

Head teacher's appraisal competence and teacher performance in private secondary schools in Busiro County, Wakiso District, Uganda

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Abstract

Teacher appraisal has also become widely recognized as a key process by which school leadership influences the quality of instruction and professional responsibility. This paper has explored the connection between teacher performance and the appraisal competence of the head teachers in the private secondary schools in the Busiro County, Wakiso District, Uganda. The cross-sectional mixed-methods design was used in gathering data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 198 teachers, and semi-structured interviews conducted with eight head teachers. The quantitative data were analysed using simple linear regression while the qualitative data analysis was done through thematic analysis. The data showed that the overall teacher appraisal competence was moderately rated ($M = 3.399$, $SD = 0.706$), with highest appraisal rating in discipline management among students ($M = 4.060$) and lowest rating in curriculum compliance appraisal ($M = 2.904$). Regression analysis indicated that there is statistically significant positive correlation between head teacher appraisal competence and teacher performance ($r = .586$, $R^2 = .344$, $F = 102.656$, $p = .001$, $B = .580$). This null hypothesis was thus rejected. These results confirm the fact that properly designed and frequent systems of appraisal have a direct positive impact on teacher performance in the private schools. The research suggests that the head teachers should adopt open-ended, development-focused appraisal systems, especially focusing on monitoring curriculum compliance and adopting peer appraisal models to facilitate professional growth.

Keywords: Teacher performance, The head teacher appraisal competence, Instructional supervision, Uganda, Private secondary schools

Introduction

In any school system, the performance of teachers is commonly considered to be the most proximate factor in determining the outcome of learning. Irrespective of physical infrastructure, physical material resources, the quality of instruction provided in the classroom will ultimately determine whether students will be able to learn, acquire competencies, and achieve the expectations of the curricula. In Uganda, and in much of Sub-Saharan Africa, the question of deteriorating teacher performance has led to a renewed interest in school leadership and supervision as a source of instructional quality maintenance (Mugizi & Dafiewhare, 2019; Serunjogi & Samanya, 2023).

Performance appraisal plays a very important role as one of the supervisory functions open to head teachers. An appraisal is not just an administrative practice, but it is a formal professional conversation between a head teacher and a teacher which has at least three interconnected functions. First, it offers a structured way of assessing teacher performance in relation to set performance standards. Second, it provides a systematic chance of establishing developmental requirements and giving specific feedback. Third, it conveys the expectations of the institution and keeps the teachers responsible (Kirui,

Ng'eno, and Tabot, 2022; Mayse, 2019; Zhaohui and Anning, 2020).

Although such potential has been recognised, the actual application of appraisal systems by the Ugandan secondary schools in the private sector has been under-researched. A large portion of the existing empirical research is centred on government institutions, and in these cases, the structural support of appraisal is to some extent provided by government inspection procedures and centralised systems of performance management. In comparison, private schools have much more alternative accountability models: they rely on school fees to maintain their operations, hire mostly contractual employees, and operate to a large extent without the involvement of government education authorities (Byamugisha, 2023; Manacc, 2016). Here, the quality of appraisal is virtually dependent on the competence, commitment and the time of the individual head teacher.

The district education reports of Busiro County, Wakiso District, have recorded chronic issues in teacher performance, including absenteeism, syllabus coverage, and less regular lesson preparation (Wakiso District Education Department, 2019/2020). The role and the contribution of appraisal practices by the head teachers to these

performance outcomes have not been empirically determined. That gap is directly dealt with in this study.

Research Objective

The main purpose of this study is to determine how the use of teacher appraisal systems by head teachers relates with the performance of teachers in private secondary schools in the Busiro County, Wakiso District, Uganda.

Research Question

How do the practices of teacher appraisal systems by head teachers relate to teacher performance in private secondary schools in Busiro County, Wakiso District, Uganda?

Hypothesis

H₀₁ (Null): The implementation of teacher appraisal systems by head teachers has no significant relationship with teachers' performance among private secondary schools in Busiro County, Wakiso District.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded on the theory of Supervisory Options for Instructional Leaders (SOIL), which was created by Fritz and Miller (2003). SOIL framework was created specifically to address educational supervisors and it provides a dynamic, developmental framework of adjusting the supervisory strategies to the professional maturity level of a particular teacher. The framework describes three levels of supervision structured, moderately structured and relatively unstructured, which need to be guided by different degrees of directive instructions and interaction.

This clinical model is especially applicable to the appraisal in the framework of the structured level of supervision. It includes planning conference, planned classroom observation, data collection, data analysis, supervisory conferencing and post conference reflection. The process resembles the appraisal cycle in significant aspects: each is geared towards producing evidence about teacher practice, disseminating that evidence to the teacher, and putting it to use to establish improvement targets. The focus on the SOIL framework of super intensity in relation to teacher need offers a reason as to why appraisal systems should not be homogenous. A teacher who has been performing well over a long period of time would need a different conversation about appraisal compared to a teacher who has just been appointed and is still learning how to control the classroom. The framework also recognizes the risk and reward dynamics of the supervisory relationships (Fritz and Miller, 2003; Nwosu, 2021). In the case of head teachers, doing appraisals has a reputational risk: they are indirectly responsible for teacher performance in their schools. In the case of teachers, appraisals are associated with the risk of exposing weaknesses. Competence in appraisals hence refers not merely to technical competence in appraisal, but

to relational competence as well, as the ability to package feedback in a manner that encourages growth, and not defensiveness or withdrawal.

Empirical Review Teacher Appraisal Competence and Teacher Performance.

There exists a significant amount of literature that supports the connection between teacher assessment systems and instructing performance. Kirui et al. (2022) conducted a study in Kenya on how teacher performance appraisal affects the motivation of staff and student achievement in the public secondary schools as part of the Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD) program. Their results showed that properly administered appraisals had a positive effect on the professional knowledge of the teachers and consequently on the academic performance of the students. One of the findings was that the quality and frequency of appraisal feedback and not the frequency of the feedback itself determined whether appraisal would be translated into better practice.

Zhaohui and Anning (2020) studied appraisal competence in Chinese university instructors and discovered that the appraisal systems focused on professional development, research activity, and conflict resolution had the positive results on the quality of instruction. The fact that they concluded that appraisal is best used as a developmental and not punitive process is quite congruent with the line of argument that is presented in the current study.

Mahulae, Lumbanraja, and Siahaan (2020) revealed that the competence of educators such as the appraisal competence influenced teacher and student performance in Harapan Mandiri College in Indonesia. In a similar study, Acquah (2021) in the United States discovered that performance appraisals in learning institutions were highly linked with better organisational performance, staff development and career advancement, especially when the appraisal practices were systematic and transparent.

The quality of feedback in the appraisal systems is highly established. Yee and Chen (2020) showed that performance appraisal feedback is essential to the motivation of employees and to their enhanced performance, an idea that Odhiambo (2020) supported by stating that effective performance management practices, such as meaningful feedback and reward structure, play a significant role in employee productivity.

Shuriye and Wambua (2020) gave this consensus some clarification, noting that the results of feedback differ based on its method and situation of presentation and emphasizing that the appraisal systems should be specific to the institutional and cultural context.

Another aspect of appraisal that has attracted academic interest is goal-setting. Mayse (2019) noted that effective appraisal is based on clear and mutually agreed performance

objectives that the teacher and the head teacher will use as a reference point in making future judgments about performance. In the absence of explicit goal-setting, appraisal is likely to be a retroactive evaluation as opposed to a prospective developmental exercise.

In Nigeria, Ojokuku (2015) found that performance appraisal systems significantly affected the academic motivation and performance of university employees, and higher-quality, higher-implementation-rate systems yielded greater and more lasting impacts. Although the study by Ojokuku was carried out in a higher education setting, the study implications concerning the appraisal of secondary schools are essentially similar.

It is observed that, in the Ugandan context, specifically, the appraisal system is used in most of the private schools, but it is often minimized to an annual ritual instead of being a continuous developmental process (Byamugisha, 2023). This decrease in the rate and quality of appraisal is further reinforced by a general lack of specific training on how head teachers can conduct objective, supportive and growth-focused appraisals. These observations generate the gap in the empirical evidence that the current study seeks to fill.

Gaps in the Literature

The teacher appraisal literature has been voluminous but has focused too heavily on both the public school and higher education settings, and also the secondary school sector in Uganda in the private sector has not been studied in depth. The majority of the existing research is dedicated to policy frameworks or theoretical examinations instead of practical execution of appraisal and its quantifiable outcomes on teacher performance (Nabunya et al., 2021), Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020). A significant lack of geographically specific studies that investigate the functioning of appraisal competence in peri-urban and semi-rural contexts, such as Busiro County, where private schools are confronted with specific issues, such as limited opportunities to develop professionally, teachers working on a contractual basis, and the lack of external regulation, is also evident. This paper fills these gaps by concentrating on the application and the impact of teacher appraisal competence in private secondary schools in Busiro County.

Methodology

Research Design

This research adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods in the framework of a mixed-method research. The cross-sectional design was suitable since the study aimed at evaluating the current level of the appraisal competence of head teachers and how it correlates with the teacher performance at a specific time frame, at various schools. The combined methods technique enabled quantitative data to determine the statistical correlation between variables, and

qualitative data collected in the form of interviews gave depth and supportive evidence to context.

Population, Study Setting, and Sampling

The research was carried on in private secondary schools of Busiro County, Wakiso District and the Central Region of Uganda. The Busiro County was chosen due to the high density of the private secondary schools in the county and has been reported to have issues with teacher performance, such as absenteeism, inadequate lesson planning, and incompleteness of syllabus coverage (Wakiso District Education Department, 2019/2020).

All the teachers in the private secondary schools in the Busiro County were included as the target population. A sample of 219 teachers was calculated by using the sampling formula developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). In each of the schools, simple random sampling was used to sample out individual teacher respondents. Also, ten head teachers were chosen purposively to have qualitative interviews. Out of the total 219 questionnaires administered, 198 were returned and usable as the response rate is 90.4. Eight out of ten planned interviews on the head teachers were carried out resulting in an interview response rate of 80.0.

Instrumentation

The structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide were used to gather data. The questionnaire was structured in three parts, namely: Section A gathered demographic details of the respondents; Section B measured the Head teachers appraisal competence on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree); and Section C was used to measure the performance of teachers on indicators such as: timeliness of reporting, syllabus completion, creative delivery, and lesson planning. Expert review was done to determine content validity. The instrument items were rated by three experts in the subject and 63 out of 75 items were found to be relevant giving a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.84 compared to a recommended Content Validity Index of 0.70 (Amin, 2005). Cronbachs alpha analysis was used to determine instrument reliability and gave a coefficient of 0.812, which is high internal consistency.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were typed in and analysed with the help of SPSS Version 22. All the appraisal competence items were calculated to obtain descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations. Simple linear regression was then used to evaluate the predictive correlation between teacher appraisal competence (independent variable) and teacher performance (dependent variable) at a level of $\alpha = 0.05$. The data on the qualitative interviews was analysed through thematic analysis and the responses were coded and grouped in recurring patterns that supported and framed the quantitative outcomes.

Results

The demographic profile of the respondents will be presented in this section.

The number of respondents who were male was 117 (59.1) out of the 198, and 81 (40.9) were female. Most of the respondents, 108 (54.5) were holders of a Bachelor degree, 75 (37.9) were holders of diploma and 15 (7.6) were holders of postgraduate diploma. Majority of the respondents (42.4%), were within the age category of 30-39 years, then 20-29 years (17.7%), and above 50 years (14.6%). Regarding teaching experience, 57 respondents (28.8%) had one to

three years of teaching experience, 89 (44.9%) years between three and six years and 52 (26.3%) had over six years. This profile shows that the information was gathered on educationally qualified and professionally experienced teachers and this gives credibility to the findings reported.

Teacher Appraisal Competence Descriptive Analysis.

The results of descriptive statistics of the six items used to assess teacher appraisal competence in the sampled schools are identified in Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Appraisal Competence (n = 198)

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
The head teachers have clearly followed teacher appraisal policies	3.833	1.169	High
Head teachers are always appraised on the students' performance	3.085	1.630	Moderately High
Head teachers timely appraise teachers on their time of work	3.151	1.626	Moderately High
There is timely head teacher appraisal of teachers on work efficiency	3.358	1.540	Moderately High
The teachers are always appraised on compliance to the curriculum	2.904	1.623	Moderately High
There is teacher appraisal on students' discipline management	4.060	1.409	High
Overall Mean / SD	3.399	0.706	Moderately High

Note. Interpretation scale: 1.00–2.49 = Low; 2.50–3.49 = Moderately High; 3.50–5.00 = High.

Source: Field Data, 2025

The total average of 3.399 (SD = 0.706) suggests that the teacher appraisal competence in such schools is mostly moderately high. The best-rated was appraisal on student discipline management (M = 4.060, SD = 1.409), which was rated as high, indicating that the head teachers emphasize a lot on the discipline management of learners during their appraisal process. The second most rated was compliance to appraisal policies (M = 3.833, SD = 1.169), which is also high, showing that the adherence to the appraisal structures is relatively high.

Conversely, the lowest mean score (M = 2.904, SD = 1.623) was observed with the appraisal of the compliance of teachers with the curriculum, which can be perceived as moderately high with a tendency to approach the lower limit of that range. The results indicate a significant gap, that is, the dimension of teacher appraisal that is most closely related to instructional effectiveness, i.e. the extent to which teachers are covering the prescribed syllabus, is not as often addressed as discipline-related or procedurally oriented appraisal practices.

The other items, such as appraisal on academic performance of the students (M = 3.085), timeliness of appraisal (M =

3.151), and work efficiency appraisal (M = 3.358) were rated moderately high which implies that these appraisal functions are still present in the schools, but are performed with neither high rigour nor laxity.

These trends were supported by the qualitative data.

Head Teacher 07 said: Timely appraisal on the efficiency of teachers is practiced; this is carried out by collecting information needed to determine teacher effectiveness.

Head Teacher 08 responded: We do the student performance appraisals on teachers and this is largely the foundation of decision-making in our school.

These statements support the fact that appraisal systems are present in these schools but are motivated more by the accountability and discipline factors rather than the developmental or curriculum-oriented factors.

Regression Analysis: The Effect of the Appraisal Competence on Teacher Performance.

Table 2 provides the outcomes of the simple linear regression test in the analysis of the relationship between teacher performance and appraisal competence of the head teacher.

Table 2: Simple Linear Regression, Head Teacher Appraisal Competence and Teachers' Performance

	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	F	Sig.	B	Std. Error
Model	.586	.344	.340	102.656	.000		
Constant					.000	1.243	.199
Appraisal Comp.					.000	.580	.057

Note. Dependent variable: Teacher Performance. Predictor: Teacher Appraisal Competence.

Source: Field Data, 2025.

The regression analysis provided a r value of .586 and this implies that .344 percent of the variance in teacher

performance is attributed to teacher appraisal competence (R² = .344, Adjusted R² = .340). The outcome of the ANOVA

test supported the overall significance of the model ($F = 102.656, p = .000$). The unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = .580, SE = .057, b = .586, t = 10.132, p < .001$) means that teacher performance will increase by 0.580 units when teacher appraisal competence score is incremented by a unit. The constant term ($B = 1.243, SE = .199, t = 6.252, p = .001$) was also significant.

Since the p-value of 0.000 is far lower than 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis (H_0) which states that there is no significant correlation between the implementation of teacher appraisal systems and teacher performance by head teachers is rejected.

Discussion

The statistically significant positive correlation between teacher performance and teacher appraisal competence ($r = .586, p < .001$) is in line with the general agreement in the global research on school leadership and instructional quality. As this relationship explains 34.4% of teacher performance variance, the fact that the appraisal activity of head teachers is a practical, rather than a nominal, lever in enhancing instruction outcomes validates the relationship.

These findings are consistent with the results of Kirui et al. (2022) in Kenyan public secondary schools, who showed that structured and feedback-intensive appraisal systems within the framework of TPAD had a positive effect on the professional knowledge of teachers and student performance. This process works in the same way in the Ugandan context of the private school, whereby when the head teachers are able to systematically review the performance of the teachers, communicate expectations and give feedback on development, the teachers get both the information and the motivation to change their practice.

The discovery is also closer to Zhaohui and Anning (2020), who stated that professional growth-focused appraisal systems have a more significant impact on instructional quality in comparison to accountability and compliance-focused ones. The difference is directly applicable to the descriptive results of the present study. The observation that the appraisal of curriculum compliance had the lowest score ($M = 2.904$) and the highest score on the appraisal of discipline management ($M = 4.060$) indicates that the head teachers in the Busiro County private schools are making more emphasis on behavioural and disciplinary aspects of appraisal than the curriculum-based aspects and the pedagogical developmental aspects that have the most direct relationships with the instructional performance.

Acquah (2021) established that clear and standardised appraisal procedures were connected with better teacher satisfaction, organisational performance, and career growth in American schools. The trend is repeated in this case: schools with well-defined appraisal policies ($M = 3.833$) and those ones where appraisals are organized in the most timely way ($M = 3.151$) seem to be in a better position to maintain teacher accountability and professional development. Nonetheless, the fact that the average but not high scores were obtained on multiple appraisal dimensions indicate that in even those schools where appraisal systems are established formally, they are not fully implemented,

they are not consistent, or they are not focused enough on instructional development.

The study by Ojokuku (2015) on the appraisal systems in Nigerian universities supports this argument. He established that the rigour, fairness, and regularity of application of an appraisal system rather than its simple existence determined whether appraisal would translate into better academic performance. The fact that appraisal in Ugandan private schools has tend to become an annual ritual as opposed to a development process is especially informative as such: it is specifically the type of thin, compliance-based appraisal that the quantitative data indicate has become the norm in the study schools.

The qualitative results provide a valuable touch to this image. The fact that Head teachers have adopted student performance appraisals in the decision-making process (Head Teacher 08) is an element of indirect appraisal where teachers are expected to be accountable to their students' outcomes but not necessarily given systematic developmental assistance as well as formative feedback on their teaching practice. Such a strategy can also have certain accountability impacts but is unlikely to lead to the type of sustained instructional change that Yee and Chen (2020) and Mayse (2019) relate to the existence of high-quality appraisal systems.

The focus of the SOIL framework on supervisory approach modification to the level of teacher development is also relevant. In Busiro County, there is a workforce that is relatively inexperienced and is mostly contractual in secondary schools that are privately owned. The teachers who have little experience in their professional field need to be under the structured and formative appraisal where areas of improvement are pointed out and concrete instructions are given. The moderately high scores on timeliness and work efficiency appraisal are indicative that head teachers are involved in the appraisal process, whereas the rather low score on curriculum compliance monitoring shows that the most instructionally critical aspect of the appraisal cycle is not given enough attention.

Conclusion

This research aimed at evaluating the correlation between teacher performance and the competence of head teachers in their appraisal in the Busiro County, Wakiso District, Uganda in private secondary schools. The findings reveal the existence of a clear, statistically significant positive relationship ($r = .586, R^2 = .344, p < .001$) which indicates that head teachers who adopt structured, regular and growth-oriented appraisal systems are linked with high levels of teacher performance in their schools.

The dimensions that are currently operating most effectively in the study schools are appraisal on the management of discipline and the compliance with appraisal policy among the students. Yet, the dimension that is most clearly concerned with the quality of instruction is curriculum compliance appraisal, the least systematically applied one. Such a gap is a challenge and an opportunity: by filling it, one can expect significant improvements in the performance of

teachers without the need of additional resources, simply a redirection of the current appraisal focuss and effort.

The research also finds that the appraisal competence levels of the head teachers in this regard is described as moderately high, which is good enough to bring about a significant change in performance but not enough to bring about the sustained, developmental appraisal culture being most effective in the literature. Training of head teachers on appraisal method, quality of feedback and goal setting is thus among the priorities of enhancing teaching and learning in such schools.

Recommendations

For Head Teachers

The head teachers should create systematic appraisal cycles, which cover all the aspects of teacher practice, specifically the coverage of the curriculum and instructional planning. The annual reviews should not be the only appraisals, termly or half-termly appraisal meetings would ensure that the teachers receive their performance feedback within a time frame that would facilitate correction. Another supplementary monitoring strategy that should be used by the head teachers involves regular review of the exercise books and homework records of learners to provide evidence-based feedback to individual teachers regarding their pace and quality of instruction delivery.

Head teacher-led appraisal should be accompanied with peer appraisal and mentorship models. The strategies create a culture of collegial responsibility and collective professional inquiry and spreads the appraisal role in a manner that lessens over-dependence on the head teacher as the only evaluator and enhance the quality and amount of instructional feedback that teachers are able to receive.

School Directors and Proprietors.

School directors are advised to make sure that the head teachers receive proper support in carrying out their duties of appraisal. This involves time-ring-fencing appraisal activities within the school year, easing the administrative loads that conflict with supervisory tasks and availing appraisal training and career development. The appraisal structures must be integrated into school policy manuals and made accessible to all teaching staffs so that there is transparency and understanding of expectations of performance.

Ministry of Education and Sports.

The Ministry of Education and Sports must develop and implement policy directives that would require structured appraisal systems in the private secondary schools that would set minimum standards regarding the frequency of appraisal, documentation, and feedback given. In addition to this regulatory role, the Ministry must contribute to capacity-building programmes that enable head teachers to have the technical and interpersonal competencies essential to do objective, developmental, and constructive appraisals. These programmes ought to be incorporated in the pre-service and in-service training of school leaders.

Areas for Further Research

The researchers recommend longitudinal designs in future research which can monitor the variations in teacher performance across the multiple appraisals and give more causal conclusions about the long-term consequences of appraisal competence on instructional performance. Comparative research on the appraisal practices and the impacts of the same between the public and the private schools in Uganda would also be a useful source of knowledge to the development of evidence-based policies.

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