

Activities Adopted by Principals to Support Teachers' Professional Development in Kisii County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study investigated activities adopted by principals to support teachers' professional development in Kisii County, Kenya. The theory of adult learning theory (Andragogy) served as the theoretical framework for this study. With an emphasis on merging both cross-sectional and phenomenological research designs, the study used mixed-methods research technique, notably using convergent design. The study's target population included 4,436 teachers, 3,000 form three students, and 340 principals from 340 public secondary schools in Kisii County. The sample size for the study included 300 form three students, 354 teachers, 34 principals from 34 public secondary schools in Kisii County, and 11 Sub-County directors of education. Combining stratified, simple random, systematic random, and purposive sampling, participants were selected. Questionnaires, a detailed interview guide, and a focus group discussion guide were used to gather the data. The study instruments received assessments for face and content validity as well reliability prior to data collection. Using descriptive statistics, such as percentages and frequencies, quantitative data was analyzed. The hypothesis was tested with the help of inferential statistics like the ANOVA and the Spearman rank correlation. Codes and categories were developed for the analysis of qualitative data. The study's main finding is that principals design relevant training programs for teachers, manage the delivery of instruction, and supply training materials. The study concluded that principals, in their efforts to promote teachers' professional development, use a variety of activities to create and maintain a rewarding learning environment. The study recommends that principals should organize frequent seminars, workshops, and other initiatives for teachers to acquire the necessary professional skills that are essential in enhancing classroom practices.

Key Words: Teachers Professional Development; Principals role in Teacher Professional Development; Teachers' training in Kenya.

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Background to the Problem

By focusing on the whole person, professional development for teachers aims to improve instruction and the quality of teachers' work (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2021). Coe, et al. (2020), argue that all educators should strive to become better not because they are now ineffective but because they have the ability to do so. Professional development for educators is ongoing throughout their careers. Attending meetings, seminars, conferences, and courses, as well as engaging in self-directed learning, are all part of this process.

Scholars in the field of education have paid a lot of attention to the concept of principals supporting Teachers Professional Development (TPD) because of the increasing pressure on schools and principals to enhance student learning outcomes as a result of accountability measures in many countries (Hai-Ngoc, et al., 2016). Principals have a lot of pressure on their shoulders to improve classroom instruction. A classroom climate conducive to teacher professional development is essential if we want to ensure that our children are actually learning (Fatih, 2021). While teachers are ultimately accountable for their own PD, Fatih argues that school principals play a pivotal role in facilitating this process by arranging for relevant training and networking opportunities for their staff. This study does this by inviting the TPD perspective as one of the expected major contributions.

Teachers' professional development refers to any type of ongoing training designed to increase teachers' knowledge, skills, and expertise in the classroom. Kampen (2019) argues that the foundation for successful teacher professional development is the belief that good teaching is a talent that can be developed via training. Studies have shown that good professional development leads to better teacher practice, which in turn improves student performance and displaces the assumed claims of teachers-by-nature (Reimers et al. 2015; Teräs, 2016; Patton, 2015). This lends credence to Melissa's (2019) argument that the goal of professional development in the classroom is to enhance children's academic success by increasing teachers' expertise.

Professional development (PD) activities have an effect on educators because they are ongoing, relevant, collaborative procedures that include chances for feedback and personal reflection. The procedure leads to enhanced character and professional conduct. Teachers' confidence in their own abilities was found to be a significant predictor of their students' achievement in mathematics in a study conducted by Althausen (2015). Overall student outcomes were found to improve when teachers participated in job-integrated, long-term professional development aimed at boosting their competence and self-efficacy. As a result, students' education relies heavily on the expertise and dedication of their teachers. Unquestionably, principals ought to see to it that new teachers in a school system receive additional training in the form of PD.

According to Altan (2016), in-service practices are widely acknowledged as crucial to long-term success and growth in Turkey. In order to improve outcomes, the author contends that people need access to continuous and high-quality opportunities for professional growth. Altan argues that governments should create in-service programs that do not ignore the input of actual workers. To improve one's skill and practice, in-service training activities should revolve around previously learned material. However, when opportunities for professional growth are not provided, teachers' motivation, output, and morale suffer.

Preparatory courses and ongoing training for educators are gaining popularity across the continent. Educators in various African countries are now expected to participate in ongoing professional development as a strategic response to any challenge they may encounter in the classroom. Ajani's (2020) qualitative research on educators' views of professional development in

light of national policies found that teachers in both South Africa and Nigeria do not regularly or adequately participate in such activities. Another finding was that principals rarely considered teachers' actual professional needs before coming up with new forms of professional development. The importance of teachers having the resources to meet social expectations has led to professional development becoming an integral part of national school improvement projects. To that end, Luneta (2012) stresses the importance of teachers continuing their education to better meet the needs of their students.

Kenya, like many other countries, has spent a lot of time and effort on teacher professional development in an effort to get instructors on board with the rapidly evolving educational standards. Mwihi, Kagema, and Gachahi (2019) investigated the effectiveness of principals in fostering educator development and student learning in the Kenyan counties of Kirinyaga and Murang'a. The researchers had serious reservations about principals' ability to aid in teacher growth and improvement. The Pearson product correlation analysis showed a weak, hardly significant relationship between administrators' efficacy in fostering teachers' professional development and students' academic outcomes. In addition, a research conducted by the Instructors Service Commission (TSC) found that the vast majority of educators struggle with classroom management, professional record-keeping, and instructional techniques. Others are unable to manage children who have special needs and demonstrate weakness in assessment and feedback (Kwamboka, 2020). The principal is responsible for organizing, supplying, and promoting professional development in educational settings, and Ndabuki, Kasivu, and Mwanza (2020) have identified five aspects of this obligation.

The improvement of teachers' professional development is essential for raising educational standards in any county. This is also true of Kisii County in Kenya. A teacher's efficacy is determined by both their innate abilities and the principals' support for them in the classroom. Understanding the exact programs administrators have implemented to foster teacher improvement is crucial. Like many other locations, Kisii County experiences particular difficulties in education, including as limited resources and changing educational demands. Therefore, a thorough investigation is required to examine the programs that administrators have implemented to address these issues and support teachers continued professional development.

Statement of the Problem

Existing research suggests that educational leaders should actively encourage and support teachers' lifelong learning (Belmaz, 2019; Zahra, Afsaneh & Ashraf, 2023). Additionally, Professional development should foster a climate of creativity and cooperation, and make sure professional development initiatives are closely matched to the changing demands of the educational landscape (Ajani, 2020).

The present-day reality in Kisii County, however, stands in strident contrast to this ideal. The influence of principals on teachers' professional growth is often limited, fragmented, or non-existent. A number of challenges are highlighted in the literature that already exists, such as a lack of understanding of the principal's role in professional growth, and a lack of resources to support teacher growth (Mbeche, Rasugu & Jumba, 2023; Nyakundi & Orodho, 2020).

If the prevailing situation continues to persist, the consequences for the educational landscape in Kisii County could be dire. Students may receive a lower-quality education as a result of teachers' inability to keep up with changing teaching methods and technologies. In consequence, this could have a detrimental effect on students' academic success and general level of readiness for the difficulties of the modern world. To address this pressing issue, this study proposed to

investigate the activities adopted by principals to support teachers' professional development in Kisii County.

Research Question

What are the activities adopted by the principals to support teachers' professional development in Kisii County?

Theoretical Framework

The idea of adult learning (or andragogy) proposed by Malcolm Knowles in 1968 served as the foundation for this investigation. Knowles (1990) described adult learning theory as the "art and science of helping adults learn," which is echoed by McCartney and Tkatchov (2021). Adult education, according to his understanding of andragogy, places greater importance on how people learn than on the subject matter being taught. Role acting, the utilization of case studies, regular self-evaluation, and simulations are just few of the techniques that have been shown to be effective for adult learners (Malik, 2016). Teachers act less as lecturers and more as guides through the learning process. Since students came from a variety of educational backgrounds, it is important that the instructions be task-based. Learning materials should be designed to accommodate a range of prior knowledge and experience, so that students of various backgrounds can benefit from the curriculum.

For adults, learning takes on a more urgent and problem-based focus. Everyday adult life is marked by the occurrence of issues, the acquisition of knowledge about how to solve those problems, and the direct application of that knowledge (Ngozwana, 2020). Since educators' value creative problem-solving above rote memorization of facts, it's best not to hand them the solution manual up front (Kelly, 2017). The trainer should use their imagination to design engaging lessons for the educators. Including evaluations and simulations that describe certain challenges a learner can experience is one way to achieve this goal.

Assumptions based on andragogy were primarily developed and used in educational settings with adult students in mind. In some contexts, the principles of andragogy are used to enhance educators' training. Learning is considerably more than just the sequential accumulation of facts and figures for an adult learner (Malik, 2016). When it comes to teaching and learning, the relevance of the surrounding environment has only grown (Aksoy, 2018). Andragogy, in contrast to pedagogy, emphasizes professional development through an interactive and facilitating approach, with a focus on teacher-specific teaching practices. Therefore, it appears that effective adult education depends on recognizing the reality that the needs of adult learners are distinct from those of children, who are dependent on adults for their learning, despite the common assumption that adults are capable of learning on their own.

Review of Related Empirical Literature

Principals understand the importance of fostering a culture of sharing and learning within their schools. Schools want to foster a learning community where teachers share and learn from one another rather than relying solely on external experts (Gaikhorst, et al., 2019). If principals want their teachers to improve professionally and provide their students with a good level of education, they need to create activities like mentoring, induction, providing teaching/learning tools, and monitoring professional records. According to Turkey's adopted vision for 2023, school principals should prioritize faculty needs while organizing professional development opportunities.

To determine how much principals, help their teachers grow professionally, Fatih (2021) conducted a study in Turkey. The data was collected from the participants through an online survey. The methodology underlying this study was a quantitative cross-sectional survey. The information was collected from 4,729 working educators in Turkey's Sanliurfa province. A quarter of school principals were found to give "satisfactory support" for teachers' professional development, according to the study's findings. Principals frequently consulted useful resources to aid teachers, encourage professional growth, and keep educators abreast of the latest educational advancements. Furthermore, school principals did not effectively complete tasks that could have aided in the professional growth of educators, such as creating both individuals and organizations development plans, organizing a form for teachers to track their own professional growth, planning educational endeavors outside of seminar times, obtaining enough assistance from subject-matter experts, and establishing enough one-on-one reading and research tasks.

Hennessy, Habler, and Hofmann (2016) looked into how a school-based professional development method in sub-Saharan Africa might help improve teaching quality in developing countries. The research presents the results of a trial of a multimedia program in Zambia that aims to support participatory mathematics and science instruction through the use of open educational resources and digital technologies in the classroom. It looked at how the program altered educators' perspectives and methods in the classroom. The researchers drew on information gathered through observation, recording of classes and workshops, interviews with educators, portfolios, and audio diaries. Results showed that teachers' expectations for their students' performance improved when they used innovative educational approaches. Students gained a more thorough comprehension of the material, took greater interest in it, and solved difficulties together utilizing digital tools.

To ensure that newly hired or selected teachers are assisted in getting settled in as quickly as possible so that they are able to successfully carry out their assigned duties, Nyakerario (2021) aimed to learn more about the role of teacher peer coaching in the instructional program, the effect of teacher peer mentoring on teacher performance, the difficulties peer mentors face, and ways to improve their activities. The survey covered the 48 public secondary institutions in Kisii Central Kisii County. Twelve schools had twelve principals, each with a mentee (representing 25% of the population) and a mentor (representing 50%). The use of stratified sampling and a descriptive survey research design ensured that all types of schools were represented in the analysis. Data was collected using standardized questionnaires filled out by mentors and mentees, and interview instructions were supplied to principals at randomly selected schools. The acquired data was organized, coded, and analyzed with the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Among the study's many conclusions are: Without formal mentoring programs and a clear understanding of the mentors' roles, it can be challenging for new teachers to establish themselves in secondary schools. It has been proven that peer mentoring is challenging due to factors such as untrained mentors, a lack of procedures in schools to acknowledge, reward, and encourage mentors, a disregard for mentoring as an important part of helping new teachers, and unsettled mentees. According to the results of the study, the DEB or KIE should provide mentoring programs for teachers so that they can advance in their careers.

Research Design and Methodology

A mixed-method approach was used to investigate the research topic using a convergent parallel research design. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), this approach equally incorporates quantitative and qualitative methodologies, evaluates them individually, and makes judgments based on their combined findings. This strategy is justified on the grounds that it makes

up for the shortcomings of each technique and allows for a more thorough grasp of the research subject from numerous perspectives.

The convergent parallel design of this study enabled a thorough investigation of the research topic. Surveys were used to get quantitative data, while interviews and other forms of participant interaction were used to gain qualitative data. Analytic induction was used to find reoccurring themes in the qualitative data. This design produced an interpretative framework that probed actual contextual understandings of the issue by fusing participant views with quantitative analysis to establish meaning in variables.

Convergent design was chosen because it was thought to provide a deeper and wider viewpoint than using only one technique. According to Allen's (2019) perspective, a cross-sectional survey methodology was used to collect data for the quantitative investigation of activities adopted by principals to support teachers' professional development. The qualitative component, which aligned with Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio's (2019) emphasis on taking into account phenomenology's application to the study issue, used a phenomenological survey methodology to dive into the subtleties of educators' professional progress.

Locale of the Study

The research was conducted in Kisii County, with a specific emphasis on the public secondary schools. The population of Kisii County is significantly impacted by various factors, including physical characteristics, historical events, patterns of economic growth, and land settlement policies (County Government Kisii, 2018). Areas with substantial amounts of arable land tend to have high population densities. The county is situated within the geographic coordinates of latitude 0°30' to 1°0' South and longitude 34°38' to 35°0' East. The county encompasses a comprehensive land area measuring 1,332.7 square kilometers and is partitioned into nine distinct administrative sub-Counties.

The region exhibits a topography marked by undulating terrain, featuring numerous ridges and valleys. Additionally, it possesses a notable presence of perennial rivers that traverse the area, flowing in an east to west direction before ultimately converging into Lake Victoria. The soils within the County exhibit favorable characteristics, namely their quality and fertility, which facilitate the cultivation of crops and support agricultural endeavors. The region exhibits a highland equatorial climate, characterized by a bimodal rainfall pattern. The following areas border Kisii County, which is in the southwest of Kenya: Kisii County shares the Eastern border with East Nyamira County. West of Kisii County are the counties of Homa Bay and Migori. Kisii County is bordered to the north by Bomet County and Kericho County. Tanzania is located South of Kisii County, on the other side of the international boundary.

Target Population

Common, observable characteristics of the group being examined should allow for easy separation from non-study items (Opie, 2019). The research population is specified and identified in accordance with the study's goals. The 340 public secondary schools in Kisii County were the focus of this research. There were 340 principals, 4,436 teaches, 11 Sub-County Directors of Education, and 3,000 students in form three. They are a key group in determining the direction of educational policy, teacher training, classroom practices, and student outcomes. Additionally, they are well versed in the topic being researched, and they promote the growth of teachers within the county to guarantee quality teaching, because they are active in all areas of education.

Description of the Sample and Sampling Techniques

In accordance with Kothari's (2019) recommendations, the researcher built a representative sample for data collection using probability and non-probability sampling approaches. Given the mixed-method design used, a variety of probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used. According to Stephanie (2022), a suitable maximum sample size is often suggested at 10% of the population, given that it does not exceed 1,000. For instance, only 34 of the 340 public secondary schools in Kisii County were sampled using stratified sampling, which are included in the research. Further, 34 out of 340 principals using purposive sampling, 354 out of 4,436 teachers using simple random, and 300 out of 3000 form three students were sampled using systematic sampling from these designated schools were chosen to participate in the study.

Description of Research Instruments

A research instrument is a device used to measure observable natural and social phenomena, according to Sugiyono in Sugiharto (2018). The objective is to gather data or information that may be used to address research questions. This research employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative research instruments. The quantitative tools included questionnaires, whereas the qualitative instruments encompassed an in-depth interview guide and a focus group discussion guide. Document analysis and observation check-list were also included among the research instruments.

Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

A research instrument is used to describe the reliability, validity, and practicality of a measuring device, ensuring that the data collected is a true reflection of the study problem at hand. Bolarinwa (2015) notes that there are different ways to assess validity, such as face validity, validity as a construct, and content authenticity. The term "content validity" describes how well an assessment tool evaluates the variables of interest. The opposite concept, construct validity, examines how well a test or instrument measures a theoretical concept. Last but not least, "face validity" refers to an evaluation of how the exam seems on the surface (Creswell, 2018).

Validity of Research Instruments

Content validity was assessed by having experts in the field (in this case, the researcher's supervisors from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa) look over the research instruments and provide feedback on their accuracy and relevance to the study's goals. They were also reviewed by the institution's ethics committee to ensure they were up to par with what is expected of a scientific study in terms of ethical conduct. The experts skimmed the instruments to determine if the information contained was relevant to the study's goals and if the writing style and grammar met all expectations. The final version of the instruments includes professional comments and critiques.

Pilot Testing of the Research Instruments

Prior to administration, both the questionnaire and the interview guides were piloted to check for readability and data accuracy. The purpose of pilot testing was to field test the research instruments (questionnaires, interview schedules) with an adequate number of participants and use the results to refine them for the main study. The researcher piloted the study instruments at two public secondary schools that were not included in the main study. The study included 30 students from both secondary institutions, or 10% of the student body. The principals and a subset of the

faculty and student body were recruited at random for the pilot research. According to Creswell (2018), a pilot study can assist fix any problems with the instruments by revealing their flaws.

Reliability of the Questionnaires

Reliability, on the other hand, is the extent to which a research tool maintains its own consistency or stability over time. In other words, the same instrument used to study the same phenomenon twice should yield the same results. A research instrument is said to be dependable if it produces the same results when used to collect data in multiple sample studies taken at random from the same population (Mohamad et al., 2015). The split-half reliability approach (Trochim, 2020) was used to assess the validity of the educator surveys. Cronbach's alpha, a reliability analysis performed in SPSS, was used to determine post-test questionnaire consistency. With a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7, the surveys can be considered credible and useful for answering the study issue.

Reliability of Semi-Structured Interview Guides

The researcher's primary method of gathering qualitative data was through semi-structured interviews. To ensure the reliability of the qualitative tools, the researcher double-checked all interview transcripts to correct any obvious transcribing problems. The researcher ensured total uniformity in coding across all equipment by constantly comparing the codes produced. The researcher used a member-checking approach, sending the data collected by the interview guides back to the respondents so that they could double-check the accuracy of the information collected. The researcher employed Creswell's (2018) recommended instruments and the source triangulation technique to ensure the validity of the qualitative instruments.

Description of Data Collection Procedures

After getting approval from the university supervisors, the researcher applied to the Catholic University of Eastern Africa for an introduction letter for the application for a research permit from the National Council of Science and Technology (NCOST). The researcher was able to secure permission from the county and sub-county education directors with the use of NCOST research permits. After getting approval from the ministry of education, the researcher went to the secondary schools in the sample to interview principals, students, teachers, and sub-county directors of education. After getting permission, the researcher gave out the questionnaire to teachers and held individual interviews and small group talks with students at convenient times.

Description of Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis is defined as "the process of organizing data into relevant information that may be used to address research issues" (Kothari, 2019). The study used a convergent parallel mixed methods design, which means the researcher processed, analyzed, and interpreted the data using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative information has been distilled using descriptive statistics. The study topics were addressed and hypotheses tested with the use of inferential statistics like Spearman rank correlations and ANOVA. The analysis of qualitative data followed Creswell's six steps (Creswell, 2015). After collecting data via questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, the researcher selected and prepared the data for analysis by classifying the data according to the tools used and the participants.

Ethical Considerations

Research ethics refer to a set of guidelines that should be followed when conducting studies. When conducting interviews or surveys with subjects, researchers and scientists have a responsibility to act ethically (Bhandari, 2021). The study followed the seven guidelines for doing academic research that were laid forth by Arifin (2018). The researcher obtained a letter of consent from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa's administration and ethics committee before Researcher obtained formal informed consent from participants at all sampled schools and the county ministry of education before beginning data collection (Osho, 2017). In addition, no respondents' identifying information was gathered to ensure their privacy (Akaranga & Makau, 2016). In addition, the researcher abided by the principle of honesty and fabrication throughout the analysis and deliberation of the data findings to guarantee proper interpretation of the results according to the research problem and clear delivery of the results in a suitable manner to the relevant parties.

Findings and Discussions

Teachers were asked to rate 7 statements on a Likert scale, with responses ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Neutral" (3) to "Agree" (5) to "Strongly Agree" (5), with the goal of learning about how principals' activities affect teachers' professional development (see Table 1).

Table 6: *Response on Principals' Initiatives Impacting Professional Development (n=317)*

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
i. Teachers' professional development activities such as courses/workshop impact teachers' professional needs.	20 (6.3%)	42 (13.2%)	65 (20.5%)	146 (46.1%)	44 (13.9%)
ii. Observation visits to other schools or benchmarking by principals has impact on teachers' professional development.	22 (6.9%)	16 (5.0%)	42 (13.2%)	144 (45.4%)	93 (29.3%)
iii. ICT training for methodological enhancement organized by principals has impact on teachers' professional development	28 (8.8%)	40 (12.6%)	58 (18.3%)	133 (42.0%)	58 (18.3%)
iv. Curriculum demanded in-service training initiated by principals impacts teachers' professional development.	25 (7.9%)	35 (11.0%)	60 (18.9%)	144 (45.4%)	53 (16.7%)
v. Additional qualification (degree or diploma by principals has impact on for teachers' professional development.	48 (15.1%)	48 (15.1%)	69 (21.8%)	99 (31.2%)	53 (16.7%)
vi. School-based seminars and workshops organized by principals, impact teachers' professional development.	35 (11.0%)	53 (16.7%)	39 (12.3%)	131 (41.3%)	59 (18.6%)
vii. Participation in a network of teachers formed by principals has impact on teachers' professional development	17 (5.4%)	29 (9.1%)	44 (13.9%)	145 (45.7%)	82 (25.9%)

Source: *Field Data (2022)*

Table 1 shows that 146 teachers (46.1% of the sample) agreed with the statement that teachers' professional development activities like courses/workshops have impact on teachers' professional needs. There were also 20 respondents (6.3%), who strongly disagreed, and 65 respondents (20%) who were neutral. These results demonstrate the significance of teachers' participation in professional development opportunities like courses and workshops in meeting their own professional needs and advancing their careers. Teachers desperately need opportunities for professional development so that they can refine their teaching methods, learn about cutting-edge educational techniques, and meet their own unique professional demands.

Workshops and courses are essential because they allow educators to adapt lesson plans on the fly to the needs of their pupils. This result shows that schools are better equipped to identify meaningful information about students' performance when they offer professional courses and workshops that fulfill the professional needs of the teachers. Guidelines for classroom instruction could benefit from this. Therefore, these seminars and courses for educators are essential to the growth and development of both students and educators.

When asked about how they feel about teachers' professional development, principals said that offering courses and workshops is helpful. In addition, administrators suggested that PD opportunities like seminars and courses allow instructors to learn new pedagogical approaches, administrative procedures, and instructional methods. These abilities can help them become better teachers and meet the requirements of their students. Teachers can learn about fresh research, pedagogical trends, and cutting-edge resources through courses and seminars. Teachers can fill up knowledge gaps and adapt to students' and the system's changing demands by taking use of these learning opportunities. Some school administrators have argued (KCSP, 7, 9, 12, 17, and 24, 2023) that teachers benefit from having the opportunity to interact with their peers in a professional setting. This will aid them in pinpointing the root causes of any problems occurring in their schools or classrooms.

Education is a dynamic industry, and strategies that were successful in the past may not be as effective in the present, according to interviews with sub-county directors of education. As pedagogical norms, technologies, and methods evolve, teachers might benefit from participating in instructional courses and workshops. It has been hypothesized by a few SCDEs (3, 5, & 7 in 2023) that teachers' needs vary depending on the subjects they teach and the students they have in their classrooms. Teachers who have participated in professional development programs have a better chance of meeting the requirements of diverse student populations, including those who are new to the English language or have learning difficulties. A teacher's enthusiasm for their career can be revitalized and new avenues of inquiry opened up in the classroom when they take part in enriching professional development opportunities.

In addition, 135 participants (45.5% of the total) agreed that benchmarking and observation visits to other schools coordinated by administrators have an effect on teachers' professional growth. Significantly, 72 (22.7%) of the teachers remained neutral, which is a cause for concern given the evidence that teachers who incorporate techniques and strategies in analyzing students' works with colleagues are better able to share views regarding students' issues. Teachers benefit from this exchange because they pick up fresh ideas for improving student outcomes in the classroom.

Principal-initiated benchmarking and school observation trips have been shown to have a considerable impact on teachers' professional development, according to qualitative data collected from sub-county directors of education. Teachers can benefit greatly from the thoughts and ideas of their colleagues through benchmarking. The directors of the first, second, fourth, and sixth sub-

counties (SCDE, 2023) agreed that teacher observation visits are a great way for educators to learn about new methods of instruction. Teachers can get both inspiration and useful classroom strategies by observing other teachers in action. Reflective learning is also fostered by witnessing teachers in action in various classroom situations. Comparing their own methods to those of their peers allows teachers to pinpoint where they may make changes to better serve their students.

According to the teachers, observation visits and benchmarking are most effective when they are well-organized, timely, and followed up with ongoing assistance and chances for application in the teachers' own classrooms. In addition, for these actions to be very beneficial for educators and the educational setting as a whole, a culture of continual development and a readiness to learn and grow is necessary. Krebs (2015) argues that teachers who participate in benchmarking are engaged in professional growth because they are able to predict how their students will perform on tasks, listen to their reasoning, and evaluate their knowledge. Teachers can increase their own adaptability and skill at evaluating student work by taking part in this kind of activity. Teachers can take use of these chances to test children's mathematical abilities, develop their own, and collaborate with others on assessment and classroom instruction.

The principal-organized ICT training for methodology enhancement has an effect on teachers' professional growth, as 133 teachers (or 42%) agreed with the assertion. In addition, 58 people (18.3%) agreed, 58 people (18.3%) were neutral, and 40 people (12.6%) disagreed. It was clear that the way in which principals arranged IT training had a bearing on teachers' career advancement. Teachers today must be well-versed in the use of a wide range of information technology (IT) tools and resources in order to maximize their own instructional effectiveness and that of their pupils.

There may be a connection between Ludwig Von Bertalanffy's systems theory and the remark about teacher training in the use of ICT. By applying the systems approach theory to information and communication technology instruction for teachers as a means of professional development, principals can create a comprehensive and integrated approach that takes into account the interconnectedness of various elements, feedback mechanisms, adaptability, and goal orientation on the part of educators. This has the potential to lead to a deeper and more sustainable use of technology in the classroom, which would benefit teachers and students alike. After analyzing relevant documents, the researcher concluded that this is how successful schools are run.

The SCDE highlights numerous significant benefits and consequences of providing teachers with ICT training. In conclusion, the SCDE claims show how ICT education equips educators with the tools necessary to fully integrate technology into the classroom. Teachers benefit from this training because it helps them become more comfortable with technology, improves their digital literacy, and encourages a growth mentality in their classrooms. Educators' ability to prepare students for success in the digital age hinges on their ability to effectively integrate technology into their teaching approaches, resulting in more interesting, pertinent and student-centered learning environments.

In addition, the results showed that principal-initiated in-service training in response to curricular demands affects teachers' professional growth. In fact, 144 teachers (or 45.4%) agreed with the assertion. In addition, 59 (18.9%) people were ambivalent, 53 (16.7%) people strongly agreed, 35 (11.0%) people disagreed, and 25 (7.5%) participants strongly disagreed with the statement. Based on the data, it is obvious that principal-initiated in-service training that is required by the curriculum has a positive effect on teachers' growth as professionals. Taking the initiative to give in-service training for teachers shows that leaders care about their teachers' professional development and the success of their schools. Principals can better support their teachers and help

them develop in areas where they know they need it by providing them with in-service training. Training can be adapted to meet the specific requirements of a county or sub-county, making it more relevant to the teachers who will be receiving it.

Principals can help teachers achieve their professional development goals by receiving in-service training that is tailored to their needs and approved by a sub-county director of education (SCDE, 3). Teachers will be more invested in their work and motivated to learn thanks to this individualized approach to professional development. He continued by saying that better results in the classroom can be achieved through in-service training that emphasizes the use of evidence-based teaching methods and data-driven decision-making. Teachers acquire the skills to evaluate student performance, pinpoint problem areas, and adapt their lessons accordingly. The same is true for in-service training: it shows that the management cares about the professional development of its teachers. Increased morale, job satisfaction, and retention can result from this.

Table 1 shows that a total of 99 (31.2%) of teachers agree that their principals have had an effect on their professional growth by encouraging them to pursue further education. The remaining 48 (15.1%) either opposed or strongly disagreed with the statement, while 69 (21.8%) were ambivalent. The results show that principal-initiated efforts to help teachers earn credentials like a degree or diploma are beneficial to educators' careers. Teachers who continue their education improve not only their individual teaching but also the classroom as a whole. Teachers who take the time to get extra certifications are showing a dedication to lifelong learning and improving their craft. This can foster a learning environment by encouraging educators to put an emphasis on their own professional growth. Teachers may acquire more in-depth subject expertise if they pursue further degrees in their field. This knowledge can be used to help other educators have a deeper understanding of the topic and develop more effective methods of teaching it.

The researcher concluded from these results that while higher levels of education for teachers can have a positive effect on their development as educators, it is also crucial to foster a culture of learning and growth within the school. The quality of education and the outcomes for students can only rise when principals and teachers collaborate to grow professionally.

In addition, 131 (41.3%) of respondents agreed that schools should provide opportunities for teachers to participate in seminars, workshops, and other forms of professional development. An astounding eighty-two (24.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed, while fifty-three (16.7%) disagreed and thirty-nine (12.3%) were ambivalent. Teachers can greatly benefit from professional development opportunities like seminars and workshops that are held in schools. Teachers are able to network with one another, learn new techniques, and improve their own classroom methods through participation in seminars and workshops. As a result, the seminars boost educators' professionalism, allowing them to better relate to their students and adapt their lessons accordingly. As a corollary, the knowledge gathered from workshops on students' performance standards can be crucial in adjusting teaching methods to ensure all students succeed.

Finally, 145 (45.7%) agreed that teachers' professional growth is influenced by their involvement in a network of educators developed by their school's principal. Equally as many instructors (82, or 25.9%) strongly agreed, while only 44, or 13.9%, were on the fence. But nearly a third (28.5%) of educators say that being part of a network of teachers organized by principals has little to no effect on their professional growth. While 227 instructors (70.5% of the sample) reported that their professional growth had been influenced by their membership in a network of educators, this finding was not statistically significant.

Teaching professionals can benefit much from interacting with one another in a network setting. Networks of teachers who work together, exchange resources, and commit to ongoing

professional development are called teacher communities. Networks for educators allow teachers to connect and share ideas with their colleagues in other classrooms and institutions. Teachers benefit from the camaraderie and positive atmosphere created by this partnership as they share their knowledge, insights, and strategies. Educators that are part of a network have access to a plethora of shared resources, including lesson plans, instructional materials, and creative ideas. They can draw ideas and resources for their own lessons from this trove of information.

The principals argued that the instructors could learn from one other by participating in online forums and exchanging anecdotes. Feedback and introspection can help educators refine their practices. On the other hand, teacher networks frequently host professional development opportunities like workshops, seminars, webinars, and training sessions. Events like this aim to improve education by discussing topics including pedagogy, management of classrooms, and student involvement. In addition, teacher networks provide a safe space for educators to share strategies for overcoming obstacles in the classroom or school. Colleagues who have had similar problems might provide helpful advice, direction, and potential answers.

Even though a higher percentage 227 (70.5%) of the participants noted that school principals provide sufficient support for teachers' professional expansion, some had descending opinions. Some of the respondents observed that they are never given chance to attend seminars in their area of specialization nor are they given guidance on learner advancement. One of the Sub-County Directors of Education (SCDE, 4), agreed with this notion, stating that "it is regularly difficult for principals to allow teachers to attend to their professional development due to the cost of high-quality, in-depth initiatives and courses." In other responses, it was evident that some teachers are not given moral support in their occupation, or given any form of guidance regarding competent development. These responses show that some of the school principals do not invest resources to enhance teachers' professional expansion and this result to poor students' performance and overall low professional standards in their classroom procedures. This might occur as a result of teachers not utilizing the appropriate instructional strategies and learning resources.

Some principals (KCSSP, 3, 8, 10, & 15) expressed regret that it could be difficult for them to offer significant teachers' professional development if they did not have access to adequate resources. If this were the case, principals may have to place a greater emphasis on administrative responsibilities, which would be counterproductive. To apply Ludwig von Bertalanffy's theory of the systems approach to the claims made about teachers' professional development, principals must take a holistic view of the topic. They must consider how each activity affects and is affected by the others.

Conclusion

The research's findings show that principals in Kisii County have implemented a wide range of activities to assist teachers' professional development. These programs include different kinds of mentorship, training, and cooperation, demonstrating a dedication to fostering teacher professional development and, eventually, raising the caliber of instruction in the area. It is clear that principals are actively involved in creating an atmosphere that is supportive of teacher professional development, even though there is space for improvement and more resources.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher makes a number of suggestions for different groups within the educational system to help facilitate principals' contributions to teachers' professional growth and effective teacher performance in schools. It is for this reason that the next section emphasizes the suggestions provided to the Kenyan government, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, County officials, administrators, teachers, and parents.

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