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Teachers' Collegiality and its Influence on Learners' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools of Baringo North Sub-County, Kenya

Kimeto Jeniffer^{*1}, Dr. Stephen Tomno Cheboi¹

¹ Mount Kenya University, P. O. Box 2591-30100, Eldoret, Kenya.

* Author for Correspondence Email: jenykimeto@gmail.com.

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Keywords:

Motivation,
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The purpose of the study was to establish the effects of teachers' collegiality on learners' academic performance in public secondary schools of Baringo North Sub-County, Kenya. The study employed mixed methods approach which utilized questionnaires and interview schedules. It adopted a descriptive research design in carrying out the study. The target population comprised 27 principals and 216 teachers in the 27 public secondary schools of Baringo North Sub County. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 138 teachers while 24 principals were purposively selected. From these populations, two schools were selected to pilot the research tools where a reliable Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.77 was obtained upon computation. Validity of the research instruments was carried out by the University supervisor and necessary revision done. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from teachers while interview schedule was used to collect qualitative data from principals. Quantitative data were analysed to obtain means, percentages, and standard deviation. Qualitative data on the other hand were analysed and presented thematically alongside the quantitative data. Inferential statistics were run to test the null hypothesis using Pearson's Linear Correlation Coefficient. The findings established that teachers' collegiality influences learners' KCSE academic performance in public secondary schools of Baringo North Sub-County. However, there was a weak positive correlation between teachers' collegiality and learners' academic performance. It also established that though collegiality was not fully practiced there was a strong synergy among teachers to improve learners' performance. The study recommends that teachers need to be supported by headteachers to collaborate to offer the best services to their learners and create more meaningful work. School headteachers should enhance teamwork among teachers to perform their best and staff members should meet or interact regularly, share ideas and expertise to attain higher performance.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamental to the development of a country as it provides human resources that can influence other resources into output efficiently and effectively (Orodho, 2014). It gives fundamental gear by liberating mankind so that community generates more capital to ensure coming generations achieve requisite expertise for life sustainability (Okumbe, 1999). Nonetheless, owing to its importance to the people, its measurement affects learners' performance since their overall achievement is linked to teachers' efforts. Teachers' instructional efforts are measured through learners' examination results. An examination is a gauging instrument that measures the ability of learners on the level of understanding the taught subject in schools. At the centre of the curriculum, implementation is the teacher who if not motivated, not much can be achieved since de-motivated teachers cannot take the required time with learners (Koech, Tikoko & Chemwei, 2014). Lack of motivation among teachers which is perceived to be caused by several factors among them is poor collegiality among teachers. Lack of collegiality is viewed as a parameter that impinges on learners' performance in public secondary schools in Kenya (Koech, Tikoko & Chemwei, 2014) and Baringo North Sub-County is not exceptional. In addressing students' academic performance, investment in human resources plays a very important role.

Collegiality is the relationship between colleagues in the workplace is seen to be an important element in our institutions. According to Shah (2012), health and strong collaborative relationships among teachers are considered an important ingredient to the quality and effectiveness of a school, enhancement of teachers and learners' performance. Researchers have consistently revealed that strong synergy among staff is an important feature found in most successful schools. Teachers are therefore encouraged to avoid a traditional culture of isolation and move towards greater collaboration. In most cases, too many workloads among teachers deny them opportunities of working as a team but rather one for himself or herself to meet the course targets. Teachers must collegiate together as it plays a dynamic role in enhancing teachers' professional growth and development, professional commitment, and job satisfaction, hence motivated to work (Shah, 2012).

Teamwork is viewed as an important feature of the best performing institutions and their members meet or interact regularly, sharing ideas and expertise to attain high goals or performance (Gallie et al., 2012). The features and qualities that are found in teachers who work alone are seen as barriers to professional growth among teachers. It is prudent to suggest that teachers' collegiality influences instructions thus teachers are required to embrace the importance of working hand in hand with each

other to strengthen skills they commonly have. Teachers who work as a team tend to be more exposed to new skills, teaching & learning resources, and methods of teaching.

Cooperation among staff increases the level of teacher satisfaction, minimizes emotional stress, and creates a sense of belonging. Collegiality is a similar scenario leads to a positive attitude towards individuals thus strengthening commitment to influence the voluntary approach to better practices in class. It also assists new teachers in the profession to a greater extent in settling down to work and reinforces the confidence and competence of these beginners. Several types of research done on teachers' collaborations and best approaches confirm that schools with high collegiality score more learners' academic grades. It is perceived that the highest cooperative relations among teachers increase the quality of instructions and in turn increase learners' academic performance. Therefore, nurturing the culture of teamwork in a school setting is beneficial to learners as greater gains in academics are seen from students in schools whose teachers cooperate responsibly.

In collegial research done on two performing and two non-performing schools in Michigan, Vickers (2014) established that the two performing schools reported more instances of collaboration compared to professional teachers in non-performing schools. The study thus concludes that there is a need to change school culture to be more collaborative than isolative. Collegiality is thus one among many factors that determine the quality of a school. Another research done in less fortunate public schools in Chicago noted that some schools with well-off staff in terms of attitude, energy and resources improved four times more than their colleagues having weak professional communities (Banerjee et al., 2017). Teachers' collegiality is important at a time when the environment continuously changes. It is seen as an opportunity of involving many players in the field to solve the education problems of this century. In Nyakongo (2015) teaching needs sacrifice and that motivation of individual teachers impact students' results. In view of this, teachers should be motivated especially in public secondary schools due to repeated poor academic performance. Esdras and Andala (2021) in a study on the influence of

motivation of teachers on performance in boarding secondary schools recommended that teachers should be motivated to improve performance. The overall research problem addressed in this study is that despite numerous researches on teacher motivation and how it affects students' performance little have been done to improve teachers' morale. This is evidenced by the numerous teachers' strikes which is an indicator that the teacher is not happy. The motivation of teachers, and with emphasis on teachers' collegiality, is one of the most important aspects determining learners' achievement in national examination (Nyakundi, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

National Examinations form a major objective tool to evaluate and determine what learners obtain from school instruction after some time. Overall students' performance in KCSE examinations is poor (Okoth, 2018). Nationally, there has been generally poor performance in KCSE over the past years and the same has been replicated in the Baringo North sub-county which is the researcher's area of study. According to statistics from the County Director of Education, public secondary schools' performance at KCSE in Baringo County has been poor particularly in Baringo North Sub-County. In 2017 KCSE results, out of 615,773 candidates who sat for the KCSE examination nationally, only 70,073 scored C+ and above which is a minimum entry requirement to the Kenyan Universities under the normal KUCCPS placement, equivalent to 11.38% transiting to university which is a very small percentage. Baringo North Sub-County has registered dismal performance in KCSE over the last five years and few students have had direct enrolment to universities as per KUCCPS admission compared to other Sub-Counties of Baringo County. This has elicited a lot of concern from many stakeholders. Various causes have been cited for this situation; among them is the collegiality of teachers which determines the extent to which they are motivated. It is from the glaring disparity and fluctuating performance in Baringo North Sub-County that this study sought to establish the effect of motivation of teachers on the performance of learners in Baringo North Sub-County among public secondary schools.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a mixed-methods approach which collected both qualitative and quantitative data and adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population comprised 27 principals, 216 teachers in 27 public secondary schools of Baringo North Sub County. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 138 teachers while 24 principals were purposively selected. The sample sizes were established using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. Out of the 27 schools in Sub County, 2 schools were used for piloting while the remaining 25 were used to draw the sample size for the actual study where a total of 162 respondents, comprising of 24 principals and 138 teachers were selected.

Validation of the research instruments was done by the University supervisor and reliability tested by piloting the questionnaires where a reliable Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.77 was obtained upon computation. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from teachers while interview schedule was used to collect qualitative data from principals. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 was used to analyse the quantitative data to obtain means, percentages, and standard deviation. Qualitative data on the other hand were analysed and presented thematically alongside the quantitative data and inferential statistics using Pearson's Linear Correlation Coefficient was run to test the null hypothesis that there is no significant influence of teachers' collegiality on students' performance.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to establish how collegiality among teachers affects learners' academic performance at KCSE in public secondary schools of Baringo North Sub- County. The findings of quantitative data clearly reveal that respondents generally agreed at an average mean response of 3.6281 (Std. Dev. =1.2700) that teachers' collegiality influenced students' performance to a great extent among secondary schools in Baringo North Sub-County, Baringo County, Kenya. The qualitative data obtained from interviewing principals clearly revealed that teachers' collegiality

had an influence on the performance of learners. Principals observed reported that teachers had team teaching, lesson study, got involved in work groups and committees in school and were motivated to work as team. They added that this nurtured a culture of teamwork among teachers that benefited learners and increased the quality of instructions and in turn improved learners' academic performance. Other principals noted that collegiality increased teachers' knowledge and skills, level of satisfaction, minimized emotional stress and created a sense of belonging and cooperation and thereby benefited learners. This ensured that teachers avoided traditional culture of isolation and move towards greater collaboration which according to Ansawi and Pang (2017) should belong to a professional learning community and which helps in unity for a purpose and commitment to organization. These findings are consistent with the assertions of Shah (2012) who postulate that healthy and a strong collaborative relationship among teachers are considered an important ingredient to the quality and effectiveness of a school, enhancement of teachers and learners' performance.

Sarwar, Aslam and Rasheed (2010) supported the need to develop a collegial working environment in educational institutions and suggested the formation of a platform for teachers to collegiate together to enhance team-oriented spirit where all faculty members could perform collectively for institutional advancement. The findings are also supported by Mostafa and Pal (2018) who found out a positive and significant influence of teachers' collaboration on performance. This is because when teachers collaborate, feelings of isolation are alleviated, and a feeling of ownership is enhanced hence the teacher is motivated to work towards improving the learners' and institution's performance. It is also supported by Malkin et al. (2018), who argued that increased quality of collegiality leads to school improvement and students' achievement is high in such schools. Teachers are therefore encouraged to avoid a traditional culture of isolation and move towards greater collaboration and join professional learning communities.

Based on the study findings, it was established that teachers' collegiality influenced learners' academic

performance at KCSE in public secondary schools of Baringo north Sub-County. The findings consistently revealed that strong synergy among staff is an important feature found in most successful schools. Collegiality leads to a positive attitude towards individuals thus strengthening commitment to influence the voluntary approach to better practices in class. The results further show that a positive effect on learners' performance can be realized only when teachers collegiate together to discuss students' performance and assist each other to realize improved performance. These results are supported by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) who found important emotional and psychological benefits associated with working closely with colleagues in teams. Collegiality helps new teachers in the profession to settle down faster and makes unfamiliar topics be easily tackled after discussing with those who have experience in the field. However, the findings indicated that collegiality was not practiced at its best in schools, hence the principals need to improve on their management skills to enhance teamwork in their schools.

To establish if there any significant relationship between teachers' collegiality and learners' performance in public secondary schools in Baringo North Sub-County, Pearson's linear correlation coefficient was run. The findings revealed a weak positive correlation coefficient of $r=0.213$ and a significant relationship between teachers' collegiality and learners' academic performance at $p\text{-value} = 0.017 < 0.05$. The findings agree with Reeves, Pun & Chung (2017) who observed that teachers prefer working in teams, thereby collaborate with one another to give their best services to their learners and create more meaningful work make teaching less stressful and more satisfying. The author added that teamwork is viewed as an important feature of the best performing institutions and their members meet or interact regularly, sharing ideas, expertise and attaining high goals or performance. It also assists new teachers in the profession to a greater extent in settling down to work and that it reinforces the confidence and competence of these beginners. Teachers' collegiality is important at a time when the environment continuously changes.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teachers' collegiality influences learners' academic performance at KCSE in public secondary schools of Baringo North Sub-County though, there was a weak positive correlation between teachers' collegiality and learners' academic performance. Collegiality was not fully practiced hence the principals needed to improve on their management skills. However, collegiality led to a positive attitude towards individuals thus strengthening commitment to influence the voluntary approach to better practices in class. The results further showed that a positive effect on students' performance was realized when teachers specifically collegiate to discuss and advise each other on the students' performance. That there was a strong synergy among staff that leads to a positive attitude towards individuals thus strengthening commitment to influence the voluntary approach to better practices in class. The study concludes that there is a need to change school culture to be more collaborative than isolative. Teachers are encouraged to join professional learning communities, practice lesson study, and embrace teamwork to help them grow in their profession hence give the best service to their learners. Collegiality is thus one among many factors that determine the quality of a school.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The study recommends that teachers need to be supported by headteachers to collaborate to offer the best services to their learners and create more meaningful work. School headteachers should enhance teamwork as an important feature for institutions to perform their best and those members should meet or interact regularly, share ideas and expertise to attain higher performance. The government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education should come up with policies that give room for teachers to collegiate together in their teaching. Teachers should try to find time to collegiate with each other especially at their respective school departments and have lesson study before a new topic is tackled. This helps beginners in the teaching profession understand the topics better hence good delivery of content and in turn, improves the academic performance of learners. Teachers' Service Commission should

organize forums where teachers share ideas in their subject areas so as to enhance learners' academic performance.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study recommends that

- A similar study be conducted in a different County to provide comparative findings under different circumstances
- A study be conducted to establish the extent to which other aspects of teacher motivation such as teachers' autonomy, school's reward system and teachers' professional development influence learners' performance of students in secondary schools

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