Contribution of Head Teachers' Target Setting towards Learners' Academic Performance in Kenyan Public Primary Schools

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Abstract
Headteachers are expected to undertake various school management activities such as setting different targets related to internal exams, different subjects, and KCPE in the quest for improving learners' academic performance. This particular study examined the contribution of head teachers' target setting toward learners' academic performance in Kenyan public primary schools. The article is an extract study of a study conducted in Makueni County of Kenya which used a descriptive survey design and a target population of 714 public primary schools in Makueni County. The study used a sample size of 74 head teachers, 428 teachers, and 7 quality assurance officers. The researcher collected quantitative data through questionnaires which were administered to the selected head teachers and teachers while qualitative data was collected through interviewing the quality assurance officers. The study also found that the set targets were specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound. The Chi-Square test results confirmed that the head teacher's target-setting practices had a significant influence on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Makueni County ($\chi2=$ 114.835, p< 0.05). The study concluded that the active involvement of head teachers in continuous performance analysis allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the student's performance and areas for learners' academic improvement. The study recommended that head teachers should embrace technology such as phones to be used to ensure the engagement of parents and pupils in target settings using messages, calls, and WhatsApp.

1.   Introduction

The education systems across the world are dynamic necessitating school heads to remain knowledgeable on the desired managerial practices. These skills or practices are expected to drive the desired levels of academic excellence among learners. Headteachers need to adopt effective target-setting practices within schools to ensure that both learners and teachers surpass internal exam targets and monitor them as well (Thompson, 2014). School leads are required to develop strategies that enable the continuous tracking of the learners' progress. To effectively monitor learners' performance, target setting involves setting goals that adhere to the SMART criteria, ensuring they are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.

According to Bunch et al. (2021), head teachers have to closely collaborate with teachers and learners to ensure that the set targets are met. Headteachers develop different achievement goals in collaboration with the respective teachers taking into consideration some factors. Achievement targets are set by the head teachers to help the instructors offer quality and standard instructions that will help the learners achieve new skills and knowledge. In this context, Nordengren (2019) noted that the set targets also need to recognize that the academic performance of the learners largely depends on various factors such as individual learner characteristics, learning environment, and socio-economic background. Target-setting practices, thus, need to focus on specific learning environments and social contexts.

Target-setting practices are anchored on two major milestones, that is, enhancing the learners' level of mastery and knowledge retention (Savas, 2023). Headteachers must ensure that the set targets are evaluative as this enables them to determine their effectiveness by establishing whether the performance has improved, remained stagnant, or declined. As a result, the head teachers need to develop targets that take into consideration the learners' educational previous experiences. Therefore, in addition to the learners, teachers and parents need to be actively involved in setting the targets through sharing their experiences with content and skills from previous

experiences. Drawing from the above studies, it is important to examine the significance of target setting among head teachers toward learners' academic performance in public primary schools located in Makueni County.

2. Statement of the Problem

An analysis of national examination scores derived from the Makueni Education Office (2021) shows a downward trend in mean scores from 258.9 in 2017 to 251.98 in 2021. This low performance has attracted the attention of primary stakeholders like parents and teachers. While many studies have examined the role of different head teachers' management practices like supervision and the use of various leadership styles, there is a dearth of literature examining the influence of head teachers' use of target setting towards improving learners' academic performance underpinning the significance of this study.

Table 1: Mean scores attained in the national examination from 2017-2021

Year	Mean Scores
2017	258.59
2018	252.63
2019	252.32
2020	254.07
2021	251.98

Source: Makueni Education Office (2022).

The study aimed at examining the influence of head teachers' involvement in setting KCPE targets on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Makueni County, Kenya.The study further aimed at establishing the influence of head teacher's involvement in setting pupils' and subjects' targets on learners' academic performance in public primary schools, in Makueni County, Kenya

2.1 Empirical literature review

Thompson (2014) defined target setting as setting specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound goals. A study by Jayanthi et al (2014) in Singapore depicted that the state developed educational targets through the implementation of master plans for both national education and junior college/upper secondary report curriculum. The findings revealed that for those who had an interest in pursuing higher degrees their current academic scores affected their probability of enrolment. Australian Quality Education Council stated that one of the major targets of schooling is to promote equity and excellence and ensure all young Australians become successful, confident, creative, active, and informed citizens (Collins, 1993). Indicators of achieving quality targets in education include overall academic quality, individual attention for each child, committed staff, students treating each other with respect, and development of a child's social competencies including developing friendships (Collins, 1993). These findings implied that a forward-looking approach to academic achievement involved setting targets that can positively impact performance and consequently improve students' outcomes. Therefore, it is important to carry out a similar study in Makueni County, Kenya that demonstrates the impact of target setting and learners' academic performances.

Key targets for achieving high learners' academic performance in Cameroon as stated by Ndille (2015) include improving governance and management of education. The study established that low academic outcomes within public primary schools remained a major challenge. It also found that less than half of the learners did not attain the required skills in language and mathematics at the end of primary education due to poor syllabus coverage. Unlike private schools, learners from public schools find themselves taking examinations that cover areas they have not learned (Ndille, 2015). The inability to cover these topics within the given timeline contributes to low mean scores in internal exams mean grades. Targets set within Nigeria's primary education are aimed at boosting learners' level of literacy, numeracy skills, and ability to communicate effectively as well as citizenship. In a study conducted by Idowu, Chibuzoh, & Madueke (2014) to investigate the effectiveness of target setting among senior secondary students' academic performance in the English language in Enugu in Nigeria, a sample of 147 participants was drawn from two public schools. Adopting the quasi-experimental approach, the study found that academic performance in both schools was enhanced among participants that had been exposed to goal-setting interventions compared to those that were not (Idowu et al., 2014). These empirical findings pinpoint the extent to which target setting affects academic performance affirming that there is a gap that this study addressed. While the study was done in 2 schools and used the quasi-experimental approach, this study was carried out in

74 schools and used the descriptive survey approach to affirm the role of target setting within public primary schools in Makueni County.

According to ROK (2003), the basic education policy goal in Kenya is making education a catalyst for national development by advocating for better learner outcomes. To achieve this, the country's education sector has a specific policy targeting learners' competencies and skills that enable them to meet the human resource aspirations of Vision 2030. This is in line with the system theory which states that adaption and growth of a system depend on the degree of systems engagement with the environment. Ngala & Odebero (2010) conducted a study to investigate the influence of headteachers' target-setting practices on the performance of pupils in KCPE. Using a sample of 350 respondents retrieved from Rift and Nyanza rural-based schools, the findings showed that the majority of the primary school heads check teachers' professional record term which is not frequent enough to improve pupils' academic performance. Moreover, Ngala & Odebero (2010) demonstrated that a majority of head teachers assisted their teachers to set achievable targets that led to an improvement in academic performance. Headteachers are expected to have accurate records showing the academic improvement among learners, and goals set by both learners and teachers, and provide suggestions on how these goals can be attained. It is therefore important to investigate the influence of target setting as a head teacher's managerial practice on learners' academic performances in public primary schools in Makueni County.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Edwin Locke's model of goal setting developed in the 1960s (Alderman, 2013). Drawing from the arguments of this theoretical framework, head teachers are required to assist teachers and learners to develop specific targets and an action plan on how to achieve them. The model suggested that setting goals and targets has a positive impact on learners' academic performance in Makueni County's public primary schools. Lastly, regular feedback and recognition of progress can enhance their self-efficacy and boost their confidence in achieving those goals.

4. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey design where the target population was 714 public primary schools located in Makueni County, Kenya. The selected schools were sampled resulting in 74 head teachers, 428 teachers, and 7 quality assurance officers. The primary data collection instruments used were questionnaires for head teachers and teachers and interviews for the quality assurance and standard officers. Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis and mean scores, percentages, and Chi-Square test respectively.

4.1 Findings
The study sought to determine the influence of head teachers' target setting on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Makueni County, Kenya.

Learners' Academic Performance

The study assessed the learners' academic performance which was the dependent variable by asking teachers to rate overall learners' academic performance in the surveyed school. The results are represented in Figure 1.
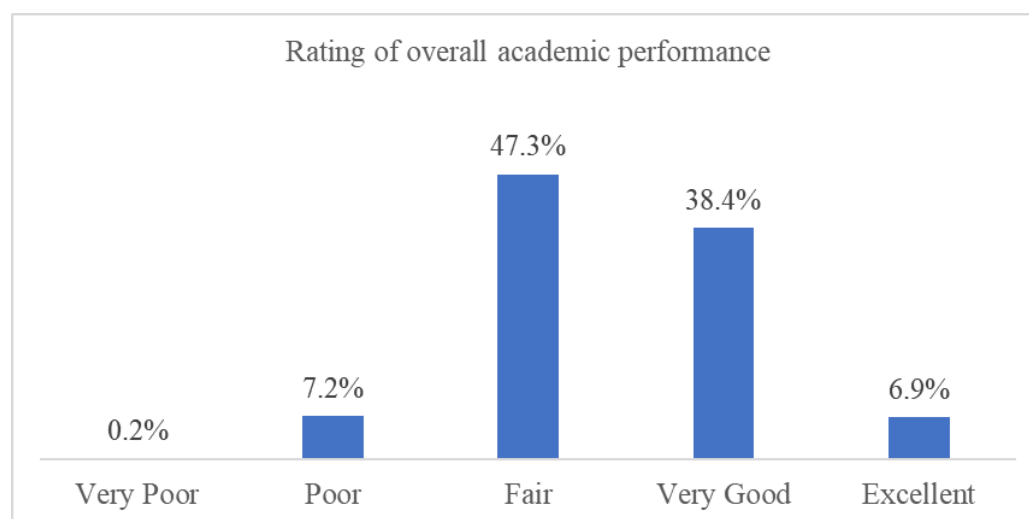
Figure 1: Rating of overall academic performance

Source: Field Data (2023)

The results in Figure 1 show that 0.2 % stated it as poor, 7.2 % as poor, and 47.3% rated the learners' academic performance as fair; 38.4% rated it as very good, and 6.9 % as excellent. The study reached values of 0.738 and 3.45 related to academic performance as the standard deviation and mean score respectively. Lastly, the quality assurance officers from some of the sub-counties stated that schools had begun to demonstrate some improvements while others still maintained low performance.

Influence of target setting on learners' academic performance

The study's specific objective of the study was to examine the influence of head teachers' target setting on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Makueni County, Kenya.

Nature of headteachers' target-setting practices

The study used a 5-point Likert scale where 1 means strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree with statements to seek the views of the teachers on target setting as undertaken by the headteachers in the schools.

Table 2: Teachers' responses on headteachers' target-setting activities

Target setting activities	1	2	3	4	5	M	S.D.
The head teacher assists teachers to set internal examinations targets	4%	4%	14%	43%	35%	4	1.014
The head teacher assists teachers to set national examinations targets	2%	3%	11%	43%	41%	4.17	0.9
The head teacher engages teachers in analyzing the previous year's KCPE results before setting the target for the year	1%	1%	9%	36%	53%	4.37	0.797
The headteacher sets KCPE mean score targets with respective teachers	2%	1%	8%	43%	46%	4.29	0.842
The head teacher engages pupils in KCPE targets	1%	1%	11%	49%	38%	4.22	0.753
The head teacher engages parents on KCPE targets	3%	3%	18%	46%	30%	3.95	0.946
The head teacher ensures that the targets set are SMART for each subject	1%	2%	12%	49%	36%	4.16	0.801
The head teacher ensures that the targets set are SMART for the top ten pupils	5%	6%	15%	46%	28%	3.86	1.036
The head teacher talks about the target in school assemblies	3%	3%	10%	45%	39%	4.15	0.914

Target setting activities	1	2	3	4	5	M	S.D.
The head teacher prepares target monitoring reports	3%	4%	17%	44%	32%	3.99	0.956
The head teacher investigates target implementation challenges and strives to find solutions	1%	3%	15%	47%	34%	4.09	0.861
The head teacher requires that teachers surpass their targets	1%	3%	13%	50%	33%	4.12	0.804
The head teacher monitors teachers to ensure they consistently achieve the set targets	1%	2%	12%	48%	37%	4.17	0.804
The head teacher calls teachers to the office to discuss why academic targets are not met	2%	3%	15%	45%	35%	4.08	0.878
The school achieves its set targets	2%	7%	21%	51%	20%	3.8	0.897

Source: Field Data (2023)

Drawing from the results in Table 2 on whether headteachers assist teachers in setting internal examination targets, 43% of teachers agreed and 35% strongly agreed, while 14% were uncertain about this aspect. On the other hand, 4% disagreed, and 4% strongly disagreed. This activity posted a mean of 4. In relation to whether the headteachers assist teachers in setting national examination targets, 43% of teachers agreed and 41% strongly agreed. In contrast, 3% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed while 11% of the teachers were uncertain about this aspect. This item recorded a mean of 4.17. The results further showed that regarding whether headteachers engage teachers in analyzing the previous year's KCPE results before setting the target for the year, 53% of teachers strongly agreed and 36% agreed. On the other hand, 1% disagreed, and another 1% strongly disagreed while 9% of the teachers were uncertain about this aspect. This activity has a mean of 4.37. The data showed that regarding whether the head teachers set KCPE mean score targets with respective subject teachers, 46% of teachers strongly agreed and 43% agreed. On the other hand, 2% strongly disagreed, 1% disagreed, and 8% of the teachers expressed uncertainty on this aspect. The item posted a mean score of 4.29. On whether the headteachers engaged pupils on KCPE targets, 46% of teachers strongly agree with this practice, while 43% agree. Additionally, 1% disagreed, and another 2% strongly disagreed while 8% of the teachers were uncertain about this aspect. The practice posted a mean score of 4.22. Regarding the engagement of parents on KCPE targets, 46% of the teachers strongly agreed and 30% agreed. On the other hand, 3% disagreed, and another 3% strongly disagreed. Additionally, 18% of the teachers were uncertain about this aspect. This item recorded a mean of 3.95. The results indicated that 49% of teachers agreed that the headteachers ensure that the targets set are SMART for each subject and 36% of teachers strongly agreed with this practice. On the other hand, 2% disagreed, and 1% strongly disagreed while 12% of teachers are uncertain about this aspect. The item had a mean score of 4.16.

The findings showed that 46% of teachers strongly agreed that the headteachers ensure that the targets set are SMART for the top ten pupils and 28% of teachers agreed with this practice. On the other hand, 6% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed while 15% of teachers are uncertain about this aspect. A mean of 3.86 was posted on this item. The results further indicated that 45% of teachers agreed that the headteachers talk about the target in school assemblies, while 39% of teachers strongly agreed with this practice. On the other hand, 3% of teachers disagreed, and another 3% strongly disagreed while 10% of teachers were uncertain about this aspect. This practice posted a mean of 4.15. The results indicated that 44% of teachers agreed that the headteachers prepare target monitoring reports, while 32% of teachers strongly agreed with this practice. On the other hand, 3% of teachers disagreed, 4% strongly disagreed and 17% of teachers expressed uncertainty about this item. This item had a mean of 3.99. The findings showed that 47% of teachers agreed that the headteachers investigated target implementation challenges and strive to find solutions. Additionally, 34% of teachers strongly agreed with this practice. On the other hand, 1% of teachers disagreed, 3% strongly disagreed and 15% of teachers expressed uncertainty about this activity. This activity posted a mean of 4.09.

In relation to whether headteachers required teachers to exceed their targets, the analysis reveals that 50% of teachers agreed and 33% of teachers strongly agreed. On the contrary, 1% of teachers disagreed, 3% strongly disagreed and 13% of teachers were uncertain about this requirement. A mean of 4.12 was posted on this item. On whether headteachers monitor teachers to ensure they consistently achieve the set targets, the analysis reveals that 49% of teachers agree with this practice, while 31% strongly agree. In contrast, 2% of teachers disagree, 3% strongly disagree and 15% of teachers are uncertain about this aspect. This activity posted a mean of 4.17. On whether headteachers call teachers to the office to discuss why academic targets are not met, the breakdown analysis indicates that 46% of teachers agree with this practice, while 41% strongly agree. In contrast, 3% of teachers disagree, and 3% strongly disagree. Additionally, 7% of teachers are uncertain about this aspect. This

practice posted a mean score of 4.08. In relation to the schools achieving their set targets, it emerged that 43% of teachers agree with this statement, while 36% strongly agree. On the other hand, 6% of teachers disagree, and 5% strongly disagree. Additionally, 10% of teachers are uncertain about this aspect. A mean of 3.8 was posted on this item.

The study then used the 5-point Likert scale where 1 represented not at all, 2 represented very little extent, 3 represented little extent, 4 represented great extent, and 5 represented very great extent to assess the extent to which headteachers felt they undertake target-setting activities in their schools.

Table 3: Headteachers' responses on the extent to which they undertake target-setting activities

| Target setting activities	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
I assist teachers to set internal examinations targets	0%	0%	8%	60%	32%	4.24	0.592
I assist teachers to set national examinations targets	0%	0%	11%	44%	45%	4.34	0.671
I engage teachers in analyzing the previous year's KCPE results before setting the target for the year	0%	1%	3%	36%	60%	4.54	0.623
I set KCPE mean score targets with respective teachers	0%	0%	11%	42%	47%	4.36	0.674
I engage pupils in KCPE targets	0%	0%	10%	45%	45%	4.36	0.653
I engage parents on KCPE targets	1%	4%	22%	49%	24%	3.91	0.863
I ensure that the targets set are SMART for each subject	0%	0%	9%	57%	34%	4.24	0.615
I ensure that the targets set are SMART for the top ten pupils	0%	0%	19%	40%	41%	4.22	0.75
I talk about the set targets in school assemblies	1%	2%	15%	47%	35%	4.13	0.821
I prepare target monitoring reports	0%	3%	23%	56%	18%	3.89	0.718
I investigate target implementation challenges and strive to find solutions	0%	3%	15%	54%	28%	4.08	0.736
I provide resources and support to help teachers meet set targets.	0%	1%	19%	47%	33%	4.11	0.751
I monitor teachers to ensure they consistently achieve the set targets	0%	0%	11%	51%	38%	4.27	0.651
I summon teachers to the office to discuss why academic targets are not met	0%	5%	14%	57%	24%	4.00	0.776
I use data to monitor progress toward targets	1%	3%	11%	51%	34%	4.14	0.816

Source: Field Data (2023)

Results in Table 3 showed that 60% of headteachers reported assisting teachers in setting internal examination targets to a great extent and 32% of headteachers stated that they assist teachers to a very great extent. On the other hand, 8% indicated they undertook this activity to a little extent. This activity posted a mean of 4.25 was posted on this item. According to the data, 45% of headteachers reported assisting teachers in setting national examination targets to a very great extent, and 44% stated that they assist to a great extent. Conversely, only 11% of headteachers indicated that they undertake this activity to a little extent. This activity had a mean of 4.34. In relation to engaging teachers in analyzing the previous year's KCPE results before setting the target for the year, the data reveals that a majority of 60% of headteachers reported doing so to a great extent, while 36% stated that they engage teachers in this activity to a very great extent. Conversely, only 3% of headteachers indicated engaging teachers to a little extent and 1% to a very little extent. A mean of 4.54 was posted on this item.

The data further showed that 47% of headteachers reported setting KCPE mean score targets with their respective teachers, to a very great extent, and 42% of headteachers to a great extent. In contrast, 11% of headteachers indicated setting these targets to a little extent. A mean score of 4.36 was posted on this item. The data revealed that 45% of headteachers reported engaging pupils on KCPE targets to a very great extent and another 45% indicated engaging pupils on KCPE targets to a great extent. Conversely, 10% of headteachers reported engaging pupils to a little extent, and no headteachers indicated doing so to a very little extent. This practice posted a mean score of 4.36. The findings indicated that 49% of headteachers reported engaging parents to a great extent, while an additional 24% stated that they do so to a very great extent. On the other hand, 22% of

headteachers indicated engaging parents to a little extent, and 4% reported doing so to a very little extent. This term recorded a mean of 3.91. The results indicate that 57% of headteachers reported ensuring that the targets set are SMART for each subject to a great extent, while 34% stated that they ensure SMART targets to a very great extent. On the other hand, 9% of headteachers indicated ensuring SMART targets to a little extent. A mean score of 4.24 was posted on this item. Pertaining to ensuring that the targets set are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) for the top ten pupils, the results indicate that 41% of headteachers reported doing so to a very great extent, and 40% stated that they ensure SMART targets for the top ten pupils to a great extent. On the other hand, 19% of headteachers indicated ensuring SMART targets for the top ten pupils to a little extent. This item had a mean of 4.22. In relation to the headteachers talking about the targets in school assemblies, the results show that 47% of headteachers reported doing so to a great extent, while 35% stated that they talk about the targets to a very great extent. On the other hand, 15% of headteachers indicated discussing the targets in school assemblies to a little extent. This practice posted a mean of 4.13.

Regarding the preparation of target monitoring reports by headteachers, the results indicated that 56% of headteachers reported doing so to a great extent, while 18% stated that they prepare such reports to a very great extent. On the other hand, 3% of headteachers indicated preparing target monitoring reports to a little extent. The item had a mean of 3.89. In relation to investigating target implementation challenges and striving to find solutions, the results indicate that 54% of headteachers reported engaging in this activity to a great extent; while 28% stated that they do so to a very great extent. Contrary, 15% of headteachers indicated investigating target implementation challenges to a little extent. This activity posted a mean of 4.08. In relation to providing resources and support to help teachers meet set targets, the results show that 47% of headteachers reported doing this to a great extent, and 33% of headteachers stated that they perform this task to a very great extent. On the other hand, 19% of the headteachers indicated they offered support to a little extent and 1% to a very little extent. A mean of 4.11 was posted on this item. The results indicated that 51% of headteachers reported monitoring teachers to ensure they consistently achieve the set targets to a great extent, and 38% stated they undertake this task to a very great extent. On the contrary, 11% of the headteachers noted they undertake this task to a little extent. This activity posted a mean of 4.17. The results indicated that 57% of headteachers reported summoning teachers to the office to discuss why academic targets are not met to a great extent and 24% of headteachers stated they do so to a very great extent. Contrary, 14% of the headteachers indicated engaging in this activity to a little extent and 5% to a very little extent. This practice posted a mean score of 4.00. On the issue of using data to monitor progress towards targets, the results indicate that 51% of headteachers reported engaging in this practice to a great extent and 34% of headteachers stated they do so to a very great extent. In contrast, 11% of headteachers indicated doing it to a little extent, and only 3% reported doing it to a very little extent. It is noteworthy that a small percentage of headteachers (1%) mentioned not engaging in this practice at all. A mean of 4.14 was posted on this item. The study then asked teachers to rate the overall target setting in the surveyed schools.
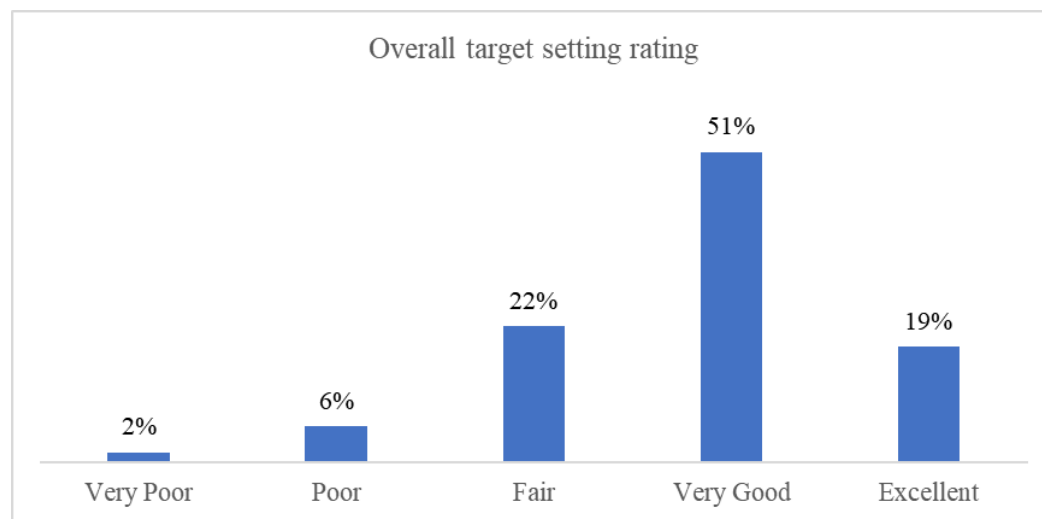
Figure 2: Rating of overall target-setting practices by teachers

Source: Field Data (2023)

The results shown in Figure 2 showed that 51% of teachers rated overall target setting in the surveyed schools as very good; 22% rated it as fair; 19% rated it as excellent; 6% rated it as poor; and 2% rated it as very poor. A mean score of 3.8 and a standard deviation of 0.875 were posted regarding the overall rating of target-setting practices.

During the interviews, the QASOs were asked to explain the Ministry of Education's position on target setting in primary schools. The QASOs indicated that the Ministry of Education encouraged target setting by headteachers for teachers, pupils, and schools. As a follow-up, the QASOs were asked to explain how target setting affects teaching and learning in primary school. QASO1 indicated that the targets provide direction and focus. However, QASO4 noted that unrealistic targets were discouraged as they were associated with examination cheating and demoralized pupils who were unable to meet the targets.

Hypothesis testing for the influence of target setting on learners' academic performance

The chi-square test was used to test the second hypothesis which stated: There is no statistically significant influence of target setting on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Makueni County, Kenya. To conduct the Chi-square test, the overall rating for learners' academic performance and the overall target-setting ratings from the teachers' data were used. The Chi-square test results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Chi-Square for target setting and learners' academic performance

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	114.835[a]	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	102.010	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	56.370	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	407		

a. 11 cells (44.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

The results in Table 4 showed a Chi-square critical value of 114.835, and the p-value was less than 0.05which indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between target setting by headteachers and learners' academic performance. The null hypothesis was thus rejected, and the alternative hypothesis that there was a statistically significant influence of target setting on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Makueni County, Kenya, was thus accepted. The Chi-Square test results implied that learners in schools where headteachers undertake target-setting activities perform better than learners in schools where headteachers do not undertake target-setting activities.

Discussion and Interpretation of Research Findings

The objective of the study was to examine the influence of a head teacher's target setting on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Makueni County, Kenya. The results from teachers in Table 3 and headteachers in Table 4 showed consensus on the nature of target-setting activities by headteachers in the surveyed schools. The two target-setting activities which had the highest mean score were with regard to the head teachers engaging teachers in analyzing the previous year's KCPE results before setting the target for the year (mean score of 4.37) and the head teachers assisting teachers in setting national examination targets (mean score of 4.17). The two items which were deemed not to be well established as they had the lowest mean scores were with regard to the head teachers ensuring that the targets set are SMART for the top ten pupils (mean score of 3.86) and the issues of the schools achieving their set targets (mean score of 3.8). These findings highlight the importance of involving teachers in academic data analysis and national examination target setting, as well as ensuring that targets are SMART.

With regard to the overall rating of target-setting practices, the results illustrated in Figure 2 indicated that 51% of the teachers rated overall target setting in the surveyed schools as very good; 22% scored it as fair; 19% rated it as excellent; 6% scored it as poor; and 2% rated it as very poor. A mean score of 3.8 and a standard deviation of 0.875 were posted regarding the overall target-setting activities by the headteachers in the surveyed schools.

The QASOs indicated that the Ministry of Education encouraged target setting by headteachers for teachers, pupils, and schools. QASO1 indicated that the targets provide direction and focus for the learners, teachers, and the school fraternity at large. The Ministry's encouragement of target setting reflected the belief that clear goals and objectives contribute to effective teaching and learning.

Drawing from results in Table 4 showed a Chi-square critical value of 114.835, and the p-value was less than 0.05 which showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between target setting by headteachers and learners' academic performance. The null hypothesis was thus rejected, and the alternative hypothesis that there was a statistically significant influence of target setting on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Makueni County, Kenya, was thus accepted. The Chi-Square test results implied that learners in schools where headteachers undertake target-setting activities perform better than learners in schools where headteachers do not undertake target-setting activities.

However, it is noteworthy to highlight the comments by QASO4 that, unrealistic targets were associated with examination cheating and demoralized pupils. The comments raised an important point regarding the potential negative influence of unrealistic targets on learners' academic performance. It suggested that when targets are set in an unrealistic or overly demanding manner, it can lead to adverse consequences such as examination cheating and demoralization among pupils who are unable to meet those targets.

Conclusions and Recommendations
The study found that head teachers' target-setting practices influence learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Makueni County, Kenya. The results highlighted the positive practices of engaging teachers in examination data analysis, setting national examination targets, and involving pupils in discussions about targets. The study concluded that the active involvement of headteachers in performance analysis allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the student's performance and areas for learners' academic improvement. The study also concluded that it is important for headteachers to engage pupils and parents in the target setting for better learners' academic performance in primary schools.

Lastly, the study recommended that head teachers and teachers should consult technological regulatory frameworks as school management tools to ensure the engagement of parents and pupils in target setting. The study persuaded head teachers and teachers to embrace technology such as phones to ensure engagement through messages, calls, and WhatsApp.

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