



# Influence of Principals' Transformative Management Practices on Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Wajir County, Kenya.

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## Abstract

*Principals' transformative management practices play a critical role in ensuring realization of education objectives in secondary schools. However, in public secondary schools in Wajir County, many students register low grades in examinations. The purpose of this paper is to assess the influence of principals' transformative management practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Wajir County, Kenya. The objectives included; to determine the influence of principals' individualized consideration and inspirational motivation practices on academic performance. It is recommended that principals should continuously support and guide staff on how to undertake their duties. The Ministry of Education should allocate funds to enable principals to organize seminars for staff to undertake capacity-building activities and staff motivation activities aimed at equipping them with skills on how to undertake their duties. Principals should set Specific, Measurable, Attainable, realistic and Time-bound academic goals and expectations for staff and students. Principals should constantly involve staff in critical decision-making, especially on activities, which entail students' academic programmes and performance. This may help in generating ideas and new approaches of how to improve academic performance in schools.*

**Key Words:** Individualized consideration, Inspirational motivation, Idealized influence and Intellectual stimulation.

## Introduction

This chapter focuses on background to the study, statement of problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, rationale of the study, significance of the study, assumptions of the study, scope of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study and assumptions of the study. It also provides a list of operational definitions of key terms used in the study.

## Transformative leadership practices

Principals play important role with the intention to make teaching and learning more effective and to give quality education to students. According to Millette (2010), principals as schools' chief executives are charged with this daunting task of managing teachers among other school resources. In other words, most educational experts consider principals as the driving force and main source of the organizational development and academic growth of students (Mirkamali, 2011). However, for this to be realized, principals adopt transformative leadership practices. According to Mirkamali (2011), transformative leadership practices entail providing clear policy directives, implementing plans and motivating staff.

In education context, Hassan (2011) posits that transformative leadership practices are daily activities adopted by secondary school principals to apply rational, systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs and goals of its students and society. Hassan (2011) further contends that principals' transformational leadership practices make the difference between the success and failure of a school. These practices include idealized influence and individualized consideration of staff. However, the extent to which principals' transformational leadership practices influence academic performance in secondary schools is yet to be fully explored.

## Idealized influence

For example, in the United Kingdom, Jawqa (2010) opines that, in secondary schools where principals practice idealized influence, consider staff welfare, inspire staff and exercise intellectual stimulation, staff feel motivated and students thus, perform in their internal and nation examinations. Despite these postulations, many students still register low grades in their internal and national examinations. In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, a very remarkable problem that has tended to inhibit academic performance among students at the secondary school level is leadership styles adopted by principals (Whawo, 2012). Adeniyi (2013) asserts that, in general, the major problems affecting the school system are ineffective time leadership styles, unrewarding staff motivation approaches, ineffective instructional supervision, and above all, poor management of students' indiscipline.

In Wajir County, secondary schools have adopted a multiplicity of leadership approaches, which border on transformative ideas as a way of improving academic performance. However, many public secondary schools have

registered a decreasing trend in performance in national examinations. A report by the Ministry of Education (2020) shows that Wajir County that performance in national examinations, though high, has been decreasing as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: KCSE Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Wajir County from 2015-2019**

| Year of Examination | KCSE Performance (Meanscore) |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 2015                | 5.355                        |
| 2016                | 4.584                        |
| 2017                | 3.560                        |
| 2018                | 3.327                        |
| 2019                | 3.110                        |

**Source: MoE (2022)**

Data in Table 1 paints a picture of low academic performance in national examinations in public secondary schools. This is against a backdrop of the existence of leadership policy which vouches for prudent management as a mitigant to low academic grades. However, few empirical studies have interrogated the extent to which principals' transformational leadership style influences academic performance in public secondary schools; hence the study.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of principals' transformative management practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Wajir County, Kenya.

### 1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. Determine the influence of principals' individualized consideration on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Wajir County;
- ii. Examine the influence of principals' inspirational motivation practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Wajir County;

### 1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions;

- i. What is the influence of principals' individualized consideration on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Wajir County?
- ii. To what extent do principals' inspirational motivation practices influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Wajir County?

## Literature Review

The empirical literature review is based on the concept of students' academic performance in secondary schools, the concept of principals' transformative management practices and the influence of principals' individualized consideration of staff members, inspirational motivation, idealized control and intellectual stimulation practices on students' academic performance. The researcher provides divergent views which are critical to different authors who raised various versions related to the issues being investigated. It also provides theoretical and conceptual frameworks and a summary of literature reviewed citing the gaps identified.

## Students' Academic Performance

Academic performance is the outcome of education, the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals. It has achieved an exalted status bolstered by the several number of references to them in conferences, official documents and communiqués. According to Smilansky and Shefatya (2010), this is in total contrast to the poor level of understanding associated with them and their relatively rare practical implementation across the entire world.

Detailed experience of academic performance is in fact limited to just a few countries at both the institutional and national levels. Academic performance represents one of the essential building blocks for transparent secondary education systems and qualifications (Rubin, Kenneth & Coplan, 2010). They have a reputation as rather wide tools, yet it is this basic underpinning function that makes them so significant. Academic performance and outcomes-based approaches have implications for curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment, as well as quality assurance. Smith, Dalgleish and Herzmark (2011) assert that academic performance is likely to form an important part of twenty-first century approaches to higher education and the reconsideration of such vital questions as to what, who, how, where and when to teach and assess.

For a variety of understandable reasons many secondary school students approach education as alienated intellectual labor rather than something that is good for them, learning that enhances their lives (Smith *et al*, 2011). Making education more meaningful for these secondary school students requires that they acquire a sense of the educational project as enabling them to lead a richer and more empowered life rather than a task done primarily to satisfy the demands of others. By explicitly building educational experiences based on what secondary school students should be able to do with their knowledge, the academic performance approach helps the educational community understand the point of the activity.

## Principals' Transformative Management Practices

Transformational leadership is a model that principals and teachers can use to lead by example. According to Bottomley, Burgess and Fox (2014), it places a high value on creating community bonds, which encourage both students and teachers to greater levels of achievement. In a school management context, transformational leadership and change are closely related because a leader's ability can positively transform his or her followers' attitudes,

norms, institutions, behaviors, and actions (Bottomley et al, 2014). In this regard, transformational school principal is often viewed as well suited to education as it empowers followers and provides hope, optimism, and energy, and produces a shared vision productively (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016). Additionally, transformational leaders provide shared beliefs and values to create comprehensive change and innovation in work ethics and expand each follower's capacity.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2016) opine that transformational principals accomplish this by employing the four behavioral components synonymous with transformational leadership practices. These components include individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealized influence. Thus, in this study, these practices will be the focus and how they influence students' academic performance in secondary schools.

### **Principals' Individualized Consideration Practices and Students' Academic Performance**

In every secondary school, every staff and student have specific needs and desires with some being motivated by money while others by change and excitement. Cognizant of this fact, Kirkbride (2014) asserts that the individualized consideration element of transformational principal recognizes these needs. In a study conducted in Colombia, Avolio and Bass (2015) found that individualized consideration entails the development of staff through coaching, mentoring and teaching. Avolio and Bass (2015) further noted that a principal who manifest individualized consideration towards their staff and students demonstrate high concern for their students and staff, treats them as individuals and gets to know well about them and listens to both their concerns and ideas. To corroborate these assertions, Rizwan, Farooq and Ullah (2015) undertook a study in Guyana which revealed that a principal who gives personal attention to subordinates, reflects the behaviour of treating each staff as an individual and initiate an interest in the long-term development of each staff. This indicates that transformational school leaders provide distinct attention to every single need of students and staff for attainment and development by assuming the responsibility of a coach or a mentor.

In the Netherlands, Rubin, Munz and Bommer (2015) report that principals practise individualized consideration of staff issues are implemented after newly discovered opportunities are crafted alongside a supportive climate. Rubin et al (2015) assert that principals who practise individualized consideration usually pay attention to the differences among staff and discovers what motivates each of them, enhance communication and improve information exchange. According to Rubin et al (2015), such principals witnessed their schools register improved academic performance of 7.3% in national examinations.

Nyenyembe et al (2016) noted that it is important for a school manager or leader to have a relationship of familiarity with the students and staff to give feedback, which results from observing the students and staff perform. Kenya is no exception and principals who embrace individualized consideration of students' and staff needs have their secondary schools register impressive academic performance in internal and national examinations (Ayiro, 2014).

In secondary schools in Wajir County, Kaptich, Kiptiony and Munyua (2019) report that individual consideration offered to every staff by school heads tends to increase the effectiveness and satisfaction level of the staff. However, Kaptich et al (2019) have not indicated how activities undertaken by principals under individualized consideration determine the extent to which students perform in examinations.

### **Principals' Inspirational Motivation Practices and Students' Academic Performance**

Motivation affects how a student pays attention to specific information and attempts to understand the learning materials through experiences, thoughts, ideas and senses rather than just going through the process of rote learning. Carnie (2013) posits that there are two types of rewards: material rewards and social rewards. Material rewards include toys, treats, outings, privileges, and permissions. Social rewards include hugs, smiles, congratulations, compliments, and kudos. For a discipline program to succeed, a principal must reward his or her student step by small step for a few simple things he or she can readily accomplish. In a study conducted in China among 243 respondents, Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems and Doan Holbein (2012) intimated that, for some motivational constructs, it has been shown that, above and beyond intelligence, motivation explains variance in academic achievement. In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Okonkwo (2015) asserts that family background plays a crucial role in the development of students' academic motivation and achievement.

In a study carried out in Tanzania, Galvin (2013) also established that other desirable behaviors are not part of a student's natural repertoire and need to be taught, such as sharing, good manners, empathy and above all, study habits. This indicates that achievement at school must be taught to students through modeling by principals and shaping skills through principals' attention and encouragement. It is much easier to stop undesired behaviors than to develop new, effective behaviors. In Kenya, there is recognition that forms of motivation such as social rewards are interactions that a student enjoys and that are affirming (Fratkin, 2013). They can be smiles, hugs, and pats on the back, the thumbs up sign, praise, and expressions of appreciation, positive acknowledgment, overhearing glowing comments, and spending pleasant time with a principal (Fratkin, 2013). According to Fratkin (2013), principals should make it a habit to administer verbal or physical pats on the back whenever they give their youngster a material reward. Some students are indifferent to praise, smiles, and kudos because every other sentence their principal utters is "good job!" until it sounds like a verbal tic.

In Wajir County, principals rarely act as academic role models and are not able to monitor their students' level of understanding or ask for help when they do not understand what is being taught. This view is supported by Fratkin and Roth (2014) who argue that satisfactory school learning is unlikely to take place in the absence of sufficient motivation to learn.

However, Fratkin and Roth (2014) have not revealed how motivation of secondary school students enhances goal setting, the spirit of academic resilience and persistence which are variables which predicts scholastic achievement among the secondary school students.

## Results and Discussion

### a) Principals' Individualized Consideration and Students' Academic performance in Public Secondary Schools

The study sought to examine how principals' individualized consideration influences students' academic performance in public secondary schools. Descriptive data were collected from teachers and results are shown in Table 10;

**Table 10: Teachers' Views on Influence of Principals' Individualized Consideration on Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools**

| Test Items   | Ratings |        |        |        |         |
|--|---------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
|  | SA<br>% | A<br>% | U<br>% | D<br>% | SD<br>% |
| Principals sometimes provide support to staff as a way of improving students' academic performance in public secondary schools         | 50.4    | 9.9    | 3.5    | 15.6   | 20.6    |
| In public secondary schools, principals rarely coach staff on how to handle daily challenges to improve students' academic performance | 54.6    | 7.8    | 4.2    | 14.2   | 19.2    |
| In public secondary schools, principals sometimes attend to staff needs as a way of improving students' academic performance           | 58.9    | 5.7    | 3.5    | 20.6   | 11.3    |
| Despite principals' concern with the welfare of every staff, students still register low performance in national examination           | 38.3    | 6.4    | 4.3    | 40.4   | 10.6    |

**Source: Field Work Data (2022)**

Table 10 shows that 71(50.4%) of teachers strongly agreed with the view that principals sometimes provide support to staff as a way of improving students' academic performance in public secondary schools as did 14(9.9%) who agreed. However, 5(3.5%) were undecided, 22(15.6%) disagreed whereas 29(20.6%) strongly disagreed. The study also found out that slightly more than half, 77(54.6%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, principals rarely coach staff on how to handle daily challenges to improve students' academic performance while 11(7.8%) agreed. However, 6(4.2%) were undecided, 20(14.2%) disagreed whereas 27(19.2%) strongly disagreed. The study also revealed that 83(58.9%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, principals sometimes attend to the needs of staff as a way of improving students'

academic performance. On the same breath, 8(5.7%) agreed. However, 5(3.5%) were undecided, 29(20.6%) disagreed whereas 16(11.3%) strongly disagreed.

These findings corroborate the findings of a study conducted in Colombia in which Avolio and Bass (2015) found that individualized consideration entails the development of staff through coaching, mentoring and teaching. According to Avolio and Bass (2015), a principal who manifest individualized consideration towards their staff and students demonstrate high concern for their students and staff, treats them as individuals and gets to know well about them and listens to both their concerns and ideas. These findings further lend credence to the assertions of Jyoti and Bhau (2015) that contemporary learning environment requires this innovative kind of leadership style which empowers staff and raises their performance in an effort to improve academic performance. This indicates that, though not fully practiced, principals play an important role in improving academic performance in secondary schools by supporting staff, taking care of their welfare and needs as well as creating equipping them with skills to handle daily challenges their places of work.

The study further revealed that 54(38.3%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, despite principals' concern with the welfare of every staff, students still register low performance in national examination whereas 9(6.4%) agreed. At the same time, 6(4.3%) were undecided, 57(40.4%) disagreed whereas 15(10.6%) strongly disagreed. These findings are inconsistent with the findings of a study carried out in the Netherlands in which Rubin et al (2015) found that principals practise individualized consideration of staff issues are implemented after newly discovered opportunities are crafted alongside a supportive climate. Rubin et al (2015) established that principals who practise individualized consideration usually pay attention to the differences among staff and discovers what motivates each of them, enhance communication and improve information exchange. In the Netherlands, Rubin et al (2015) reported that such principals witnessed their schools register improved academic performance of 7.3% in national examinations.

These findings are indicative of the fact that activities which principals undertake such as taking care of staff welfare, coaching and training staff how handle daily problems and motivate them to work hard are at the center of students' academic performance in public secondary schools. That is, though not wholesomely practised in many public secondary schools, principals who embrace individualized consideration of students' and staff needs have their secondary schools register impressive academic performance in internal and national examinations.

#### **b) Principals' Inspirational Motivation and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools**

The study sought to assess how principals' inspirational motivation influences students' academic performance in public secondary schools. Results are shown in Table 13;



**Table 13: Teachers' Views on the Influence of Principals' Inspirational Motivation on Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools**

| Test Items   | Ratings |     |     |      |      |
|--|---------|-----|-----|------|------|
|  | SA      | A   | U   | D    | SD   |
|  | %       | %   | %   | %    | %    |
| In public secondary schools, principals have set a reward system for staff as a way of improving their performance                         | 33.3    | 8.5 | 6.4 | 41.1 | 10.7 |
| In public secondary schools, principals usually help staff to identify their capabilities to improve academic performance                  | 31.9    | 7.1 | 2.8 | 50.4 | 7.8  |
| Principals always motivate staff to have a fighting spirit to improve students' grades in public secondary schools                         | 48.2    | 7.8 | 3.5 | 22.0 | 18.5 |
| Students' academic performance in public secondary schools has not improved despite principal's adoption of different motivation practices | 63.8    | 9.2 | 5.7 | 12.8 | 8.5  |

**Source: Field Work Data (2022)**

Table 13 shows that 47(33.3%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, principals have set a reward system for staff as a way of improving their performance while 12(8.5%) agreed. However, 9(6.4%) were undecided, 58(41.1%) disagreed whereas 15(10.7%) strongly disagreed. The study also found out that 45(31.9%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, principals usually help staff to identify their capabilities to improve academic performance while 10(7.1%) agreed. However, 4(2.8%) were undecided, 71(50.4%) disagreed whereas 11(7.8%) strongly disagreed.

The study also revealed that 68(48.2%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that principals always motivate staff to have a fighting spirit to improve students' grades in public secondary schools while 11(7.8%) agreed. However, 5(3.5%) were undecided, 31(22.0%) of the teachers disagreed whereas 26(18.5%) of the teachers strongly disagreed. From Table 13, majority, 90(63.8%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that students' academic performance in public secondary schools has not improved despite principal's adoption of different

motivation practices whereas 13(9.2%) agreed. At the same time, 8(5.7%) were undecided, 18(12.8%) disagreed whereas 12(8.5%) strongly disagreed.

These findings do not corroborate the assertions of Carnie (2013) posits that there are two types of rewards: material rewards and social rewards. According to Carnie (2013), material rewards include toys, treats, outings, privileges, and permissions as well as social rewards include hugs, smiles, congratulations, compliments, and kudos. These findings are further consistent with assertions of Fratkin (2013) that forms of motivation such as social rewards are interactions that a student enjoys and that are affirming. Fratkin (2013) further asserts that such reward system entails smiles, hugs, and pats on the back, the thumbs up sign, praise, and expressions of appreciation, positive acknowledgment, overhearing glowing comments, and spending pleasant time with a principal. These findings affirm the fact that activities undertaken by principals such as rewarding staff, though not fully practised in many public secondary schools, are crucial determinants of academic performance. In other words, principals rarely act as academic role models and are not able to monitor their students' level of understanding or ask for help when they do not understand what is being taught. Students from such public secondary schools rarely set academic goals, lack the spirit of academic resilience and persistence which are variables which predicts their scholastic achievement.

### **Conclusion**

Drawing from the above findings, it is evident that, in many public secondary schools in Wajir County, performance of students in KCSE has been on a downward trend for the last five years (2017 to 2021). It is also evident that, though regarded as important in improving students' academic performance, many principals rarely provide support to staff. They rarely provide support to all members of staff with any idea on how to improve academic performance with few or no seminars organized for coaching and capacity-building to equip them with skills on how to handle daily challenges at workplace. From the study findings, it is also evident that many secondary school principals rarely undertake activities aimed at motivating teachers. What is commonly undertaken by school heads is social rewards to performing staff. Material rewards or any form of incentive are rarely provided. However, the study found out that principals usually set academic goals to be achieved at the end of every academic year to improve students' academic grades. From the study findings, many principals rarely involve staff in decision-making and are rarely often open to new ideas of problem-solving which has led to low students' academic performance in examinations.

### **Recommendations for Policy**

The Ministry of Education should formulate and enforce a mandatory management training for all school heads and their deputies to enable them acquire transformative leadership skills.

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