

TEACHER REWARD CHALLENGES AND STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LUWERO DISTRICT

AUK TIMOTHY*¹, Prof. SEKIWU DENIS*² & Dr. EDORU JOHN MICHAEL*³

¹ St Mary's College Kisubi, Entebbe road, Uganda

² Kabale University, Uganda

<https://doi.org/10.37602/IJREHC.2025.6203>

ABSTRACT

Poor academic performance remains a major challenge in Luwero District, mainly attributed to a disproportionality in teacher reward systems. Thus, this study was intended to explore how teacher reward challenges, affect student academic performance in selected secondary schools in Luwero District. Using the descriptive research design, data was collected from a sample of 108 participants. The findings were that the teachers and administrators enrolled, showed that teacher reward challenges like meager payment 77.3%, rewards not on merit 63.9%, no recognition 66.0%, inadequate funding for teachers reward 85.6, poor management of teacher reward systems 76.3% and salary delay 84.5% influences student academic performance. The current teacher reward systems may indicate that these challenges continues to have a significant impact on student academic performance. Interventions targeting teacher reward systems, particularly on monetary and non-monetary reward, non-delayed salaries, no meager payment, recognition aspects, are vital.

Keywords: Challenges; teachers; reward systems; student academic performance.

1.0 OVERVIEW

Globally, teachers' reward systems in the education sector have a long history. For instance, in the United States of America in the early 1990s the country adopted a pay-for-performance strategy whereby teachers are paid basing on their performance abilities (Odden & Kelley, 2002). However, a study by Owen (2003) noted that paying teachers' salaries and wages did not guarantee student performance. In another empirical study in Asia by Kalsoom et al. (2017), it is evident that reward systems made significant contribution on teachers' and students' performance at elementary level, which disagrees with the findings of Owen (2003). More so, Yamoah (2013) argues that in battling with the desire to keep good academic performance, educators for centuries now have been exploring effective measures of rewarding teachers for better student performance, and this is notable in Ghana where financial and non-financial rewards systems are in place. The study was intended to explore how teacher reward challenges, affect student academic performance in selected secondary schools in Luwero District.

1.1 Problem Statement

Ideally, high academic achievement of students in secondary schools is critically essential in the realization of the national educational goals and objectives (Abdurrahman & Garba, 2014).

Notably, the Government of Uganda in a bid to strive for high academic performance of students in secondary schools has come up with programmes like revising the curriculum to boost student academic performance, ensuring that teachers receive their due salaries, allowances, bonuses and giving credit, praise or recognition, coupled with promotions to hardworking teachers, among others (Right to Education Project, 2012; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2016). Luwero District in partnership with the Government of Uganda's drive to ensure good academic performance in secondary schools, has endeavoured to make that sure all secondary schools are closely monitored by the District Education Officer (DEO) and other relevant organs to ensure that teachers are fairly motivated for better performance (Luwero District Local Government, 2022).

Despite the spirited efforts exerted by Luwero District to promote academic performance in secondary schools, the district's academic performance in national examinations has not yet improved. For instance, the UNEB 2020 results showed that learners' performance in UACE and UCE in Luwero District had decreased from 70% to almost 50%. This worst performance was witnessed in science-related disciplines and Mathematics. Furthermore, in 2019, the failure rate in science related subjects was at 60% while in Arts the failure rate increased from 28% to 33%. The failure rate in sciences was indicated to have doubled in the past three years. Even in Arts disciplines, the UNEB results indicated that learners' performance was also declining, although not at the same level as the sciences (UNEB, 2019; UNEB, 2020).

The level of academic performance in selected secondary schools in Luwero District raised concerns as to the adequacy and relevance of rewards systems of teachers in boosting the academic performance of students and this position would continue to occur and might even exacerbate unless mitigating measures are deployed. It was against this background that the study was carried out to explore how teacher reward challenges, affect student academic performance in selected secondary schools in Luwero District.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore how teacher reward challenges, affect student academic performance in selected secondary schools in Luwero District.

1.3 Research Question

1. How do teacher reward challenges affect student academic performance in selected secondary schools in Luwero District?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Motivational Systems Theory

The underpinning theory that guided the study was Herzberg's two-factor theory. On the review of related theories that supplement the current study the researcher reviewed Martin Ford's (1992) Motivational Systems Theory (MST). This theoretical framework focuses on the individual as the unit of analysis, but embeds the individual in the biological, social, and environmental contexts that are crucial to development. This is very vital in the sense that the current study has two individuals that it was measuring -- teacher and student -- and both exist

in a single environment and are intertwined. The teacher's demotivation results in the low performance of students and vice versa.

2.2 How teacher reward challenges, affect student academic performance

In the context of an employment relationship, a reward system is a collection of systems for allocating both material and intangible benefits (Anua, 2018). Reward is an objective term for the positive value a person places on something, a behavior, or a condition of their bodies internally. One typical form of reward is money. The majority of the time, a company will reward its employees with pay raises or larger bonuses (Asaari, Desa, & Subramaniam, 2019). The simplest and most straightforward approach to express gratitude to employees and foster a sense of fulfillment is with money.

Most times challenges usually arise when it comes to implementation of reward systems (Johnson & Szamosi, 2018). First, most education managers don't have enough time to monitor the behaviors of teachers. Therefore, it is always challenging to determine the employees that deserve the rewards. A study by Nairuba (2017) on Motivational practices and teachers 'performance in Jinja Municipality secondary schools, Jinja District, Uganda was qualitative and quantitative; and descriptive-correlation research design was used in the study. The researcher used purposive and simple random sampling techniques to select the research participants respectively from selected secondary schools. The study revealed that some of the key challenges in relation to teacher reward systems is that there are punitive features built into every reward in that when rewarding teachers, it demonstrates control over them (Nairuba, 2017). This creates an illusion that such a reward is a right expected to be gotten even in the future. It also creates a wrong impression and sometimes conflicts which is counterproductive to student performance. The study also noted that individual rewards creates jealousy and negative competition among teachers which disrupts teacher-student relations.

A study by Nankya (2006) on reward management and performance of teachers in selected private primary schools in Uganda; a case study of Masaka Municipality analyzed data using correlation co-efficient to determine the relationship between rewards and performance of teachers in private primary schools in Masaka Municipality. The findings noted that inadequate finances, poor leadership and management suffocate efforts of ensuring fair and equitable rewarding of teachers.

In the same vein, Rakiro (2013) conducted a study on effects of institutional teacher reward systems on students' performance in Kenya certificate of secondary education in Rongo District. 11 Principals, 11 deputy principals and 22 teachers in 11 secondary schools in Rongo District of Migori County participated in the study and the study noted that inadequate finances are a great challenge to sufficiently rewarding of teachers in Kenya and as a result many teachers receive very low salaries, allowances and hardly any allowances. The study further adds that there are hardly any clear-cut open systems that ensure that teachers' efforts are recognized and applauded accordingly

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design because it helps in describing the characteristics of a population or phenomenon under investigation. The study employed both qualitative and

quantitative methods for data collection and analysis supporting triangulations as required in modern scientific research. Among the selected secondary schools in the Luwero District, 97 teachers and 11 school administrators were sample which sums up to 108 sample size chosen for the study. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were generated using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 21 and presented in form of tables. The qualitative data that was collected through interviews was analysed using thematic analysis manually transcribed the data collected based on narrations and citations made by the respondents' views and conclusions made from the subjective decisions of the researcher basing on the purpose of the study.

3.1 Data findings

Demographic characteristics of respondents

The gender of the respondents was crucial for the study. Table 1 below presents the statistical values of the various respondents who participated in the study.

Table 4.1: Showing Demographic response of the respondents

Gender	Teachers	Percent	Administrators	Percent
Male	42	43.3	6	54.5
Female	55	56.7	5	45.5
Total	97	100.0	11	100

Source: Field data (2022)

Evidence from Table 4.1 above shows that 43.3% (n=42) of the respondents were male and 56.7% (n=55) were female. This simply indicates that the majority of the respondents were female with a great difference compared to the males who participated in the study. On the side of the administrators, statistics showed that there was a little difference by gender; male 54.5% and female 45.5% respectively. This was important to the study to know the bigger group opinion by sex that participated in the study and their knowledge about the study being investigated as well as gender balance in the employment opportunities and positions in schools by both genders.

The age brackets of the respondents were also ascertained. Table 4.3 below shows the data findings.

Table 4.2: Showing Age Bracket of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-29 years	23	23.7
30-39 years	27	27.8
40-49 years	38	39.2
50 years +	9	9.3
Total	97	100.0

Source: Field data (2022)

Table 4.2 above indicates the age brackets of the respondents of whom 23.7% (n=23) were between the age of 20-29 years; 27.8% (n=27) were in the range of 30-39 years; 39.2% (n=38) were between 40-49 years; 9.3% (n=9) were in the range of 50 years and above. In regard to the precision of age, the participants in the study were mature enough to understand the study topic and cooperated accordingly with their answers based on their understanding and experience.

How teacher reward challenges affect student academic performance

The teacher respondents were asked a series of questions (as shown in table 4.3). This section aimed at exploring how teacher reward challenges affect student academic performance. Teachers were asked to record their responses to each of the questions in the questionnaire using the scale of 1= Agree, 2 = Neutral, and 3 = Disagree. The summery of their ratings and results is shown in the tables below and a summary of the six questions on challenges of teacher reward systems is shown below:

- A1: Mega payment
- A2: Rewards not on merit
- A3: No recognition
- A4: Inadequate funding for teachers’ reward
- A5: Poor management of teachers’ reward system
- A6: Salary delay

Table 4.3 shows the ratings on how teacher reward challenges affect student academic performance

Rating	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Total	%
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
A1	75	77.3	6	6.2	16	16.5	97	100
A2	62	63.9	14	14.4	21	21.6	97	100
A3	64	66.0	19	19.6	14	14.4	97	100
A4	83	85.6	8	8.2	6	6.2	97	100
A5	74	76.3	8	8.2	15	15.5	97	100
A6	82	84.5	5	5.2	10	10.3	97	100

Source: Field data (2022)

Table 4.3 above showed that the average percentage of the teachers 75.6% agreed that meager payment, rewards not on merit, no recognition, inadequate funding for teachers reward, poor management of teacher reward systems and salary delay are teacher reward challenges that influence student academic performance as opposed to the average percentage of 14.1% of the teachers that disagreed to the above statements. With this great differences in the level of agreement and disagreement, it may indicate that meager payment, rewards not on merit, no recognition, inadequate funding for teachers reward, poor management of teacher reward

systems and salary delay has a great significant impact on student academic performance and suggest a great positive relationship between teacher reward challenges and student academic performance.

Among the school administrators interviewed they affirmed that challenges in relation to teacher reward systems are that teachers always want more money and to be recognised that they are the one who have done it. And when not recognised some teachers can even stop teaching or even quit the job in the school. Some of the unique statements are as follows:

There is the issue of teachers not having their salaries on time and this makes some teachers to look for side jobs and have many excuses for not teaching... [Admin 1]

From my school, I have observed that teachers begin to dodge classes and get many schools to get more money and this makes it difficult to retain them... [Admin 2]

Teachers seek for extra pay for extra coaching in order to have time to cover the syllabus and if they are not given, they go their way... [Admin 3]

One of the issues that affect my school is the issue of every teacher wanting to be recognised and this brings confusion and I stopped rewarding them... [Admin 5]

Reward is not an entitlement I chose to reward when I want... [Admin 6]

From the above assertions, it can be deduced that the study findings are almost the same as the quantitative data findings. The major recurring themes are no rewards for teachers, delay in teachers' salaries, teachers not being happy with their job, teachers looking for recognition and teachers having a lot of excuses for not teaching. These are some of the signs of challenges that exist in reward systems and hence affecting student academic performance. Captioning Interview 6, Reward is not an entitlement I chose to reward when I want... This is already enough evidence that some school administrators do not treat teachers well. Whilst everyone seeks to be satisfied at job but with such a demoralising statement it automatically implies that some administrators overlook reward systems. Little wonder that this has perpetuated poor academic performance in some schools in Luwero District.

4.0 DISCUSSION

The study showed that 75.6% of teachers on average enrolled in the study agreed that meager payment, rewards not on merit, no recognition, inadequate funding for teachers reward, poor management of teacher reward systems and salary delay are teacher reward challenges that influence student academic performance as opposed to the average percentage of 14.1% of the teachers that disagreed to the above statements. With this great differences in the level of agreement and disagreement, it may indicate that meager payment, rewards not on merit, no recognition, inadequate funding for teachers reward, poor management of teacher reward systems and salary delay has a great significant impact on student academic performance and suggest a great positive relationship between teacher reward challenges and student academic performance. According to Johnson & Szamosi, (2018) they affirmed that most times challenges usually arise when it comes to implementation of reward systems because most

education managers have no enough time to monitor the behaviors of teachers. Therefore, it is always challenging to determine the employees that deserve the rewards.

The result of this study is in contrast with the findings of Johnson and Szamosi (2018) because of the confusion in not knowing how to reward employees out of no time to monitor their performance. If a worker has worked, he/she deserves to be motivated and if all has done so then why not motivate all of them accordingly instead of getting stuck with who should be motivated or not. This might be the reason why Luwero District is failing to reconcile properly with the understanding that teacher reward systems can tantamount to poor or good student academic performance and the relationship has been proven by this study. Therefore, reward systems should be satisfactory to promote performance.

On a confirmatory note, a study by Nankya (2006) on reward management and performance of teachers in selected private primary schools in Uganda; a case study of Masaka Municipality confirmed that inadequate finances, poor leadership and management suffocate efforts of ensuring fair and equitable rewarding of teachers.

In the same way this study also has the similar findings. The researcher deduced that such a situation only calls for amendment in the management process and the existing reward systems so as to curtail this appalling situation of poor academic performance and academic decline as stated in the problem statement that underpinned this study. In the same vein, Rakiro (2013) study on the effects of institutional teacher reward systems on students' performance in Kenya certificate of secondary education in Rongo District and noted that inadequate finances are a great challenge to sufficient rewarding of teachers in Kenya and as a result many teachers receive very low salaries, allowances and hardly any allowances. The study further added that there are hardly any clear-cut reward systems that ensure that teachers' efforts are recognized and applauded accordingly.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to explore how teacher reward challenges affect student academic performance. The study concludes that teachers reward challenges such as meager payment, no rewards, hardly or no recognition, inadequate funding for teacher's reward systems and delayed salaries influences students' academic performance to a larger extent.

5.1 Recommendation

The study recommends that teacher reward challenges such as meager payment, no rewards, hardly or no recognition, inadequate funding for teachers should be addressed with urgency in order to improve on students' academic performance in Luwero District.

REFERENCES

Abdurrahman, M. and Garba, I. M. (2014). The impact of motivation on students' academic achievement in Kebbi State Junior Secondary School Mathematics. *International Journal of Advance Research*, IJOAR.org, 2(12), 1-15, <http://www.Ijoar.org>

- Anua, N. A. (2018). The relationship between the reward systems and the job performances among support staff at Land and Survey Department Kota Samarahan.
- Asaari, M. H. A. H., Desa, N. M., & Subramaniam, L. (2019). Influence of salary, promotion, and recognition toward work motivation among government trade agency employees. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 14(4), 48-59
- Ford, M. (1992). *Motivating humans: Goals, emotions, and personal agency beliefs*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Johnson, P., & Szamosi, L. T. (2018). HRM in changing organizational contexts. In *Human resource management* (pp. 27-48). Routledge.
- Kalsoom, T., Akhter, M., Mujahid, A. H., Saeed, A., Kavsar, M. (2017). Teachers' perception regarding effect of reward system on teacher's performance at elementary level. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 39 (2), 17-118.
- Luwero District Local Government (2022) Education Overview, <https://luwero.go.ug/Statistics?page=1>
- Malin, N. (2020). Public services, the UK economy and the Brexit debate. In *De-Professionalism and Austerity* (pp. 27-50). Policy Press.
- Ministry of Education and Sports (2016). *Education and sports sector strategic plan 2017/18 – 2019/20*. MoES, Kampala
- Nairuba, J. (2017). *Motivational practices and teacher performance in Jinja municipality secondary schools, Jinja District in Uganda*. A dissertation submitted to Bugema University in partial fulfillment for award of a Masters in Educational Management.
- Nankya. VKizito. K (2006) *Reward management and performance of teachers in selected private primary schools in Uganda-a case study of Masaka municipality*, UMI.
- Odden, A and Kelley, C (2002) *Paying Teachers for What They Know and Do: New and Smarter Compensation Strategies to Improve Schools*, 2nd Edition, Corwin Press, and California.
- Owen H.B (2003) *Performance-Based Rewards for Teachers: A Literature Review, For Distribution at the 3rd Workshop of Participating Countries on OECD's Activity Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*, Athens, Greece
- Rakiro L.A (2013) *Effects of institutional teacher reward systems on students' Performance in Kenya certificate of secondary education in Rongo district, Kenya*, University of Nairobi
- Right to Education Project (2012). *The right to education Country Fact Sheet; Uganda: saving the future generation*. www.right-to-education.org/resourceattachments
- UNEB (2019) *UCE and UACE Examination Results; Overview*

UNEB (2020) UCE and UACE Examination Results; Overview

Yamoah, E. E. (2013). Exploratory study on rewards and job performance of teachers of public schools in Ghana. *Public policy and Administration Research* 3(7), 12-18, www.iiste.org.