



Influence of Mentoring Newly Employed Teachers on their Performance on Curricular Activities in Public Secondary Schools in Thika East and West Sub-Counties, Kiambu County, Kenya

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Abstract

The first year of teaching is one of the most challenging and critical periods in a teacher's career. Newly employed teachers begin experiencing challenges such as workload pressure, lack of appreciation and support from colleagues, work-leisure spillover and discipline and behavior problems of students, burnout and conflict with other colleagues and other school stakeholders. This leads to low performance of newly employed teachers, as 40% of newly employed teachers do not meet the performance appraisals targets as set by TSC. This study's objective was to determine the impact of mentoring on the job performance of newly employed teachers in public secondary schools in Thika East and West Sub-Counties, Kiambu County, Kenya. Feldman's model of organizational socialization and social exchange theory informed this study. The study used a descriptive design and adopted a mixed methodology approach where qualitative and quantitative data were used. The study population was 568 participants comprising of 148 newly employed teachers, 378 experienced teachers, 21 principals, and 21 deputy principals. The study used stratified random sampling to sample 60 newly employed teachers, 153 experienced teachers, 17 principals, and deputy principals; thus, the total sample size was 230 respondents. The study collected data using an interview guide for newly employed teachers, questionnaires for experienced teachers, principals, and

deputy principals, and FGD for students. The researcher also carried out observation, document analysis, and other relevant secondary data. The researcher carried out mixed analysis. The study results indicated that there is a positive and statistically significant influence of mentoring ($\beta=0.628$, $p=0.039<0.05$) on the performance of newly employed teachers. The study concludes that having proper and effective mentoring led to better job performance of newly employed teachers. The study recommends improving on mentoring so as to boost the job performance of newly employed teachers in Kenya.

1.1: Background of the study

The first year of teaching has been described as a time of survival for newly employed teachers, one of the most challenging and critical periods in a teacher's career (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). During this transition, the teacher begins to develop the skills and habits that form the foundation for future teaching success. Newly employed teachers find themselves in a new environment involving positive and negative influences on their teaching careers (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). Different schools have unique ways of helping or socializing newly employed teachers to transition, which may have other effects on their job performance (Qian, Youngs & Frank, 2013). Socialization is the process through which an individual learns or acquires the necessary knowledge, skills, and values needed to become a functional member of a group, such as a family or in the context of teaching, a school (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Newly employed teachers are expected to successfully transition, adapt and integrate into the school community, acquiring knowledge of how to teach and deal with different categories of students, colleagues, and other members of the school community, as well as administrators' support (Uusiautti, et al. 2014). Research demonstrates that once newly employed teachers are confronted with the reality of classroom teaching, guiding students in curricular activities and interacting with colleague teachers, parents, students and other school stakeholders, among other demands, many of them struggle and are sometimes unsure of the best way to fit in the culture of a particular school (Pířová, 2013; Eisenschmidt, Poom-Valickis, & Kärner, 2011). Some of the demands and challenges facing newly employed teachers are low collegial support from their senior colleagues, lack of experience, low self-efficacy, and ability to cope (Pířová, 2013).

In educational research, several different labels have been applied to this phenomenon, including "reality shock" or "cultural shock" (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998), and "practice shock" ((McCormak & Thomas, 2003). All of these tensions and struggles surrounding newly employed teachers' successful professional socialization and development heighten the need to research solid approaches and plausible solutions to better prepare and fully support them in adapting to school life.

Various socialization strategies are applied to address the challenges experienced by newly employed teachers and equip them with relevant coping skills. Such socialization strategies include but are not limited to in mentoring programs. Having proper socialization strategies for newly employed teachers should lead to realistic expectations about the job, development of a sense of task competence, acquisition of the appropriate knowledge and skills, successful interpersonal relationships, and work role clarity which is essential in their job performance (Uugwanga, 2010; Pířová, 2013). Mentoring refers to knowledge transfer and support from an individual with more experience

or greater relevant knowledge and wisdom to a less-experienced individual (Ojewunmi, 2011). Mentorship is a professional relationship in which an experienced and knowledgeable individual, known as a mentor, provides guidance, support, and advice to a less experienced person, referred to as a mentee (Zachary, 2012). This partnership is typically aimed at helping the mentee develop their skills, knowledge, and career by sharing insights, offering constructive feedback, and fostering personal growth and development (Clark, 2012; Zachary, 2012). Mentorship plays a crucial role in knowledge transfer, skill-building, and career advancement. Mentoring is key to the professional success of newly employed teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Hobson & Malderez, 2013). The mentors play an important role in developing newly employed teachers as they provide nonjudgmental feedback, professional growth opportunities, and the emotional support they need (Clark, 2012). Successful mentoring of newly employed teachers enhances their work performance (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Clark, 2012).

1.2: Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, more than 40% of newly employed teachers do not meet the performance appraisals targets as set by TSC through Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD) system, which was introduced in schools to serve as a continuous assessment and tool kit for teachers (TSC 2019; Macharia, 2019). This may be partly attributed to the lack of proper socialization strategies of newly employed teachers, leading to poor performance in content delivery, behavior management, teamwork and other responsibilities (Olweya, 2020; Pířová, 2013). Despite most of the schools developing several socialization and support strategies for newly employed teachers (Kimila, 2012), there was need to get more information on the strategies being implemented and their influence on teachers' job performance. This study was set to look at how mentoring is used to socialize newly employed teachers and the kind of help, support, understanding and cooperation they received from their colleagues, school leadership, and other school stakeholders.

Despite the importance of having successful socialization and support strategies for newly employed teachers, there was no clear empirical evidence of the influence of mentoring of newly employed teachers on their job performance in schools. Thus, this study envisioned a knowledge gap to fill by establishing the mentoring of newly employed teachers and their subsequent job performance in public secondary schools in Thika Sub-Counties, Kiambu County, Kenya.

1.3: Research Objective

To find out the influence of mentoring newly employed teachers on their performance in curricular activities in public secondary schools in Thika East and West Sub-Counties, Kiambu County, Kenya

1.4: Literature Review

Teachers' mentorship has many tentacles (Shields & Murray, 2017). An essential role of mentoring is knowledge transfer and skill development which are aspects of the career function of coaching. In order to help newly employed teachers learn and progress, mentors use their insight, experiences, and advice (Shields & Murray, 2017; Kent, Green, & Feldman, 2012). The mentor teacher gives feedback and advice and advocates for the newly employed teachers using their influence. Mentor teachers also provide a buffer for adverse career outcomes or damaging consequences through protection. Protection involves the mentor taking the blame in controversial situations, intervening

on behalf of the newly employed teachers in potentially career-damaging situations, shielding the newly employed teachers from high visibility assignments where the risk of failure is high, or the newly employed teachers are ill-equipped for the task (Ensher & Murphy 2006). Finally, exposure is also a function of mentoring. The newly employed teachers are given opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and network extensively as the mentor helps them improve their reputation (Shields & Murray, 2017).

Resta, Huling, and Yeargain's (2013) study tried to establish the effects of newly employed teachers' induction programs using mentor relationships. The study involved 1,000 newly employed teachers in schools in the United States of America (USA). The study found that good mentor relationships improved newly employed teachers' teaching strategies. The study also established that mentoring helped newly employed teachers' professional performance. However, this study did not consider how mentoring can affect newly employed teachers' curricular activities and job performance when a newly employed teacher is assigned to a veteran teacher from the same establishment, was one of the focus areas of this study.

A study by Qian, Youngs, and Frank (2013) on the implications of an effective mentoring relationship between newly employed teachers and their mentors in schools in the USA established that effective mentoring helps newly employed teachers to have good student relationships, improves their time management, increase their local knowledge of a school and also help them to become more effective in instructional practices. The study also established that mentorship is an integral part of the experienced teachers' role that supports the learning and development of newly employed teachers. The study's findings concurred with those of Henning, Gut and Beam (2015), who also established that effective mentoring includes forming collegial relationships to help newly employed teachers gain proficiency and confidence in the classroom, which will lead to an increase in job performance. Nevertheless, the USA's socioeconomic factors differ from Africa, specifically in Kenya, which might affect mentoring of newly employed teachers. Thus, it was crucial to have a local study to fill this knowledge gap.

In research conducted by Fletcher and Barrett (2004), this aspect of a mentor aiding a newly employed teacher's socialization process is consolidated. A mentor's role helps socialize newly employed teachers and enables them to get to know other teachers and become more familiar with the students. The outcome of their survey displayed highly positive outcomes and results from mentoring programs. More than 95% of newly employed teachers felt they had learned more about instructional strategies and skills as mentors, which helped newly employed teachers improve their instructional skills and teaching strategies (Fletcher & Barrett, 2004).

1.4.1: Theoretical Framework

This section discussed the theories that guided this study. Feldman's Model of Organizational Socialization and the Theory of Social Exchange informed this study.

Feldman developed the Model of Organizational Socialization in 1976. The model proposes that socialization comprises three distinct stages: The first stage is the anticipatory socialization stage, the second stage is the accommodation stage, and the third stage is the role management stage (Feldman, 1981). Each stage of socialization has different sets of activities. In this study, the

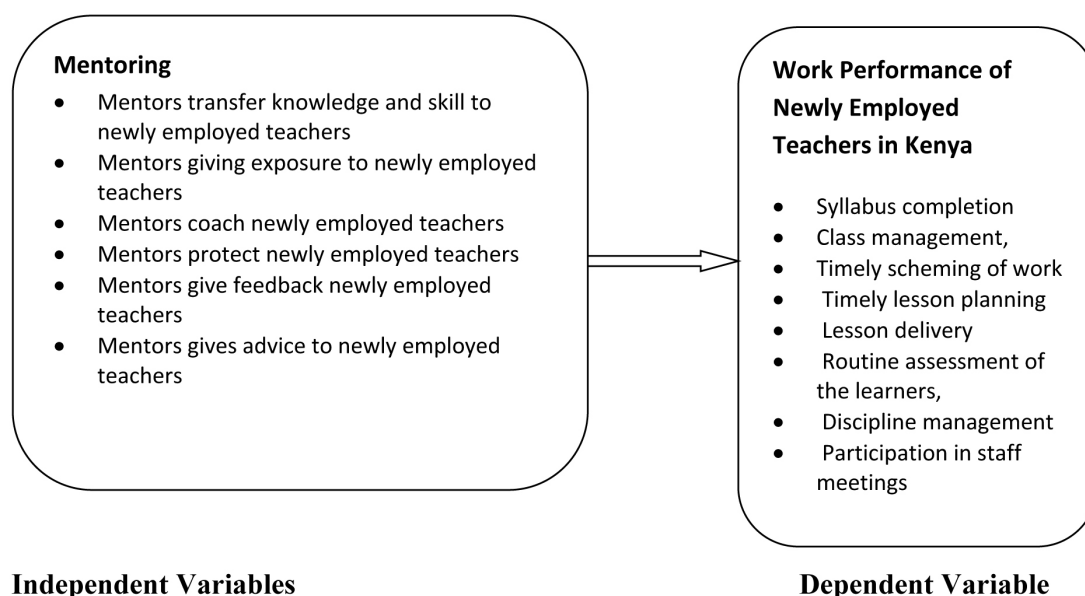
expected socialization stage, which is the first stage of socialization, included the expectation of newly employed teachers' role. The adaptation stage, which is the core of socialization, included learning and the stage of role management increased the expected responsibility of newly employed teachers. This was then related to the outcome of newly employed teachers work performance in curricular activities.

The Theory of Social Exchange postulated by sociologist Homans in 1958. The Theory of Social Exchange states that human social behavior and relationships are rooted in an exchange process defined by benefits and risks, social rewards, costs, and reciprocity (Homans, 1958). Chadwick-Jones (1976), in reviewing social exchange theory, suggested that many social scientists have found it to be a useful conceptual framework for studying social interaction. Thus, social exchange theory is an effective tool for examining the relationship between various school stakeholders. This theory was appropriate for this study as it was expected that newly employed teachers, before engaging in a particular relationship with their colleagues, administration, parents, or students, would weigh the benefits, rewards, risks, or costs associated with that relationship.

1.4.2: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is the researcher understands of how the study's independent and dependent variables connect. The independent variable was mentoring, while the dependent variable was the work performance of newly employed teachers in Kenya.

Figure 1: **Conceptual Framework**



1.5: Methodology

The study used a descriptive design and adopted a mixed methodology approach where qualitative and quantitative data were used. The study population was 568 participants comprising of 148 newly employed teachers, 378 experienced teachers, 21 principals, and 21 deputy principals in Thika East and West Sub-Counties, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study used stratified random sampling to sample 60 newly employed teachers, 153 experienced teachers, 17 principals, and deputy principals;

thus, the total sample size was 230 respondents. The study collected data using an interview guide for newly employed teachers, questionnaires for experienced teachers, principals, and deputy principals, and FGD for students. The researcher also carried out observation, document analysis, and other relevant secondary data. All the ethical research protocols guided the researcher. A pilot test was carried out to test the validity and reliability of research instruments. The researcher carried out mixed analysis. The qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis while quantitative data was analyzed using quantitative data techniques.

1.6: Results

1.6.1: Mentoring of Newly Employed Teachers

The study requested the participants to indicate their extent of agreement with statements regarding the influence of mentoring of newly employed teachers on their performance in curricular activities in public secondary schools in Thika East and West Sub-Counties, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study participants were asked to give their opinion based on a 5-point likert scale where 1-strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- undecided, 4-agree, and 5-strongly agree. The analysis is presented in table 5.

Table 1: Mentoring of Newly Employed Teachers

Statements on Mentoring of Newly Employed Teachers	Mean	Std. Deviation
There are effective mentoring programs for newly employed teachers	3.5815	0.8434
Mentors transfer knowledge and skills to newly employed teachers	4.1074	1.2248
Mentors give exposure to newly employed teachers	4.2941	1.1555
Mentors coach newly employed teachers	3.9317	0.7065
Mentors protect newly employed teachers	3.1098	0.8662
Mentors give feedback to newly employed teachers	3.5366	0.5186

The study findings presented in table 5 show that the study participants agreed with the statements that mentors give exposure to newly employed teachers; mentors transfer knowledge and skills to newly employed teachers; mentors coach newly employed teachers; there are effective mentoring programs for newly employed teachers and mentors give feedback to newly employed teachers. Each statement had a mean score of 4.2941, 4.1074, 3.9317, 3.5815, and 3.5366, respectively. Most study participants were undecided on whether mentors protected newly employed teachers. The study results infer that there was mentoring of newly employed teachers in most of the public secondary schools in Thika East and West Sub-Counties, Kiambu County, Kenya.

The study sought to establish the effectiveness of mentoring of newly employed teachers. The study established that most mentoring programs were effective but faced various challenges. Some study participants were of the view that mentoring programs were effective as the newly employed teachers are equipped with knowledge and skills on what they are expected to do; some mentors are committed to mentoring programs, and the newly employed teachers learn a lot from their mentors such as school roles, teaching methods, school culture, do’s and don’ts, codes and regulations from TSC

Some newly employed teachers highly regarded the effectiveness of the mentoring program.A newly

employed teacher Ms Jane, (not real name) from one of the extra county school in Thika West said, “*My mentor is “My parent” to see me through in adapting to school teaching life*”. While other newly employed teachers stated that mentoring programs also equip them with better psychological skills, especially dealing with students from humble backgrounds and with low academic performance. Another newly employed teacher Mr. “Njoroge (not real name)” from one of the sub county school in Thika East, who had received exceptional mentorship, had the following opinions on mentorship

.....My mentor was exceptionally good and made me like the teaching profession. She facilitated a great working and learning environment. She opened up new horizons, coaching, encouraging and helping me develop the skills and knowledge needed for higher performance in my job. I appreciate her commitment, leadership and advice. I’m forever grateful

Nonetheless, some newly employed Teachers viewed mentoring programs as being ineffective as some mentors were unfriendly, and there were age barriers between mentors and mentees, among many other challenges.

The study participants highlighted various challenges that face mentoring programs of newly employed teachers. Most study participants highlighted time constraints as a major challenge affecting the mentoring program. Most of the experienced teachers indicated they were busy and overwhelmed by school work particularly Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD), so they needed to be in a position to create time for mentoring newly employed teachers. Another major challenge was the poor attitude toward the mentoring program of newly employed teachers. Some study participants believed that newly employed teachers have a negative attitude toward their job and mentoring programs. Some newly employed teachers had a “know it all” attitude, so they disregarded the mentor-ship program. As one newly employed teacher said, “*Some mentors overloaded me with unnecessary or unwanted advice. They even give you an extra load*”. Other views were that despite newly employed teachers undergoing mentoring programs, they easily forget or ignored the pieces of advice given.

Poor planning and execution of the mentorship program were other major challenges. Mentorship programs lacked comprehensiveness, appropriate guidelines on how to conduct it, and unrealistic and mismatched expectations. Other challenges that the study participants highlighted that are faced in mentoring programs of newly employed teachers included: lack of cooperation, lack of consultations; unfriendly mentors, unavailability of mentors as most teachers are not ready to mentor; poor communication on expectations, goals, and schedules, lack of commitment by mentors, mentees, and administrators.

1.6.2: Influence of Socialization Strategies of Newly Employed Teachers on Their Performance in Curricular Activities

The study requested the participants to indicate their agreement with statements regarding the influence of socialization strategies of newly employed teachers on their performance on curricular activities in public secondary schools in Thika East and West Sub-Counties, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study participants were asked to give their opinion based on a 5-point Liker scale

where 1-strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- undecided, 4-agree, and 5-strongly agree. The analysis is presented in table 13.

Table 2: Influence of Socialization Strategies of Newly Employed Teachers on Their Performance in Curricular Activities

Statements on Influence of Socialization Strategies of Newly Employed Teachers on Their Performance on Curricular Activities	Mean	Std. Deviation
Successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in syllabus completion	4.0778	1.0401
Successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in class management	4.2207	0.8569
Successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in timely scheming of work	4.2631	0.9650
Successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in routine assessment of the learners	3.8189	1.3554
Successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in discipline management	3.7324	0.9406
Successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in curricular planning and implementation	4.3824	0.6580
Successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in instruction planning and implementation	4.1393	0.8569
Successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in student assessment	4.0471	0.5281
Successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in pedagogical knowledge	3.9353	0.5610

The findings, as shown in table 10, indicate that study participants agreed with the statements that the successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in curricular planning and implementation; successful socialization of newly employed teachers help them perform better in timely scheming of work; Successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in class management; successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in syllabus completion; successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in student assessment; successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in pedagogical knowledge; the successful socialization of newly employed teachers helps them perform better in the routine assessment of the learners. Each statement had a mean score of 4.3824, 4.2631, 4.2207, 4.0778, 4.0471, 3.9353, and 3.8189, respectively. The study results infer that appropriate socialization strategies can lead to successful socialization and better performance on curricular activities by newly employed teachers in public secondary schools in Thika East and West Sub-Counties, Kiambu County, Kenya.

After conducting regression analysis the study established that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between mentoring and the performance of newly employed teachers on curricular activities ($\beta=0.628$, $p=0.039<0.05$). The study established that proper mentoring of newly employed teachers leads to emotional support, knowledge transfer, and skill development, provides nonjudgmental feedback, and leads to professional growth, which enhances newly employed teachers' work performance. The results of this study are in line with the results of previous research conducted by Shields and Murray (2017); Hobson and Malderez (2013); Qian, Youngs, and Frank (2013), who established that mentoring of newly employed teachers influence

their job performance.

1.7: Conclusions

Based on the study results, the study concludes that there is a positive and statistically significant influence of mentoring on the performance of newly employed teachers on curricular activities in public secondary schools in Thika East and West Sub-Counties, Kiambu County, Kenya.

1.8: Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations on mentoring of newly employed teachers

- (i) Mentoring programs should be allocated more time and resources
- (ii) There is also a need to develop guidelines for the mentorship of newly employed teachers.
- (iii) There is need to have open communication between mentors, mentees, and school managers to improve the understanding of each other's aspirations and motivation.
- (iv) The study also suggests creation of social media group or any other online platform for newly employed teachers with mentors who can answer their questions and guide them accordingly.
- (v) The study recommends that schools with no mentoring programs should introduce necessary support, resources, and time be allocated for the same. Both formal and informal mentoring sessions should be introduced in the schools. Both formal and informal mentoring sessions should be introduced in the schools.

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