



# Do Principals' Staff Recruitment Practices Influence Academic Performance of Schools? An Empirical Study of Public Secondary Schools in Isinya Sub- County, Kajiado County, Kenya

Elphas Taabu Nyakuti & Reuben Kenei  
School of Education  
Mount Kenya University

Email: [nyakutielphas@gmail.com](mailto:nyakutielphas@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** Human resource management practices adopted by secondary school principals play a key role in ensuring improved service delivery and academic performance in internal and national examinations. However, in Isinya Sub-County, the situation is different with many public secondary schools registering low academic grades in KCSE. This study sought to assess the influence of principals' human resource management resource practices on academic performance in public secondary schools in Isinya Sub- County, Kajiado County, Kenya. The study was guided by the objective: To determine the influence of staff recruitment practices adopted by principals on academic performance in public secondary schools in Isinya Sub- County. This study was guided by the systems theory which was postulated by Luhmann Nklas and adopted a mixed methodology and thus applied concurrent triangulation research design. Using a target population of 433, Yamane's Formula was used to get a sample of 208 respondents who were selected by stratification. Piloting was conducted among 21 respondents from secondary schools in Isinya Sub- County. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically based on study objectives and presented in narrative form, whereas quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study found that staff recruitment practices adopted by principals influence academic performance in public secondary schools. Principals usually put adverts to announce the existence of a teaching vacancy in public secondary schools detailing requirements for every position. The study recommends that the principals should ensure that staff hired are qualified with relevant educational level, pre-requisite experience and understand the nature of their work.

**Keywords:** Academic Performance, Human Resource Management, Public schools, Recruitment Practices, Staff Recruitment

## How to cite this work (APA):

Nyakuti, E. T. & Kenei, R. (2023). Do Principals' Staff Recruitment Practices Influence Academic Performance of Schools? An Empirical Study of Public Secondary Schools in Isinya Sub- County, Kajiado County, Kenya. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 7(3), 1 – 9. <https://doi.org/10.59765/vp45a92>.

## 1. Introduction

Human resources are at the heart of the learning process and strongly influence both the quality of education that children receive at school and eventually their learning outcomes. Effective human resource management is therefore essential to the success of any education system.

According to Hattie and Clinton (2013), human resource management entails undertaking a set of activities which are geared towards improving service delivery. These include human resource training, recruitment, supervision, performance appraisal, transfers and discipline.

In the United States, Rivkin, Ertik and John (2010) posit that human resource management practices which government agencies engage in include, but not limited to, promotion, transfer, dismissal, in-service training and professional development. Rivkin et al (2010) assert that cost-efficient human resource management is even more important given the fact that teachers account for a significant share of civil service staff and that their wage bill represents over two thirds of public education spending in most countries. Cognizant of this fact, Fenstermacher (2015) avers that ministries of education in different countries have had to respond to an increasing demand for teachers while at the same time trying to ensure the same level of quality.

In addition to challenges related to teacher supply and training, countries must tackle issues related to equitable teacher allocation and utilization across different regions. According to Fenstermacher (2015), teacher absenteeism, high attrition and low motivation are among the issues that education planners are exposed to in one way or another in almost all countries around the world. In Venezuela, Jamwal (2012) posits that many education systems are seeking to improve the efficiency of their human resource management and are looking for the analysis, strategies and tools that they could apply.

Jamwal (2012) further opines that improved human resource management will have positive effects on teacher deployment; teacher working conditions and salaries; the quality and capacity of teacher training institutions to produce enough appropriately trained teachers; and will reduce teacher attrition and turnover rates whilst increasing teacher retention. Hence, these factors will then have a direct positive impact on teacher morale and motivation and will reduce the economic and quality costs of poor human resource management, making the education systems of developing countries more efficient and effective and giving them a greater chance of achieving the education as spelt out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, the extent to which these human resource management practices contribute to academic performance in public secondary schools is yet to be fully explored.

According to Al-Helou (2010), academic performance entails achievement of learners in internal, joint, or national examinations. For example, in Yemeni, any student in secondary school who scores a mean grade of 75% and above is considered to manifest excellent academic performance (Jawqa, 2010). Such is the case in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, and United Kingdom (Jawqa, 2010). These assertions corroborate the tenets of Goal 6 of the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) which emphasizes the need of a stimulating pedagogy. It is the teaching and learning process that brings the curriculum to life, determines what happens in the classroom and subsequently improves learning outcomes. For such academic performance to be realized,

human resource management cannot be overlooked. In Australia and USA, to improve academic performance, Su, Gamage and Mininberg (2013) assert that governments have created special graded teaching positions that offer more responsibility and higher pay to better human resources. Su et al (2013) further assert that in Australia, relevant, regular and practical in-service training that is well implemented appears to be a prerequisite for school excellence.

In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, human resource management is at the core of realization of improved academic performance in secondary schools. However, Adewuyi and Ogunwuyi (2012) report that governments have faced increasing challenges in recent years while managing their teaching staff. In Nigeria, for example, Bukola and Subair (2015) assert that Ministry of Education has responded to an increasing demand for human resources while at the same time trying to ensure that the same level of quality of education is maintained. According to Bukola and Subair (2015), in addition to challenges related to human resource supply and training, Nigerian Government must tackle issues related to equitable human resource allocation and utilization across different states.

This implies that human resource management is the key to quality of education offered in secondary schools and many education systems are seeking to improve the efficiency of their human resource management and are looking for the analysis, strategies and tools that they could apply to achieve the same. In Kenya and Isinya Sub- County in particular, the scenario is similar with human resource management in public secondary schools being the responsibility of the principals.

According to Akala and Maithya (2014), principals and school management recruits, supervises, performs performance appraisal, re-trains and disciplines staff as a way of improving service delivery which, in turn, improves pedagogy and students' academic performance in secondary schools. However, the influence of such human resource management practices in improving academic performance in students in national examinations is still low. For example, a report by the Ministry of Education (2019) notes that there has been a decreasing trend in performance in KCSE among public secondary schools in Isinya Sub- County. For example, in the year 2014, Isinya Sub- County had a mean grade of 34.9% in KCSE, 2015 had 32.5%, 2016 had 30.1%, 2017 had 29.6% whereas in 2018, secondary schools registered a mean grade of 28.6% (MoE, 2019). Despite these statistics, few empirical studies have interrogated the extent to which principals' human resource management practices influence academic performance in public secondary schools, hence the need for the study.

Human resource management practices adopted by secondary school principals play a key role in ensuring

improved service delivery and academic performance in internal and national examinations. However, in Isinya Sub- County, the situation is different with many public secondary schools registering low academic grades in KCSE. As noted in the background, MoE (2019) notes that there has been a decreasing trend in performance in KCSE among students in public secondary schools in Isinya Sub- County. For example, in the year 2014, Isinya Sub- County had a mean grade of 34.9% in KCSE, 2015 had 32.5%, 2016 had 30.1%, 2017 had 29.6% whereas in 2018, secondary schools registered a mean grade of 28.6% (MoE, 2019). This paints a picture of declining trend in academic performance. Despite these statistics, few empirical studies have interrogated the extent to which human resource management practices adopted by principals influence academic performance in public secondary schools, hence the need for the study.

This study sought to assess the influence of principals' human resource management resource practices on academic performance in public secondary schools in Isinya Sub- County, Kajiado County, Kenya. The study was guided by the objective: To determine the influence of staff recruitment practices adopted by principals on academic performance in public secondary schools in Isinya Sub- County.

## 2. Literature Review

Recruitment as a human resource management function is one of the activities that impact critically on the academic performance in secondary schools in any nation. Anderson and Cunningham-Snell (2011) assert that, while it is understood and accepted that poor recruitment decisions continue to affect teachers' service delivery which in turn affects academic performance offered in secondary schools. Cognizant of these assertions, Haroon (2010), in a study carried out in Pakistani Schools, revealed that acquiring and retaining high-quality talent is critical to schools' success. That is, it involves hiring employees with the right qualifications, a positive attitude and sufficient work experience. Haroon (2010) further indicated that due to redundancies, retirements, or loss of teachers through natural attrition, many secondary schools are faced with the problem of identifying and selecting the best teachers to fill vacancies left. These findings affirm the fact that teachers' recruitment practices are vital functions of human resource management for any type of secondary school.

A study conducted in Kuala Lumpur by Stewart and Knowles (2014) revealed that the availability of competent and efficient teachers does not happen by gambling, but through an articulated recruitment exercise. In other words, education ministries implement sophisticated recruitment processes with the majority of smaller secondary schools relying on referrals and

advertising as their teachers' recruitment practices of choice (Stewart & Knowles, 2014).

Based on the need to identify teacher skills that underpin academic performance, recruitment and selection process becomes presently the only known way to ensure that applicant with the requisite skills and qualities are successfully considered to teaching in secondary schools. In most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Richard and Johnson (2009) note that education is people based hence, the desire of education secondary schools to attract quality teachers to achieve the secondary school objectives. Richard and Johnson (2009) argue that ministries of education should consider putting in place recruitment policies that attract quality teachers and manpower in secondary schools that are capable to assist various academic and non-academic activities in the education sector.

For example, a study conducted in Nigeria by Ekwoaba, Ikeje and Ufoma (2015) revealed that, in order to grow the education sector in the Nigerian Federal Capital Territory, there was therefore urgent need to assess how teachers' recruitment practices impacts on academic performance offered in public secondary schools so as to determine the suitable teachers' recruitment practices that ensure positive effect on their performance, more so identify the teachers' recruitment practices that have positive contributions to the performance of education sector. These findings lend credence to the contention in National University of Ireland that the continued growth of any education sector depends on its ability to recruit and select high quality educators at all levels (Stecher & Rosse, 2012).

To corroborate these assertions, Rangone (2012) carried out a study in Uganda which revealed that public secondary schools which find and attract suitably qualified teachers to apply for teaching vacancies in such schools and register impressive performance in syllabus coverage, learner transition and performance in internal and national examinations.

These findings point to the fact that the quality of human resources in secondary schools highly depends on the quality of teacher applicants. Besides, recruitment is thus the entry point of teachers into secondary schools and the path a secondary school must follow to make sure that they have attracted the right individuals for their culture and vibes so that the overall strategic educational goals are achieved.

In Kenya, just like other secondary schools, the Ministry of Education has adopted a multiplicity of practices for staff recruitment to achieve education and curriculum objectives (Muchiri, 2011). In a study conducted in Kajiado County, Okoth (2014) reports that such effectiveness is achievable if the Ministry of Education can acquire teachers who already possess relevant

knowledge, skills and aptitudes and are also able to make an accurate prediction regarding their future abilities, recruiting staff in an effective manner will avoid undesirable costs, staff turnover, poor performance and dissatisfied customers.

In Isinya Sub- County, the scenario is the same with recruitment of well-trained teaching staff is regarded as the panacea to quality education in public secondary schools. For example, a study carried out in Isinya Sub-County by Muchiri and Ayoko (2013) established that any education system with effective recruitment and selection systems can better identify and hire teachers and staff with the right skills and motivation to succeed in their positions in secondary schools. In the Ministry of Education, teachers' recruitment practices adopted play a pivotally important role in shaping the Ministry's effectiveness and academic performance in secondary schools (Muchiri, 2011). However, Okoth (2014) and Muchiri (2011), as did other empirical studies, have not articulated how different teachers' recruitment practices adopted by the principals in Kenya influence on academic performance in secondary schools, hence the need for the study.

## **Theoretical Literature Review**

This study was guided by two theories. These included the systems theory and academic performance theory.

### **The Systems Theory**

This study was guided by the systems theory which was postulated by Luhmann Nklas (2004). This theory holds that a school is a managed system that transforms inputs such as raw materials, people and other resources into outputs which is the goods and services that comprises its products. One of its key concepts is that human resource management must interact with the environment to gather inputs and return the output of its production. Consequently, in this study, human resource management practices interact with all the aspects of teaching and learning and returns quality education in secondary schools as the output. Teaching, learning and management are acts of planning, organizing and administration of education process. This means that teachers are part of teaching-learning process.

Academic performance requires marshalling and organizing all the human resources needed for such outcomes and therefore, human resource management practices adopted by the principals dictates the expected outcomes. For such outcomes to be realized, dynamics such as staffing, instructional resources and school physical facilities are paramount. Thus, the rationale of using this theory in this study is that it underscores the fact that effective human resource management practices are critical to realization of quality secondary education.

## **The Academic Performance Theory**

The study was also guided by Walberg's academic performance theory. This theory posits that learners' psychological traits coupled with their immediate learning environments influence educational outcomes. Walberg (2012) proposed nine main aspects which impact on learners' educational outcomes. These include learners' ability or prior achievement, motivation, age or developmental level, quantity of instruction, quality of instruction, classroom climate, parental involvement, home environment, peer group, and exposure to mass media outside of school.

Walberg (2012) shows that psychosocial characteristics of classroom learning environments demonstrate incremental validity in predicting learner achievement. These traits are useful in curriculum evaluation studies and can provide teachers with useful information to arrange more optimally functioning classrooms. In this study, to increase educational productivity and efficiency, educational process goals as well as achievement goals must be considered.

Thus, the relevance of this theory is that educational process goals are interpreted to include learner perceptions of the social environment, creativity, self-concept, participation in extra-curricular activities, and interest in subject matter. In other words, ignoring these perceptions and experiences in favor of traditional goals measured by test scores would decrease motivation and ultimately lower educational achievement.

## **3. Methodology**

This study adopted mixed methodology and thus applied concurrent triangulation research design. Target population was 433 respondents which comprised 33 principals, 268 teachers and 132 support staff from which a sample of 208 respondents was determined using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create four strata based on the number of zones in Isinya Sub- County. From each zone, three principals and three support staff were selected using purposive sampling. However, from each zone, 46 teachers were selected using simple random sampling. This sampling procedure realized a sample of 12 principals, 12 support staff and 184 teachers. A questionnaire was used to collect data from teachers whereas interview guides were used to gather data from principals and support staff. Piloting was conducted among 21 respondents from secondary schools in Isinya Sub- County to test the validity, reliability, credibility and dependability. Validity was established through judgment by experts in educational management at Mount Kenya University. Reliability was established using test re-test technique. A reliability index,  $r = 0.725$ , was obtained using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Method which

indicated high internal reliability. Credibility was ascertained by data triangulation through multiple analysts whereas dependability by detailed reporting of each data collection process. Data analysis began by identifying common themes from the respondents' description of their experiences. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically based on study objectives and presented in narrative form whereas quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. Inferential analysis was also undertaken using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis in Statistical Package for Social

Sciences (SPSS Version 23). The quantitative findings were presented using tables and charts.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The study sought to establish how staff recruitment practices adopted by principals influence academic performance in public secondary schools. Descriptive data were collected from teachers and results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Teachers' Views on the Influence of Principals' Staff Recruitment Practices on Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools**

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
Secondary school principals usually put adverts to announce the existence of a teaching vacancy in public secondary schools	52.4	9.5	3.2	23.0	11.9
Levels of education is often considered while recruiting new teachers in public secondary schools	60.3	8.7	5.6	20.6	4.8
In public secondary schools, the principals always set qualifications which new teachers must meet during the recruitment process	58.7	6.3	3.3	24.6	7.1
To improve academic performance in public secondary schools, experience is always a critical factor considered during recruitment of staff	65.1	10.3	3.1	16.7	4.8
Public secondary school principals usually assess candidates' ability to participate in co-curricular activities during recruitment of staff	76.5	3.8	3.3	10.1	6.3

Table 1 shows that 52.4% of the teachers strongly agreed that secondary school principals usually put adverts to announce the existence of a teaching vacancy in public secondary schools whereas 9.5% agreed. On the contrary, 23.0% of them disagreed whereas 11.9% strongly disagreed.

This supports the assertions of Richard and Johnson (2009) that ministries of education should consider putting in place recruitment policies that attract quality teachers and manpower in secondary schools that are capable to assist various academic and non-academic activities in the education sector. This implies that hiring qualified teachers is a process which entails announcement of an existing vacancy. Through this, school heads are able to attract a pool of trained teachers and a performance track record. In other words, continued growth of any education sector depends on its ability to recruit and select high quality educators at all levels.

The majority (60.3%) of the teachers were in strong agreement that levels of education is often considered while recruiting new teachers in public secondary schools while 8.7% agreed. On the contrary, 5.6% were undecided, 20.6% disagreed whereas 4.8% strongly disagreed. The study further revealed that 58.7% of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, the principals always set qualifications which new teachers must meet during the recruitment process while 6.3% agreed. However, only 24.6% of them disagreed whereas 7.1% were in strong disagreement. In the same vein, 65.1% of the teachers strongly agreed that, to improve academic performance in public secondary schools, experience is always a critical factor considered during recruitment of staff while 10.3% agreed. However, 16.7% disagreed whereas 4.8% strongly disagreed.

These findings lend credence to the findings of a study carried out in Kuala Lumpur by Stewart and Knowles (2014) which revealed that the availability of competent and efficient teachers does not happen by gambling, but

through an articulated recruitment exercise. This implies that teachers' experience is a key determinant in the academic performance of students and thus a crucial consideration during recruitment of teachers. The majority (76.5%) of the teachers strongly agreed that public secondary school principals usually assess candidates' ability to participate in co-curricular activities during recruitment of staff while 3.8% agreed. However, 10.1% disagreed whereas 6.3% strongly disagreed. These findings corroborate the findings of a study carried out in Isinya Sub- County by Muchiri and Ayoko (2013) which established that any education system with effective recruitment and selection systems can better identify and hire teachers and staff with the right skills such as co-curricular activities and motivation to succeed in their positions in secondary schools. In summary, these findings point to the fact that teachers' recruitment practices adopted play a pivotally important

role in improving academic performance in secondary schools. Secondary schools, which adopt competitive and effective recruitment practices, attract qualified teachers and staff, are motivated to work and thus, register impressive academic grades.

### **Inferential Findings on the Influence of Principals' Staff Recruitment Practices on Academic Performance in Secondary Schools**

To further verify the influence of principals' staff recruitment practices on academic performance, data were collected from the nine (9) sampled principals on how often (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) adhere to recruitment practices and academic performance in KCSE for the year 2021. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: How Often Principals Adhere to Recruitment Practices and Academic Performance in KCSE for the Year 2021**

Frequency of Principals' Adherence to Recruitment Practices	2021 KCSE Results
1	3.57
1	3.60
2	4.50
3	4.27
4	4.45
2	3.95
2	4.07
4	4.15
2	3.57

Table 2 shows that, in public secondary schools where principals often adhere to teacher recruitment practices while hiring teaching staff, academic performance is high. This further supports the assertions of Richard and Johnson (2009) that, if ministries of education and school

heads consider putting in place recruitment policies that attract quality teachers in secondary schools, academic performance is always improved. The data above were run in the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Test Analysis and results are shown in Table3.

**Table 3: Relationship between Principals' Staff Recruitment Practices and Academic Performance in KCSE**

Frequency of Principals' Adherence to Recruitment Practices	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	N	Frequency of Principals' Adherence to Recruitment Practices	Academic Performance in KCSE
1	.687*	9	1	.687*
9	.041	9	9	1
Academic Performance in KCSE	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	N	.687*	.041
			9	9

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test Analysis which generated correlation coefficients of  $r = 0.687$  with corresponding significant level (p-value) of 0.041 which was less than the predetermined level of significance, 0.05, that is,  $p\text{-value} = 0.041 < 0.05$ . Thus, the data shows there is significant influence of staff recruitment practices adopted by principals on students'

academic performance in public secondary schools. In other words, though not often practised, adherence to staff recruitment practices is key in identifying qualified teachers, improve pedagogy and consequently improved academic performance among students.

### ***Thematic Analysis of the Influence of Principals' Staff Recruitment Practices on Academic Performance in Secondary Schools***

During the interviews, the principals and support staff also responded in favour of the view that principals usually put adverts to announce the existence of a teaching vacancy in public secondary schools. Principal, P1, stated:

*In my secondary school, I always ensure that existing vacancy in the teaching position or support staff is advertised. This has enabled me to hire the best and most qualified staff in my school.*

These views were also supported by most of the support staff who noted that they learnt of an existing vacancy through adverts. Support staff, SS1, noted:

*I learnt of an existing vacancy in my current secondary school from the local dailies, applied for it and was called for an interview. This has been the trend in my school where a vacancy is advertised and qualified candidates are competitively sourced.*

Just like quantitative findings, these verbatims corroborate the views expressed by Richard and Johnson (2009) that school heads consider putting in place recruitment policies that attract quality teachers and manpower in secondary schools that are capable to assist various academic and non-academic activities in the education sector. On the question of educational level, the interviewees noted that one's level of education is often considered while filling a vacancy in public secondary schools. Principal, P2, noted:

*A prospective candidate must present his or her academic qualifications to be shortlisted for an existing vacancy in my secondary school. Over and above everything, level of education plays a major role in determining the right and suitable candidate to fill a vacancy.*

Just like majority of the teachers, the interviewees also noted that, to improve academic performance in public secondary schools, experience and ability of a candidate to take part in co-curricular activities are also critical factors considered during recruitment of staff. This further lends credence to the viewpoints held by Stewart and Knowles (2014) that the availability of competent and efficient teachers does not happen by gambling, but through an articulated recruitment exercise. As indicated earlier, these mixed findings are indicative of the fact that

any education system with effective recruitment and selection systems can better identify and hire teachers and staff with the right skills and motivation to succeed in their positions in secondary schools.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

From the study findings, staff recruitment practices adopted by principals influence academic performance in public secondary schools. Principals usually put adverts to announce the existence of a teaching vacancy in public secondary schools detailing requirements for every position. The details in the adverts include educational level and experience as well as the ability of a candidate to take part in co-curricular activities. From the study findings, it is also evident that principals usually undertake supervision of staff as a way of improving academic performance in public secondary schools. Principals always supervise teaching methods adopted by teachers, whether teachers prepare professional tools such as schemes of work, lesson plan, records of work and sometimes, lesson notes as well as supervising teachers' class attendance.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

The study makes the following recommendation: that principals should ensure that staff hired are qualified with relevant educational level; That the school administrators institutionalize staff recruitment prerequisite to include experience and understand the nature of their work. Further research may be conducted in the extent to which principals' attitude on academic performance in public secondary schools.

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