

## **An evaluation of the effectiveness of school based reward systems in enhancing teacher performance in secondary schools in Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

The pride of every school rests in its ability, at the end of the particular academic cycle, to churn out to society students with excellent academic performance, that are all round and super motivated to pursue higher education goals or delve into careers that will contribute to the positive development of the nation. To achieve this, most schools have recognized and underscored the key role that teachers play in the overall performance hence invested heavily in mechanisms geared towards boosting their morale so as to enhance effective teacher delivery. According to Ornstein and Hunkins (1988), teachers are a source of untapped energy and insight and are capable of profoundly changing their schools. The paper therefore focuses on the effectiveness of the school based reward systems towards enhancing teacher performance in Secondary schools in Kitale County, Kenya. The objectives of the study included to identify existing school based reward systems, to assess teacher preferences in regard to school based reward systems and to identify difficulties encountered in regard to school based reward systems in their schools. The study adopted the survey research design as well as the simple random sampling technique to sample 10 schools from Kitale County, each providing 3 teachers for the study thus making a sample of 30 teachers. Descriptive statistics were used. The findings revealed a myriad of existing school based reward systems in the various schools, but most teachers preferred financial tokens to any other reward system and that the school principals were deemed the biggest obstacle to effective enjoyment of the school based reward system.

**Keywords:** evaluation, school based reward systems, teacher performance

### **Introduction**

Reward, according to Horner (2009), refer to any contingency that may deliver a consequence such as an activity, event, or any object that may be associated with an increase in the future likelihood of a defined behaviour in a similar situation. Thorndike (1898) for instance beefs up this view by reiterating the likelihood of reoccurrence of a behaviour (in similar circumstances) that has been successful, hence a reward can also be defined as a reinforcer, if its delivery increases the probability of a behaviour. Rewards therefore, according to Horner, (2009), are important both for

encouragement of appropriate behaviour and preventing the encouragement of inappropriate behaviour.

### **Statement of the problem.**

Most school managers place very heavy demands on teachers to perform, sometimes employing unpalatable measures such as threats of transfer or job loss to bully teachers towards this end. Yet, however much pressure they put teachers through, however intensive the threats, not much seems to be done and most schools continue to wallow in the miasma of academic obscurity, year in, year out. As Grafft (1993) points out, the Principals' quality of interaction with their staff provides a great amount of success, hence, Principals need to find more acceptable and orthodox measures of boosting their schools' performance. The study therefore seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of school based reward systems towards boosting teacher commitment, delivery and ultimate excellent students' performance.

### **Research questions**

To achieve the purposes of the study, the following questions were formulated: -

1. What school based reward system exists in secondary schools in Kitale county, Kenya?
2. What existing school based reward systems are most preferred by teachers in secondary schools in Kitale county, Kenya?
3. What difficulties are encountered by teachers in regard to the school based reward systems in secondary schools in Kitale county, Kenya?

### **Purpose of the study**

The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of school based reward systems towards enhancing teacher performance in secondary schools in Kitale county, Kenya.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study bears great importance to the school management bodies of secondary schools to realize the vitality of establishing sound school based reward system in their school so as to enhance effective teacher performance for realization of excellent results for their students. The study is also significant to the principals and Board of Management (BOM), to know the best way to motivate their teachers thus enhancing teacher performance.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **School based reward and motivation**

Teachers for instance don't need to be harangued to attend to their duties. Once an effective reward system is in place, it will work as a major driver to get teachers to class because they understand the inherent value at stake. The way to get things done, Kouzer and Posner (2007) for instance purppot, is by injecting enthusiasm and energy and school based rewards, in any form, go along

way in injecting enthusiasm and energy among teachers towards excellent performance. Additionally, (Marltz.com, 2012) asserts that a critical results of an employee rewards programme that can be termed as good, is itself an enhanced motivation existing among personnel and includes helping employees to make connections between the goals of the profession and those of the person. Further, a solid employee rewards programme therefore, according to Horner, (2009), strengthens and increases employee engagement as factor that converts into improved performance and better customer experience in the workplace.

In the same vein, Lindbald (2008) observes that any corporate culture that embarks on rewarding excellence motivates its employees to do their best. This is due to the fact that any employee needs the recognition and appreciation of the employer in regard to the skills he/she (employee) brings to the workplace as positive contribution on the job. Teachers for instance, according to Hoberg (1994), are successful in their professional performance in schools which are effectively managed, hence, Principals who normally double as managers as well as instructional leaders of their schools ought to provide guidance in their schools ability to articulate the vision. This will include establishing a sound, effective and efficient reward and motivation system that will, according to Lindbald (2008), acknowledge the teachers' accomplishments and demonstrates their importance to the school.

Yamoah (2013) for instance assert that employees will be driven by effective performance if their expectations of fair and just reward systems are met. However, not all rewards can elicit the expected motivational response all the time. This is because human beings are different and have different values and aspirations hence the reward systems must take these individual differences and preferences into account. Miles (2011) for instance asserts that it is doubtful that an organization could maximize the effectiveness of its employees if the compensation system is disconnected from what the organization values. Schools therefore have to be clear about the teachers' individual values and align them with the school's values in order to enable a more effective and acceptable reward system. In order to achieve the objectives of a school through leadership, Pretorius (1998) for instance points out that, the management of a school should involve each member of staff who have individual roles to play.

A motivation and a reward system that focuses on mutual respect, Lindbald (2008) for instance observes, increases employee retention, performance productivity and morale. A good reward system therefore, that is mutually agreed upon between the staff and the school principal, fulfills this need as teachers feel that their efforts are appreciated, recognized and respected. According to Horner (2009), high performing employees add value to the company, hence the need to recognize their efforts, worth and contributions through rewarding them appropriately. Highly motivated teachers for instance, who are also passionate about quality output from their schools are a huge treasure to any school and hence, everything should be done to retain them including putting in place an attractive school based reward system. There is also need, according to Horner (2009), to aim at rewarding behaviour but not people, and when rewards are provided, the clarity about the specific

behaviour that led to the reward should be made paramount. These calls for diversification in the school based reward systems so that as many teachers as possible can benefit depending on the kind of contribution they made towards the success of the particular students.

### **Kenyan education evaluation system as a tool of teacher motivation**

One major common criticism of the Kenyan education evaluation system is that it tends to overlook the affective domain of the curriculum while at the same time overly glorifying the cognitive aspects. Often times when national examination results are released by the education minister, all attention is paid on the mean scores of the students and schools with a total blackout on the efforts made in the other learning domains. This has among other things been blamed for examination irregularities as some students go out of their way to cheat so as to maximize on their grades thus producing docile and dependent-minded graduates as Ojiambo, (2009) for example, has observed. This implies that great efforts made by teachers towards positive formation of the students' attitudes, values and aspirations are largely overlooked to the disaffection, dissention and demoralization of many teachers.

Armstrong (2009) for instance reiterates that people are rewarded for the value they create hence rewards have a cardinal aim of motivating people and obtaining their commitment and engagement as well as helping in attracting and retaining class of high quality people to the organizational needs. Since people, as Du Four and Berkey (1995) point out, play the most important role in school improvement, and that only individuals change but not the school, Principals therefore obliged to do everything within their power to provide enabling conditions for teachers to feel appreciated so that the school can achieve its goals more effectively. Johnson and Scholes (2002) for instance states that effective management is possible when managers have the cognitive capacity to make sense of problems or issues in their experiences while Grobler (1998) concludes by adding that the quality of life and the standards of work provided by teachers and students is highly determined by the quality of management in their schools.

### **Teacher performance**

Teacher performance is a whole embracing concept that comprises the following indicators as expounded on by the Ministry of Education.

- i. Student academic performance – This comprises the scores in the summative Kenya National Examination Council's (KNEC) Examinations. KNEC for instance awards students in terms of grades that carry with them points for example, grade 'A' which equals 12 points, is the highest with grade 'E' as the lowest and attracting only one point. Most schools for example give awards to teachers for any student's score of grade 'B' or in some instances grade 'B-' and above in any subject while any positive improvement of above 0.1 in any subject compared to the previous mean score is also awarded in most schools. Different sums of money are appended for each grade and these amounts differ from school

- to school. Some schools also set targets for mean scores in each subject and those who beat or exceed the set targets are rewarded.
- ii. Teacher teaching methods – This comprises the teacher’s ability to instruct in class, their communication skills and classroom management capabilities. Most schools for instance award the best teacher in terms of these abilities and skills.
  - iii. Punctuality– Teacher performance incorporates their punctuality in reporting on duty. Time, is a critical factor in curriculum implementation and teachers who go to class late or are frequently absent without solid explanations waste students’ prime time for syllabi coverage and are usually frowned upon. Those teachers who are always on time therefore, are deemed effective performing teachers and are, and should be rewarded for this.
  - iv. Relationship between teachers and students – This calls for interpersonal relationships between teachers and handling students in a professionally fair, humane and understanding manner. This is crucial in the sense that it contributes to a conducive working environment of the school hence, teachers who excel at this are usually rewarded in most schools.
  - v. Commitment to work – Teacher performance includes a teacher’s commitment to work for example, marking students’ books, following up discipline cases in the class or school and properly covering the syllabus content for the particular period appropriately and on a timely basis. This, as already alluded to, is key to successful and effective curriculum implementation in the schools.
  - vi. Teacher delivery – This incorporates proper preparation of lesson plans, schemes of work and actual delivery of the content to the students in a manner they can understand and comprehend the concepts. Properly prepared teachers are a huge asset to the teaching learning process and this entails a lot of hard work, time and focus on the teacher’s part hence, it does well to reward them

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a quantitative methodology. The survey design was used to generate data that was analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviation, among others, hence quick, comprehensive and effective data analysis process. Simple Random sampling technique was adopted where in sampling of schools and teachers for the study sample.

Ten schools were randomly selected from among the schools within the County, both private and public. From each of the ten schools, three teachers were randomly selected for the interviews and answering of the questionnaires.

The study employed the use of questionnaires which were designed to provide a more in-depth information or data. Such information for example, as outlined by Orodho, (2009) included peoples’ beliefs, attitudes, values and reported behavior. The study was based on the Expectancy theory which according to Armstrong (2009), people are highly motivated when they know what they ought to do to get a reward, expect that they will be able to get the reward and expect that the reward will be worthwhile.

The theory was originally contained in the valency–instrumentality–expectancy (VIE) theory formulated by Vroom (1964), Armstrong, (2009). According to Vroom (1964), valency stands for value while instrumentality means the belief that if one thing is done, it leads to another, and expectancy is the probability of an action or effort leading to an outcome. However, Armstrong (2009), argue that, motivation is only likely achieved when a clearly perceived and usable relationship exists between performance and outcome, and whereby the outcome is seen as a means of satisfying needs. This explains why, according to Armstrong, (2009), extrinsic financial motivation which is an incentive works best only if the link that exist between effort and reward comes out clearly and the value of the reward is worth the effort.

Porter and Lawler (1968) for instance developed a model that adopts Vroom’s ideas; suggestive of the existence of two factors that determines the effort people put into their jobs. The first among efforts according to Porter and Lawler (1968), is the value given to the reward by the individuals in so far to the satisfaction of their needs for social esteem, security, autonomy, and self-actualization. Secondly, the rewards may depend on the individual effort in regard, to the expectations they have about the relationships that exist between the effort and rewards. Therefore, as Armstrong, (2009) posits, ...“the greater the value of a set of awards and the higher the probability that receiving each of these rewards depends upon effort, the greater the effort that will be expended in a given situation”. Porter and Lawler (1968), however strongly argue that mere effort is not enough; rather, effort is effective if it produces the desired performance.

## Results and discussions

To answer the first question, several responses were compiled and are presented in table 1.

**Table 1**

*School-based reward system in secondary schools*

Reward system	Frequency	Percentage
Monetary tokens	14	46.7%
Trips	7	23.3%
Get together	5	16.7%
Vouchers	3	10%
Material tokens	1	3.3%
Certificate of recognition	0	0

**Source: The researcher, 2013**

The findings in table 1 reveal that majority of schools offer monetary tokens, others organized trips to certain tourist destinations, some schools organized special lunches or dinners where the entire

staff meets at a particular hotel for a special meal together. During such moments teachers share light moments together and even set new targets for the new year's or term's performance. Some schools give out vouchers to teachers who would then buy various items from the prescribed institution either a supermarket or retail shop.

Other schools bought materials for their teachers such as utensils or furniture and gave them out to teachers as per determined performance measurement status. It is worth noting that the awards were offered on merit hence the most performing teachers had the most awards forming the grounds for stiff competition among teachers which ultimately improved the general school performance. According to Horner (2009) for instance, rewards are important tool for encouraging appropriate behavior as well as preventing the encouragement of a behavior that is not appropriate.

Most schools reported various categories of monetary gains which are listed here:

- ❖ Grade tokens – Most schools reported awarding a certain amount for student grades in each subject ranging from a score of grade B with some schools awarding grade B-. The amounts differed from school to school with some reporting as little as 100 Kenya shillings for Grade B- while the highest amount was 2000 Kenya shillings for grade 'A' Generally, according to the document reviews, the highest paying schools seemed more established and posted very high mean scores indicating that monetary tokens were one of the highly motivating factors for the excellent performance.

According to Armstrong (2009), money is outrightly a powerful motivating force due to its direct or indirect link to the satisfaction of many needs. Some of the reasons given for the preference of monetary tokens by teachers for example were the harsh economic times that made welcome any additional cent. Teachers also mentioned that they enjoyed the freedom to use the money as they acquired what they pleased from a place of their own choice. Armstrong (2009) for instance, observed that money in itself may have no intrinsic meaning to an individual but it acquires significant motivating power because of the so many intangible goals it may symbolize.

- ❖ Mean score tokens– Some respondents reported setting targets for subject mean scores. For example one school had a mean score target of grade B for each subject which if arrived at or exceeded, the teacher would be rewarded. Some schools awarded any positive improvement in the mean scores as compared to the performance in the previous years' Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC)'s examinations.
- ❖ Responsibility token – Most respondents reported that monetary tokens were awarded to teachers for holding certain responsibilities in the schools such as Heads of Departments (HOD's) and class teachers. The amounts were predetermined during staff meetings and approved, disapproved or improved upon by the boards of management (BOMs).

- ❖ Miscellaneous tokens – These tokens, according to most respondents, were put in place to ensure every teacher present on the school compound then, whether on teaching practice, contract or permanent and whether they taught a candidate class or not, will all have some token to take home with. This according to most respondents created a sense of ownership of the school results and removed any sense of a feeling of alienation among those teachers who did not handle the previous candidate class. In some schools money was given to the various departments and the members agreed on how to share the benefits out. The problem however was that some members belonged to different department hence enjoyed double benefit at the expense of others. Most respondents felt that individual monetary tokens were better than sharing at departmental level.

In regard to the second question, responses were tabulated as presented in table 2.

**Table 2**

*Teacher preferences to the Reward System*

Awards	Frequency	Percentage
Monetary tokens	14	53.8%
Trips	6	23.1%
Special lunch and dinner	2	7.7%
Voucher	4	15.4%
Material tokens	0	0
Certificates of recognition	0	0

**Source: The researcher, 2013**

The findings in table 2 reveal that teachers preferred monetary tokens to any other school based award system. In the interviews with most teachers, there was plain disgust and resistance to any attempts to reward them with predetermined vouchers or material tokens as this denied them freedom of choice and variety. Additionally, although most teachers hailed the award of certificates in recognition of their efforts and contributions, they however vehemently protested award of certificates without the accompaniment of immediate tangible value. Obviously, they preferred that the certificates cap the other award systems especially the monetary tokens rather standing alone.

A good percentage of teachers also preferred school trips while others supported special lunches or dinners. Most respondents in these two categories seemed to care more about interpersonal relationships rather than monetary benefits just as Lind bald (2008) for instance observed that many workers value the work place community and the network of professional relationships that their jobs help them build. Miller, (2008) also observes that, the outcome of recent surveys indicate a relevant increase in the number of those employees who prioritize recognition and appreciation by



their employers over monetary benefits and rewards. Lind bald (2008) therefore advises employers to strategically enhance this in their organizations to cater for such employees.

Regarding the third question responses were compiled and are presented in table 3.

**Table 3**

*Challenges encountered by teachers in regard to school based award systems*

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Weak student/unwilling students	4	20%
Lack of parents' support	5	25%
Wrangles among teachers over token sharing	2	10%
Insufficient amount allocated per grade/slot	3	15%
Delays in release of the tokens	6	30%
Lack of time to invest in extra tuition	0	0

**Source: The researcher, 2013**

The findings in table 3 reveal that delays in release of the tokens are a major challenge to the school based reward system. Most teachers felt the principals held on to the tokens until it was too late in the year thus suggested that a specific body comprising certain teachers be set up to manage the school – based reward systems' fund so as to minimize wrangles among teachers as well as delays in releasing of the funds by certain principals. Most teachers had a feeling principals spent this money on other matters so that when the money was needed for its rightful purpose, it could not be timely availed.

Other respondents complained that most parents did not support the reward systems thus crippling them financially. Most parents, according to the respondents, did not see the reason why teachers should be given extra monetary benefits besides what they earn in terms of their normal salaries and wages. Armstrong (2009), for instance observed that because individual behavior is directed towards something specific, it is important for the surrounding environment to reinforce the intensity and direction of such individual drivers. An administrator or manager therefore should provide an environment that supports motivation to thrive. They are responsible of providing employees with the opportunity to achieve both the individual and organizational goals (Armstrong, 2009).

Some teachers felt that the money allocated per grade or slot was very little. Some schools reported as little as 100 Kenya shillings for a B- grade in any subject and 500 Kenya shillings for grade A which they felt was not sufficient compensation given the time and energy they had invested in the candidates. According to Malen (1999) for instance, if schools that perform poorly are underfunded,

setting up a school based strategy will be a waste of time until additional funds and expertise are provided. Some teachers complained that however much effort they put in, students were weak or unwilling to measure up hence reported great frustration.

The American Federation of teachers (2001) for instance observed that poorly performing students may suffer because they significantly require tuition to improve. In this regard, teachers focus disproportionately on the students that are most likely to pass in order to maximize on their chances to earn benefits. Chamberlin (2002) also mentions that the best performing and probably the lowest performing students are likely to be neglected since they may not represent a quality investment of the time of the teacher.

Some teachers also felt that the reward systems were not wholly embrative or inclusive enough to reward all efforts put in by teachers. Some teachers for instance claimed to have stayed in schools much longer than the rest of the teachers guiding, counseling and helping students change their attitudes but such kind of efforts seemed neither to be recognized nor rewarded. (Holt,2001 Ramirez , 2001 and Evans 2001) for instance wonder how a system based on performance rewards characteristics such as civic responsibility and honesty, among others. According to The American Federation of teachers (2001), the performance based on reward programs may create a system which narrows the curriculum and promotes a teaching to test mentality which may restrict the students' advancement in those areas of the curriculum not tested. Further, Chamberlin et al (2002) argue that, only specific skills of outcome are measured and rewarded thus resulting in an education which is narrowed eand with an under emphasis on subjects that are percieved hard to evaluate meaning the breath of the intellectual activation in schools may be narrowed.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:-

1. Parents, Boards of Management (BOMs) and other stakeholders in schools should combine effort and establish sound school based reward systems that not only boost the morale and motivation of teachers but enhance the feeling of being appreciated and recognized for the work they do. This will go a long way to ensure the attraction, retention and motivation of highly innovative and passionate teachers in their schools.
2. An accountable and transparent body of teachers in each school should be put in place to receive and manage the funds allocated for this purpose and as soon as results are out, they can quickly compile the lists and dispense of with the matter quickly. This will help keep the principal away from the fund and the complaints that come with their alleged interference.
3. The government through Ministry of Education should not interfere with this arrangement as long as parents, BOMs, students and other stakeholders of the school (in a democratic environment) are comfortable with it.
4. Reasonable amounts should be allocated so that the tokens play their rightful role of motivating, boosting morale and ensuring teachers feel their efforts are recognized and appreciated.

5. School based reward system should not operate apart or separate from each other. There should be varieties done all together such as organizing trips which should come hand in hand with monetary tokens and award of certificates for the performance which may come in handy during interviews as proof of performance.

## CONCLUSION

School that had well established school-based reward system posted an impressive improvement in their overall performance, academic and otherwise. Teachers in such schools were largely inspired and motivated to deliver as well as having close, interpersonal relationships. Ohio Board of Regents, (1994) for instance observe that, the production of top performance may basically require compensation plans and programme of incentives that must be tailored to deliberately meet the specific needs of each employee. In order to improve and maintain organizational effectiveness and performance therefore, its important for the administration to know who their employees are and how to improve and maintain their job satisfaction through a feasible school based reward system.

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