

Effects of Teachers' Distribution and Transfer on Student's Academic Performance in Public Day Secondary Schools in Naivasha Sub-County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Studies have shown that the education sector is characterized by several staffing challenges, including skewed distribution of teachers, shortages of teachers, and tussles regarding promotions and transfers. This research sought to probe the impact of teacher distribution and transfer on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The target population was 18 day secondary schools, out of which nine were sampled using the simple random method; 198 teachers were targeted, out of which 45 were sampled using the stratified and simple random methods. In addition, nine principals and one Sub-County Teacher Service Commission (TSC) officer were purposefully sampled, and 144 students were selected using stratified and simple random sampling. Quantitative data was obtained from teachers and students through the use of structured questionnaires, while qualitative data was gathered from principals and the sub-county TSC officer through the use of interview guides. Descriptive statistics, mainly percentages, were used to analyze the quantitative data, while the thematic content analysis technique was utilized to process the qualitative data. Results revealed that teacher distribution and transfer have a negative impact on various aspects of students' performance, including students' grades and participation in class. Teacher distribution and transfer affect students' performance by diminishing the quality of teacher-student interaction, increasing teachers' workload, and disrupting the continuity of learning. The study recommends the exploration of strategies for improving the distribution and transfer of teachers in Naivasha Sub-County in order to enhance students' academic performance.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Distribution, Students, Teacher, Transfer

I. INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a central role in ensuring the delivery of quality education. According to Gewasari and Sibuea (2017), the quality of teaching is the most critical determinant of achieving educational goals. In Kenya, the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) is responsible for the distribution and transfer of teachers according to the needs of particular schools. The TSC 2019–2023 strategic plan expresses the intention to introduce a number of reforms with the view of optimizing the utilization of human resources, improving efficiency, and enhancing the quality of services (TSC, 2019). One of the proposed reforms was the restructuring of teacher distribution and transfer to address disparities across regions. Distribution and transfer of teachers are not challenges that are unique to Kenya.

According to Abaabneh et al. (2012), there was a skewed distribution of teachers, with some schools being overcrowded and having a high student-to-teacher ratio and others having an extremely low student-to-teacher ratio, leading to underutilization in Jordan. The government of Jordan initiated a school streamlining program with the view of ensuring equitable distribution and optimal utilization of teaching resources. Streamlining the distribution of teachers was also done in South Africa in the initial years that followed the abolition of apartheid (Dhunpath & Subbaye, 2018). The goal of the policy in South Africa was to address the disparity in the distribution of teachers and other learning resources between schools in white neighborhoods and those in black neighborhoods. During the apartheid era, the average teacher-to-pupil ratio in white neighborhoods was 1:18, while the average ratio in black neighborhoods was 1:43 (Bharath, 2004).

In Ghana, it was noted that there was severe inefficiency and inequality in the staffing of teachers at regional and district levels. According to Dawuda (2018), the eastern region of Ghana had an average teacher-pupil ratio of 1:25, while the northern region had a ratio of 1:52 in 2016. A shortage of teachers was largely experienced in rural and underserved areas, making the teaching profession in these areas less attractive (Dawuda, 2018). In Kenya, Abdi and Kharbiryumbai (2019) observed that in public secondary schools, which have a teaching workforce of 88,000, there is a shortage of 50,000 teachers. This situation has been compounded by a high rate of teacher attrition. According to TSC, about 44 teachers retire, die, or resign daily, putting strain on the sector that is facing a shortage of about 100,000 tutors (Wanzala, 2019).

In 2017, according to Mbaka (2017), the teacher-student ratio in public secondary schools was 1:41, which was 5.7 points higher than the ratio in private secondary schools. M'birichi et al. (2022) noted that the introduction of the 100 percent primary-secondary transition policy had further increased the student-teacher ratio in public secondary schools. In addition, there are notable disparities in the distribution of teachers across regions and geographical locations. Some schools, especially those located in rural areas, have as few as one teacher, while those in urban centers have high numbers (Wanzala, 2019).

Bwire et al. (2016) further noted that there was a skewed distribution of teachers across school types in favor of county and national schools, with these school categories having more than 10 TSC-employed teachers while most of the sub-county schools had less than 5 teachers. Wanzala (2019) reported that TSC is facing a shortage of teachers in specific subject combinations in humanities, Kiswahili, physics, and computer studies. The shortage of teachers for physics and computer studies has been occasioned by the mobility of these teachers to the private sector (Ndege et al., 2019). Given that students' academic performance can be influenced by various factors, this study aims to investigate whether teacher distribution and transfers have an impact on students' academic performance in Naivasha public secondary schools.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Approach

The study adopted a mixed-methods research approach. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the mixed-method paradigm seeks to integrate the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. It allows flexibility in the selection of data collection tools and instruments. The quantitative methodology focuses on gathering quantifiable data so as to facilitate the use of objective methods of analysis such as statistical tests (Coheen et al., 2013). The qualitative methodology focuses on collecting in-depth information, mainly revolving around the views and experiences of individuals exposed to the phenomenon being studied.

2.2 Research Design

The inquiry employed a descriptive survey design. According to Coheen et al. (2013), this design entails examining the variables of interest without manipulating them in any way. Specifically, the design entailed obtaining the views of individuals who have information regarding the variables of interest. This design was selected because the researcher had no control over the study variables (teacher distribution and transfer); hence, the study could only interrogate the situation that existed in the study area with respect to these variables. The descriptive survey design was also appropriate for this study because the aim of the study is to define the situation that exists in Naivasha Sub-County with respect to the distribution and transfer of teachers, students academic performance, and the relationship between the three variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.3 Target Population and Sample

The study targeted the population of 198 registered teachers, 18 principals, and approximately 5,760 students in 18 public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County. The study also targeted the Naivasha Sub-County TSC officer. The study made use of the simple random sampling technique to select nine schools from the 18 public secondary schools. The names of all 18 schools were written on small pieces of paper, placed in a container, and shuffled. A third party will be asked to pick nine pieces randomly. The names of schools contained therein were included in the sample. stratified and simple random sampling was then used to select 45 teachers and 144 students from the nine schools. The purposive sampling technique was used to select nine principals and the TSC officer.

2.4 Research Instruments

The study used a combination of questionnaires and interview guides. Questionnaires were used to gather data from teachers and students, while interview guides were used to obtain data from principals and the TSC officer. The validity of the research instrument was examined through the expert judgment method, which entailed subjecting the instrument to scrutiny by individuals who have great expertise in the study area (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher sought the input of the university research supervisor in assessing the appropriateness and relevance of the instrument in assessing the distribution and transfer of teachers in the study area and their impact on students' academic performance. The reliability of the instrument was assessed by conducting a pilot study in the adjacent Gilgil Sub-County. The pilot study involved three public secondary schools from the sub-county. Reliability was assessed using the Cronbach alpha method at the 0.7 threshold.

2.5 Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures

Responses to the questionnaires were coded and entered into the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 25, where they were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data was analyzed using the thematic technique (thematic coding). According to Bryman (2016), the thematic content analysis technique entails classifying the qualitative data into themes that are relevant to the research objectives and study purpose. In this study, responses obtained during the interviews were summarized into themes that are relevant to the research issue. The results of the qualitative analysis are presented using illustrative quotes.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Response Rate

Out of 45 questionnaires that were given to teachers, 39 were duly completed and returned to the researcher, marking a response rate of 86.7%. The researcher also approached nine principals and requested to set up an interview. One of the principals could not be reached during the data collection period, and thus the response rate for the principals was 88.7%. The study sought to engage 1 TSC officer who agreed to participate, marking a response rate of 100%. Also, the researcher issued 144 questionnaires to students, out of which 116 were completed in full and deposited in the boxes available in the schools, marking a response rate of 80.6%.

3.2 Respondent Profile

About 53.8% of the respondents were male teachers, while 46.2% were female. The teachers were of diverse age groups, with the largest segment (33.3%) being in the 31–40 age bracket. The majority of the teachers (66.7%) had the bachelor's level of education, which is also congruent with the study by Kamau et al. (2021), who found that 68.1% of the teachers employed by TSC had the bachelor's level of education. Close to half of the teachers (48.7%) had worked in the school for 6–10 years and thus were privy to information regarding the performance of students and the transfer and distribution of teachers.

On the other hand, 51.7% of the sampled students were male, while females constituted the remaining 48.3%. The largest segment of the students (44.8%) were 17 years of age, which can be explained by the fact that the study targeted Form 3 and 4 students. In Kenya, most students enter secondary school at the age of 15, and therefore most students in Form 3 are 17 years of age, while most students in Form 4 are 18 years old (Ibrahim, 2018). However, some students join secondary school at an advanced age, while a few join early. Form 3 students accounted for the majority of the sample, comprising 52.6%, while Form 4 students constituted the remaining 47.4%.

In addition, 62.5% of the sampled principals were male, while the remaining 37.5% were female. Half of the sampled principals were in the 41–50 year brackets, while the remaining half were in the 51–60 year brackets. About 62.5% of the sampled principles have a master's level of education, which is consistent with the latest TSC (2022) recruitment guidelines that require a person to have a master's degree to qualify for the principal position. Half of the sampled principals had worked as principals in Naivasha sub-county for 6–10 years, while 25% had served for more than 10 years. This implies that most of the principles had an in-depth understanding of teacher distribution and transfer practices within the sub-county. The study also engaged one TSC officer who was a male within the 41–50 year age bracket with a master's level of education. The officer had worked in Naivasha Sub-County for 6–10 years.

3.3 Influence of Teacher Distribution and Transfer on Students' Academic Performance from Teachers Perspective

The study aimed to investigate the impact of teacher distribution and transfer on students' academic performance in Naivasha Sub-County. Teacher perspectives were solicited through a set of statements, and their agreement or disagreement with these statements is presented in Table 1.

Results indicate that a significant portion of teachers, 56.9%, either agreed or strongly agreed with item P1, suggesting that teacher distribution and transfer in Naivasha Sub-County have affected the KCSE mean scores of their respective schools. Similarly, 52.1% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with item P2, which proposed that student grades in end-of-term examinations have been influenced by teacher distribution and transfer. These findings suggest that teachers perceive a direct link between teacher distribution and transfer practices and students' examination performance. These results align with a study by Angote et al. (2023), which found that teacher transfers in public secondary schools in Kakamega County had a significant impact on students' academic achievement.

Moreover, 53.2% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with item P3, indicating that the distribution and transfer of teachers have affected student participation levels in class activities over the past three years. Likewise, 53.3% of teachers agreed with item P4, suggesting that these practices have also influenced the interaction between teachers and

students in their schools. These outcomes imply that, in a majority of public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County, student participation in class activities and the teacher-student interaction have been disrupted due to teacher distribution and transfer.

Table 1

Teachers' view on Influence of Teacher Distribution and Transfer on Students' Academic Performance

| S/NO | Statement | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|------|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| P1 | The distribution and transfer of teachers in Naivasha Sub-County has affected the KCSE mean score of our school | 13.3 | 43.6 | 29.8 | 10.9 | 2.6 |
| P2 | Students grades in end of terms examination have been affected by the distribution and transfer of teachers | 13.4 | 38.7 | 21.9 | 19.3 | 6.7 |
| P3 | The distribution and transfer of teachers has affected the levels of students participation in class activities in the last 3 years | 17.4 | 35.8 | 11.6 | 22.5 | 12.7 |
| P4 | The distribution and transfer of teachers has affected interaction between teachers and students in our school | 16.6 | 36.7 | 15.4 | 21.5 | 9.8 |
| P5 | The distribution and transfer of teachers has had an impact on the percentage of students who complete secondary education in our school | 9.5 | 33.2 | 25.6 | 29.2 | 8.1 |
| P6 | The distribution and transfer of teachers has had an impact on the safety and friendliness of the learning environment in our school | 22.6 | 38.7 | 17.3 | 13.5 | 7.9 |
| P7 | The distribution and transfer of teachers has had an impact on teachers workload that has in turn affected the quality of teaching and learning | 22.3 | 37.6 | 19.4 | 14.5 | 6.2 |
| P8 | Teacher transfer policy in Naivasha Sub-County has affected the continuity of learning in our school | 23.4 | 32.1 | 17.5 | 16.3 | 10.7 |

Qualitative data from the interviews confirmed that teacher distribution and transfers within the public day schools were hampering students' participation in the classroom as well as the interaction between students and teachers.

Day schools are disadvantaged when it comes to teacher distribution when compared to boarding schools. This has created a lot of shortages in the day school, especially due to the free day secondary school and the 100 percent transition policy. Because the class has become large, it is easy for some students to get lost and not gain anything during learning (Interviewee 1, female, 49 years old).

We have few teachers dealing with many students. This has affected the quality of learning because it is difficult for the teacher to give all the students time to participate in class activities and the attention they need (Interviewee 4, male, 55 years old).

The excerpts from the study shed light on the significant impact of teacher distribution and transfers on student participation and the overall learning environment in public secondary schools. These findings resonate with the challenges posed by policies like the FDSE (Free Day Secondary Education) and the 100 percent transition policy. These policies have exacerbated the difficulties associated with teacher distribution and transfers in day schools. The study aligns with the observations made by M'birichi et al. (2020), who noticed that the 100 percent transition policy stretched the resources of public secondary schools, ultimately affecting the quality of education.

One notable consequence is the compromised teacher-student interaction due to an increased teacher-student ratio. This aligns with the research of Wang and Calvano (2022), who found that larger class sizes tend to encourage student passivity. In such environments, students might feel anonymous and disengaged, with some even withdrawing from active participation.

Regarding item P5, which assesses the impact of teacher distribution and transfers on the percentage of students who complete secondary education, teacher opinions varied. A portion (42.7%) agreed that these practices affect completion rates, while others (37.3%) disagreed, and some remained undecided (25.6%). This inconclusiveness suggests that the relationship between teacher distribution/transfers and student completion rates in public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County is complex and multifaceted. Completion rates are a crucial indicator of student performance, reflecting those who successfully navigate their entire educational journey. The lack of consensus on this issue underscores its nuanced nature.

On the topic of item P6, about 61.3% of teachers agreed that teacher distribution and transfers impact the safety and friendliness of the learning environment in their schools. This finding underscores the interconnectedness of teacher distribution and the overall atmosphere within schools. The study resonates with Jepkemei (2018), who discovered a strong link between student-teacher relationships and the friendliness of the school environment. This suggests that any factor, including teacher staffing levels and distribution/transfers, which influences teacher-student dynamics, can affect the school's overall environment.



Lastly, a significant majority of teachers (60.2%) agreed with item P7, indicating that teacher distribution and transfers affect teachers' workload, subsequently impacting the quality of teaching and learning. This finding emphasizes the pivotal role of teacher distribution and transfers in shaping the educational landscape. A heavier workload can lead to burnout, potentially diminishing the quality of instruction. This finding implies that teacher distribution and transfer have had an impact on teachers' workload in most of the day secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County. Interview data confirms that the impact has been negative as the workload of the teachers has increased.

The way teachers are distributed has led to a shortage of teachers in secondary schools. This means that available teachers have to do more work, which reduces their effectiveness. These teachers may not have ample time to prepare for lessons and interact with students to know their progress (Interviewee 3, female, 44 years old).

In our school, teachers have to teach many lessons and deal with large classes due to existing shortages. You can imagine the amount of work they have to deal with in terms of preparing lessons and marking students work. This has really affected the quality of learning and the motivation of these teachers (Interviewee 8, female, 53 years old).

The interview extracts affirm that teacher distribution and transfer practices have contributed to increased teachers' workload in the public day secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County, which has adversely affected the quality of learning. The extract from interviewee three goes on to explain that one way in which teacher workload affects students' performance is by limiting interaction between teachers and students and diminishing the quality of lesson preparation by teachers. These findings are consistent with the study by Mwaniki et al. (2022), where 74.9% of the sampled teachers agreed that public secondary school teachers deal with heavy workloads.

Lastly, 55.5% of the teachers agreed with item P8, which indicated that the teacher transfer policy in Naivasha Sub-County has affected the continuity of learning in their school. These statistics imply that teacher transfer policies have had an impact on the continuity of learning in the majority of public secondary schools in the study area. The findings are consistent with Kazak (2021), who observed that teacher mobility was negatively affecting the continuity of learning in Turkey.

3.4 Students Perspective on Influence of Teacher Distribution and Transfer on Students' Academic Performance

The study also sought the students' views regarding how teacher distribution and transfer have affected their performance. The findings were presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Student's views on Influence of Teacher Distribution and Transfer` on their Academic Performance

| S/NO | Statement | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|------|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| SP1 | How teachers are distributed across secondary schools is affecting our performance as students in public day secondary schools | 19.1 | 35.9 | 27.1 | 12.8 | 5.1 |
| SP2 | Distribution of teachers has ensured that our school has adequate number of teachers in all subjects | 7.4 | 10.5 | 26.1 | 39.7 | 17.3 |
| SP3 | We are able to cover the syllabus in most subjects before the end of the year because we have enough teachers in our school | 6.2 | 14.5 | 19.4 | 37.6 | 22.3 |
| SP4 | We usually get another teacher to stand-in for lessons when our teacher is absent because we have many teachers in our school | 5.4 | 10.8 | 36.5 | 36.5 | 10.8 |
| SP5 | In our school, teachers have time to speak to every student about his or her academic progress. | 9.8 | 20.5 | 16.4 | 40.7 | 12.6 |
| SP6 | I received feedback regarding my academic progress from most of my teachers | 6.8 | 10.8 | 29.2 | 39.1 | 11.8 |
| SP7 | There is little disruption in our learning because the number of teachers transferring away from the school has reduced | 23.0 | 40.5 | 27.0 | 5.4 | 4.1 |

Table 2 shows that 53.2% of the students agreed or agreed strongly with item SP1, which claimed that how teachers are distributed across secondary schools is affecting our performance as students in public secondary schools. On the other hand, 57% of the students disagreed with item SP2, which alleged that the distribution of teachers has ensured that their school has an adequate number of teachers in all subjects. These findings indicate that the majority of the students in public secondary schools believe that their academic performance is affected by how teachers are distributed. The students also believe that the teacher distribution practices have not ensured that their school has an adequate number of teachers in all subjects. The findings are consistent with those of M'birichi et al. (2020), who found that most public secondary schools in the upper eastern region had a severe shortage of teachers.

In addition, 59.9% of the students disagreed with item SP3, which purported that they are able to cover the syllabus in most subjects before the end of the year because they have enough teachers in their school. Similarly, 59.9% disagreed with item SP4, which indicated that they usually get another teacher to stand in for lessons when their teacher is absent because they have many teachers in their school. These statistics suggest that students in most public secondary schools do not complete the syllabus in time because they do not have enough teachers to cover for absentee teachers. This issue also arose during the interview when one principal narrated how some of his classes have suffered because the physics teachers have gone on maternity leave and the school does not have an adequate number of physics teachers.

In our school for instance, we only have two physics teachers. One went for maternity leave two weeks ago. We now left in a difficult position trying to figure out how one teacher can teach all the physics classes (Interviewee 5, male, 51 years old).

The excerpt showcases how teacher distribution has impacted the completion of the syllabus in public secondary schools in the study area. In addition, 53.3% of the students disagreed with item SP5, which detailed that their teachers get time to speak to every student about his or her academic progress. Similarly, 50.9% of the students disagreed with item SP6, which indicated that the student had received feedback regarding his or her academic progress from most of the teachers. These findings confirm that there is limited individualized interaction between teachers and students in the public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County. Consequently, students in most of these schools do not get personalized feedback from their teachers regarding their learning progress.

Lastly, the majority of the students (63.5%) agreed or agreed strongly with item SP7, which alleged that there is little disruption in our learning because the number of teachers transferring away from the school has reduced. This finding implies that there is little disruption of learning in most public secondary schools because the transfer of teachers has been reduced. The findings are consistent with Mwaniki et al. (2022), who found that TSC had put in place policies that seek to minimize transfers and mobility of teachers, such as payment of allowances.

IV. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

This study aimed to assess the effect of teacher distribution and transfer on students' academic performance in public day secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County. Results show that teacher distribution and transfer had negative impact on students' grades and students' class participation. However, data did not support the existence of any effect on students' secondary school completion rate. Teacher distribution and transfer affect students' academic performance by affecting teacher-student interaction, safety and friendliness of the school environment, teachers' workload, and the continuity of learning.

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the distribution and transfer of teachers in Naivasha Sub-County have had an adverse impact on various aspects of students' performance including students' grades and participation in class. In particular, teacher distribution and transfer has affected students' performance by diminishing the quality of teacher-student interaction, increase teachers' workload, and disrupting the continuity of learning.

4.2 Recommendations

From the findings, it is evident that the distribution and transfer of teachers in the sub-county has not been optimal. Ensuring a stable and consistent distribution of skilled and experienced teachers is critical to providing students with the best education possible. It is vital that schools have equitable access to talented teachers and resources to provide the best possible outcomes for all students, regardless of their location or socioeconomic background.

The findings of this study are of value to various stakeholders including the TSC and other policy makers, public day secondary schools, other public institutions, and scholars and researchers in the field of education. For TSC and other policy makers, this study highlights the extent to which the teacher distribution and transfer have impacted the academic performance of students in this area. It creates a case for developing targeted evidence-based interventions for improving the teacher distribution and transfer processes and consequently the academic performance of students.

The study was limited by the reliance on data reported by respondents to assess teacher distribution and academic performance. Using these data sources may have introduced self-reported bias, especially in assessing students' academic performance. The study tried to overcome the limitation by using multiple sources of data including teachers, principals, TCS Officer and students. This study was confined to Naivasha Sub-County and therefore findings may not be generalizable to other areas and regions. To enhance the generalizability of findings, future researcher should consider replicating the study in other sub-counties in the country. There is also need for more researcher investigating factors that shape distribution and transfer of teachers in Naivasha Sub-County as well as strategies that can enhance the distribution and transfer of teachers.

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