

How Effectively Principals are Implementing the Ministry of Education's Policy to Support Teachers' Professional Development in Kisii County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study investigated how effectively principals are implementing the Ministry of Education policy on teacher professional development to support teachers' professional development in Kisii County, Kenya. The 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 a mixed-methods research technique, notably 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. Stratified, simple random, systematic random, and purposive sampling techniques were used in the selection of the participants. 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. Findings indicate that despite commendable efforts being made, problems including resource shortages and differences in how policies are interpreted still remain. The study concluded that, Kisii County principals have worked very hard to implement the Ministry of Education's policy in supporting teachers' professional development into practice. To improve the consistency and effectiveness of policy execution, recommendations include policy clarity, greater training, and higher resource allocation.

Key Words: Teacher professional development; Principals role in educational policy implementation; Professional Growth; Educational policy.

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Background to the Problem

The process of teacher professional development entails the use of appropriate teaching and learning resource materials required for instructional activities, as well as the creation of educational policies to equip teachers with professional, pedagogical, and social skills. It takes a lifetime to develop a well-rounded teacher with acceptable competences, and it may continue throughout the teacher's career (Akinyi, Wamichwe, Yatich, & Wakhamu, 2022). Mgaiwa (2018) claims that pre-service and in-service teacher development programs are incorporated into teacher professional growth. Kijana (2016) further suggests that initial teacher education, teacher professional development, and induction programs serve as the foundation for developing and fostering quality teachers. Teacher educators are the experts who work with future teachers to prepare them for the classroom.

Programs for Teacher Professional Development should be built upon comprehensive policies that commit to the education of all teachers, as stated by Gathumbi et al. as referenced by Odhiambo (2021). Kenya's policy for educating and training its teaching staff is administered by MOEST. This policy mandates ongoing professional development for all currently employed educators, with the goal of better equipping them to adapt to the changing nature of education. The Ministry of Education and the College of Education and External Studies have joined forces to provide open distance learning possibilities for educators.

The Constitution of Kenya (2010) mandates that human capital development be prioritized in teacher training, and this has led to a revision of the MOEST framework. More than that, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology in Kenya has institutionalized teacher professional development and assigned in-service training for secondary and primary teachers to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) and the Center for Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTE). These groups help teachers learn how to incorporate ICT and a learner-centered approach into their lessons in order to boost student engagement in the classroom (Mutende, 2015).

Despite the good intentions behind this policy, it is sometimes difficult to put them into practice at the school level, where administrators play a crucial role. Numerous factors, including resource limitations, leadership styles, and the particular circumstances of Kisii County, might have an impact on the implementation of these programs. A critical topic of investigation is how well Kisii County school principals are carrying out the Ministry of Education's policy to assist teachers' 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 implementing Ministry of Education's policy to support

professional growth, and a lack of resources to support teacher growth (Mbeche, Rasugu & Jumba, 2023; Nyakundi & Orodho, 2020).

The educational landscape of an area is significantly shaped by the policies of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry has implemented policies in Kisii County to advance teachers' professional development. However, there are a number of variables that might affect how well these policies are implemented at the school level, including resource availability, leadership, and local contextual factors. It is critical to evaluate how principals in Kisii County are putting these policies into practice and whether they are attaining the desired results in order to determine the impact of these policies. This study aims to provide insight on the efficacy of these approaches in promoting teacher growth by examining how well policy goal and actual implementation correspond.

Research Question

How effective are principals implementing the Ministry of Education's policy to support teachers' professional development in Kisii County, Kenya?

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Adult Learning Theory. 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

The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) were tasked with formulating a national policy for coordinating the delivery of professional development for teachers (MoE, 2018). The policy was developed with the intention of enhancing instructional resource development, accountability, and cooperation. The Ministry of Education, Teachers Service Commission, Agencies within the Ministry of Education, and County Governments were all invested in teacher professional development at the national and devolved levels, respectively. As a result, the management of the educational tool necessitates networking with relevant stakeholders and maintaining open lines of communication with them. Making this a reality may depend on the creation of national regulations and processes for teacher professional development. What teachers are and are allowed to do in the classroom and throughout the educational system is shaped and constrained by policies for professional growth for educators.

The purpose of Garba's (2020) study was to examine how instructional supervision as a policy from principals affected the pedagogical practices of secondary school teachers in Bauchi state, Nigeria. Descriptive survey methodology was used for the research. A total of 29 school principals and 7 local Education Officers were randomly selected to make up the sample. According to the findings, many school administrators do not check students' academic files. Workshops for instructors, peer mentorship programs, document reviews, and classroom observations were found to have uneven implementation in public secondary schools. Finally, the study found that the quality of schools had declined as a result of insufficient money for supervisory activities and a lack of supervision skills among principals.

The study by Salleh (2019) looked at the top policies for encouraging teachers' professional growth that were used by Malaysian cluster secondary school principals. The data gathering tool was the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale. To examine the gathered data, the researcher used descriptive statistical methods that involved frequency counts and percentage distribution. According to principals' and teachers' perceptions, the study found that the best practice for fostering teacher professionalism among principals of cluster secondary schools in Malaysia was "allocating time at faculty meetings for teachers to share ideas about instruction or information from in-service activities."

Ajani (2020) looked at the policy guidelines for professional development of teachers in South African secondary schools. Three department heads and five instructors were purposefully chosen from eight public high schools in the King Cethswayo District. Data were gathered using the qualitative research approach through semi-structured face-to-face interviews with five economics teachers at each of the five schools. The information gathered was presented thematically and interpretably. Teachers complained of the subpar and inconsistent seminars and training they had received. The training and seminars were held at times that interfered with their in-class activities and failed to fulfil their requirements.

The goal of Makena's study in (2022), was to determine how teacher performance appraisal affected and contributed to the quality of instruction in a sample of public primary schools in Nairobi County's Kibera Sub-County. This study used a mixed-methods approach. The results showed that (75.0% [126]) of respondents believed that TPAD allowed management to pinpoint teacher performance gaps and helped with professional growth. The results also showed that teachers (85% [144]) praise students who do well in the topics they are teaching. The results also showed that creating goals helps a teacher manage time effectively (85.2% [144]), indicating that instructors can now effectively manage their time and provide the lesson objectives' prescribed material thanks to TPAD.

Research Design and Methodology

A mixed-method approach was used to investigate the research topic using a Convergent Parallel Research Design. According to Creswell and 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.

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 effective principals implement Ministry of Education's policy to support teachers' professional development (see Table 2).

Table 2: *Effectiveness of Principals Implementing Ministry of Education's Policy (n=317)*

STATEMENTS	SD	D	UD	A	SA
i) Ministry of Education Science and Technology has developed policy legislative framework for teachers' professional development.	27 (8.5%)	43 (13.6%)	73 (23.0%)	127 (40.1%)	47 (14.8%)
ii) Principals establish friendly interactions with teachers at all stages of a school assessment.	28 (8.8)	28 (8.8)	55 (17.4)	151 (47.6)	55 (17.4)
iii) Principals conduct effective evaluation of the teaching/learning process.	14 (4.4)	35 (11.0)	60 (18.9)	157 (49.5)	51 (16.1)
iv) Principals have influenced teachers towards proper keeping, up to date and use of teachers' professional records.	13 (4.1%)	27 (8.5%)	50 (15.8%)	136 (42.9%)	91 (28.7%)
v) Principals effectively help teachers streamline their curriculum implementation processes.	19 (6.0%)	20 (6.3%)	62 (19.6%)	152 (47.9%)	64 (20.2%)

vi) Regular evaluation of teachers progresses against learning standards allow the principal to have immediate impact on teaching/learning outcomes.	25 (7.9%)	36 (11.4%)	72 (22.7%)	135 (42.6%)	49 (15.5%)
vii) Principal as an evaluator should identify a mechanism for keeping evaluation results in a single longitudinal database.	16 (5.0%)	19 (6.0%)	44 (13.9%)	146 (46.1%)	92 (29.0%)

Source: *Field Data (2023)*

Table 2's breakdown focuses on the overall percentage of responses received. If the 'Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) produced policy and legislative framework for teachers' professional development.' About 40% of respondents were in agreement, 23% were on the fence, 14% were very in agreement, 13% were neutral, 13% were opposed, and 8% were extremely opposed. It was clear that a policy and legal framework for TPD had been prepared by MoEST. Inadequate initial teacher preparation can be mitigated through supportive policy and legislative framework for new teachers. Due to the difficult nature of teaching and the possibility of evolving professional expectations, it is essential to adopt a development mindset and approach to learning throughout one's career. While it is widely agreed that teachers should continue their education, Boeskens, Nusche, and Yurita (2020) argue that doing so is not easy because it requires developing policies that are effective, egalitarian, and sustainable. The goal of the TPD is to help schools develop more effective practices and guidelines.

Principals, contrary to the researcher's findings on the ground, found it challenging to develop efficient TPD policy guidelines for their schools. This is because principals ran across issues when trying to apply the TPD policy guideline, such as a lack of time and funding. It was found that there was a deficiency in the number of available educators, and those who did get hired faced heavy demands to both instruct and guide students. The principals also noted that a lack of government financing was a barrier to implementing TPD policy proposals because of the high cost and time commitment involved.

Teachers' familiarity with policies established by the Ministry of Education outlining expectations for professional development in the classroom was crucial to the success of these initiatives. Most school administrators, according to the methods used in their schools, have made sure that their instructors are aware of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology's professional development regulations that will allow them to better serve their students. Respondents' accounts of professional development initiatives they have implemented varied widely, but common themes included a focus on teachers' knowledge, abilities, and attitudes; students' growth as learners; and the development of new strategies for teaching and learning. Policies on professional growth, teacher advancement, and competency-based hiring and evaluation, as well as the availability of adequate teaching tools.

Moreover, the respondents identified such policies implemented by their school principals as having significantly contributed to enhancing their professional development: school assessment by quality and standards; monitoring the learning process; evaluating learners; encouraging teachers to undergo TPD training to enhance their skills; and involving learners in the teaching process. All of the principals who were interviewed felt that the QASOs' findings and recommendations had a positive impact on teacher professional development. This is consistent with the research of Mwaniki (2017), who found that the use of instructional monitoring motivates

educators to improve their own pedagogical techniques for the benefit of their students. Sub-County Directors of Education interviewed cited monitoring as a means by which both instructors and students might benefit from feedback on their performance. Students argued in a focus group that they should be held accountable for things like showing up to class and doing their work, as well as for any other tasks assigned to them by their teachers. Although it may seem like you are just sitting back and taking it all in, attentive listening is essential in the classroom.

A sub-county director of education's responsibilities for managing the schools under their jurisdiction are laid forth in the proclamation. The Director's direction is crucial for the smooth operation of schools and the maintenance of an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. There are many responsibilities that fall under the purview of the sub-county director of education. In order to cultivate an atmosphere conducive to effective teaching and learning, they place a premium on ensuring the curriculum is really implemented, encouraging the professional development of teachers, and maintaining discipline. Their goal is to improve education throughout the sub-county through inspiring success in both teachers and students.

The research concluded that sub-county directors of education played an important part in the continuing education of educators. Not because educators are unwilling to take part in professional development opportunities, but because of how poorly most of them are executed. This shows that the principal has the power to affect the quality and quantity of education received by all students. Principals' mindsets, behaviours, and convictions must be comprehended in order to raise awareness and improve instructional methods. They are intertwined with the paths that teachers pursue in their professional growth as they address challenges in their classrooms.

Principals were interviewed and all stated that it is their duty to see that the regulations set forth by the Ministry of Education are carried out and followed. Moreover, they develop instructional coaching systems and make use of existing technologies to provide ongoing support for the teachers based on the observations of the principals. Furthermore, principals shift PD away from seminars towards TPD-focused counselling. According to the responses received from principals, some of their responsibilities include encouraging teachers to participate in TPD activities, administering frequent assessments on TPD, enforcing the TSC code, guiding the implementation of curriculum, and bridging the gap between teachers' needs and those of their employer, the TSC.

However, some educators have found that not all principals read or approve of teachers routinely created professional documents like schemes of work and lesson plans. In addition, educators countered principals' assertions that there was sufficient cash to routinely host seminars and workshops. Similarly, while 65.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "principals created friendly interactions with teachers at all phases of a school evaluation," up to 35.0% disagreed, strongly disagreed, or were unsure. Based on these discouraging results, the study concluded that principals should try to develop strong relationships with teachers throughout the assessment process. This contributes to a pervasive atmosphere in the school, which in turn affects student achievement. Teachers are more likely to feel comfortable discussing challenges they are facing that may be impeding effective classroom practices if there is a climate of trust, shared vision, and openness between school principals and teachers. Also, when principals and teachers get along well, the latter can hear from the former about how satisfied they are with the school's resources, how dedicated they are to their jobs, and what can be done to further the educators' professional growth. As a result, teachers are better able to implement strategies proven to promote student learning, have a favorable impact on test scores, and foster character in their students.

A total of 151 respondents (47.6%) gave their assent to this statement, while another 55 (17.4%) wavered between agreement and disagreement and gave their vote accordingly. Principals, according to this claim, "conduct effective evaluation of the teaching/learning process." The findings demonstrate that principals conduct assessments of the educational system. This suggests that the goal of teacher assessment is to provide feedback on strengths and areas for improvement so that educators can grow professionally. The evaluation of principals is a crucial procedure that affords the opportunity for constructive criticism as well as plaudits. Evaluations of instructional strategies can always benefit from objective feedback. According to (Meador, 2019), a comprehensive assessment cannot be completed after a single classroom visit; rather, the most illuminating assessments arise from the synthesis of data acquired over multiple visits.

In fact, the interview with the principals made it abundantly evident that evaluation largely emerges as a requirement for principals' involvement to TPD in order to maintain open lines of communication with parents about their children's academic progress. To sum up, assessment is an integral part of the educational process. Quality management in education and selection are only two of the many uses it has in classrooms. It also helps evaluate the likelihood of success in a given field and guides future TPD decisions. Orphanos (2013), in contrast to the principals' findings, describes some of the challenges that arise when assessing instructional practices. He advocated for differentiation in principal evaluations between teachers and between measures of teacher effectiveness. Evaluations of educators are unaffected by variables that have nothing to do with their effectiveness. The results reveal that even in systems where principals have less sway over teacher evaluations, their involvement has grown.

Do principals encourage the maintenance, accessibility, and usage of teachers' professional files? Of those polled, 91 (28.5%) strongly agreed, 136 (42.9%) agreed, and 13 (4.1%) strongly disagreed. Principals have had a significant impact on teachers' attitudes regarding maintaining accurate and useful professional records, according to the responses of 227 teachers (76.0% agree/strongly agree). Principals are accountable for ensuring that instructors maintain and use accurate records that demonstrate mastery of both general and subject-area benchmarks.

The results indicate that principals' efforts to ensure that teachers maintain accurate professional records are beneficial because they help teachers maintain order in the classroom and keep better tabs on their lessons and grading schemes. These efforts are designed to improve the educational experience for students and teachers alike. A teacher's ability to instruct and interact with their students is enhanced by the increased efficiency afforded by professional record keeping practices. Professional record keeping also facilitates communication and cooperation among educators over shared pedagogical challenges in the classroom. Teachers can collaborate on improving their students' educational experiences by exchanging ideas and resources online, as noted by Ball, Ben-Peretz, and Cohen (2014). As a result, the teaching techniques of educators will benefit from this concerted effort.

In addition, 135 respondents (or 42.9% of the total) found this statement to be true: "principals successfully assist teachers streamline their curriculum implementation processes." In addition, 72 respondents (22.7%) were unsure if principals could help teachers streamline curriculum implementation. The percentage of people who agree with the statement that principals help teachers with curriculum simplification and implementation increased by 49 (to 15.5%).

One hundred thirty-five respondents (42.6%) and forty-nine (15.5%) respectively agreed that principals effectively help instructors streamline the curriculum and implementation processes; nevertheless, the opinions of the remaining seventy-two (22.7%) cannot be discounted. Teachers need clear instructions on how to streamline the curriculum and put it into practice for

the benefit of their students and themselves. However, most educators do not fully grasp and internalize the curriculum development process, hence curriculum materials often remain static as written guidelines. Teachers discovered that principals placed a premium on educators' knowledge of the curriculum and their desire to further their careers through continued education. When compared, teachers' responses to curricular implementation and simplification have been all over the map.

Interviews with school principals revealed that they help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the process of implementing the curriculum by offering a variety of support services to teachers that are developed in response to the needs of the students' learning process. Principals aid teachers in simplifying the curriculum by doing things like supporting novel approaches to teaching. Some teachers, according to the study's findings, have created teaching/learning resources that helped students quickly retain or recover knowledge when needed. Establishing connections with external support systems, such as hiring experts on the most effective strategies to improve students' learning experiences, is another way to collaborate with teachers and evaluators to provide students with authentic learning opportunities (Blandford, 2012). Teachers will benefit from these changes because they will gain a clearer picture of their students' learning experiences and be able to focus their efforts where they will have the greatest impact.

Up to 108 (42.0%) were unsure, disagreed, or strongly disagreed on the statement, "regular evaluation of teachers' progresses against learning standards, principals were seen to have immediate effects on teaching/learning outcomes," while 184 (58.0%) were in agreement. According to the study's author, teachers' professional growth can be boosted significantly through more frequent and thorough review of their performance. That's why it's crucial to regularly assess instructors' growth and effectiveness in the classroom as a means of fostering both their own and their students' learning and development.

The principal's role in evaluating instructors on a regular basis enables him or her to provide constructive feedback on how to improve students' educational experiences. Teachers can improve student results by rethinking and reimplementing their approaches to the classroom after being evaluated on how well they are meeting learning standards. According to Tuytens and Devos (2017), these assessments will give educators useful information about how they may improve their course preparation and delivery in the classroom. Teachers' professional development and the academic success of their pupils will both benefit from these assessments' emphasis on careful planning and organization of classroom time. Therefore, regular teacher assessment plays a pivotal role in promoting methodical and systematic instruction, which ultimately benefits students.

Lastly, 238 respondents (75.9%) highlighted the importance of 'principal as an evaluator should create a process for keeping evaluation outcomes in a single longitudinal database.' The study concluded that this discovery demonstrates the clear need for better data systems in schools in order to access information about the academic performance of individual students, schools, and regions. The ability to analyze student and school performance over time requires timely, valid, and relevant data, all of which can be gleaned from a longitudinal database. Consequently, finding and deploying a single longitudinal database raises educators' professional standards through enhancing classroom practices and the educational experience for students.

By adopting Donald Schön's reflective practice theory, principals and teachers may create a collaborative and supportive environment in which instructors can advance in their careers. It is crucial to emphasize social contact, guided participation, and the utilization of cultural artifacts in the classroom to improve teaching methods and student outcomes. Using a knowledge-sharing

approach, schools may foster a culture of lifelong learning and guarantee the efficacy of ongoing professional development programs.

Conclusion

The study's findings show that Kisii County principals have worked very hard to put the Ministry of Education's policy supporting teachers' professional development into practice. However, obstacles including a lack of resources and different interpretations of the policy exist, which can prevent its comprehensive and uniform application throughout the county. Relevant parties must address these issues and give principals the necessary assistance in their implementation efforts if we are to optimize the impact of these policies.

Recommendations

To guarantee a thorough approach to teacher professional growth, principals should try to get additional funds for professional development activities, including financing for seminars, training materials, and technology. Teachers, administrators, and other educational stakeholders in Kisii County should work together to exchange best practices and create creative professional development projects that are suited to the local environment. Conduct frequent teacher needs assessments to pinpoint particular areas for professional development. This will help administrators create programs that are unique to the requirements of the various educators. Implement mentoring programs so that more seasoned educators may help and assist their less seasoned colleagues, resulting in a long-lasting professional development model.

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