

INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' LEVELS OF PREPAREDNESS ON TEACHER PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MATUNGULU SUB-COUNTY, MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Teacher performance appraisal is an important mechanism for enhancing the quality of teaching services in Kenya. The Teachers Service Commission introduced the Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD) system to strengthen teacher accountability and professional development.

Purpose of the Study: This study examined the influence of teachers' levels of preparedness on teacher performance in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-County, Machakos County, Kenya.

Methodology: The study adopted a descriptive research design and was guided by Goal Theory, which emphasizes clear goals and appropriate feedback as drivers of performance. The target population comprised 37 principals and 549 teachers in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-County. The study reported a sample of 11 principals and 220 teachers. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS, while qualitative findings were used to complement the quantitative results.

Findings: The findings showed that teachers' preparedness for TPAD, particularly professional knowledge, professional development, and innovation in teaching, was positively associated with teacher performance.

Recommendations: The study recommends continuous and structured professional development to strengthen teachers' content mastery, pedagogical competence, curriculum knowledge, and preparedness for appraisal.

Keywords: *Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD), Teacher Preparedness, Teacher Performance*

INTRODUCTION

Teacher performance appraisal and development is intended to strengthen accountability, professional growth, and the quality of classroom instruction. In Kenya, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) introduced the Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD) system as a structured mechanism for evaluating teachers and supporting continuous improvement. Effective implementation depends on both the existence of an appraisal framework and the extent to which teachers understand its requirements, possess the professional knowledge required to meet appraisal expectations, and use feedback for professional growth. Teachers require appropriate orientation and training to understand appraisal procedures and to translate appraisal feedback into improved teaching practice. Ngu (2021) reported that insufficient orientation and training can limit teacher preparedness and engagement with appraisal processes, while Mwangi (2020) noted that limited technical knowledge may constrain effective use of appraisal feedback. Teachers' willingness to embrace appraisal is also shaped by perceptions of fairness and transparency (Kilonzo, 2022). Supportive school leadership is therefore important in creating conditions in which TPAD is viewed as a developmental rather than punitive process (Gichuru & Mwaura, 2021).

When effectively implemented, TPAD can support professional development, accountability, and improvement in teaching practices. Regular feedback can help teachers identify instructional gaps and pursue relevant professional learning, while clear performance standards can reinforce responsibility for teaching and learner outcomes (Kithinji & Muema, 2020; Orodho, 2018). However, the contribution of TPAD to teacher performance depends substantially on teachers' preparedness, including their professional knowledge, ability to apply pedagogical skills, and capacity to adopt innovative teaching approaches.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Teachers Service Commission introduced TPAD to enhance teacher accountability, professional development, and learning outcomes in Kenyan schools. Despite these objectives, implementation has been associated with challenges such as resistance, perceptions of unfairness, administrative workload, and concerns about the objectivity and developmental value of appraisal (Khatete & Macharia, 2020). Previous studies have also reported inconsistent implementation and

inadequate support mechanisms, which may weaken the contribution of appraisal to improved teacher performance (Midimo, 2017).

In Matungulu Sub-County, public secondary schools continue to experience fluctuating and generally unsatisfactory student academic performance, raising concerns about the effectiveness of teacher performance management practices. However, empirical evidence on how teachers' preparedness for TPAD influences teacher performance in this context remains limited. The study therefore examined the influence of teachers' levels of preparedness on teacher performance in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-County, Machakos County, Kenya.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of teachers' preparedness for the Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD) system on teacher performance in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-County, Machakos County, Kenya.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To determine the influence of TPAD preparedness on teacher performance in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-County, Machakos County, Kenya.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the influence of TPAD preparedness on teacher performance in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-County, Machakos County, Kenya?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The section presents the theories reviewed in the section and the literature review.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by Goal Theory, advanced by Locke (1968), which proposes that employees are motivated by clear goals and appropriate feedback. Specific and challenging goals can direct effort and improve performance when individuals accept the goals and receive information about their progress. In appraisal contexts, clear performance targets provide employees with direction, while periodic feedback enables them to assess performance and adjust their strategies toward expected outcomes. Teacher appraisal reflects key elements of Goal Theory because TPAD targets

are expected to be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound. Teachers are expected to work toward defined performance standards and receive feedback through appraisal processes. The theory was therefore relevant to the study because it explains how clarity of expectations, participation in target setting, and feedback may shape teachers' preparedness and subsequent performance.

TPAD PREPAREDNESS AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE

TPAD preparedness encompasses understanding of appraisal procedures, professional competence, willingness to participate in appraisal, and access to institutional support. Adequate training and orientation are important because teachers who understand appraisal expectations are better positioned to interpret feedback and develop relevant improvement plans. Conversely, insufficient orientation and technical knowledge can reduce engagement with appraisal and limit its developmental benefits (Ngu, 2021; Mwangi, 2020). Perceptions of fairness and transparency also influence teacher attitudes toward performance appraisal. Teachers who view TPAD as supportive and developmental are more likely to engage positively, while those who perceive it as punitive may be less receptive (Kilonzo, 2022). Leadership support is therefore important in creating a school environment in which appraisal results are linked to constructive feedback, professional learning, and improvement in teaching practice (Gichuru & Mwaura, 2021).

Professional Knowledge and Application

Teacher professional knowledge provides a foundation for effective instructional delivery and is an important dimension of teacher performance. Teacher competence extends beyond subject mastery to include the capacity to apply pedagogical knowledge in varied classroom contexts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022). In TPAD, appraisal of professional knowledge can encourage teachers to reflect on their instructional practice, align teaching with curriculum expectations, and pursue continuing professional development. Evidence indicates that strong pedagogical content knowledge contributes to instructional effectiveness and learner outcomes (OECD, 2020). However, gaps may remain between theoretical knowledge and classroom application, particularly in resource-constrained settings (World Bank, 2022). Goal Theory suggests that clear expectations concerning professional practice can motivate teachers to align their effort with defined standards, making appraisal of professional knowledge relevant to teacher performance.

Innovation and Creativity in Teaching

Innovation and creativity are increasingly recognized as important components of effective teaching. Through lesson observation, professional portfolios, and performance expectations, TPAD can encourage teachers to adopt learner-centred approaches, integrate technology, and design varied learning activities. UNESCO (2022) emphasizes the importance of innovative teaching in strengthening learner engagement, while OECD (2023) notes that appraisal systems can encourage experimentation with new teaching approaches when innovation is recognized and supported. The effectiveness of appraisal in promoting innovation, however, depends on resources, training, and institutional support. Where teachers lack adequate resources or perceive appraisal primarily as a compliance exercise, innovation may remain limited. From a Goal Theory perspective, clear expectations and recognition of creative effort can strengthen motivation to improve instructional quality.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design and was conducted in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-County, Machakos County, Kenya. The target population comprised 37 principals and 549 teachers, giving a total target population of 586 respondents. Principals were selected through stratified sampling, while teachers were selected using simple random sampling. The manuscript reports a study sample of 11 principals and 220 teachers, giving a total of 231 respondents. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview guides. A pilot study was conducted in two public secondary schools in Makueni County that were not included in the main study. Content validity was established through expert review and reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS through frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, while qualitative responses from key informants were used to enrich interpretation of the quantitative findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study targeted 231 respondents, comprising 11 principals and 220 teachers. A total of 180 respondents participated satisfactorily, representing an overall response rate of 77.92%. The response distribution is presented.

TPAD Level of Preparedness and Teacher Performance

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with statements concerning TPAD preparedness and teacher performance. Table 1 presents the descriptive findings.¹

Table 1: Extent of Agreement on TPAD Level of Preparedness and Performance

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
The professional knowledge of a teacher relates to teacher competence and improves learner performance.	170	4.161	0.451
Teacher professional development programmes and knowledge have improved teacher performance.	170	4.283	0.452
Appraisal of professional knowledge and application encourages teachers to continue developing their knowledge through professional advancement programmes.	170	3.350	0.960
Innovation and creativity in teaching have improved teacher performance.	170	4.150	0.602
Effectiveness in teaching practice has been promoted through appraisal of teachers' professional knowledge and application.	170	4.244	0.503

The highest mean was recorded for the statement that teacher professional development programmes and knowledge had improved teacher performance ($M = 4.283$, $SD = 0.452$). This was followed by the view that effectiveness in teaching practice had been promoted through appraisal of professional knowledge and application ($M = 4.244$, $SD = 0.503$). Respondents also agreed that professional knowledge improves teacher competence and learner performance ($M = 4.161$, $SD = 0.451$) and that innovation and creativity improve teacher performance ($M = 4.150$, $SD = 0.602$). The comparatively lower mean for continued professional advancement following appraisal ($M = 3.350$, $SD = 0.960$) suggests that the link between appraisal and sustained professional-development participation was less strongly perceived.

Key informant findings similarly indicated that appraisal of professional knowledge and its application encouraged teachers to take professional development seriously, remain updated on curriculum changes, and adopt more learner-centred approaches. These findings are consistent

with the broader view that effective professional development strengthens instructional practice and supports improved learner outcomes.

Professional Knowledge and Application

The study further examined how appraisal of teachers' professional knowledge and its application influenced teacher performance. Table 2 presents the summarized responses.

Table 2: Professional Knowledge and Application.

Statement	Mean	SD
Professional knowledge improves teachers' competence and learner performance.	4.21	0.69
Teacher professional development programmes have improved teacher performance.	4.18	0.74
Appraisal of professional knowledge encourages continuous professional development.	4.15	0.77

The findings show strong agreement that professional knowledge and its application positively influence teacher performance. The highest mean ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.69$) indicates that respondents associated professional knowledge with stronger teacher competence and learner performance. Respondents also agreed that professional development programmes improve teacher performance ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.74$) and that appraisal encourages continuous professional development ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.77$).

One principal (P3) stated: "Teachers who demonstrate strong subject mastery and apply appropriate teaching methods usually perform much better during appraisal and classroom instruction."

Another principal (P8) observed: "Professional appraisal has encouraged teachers to improve their pedagogical skills and continuously update themselves with curriculum changes."

The qualitative findings reinforce the quantitative results by showing that appraisal of professional knowledge can encourage teachers to strengthen instructional effectiveness through continuous learning. The findings are consistent with Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) and OECD (2020), who

link strong pedagogical knowledge with higher instructional effectiveness and improved learner outcomes.

Innovation and Creativity in Teaching

The study also examined the extent to which innovation and creativity in teaching, as promoted through TPAD preparedness, influenced teacher performance. Table 3 presents the findings.

Table 3: Teachers' Responses on Innovation and Creativity in Teaching

Statement	Mean	SD
TPAD encourages innovative teaching methods	4.02	0.85
TPAD promotes learner-centred approaches	4.15	0.76
TPAD encourages integration of technology in teaching	3.89	0.91

Teachers generally agreed that TPAD enhanced innovation and creativity in teaching. Learner-centred approaches recorded the highest mean ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.76$), followed by innovative teaching methods ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.85$). Integration of technology received a comparatively lower, though still positive, mean ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.91$), suggesting some variation in teachers' experiences with technology-supported instruction.

One principal (P4) observed: "Teachers have become more innovative in lesson delivery and classroom engagement due to TPAD requirements."

Another principal (P6) stated: "Many teachers now prepare diverse learning activities to improve learner participation."

The findings support UNESCO (2022), which links innovative teaching practices with learner engagement and achievement. They are also consistent with Goal Theory, which suggests that clearly defined performance expectations can direct teachers' effort toward improved instructional practice.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that teachers' preparedness for TPAD is important to effective teacher performance in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-County. Preparedness is reflected in

professional knowledge, continuous development, application of pedagogical competence, and willingness to use innovative approaches in teaching. When teachers understand appraisal expectations and receive appropriate professional support, TPAD can function as a developmental mechanism that strengthens instructional practice rather than merely an administrative compliance exercise.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the Teachers Service Commission and the Ministry of Education provide continuous and structured professional development for teachers. Regular workshops and refresher programmes should focus on content mastery, pedagogical competence, curriculum updates, interpretation of appraisal feedback, learner-centred instruction, and appropriate use of technology in teaching. School leaders should also provide consistent support during the appraisal process so that teachers can translate TPAD feedback into practical professional-improvement plans.

Further studies may compare findings from Matungulu Sub-County with other sub-counties in Machakos County and other counties in Kenya to determine the extent to which the observed patterns vary according to leadership, resources, school context, and implementation conditions.

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