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**INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' PROVISION OF OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON TEACHER  
PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SAKU SUB-  
COUNTY, MARSABIT COUNTY, KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Statement of the Problem:** Principals play an important role in providing instructional leadership by adopting motivation strategies to ensure that teachers perform. However, in Saku Sub-county, the situation is quite different with many secondary school teachers registering low performance. Most of the teachers do not complete syllabus in time and have most of their students register low grades in internal and national examinations.

**Purpose of the Study:** To assess the influence of principals' motivation strategies on teacher performance in public secondary schools in Saku Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya.

**Methodology:** The study adopted a mixed methodology and thus applied concurrent triangulation research design. Target population comprised 11 principals and 115 teachers totaling to 126 respondents from which a sample of 96 respondents was determined using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was applied to create four strata based on the number of zones in Saku Sub-county. From each zone, two principals were sampled using purposive sampling considering schools which have had reported cases of teacher attrition and low students' academic performance in KCSE for the last five years. However, from each zone, simple random sampling was applied to select 22 teachers. This sampling procedure enabled the researcher to sample eight principals and 88 teachers. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS 23) and presented using tables.

**Findings:** The study established that teacher performance has been low with many teachers not able to cover syllabus in time which has occasioned low KCSE performance. This is attributed to lack of opportunities for further studies as a form of motivation.

**Recommendation:** The study recommends that principals must create time to provide sound instructional leadership by undertaking instructional supervision activities geared towards teachers' classroom pedagogy. The Ministry of Education should create flexible programmes to enable teachers undertake further studies.

**Keywords:** *Principals' provision of opportunities for professional development, teacher performance, public secondary schools.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Teachers are at the epicenter of the success of any education reform and thus, constitute a very important component of the education sector through implementation of curriculum objectives. Aaronson, Lisa and William (2014) assert that teachers undertake classroom pedagogy, syllabus coverage and above all, ensure that students register impressive academic grades in both internal and national examinations. However, to realize this, teacher motivation cannot be overlooked. Motivation activities such as provision of opportunities for professional development are crucial for teacher performance. Professional development entails the development of a person in his or her professional role. In the context of teaching, Villegas-Reimers (2015) asserts that professional development is a set of activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher.

In a study carried out in the Netherlands, Boyle, Lamprianou and Boyle (2015) established that there is a very considerable consensus that professional development deals with developing teachers. According to Boyle et al (2013), the continual deepening of skills and knowledge is vital in the development of any professional's life. This implies that development of teachers is necessary for the betterment of quality teaching and learning. To support this, Blase and Blase (2015) carried out a study in Germany which revealed that professional development is a lifelong development program that focuses on teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitude to enable them to teach learners effectively. Blase and Blase (2015) noted that professional development is an exercise that targets a teacher, taking place over a particular time in order to attain professional growth. According to Blase and Blase (2015), effective professional development for teachers supports teacher motivation and their commitment to the learning process. This indicates that teachers' professional development strives to perfect what teachers were taught in the tertiary in order to meet the demands of the curriculum and secondary

schools which accord their teachers such opportunities witness improved teacher performance in terms of syllabus coverage and students' academic outcomes.

In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Du Plooy (2014) opines that secondary schools regard teacher development as key to their performance. For example, in a study carried out in Nigeria, Egu, Wuju and Chionye (2014) revealed that secondary schools ensure that teachers take part in professional development activities in order to become better teachers. According to Egu et al (2014), in essence if teachers develop, they will obviously be motivated to teach and they are often attracted to professional development because they believe that it will enhance their knowledge and skills, contribute to their growth, and augment their effectiveness with learners. In secondary schools in Somalia, Jandaya (2014) avers that secondary schools recognize that offering teachers opportunities for professional development is an important component of ongoing teacher education and is critical to the role of the teaching staff since it leads to their effectiveness and performance. Jandaya (2014) revealed that secondary schools which adopted continuous in-service training for their teaching staff had their students register an average annual improvement of 5.9% in national examinations. This implies that professional development is crucial to teachers since it accords an opportunity to learn new approaches of pedagogy and new ways of handling students' academic needs, interests and preferences, which are key to their academic performance. In other words, professional development seeks to improve teachers' instructional methods, their ability to adapt instruction to meet the needs of the learners, their classroom management skills, creation of professional culture that relies on shared beliefs about the importance of teaching and learning and emphasizes teacher collegiality.

In Kenya, there is recognition that teachers require opportunities for professional development and career progression. A study conducted in Thika West District by Kemunto (2015) submit that teachers must be well grounded in the knowledge, skills, values, principles, methods and procedures relevant to their field. According to Kemunto (2015), high quality professional development for teaching staff is an imperative component in nearly every modern proposal for improving education. Kemunto (2015) noted that there is need for teachers to be prepared to meet certain standards and improve learner performance. In Masaba South District, for example, Onyambu (2014) asserts that increasing hours of work, larger class sizes, more subjects, and constantly changing curricula are the major de-motivators in many countries. According to Onyambu (2014), what is expected from teachers is not pitched at a realistic level

in many regions given material rewards, workloads, work and living environments. Onyambu (2014) further posits that, in many schools, teachers are being asked to take on more responsibilities, including HIV/AIDS education, counselling and community development.

In the same token, a study carried out in Thika West Sub-county by Nyakundi (2015) shows that 79.3% of motivated teachers are more likely to motivate students to learn in the classroom, to ensure the implementation of educational reforms and feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment. According to Nyakundi (2015), while teacher motivation is fundamental to the teaching and learning process, several teachers are not highly motivated.

However, in secondary schools, the challenge for principals is to develop highly motivated teachers who are actively engaged in teaching and learning, open to new ideas and approaches and committed to students and change over the lifetime of their teaching careers. In Saku Sub-county, principals play a key role in teacher motivation which, in turn, contributes to teacher performance. However, teacher performance in many public secondary schools in Saku Sub-county is low. For example, a study carried out in Saku Sub-county by Huma (2014) indicates that, in public secondary schools, 67.2% of teachers do not complete syllabus in time and have 59.3% their students register low grades in internal and national examinations. Despite these statistics, few empirical studies have interrogated the extent to which principals' motivation strategies influence teacher performance in public secondary schools. There is a requirement for teachers to undertake in-service training plus any other professional development courses to sharpen their teaching approaches.

A study conducted in Saku Sub-county by Galgallo (2014) established that, for effective implementation of secondary school curriculum, teachers ought to be retrained and undergo further professional advancement programmes. According to Galgallo (2014), professional development serves to enhance the knowledge of the teacher, be on the par with subject development, improve teaching skills and create new knowledge. However, much still needed to be done since Galgallo (2014) has not interrogated the extent to which offering teachers opportunities for professional development influences their performance in terms of syllabus coverage and students' academic performance.

#### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Principals play an important role in providing instructional leadership by adopting motivation strategies to ensure that teachers perform. However, in Saku Sub-county, the situation is quite different with many secondary school teachers registering low performance. As noted earlier,

Huma (2014) revealed that, in public secondary schools, 67.2% of teachers do not complete syllabus in time and have 59.3% their students register low grades in internal and national examinations. Efforts to mitigate on these challenges have not yielded much remarkable progress and has compromised the quality of education offered in public secondary schools. Despite these findings, few empirical studies have interrogated the influence of principals' provision of opportunities for professional development on teacher performance in public secondary schools; hence the need for the study.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To assess the status of teacher performance in public secondary schools in Saku Sub-county;
- ii. To determine the influence of principals' provision of opportunities for professional development on teacher performance in public secondary schools in Saku Sub-county.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study was guided by the motivation management theory which was postulated by Robert Owen in 2001. This theory was based on Owen's experience with machines during the Industrial Age of the 1800s. According to Owen (2001), the better a machine is taken care of, maintained and looked after, the better it performs. This theory was revolutionary during his time and has continued to be true. This theory states that every person has the same needs, but each individual prioritizes them differently. In the context of this study, the theory identifies three needs: achievement, power and affiliation. The need for achievement is the desire to do well at a task, the need for power demonstrates itself through influence over other people, and the need for affiliation is the yearning for meaningful relationships. According to Owen (2001), motivation is the psychological process of providing purpose and intention to students' academic behavior and explains why students behave the way they do. Thus, the relevance of this theory in this study is that it underscores the fact that teacher performance is key to their performance and eventual students' success.

The study was also guided by Walberg's achievement theory. This theory posits that psychological characteristics of individual teachers and their immediate psychological environments influence educational outcomes, that is, cognitive, behavioral and attitudinal. Walberg (2012) identified nine key variables that influence educational outcomes as: teachers' prior achievement, motivation, developmental level, quantity of instruction, quality of instruction, classroom climate, stakeholders' involvement, home environment, group dynamics

and exposure to mass media outside the school. In this study, to improve teacher performance, educational process goals as well as achievement goals must be considered. Thus, the relevance of this theory is that performance is interpreted to include teacher perceptions of the social environment, creativity, self-concept, participation in extra-curricular activities, and interest in subject matter.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed methodology and thus applied concurrent triangulation research design. Target population comprised 11 principals and 115 teachers totaling to 126 respondents from which a sample of 96 respondents was determined using Yamane’s Formula. Stratified sampling was applied to create four strata based on the number of zones in Saku Sub-county. From each zone, two principals were sampled using purposive sampling considering schools which have had reported cases of teacher attrition and low students’ academic performance in KCSE for the last five years. However, from each zone, simple random sampling was applied to select 22 teachers. This sampling procedure enabled the researcher to sample eight principals and 88 teachers. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from teachers whereas interview guides were used to collect qualitative data from principals. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Analysis with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS 23) and presented using tables.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the objective. It also outlines the methods of presentation of the study findings and discussions.

#### RESPONSE RATES

In this study, 88 questionnaires were administered to teachers out of which 85 questionnaires were filled and returned. At the same time, the researcher also interviewed six (6) principals. This yielded response rates shown in Table 1;

**Table 1: Response Rates**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Sampled Respondents</b>	<b>Those Who Participated</b>	<b>Achieved Return Rate (%)</b>
Principals	8	6	75.0
Teachers	88	85	96.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>94.8</b>

Table 1 shows that principals registered a response rate of 75.0% whereas teachers registered 96.6% as the response rate. On average, this yielded a response rate of 94.8%, which affirmed the assertions of Creswell (2014) that a response rate above 75.0% is adequate and of suitable levels to allow for the generalization of the outcomes to the target population.

**Status of Teacher Performance in Public Secondary Schools**

The study sought to assess teacher performance in public secondary schools in Saku Sub-county.

This was measured by assessing how often teachers cover syllabus in time and KCSE performance (mean points) between 2017 and 2021. Descriptive data were collected from the sampled teachers and results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Frequency of Syllabus Coverage by Teachers in Public Secondary Schools**

Frequency of Timely Syllabus Coverage by Teachers	Number of Teachers	
	f	%
Often	25	29.4
Rarely	47	55.3
Never	13	15.3

Table 2 shows that most of the teachers do not often cover syllabus in time, 45.9% rarely whereas 11.3% never do. During the interviews, principals also stated that most teachers do not cover syllabus in time. Principal, P1, noted;

*In my school, I have had cases where teachers do not cover syllabus in time to accord students’ adequate time for revision.*

These findings corroborate the assertions of Hofman and ve Hofman (2015) that, in the Netherlands, a performing or s competent teacher is regarded as one who is able to cover syllabus in time and teach a particular subject very well that is, one who perceives his or her teaching competence and believe that they can exert a positive effect on students’ achievement. Having collected and analyzed data on syllabus coverage, the researcher further sought to assess the status of performance in KCSE for the last five years (2017-2021) as an indicator of teacher performance. Results are shown Table 2.



**Table 2: KCSE Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Saku Sub-county (Mean scores) between 2017 and 2021**

KCSE Results in Mean Score (Points)	Years of Examination				
	2017 %	2018 %	2019 %	2020 %	2021 %
1-2.9 points (Poor)	40.2	43.5	44.2	47.3	48.9
3-4.9 points (Below Average)	36.9	35.1	34.9	33.5	32.5
5-6.9 points (Fair)	15.4	15.1	14.8	13.7	13.4
7-8.9 points (Good)	5.3	4.4	4.3	3.8	3.6
9-11.9 points (Excellent)	2.2	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6

Table 2 shows that, in 2017, 40.2% of the secondary schools had mean points ranging between 1-2.9 in KCSE, 36.9% scored between 3-4.9 points, 15.4% scored between 5-6.9 points, 5.3% scored between 7-9 points whereas only a paltry 2.2% of the secondary schools scored between 9-11.9 points in KCSE. In the subsequent years, the performance has been on a declining trend. For example, from Table 7, 43.5% of secondary schools scored between 1-2.9 points in 2018, 35.1% scored between 3-5 points, 15.1% scored between 5-7 points, 4.4% scored between 7-8.9 points whereas 1.9% scored between 9-11.9 points in KCSE. In 2019, 44.2% of secondary schools registered between 1-3 points in KCSE, 34.9% scored between 3-5 points, 14.8% scored between 5-7 points, 4.3% scored between 7-8.9 points whereas 1.8% scored between 9-11.9 points. Table 7 further shows that, in 2020, 47.3% of secondary schools scored between 1-2.9 mean points in KCSE, 33.5% scored between 3-4.9 mean points, 13.7% scored between 5-6.9 mean points, 3.8% scored between 7-8.9 mean points while 1.7% scored between 9-11.9 mean points in KCSE.

In a similar trend, 48.9% of the secondary schools scored between 1-3 mean points, 32.5% scored between 3-4.9 mean points, 13.4% scored between 5-6.9 mean points, 3.6% registered between 7-8.9 mean points whereas 1.6% registered between 9-11.9 mean points in KCSE in 2021. These findings corroborate the findings of a report by MoE (2022) that the performance of students in Saku Sub-county in KCSE has been on a downward trend. This calls into question the level of teacher performance and strategies therein which principals develop to motivate teachers. In summary, these findings affirm the fact that teacher performance entails several aspects such as increased efforts to achieve high output, innovation to discover new superior ways of doing things, enhanced attitudes to treat customers, in this case students, with respect and the overall performance of schools in terms of syllabus coverage and performance.



### Opportunities for Professional Development and Teacher Performance in Public Secondary Schools

The study sought to establish the extent to which provision of opportunities for professional for teachers influence their performance in public secondary schools. Descriptive data were collected from teachers and the results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Teachers’ Views on the Influence of Provision of Opportunities for Professional Development on Teacher Performance in Public Secondary Schools**

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
In public secondary schools, there are no opportunities for in-service training as a way of improving performance	41.6	7.1	5.5	40.4	5.4
Teachers have sometimes attended any mentorship programmes on how to handle learners with indiscipline cases	54.0	6.3	6.3	12.7	20.7
In public secondary schools, teachers have not witnessed a situation where they are given sabbatical leave to refresh themselves	29.5	5.6	6.7	51.9	6.3
Public secondary school principals rarely organize workshops and seminars for teachers to learn new teaching approaches	33.3	3.2	3.1	54.8	5.6
In public secondary schools, teacher performance is low since there are no opportunities for personal growth and development	30.7	3.4	3.5	56.8	5.6

Table 3 reveals that only 41.6% of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, there are no opportunities for in-service training as a way of improving performance as did 7.1% who agreed. However, 40.4%, disagreed whereas 5.4% strongly disagreed. Slightly more than half (54.0%) of the teachers strongly noted that teachers have sometimes attended any mentorship programmes on how to handle learners with indiscipline cases while 6.3% agreed. However, 12.7% disagreed whereas 20.7% strongly disagreed. A small proportion of the teachers (29.5%) strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, teachers have not witnessed a situation where they are given sabbatical leave to refresh themselves with only 5.6% in agreement. However, 51.9% disagreed whereas 6.3% strongly disagreed.

A third (33.3%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that public secondary school principals rarely organize workshops and seminars for teachers to learn new teaching approaches while 3.2% agreed. Most of them (54.8%) disagreed whereas 5.6% strongly disagreed. A small proportion (30.7%) of the teachers stated that, in public secondary schools, teacher performance is low since there are no opportunities for personal growth and development while 3.4% agreed.

Most of them (56.8%), disagreed whereas 5.6% strongly disagreed. These findings are consistent with the findings of a study conducted in the Netherlands in which Boyle et al (2015) established that there is a very considerable consensus that professional development deals with developing teachers. According to Boyle et al (2013), the continual deepening of skills and knowledge is vital in the development of any professional's life. This implies that development of teachers is necessary for the betterment of quality teaching and learning. To support this, Blase and Blase (2015) carried out a study in Germany which revealed that professional development is a lifelong development program that focuses on teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitude to enable them to teach learners effectively. Blase and Blase (2015) noted that professional development is an exercise that targets a teacher, taking place over a particular time in order to attain professional growth.

These findings point to the fact that, though not common, professional development of teachers is crucial for the performance. That is, teachers' professional development is important it strives to perfect what teachers were taught in the tertiary in order to meet the demands of the curriculum and secondary schools which accord their teachers such opportunities witness improved teacher performance in terms of syllabus coverage and students' academic outcomes. This implies that professional development is crucial to teachers since it accords an opportunity to learn new approaches of pedagogy and new ways of handling students' academic needs, interests and preferences, which are key to their academic performance. In other words, professional development seeks to improve teachers' instructional methods, their ability to adapt instruction to meet the needs of the learners, their classroom management skills, creation of professional culture that relies on shared beliefs about the importance of teaching and learning and emphasizes teacher collegiality.

### **Inferential Analysis**

To verify the possibility of the influence of provision of opportunities for professional development on teacher performance, data were collected from the five sampled public

secondary schools on how often (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) teachers are accorded opportunities for professional development, how often teachers cover syllabus in time and academic performance in KCSE for the year 2021. The results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: How Often Teachers are Accorded Opportunities for Professional Development and Teacher Performance in KCSE for the Year 2021**

How Often Teachers are Accorded Opportunities for Professional Development (X3)	How Often Teachers Cover Syllabus in Time	2021 KCSE Results
2	2	2.14
3	3	3.78
5	5	4.81
3	3	2.80
3	2	3.48

Table 4 shows that the higher the number of times teachers are given opportunities to further their studies or undergo professional development, the higher the frequency with which teachers cover syllabus in time as well as improved students’ academic performance in KCSE. These results further lend credence to the findings of Blase and Blase (2015) that professional development is a lifelong development program that focuses on teachers’ knowledge, skills, and attitude to enable them to teach learners effectively. The data in Table 15 were run through Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Test Analysis. The results are presented in Table 16:

**Table 5: Relationship between How Often Teachers are Accorded Opportunities for Professional Development and Teacher Performance in Public Secondary Schools**

		<b>X3</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>X3</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.932*	.921*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.021	.026
	N	5	5	5
<b>A</b>	Pearson Correlation	.932*	1	.808
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021		.098
	N	5	5	5
<b>B</b>	Pearson Correlation	.921*	.808	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	.098	
	N	5	5	5

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

Key: **X1**- How Often Teachers are Accorded Opportunities for Professional Development; **A**- How Often Teachers Cover Syllabus in Time and **B**-2021 KCSE Results

Table 5 shows that there is a strong correlation between provision of opportunities for professional development and teacher performance in public secondary schools. That is, the

higher the number of times teachers are given opportunities to further their studies, the higher frequency with which teachers cover syllabus in time and improved students' academic performance in KCSE ( $r(5) = 0.342$  and  $0.921$  at  $p = 0.021, 0.026$  at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ). This affirms the fact that re-training of teachers and providing them with opportunities to learn new ways to teach are critical activities which school heads must undertake to improve teacher performance in secondary schools.

### **Thematic Analysis**

During the interviews, the principals, however, expressed different views from those of teachers with regard to provision of opportunities for professional development. They stated that most teachers are accorded opportunities to further their studies. Principal, P4, stated;

*In my secondary school I have had quite a number of teachers given opportunities and scholarships to attend seminars and universities to undertake professional development courses. This has enabled them to acquire new teaching approaches, which has, in turn, improved their performance in terms of timely syllabus coverage and improved learner performance in their respective subjects*

Despite the differences in views expressed by the respondents, these findings are indicative of the fact that teachers require constant and regular professional growth so as to up their teaching skills and pedagogical competence at all times. This is in line with the assertions of Boyle et al (2015) established that there is a very considerable consensus that professional development deals with developing teachers. According to Boyle et al (2013), the continual deepening of skills and knowledge is vital in the development of any professional's life. This implies that development of teachers is necessary for the betterment of quality teaching and learning. These mixed findings affirm the fact that, though not a regular exercise, professional development of teachers is crucial for the performance in terms of syllabus coverage and students' academic outcomes.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

From the study findings, it is evident that many teachers do not cover syllabus in time and this has occasioned low academic performance of students in KCSE. Due to untimely syllabus coverage, students lack adequate time for revision. In the same token, the study established that performance of students in Saku Sub-county in KCSE has been on a downward trend. It is also evident that teachers are accorded opportunities for professional development, though not majority. This indicates that professional development deals with developing teachers since it results into continual deepening of skills and knowledge.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should create flexible programmes to enable teachers undertake further studies.

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