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Human Resource Management Practices, and Academic Performance of Secondary Schools in Machakos County, Kenya

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Abstract:

Organizations worldwide primarily exist to achieve specific goals. Academic performance trend in secondary schools in Machakos County has been declining in the recent past (2013-2019) hence the need for the study. The aim of the study was to establish the influence of human resource management practices on academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County, namely influence of teaching staff recruitment and selection and teaching staff training and development on the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County, Kenya. The resource-based theory, universalistic theory and the human capital theory informed this study. The study employed mixed methods research design. The target population was the 413 secondary schools in Machakos County. The school principals were selected as units of observation. The study used primary data that was collected using self-administered semi-structured questionnaires and interview schedules. The study found that human resource management practices under study namely teaching staff recruitment and selection, teaching staff training and development, positively and significantly influenced the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County.

Keywords: Human resource management, recruitment and selection, training and development, academic performance, teaching staff

1. Background of the Study

Human resource management practices are key components of performance in almost all organizations. In any organization, the employees must be treated as a valuable asset. The organization mission will be achieved in a better way if the skills of the workers are developed. In the present competitive environment, the success of any organization depends on the caliber of their human resources and their programmes (Rehman, 2011).

Academic performance is a threshold assessment used to measure a student's ability to meet performance criteria. Grades are used to measure learning or knowledge and attainment of learning objectives and acquisition of skills and competencies (York 2015). Academic performance of a student is regarded as the observable and measurable behavior in a particular situation (Komba, Hizza, & Jonathan, 2013).

Education outcomes are measured through examinations which have been accepted as an important aspect of the educational system. In Kenya, the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination administered by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) measures student performance. It is used as the main basis for judging a student's ability and also as a means of selection for educational advancement and employment (Kieti, 2017). The education system in Kenya places a minimum grade C+ which students must obtain before they are admitted to public and private universities (Kigotho, 2012). Those who fail in the KCSE examination are most likely to join the high number of unemployed youngsters who look for informal jobs in a country that has few of them (Matiangi, 2017).

Belinda, Crosnoe and Muller (2010) argue that in the US educational system, student advancement is predicated on graded performance in a series of classes. Failing to achieve passing grades has numerous additional implications during secondary school and beyond the school level. Students' academic failure is a major determinant of status attainment and adult well-being. Low-performing students are less likely to graduate from high school and less likely to go to college. This increases high school dropouts, and substantially lower adulthood wages.

Academic performance as measured by the examination results is the aggregate form in a course or GPA is one of the major goals of a school globally (Oreidin, 2016). The social and economic development of a county is directly linked with student academic performance (Mushtaq & Khan 2012). Students with quality results become great leaders and manpower for the country thus responsible for country's economic and social development. York (2015) notes that academic failure is not only frustrating to the pupils and the parents; its effects are equally grave on the society in terms of death of manpower in all spheres of the economy and politics.

In the Kenyan context, education is considered a basic need and academic performance is positioned quite high on the national agenda with educators and policy makers putting effort in testing, accountability and other related concerns (Kaimenyi, 2013). Further, the Kenya education arrangement is dominated by examination-oriented training, where passing examinations is the only standard for performance since there is no internal structure of monitoring learning achievements (Maiyo, 2009). Academic performance is used to grade schools and most importantly to determine one's career path. The 'good schools' are acclaimed to be those that are able to groom the students well enough to achieve the set standards (Kaimenyi, 2013).

Statistics of KCSE analysis in the last six years, indicate that majority of the secondary schools in Machakos County registered a mean score below that of the other schools of similar categories in other counties. Schools in other counties of the same category post results with a higher index, for example in the national category, Friends school Kamusinga in Bungoma County in the year 2017 posted a mean of index 10.28, while Machakos School posted an index of 7.8.

YEAR	TOTAL	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E	C. MEAN
2019	27222	2	117	374	788	1198	1572	2274	3105	3810	5698	4930	863	3.744
2018	23856	4	53	210	531	906	1319	1751	2658	3641	5542	6158	1224	3.11
2017	23479	0	34	144	353	642	905	1414	2133	3252	5212	7620	1733	3.112
2016	21662	0	81	270	522	799	1163	1581	2144	3046	4515	6176	1365	3.29
2015	20891	12	153	437	763	1283	1808	2409	3133	3531	4118	2921	317	3.725
2014	19152	28	169	442	799	1151	1653	2179	2966	3356	3651	2470	284	4.799
2013	18416	18	171	728	998	257	1868	2381	2801	3392	2387	338	404	4.567

Table 1: KCSE Performances in 2013 -2019 in Machakos County

Source: Machakos County Director of Education Office (2020)

1.1. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Examine the influence of recruitment and selection of teaching staff on academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County.
- Establish the influence of teaching staff training and development on academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County.

1.2. Research Hypotheses

The study tested the following five research hypotheses:

- Ho1: There is no significant relationship between recruitment and selection of teaching staff and academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County.
- Ho2: There is no significant relationship between teaching staff training and development and academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Resource Based Theory

Barney's (2007) resource-based view (RBV) theory observes that a company must have valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable resources to have a sustainable competitive advantage, and that these resources include everything internal to the firm. Barney (2007) listed all of the assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information and knowledge as resources. Wright and McMahan (1992) further explain what people, as resources, must have for the company to be competitive. They must give value to the organization's production processes; they must have rare skills to promote significant performance. The human capital investment must not be easily imitated. A company's human resources must not be substituted or replaced by technological alternatives. The high levels of automation in many industries and the continuing shift towards a service economy have made substitution less likely (Armstrong, 2010).

The theory argues that good human resource management practices lead to good functioning of internal organization which eventually becomes the source of creativity, innovation and successful performance of organization (Ahteela&Vanhala, 2011). Thus, the practices should be considered as a strategic issue within the learning institution. The policies, systems and practices influencing attitude, behavior and performance of employees compose the HRM practices (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2007). Porter (2008) observes that the resource-based theory has been an imperative step in human resource management since it has given a new point of view to explain a firm's success. According to the focus on resources, an institution's success is due to joint resources and capabilities which an organization owns and makes it different from its competitors.

Among such resources and capabilities are the human resources and the crucial attributes of knowledge, skill, and talent. These resources and capabilities may constitute a source of competitive advantage (Hesketh& Fleetwood, 2008). From this point of view, the HRM practices in an organization are geared towards strengthening those significant capabilities and knowledge. Secondary schools are not exceptional and this calls for resource mobilization towards improved performance.

Wright and McMahan (2001) show the relation between strategy, HRM practices and human resource capital pool. They observe that if resources are strategic for the firm, it implies that they are scarce, valuable, specific or difficult to transfer. This is possible if the organization implements HRM practices such as recruitment of essential employees,

compensating them conveniently, training them or to develop new capabilities and motivate them through incentives. Consequently, the HRM practices are likely to affect the performance.

The resource-based view of the organization gives a new perspective to human resource management. The organization creates and implements new measures in areas such as recruitment and selection, training and career development, compensation among others (Grant, 2002). An organization will usually train its employees in order to increase productivity for this reason, an organization will only train employees in those abilities and skills that are crucial to making tasks better and faster (Grant, 2002). As far as compensation is concerned, the focus is compensating individual performance and the value created by an employee. The resource-based theory has thus made it possible to mark the importance of human resources for an enterprise because it is able to create competitive advantages.

Capabilities are another key concept within resource-based theory. Resources refer to what an organization owns, capabilities refer to what the organization can do (Mullins 2005). Capabilities tend to arise over time as a firm takes actions that build on its strategic resources. They are important in part because they are about how organizations capture the potential value that resources offer. Capabilities are needed to bundle, to manage, and otherwise to exploit resources in a manner that provides maximum productivity.

Overall, the resource-based theory provides a useful basis for understanding the value that HRM adds to the performance of the organization. Human resource management (HRM) practices have been widely researched and accepted as playing an instrumental role in creating and sustaining organizational performance (Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2008). It is argued that the resource-based view of the firm (RBV) on human resource management generates sustainable competitive advantage through recruiting, developing and retaining exceptional human talent (Steinkellner, Czerny, & Lueger, 2010).

The resource-based theory is relevant to this study because the theory emphasized on the importance of developing and enhancing the resources that are distinctive for a competitive advantage (Perce & Robinson, 2007). It relates to this study in that teachers who form part of human resources should be properly recruited and selected, trained and developed, properly remunerated and work in a healthy and safe place with the proper physical infrastructure for better performance. If this is done the academic performance is expected to improve.

2.2. Universalistic Theory

The universalistic theory was postulated by Dewar and Werbel (1979) who sought for best practices in human resource management. Several researchers have contributed to the universalistic theory such as Beh and Loo (2013), Hamid (2013) and Hughes (2002). The researchers admit that there is a linear relationship in organizational performance if certain HRM practices are implemented. They argue that some HRM practices are superior to others and therefore all organizations should assume these best practices. Hamid (2013) for example refers to the universalistic theory as the 'best' practice model which is based on the assumption that there is a set of superior/best HRM practices, and that adopting them will definitely lead to superior organizational performance. If certain HRM practices are implemented in the organization, they can guarantee increases in performance.

The 'best' HRM practices are seen through improved employee attitudes and behaviors, lower levels of absenteeism and turnover, higher levels of skills and therefore higher productivity, enhanced quality and efficiency and of course increased profitability (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2008). Therefore, all organizations will benefit and experience improved organizational performance if they will be able to identify, get committed to and implement a set of best HRM practices.

The universalistic perspective maintains that firms will see performance gains by identifying and implementing best practice irrespective of the product market situation, industry or location of the firm (Pfeffer, 2001). It is up to the firm to decide what may be relevant in general terms and what can be adopted to fit its particular strategic and operational requirements. There are certain 'best' HRM practices that contribute to increased organizational performance regardless of the strategic goals of the organization (Hughes, 2002). These are recruitment and selection, socialization, job design, training, communication, participation, career development, performance management, employee reward and job security (Maina, 2012). The universalistic approach to HRM research assumes that HRM practices contribute to worker motivation (and thereby increased productivity) as well as increased efficiency (Ichniowski, Kochan, Levine, Olson, & Strauss, 2000).

Boxal (2007) observes that the universal human resource management practices among them, recruitment, training, reward management, job rotation and staff welfare and firm performance are related and supported by arguments from universalistic theory which suggests that people possess skills, knowledge and abilities through effective human resource management practices that provide economic value to firms. Therefore, increased productivity derived from human capital depends on the effectiveness of HRM practices in organizations (Storey, 2004).

Wayne, Musisca and Fleeson (2010) suggest that HRM practices that signal the organization's intentions to invest in employees (such as developmental experiences and training) produced higher levels of (influence) organizational commitment. In recent times, HRM has assumed new prominence because of continuing concerns about global competition, the internalization of technology and the productivity of labour through effective HRM practices (Bratton & Gold, 2006). Joan Marques (2015) notes that the strength of universalism is its consistency and with the moral approach, there is no question about the decision to be made what is right for one should be right for all. Managers need to change the way they manage the employment relationship in order to allow the most effective utilization of human resources.

The universalistic approach does not consider that what works well in one organization will not necessarily work well in another because it may not fit its strategy, technology or working practices. The theory is relevant to this study because each secondary school should have a set of best HRM practices; recruitment of teaching staff, training and

development, compensation practices and safety which are the independent variables for this study. The best practices if well managed will influence academic performance, which is the dependent variable.

2.3. Human Capital Theory

The Human Capital Theory was developed by Samuel and Gary (1930). It is defined as the knowledge, skills, assets, and experiences that an individual has which add value to a company (mixture of human and skill). Human capital is a way to determine economic performance in a workforce and this idea of human capital itself gave rise to human capital theory (Armstrong, 2010). However, not every employee has the same value; it depends on their knowledge, skills, and assets.

The human capital theory acknowledges the values that people can contribute to an organization and regards people as assets stressing that investment by organizations in people will generate worthwhile returns (Tan, 2014). Torrington (2008) explains that human capital theory signifies the combined intelligence and experience of staff. He specifically points out that effective HRM practices are an organization's source of competitive edge. The theory has, cross-cutting significance in HRM practices such as recruitment and selection, training and development, human resource planning among others that are meant to help organizations achieve their goals.

Armstrong (2013) observes that individuals generate, retain and use knowledge and skills to create intellectual capital. Their knowledge is enhanced by the interactions between themselves and this generates the additional knowledge possessed by an organization. Further, individuals generate, retain and use knowledge and skills to create intellectual capital. Throughout the investment of human capital, an individual acquires knowledge and skills that can easily be transferred to certain goods and services (Whitaker, Debbie, Wilson, & Laura, 2007).

Shrader (2007) notes that without investments in human capital we would be left with only hard physical labour and high levels of poverty. The human capital theory has the ability to use the knowledge skill and experience to achieve results and potential for growth. The theory is relevant to the study because it is indeed the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals that create value. This is why the focus of any organization has to be on the means of hiring, developing and rewarding. The theory contributes to the study because schools need to ensure that they have the right human resources right from recruitment if they have to produce quality results.

Each organization has to focus on the means of recruitment of the right people, training and development of the people for better results. Therefore, it informs two independent variables and suggests that when the right people with proper skills are put in place productivity is expected. When the focus is on the right means of recruiting and training the people then secondary schools can expect to produce quality grades.

2.4. Theoretical Review of Human Resource Management Practices and Performance

2.4.1. Staff Recruitment and Selection

According to Armstrong (2010), the objective of HRM resourcing strategies is to obtain the right basic material in the form of workforce with the appropriate qualities, skills, knowledge and potential for future training. Performance is based on the fact that failure to recruit and select the proper employees would result in low organizational performance. Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (2012) observe that recruitment is a key method of improving the performance of an organization. The right people should be placed in positions that fit them best (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskin, 2010).

The process of recruiting and selecting may come in four stages: defining recruitment, planning recruitment campaign, attracting candidates and selecting candidates. Effective recruitment and selection practices leads to positive increase in organizational performance, labour productivity, product quality, organizational innovations, and customer satisfaction (Ali & NurMansor 2015). Failure to properly allocate the right employees would result in low organizational performance.

Djabatey (2012) and Ekwoaba (2015) argue that proper staffing is critical for building and sustaining a competitive advantage and that recruitment and selection are essential in organizations because individuals need to be attracted on a timely basis in sufficient numbers and with appropriate qualifications. According to Armstrong (2010), the objective of HRM resourcing strategies is to obtain the right basic material in the form of workforce with the appropriate qualities, skills, knowledge and potential for future training.

The recruitment and selection process should be effective enough to ensure that the right pool of personnel is attracted (Turner, 2010). Selection is the second stage of the employment process. Selection is therefore the process of identifying the most appropriate and suitable person for a particular job. Through selection, the performance for the job is predicted. According (Yaseen, 2015) the purpose of selection is to identify applicants to fill vacant vacancies in an organization. Here applicants are supposed to meet specific requirements related to competencies of the job and applicants must fulfill this performance requirement before they would be selected.

Organizations expect to find suitable candidates who satisfy the requirements for employment. Adu-Darko (2014) observes that it is the process of obtaining applicants with the required experience, knowledge, skills, qualifications and attitude for a job vacancy. Armstrong (2010) observes that candidates can be selected using different methods in order to assess their suitability and merit for a certain role. These methods include; individual interviews, interviewing panels, selection boards, and assessment centres. Failure to recruit and select the proper employees would result in low organizational performance. Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (2012) observe that recruitment is a key method of improving the performance of an organization. The right people should be placed in positions that fit them best (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskin, 2010). Under normal circumstances, an increase in the pool of applicants will improve an employer's opportunities in selecting exactly the right people for job vacancies.

Failure to properly allocate the right employees would result in low organizational performance. Djabatey (2012) and Ekwoaba (2015) argue that proper staffing is critical for building and sustaining a competitive advantage and that recruitment and selection are essential in organizations because individuals need to be attracted on a timely basis in sufficient numbers and with appropriate qualifications.

2.4.2. Staff Training and Development

According to Armstrong (2010) training is the application of the formal process to impart knowledge and skills that are pivotal to the realization of high output levels. It is the process of increasing knowledge and skills of employees required for the efficient performance of a particular job. Training is the continuous assistance or coaching given to an employee in order to make him have current knowledge of the job content, scope and relationship within the organization (Ezeani&Oladele, 2013). Development entails the facilitation of learning that strives to broaden the employee's expertise and knowledge for future responsibilities and assignments.

Training and career development are very vital in any company or organization that aims at performance and progression. This includes decision making, thinking creatively and managing people. Training and development are so important because it helps in addressing employee weaknesses, brings improvement in worker performance, creates consistency in duty performance, ensures worker satisfaction, increased productivity and improved quality of service and products, reduces cost and reduces time used in supervision.

Training can also be used to prepare employees for increased responsibilities in their current human resource plan. Thus, it is the series of activities embarked upon by organization that leads to knowledge or skills acquisition for growing purposes. Training contributes to the well-being and performance of human capital, organization, as well as the society at large. Training leads to improvement in technical skills of employees (Manju& Suresh, 2011).

Training programs have very specific and quantifiable goals, like operating a particular piece of machinery, understanding a specific process, or performing certain procedures with great precision (Neville, 2011). All forms of training are as a means of promoting employee growth and acquiring a highly skilled work force. Organizations choose from a variety of training methods which include, orientation, lecturers, case study, role playing, computer-based training, team building exercises among others. Classroom training, lectures, computer-based learning and e-learning are all examples of formal training. Training can be done on the job or off the job (Armsrong, 2012).

Kochachathu (2011) observed that training provides specialized technique and skills to employee and also helps to rectify deficiencies in employee performance. The availability for all employees having access to training and development programs is critical in facilitating organizational growth, particularly with performance and technological improvements. Development refers to activities leading to the acquisition of new knowledge or skills for purposes of growing. Organizations provide employees with development programmes in order to enhance their capabilities (Hameed &Waheed, 2011).

Organizations need to invest in continuous employee development in order to maintain employees as well as the organization success (Khawaja & Nadeem, 2013). Rahman and Nas (2013) argue that the purpose of employee development programmes is to improve employee capabilities which lead to increased productivity for them and their team thus sustaining a competitive position for their organizations. Developmental programs, on the other hand, concentrate on broader skills that are applicable to a wider variety of situations, such as decision making, leadership skills, and goal setting. The objectives of the training should be clearly outlined, specifying what behaviors or skills will be affected and how they relate to the strategic mission of the company.

School Category	Target Population
Naitonal schools	2
Extra county	30
County	93
Sub-county	207
Private	81
Total	413

Table 2: Target Population

Source: Machakos Education County Office, 2019 (GOK, 2019)

2.5. Influence of Recruitment and Selection of Teaching Staff on Academic Performance

Regression analysis was carried out to determine the nature of the relationship between the recruitment and selection of teaching staff and the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County. A bivariate linear regression model was used to quantify the influence of recruitment and selection of teaching staff in the sampled schools on their academic performance. In this case, the mean of responses for academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County for all respondents were regressed against the mean of responses for recruitment and selection of teaching staff in these schools for all the respondents as well. The following hypothesis was formulated and tested;

- H_{01} : Recruitment and selection of teaching staff has no significant influence on the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County.

From the bivariate regression analysis conducted, three outputs were generated as shown in Table 4.32.

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.748a	0.560	0.557	0.735686		
a Predictors: (Constant), Recruitment and Selection of Teaching Staff						
ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	102.465	1	102.465	189.318	.000b
	Residual	80.644	149	0.541		
	Total	183.109	150			
a Dependent Variable: Academic Performance						
b Predictors: (Constant), Recruitment and Selection of Teaching Staff						
Coefficientsa						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.490	0.149		3.276	0.001
	Recruitment and Selection of Teaching Staff	0.659	0.048	0.748	13.759	0.000
a Dependent Variable: Academic Performance						

Table 3: Recruitment and Selection of Teaching Staff and Academic Performance

2.6. Influence of Teaching Staff Training and Development on Academic Performance

The relationship between staff training and development and academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County was also assessed by conducting a bivariate regression analysis. The mean of responses for academic performance of the sampled secondary schools were regressed against the mean of responses regarding teaching staff training and development for all the principals. A bivariate linear regression model was thus applied in establishing the influence of staff training and development on academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County. The following hypothesis was for this reason tested:

- H_{02} : Teaching staff training and development has no significant influence on the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County.

The results obtained are summarized in Table 4.33.

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.771a	0.595	0.592	0.705403		
a Predictors: (Constant), Teaching Staff Training and Development						
ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	108.968	1	108.968	218.99	.000b
	Residual	74.141	149	0.498		
	Total	183.109	150			
a Dependent Variable: Academic Performance						
b Predictors: (Constant), Teaching Staff Training and Development						
Coefficientsa						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.170	0.160		1.063	0.289
	Teaching Staff Training and Development	0.809	0.055	0.771	14.798	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance						

Table 4: Teaching Staff Training and Development and Academic Performance

2.7. Model Summary

The model summary results presented in Table 4.33 showed that the coefficient of determination associated with teaching staff training and development in the sampled schools was 0.595. These results meant that staff training and development explained 59.5% of the changes in the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County. The rest of the variation in the performance of these schools, 40.5%, were attributable to other factors not taken in to account in this study.

2.7.1. Goodness of Fit

The findings outlined in Table 4.33 also show that the model used in showing the link between staff training and development and academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County was statistically significant, that is, the model fit the data used well. This was supported by $F(1, 149) = 218.99, p = .000$. It can also be inferred from these findings that staff training and development was an adequate predictor of the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County.

2.7.2. Regression Coefficient

The results in third output in Table 4.33 demonstrated that the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County was positively and significantly affected by teaching staff training and development as illustrated by ($\beta = 0.809, t = 14.798, p = .000$). The implication of the findings was that a unit increase in staff training and development would lead to increased academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County by 0.809 units holding all other factors constant. Hence, since the p value computed was 0.000 which was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and an inference made that staff training and development significantly influenced the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County. These findings were consistent with that of Rahman et al. (2011) which revealed that teacher training and development affected students' academic performance by supporting effective teaching. The findings were also congruent with that of Tahir, Hashim and Jan (2014) which demonstrated that training and development significantly enhanced the performance and overall productivity of employees which yielded better organizational performance.

With the regression coefficient results, the following model was fitted in this case;

$$Y = 0.170 + 0.809 X_2$$

Where; Y=Academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County and X_2 =Teaching staff training and development

2.7.3. Regression Coefficient

The study further established that the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County was positively and significantly influenced by staff compensation in the schools as supported by ($\beta = 0.825, t = 16.094, p = .000$). The implication of these results was that increased staff compensation by one unit would result to enhanced academic performance of the schools under study by 0.825 units, holding all other factors constant. From the findings, the p value computed was 0.000 which was less than 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected and a conclusion made that teaching staff compensation has a significant influence on the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County.

3. Conclusions

The correlation analysis results showed that recruitment and selection of teaching staff was positively and significantly associated with the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County. This association was found to be strong as confirmed by $r = 0.748$ and $p = 0.000$. The regression analysis results ($\beta = 0.659, p = .000$) on the other hand confirmed that the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County was positively and significantly influenced by the recruitment and selection of teaching staff. These findings implied that enhanced recruitment and selection of teaching staff would translate to improved academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County and vice versa. A calculated p value of 0.000 associated with the beta coefficient of recruitment and selection of teaching staff was a confirmation that this HRM practice significantly influenced the academic performance of these schools.

The influence of teaching staff training and development on academic performance of these secondary schools was also found to be significant as demonstrated by a p value of 0.000 that was associated with the regression coefficient for staff training and development. It was therefore, deduced that higher levels of teaching staff training and development were followed by considerable improvement in academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County.

Overall, the study concluded that the HRM practices that were of interest in this study namely teaching staff recruitment and selection, teaching staff training and development, individually and in combination, significantly influenced the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County. Consequently, the study concluded that HRM practices were significant variables that influenced the academic performance of secondary schools in this county.

It is however concluded that although these practices were in place, the quality grades in most of the schools was not satisfactory. From the study it is concluded that besides teaching staff recruitment and selection, teaching staff training and development, other aspects of human resource management such as succession planning, leadership, talent management, staff involvement and work life balance may also play a significant role in the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County and should not be ignored. The findings therefore, suggest that key stakeholders should address other HRM practices to maximize their potential effect on the academic performance of secondary schools in Machakos County and elsewhere.

4. Recommendations

4.1. School Management

On recruitment and selection, the study recommends that the management of secondary schools in Machakos County should sustain their current recruitment and selection practices. They should also lay emphasis on the experience and qualification that the recruits have and also conduct thorough background checks to determine how recruits performed in their previous work stations. The management of these schools' ought to also establish concrete structures, procedures and guidelines that guarantee integrity and independence throughout the recruitment process so that the various positions in the school are filled by deserving individuals.

The study recommends that public secondary schools in the county should strictly adopt the TSC manual/recruitment policy when recruiting and selecting their teaching staff. Secondary schools in Machakos County should consider using diverse channels of advertising vacant positions and on a timely basis so as to attract a large pool of recruits from far and wide. This will go a long way in reducing emerging issues in the recruitment and selection of teachers such as nepotism and also the lack of a heterogeneous teaching force.

The study recommends that the schools' management should consider reviewing their recruitment policies to extend the probationary period for teachers so that they can adequately grasp the responsibilities and methods of discharging their mandate. This should go hand in hand with the extensive engagement of the candidates throughout the recruitment process and also greater involvement of the administration in the recruitment process.

Schools, through their ICT departments or any other relevant unit, should maintain databases of job seekers which will make future placement much easier and less costly. The study further recommends that schools' management should have in place structures or systems for cultivating a strong culture of commitment and dedication of teachers to their work so that their competencies and qualifications can translate to excellent results.

In relation to training and development of teaching staff, the study recommends that the schools' managements ought to motivate their teachers by attaching incentives into the available training and development programmes. For instance, the schools' managements should guarantee fair promotion opportunities and issue recognized certificates to those who successfully go through the available programmes. This can be used to encourage private arrangements for personal development among teachers.

The management of these schools should also develop operational policies to guide the design of their training and career development programmes to make them more inclusive, relevant and comprehensive. The study also recommends that principals and the schools' management in general should enhance their in-house training programmes by making them more diverse and also ensure that at a minimum, all their teaching staff exploit the training opportunities under these programmes.

The study calls for increased resource mobilization in terms of funding, more trainers and reference materials in order facilitate frequent training and team building sessions for teachers. The study recommends that school managements should hold periodic consultative meetings involving different stakeholders such as teachers, HODs, subject heads, examiners and students so that the training and development needs of their teaching staff can be adequately identified. This in turn will ensure that the design of available programmes for teaching staff training and development is well-informed by observed performance gaps.

The study recommends that proper scheduling of training and development sessions should be undertaken so that teachers can conveniently participate in these sessions. This measure will also ensure that more teachers get a chance to be part and parcel of available programmes. To ensure proper scheduling of these programmes, the study recommends for the maintenance of a database or records that show the staff who have or have not taken part in a given programme. The study further recommends for periodic impact assessment analyses to allow the management of schools to audit their teaching staff training and development programmes. This will enable them to pinpoint any shortcomings and take informed actions to make the design of these programmes more efficient.

5. References

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