

## **An Evaluation of the Work Performance Tendencies of Teachers in Public Primary Schools in Kenya**

*Joab Namai, Sister Jacinta Adhiambo, & Shem Mwalwa*

### **Abstract**

Teachers in basic learning institutions in Kenya have a variety of roles and responsibilities as documented in the Teachers Service Commission Act and other relevant documents. However, despite the guidelines, teachers sometimes find themselves overstretched and overwhelmed, hence missing out on critical targets. This study, therefore, sought to investigate the work performance tendencies of teachers in public primary schools within Khwisero Sub-County in Kenya. The study was grounded on TheoryX TheoryY which segregates workers into intrinsically motivated on one side and extrinsically motivated on the other. A sample of 18 head teachers, 144 class teachers and 144 pupils was adopted. The questionnaire and interview guide were used in data collection. Quantitative and qualitative procedures were adopted in the analysis. Results were interpreted and converged to provide a solution to the research problem. It was established that teachers used regular class attendance, the record of workbooks and lesson plans to demonstrate work performance. Based on the study findings, it was recommended that the Ministry of Education should constantly include all teachers in refresher courses, seminars, and workshops to update them on the latest technological and professional practices instead of targeting headteachers alone. Although there is a laudable effort towards this through the teacher professional development program, the cost attached is beyond affordability by most of teachers. There was also a need for the school boards to support sound motivation initiatives by teachers to encourage and enhance pupils' academic performance.

**Keywords:** Teachers, tendencies, performance, appraisal, innovative teaching, schools

## Introduction

Teaching is one of the most respected and pivotal professions in the world. Regardless of the technological progression, teachers are and will still be in demand in providing a real learning experience (Annicrah, Askandar, & Usop., 2018, Ricard & Pelletier, 2016). Schools are indeed likely to be successful if their teachers perform their work well. The work performance of teachers is important in determining the advancement of education quality because, through their direct encounters with students, they equip them with skills and competencies.

Teachers' work performance comprises all those activities done by the teacher to gain certain outcomes and targets. Teachers' work performance has a significant impact on pupils' academic performance. Although teachers' work performance may not be easily measured, it can be deduced from pupils' marked books, performance levels in national exams, pupils' disciplinary level, and level of teacher preparation for a class as reflected in available pedagogical materials (Malunda, Onen, Musaazi, & Oonyu, 2016). As part of their tools of trade, teachers must refer to the course syllabus and teaching aids. They also prepare lesson notes, lesson plans, schemes of work and class attendance registers. Teachers' traits and virtues are also critical in influencing pupils' performance.

Teachers' work performance is also demonstrated through personal growth and professional development. A study by Mudawali and Mudzofir (2017) on the relationship between instructional supervision and professional development among secondary school teachers in Indonesia established that teachers' perception of supervision was based on the nature of the school. Although the study noted that there was no relationship between supervision and teacher professional development, it recommended that supervision was critical in developing professionalism among teachers. This, therefore, indicates that there must have been other exterior factors that led to the findings because they were not consistent with recommendations. It is no wonder that the study suggested further research based on a larger sample size and a larger scope. This is because the study targeted only 9 schools which were both private and public.

Teachers have been known to perform their work well and draw a lot of satisfaction from it if they are well-mentored and supervised. A study done by Langguyuan et. al. (2018) in the Philippines confirmed that whereas teachers draw a lot of satisfaction from their work performance, there is a need for close supervision and mentoring. This will help teachers develop and maintain teaching performance and job satisfaction that would

in effect bring about efficiency and effectiveness. The satisfied teachers have a college degree and are aged between 31 to 40 years. This close supervision and mentoring sometimes assume a different meaning depending on the context.

In Kenya, teachers are expected to comply with the teaching standards in the discharge of their duties (TSC, 2015). Agents are appointed with express permission to enter schools to assess work performance. This however provides a perfect environment for teachers to play safe on that single day when these agents visit the school. After this, the possibility of reverting to the default mode of operation is real and high. However, with site residence supervision provided by the head teachers, this dichotomy is minimized, enabling the teachers to work to their full capacity. The pretentious window is reduced, which inspires pupils to perform.

An assessment of performance in national exams at the coastal schools in Kenya indicated that most schools, particularly in the Diani area, performed poorly, in KCPE due to involvement in tourism activities and laxity in both teachers and head teachers in executing their duties (Maluki, Masese, & Kahigi, 2018). This may have informed the recommendation by Too, Kimutai and Zachariah (2016) that teachers should improve on work performance if schools are to register improved performance in national examinations. A catalogue of the work performance tendencies of teachers in public primary schools could be a good indicator of the level of commitment of teachers to the pupils' academic performance. Despite supervision efforts by Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, work performance by teachers in Khwisero Sub-County has remained low, affecting pupils' performance. This, therefore, means that the solution to the dismal performance by pupils in national examinations in Khwisero rests not in the external forces of education and quality assurance officers but with teachers and head teachers within the school itself. When teachers' work is guaranteed, all other aspects of school fall into place because teachers are the main pillars of the learning process (Kaur, 2019). This study, therefore, focused on investigating the work performance tendencies of teachers in public primary schools within Khwisero Sub-county in Kakamega County, Kenya.

Having established that teachers require close supervision and mentoring to perform, it automatically follows that the supervisory practices adopted by head teachers may to a great extent affect the work performance of teachers. Whenever head teachers allocate little time for supervision of lesson planning and delivery by teachers, there is always a decline in their performance (Ampofo, Onyango, & Ogola 2019). Whereas

Ampofo et al. recommend a reduction of workload for heads of department to allow them more time for supervision, this may not be desirable due to cost implications. Moreover, the supervisory responsibility lies with the head teacher who should engage the role in a way that encourages the teacher's work performance.

### **Research Methodology**

The study adopted the convergent parallel mixed methods approach where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed. Respondents were exposed to qualitative and quantitative tools in a deliberate effort to conclusively address the research problem. This approach was critical in allowing for the convergence of data and guaranteeing triangulation and complementarity (Ayiro, 2021).

The study's target population included the 60 public primary schools within Khwisero Sub-County, Kakamega County in Kenya, out of which 18 headteachers, 144 teachers, and 144 students were sampled for the study. Teachers and pupils responded to researcher-administered questionnaires while headteachers were interviewed as the available documents were reviewed. Quantitative data were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Science version 24 computer packages for analysis, while qualitative data was reorganized and coded to isolate recurring themes. These were categorized, and illustrative quotations were used to support the results while adhering to relevant ethical considerations of respect, beneficence, and justice.

### **Findings and Discussions**

This study sought to investigate the work performance tendencies of teachers in public primary schools in Khwisero Sub-County. The findings presented were based on the data that was collected and analyzed.

#### **Response Rate**

Out of the sample of 18 head teachers, 16 were successfully interviewed while 103 and 126 responses were received from teachers and students respectively. The responses received were considered sufficient. As noted by Ahmad and Halim (2017), a completion rate of less than 50% is unacceptable; 50 – 60% is barely acceptable; 60 – 70% is acceptable; 70 – 85% is good; and over 85% is excellent enough to proceed with statistical analysis. Regarding this study, a 71.5%, 88.89, and 87.5%) response rate was good for the teachers' questionnaire and excellent for head teachers and pupils.

## **Demographic Characteristics and Work-Performance Tendencies**

The study sought to establish the demographic characteristics of study participants. This was critical in helping the researcher establish how this would influence the work performance tendencies of teachers in public primary schools in Khwisero Sub-County. Teachers were asked to indicate their age bracket. Most of the teachers were at the exploration stage with an urge to try different things, hence unstable in their career path. They would need close supervision and guidance for them to perform. About 41 (39.8%) of the teacher respondents were aged between 20 and 25 years of age, while 40 (38.8%) were aged between 26-35 years of age. This left 19 (18.4%) between 36-45 years and only 3 (2.9%) over 46 years. This was the opposite of the head teachers' data. There was no head teacher within the first two age brackets of 20 to 35 years of age. The 36 to 45 years age bracket had 2 head teachers. The majority were spread across the higher age bracket of above 46 years, with a total of 14 head teachers. This showed that over 87 % of the head teachers were in the decline stage of their careers, which explained why they were not very passionate about supervising work performance. As explained by Swanson (2022), there are four main stages of career development. These are the exploration stage, establishment stage, maintenance stage, and decline or disengagement stage. Whereas employees would be at their peak during the establishment and maintenance stages with efforts to prove themselves in their fields of engagement, this declines at the tail end of the maintenance stage as one tends towards the decline stage (above 46 years of age).

### **Work Performance Tendencies by Teachers**

Teachers described the work performance tendencies they adopted. Some of the responses were collaborated with responses from pupils and head teachers.

### ***Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD) Work-Related Tendencies***

The development of pedagogical documents came out strongly as the main evidence of teaching in public primary schools in Khwisero. These are the same documents that were emphasized as part of the TPAD process. They included records of work, schemes of work and lesson plans. In all the cases surveyed, teachers agreed that these documents were important not only as evidence of work done but in guiding the teaching and learning process. The constant assessment of these documents by head teachers helped them prepare for their various assignments. However, the preparation of

the documents was one issue, separate from implementing them. In one incident, a head teacher reported cases where teachers downloaded documents from the internet and submitted the same as their own:

Some teachers are lazy. They just download lesson plans from the internet and present them as theirs. They even forget to edit the name of the class and school and in some cases even the name of the teacher. You will find that even the name of the school and class are very different from what we have in this school. Completely nonexistent. (Headteacher interviewee 6: 8<sup>th</sup> July 2022 at 3 pm)

Teachers, therefore, found themselves presenting work that did not belong to them. Other than being academic dishonesty, this tendency did not bring out the truth of what was happening on the ground. It was also indicative of an exercise that was done in a hurry at the last minute, meaning that it was not routinely checked by the head teacher. When inscribed in the normal practice of the school as the head teacher's supervisory practice, the generation of these documents by teachers is seamless. Teachers will not struggle to avail these documents. Nevertheless, although some of the teachers were struggling to avail these documents, they all agreed that the documents were important for work performance.

To isolate the work performance tendencies, teachers were exposed to various questions which attracted different responses. A total of 88 teachers, translating to 85.4% agreed that checking records helped improve work performance. There were however 12 teachers (11.7%) who felt that checking records did not help inspire work performance. Records are important in a school environment. They are not only important as proof of work done but reference points for posterity. A lack of records is indicative of a lack of work performance. With constant follow-up, the head teacher can ensure that these records are kept by teachers for reference as well as evidence of work done to uphold quality because quality education is the cornerstone to creating sustainable development in line with the 2030 agenda (Manyinsa 2019)

### ***Instructional Materials Work-Related Tendencies***

The use of learning aids was another work performance tendency identified among the teachers. A total of 72 out of the 103 teachers sampled confirmed that they used learning aids in their work. This translated to 69.9%. The use of instructional resources is a good measure of work performance among teachers. A teacher who is not keen on his

work will not go out of his way to seek and utilize instructional resources. Instructional resources are educational inputs that facilitate the implementation of the curriculum. They are materials which teachers use to make conceptual abstractions more concrete and practical to the learner (Ajoke, 2017). The use of instructional materials, therefore, promotes closer and more effective communication between a teacher and the learners. Although the head teacher is supposed to purchase and avail relevant instructional materials to the school, it is acknowledged that resources may sometimes not be enough. A teacher must be innovative in lesson delivery to guarantee maximum and effective learning. One of the ways this is achieved is through the development and use of relevant teaching and learning materials from readily available resources.

It was however of concern that out of the 72 teachers that agreed to the use of instructional materials, only 13.6% strongly agreed. Furthermore, a total of 21 (20.4%) of the teachers disagreed to use and checking of learning aids by the head teachers. If examination of the learning aids was done by head teachers across the schools, it, therefore, raises concern as to why 21 would express uncertainty on the execution of this process. It could also be a confirmation that some teachers did not bother to innovatively construct teaching and learning aids for their class engagements. This could compromise the learning experience, thus leading to the dismal performance by pupils in national exams. This is because learning can be hindered, and performance compromised whenever there is no communication between the teacher and the pupils (Abbad & Alshoraty, 2020). Instructional materials would normally come in handy to vary the teaching methodologies. Regarding whether teachers adopted different teaching methods to deliver their lessons, 40 (32%) of the teachers agreed, while 70 (56%) of them disagreed. This response reflected the disparity in performance in exams where most of the students scored below the average mark.

### **Checking Learner's Books Work-Related Tendencies**

Teachers confirmed checking of pupils' assignments and continuous assessment scripts to ensure regular correction takes place. Of all the teachers that responded to the questionnaire, 85 (82.5%) of them agreed to checking pupils' assignments while 14 (13.6%) disagreed. Checking work done by students is one of the ways of ensuring that the learner is in tune with the teacher's work efforts. A learner who knows that the teacher is not keen on checking their books will not make an effort to do the assignments and

write the notes. Through checking their books, the teacher can determine the level of understanding of the learner to make relevant corrective measures. It is a formative way of assessing learner progression and is indicative of the teachers' work performance. This, according to Colognesi, et al. (2020) has been demonstrated to benefit the learners more than waiting for the summative assessment.

### ***Class and Meeting Attendance Work-Related Tendencies***

Teachers further demonstrated work performance by attending all meetings called in the school. Meetings are an important part of management which help in decision-making (Ayiro, 2021). In a school set-up, meetings also help members of staff gel together. This in turn helps cultivate a healthy atmosphere for maximum work performance and higher academic performance among learners. The researcher sought to find out if teachers attended all school meetings and responded to assignments on time. From the data presented, there was evidence that most of the teachers (96.1%) attended meetings called by the head teacher in the school. Only 3 (2.9%) teachers disagreed, with one teacher (1%) not being sure. In these meetings, important decisions including the allocation of roles are made. They are also forums for socializing, policy formulation and notifications. They, therefore, prove critical for any teacher. This explains the high number of teachers that confirmed turning up.

The researcher sought to establish whether teachers took class attendance twice a day as indicated by the school. From the responses received, it was confirmed that teachers took a record of class attendance twice daily. Up to 77 teachers (74.8%) confirmed taking class attendance twice a day while 18 teachers (17.5%) disagreed. Eight teachers did not seem to decide on whether they took the daily register. Whereas it could be encouraging to note that a majority of the teachers took class attendance, the number of those that did not was of concern. Taking the class attendance register is critical in tracing students during the day. Cases of truancy and students who miss out on school in the afternoon were common in Khwisero Sub-County. This needed to be captured and relevant follow-up made. Studies have shown that there is a relationship between poor performance and absenteeism. Pupils who are constantly absent from school end up performing poorly in national examinations. Despite the level of teacher work performance, learners' performance cannot be improved unless the learners are available for relevant class sessions in school.



The response by the teachers was compared with the responses from pupils on the same issue of taking class attendance. From the responses received from the pupils, it was established that some of these teachers had delegated the responsibility of checking class attendance to the learners. Although it could be assumed that class teachers were consistent in marking class attendance twice a day, this may not have been done by the teachers themselves. The actual duty of marking attendance had been delegated to students. Furthermore, at 48 (the total number of undecided and disagreed), translating to over 37 % of the respondents, the number of students who did not agree with the statement that teachers marked class attendance consistently could be a pointer to default in work performance by the teachers. Furthermore, 84 pupils, translating to 66.6% of the total number of pupils respondents confirmed that teachers delegated the marking of class attendance to prefects. Delegating the marking of the class attendance to prefects is not desirable. Though helpful in easing the work, pupils can easily be manipulated by friends and other pupils, thus compromising the integrity of the records taken.

Regarding whether teachers always reported to the school and attended class lessons on time, 102 (99%) of the teachers agreed with the statement and only 1% disagreed. This implied that punctuality was observed by teachers in their teaching responsibilities. As indicated in a study by Loong, Lierop and Ahmed, (2017), punctuality is important in providing quality mentorship to pupils as well as providing much-needed time for productivity. According to this study carried out among staff at MacGill University, a worker feels more energized and satisfied when they are punctual at work.

### ***Participating in Co-Curricular Activities Work Related Tendencies***

Teachers were also asked to indicate whether they participated in co-curricular activities with the pupils. Participation in co-curricular activities affirms the healthy relationship between teachers and pupils. The pupils can only feel free to consult with the teachers on various issues during their learning experience if and when they are free with the teachers. At 101, translating to 98.1%, almost all the teachers confirmed participation in co-curricular activities with the pupils. However, it is important to take note of a response that was received from some schools when asked about the participation of the schools in co-curricular activities. The head teacher was asked to indicate what he considered the main impediments to enhancing work performance by teachers. It was noted that:

We have so many challenges. Talk of a scarcity of teachers, lack of teaching materials for 8.4.4 classes and lack of money. Can you imagine we cannot even participate in co-curricular activities? We have very good students and even a teacher who is passionate about music and sports but there is no money. What the government gives is spent at the county level. We may need a sponsor to help. (Headteacher, 14: 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019 at 8 am)

This observation by the head teachers attested to the inconsistency between the teachers' views and the reality on the ground. An interrogation of the type of co-curricular activities that teachers engaged the pupils in would help clarify facts even further. This is because the greatest motivation for participation in most of these activities is competition. This is in line with the recommendation by Kamau, Rintangu, Muriu, and Amura (2015), that competitive sports should be emphasized in schools. Other than helping maintain healthy students, it also ensures connectedness among learners.

### ***Checking Absenteeism***

The researcher also inquired to know from the pupils whether they felt that teachers followed up to know why they (pupils) were absent from class. The data gathered demonstrated that a majority (98%) of the pupils confirmed that teachers followed up to know why they were absent from class. Overall, it can be concluded that pupils' absence was followed up and teachers were responsible. This was confirmed by 94.1% (97) of the teachers who indicated that they indeed followed up on pupils to find out their whereabouts. This implied that teachers minimized cases of absence from school, which is critical in promoting good performance. However, the fact that the teachers could be so consistent in this follow-up, without equal reflection on performance in the national examinations was an issue of concern. This is because studies show that students who attend classes more regularly seem to be more successful in their studies than those who are regularly absent (Khalid, 2017).

### **Assessing and Giving Assignments Work-Related Tendencies**

The administration of continuous assessment tests was another critical work performance indicator by teachers in public primary schools in Khwisero Sub-County. The teacher respondents were required to indicate the period between which the assessment was done. Up to 77.6% of the teacher respondents indicated that they administered examinations every after two weeks. This implied that teachers generally

used continuous assessment tests to enhance pupils' performance and gauge weak areas for improvement. A continuous assessment test is indicative of the commitment to work by teachers. Tests require dedication and hard work so that relevant responses and feedback are given to the learners. It is a formative way of assessing learners' appreciation of the course content to make relevant remedial measures.

Although lesson plans and other pedagogical documents are critical to the learning and teaching process, the timely preparation of the same is critical. Cases of teachers preparing lesson plans long after the lesson is covered were noted in Khwisero Sub-County. It was therefore important to determine whether these documents were made on time. In responding to this question on whether teachers prepared their lesson plans and notes in time for class sessions, 88 (85.4%) of the teachers indicated they did and 15 (14.6%) did not.

The assessment of the instructional documents however presented a different picture. These documents were not available in most of the sampled schools. Although with experience teachers are always perfect in their career and can teach without these documents, it is always expected, as part of the professional requirements for the teachers to prepare relevant pedagogical documents. A lesson plan is one such document. It not only guides the teaching exercise but also serves as evidence of work done. It could not be established whether the lack of the document was due to the confidence and feeling of teachers that they could teach without them, or an indication of a deficiency in work performance.

However, in the face of the low performance of pupils in their exams within the sub-county, this proved to be a major indicator of the teachers' work performance. Reference materials are important in the teaching and learning process. They not only serve to prove work done but are indicative of a competent teacher as well (Abubakar, 2020)

### ***Innovative Teaching Work-Related Tendencies***

The study also inquired whether teachers sometimes took learners for academic experiences out of class and the results showed that 88 (85.5%) of the teachers agreed that they sometimes took learners for academic experiences out of class, while 15 (14.6%) did not. Experiential learning is critical in enhancing learners' understanding of the various disciplines. A learner may not understand a construct in class, but the same could

change as soon as they are exposed to the same construct experientially. The responses showed that teachers employed out-of-class strategies to enhance learning.

Teachers were also asked to indicate whether they mentored students to moral maturity. The results revealed that 100 (97%) teachers mentored students in morality, while 3 (3) did not. Mentorship requires patterning of the right behaviors for the mentees by the mentor. The teachers must present themselves in a manner that will endear them not only to the pupils of the school but to the community at large. Well-mentored pupils will adopt positive lifestyles that will enhance learning and good performance. When cases of teachers coming to school late as was reported by some of the head teachers, then such teachers lack the courage to mentor the learners in the right way. Without telling them, such learners find themselves in similar compromising situations. Although the observation from teachers was almost perfect in mentoring, cases of drunkenness in school were reported which could be evidence of negative influence (Karanja & Gikungu, 2014). Well-mentored students tend to have higher academic achievement and tend to behave positively, be more responsive, and are more disciplined than non-mentored ones.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the literature reviewed, data analyzed, and the final discussions held, it was concluded that teachers demonstrated various work performance tendencies which were important in guaranteeing learner performance. Indeed, the work performance of teachers was found critical as an indicator not only of the head teachers' supervisory performance but a catalyst to students' academic performance as well. Although the work performance tendencies employed could vary from one teacher to another, there were basic aspects that were important in guaranteeing work performance. They all focused on delivering pedagogical documents and interacting with the pupils. Based on the observations made, it was recommended that:

1. The Ministry of Education should include all teachers in fully funded refresher courses, seminars, and workshops to update them on the latest ICT and professional practices instead of targeting headteachers alone.
2. Through the support of the boards of management and parents' associations, sound motivation programs like the provision of meals in schools, bonding trips and excursions and soft loans should be developed for teachers to encourage and enhance pupils' academic performance.



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