

**INFLUENCE OF PROMOTION OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ATHI RIVER SUB-COUNTY IN MACHAKOS
COUNTY, KENYA**

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of the promotion of teachers' professional development on students' academic performance among public secondary schools. The research used a concurrent triangulation design. Using a mixed-methods approach, the target population for this study consisted of 247 respondents, with 23 principals and 224 teachers. A representative sample of 9 principals and 87 teachers was selected through a combination of stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Structured questionnaires, interview schedules, and document analysis were used to collect quantitative data, with their validity and reliability confirmed through pilot testing and test-retest methods. Data was processed, with means and percentages used to describe the distribution of variables among respondents. The findings were visually presented using frequency distribution tables and bar graphs. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was applied to test the relationship between the study variables. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 23), with a significance level set at 0.05. The research results reveal significant findings. Principals exhibit a propensity to encourage staff professional development, evidenced by a correlation coefficient (r) of .59. The study concluded that the majority of principals in public secondary schools within the Athi River sub-county actively supported and embraced strategies and programs aimed at enhancing the professional development of their teaching staff. In light of these findings, pertinent recommendations emerge. Government bodies, such as the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and the Ministry of Education, should orchestrate targeted training for school principals in effective instructional leadership practices.

Keywords: Promotion of Teachers' Professional Development, Academic Performance, Public Secondary Schools, Teacher Training.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education is viewed as a way of improving societal and political awareness and maintaining the level of manpower and is thus essential to the development of any civilization (Weuffen *et al.*, 2023). Education has transformational value and, among other roles, promotes productivity and improves people's lives (Lacka *et al.*, 2021). Principals play a vital role in providing pupils with a quality education, especially in secondary schools. According to Olmo-Extremera *et al.*, (2022), principals are tasked with the overwhelming responsibility of managing teachers and other school resources. In other words, the majority of educational professionals see principals as the key source of kids' organizational growth and academic performance (Sahlberg, 2021).

Professional growth is a continuous process in which instructors gradually gain confidence, acquire new perspectives, expand their knowledge, discover new techniques, and take on additional responsibilities (Martin *et al.*, 2021). In contrast, Cirocki and Farrell (2019) define professional development as a strategy employed by schools and school districts to ensure the ongoing growth of teachers' practices throughout their careers. Effective professional development encourages teacher teams to focus on the needs of their students, promoting cooperation, research, and collaborative problem-solving to ensure the success of all students.

While professional growth can manifest in various forms and is sometimes viewed as a systemic shift (Imants & Van der Wal, 2020), there is a consensus among professionals and decision-makers that the primary objective of professional development is to enhance student achievement (McKeown *et al.*, 2023). Yoon *et al.* (2007) identified three outcomes of professional development on student success: it enhances teachers' knowledge and skills, which subsequently improves classroom practices, ultimately leading to increased student achievement.

Teachers quality of teaching is recognized as a pivotal factor influencing student performance (Cornet *et al.*, 2006), it is logical to assume that supporting teachers' continuous professional development would yield long-term improvements in student achievement. Shen *et al.* (2020) further establish a positive relationship between teacher collaboration, idea sharing, viewpoint comparison, and student achievement. Engaging in various types of professional development can inspire instructors to apply what they have learned, potentially leading to improved academic success.

In the educational field, “developing teachers” involves providing students with individualized support, stimulating their intellectual curiosity, and promoting positive professional behaviours and values (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019). Nurturing professional growth is considered the most critical leadership behaviour that positively impacts classroom instruction, as indicated by Mahoney et al.’s research (2021). Consequently, school administrators bear the responsibility of providing teachers with excellent professional development opportunities (Brauckmann et al., 2023).

To facilitate teachers’ professional development, school administrators must inform them about available opportunities and encourage their participation, often by granting time off to attend conferences, workshops, and seminars or providing financial assistance. Brauckmann et al. (2023) suggest that professional development is most effective when integrated into educators’ regular responsibilities, involving all teachers in learning, rather than relying solely on those who voluntarily seek it. This can encompass all teaching activities throughout the academic day, and professional growth programs before or after regular classes may also prove beneficial. Principals play a role in this process by informing teachers of professional development opportunities and organizing in-service programs that focus on specific teaching objectives. Administrators can further encourage teachers’ professional development by providing time away from their regular duties for independent study, such as participation in part-time and school-based courses. Additionally, they can hire experts in specific fields to guide teachers and students through the grading procedures for national exams. Professional development focused on a particular instructional method, as demonstrated by Yigletu et al. (2023), can enhance teachers’ utilization of higher-order teaching approaches, potentially leading to improved academic performance.

For schools to provide a high-quality education, they must hire highly trained instructors and support them in expanding their abilities, staying current in their disciplines, and adopting new teaching techniques. When administrators actively support teachers’ professional development, it results in more reflective and informed behaviours, such as generating new ideas and taking risks in the classroom (Murphy & Levinson, 2023). Effective professional development is crucial for teachers to acquire and enhance the knowledge and skills necessary to address their students’ learning challenges (Haug & Mork, 2021). Ensuring that professional development aligns with educators’ learning goals, requires rigorous planning, thorough implementation, and feedback mechanisms. Teachers who participate in professional development must then apply the new knowledge and abilities they acquire, as professional development is ineffective

unless it translates into improved instruction, administration, or school leadership (Karakose et al., 2021). Given that teacher effectiveness significantly influences student achievement (Roorda et al., 2021), governments should invest in teachers' professional development. This investment is crucial in a knowledge-based global economy, where education is considered a critical component of maintaining global competitiveness (Wirba, 2021). Consequently, schools are increasingly emphasizing student-directed learning to equip students with lifelong learning skills (Roorda et al., 2021).

Gitau's research (2010) reveals that transformational principals value the original ideas of their staff and students, fostering a collaborative environment. This positive approach is not unique to the Kandara Division of the Murang'a District but is also observed in the Athi River Sub-county, where Nzuve (2011) illustrates the favorable influence of transformational leadership on students' overall performance and staff motivation to work with principals to achieve educational goals. However, Ngina and Kalai (2016) and other empirical studies have not fully explored the influence of transformational principals' varied qualities on academic performance, productivity, and creativity among staff and students. Furthermore, these studies have not addressed how instructional leadership qualities influence KCSE performance specifically, leaving certain aspects unexplained.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Regardless of whether the students in Athi-River Sub County have the same access to education as children in neighboring sub-counties, national test scores have consistently shown stagnated learning. According to a statement from the Education Ministry (2019), Athi River Sub-County had KCSE mean scores of 2.18 in 2014, 2.32 in 2015, 2.47 in 2016, 2.07 in 2017, and 3.40 in 2018, indicating a decline in educational outcomes in secondary public schools. Despite that the majority of the schools in the sub-county are considered to have a sufficient number of trained instructors and suitable facilities, this low performance has persisted. As a consequence of public pressure on school administrators to enhance educational outcomes on national tests, schools have used a variety of performance improvement techniques to guarantee success. There have been occasions, however, in which some of the tactics used by schools to promote academic performance are not supported by scientific findings. Others, such as requiring students to retake subjects and charging extra fees, have been proven to be ineffective. It is unknown whether administrators have adopted instructional strategies at their institutions, despite the significance of instructional leadership in assisting teachers' instructional practices and students' learning and success. Second, it's not known if administrators ever use

instructional leadership techniques, and third, it's not known how much of an impact these leadership techniques have on encouraging outstanding learning and, ultimately, better school performance. In this context, this study aimed to explore the influence of the promotion of teachers' professional development on students' academic performance in Kenya's Athi River Sub-County, thereby addressing a gap in the existing research.

1.2 Objective of the Study

To determine the influence of the promotion of teachers' professional development on students' academic performance among public secondary schools in Athi River Sub-County

1.3 Research Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant influence of the promotion of teachers' professional development on students' academic performance among public secondary schools in the Athi River Sub-County.

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Academic Achievement Theory

The idea of academic performance put out by Walberg (2012) will also have an impact on the research. According to this theory, learning outcomes are influenced by the psychological features of learners and their immediate learning settings (Huang, et al., 2020). Walberg (2012) identified nine crucial factors that have an impact on students' academic performance. These qualities include students' aptitude or previous achievements, motivation, age or developmental stage, the volume and quality of teaching, the classroom environment, parental involvement, the home environment, peer groups, and exposure to mass media outside the classroom. Tindle et al. (2021) highlight the significance of psychosocial aspects of classroom learning settings in predicting student progress.

To enhance educational productivity and efficiency, it is essential to address both educational process objectives and success objectives (Bakia et al., 2012). This theory is relevant because it interprets educational process goals to include students' perceptions of the social environment, creativity, self-concept, extracurricular activities, and interest in subjects (Karari et al., 2022). In other words, academic progress and motivation would decline if these feelings and experiences were overlooked in favor of traditional objectives defined by test results.

According to Walberg's theory, the quality of teaching is a crucial factor influencing academic performance. Principals' instructional leadership that emphasizes and promotes teachers' professional development can enhance teaching quality. This includes providing teachers with opportunities for continuous learning, updating their skills, and adopting effective teaching strategies. Improved teaching quality, as suggested by Walberg, directly contributes to better learning outcomes among students. Collaboration among teachers and other educational stakeholders (like principals) is highlighted in Walberg's theory as beneficial for creating a supportive learning environment. Principals who foster collaborative practices create a school culture where teachers can share best practices, collaborate on instructional strategies, and collectively work towards improving student outcomes. This collaborative effort enhances both teaching effectiveness and the overall classroom environment, which are critical factors according to Walberg's model.

Walberg's theory emphasizes the importance of clear goals and expectations in educational settings. Principals who effectively communicate school goals provide direction and purpose to teachers and students alike. This clarity helps align efforts towards achieving academic success by ensuring that everyone understands and works towards common objectives. Clear communication of goals fosters a positive school climate and increases motivation among students, which are factors positively linked to academic performance in Walberg's framework. Supervision of teaching, as per Walberg's model, involves providing feedback, support, and guidance to teachers to improve their instructional practices. Principals who engage in effective instructional supervision ensure that teaching quality remains high and consistent across classrooms. This supervision helps identify areas needing improvement, provides professional development opportunities tailored to individual teacher needs, and ultimately enhances student learning outcomes.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Methodology

The study utilized a mixed methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic. This approach was considered suitable as it aimed to collect and analyze both types of data. The investigator leveraged the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods. According to Creswell (2014), a quantitative approach involves asking precise questions to a large number of respondents and gathering numerical data. In this study, questionnaires were used to collect

this data. Concurrently, qualitative data were gathered based on participants’ opinions, primarily through textual information collected via scheduled interviews.

3.2 Research Design

The research used a concurrent triangulation design as its single-phase design with simultaneous and equal weighting of quantitative and qualitative approaches. This method provided data that was well-validated and well-supported, as there was no interaction between individuals completing surveys and those being interviewed. This design facilitated the collection of data, which was subsequently organized, tabulated, illustrated, and discussed.

3.3 Target Population

As indicated in Table 1 the target population for this study consisted of 247 respondents, with 23 principals representing all public schools in Athi River Sub County and 224 teachers.

Table 1 Target Population of the Study

Categories	Target Population
Principals	23
Teachers	224
Total	247

Source: Athi River Sub-County Education Office (2023)

3.4 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

To obtain a sufficient sample size for principals and teachers, the researcher used Yamane’s Formula as follows:

$$N_0 = \frac{N}{1 + N (e^2)}$$

Where, N_0 = Recommended sample size at 95% confidence level

N = Target Population

e = Confidence level of 5% (decimal equivalent is 0.05)

Using the aforementioned formula, a target sample size of 96 respondents was determined. To mitigate bias in the research, the number of zones within Athi River Sub-county was used to divide the population into two strata. The sampling strategy focused on schools with poor performance in KCSE exams over the past five years, with six principals selected from each

zone. Purposive sampling, aligned with Creswell’s (2014) objectives, aimed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the variability in the phenomena of interest in the environment and to evaluate the emergence of evolving attitudes toward the environment. However, instructors from each zone were chosen through simple random selection to avoid bias and favoritism. This sampling approach yielded a sample size of 9 principals and 87 teachers, as depicted in Table 2.

Table 2 Sampling Grid

Categories	Target Population	Procedure	Sample size
Principals	23	23/247*96	9
Teachers	224	224/247*96	87
Total	247		96

3.5 Research Instruments

The instruments that were used to gather data from respondents included questionnaires and interview guides designed for both teachers and administrators.

3.6 Piloting of Research Instruments

The pilot study, which constituted 10% of the research population (10% of 96), involved trialing the questionnaire with 10 respondents from various public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County. Throughout the pilot phase, the questionnaire’s questions were assessed for relevance, clarity, applicability, and language usage. The research instruments were also pre-tested using the feedback from the pilot to ensure and confirm their reliability. This process aimed to anticipate and address potential challenges or obstacles that respondents might encounter, such as understanding the surveys and allocating time for data collection. Moreover, the interview schedules underwent trial runs to ensure that the questions were well-articulated and elicited diverse responses, aiding the researcher in identifying areas requiring adjustment. It’s important to note that participants in the pilot study were not included in the actual data collection phase.

3.6.1 Validity of the Research Instruments

Data was collected in a triangulated manner to evaluate the validity of the questionnaire. This method was utilized to enhance the instruments’ internal validity. The interview data was promptly transcribed for this research and sent back to the participants for review. Peer debriefing was also employed to confirm the accuracy of the outcomes. This involved a review

of the questionnaire and the interview guidelines by experts on the subject under investigation. Techniques and interpretations were scrutinized and questioned by these experts, who specialized in school administration, leadership, and management. The instruments were adjusted based on their comments, thoughts, and views, ensuring that the questions had a strong alignment with the research's goals and variables.

3.6.2 Reliability of the Research Instruments

To increase the reliability of the instruments, the investigator analyzed the validity of the results to determine their dependability. Special emphasis was placed on ensuring that all respondents fully understood the topics. To confirm the reliability of the test items, the test-retest approach was utilized. In this case, a subset of respondents received the same exam questions twice. The Cronbach Alpha Method was employed to calculate the inter-score reliability index. The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient tends to be closer to 1 when a scale's test items are more internally consistent. A Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of $r \geq 0.75$ in the study indicated strong internal consistency and was considered satisfactory. Cronbach Alpha scores between zero and one were used to assess the high level of internal consistency, as per Kothari (2005).

3.6.3 Credibility of Instruments

The credibility of the instruments was established by triangulating data from multiple analyses completed by respondents, as only participants/readers could evaluate the credibility of the results in an objective manner. This approach increased the credibility of the research by demonstrating the veracity of its findings and emphasizing the quality of the work over its quantity (Kothari, 2005). Creswell (2014) asserted that the quality of the material is more important than the volume of data acquired in demonstrating the verifiability of a study's results.

3.6.4 Dependability of Instruments

Each qualitative data collection technique was thoroughly described to confirm the accuracy of the study findings. As per Kothari (2005), dependability improved the durability and reproducibility of study results, and this was evident in the execution, analysis, and presentation of the research. Every method employed in the study was described in sufficient detail for an outside researcher to utilize it to conduct a similar investigation and obtain comparable results. This level of detail also made it possible for researchers to evaluate the efficacy of the methods.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Software for the Social Sciences, version 23.00) software. However, before analysis, the acquired data was cleaned to identify and remove any flaws or inconsistencies in the dataset following data coding and input. This step was crucial for ensuring the accuracy of the data and results. To begin the data analysis, similarities between qualitative and quantitative data were identified as a starting point. Relevant information was divided into phrases or sentences, each conveying a different idea. Answers provided in response to closed-ended questions were coded and classified. Frequency counts and percentages of responses were calculated to offer a concise analysis of the participants and to highlight the overall trends in the topics explored. For the research objectives, qualitative data underwent systematic analysis. Quantitative data were depicted using charts and tables following descriptive analysis, which included frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Inferential analysis was carried out using linear regression analysis with Statistical Software for the Social Sciences.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Instruments Return Rates

The instrument's return rate refers to the percentage of research instruments that have been returned after being distributed to the respondents. In this study, both questionnaires and interview guides were administered to the participants. The return rate for questionnaires administered to principals was 88.88%, while for teachers, it was 83.33% (see Table 3).

Table 3. Questionnaires Return Rates

Respondents	Numbers of questionnaires Administrated	of The number of questionnaires returned	Return rate %
Principals	9	8	88.88%
Teachers	87	70	80.46%

The research employed various strategies to maximize the return of the administered instruments, yet some respondents did not participate. The reasons cited for their absence during data collection included factors such as illness, meetings, and family commitments. Nevertheless, the rate of return fell within the recommended range of 70-100%, as suggested by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), signifying acceptable levels of participation.

4.2 Staff Professional Development and Academic Performance

The main objective of this study was to assess the influence of promoting the teaching profession on academic performance in public secondary schools within the Athi-River sub-county, Kenya. Figure 4.1 illustrates the responses provided by principals regarding the extent to which staff professional development influences KCSE performance in public secondary schools in the Athi-River sub-county, Kenya. Among the principals surveyed, 5 (62.5%) indicated that staff professional development greatly influences KCSE performance, while 2 (25%) agreed to a moderate extent, and one (12.50%) responded to a lesser extent.

The study presented statements to both principals and teachers, requesting their opinions on the influence of staff professional development on KCSE performance, as indicated in Tables 4.19 and 4.20. Respondents were asked to express their opinions using the following scale: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, and SD = Strongly Disagree. The results pertaining to principals are summarized in Table 4.

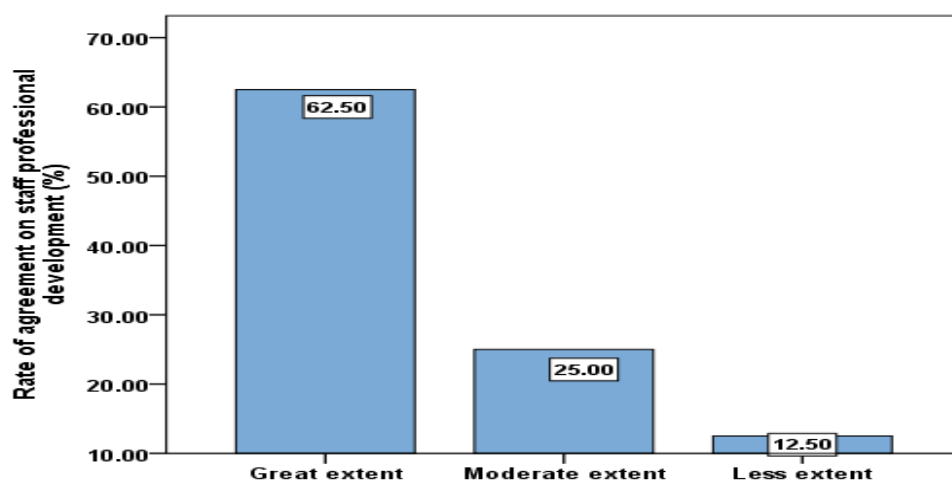


Figure 1 Principals' responses on staff professional development

Table 4. Principals on Staff Professional Development and KCSE Performance

Statement	SD		D		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
I prioritize the inclusion of funds dedicated to staff professional development within the school's annual budget allocation.	0	0	0	0	4	50	4	50
The principal actively motivates and supports teachers in participating in courses to elevate their professional skills	0	0	0	0	2	25	6	75
I strategically organize workshops and internal training sessions, aligning them with teachers' instructional requirements.	0	0	0	0	2	25	6	75
I spearhead school-wide staff development initiatives aimed at enhancing classroom practices.	1	12.5	1	12.5	2	25	4	50
I foster a culture where Heads of Departments (HODs) regularly engage in meetings with teachers, sharing insights and knowledge gained from attended courses to enrich classroom teaching.	0	0	1	12.5	1	12.5	6	75

Source: Field Data (2023)

The first statement focused on whether principals allocate funds for staff professional development in the school's annual budget. Results revealed that 4 (50%) of principals strongly agreed, while the remaining 4 (50%) simply agreed; none of the principals expressed disagreement. Another query pertained to whether principals motivate teachers to partake in

courses for their professional growth. A significant majority of 6 (75%) of principals strongly agreed, with 2 (25%) agreeing and none registering disagreement. In terms of arranging workshops and internal training to cater to teachers' instructional requirements, 6 (75%) of principals strongly agreed, and another 2 (25%) concurred; none of the principals disagreed. The outcomes presented in Table 4 illustrated that 4 of the principals (50%) held a strong agreement regarding the implementation of staff development programs to enhance classroom practices. Additionally, 2 (25%) agreed, 1 (12.5%) disagreed, and a corresponding 1 (12.5%) strongly disagreed with this statement.

Regarding the involvement of Heads of Departments (HODs) in sharing course-derived insights with teachers to enhance classroom teaching, 6 (75%) of principals strongly agreed, while 1 (12.5%) agreed and another 1 (12.5%) disagreed with the notion. The qualitative phase of the study delved into the experiences of educators concerning their involvement in Professional Development (PD) courses within the preceding six years. Out of the pool of respondents, a subset of teachers - three in total - indicated that they had not participated in any PD courses over the stipulated four-year timeframe. Four teachers had undertaken a solitary PD course, signifying a modest effort towards enhancing their pedagogical prowess. A more substantial group of 18 teachers had partaken in two PD courses, reflecting a greater commitment to continuous professional development. Seventeen teachers expressed further dedication by participating in three PD courses, while an even more substantial contingent of 28 teachers had immersed themselves in the deep waters of professional growth, attending four PD courses over the six years.

Moreover, when queried about the tangible impact of the Professional Development program on their instructional methods, teachers' responses echoed a broad spectrum of perceptions. Within this realm, it was discerned that a mere two teachers held the perspective of Strongly Disagree, seemingly indicating a lack of alignment between their experiences and the intended benefits of the PD initiatives. Ten teachers leaned towards disagreeing, showcasing a sentiment that suggested a modest disparity between the content of the PD program and its practical applicability. Conversely, a more significant cohort of 28 teachers signalled their acceptance of the program's efficacy through the Agree category, attesting to the congruence between the provided PD content and their instructional enhancements. A remarkable 30 teachers, constituting a substantial majority, proclaimed their resolute alignment with the Professional Development program's transformative impact by endorsing the Strongly Agree stance. This

profound endorsement indicated a profound synergy between the content of the PD interventions and the tangible improvements in their pedagogical methods.

Furthermore, the study extended its inquiry to encompass teachers’ appraisals of students’ academic performance within the context of their engagement with professional development opportunities. The teachers’ subjective evaluations were categorized into distinct grades of improvement: six teachers conceded that they had observed little to no improvement in students’ academic performance, offering a note of caution regarding the transformative potential of the PD initiatives. A group of 14 teachers recognized a moderate degree of advancement, categorizing it as “Little improvement,” which could be interpreted as a cautious optimism about the program’s influence on student outcomes. Twenty-two teachers perceived an “Average improvement,” indicating a discernible yet balanced enhancement in students’ academic performances attributable to their participation in professional development endeavours. Intriguingly, 28 teachers asserted that their investment in professional development had yielded a substantive and noteworthy impact, signifying “High improvement” in students’ academic performance - a testament to the perceived potency of the program.

In the same vein of investigating the influence of principals’ promotion of staff professional development on students’ performance in KCSE, teachers were invited to provide their viewpoints. They were prompted to indicate their responses using a 4-point Likert scale as follows: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, and SD = Strongly Disagree. The details are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Teachers Responses on Staff Professional Development

Statement	SD		D		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The principal prioritizes the inclusion of funds dedicated to staff professional development within the school’s annual budget allocation.	8	11.43	11	15.72	19	27.14	32	45.71
The principal actively motivates and supports teachers in participating in courses to elevate their professional skills	4	5.71	1	1.43	27	38.57	38	54.29

The principal strategically organizes workshops and internal training sessions, aligning them with teachers' instructional requirements.	2	2.86	5	7.14	25	35.71	38	54.29
The principal spearheads school-wide staff development initiatives aimed at enhancing classroom practices.	0	0	0	0	16	22.86	54	77.14
The principal fosters a culture where Heads of Departments (HODs) regularly engage in meetings with teachers, sharing insights and knowledge gained from attended courses to enrich classroom teaching.	4	5.71	5	7.14	22	31.43	39	55.72

To ascertain if principals allocate funds for staff professional development in the annual school budget, 32 teachers (45.71%) strongly agreed, 19 (27.14%) agreed, 11 (15.72%) disagreed, and 8 (11.43%) strongly disagreed. A notable proportion of 38 (54.29%) teachers confirmed that principals encourage them to attend courses for enhanced professionalism, with 27 (38.57%) agreeing, 1 (1.43%) disagreeing, and 4 (5.71%) strongly disagreeing.

Regarding principals' planning of workshops and internal training to meet teachers' instructional needs, 38 (54.29%) of teachers strongly agreed, 25 (35.71%) agreed, 5 (7.14%) disagreed, and 2 (2.86%) strongly disagreed. Table 5 highlights that 54 (77.14%) of teachers strongly agreed that principals implement staff development programs to enhance classroom practices, while 16 (22.86%) agreed, and none disagreed or strongly disagreed. In determining whether principals ensure Heads of Departments (HODs) hold meetings to share insights from attended courses for improved classroom teaching, 39 (55.72%) strongly agreed, 22 (31.43%) agreed, 5 (7.14%) disagreed, and 4 (5.71%) strongly disagreed. To gauge the collective impact of principals' promotion of staff professional development on KCSE performance, the researcher combined the responses from both principals and teachers to create a unified average index. Responses categorized as SA = Strongly Agreed and A = Agree were integrated for this purpose.

Table 5 Principals' and Teachers' Responses on Staff Professional Development

Statement	Principals				Teachers			
	A		SA		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The principal prioritizes the inclusion of funds dedicated to staff professional development within the school's annual budget allocation.	4	50	4	50	19	27.14	32	45.71
The principal actively motivates and supports teachers in participating in courses to elevate their professional skills	2	25	6	75	27	38.57	38	54.29
The principal strategically organizes workshops and internal training sessions, aligning them with teachers' instructional requirements.	2	25	6	75	25	35.71	38	54.29
The principal spearheads school-wide staff development initiatives aimed at enhancing classroom practices.	2	25	4	50	16	22.86	54	77.14
The principal fosters a culture where Heads of Departments (HODs) regularly engage in meetings with teachers, sharing insights and knowledge gained from attended courses to enrich classroom teaching.	1	12.5	6	75	22	31.43	39	55.72

The analysis revealed a strong agreement among 4 (50%) principals and 32 (47.71%) teachers regarding this allocation, suggesting a prioritization of staff professional development within Athi River's public secondary schools. This is in line with Yusuf, Muhammed, and Kazeem's (2014) assertion that school leaders should adapt their leadership styles to improve school situations. Principals in the Athi River sub-county have demonstrated their commitment to enhancing staff professional development by allocating budgetary resources accordingly.

Furthermore, the study investigated whether principals encouraged teachers to participate in courses aimed at enhancing their professionalism and competencies. Impressively, 6 (75%) of principals and 38 (54.29%) of teachers strongly endorsed this initiative. This indicates a widespread acceptance of teacher professional development programs within public secondary schools in the Athi River sub-county, with the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) leading some of these initiatives. However, there's resistance from teachers who have to bear the training costs.

Based on whether principals organized workshops and internal training sessions to address the instructional needs of teachers, a substantial 6 (75%) of principals and 38 (54.29%) of teachers strongly supported this statement. This demonstrates that Athi River's public secondary school principals are actively engaged in organizing workshops and training sessions to equip teachers with the necessary skills and methodologies for improved learner performance. These efforts align with TSC's encouragement for robust teacher capacity building. This approach resonates with the findings of Melisa and Kaylan (2015) and the SMASSE project report (2007), both highlighting the significance of staff professional development in achieving better learner outcomes.

From the interviewees, principal A highlighted that:-

“Investing in teachers' professional development is paramount for improving academic outcomes in our schools. By providing opportunities for continuous learning and skill enhancement, we empower our educators to deliver high-quality instruction that resonates with our students and drives academic success.”

Additionally, the study assessed the implementation of staff development programs by principals to enhance teacher performance. Notably, 4 (50%) of principals and 54 (77.14%) of teachers strongly agreed with this statement, indicating widespread support for the concept of staff professional development. This is consistent with the views of Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), who view principals as key drivers of staff professional development. The successful implementation of these programs could be attributed to the TSC's policies guiding curriculum implementation, which identify and address professional gaps.

The study delved into whether principals ensured that Heads of Departments held meetings with teachers to share insights from attended courses for improved classroom teaching. Six (75.0%) principals and 39 (55.72%) of teachers strongly endorsed this approach. This echoes the importance of departmental meetings as highlighted by Wamulla (2013), where teachers collaborate to enhance syllabus coverage and teaching methodologies, aligning with the school's goals.

In conclusion, the majority of principals in public secondary schools within the Athi River sub-county are actively promoting staff professional development to enhance KCSE performance. This finding underscores the pivotal role that principals play in cultivating a culture of continuous improvement.

The null hypothesis (H01) tested in this study was:

H01. There is no statistically significant relationship between principals’ promotion of staff professional development and students’ academic performance in KCSE among public secondary schools in the Athi-River sub-county, Kenya.

To examine whether there existed a correlation between principals’ promotion of staff professional development and student’s academic performance in KCSE, a simple regression test was conducted between the average scores of both principals and teachers and the average school mean score for the study period. This analysis yielded a correlation coefficient (r), indicating the strength and direction of the correlation. The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Promotion of Staff Professional Development and Academic Performance

Model Residual	Academic Performance.
Principals’ promotion of staff professional development on students’ Academic performance.	Person correlation coefficient(r) =0.59 Person Chi test sig (2-tailed) =0.01
N	10

Significant at the 0.05% level (2- tailed) df = 1

Table 6 illustrates that the correlation coefficient (r) for principals’ promotion of staff professional development was 0.59, indicating a highly robust positive relationship between this factor and academic performance. The level of principals’ promotion of staff professional development was found to be highly significant at a P level of 0.01, which is lower than the standard alpha of 0.05. This suggests a substantial influence of principals’ promotion of staff professional development on students’ KCSE performance. Principals played a pivotal role in organizing workshops, facilitating training sessions, promoting collaborative teaching, and adhering to guidelines set forth by the TSC. These results align with the findings of various scholars such as Melisa and Kailan (2015), Yusuf, Mohamed, and Kazeemi (2014), and Wamulla (2013). However, they contrast with the observations made by Wahab, Mehidah, Abdulla, and Kanesan (2007), who suggested that instructional leadership practices might vary depending on contextual factors.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions of the Study

The study's findings highlight that the majority of principals in public secondary schools within the Athi River sub-county actively supported and embraced strategies and programs aimed at enhancing the professional development of their teaching staff. This underscores their commitment to improving the skills and expertise of their students. Additionally, a strong trend was observed among these principals, with most showing support for and engagement in collaborative practices. These practices were geared toward enhancing the academic performance of their students. This reflects their dedication to fostering an environment of cooperation that positively impacts student achievements.

5.2 Recommendations of the Study

5.2.1 Policy Recommendations:

The study underscores the need for targeted interventions to address academic performance challenges observed in public secondary schools within Athi River sub-county. The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should implement focused strategies based on the findings of this study. This may include conducting thorough needs assessments specific to each school, allocating additional resources, and providing tailored support to schools facing academic decline. Continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established to ensure the effective implementation of these improvement measures, aligning them closely with the principles of instructional leadership identified in the study.

5.2.2 Practice Recommendations:

Teacher capacity-building initiatives: Principals should prioritize teacher capacity-building initiatives such as workshops, seminars, and refresher courses. These programs are essential for equipping teachers with up-to-date skills, competencies, attitudes, and subject-specific knowledge, ultimately enhancing teaching effectiveness and students' academic performances.

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