ASSESSMENT OF PRINCIPALS' GOAL SETTING APPRAISAL PRACTICES ON STUDENTS PERFORMANCE AT KENYA CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN KIMININI SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

Wafula Medarn Mbovi[1*], Lukoba Newton Barasa[1], Ronald Werunga Kikechi[1]

[1]Mount Kenya University*

Corresponding Author:
Email: mboviwafula@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed to carry out the assessment of principals' goal setting appraisal practices on students' performance at KCSE in public secondary schools in Kiminini Sub-County, Kenya. It anchored its study on Goal Setting Theory of Motivation by (Locke, 1990), which asserts that setting clear, demanding goals and receiving helpful feedback results in increased task performance. Using simple random sampling technique, 18 principals and 18 deputy principals, 24 Heads of Departments and 150 teachers were selected as a sample from 60 schools in Kiminini Sub County. Information from the principals was gathered using a purposeful sampling method. In order to evaluate the Principal's Evaluation procedures, interview schedule was conducted, whereas from Deputy Principals, Heads of Departments and teachers, questionnaires were employed. Linear regression, ANOVA and correlations besides descriptive statistics between the academic performance of the instructors and the principals' goal setting appraisal processes was used to analyze the study's variables. Presentation of the analyzed data was done by use of tables, charts, figures and thematically. Data was interpreted to ascertain if there existed a positive and significant relationship between Principal's goal setting Appraisal practices and the students' performance in the respective KCSE mean scores in public secondary schools in Kiminini Sub County. The study then concluded that Principals goal setting appraisal practices in Public Secondary Schools significantly affected Student performance in KCSE.

Keywords: *Appraisal practices, Goal setting, Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education, Students' performance*

INTRODUCTION

Setting goals and objectives can motivate employees to put up more effort, pay more attention, be more persistent, and seek out new and improved methods of working (Kichuki et al., (2018). According to Leithwood (2014), a school principal's role as an instructional supervisor in the advancement of excellent teaching and instruction for high academic objectives is crucial. Effective instructional leadership in goal setting techniques, according to Ngunjiri (2012), improved students' performance in national examinations. According to Ariko and Simatwa (2011), prompt goal setting and planning helped students perform better. According to Warokka (2016), the majority of principals seldom verified professional documents in line with the set goals and this affected students' performance in national examinations. Makuto (2014) noted a link between students' poor performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education and the administration of the schools by the head teachers. Ahmed (2016) noted that performance appraisal is strengthened by performance goals only when the supervisors and employees work together as a team. The results further concurred with those of and Mukonambi (2016) whose study findings established that goals setting contribute to improved employee performance.

As stated by Noe et al., (2018), managers utilized performance management as a means to ensure that employees' actions and productivity align with the company's objectives. They argue that performance management is crucial for gaining a competitive edge They

outline three key components: defining performance expectations, evaluating outcomes, and providing feedback based on performance data. In the beginning, a performance management system determines the aspects of performance evaluation that are applicable to the organization, primarily through job analysis. Afterwards, it quantifies precise performance-related measures using performance appraisals, which serve as a means to oversee and enhance employee performance. Ahmed (2016) underscored the importance of instructional leadership practices, such as establishing and communicating school objectives to create a framework for monitoring. Finally, it offers feedback to employees through formal appraisal sessions, enabling them to adjust their performance in alignment with the company's goals.

Setting goals is deemed critical for employee performance, as per research findings. Goals can serve as motivators for employees, encouraging them to exert more effort, stay focused, display persistence, and seek out innovative and improved work methods (Kichuki et al., 2018). The study highlights that some evaluators lacked awareness of the performance appraisal process. However, they noted that the extensive use of performance evaluation procedures came with various implementation challenges, including poor goal setting techniques, lack of feedback, minimal involvement from subordinates, and ineffective evaluation criteria. Agesa (2012) and Odhiambo (2015) identified several concerns regarding the appraisal process, including insufficient constructive engagement of principals, challenges in establishing suitable quality standards, complexities in developing appropriate evaluation criteria, limited follow-ups, and shortcomings in feedback mechanisms. This study did not address issues like the inability to carryout goal setting appraisal practices, provide prompt feedback, subjectivity in assessments, and supervisors rushing through the application process while bypassing essential steps, all of which can lead to dissatisfaction with performance appraisals when protocols are not followed.

Performance appraisal methods are referred to as techniques for assessing employee performance. These methods fall into two categories: past-oriented techniques, which include rating scales, checklists, and forced rankings, and future-oriented methods, such as Observation Monitoring, assessments, the 360-degree approach, and psychological assessment methods. Management by objectives and the 360-degree method are considered favourable options as they encourage active engagement, focus on tangible results, and provide a sense of autonomy and achievement, fostering comprehensive commitment to performance improvement. However, it's essential to be cautious about setting unrealistic expectations for individuals. According to Kithuku (2012) and Namuddu (2010), school evaluation criteria should be specific enough to measure real-world view performance and transparent in nature. Research by Namuddu (2010) and Kihugu (2013) concluded that the choice of assessment technique could impact employee performance both positively and negatively. Nevertheless, the impact of performance evaluation methods on student performance remains an underexplored area. The researcher aims to address this knowledge gap by investigating how performance assessment systems have affected student performance based on goal setting practices. Maicibi (2005) defines informal appraisal as a method in which subordinates engage in informal conversations with their superiors to set goals and evaluate the latter's traits and behaviours. According to Maicibi, this approach can provide management with valuable information useful for staff training and development, as well as for making decisions related to incentives, promotions, career advancement, transfers, and terminations or layoffs.

Methodology

The impact of principals' assessment procedures on students' performance at KCSE in public secondary schools in Kiminini Sub-County of Kenya was investigated in this study using a descriptive research design. Descriptive research design, according to Kothari (2011), is the means of assembling data to examine a hypothesis or address issues with the status of a topic. Descriptive research design is, regarded as an appropriate strategy for data gathering if the study's aims call for both quantitative and qualitative data (Poland, 2005). The sample components and the variables are just observations of what they are; hence, the research strategy chosen for this study was descriptive. The descriptive study approach was used since quantitative data from standard and standardized questionnaires was required. It specifically targeted students, teachers, deputy principals and principals. Kiminini Sub County has 60 Secondary schools with 60

principals and 60 deputy principals. To choose the respondents, the proportional to size sampling (PPS) approach was utilized. The researcher employed multistage sampling technique comprising of stratified sampling, purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The sample size was determined according to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table which from a target population of 60 schools, 18 principals ,18 deputy principals , 24 HODs and 150 teachers were selected hence yielding a sample of 210 teachers to represent a cross- section of the population. Thus a total sample size of 210 respondents constituted the sample size of the study.

Table 1 Sample size

Category	Target Population	Sample size
Principals	60	18
Deputy Principals	60	18
Heads of Departments	240	24
Teachers	1500	150
Total	1860	210

The study utilized questionnaires to collect data from teachers, Heads of departments and Deputy Principals, interviewing schedules from Principals and document analysis to get administrative secondary data. Reliability in addition to validity were expected to rate the calibre of the research instruments. With the guidance of the supervisor, the researcher was able to ascertain the validity of the instruments. Calculating the test-retest reliability factor revealed the instrument's dependability (Kathuri &Pals, 1993). To get the reliability of the research instruments, the researcher conducted a pilot study which gave an average reliability factor of 0.75. The researcher distributed and collected questionnaires using the drop- offs and pick – ups approach while interviews conducted to principals was scheduled after consulting them. Questionnaires data was compiled, cleared and organized, then put into a computer for analysis using the statistical packages for social science (SPSS) version 22. The effectiveness of the principals, students' performance assessment procedures was assessed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Quantitative data was analyzed thematically. Data was presented basing on the objectives of study which were to establish the effect of principal's goal setting practices on students' performance at KCSE in Kiminini Sub County, Kenya.

Results

The dependent variable for the current study was school performance in KCSE in the sampled school for the period 2017 to 2021. Thus, the principals were required to provide performance data for the schools, from which analysis was done to determine its distribution as a variable. The means provided by principals were used to compute a mean for each school over the period. The descriptive statistics for the variable was presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for school means for 2017-2021

|	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
School Mean 2017-2021	18	2.41	6.34	4.0571	1.38215
Valid N (listwise)	18				

Table 2 reveals that the variable school performance had M= 4.0571, and SD=1.38215. The lowest performed school had an average of 2.41 while the highest performed was 6.34. The researcher categorized the schools basing on their mean performance. Schools that recorded values below the mean of 4.0571 were classified as low performing while those that attained values above the mean were classified as high performing. The summary statistics were presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for School Mean categories

School Mean category	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
High	5.6308	7	.65950	4.90	6.34
Low	3.0278	11	.46902	2.41	3.92
Total	4.0401	18	1.40992	2.41	6.34

Table 3 revealed that the High mean category of schools were N=7, and had M=5.6308, Sd=0.6595 while the Low mean category had N=11, with M=3.0278 and Sd=0.46902.

The researcher further performed diagnostics to determine the normality of the variable in order to enable the study to undertake parametric test. Hence a P-P test for normality was done for the variable School Mean. This was presented in Figure 2.
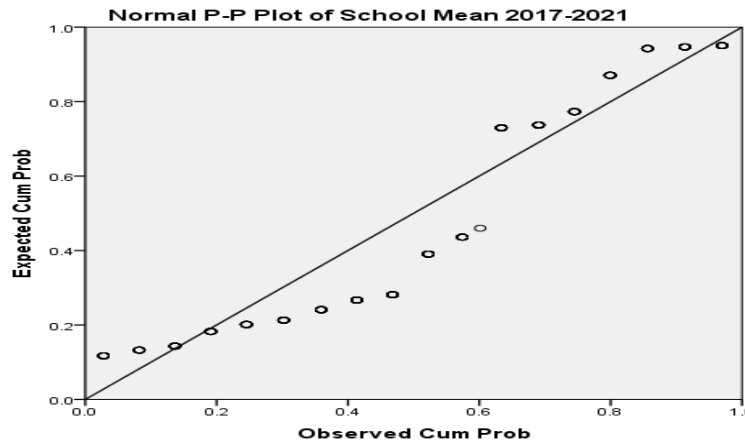
Figure 2: P-P plot for School Mean in sampled schools

Figure 2 illustrates that the standardized residuals of the variable School Mean were normally distributed most of them lying along the normal distribution line. Hence the variable was considered normally distributed with a mean. M=0 and Sd= 1. The test validated the use of the parametric test of independent samples t-test. The objective of the study was to establish the effect of principal's goal setting practices on students' performance at KCSE in public secondary schools in Kiminini Sub-County, Kenya. The study set to verify the following hypothesis

H_01: *There is no statistically significant effect of principals' goal setting practices on students' performance at KCSE in public secondary schools in Kiminini Sub County.*

The researcher set out to obtain data to determine principals' goal setting practices by administering questionnaires to teachers, HODs and Deputy Principals in the sampled schools. They were required to respond to six statements by rating their opinions on a five point likert scale, where Strongly Agree (SA) – 5; Agree (A)- 4; Not Sure(NS)- 3; Disagree (D)- 2; and Strongly Disagree (SD)- 1. The findings were presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Respondents' ratings for Principal's goal setting practices

Attributes of Goal setting practices	SD N	%	D N	%	NS N	%	A N	%	SA N	%	Sum	Mean
Initiates Meeting	13	7.1	70	38.0	7	3.8	84	45.7	10	5.4	560	3.04
Keen on setting Syllabus Coverage Targets	3	1.6	84	45.7	20	10.9	71	38.6	6	3.0	545	2.96
Oversees setting of Learner Progress Targets	11	6.0	92	50.0	2	1.1	70	38.0	9	4.9	526	2.86
Actively Involves teachers in setting targets	23	12.5	80	43.5	7	3.8	53	28.8	21	11.4	521	2.83
Keen about exam achievement targets	17	9.2	73	39.7	8	4.3	77	41.8	9	4.9	540	2.93
Monitors teacher lesson attendance targets	9	4.9	81	44.0	9	4.9	72	39.1	13	7.1	551	2.99
Valid N (list wise)	135											

The respondents were required to rate their opinion on the statement that the principal initiates appraisal meetings. Majority of the respondents represented by 94(51.1%) agreed while those that disagreed were 83(45.1%) and only 7(3.8%) were Not sure about the statement. The statement had a weighted mean of 3.04 implying that the respondents were divided on whether principals initiate appraisal meetings. On whether the principal was keen on setting syllabus coverage targets, a larger proportion represented by 87(47.3%) agreed with the statement while 77(41.6%) disagreed with the statement and only 20(10.9%) were not sure with the statement. The statement scored a weighted mean of 2.96 which indicates that most principals were not keen on setting syllabus coverage targets. On whether the principal oversees setting of Learner

Progress Targets, a large proportion of the respondents of 103(56%) disagreed with the statement while 79(42.9%) agreed and only 2(1.1%) were not sure. The weighted mean was 2.86, implying that most principals are never keen with setting of learner progress targets. The respondents were also required to rate their opinion on whether the principal actively involves teachers in setting targets. Majority of the respondents represented by 103(56%) disagreed while 74(40.2%) agreed and only 7(3.8%). The statement had the lowest weighted mean of 2.83 which meant majority of principals hardly involve teachers in setting targets.

On whether the principals were keen about exam achievement targets, the responses were fairly balanced with 90(48.9%) indicating they disagreed with the statement while 86(46.7%). Only 8(4.3%) indicated not being sure about

the statement. The weighted mean was low at 2.93 hence generally; most principals were not keen about exam achievement targets. The respondents were required to rate opinion on whether the principal monitors teacher lesson attendance targets. There was a fairly balanced opinion with 90(48.9%) indicating they disagreed while 85(46.2%) agreed with the statement and only 9(4.9%) which yielded a weighted mean of 2.99. The mean implies that generally most principals hardly monitor teacher lesson attendance targets.

The ratings of the respondents were aggregated in order to compute an index that could measure the levels of the independent variable (Principal's goal setting practices) for the schools. The index had values ranging from 6 to 30. A score of values above 18 indicates higher levels in principal's goal setting practices while lower scores indicate low levels. The descriptive statistics for the index were presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Principal's goal setting practices index

School Mean category	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Deviation
High	73	22.8767	19.00	27.00	2.37431
Low	111	14.1712	8.00	21.00	3.24142
Total	184	17.6250	8.00	27.00	5.17409

Table 5 illustrates that ratings for High performed schools were high (M=22.8767, Sd= 2.37431) while those for Low performed schools were very low (M=14.1712, Sd=3.24142). The results indicate that generally principals in High performing schools exhibited high levels of goal setting practices than those in Low performing schools The study set to verify the null hypothesis H_01 which stated that:

H_01: There is no statistically significant effect of Principal's goal setting practices on students' performance at KCSE in public secondary schools in Kiminini Sub-County, Kenya

In order to verify the hypothesis, the study computed the inferential statistical technique of the independent samples t-test. The results were presented in Table 5

Table 5: Independent samples t-test for Principal goal setting practices

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	Lower	Upper
Goal Index	Equal variances assumed	7.239	.008	19.722	182	.000	8.70554	.44141	7.83461	9.57648
	Equal variances not assumed			20.998	179.832	.000	8.70554	.41458	7.88747	9.52362

Table 6 reveals that a significant value was computed with $t_{(182)} = 19.722$, $\rho<0.05$. Hence the null hypothesis stating that there is no statistically significant effect of principal's goal setting practices on student performance in KCSE in Kiminini Sub County was rejected.

An independent samples t-test conducted to determine the effect of principal's goal setting practices on student performance at KCSE found a significant effect with High Performing schools reporting significantly higher levels of goal setting practices (M=22.8767, Sd= 2.37431) than Low performing schools (M=14.1712, Sd=3.24142).

The results indicate that the Principals goal setting practices influenced the students' performance in KCSE. The results also indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between the principals goal setting practices and the students' performance at KCSE in Kiminini Sub County, Trans Nzoia County with a p value $p < 0.05$. These findings are in line with Janes et al (2016) findings that performance of both the employee and the management is weak when the goals are set and used in the environment that lacks common understanding and language and that improved performance is experienced when the management makes it a habit of using goals as part of the performance appraisal practices.

Conclusion

The study established that the pricipals goal setting appraisal practices significantly affected performance in the schools sampled for the study. In schools where the principals were keen with appraisal practices, the performance in KCSE was found to be relatively higher. The study therefore concluded that goal setting appraisal practices undertaken by Principals in Public Secondary Schools significantly affected Student performance in KCSE.

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