic performance. This is in line with the findings of Leithwood and Jantzis (2006) that teachers’ instructional input efficacy improves students’ academic performance.

Additionally, 59(40.4%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that teachers’ instructional feedback efficacy improved students’ academic performance, 56(38.4%) strongly agreed, 21(14.4%) disagreed, 8(5.5%) were undecided, and 2(1.4%) strongly disagreed with the statement. It emerged from the study that the respondents agreed (Mean=4.00) that teachers’ instructional feedback efficacy improved students’ academic performance. This

was supported by an interviewee who had the following to say;

Fundamental to teacher and student success is the teacher’s ability to communicate effectively with students. Therefore, teachers should have good communication skills to help their students achieve academic success... (Female Participant, 57 years, Head Teacher)

This implies that teachers’ instructional feedback efficacy improves students’ academic performance.

Similarly, 70(47.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that teachers’ communication efficacy improved students’ academic performance, 45(30.8%) agreed, 24(16.4%) were undecided, 4(2.7%) strongly disagreed, and 3(2.1%) disagreed with the statement. The study findings suggested that the respondents agreed (Mean=4.19) that teachers’ communication efficacy improved students’ academic performance. This implies that teachers’ communication efficacy improved students’ academic performance.

Lastly, 77(52.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that teachers' knowledge of subject matter efficacy improved students' academic performance, 44(30.1%) agreed, 15(10.3%) disagreed, 7(4.8%) undecided and 3(2.1%) strongly disagreed with the statement. It emerged from the study that the respondents agreed (Mean = 4.21) that teachers' knowledge of subject matter efficacy improved students' academic performance. This implies that teachers' motivation on knowledge of subject matter improves students' academic performance. This is in agreement with the findings of Brisk (2006) that teachers' motivation on knowledge of

subject matter improves students' academic performance.

These descriptive statistics of objective one were followed by a Chi-square test of association. The Chi-square test at $p \leq 0.05$ significance level illustrates the statistically significant association between teachers' instructional practices and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mwatate Sub-County. To achieve this, the hypothesis below was tested;

H₀₁: There is no significant association between teachers' instructional practices and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mwatate Sub-County.

Table 3: Chi-square test of association between teacher's instructional practices and students' academic performance in public secondary schools

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	533.464 ^a	132	.000
Likelihood Ratio	275.085	132	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	94.806	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	146		

a. 152 cells (97.4%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

Source: Researcher, 2022

Table 3 shows that the p-value ($p = 0.000$) for classroom play was less than 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis, "there is no significant association between teacher's instructional practices and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mwatate Sub-County", was rejected. This implies that there is a statistically significant association between teachers' instructional practices and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mwatate Sub-County.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study findings suggested that the respondents tended to agree that teachers' instructional input efficacy improved students' academic performance. Additionally, it emerged from the study that the respondents agreed that teachers' instructional feedback efficacy improved students' academic performance. Similarly, the study findings suggested that the respondents agreed that teachers' communication efficacy

improved students' academic performance. Lastly, it emerged from the study that the respondents agreed that teachers' knowledge of subject matter efficacy improved students' academic performance. The chi-square test of association revealed that there is a statistically significant association between teachers' instructional practices and students' academic performance in public secondary schools.

From the findings, the study concluded that teacher efficacy influences secondary school students' performance. It is concluded that there is a statistically significant association between teachers' instructional practices and secondary school students' performance. Therefore, teachers' instructional input, instructional feedback, communication, and knowledge of subject matter efficacy improve students' academic performance in public secondary schools.

In reference to the findings, conclusions, and guidance from the literature review, it was vibrant

that teacher efficacy influences secondary school students' performance in Mwatate Sub-County. Therefore, the head teachers, administration, policymakers, and other stakeholders should consider incorporating teachers' motivation in various practices such as teacher instruction, classroom management, motivation, and interpersonal relationships, as this will enhance secondary school students' performance.

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