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### Professional Growth Opportunities and Its Influence on Job Performance of Deputy Principals of Public Secondary Schools in Lugari Sub-County, Kenya.

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**Keywords:**

*Deputy Principal,  
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Schools.*

This study sought to explore the influence of professional growth opportunities on the job performance of deputy principals of public secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County, Kenya. Adopting the descriptive research design, the study utilised mixed methods approach engaging both questionnaires and interview guide. The focus population for the study included 28 principals, 28 deputy principals and 420 teachers of public secondary schools within Lugari Sub-County. All the 28 principals and 28 deputy principals were purposively sampled for study whereas, 200 teachers were identified for study by simple random sampling technique. A pilot test-retest study was conducted in three public secondary schools from nearby Uasin Gishu County and a reliable Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.79 and 0.81 was obtained for the deputy principal response questionnaire and teacher response questionnaire, respectively. Supervisors and researchers from Mount Kenya University School of education were engaged to ascertain the validity of the research instruments and necessary adjustments effected on the tools before use. The questionnaires gathered quantitative data from teachers and deputy principals whilst the interview guide assembled qualitative data from the principals. The statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.0 was used for the analysis of quantitative data yielding frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation. Qualitative data were analysed thematically based on the objectives and presented along with the quantitative data. The findings established that schools in Lugari Sub County hardly support deputy principals for in-service training, the majority of deputy principals perceived unfairness in promotion procedures and that the position of deputy principal did not adequately prepare deputy principals for principal-ship. The study recommends that deputy

principals need to be supported by the school management to collaborate and improve their requisite skills to discharge their duties effectively.

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## INTRODUCTION

The educational organisation of a nation determines its growth. On this basis, education and training have been identified as the means to propel Kenya into a middle-level economy (Keiyoro, 2012). Notably, excellent instruction is a result of quality educators coupled with the appropriate running of learning institutions (Selamat, Samsu and Kamalu, 2013). However, accelerated global transformations, technological and demographical changes, increased sense of responsibility as well as weakened support systems have created additional multifaceted and complicated tasks for institutional managers (Armstrong, 2014). Demet and Erkut (2018) noted that setting the pace, aspirations, efficiency and safety at schools is a duty bestowed on the instructors and administrators. Apparently, to manage schools properly, principals need the support of all stakeholders. One such important stakeholder is the deputy principal. Barnett, Shoho and Oleszewski (2012) posit that if deputy principals assume their duties wholesomely, they stand a central position in responding to modern age

school transformation realities. Hulya (2019) adds that school administrators greatly influence the climate and social practices at school, as well as learners' achievement; hence, they need proper professional development for the realisation of school goals.

The position of deputy principals is imperative to institutions owing to its historical reality worldwide. They are believed to embrace fundamental roles in schools including; the traditional function of deputising the principal, the prospective role as a preparatory stage to principal-ship and thirdly, the emergent role as an administrator (Barnett et al., 2012; Armstrong, 2009; Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis & Ecob, 2008). Unfortunately, many assistant principals feel unprepared for their current role (Busch, Macneil & Baraniuk, 2012). World over, studies have indicated a number of challenges concerning deputy principals. In Florida, superintendent and district human resource executives testified to heightened difficulty in satisfying available positions for deputy principals (Maddern, 2009). In the US, Capelluti and Nye

(2005) envisaged a countrywide scarcity of principals normally selected amid potential deputy principals. In Turkey, deputy principal's stand-in in the absence of main administrators and are in charge of routine activities, supervision of teachers and learners as well as convey challenges to the boss (Goksoy, 2016). In India, deputy principals called for additional coaching pertaining to technology and special education (Abebe et al., 2010).

Nigeria deputy principals decry unclear guidelines regarding their job description which has heightened the complexity and stress levels for holders of the position. This has made female educators hesitant to assume the position apprehensive of frequent disagreements linked to the position (Edo & Nwosu, 2018). In Kenya, studies have eminent reports of deputy principals exiting the service, declining appointments and resigning from the position (Ndichu & Silsil, 2007; Barasa et al., 2014; Ombuya, 2015; World Bank, 2014). Also, worth noting is the increased desire of teachers to migrate to specific schools. The transit behaviour may be informed by the work conditions and inadequacy of the deputy principals to handle increased tasks. Edo and Nwosu (2018) affirm that school managements face the novel challenge of creating a surrounding that draws, holds and inspires teachers to pride working to their full potential. One such challenge is updating teachers' proficiency through well designed professional development plans. In summary, these studies appreciate the gradual evolution of the duties of the deputy principal cognizant of learner supervision and instructional guidance as key duties for this group of school administrators.

Regrettably, scores of deputy principals expressed unpreparedness in their current assignment (Busch, Macneil & Baranuik, 2012), positively indicating a need for meaningful and relevant professional development. While Barnett et al. (2012) highlighted that new and veteran assistant principals alike felt unprepared working with the school community, lacked understanding of some job-

related expectations and were deficient in requisite organisational and managerial skills to carry out their duties. One way to overcome such challenges is through capacity building. Literature indicates a universal consent on the necessity of continuous expertise advancement in enhancing educators' professional capability with the eventual aim of improving learners' outcomes (Busch, Macneil & Baranuik 2012; Barnett et al. 2012; Abebe, Linsey, Bonner and Heck, 2010; Komba and Nkumbi (2008); World Bank 2014). In the same vein, numerous reasons necessitate the need for enhanced professional development for deputy principals. Deputy Principals' handle a myriad of responsibilities with unclear job descriptions, coupled with the fact that they will assume office upon exit of principals with diminutive support. Deputy Principals also require support and training to handle new and emergent tasks, especially learner discipline, curriculum schedule, co-curriculum activities and fundamentals in administration. For deputy principals, professional growth is paramount as a preparation factor to principal-ship serving as an effective training base for the assumption of principal duties (Agba, Ogaboh & Ushie, 2010) when opportunities arise.

Professional development entails shared learning opportunities and experiences in a formal or informal perspective amid associates in occupational teams or peers (Hulya, 2019). Diverse connotations have been assigned including staff development, in-service training, professional learning or continuing education. Deputy principals are earmarked for professional development since their novel tasks call for skills to interpret emerging guidelines and plans of action as well as gain support in discharging duties (World Bank, 2014). Worth noting is that mentorship plans are progressively vanishing away and the new responsibility may be an uphill task to handle for the new administrators. Kennedy (2016) posits vital competencies in a job is a long-term process, and without professional development, job performance

may be greatly compromised. In addition, the ever-changing technological world, techniques for instruction and methods, policies, and students learning needs automatically trigger the need for professional competencies among teachers in order to cope (Hilton, Hilton & Goos, 2015). These enormous tasks tied with the evolving work environment necessitates that deputy principals regularly renew their leadership and managerial competencies.

The importance of professional development can never be overemphasised; it grants educators an occasion to shuffle their habitual practice of teaching to becoming learners, providing an opportunity to receive rather than give knowledge. Through such training, the trainees acquire fresh facts and competencies that would enhance their task delivery (Hilton, Hilton & Goos, 2015). It enables educators to frequently adapt their knowledge and practice to the changing teaching needs (Kuncoro & Darvidi, 2017). However, deputy principals have reduced openings for professional development (World Bank 2014), triggered by general school factors that can impact teachers learning and practices. Hilton, Hilton & Goos (2015) argue that school managerial incapacities and contradictory school ethics and practices can hinder teachers' professional erudition. Therefore, there is a need to tailor professional support and training to teachers needs and improve its usefulness as well as ensure adequate resources are availed for teachers to access the training. Of importance is the influence on educators to develop a culture of learning through a well-defined support system and incentives of self-growth.

Although Professional enlargement is identified as a means of steering enhanced job outcomes, studies have indicated that the highly valued and effective professional development courses are not accessible to many educators. A report by World Bank (2014) indicates that openings for teachers' professional growth are scarce, unreachable and disproportionately disseminated, notwithstanding

the soaring desire from teachers. Similarly, only a small proportion of teachers and deputy principals have masters' degrees (Githinji, 2014; Barasa et al., 2014). Time and financial constraints have also been identified as hindrances to educators' desire to study, reflect and incorporate learnt skills into their practice.

Fredrick Herzberg identified promotion/ growth and development as one of the satisfier factors which improves motivation at work (Vijaya & Saxena, 2015). There is a need for schools to create and enhance the accessibility of in-service training for their employees. A work environment that supports the professional growth and development of its staff presents an opportunity for diligent job performance and personal growth. Bucheli et al. (2010) noted that previously an employee's profession was a concern of the organisation, but currently, it is an employee's own vocation and would join or leave an organisation subject to opportunities for professional development. If an organisation expresses interest in its employee's professional growth, the employees would positively identify with the organisation (Wang et al., 2014), hence strengthening employee organisation bonds. This way, employees job performance would be enhanced and organisational goals may be easily achieved. Worker's performance is determined by ability, motivation and environment (Denmar & Maroah, 2017; Wang et al., 2014). How well schools in the Lugari sub-county have provided support for the deputy principals is yet to be exploited.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Deputy Principals represent a unique cluster of teachers owing to their unique role of administrative leadership in addition to teaching. Teachers' Service Commission recognises the deputy principals' as second to principals. The position is promotional and competitive based on the career progression scale (TSC, 2019). The position also comes with special salary scales that cater for added

responsibility based on type and population in schools. The salary scales also seek to harmonise teachers' salaries with that of other public servants. In addition to their curriculum instructions duties, the deputy principals have numerous roles and responsibilities most of which are a function of the delegators' authority of the principal. This scenario subject deputies to little decision-making autonomy posing difficulty in defining their exact roles which predisposes them to confusion and conflict hindering their effective discharge of duties. Furthermore, the government has rolled out a number of policies among them being abolition of corporal punishment, 100% transition, readmission of teenage mothers among others, that pose a challenge to the office of the deputy principals directly as discipline managers in schools. These education reforms coupled with the evolving technological advancements have disrupted the school ecosystem; as school populations increase, learner challenges increase too, handling teenage mothers and overstretched school facilities not forgetting the increasing number of teachers and support staff. The deputy principals as administrators are required to interpret the policies to stakeholders, uphold discipline at school as well as supervise curriculum implementation. These changes and reforms demand that deputy principals are well equipped and regularly renew requisite skills such as leadership, discipline management,

ICT, guiding and counselling, among others, to perform their duties diligently.

Against this backdrop, a good number of teachers including deputy principals are reported to exit teaching as a career for non-teaching related jobs in both private and public sectors. According to the Lugari Sub-County education report, 2017, four deputies exited the service, two wrote to the commission declining the offer, while a good number submitted their transfer requests to be moved to other schools. This turnover and migration upset the compositional arrangement in teacher quality, changes learner culture and inspiration and

erodes staff collegiality, confidence and propagates loss of institutional knowledge which is detrimental to the school's performance in the long run. This situation raises concerns on the professional preparedness of deputy principals as the underlying reason behind the unprecedented behaviour of these vital educators. Therefore, the study aimed at probing how professional growth opportunities influenced the job performance of deputy principals of public secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County, Kenya.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and employed a mixed-methods approach that collected both qualitative and quantitative data. The target population was 476, comprising of 28 principals, 28 deputy principals and 420 teachers in 28 public secondary schools of Lugari Sub County. 200 teachers were selected by simple random sampling technique, while 28 deputy principals and 28 principals were purposively selected. The teachers sample size was established using the Taro and Yamane formula (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). All 28 principals and 28 deputy principals were incorporated in the study, considering that 28 was the severe lower boundary of sample limits according to the central limit theorem (Singleton & Royce, 1975). Three public secondary schools from the neighbouring Uasin gishu County were used for piloting the research instruments. Research instruments were adequately validated. The test-retest technique was used to establish the reliability of the tools; after the computation of scores in the first and second trials, a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.8 was obtained for the deputy principal response questionnaire and 0.79 for the teacher response questionnaire. The questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from deputy principals and teachers, while the interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from the principals. To analyse quantitative data from questionnaires, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 software was used to



derive means, percentages, and standard deviation. On the other hand, qualitative data were analysed based on the objectives and presented thematically along with quantitative data.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to establish how professional growth opportunities influence the job performance of deputy principals in Lugari Sub County.

**Table 1: Deputy Principal Responses on Effects of Professional Growth Opportunities on Job Performance**

Statement	SD/D		N		SA/A		Mean	SD
	F	%	f	%	f	%		
The school supports me for in-service training.	17	(60.7)	1	(3.6)	10	(35.7)	2.5357	.51705
I have been trained in discipline management by the school.	25	(89.3)	-		3	(10.7)	1.9643	.57194
I have been trained in ICT by the school.	18	(64.3)	-		10	(37.5)	2.4643	.82490
I have been trained in leadership by the school.	23	(82.1)	-		5	(17.9)	1.7857	.61704
I perceive fairness in promotion procedures.	26	(92.9)	-		2	(7.1)	1.75	.46453
The position of deputy principal adequately prepares me for principal-ship.	17	(60.7)	5	(17.9)	6	(21.4)	2.3923	.61774
I am contended with the current trends of promotion.	21	(75.0)	3	(10.7)	4	(14.3)	2.1071	.57433
Promotion provides me opportunities for personal growth.	12	(42.9)	3	(10.7)	13	(46.4)	3.25	.74156
Professional development is paramount to my job performance at school.	6	(21.4)	6	(21.4)	16	(57.1)	3.3928	.25816
Professional skills development increases my motivation to work.	8	(28.6)	3	(10.7)	17	(60.7)	3.6786	.86187

**Table 2: Teachers' Responses on Effects of Professional Growth Opportunities on Job Performance of Deputy Principals**

Statement	SD/D		N		SA/A		Mean	SD
	F	%	f	%	f	%		
The school supports deputy principal for in service training.	109	(54.5)	17	(8.5)	74	(37.0)	2.63	.55577
The school has trained the deputy principal in discipline management.	156	(78.0)	12	(6.0)	32	(16.0)	2.235	.88526
The school has trained the deputy principal in ICT.	113	(56.5)	18	(9.0)	69	(34.5)	2.59	.61855
The school has trained the deputy principal in leadership.	146	(73.0)	16	(8.0)	38	(19.0)	1.98	.79871
The deputy principal in my school perceives fairness in promotion procedures.	112	(56.0)	80	(40.0)	8	(4.0)	2.00	.28755

Statement	SD/D		N		SA/A		Mean	SD
	F	%	f	%	f	%		
The position of deputy principal adequately prepares him/her for principal-ship	116	(58.0)	38	(19.0)	46	(23.0)	2.355	.74424
The deputy principal in my school is contended with the current trends in promotion.	134	(67.0)	37	(18.5)	29	(14.5)	2.055	.88526
Promotions provide the deputy principal opportunities for personal growth.	86	(43.0)	22	(11.0)	92	(46.0)	3.01	.79129
Professional development is paramount to the deputy principals' job performance.	57	(28.5)	39	(19.5)	104	(52.0)	3.215	.62207
Professional skill development increases the deputy principals' motivation to work at school.	54	(27.0)	32	(16.0)	114	(57.0)	3.57	.55680

As indicated in *Tables 1 and 2*, at mean 2.5357 and SD .51705 and teachers at mean 2.235 and SD .55577. Respondents generally disagreed that deputy principals receive in-service training at school. The principals indicated a lack of funds in schools to support in-servicing training deputies. These findings agree with Bucheli et al. (2010), who reported that nowadays, professional growth is the discretion of employees and not the organisation. This presents a weak employee institution bond that can propel deputy principals desire to exit the profession.

Deputy Principals at the mean of 1.9643 and SD .57194 and teachers at the mean of 2.235 and SD .88526 disagreed that deputy principals are trained on discipline management by the school. Similar trends were realised in Kwazulu Natal where the majority (49%) of teachers indicated that they were ill-prepared to deal with drug and substance abuse at school (Dehaloo, 2011). The deputy principals at the mean of 2.4643 and SD .8249 and teachers at the mean of 2.59 and SD .61855 disagreed that their deputy principal was trained in ICT by the school. Both deputy principals at mean 1.5357 and SD .78004 and teachers at the mean of 1.98 and SD .79871 generally disagreed that the deputy principals were trained in leadership by the school. Interviews with the principals revealed that

discipline management, ICT, and leadership skills are important for deputy principals to effectively discharge their duties. However, they were non-committal to facilitating the same decrying lack of funds for training. Interestingly, the principals indicated that all teachers including their deputies had been trained on Teacher Performance and Appraisal Development (TPAD), an online platform for monitoring teacher performance by the employer. This is a pointer to the prioritised areas for professional development.

Both deputy principals at mean 1.75 and SD .46453 and teachers at mean 1.75 and SD .46453 disagreed that the promotion procedure for deputy principals was fair. The interviewed principals indicated that promotions are pegged on job groups but decried delays and stagnation which discourage deputies in their job performance. In the Lumuru district, majority 47.6% of deputies were not satisfied with fairness in promotion (Githinji, 2014). In the Hamisi district, 57.57% disagreed with fairness in promotion procedures (Barasa et al., 2014). The position of deputy principal does not adequately prepare them for principal-ship. On this, deputies disagreed at the mean of 2.3923 and SD .61774 and teachers disagreed at mean 2.355 and SD .74424. The principals indicated that the position of deputy principal gives a basis to principal-ship though the

challenges in principle-ship are unique in each school. Deputy Principals are not contented with current promotion trends disagreed at the mean of 2.1071 and SD .5743 and teachers disagreed at mean 2.355 and SD .74424. The interviewed principals hinted at delays and stagnation hampering upward mobility in ranks, lowering contentment of deputies. These results agree with Githinji (2014), who observed that deputy principals in Limuru district indicated dissatisfaction with promotion chances. The deputy principals agreed at the mean of 3.25 and SD .74156 and teachers agreed at the mean of 3.215 and SD .79129 that promotions provide deputy principals opportunities for personal growth. One principal indicated that the position of deputy principal accords them a chance for networking and exposure. Another principal said, “For teachers to climb the administrative ladder, the position of deputy principal is inevitable”.

Deputy Principals agreed at the mean of 3.3928 and SD .25816 and teachers agreed at the mean of 3.215 and SD .62207 that professional development is vital in deputy principals’ job performance. The principals emphasised that professional development sharpens job performance hence a vital element in any career. Similar results were posted by Komba and Kumbi (2008), where the majority 61.2% of respondents, agreed that skill progression is vital for teachers. Similarly, 42.5% of deputies in Rachuonyo Sub County indicated that professional development is important for teachers (Ombuya, 2015). Professional skill development increases deputy principals’ motivation to work. Deputy Principals agreed at the mean of 3.6786 and SD .86187 and teachers agreed at the mean of 3.57 and SD .55680. The principals hinted any form of professional development propels deputies to work better. Similarly, 71.5% of deputies in Rachuonyo Sub County agreed that professional skill development motivates teachers intrinsically (Ombuya, 2015). This implies that deputy principals would have their job performance improve if they

were accorded more professional growth opportunities.

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to explore how professional growth opportunities influence the job performance of deputy principals in Lugari Sub-County, Kenya. The study findings revealed that: professional development opportunities increase the deputy principal’s motivation to work, accords them opportunities for personal growth hence vital for their job performance. However, a weak deputy principal school bond is exhibited due to a lack of professional support and training in ICT, leadership and discipline management. These coupled with inadequate preparation for principal-ship, stagnation and unfair promotion procedure may trigger exits or transfers of deputy principals to schools that are better placed to enhance their professional growth.

## Recommendation for Practice

The findings can be used to guide education stakeholders in policy-making including creating time for school administrators to attend in-service training. The findings recommend that schools and TSC should adopt a needs-based approach to design and tailor in-service training for deputy principals. Funding for in-service training should be prioritised in school budgets. The schools’ Board of Management to write policies that describe the boards’ philosophy about professional development, its purpose and guidelines for its operation.

## Suggestion for Further Research

This research recommends that:

- A comparable study considering deputy principals in private secondary schools whose conditions are different be carried out.



- Similar studies are to be carried out in other sub-counties and counties for corroboration now that

education and teachers' employment is a national function.

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