

# Human Resource Management Practices and Performance in Public Secondary Schools in the Thika West Sub-County of Kenya

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**Abstract:** - This research project aimed at investigating the relationship between Human Resource Management practices and performance in public secondary schools in Kenya. The objectives of the study are to: establish the relationship between training and development and performance in public secondary schools in Thika West Sub-County Kenya; determine the relationship between management style and performance in public secondary schools in Thika West Sub-County Kenya; assess the effect of performance management on the performance in public secondary schools in Thika West Sub-County Kenya and; determine the relationship between compensation and reward and performance in public secondary schools in Thika West Sub-County Kenya. This study is based on three theoretical foundations: Expectancy Theory, Human Capital Theory and; McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. The study adopts the descriptive survey design. The study sampled 120 teachers and 5 principals from the 16 public schools in the sub-county. The study collected both primary and secondary data using a structured questionnaires and interviews. Data from key informants will be analysed thematically. Descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and Pearson correlation will be used to analyse the data. On the first objective of the study, findings from Pearson correlation shows that there was significant relationship between performance of public secondary schools and training and development ( $r=0.870$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). On the second objective of the study, the findings show that principals' leadership styles contribute to student achievement indirectly through teacher commitment and beliefs about their collective capacity. In this regard, the findings from Pearson correlation shows that there was significant relationship between performance of public secondary schools and management style ( $r=0.648$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). On the third objective of the study namely, the findings show that there was positive and significant relationship between performance management systems and employee performance (Pearson correlation,  $r=0.844$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). On the last objective of the study, the findings obtained show that rewards positively contributed to the performance of teachers (Pearson correlation,  $r=0.885$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). In view of the findings of the study it is recommended that the government should put in place mechanisms for enhancing progressive training and development for teachers. Effort should be made to ensure consultative, democratic and transformational leadership styles are promoted in schools. Performance management should also be strengthened in schools so as to enhance assessment and feedback among teachers. Lastly, teachers' salary increment proposals should be promptly implemented.

**Key Words:** Performance; Training & Development; Management Style; Performance Management; Reward and compensation

## I. INTRODUCTION

There is decline in performance in KCSE examinations over nine years (2009 to 2017) in Thika West Sub-County public secondary schools. According to Mwangi, 2015, trend analyses show that most of the schools scored far below the possible 12 optimal points in Kenya. Actually all the schools studied had a below average mean grade, (Mwangi 2015). According to Thika West Sub-County public and private schools performance Report (2016 - 2017) the performance went down from a mean grade of 5.519 in 2016 to a mean grade of 4.67 in 2017. It is thus imperative to empirically test the relationship between human resource management practices and performance of public secondary schools in Thika west subs county Kenya.

Shaun (2006) in his study based on desk review of available literature in the United States of America argues that there is an undeniable link between HRM practices that ensure that teachers are well equipped to become effective in their jobs and good performance in examinations. In the same accord, Kremer (2003) in a study on "Randomized Evaluations of Educational Programs in Developing Countries" shows that the efficiency of human resource management could affect the performance of such schools since it directly affects the quality of teaching. However, the studies by Shaun and Kremer do no focus on Kenya or on Thika West for that matter. As such, they may not expressly relate to this current study.

In the Kenya context, Gituathi (2012) studied human resource factors influencing pupils' performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in Thika West District, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study shows that the performance of students in all aspects such as performance in examinations and other activities in the school can only be assured through the good HRM practices.

Conversely, Gituathi (2012) recommends that the government should invest in HRM practices that motivate teachers so as to enhance academic performance of such teachers in national examinations. Though focused on the

same study area, Thika West, as this current study and also on human management practices, the study of Gituathi strongly differs with this current study. To begin with, her variables namely: teacher-pupil ratio; staff development (training); teachers' experience and teachers' classroom management slightly differs with those of this current study which focuses on management styles, training and development (though one of her variables), performance management and, reward and compensation. In addition, the study focused on primary school pupils unlike this current study that focuses on secondary schools. The study of Gitonga (2012) on "influence of teachers' motivation on students' performance in Kenya certificate of secondary education in public secondary schools in Imenti South District" was also outside the scope of this study since it focused on schools in a different area.

The fact that none of the studies reviewed focus on the HRM practices under investigation in this current study, it may be untenable to understand the effects of these variables on the performance of schools in Thika West Sub-County. This ought not to be so in the wake of poor performance among most public schools in the area. This current study sets to apply different variables to investigating the influence of HRM practices on the performance of secondary schools in the area."

## II. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE

Performance is an important aspiration for all schools globally. This owes to the fact that education utilizes huge portions of a country's budget. According to Orodho (2004), the importance of the gains anticipated from education cannot be gainsaid. This emanates from the fact that education is pivotal to economic development in a country. It is aimed at adding value to other resources through the development of the requisite human capital. In this regard, human resource management (HRM) practices play critical roles in education processes by enhancing the capacity of teachers to deliver.

According to Alarm and Farid (2011), HRM practices a central to the motivation of teachers. When teachers are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated, students are affected directly. This goes on to enhance the performance of these students. Furthermore, when teachers are motivated, their efficacy is enhanced. This is usually essential for enhancing the achievement of goals of education since teacher efficacy and students performance are strongly correlated as posited by Gituathi (2012).

Gillespie (2003) is of the opinion that meaningful performance cannot be achieved without clear performance indicators. Most HRM practices are aimed at facilitating the achievement of the goals of the organization such as schools in the case of this current study. A combination of efforts aimed at making teachers more equipped to deliver pedagogical targets would lead to goal-oriented teaching in schools. This occurs in the backdrop of teachers' reciprocal

efforts in response to the motivation achieved through HRM practices (Grindle, 2009).

Human resource management practices and performance in the public sector have been proven to be intertwined in African countries such as Botswana, Ghana, South Africa and Uganda. When employees find themselves in favourable working environments, they tend to deliver more on the set government performance targets (Salemi, 2007). This current study sets to investigate the level to which HRM practices would influence performance in public schools in Kenya. This is particularly important since billions of tax payers' money is committed to education in these schools. If HRM practices, which also utilize huge chunks of the national budget, do not translate to academic performance in public schools, then this would be waste of hard-earned public resources.

In Kenya, Gitonga (2012) argues that one of the ways of enhancing performance of teachers, and by extension that of students, is putting in place teacher-sensitive human resource management practices. It can thus be concluded that HRM practices contribute to an environment in which teachers can perform better hence students' good performance in the examinations. Conversely, Gituathi (2012) in a study undertaken in the country recommends that the government should invest in HRM practices that motivate teachers so as to enhance academic performance of such teachers in national examinations.

## III. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES EMPLOYED IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

According to Schuler and Jackson (2007), management of human resources affects the performance of schools. These resources are usually the employees of an organization, such as schools in the case of this current study. *The two scholars however see it a cosmetic measure since the HR Department, "more often than not, cannot guarantee a change in the management of their people as an asset which the concept prescribes. This issue, which is worth assessing in totality through the exploration and description of the HRM concept in practice and their influence on performance, forms the bases for this study."* Despite the fact that there is plenty of literature in the field of human resource management, most focuses upon developed economies and tend to the neglect of developing economies.

This current study conceptualizes that numerous HRM practices are employed in public schools. These include training and development, management style, performance management and reward and compensation, as presenting in the following discourse. The joint effects of these practices are expected to contribute to the performance of teachers in such schools.

Training and development is an important HRM practice employment in most organizations. Ombui, Kagiri and Omoke (2014) studied the influence of training and

development on the performance of employees in research institutes in Kenya. The findings obtained show that HRM practices are vital in enhancing the quality of workforce. In this regard, their study shows that training and development are positively correlated with the level of employee performance in the organization. The former study focuses on research institutes and may not show the state of affairs in secondary schools.

Management styles have also been proven to affect the performance of organizations. Various management styles influence the performance of organizations in various ways. Nave (2006) and, Thompson and Strickland (2007) and McNamara (2005), are of the view that effective leaders often improve the performance of organizations through meticulous implementation of the strategies of the organization. Among Kenyan Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), it is evident that the leadership style of the manager influences the performance of core business activities.

Performance management has also been shown to affect organizational performance. Caldwell (2004) points out that performance management enables organizations to put in place mechanisms for enhancing assessment and feedback among employees so as to enhance the performance of the organization. In this regard, effect performance management goes beyond just evaluation and feedback to inculcating a culture of feedback among workers. When this is done the performance of the organization is enhanced and vice versa.

Furthermore, the reward system, as advanced by the expectancy theory argues that employees expect certain rewards for their input. In this regard, human resource managers put in place a befitting reward system so as to motivate employees to expeditiously execute their duties. This is based on the assumption that the reward management practices have direct relationship with employee performance (Ali & Ahmad, 2009).

Armstrong and Murlis (2007) are of the view that as a result of the rewards accrued within the process of service delivery, employee performance can be enhanced. In this light, organizations put in place robust reward systems so as to tap from its associated gains in the current competitive environment. This is based on the fact that the centrality of employees in gaining competitive advantage in firms is indubitable. Conversely, Armstrong and Taylor (2014) argue that the rewards promised to employees (usually salaries or wages) increased the performance of the employee when their expectations have been met.

From the preceding discourse, it is evident that various HRM practices affect performance in organizations. Most of the studies reviewed do not attempt to link such practices and performance in public schools in Thika west Sub-County which was the focus of this current study. As such, the findings and premises of these studies may not relate to this current study. This underlined the importance of this current study that investigates the influence of Human

Resource Management Practices on the performance in public secondary schools in the area.”

#### IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In this light the study sought to respond to five objectives namely:

- (i) To establish the relationship between training and development and performance in public secondary schools in Thika West Sub-County Kenya.
- (ii) To determine the relationship between management style and performance in public secondary schools in Thika West Sub-County Kenya.
- (iii) To examine the relationship between performance management and performance in public secondary schools in Thika West Sub-County Kenya.
- (iv) To assess the relationship between compensation and reward and performance in public secondary schools in Thika West Sub-County Kenya.

#### V. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

This study is based on three theoretical foundations: Expectancy Theory, Human Capital Theory and; McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. *The expectancy theory* casts light on the effect of compensation and rewards on the performance of secondary schools in Kenya. The Expectancy Theory as pushed forward by Richard Oliver in 1974 posits that expectancy is “the probability that the individual assigns to work effort being followed by a given level of achieved task performance.” The theory shows that there is a link between rewards and behaviour. In this case, it shows that compensation has the propensity to enhance job satisfaction. The expectancy theory relates to this current study since it shows that employees are likely to perform better when they are well motivated. As such, there should be efforts to come up with ways of ensuring that teachers are motivated through various methods such as rewards and compensations, which could go on to enhance their individual performance as conceptualized in this current study.

*The human capital theory* relates to the training and development as well as performance management variables of this study. Gary Becker advanced the human capital theory in 1962. According to this theory, the knowledge and skills that are offered to employees in training institutions are a form of as capital (Becker, 1994). The theory has also been expounded by Scott Sweetland in his book titled “Human Capital Theory: Foundations of a Field of Inquiry.” In this regard, Sweetland (1996) opines that individuals and the whole society gain economic benefits from investments in people. In educational circles, human capital has been applied in the book, “human capital theory: implications for educational development” by Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008). This theory relates to this current study since training and ensuring that performance management is undertaken so as to appraise and enhance the capacity of teachers to meet

teaching requirements could contribute to better performance among such teachers as well as that of the students they teach.

*McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y* relates to the management style variable of this study. The theory, as postulated by McGregor (1960) consists of two alternative set of assumptions. Theory X is an authoritarian style of leadership where Theory X assumes that employees find working unpleasant and usually avoid working if possible. In this regard, it is assumed that under theory X, employees are directed and coerced to deliver their services within the process of achieving organizational goals such as learning objectives as in the case of this current study. As such, such employees lack motivation to perform. On its part, theory Y is a participative style of leadership. In this theory, employees are given liberty to work in their own pace and are constantly motivated to perform well. This emanates from the fact that it is assumed that threatening and external controls are not the only ways to make people work better to achieve organizational (Hofstede, 2005). This theory however relates to this study since it can be argued that the participatory forms of leadership could make teachers more motivated to perform their duties, hence enhancing their performance.

## VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts the descriptive survey design. The study sampled 120 teachers and 5 principles from the 16 public schools in the sub-county out of a target population of 13 principals and 335 using sampled using the simple random sampling technique. The study collected both primary and secondary data using a structured questionnaires and interviews. A pilot study was conducted to pre-test data collection tools. In this study, a sample of 15 teachers was used. The 15 teachers were not included in the final study. The sample of 15 is informed by the work of Kothari (2004) which mentions that 10% to 30% of a target sample was sufficient for piloting a questionnaire. Data from key informants will be analysed thematically. Descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and Pearson correlation will be used to analyse the data.

## VII. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

On the *first objective of the study* which was to establish the relationship between training and development and performance, it is evident that training and development affected teachers positively. The findings from Pearson correlation shows that there was significant relationship between performance of public secondary schools (the dependent variable) and training and development ( $r=0.870$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). This was due to the fact that training made teachers able to cope with emergent learning demands. It also made it possible for teachers to cope with emergent curricular requirements. This made such teachers able to offer quality learning to students, which went on to enhance the performance of the schools in national examinations and other learning activities.

On the *second objective of the study* which was to determine the relationship between management style and performance in public secondary schools in Thika West Sub-County Kenya, the findings show that principals' leadership styles contribute to student achievement indirectly through teacher commitment and beliefs about their collective capacity. In this regard, the findings from Pearson correlation shows that there was significant relationship between performance of public secondary schools (the dependent variable) and management style ( $r=0.648$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

On the *third objective of the study* namely to was to examine the relationship between performance management and performance in public secondary schools in Thika West Sub-County Kenya, the findings show that there was positive and significant relationship between performance management systems and employee performance (Pearson correlation,  $r=0.844$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

On the *last objective of the study* which was to assess the relationship between compensation and reward and performance in public secondary schools in Thika West Sub-County Kenya, the findings obtained show that rewards contribute to the performance of teachers. Indeed, there is a direct relation between reward system and teachers' performance, which translates to the overall performance of the school (Pearson correlation,  $r=0.885$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

## VIII. CONCLUSION

On the *first objective of the study*, it can be concluded that training and development enabled teachers to use their acquired skills and talents better. This went on to enhance the performance of students. On the *second objective of the study*, it can be concluded that the management style practiced by the head-teacher affected the performance of their schools. If teachers were involved in making key learning decisions, such teachers go motivated to put in their best to the learning processes. This went on to improve the performance of the students. Furthermore, if students were treated well and their views taken into account when they had grievances, indiscipline cases were reduced. Students tended to work harder and this went on to positively enhance their performance. Lastly, if good school-community relationships were fostered by the school management, a good learning environment was created, they was tendency to check negative influences on students from the community such as selling drugs and alcohol to students. This went on to boost the performance of the students.

On the *third objective of the study*, positive ways of ensuring that the performance of teachers was assessed and improvements suggested encouraged teachers to work hard. When teachers' exemplary performance was identified and rewarded, the morale of these teachers was enhanced. This made such teachers put in their best in learning processes. The end result was better performance of the schools. On the *last objective of the study*, it can be concluded that based on the

promises of rewards, teachers put in extra rewards due to enhanced morale. This resulted in better fulfilment of learning objectives with school syllabuses being completed in time. Student-teacher relationships were also enhanced since teachers tended to be well motivated. Teachers had fewer problems at home due to enhanced financial security. This means that there was less absenteeism among teachers. The combined effects of these factors led to better performances of schools in national examinations as well as in extracurricular activities such as games and sports.

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made. The government should put in place mechanisms for enhancing progressive between training and development for teachers. Policies for augmenting budgetary allocations for funding training and development through the Ministry of Education should be regularly enacted. Progressive review of ways of assessing and formulating emergent training needs for teachers should be put in place so as to ensure that training and development was mainstreamed in the Ministry of Education. On management style there should be effort to ensure that consultative, democratic and transformational leadership styles were promoted in schools.

There was also need to put in place mechanisms for ensuring that principals involve teachers, parents and students when making key decisions in schools. In addition, adequate policies aimed at guiding performance appraisal of teachers so as to the performance in schools should be formulated by the government in close collaboration with all education stakeholders.

Performance management should be strengthened in schools so as to enhance assessment and feedback among teachers. Furthermore, follow up efforts for ensuring that the recommended made after all assessments undertaken in schools are implemented should be put in place. There should be synchronized rewards management frameworks in schools so that promotions, cash incentives and other forms of rewarding teachers should be instituted. There should also be ways of ensuring that teachers' salary increment proposals negotiated with the Teachers' Service Commission are promptly implemented. Lastly, the financial risks facing teachers should be mitigated through loans and other benefits so as to ensure the socioeconomic security of their families

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