

# Role of principals' promotional opportunities on retention: Case of secondary school teachers in Homa Bay County, Kenya

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## Abstract

The study investigated the role of principals' promotional opportunities on retention: case of secondary school teachers in Homa Bay County, Kenya. Two sets of questionnaires were used; one for the school principals and another for the teachers. To enhance validity of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted in twenty selected schools in all the six sub-counties of Homa Bay County. This involved the ten principals and two teachers from each school. In this study, internal consistency reliability of the instruments was obtained by computing Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) using SPSS and a Cronbach's Alpha of  $\alpha = .830$  was reported. Two methods were adopted for data analysis where both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. The findings indicated that availability of teacher promotional opportunities was a significant predictor of teacher retention [ $F(1, 420) = 71.889, p < .05, R^2 = .144$ ] and positive correlation between the two variables at [ $r = .382, n = 422, p < .05$ ]. The study recommends that the Principals' through the Ministry of Education should be able to empower teachers at their work stations as this will give intrinsic satisfaction. The administrators should assure teachers upward mobility at their work place as this increases teachers confidence at work place and self-reliance. Principals should recommend teachers for professional growth either within or outside their schools to enhance teacher's retention. A functional teacher professional development strategy needs to be put by the government through the Ministry of Education to control teacher's transfer rates. The Teachers Service Commission needs to ensure that teachers are transferred annually and only by the end of each year and this be made a guiding policy to all County Directors of Education.

**Key words:** *staff promotional opportunities, retention, secondary school teachers*

## Introduction

The most valuable asset to any learning institution is its teachers, therefore retaining them in their stations is essential for any school (Ng'ethe, 2013). Globally, teaching quality is a very important schooling input in determination of student achievement given the central role the teacher plays in the education sector. However, it has been observed that teaching is increasingly becoming a profession with the highest flows in and out of schools.

This high rate of teacher transfers impacts negatively on schools' academic achievements because it disrupts the stability and continuity of teaching (Onsomu, 2014). It is noted that teachers' transfers have emerged as a significant problem affected by school administrators' behaviour in most institutions of learning. Schools and staffing survey from Marvel, Litter, Petrola, Strizek and Morton (2013) provided sufficient argument indicating that approximately a third of American teachers seek transfer from one institution to the other citing lack of

recommendations for promotional opportunities by the school administrators among other factors.

A study by Dockel (2011) on the effects of teachers' recommendations for promotions on commitments and performance revealed that promotional opportunities form part of teachers' recognition and it refers to the degree an employee perceives his or her chances to grow and be promoted internally or externally. The results further showed that teachers like stations that provide them with opportunities to be promoted to new and challenging positions of leadership either within as Heads of Departments or recommendations for higher positions in other institutions by the school principals. Ingersoll (2011) equally noted that primary reasons why teachers leaves a school to another is lack of empowerment by school head teachers, poor administrative support, lack of promotional recommendations and dissatisfaction with school climate. His analysis of 15, 200 South Carolina primary school teachers working conditions surveys reveals a strong correlation between teacher retention and the domains of promotional opportunities and teacher empowerment.

Leah (2014) studied job satisfaction and motivation among teachers of Kiharu Sub-County in Kenya. The study noted that people do not develop their potential if their esteem is low and when one feels unappreciated at their work. The study concluded that presence of on-the-job training and recommendations for upward mobility by school principals to teachers is a strategy to retain experienced teachers in public secondary schools. However, some authors express contrary opinion from the findings of the above study. Nguni, Slegers and Denessen (2010) contend that constant training and development opportunities raise market value of employees hence increasing their mobility through transfers to other institutions taking higher positions or quitting teaching services to other employment areas.

A study by Benjamin and Ahmad (2012) on motivational factors of employee retention and engagement in organizations indicated that motivational factors that are crucial in influencing employee retention are financial rewards, teacher promotional opportunities, career development and recognition. The study thus recommended that organizations should formulate appropriate retention strategies in a holistic manner to reduce turnover rates and these require a commitment from employers, but it will be well worth the investment in the long term.

Despite the efforts to enhance teacher retention, teacher mobility is still prevalent in many areas in Kenya. Transfer requests by teachers particularly in Homa Bay country still remain way above the national average of 5% (Ariko and Simatwa, 2011). It is noted however that at the policy level from where these incentives are designed it is difficult to make a control to this because the policies set by the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Service Commission are more inclined to tackle national and regional issues and not empowering the institutional heads to source for other means of rewarding teachers to enhance retention. The Kenyan government has however developed a bonding policy

which restricts newly recruited teachers from seeking transfer before the end of five years from their first posting schools since 2001 (Republic of Kenya, 2009). However, many teachers still find their ways out of this restriction and get transfer from their posted schools.

Many questions have been raised about frequent teachers' rampant transfer requests by the education stakeholders: are they related to principals' management behaviours, promotional opportunities at school level or teachers recognition? If yes, then what specifically motivates the teachers to seek transfers to other schools and is there a role that recommendations for promotional opportunities by principals play on retention of these teachers? And how well can the principals recommend teachers for promotional opportunities within a school or to other schools? Determining these questions through research was important in the understanding and solving one of the significant educational challenges facing public secondary schools in Homa Bay County and other areas in the country faced by the same challenges.

### **Research Methodology**

The study used a survey research design on the secondary school principals' motivational rewards on retention. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) noted that surveys are the excellent vehicles for the measurement of characteristics of large population. The design was appropriate because it helped the researcher to obtain information that describes phenomenon by asking individual teachers and principals about their perceptions, attitudes, behaviour or values related to motivational rewards on retention. This study was conducted in Homa Bay County which comprised of eight sub-counties; Suba, Homa Bay Town, Rangwe, Mbita, Ndiwa, Rachuonyo East, Rachuonyo North and Rachuonyo South. A population of two hundred and ninety-five (295) principals and 1801 teachers were used in this study. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) cited by Kasomo (2007), a sample size of three hundred and twenty (320) teachers and one hundred and sixty-nine (169) principals were appropriate for the study. This study used two sets of questionnaires; one for the school principals and another for the teachers. It was feasible to conduct a pilot study to enhance validity of the instrument. This was done in twenty selected secondary schools in the eight sub-counties of Homa Bay. Teachers and principals used in piloting were never used in the actual study. Internal consistency reliability of the instruments was obtained by computing Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) using SPSS and a Cronbach's alpha of  $\alpha = .830$  was realized, revealing that the instruments were reliable enough for the study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This study used two methods where both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in analysing the data.

### **Results**

The study investigated the role of promotional opportunities by the principals on retention of secondary

school teachers. The respondents' views on promotional opportunities and empowerment were investigated using Likert-scaled questionnaires administered to both the principals and their teachers. The respondents were presented with statements whose constructs were related to facts or perceptions linked to teacher promotion and retention in secondary schools. They were Likert-scaled item type statements, in which respondents choose from

5-point scores; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The respondents scored on each statement in regards of their perception on the statement regarding retention and transfer. The researcher computed percentage frequencies of the responses from the principals and their teachers separately as tabulated in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Views of Principals on Staff Promotional Opportunities**

Item	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
Promotional opportunities and empowerment increases teachers' commitment and retention.	53 (33.8%)	64 (40.8%)	14 (8.9%)	21 (13.4%)	5 (3.2%)	3.89	1.11
Teachers feel motivated when empowered and involved in school decision making process.	53 (33.8%)	79 (50.8%)	13 (8.3%)	10 (6.4%)	2 (1.3%)	4.09	0.88
Rewarding teachers through promotional opportunities and empowerment encourages team work and retention	53 (33.8%)	71 (45.2%)	20 (12.7%)	10 (6.4%)	3 (1.9%)	4.03	0.94
Promotional opportunities and empowerment of teachers by the principals leads to creativity and innovativeness	30 (19.1%)	61 (38.9%)	38 (24.2%)	21 (13.4%)	7 (4.5%)	3.55	1.08
Promotional opportunities and teacher empowerments by the principals motivates teachers to work harder.	58 (36.9%)	72 (45.9%)	14 (8.9%)	10 (6.4%)	3 (1.9%)	4.10	0.94
Promotion and empowerment of teachers by principals encourages teachers to be more productive in their service delivery.	69 (43.9%)	65 (41.4%)	12 (7.6%)	7 (4.5%)	4 (2.5%)	4.20	0.94
Teachers like working in schools where principals recommend them for promotions and empower them.	96 (61.1%)	47 (29.9%)	7 (4.5%)	6 (3.8%)	1 (0.6%)	4.47	0.80
Teacher empowerment and promotion by the principal is a key factor for teachers' retention in a school.	67 (42.7%)	57 (36.3%)	12 (7.6%)	17 (10.8%)	4 (2.5%)	4.06	1.08
Promotional opportunities and empowerment of teachers helps in developing competency on teachers.	49 (31.2%)	75 (47.8%)	19 (12.1%)	9 (5.7%)	5 (3.2%)	3.98	0.97
Teachers feel motivated when empowered and involved in school decision making process.	41 (26.1%)	52 (33.1%)	26 (16.6%)	25 (15.9%)	13 (8.3%)	3.54	1.25

Key: SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-Undecided, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree and Std. Dev.-Standard Deviation

Promotions offer opportunities for growth and it is one of the Herzberg's motivating factors that can be used to enhance retention within a place of work (Rice & Roelike, 2014). The findings equally established that a significant majority of 130 (82.7%) of the principals who took part in

the study generally held assumption that promotional opportunities and teacher empowerments motivates teachers to work harder, nearly three quarters 117 (74.6%), with a mean of 4.10 (SD=.94), of them believed that promotional opportunities and empowerment

increases teachers commitment and retention and a similar proportion of them argued that teachers feel

motivated when empowered and involved in school decision making process.

**Table 2:** Descriptive Statistics and Views of Teachers on Staff Promotional Opportunities

Item	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
Promotional opportunities and empowerment increases teachers' commitment and retention.	85 (32.1%)	82 (30.9%)	26 (9.8%)	47 (17.7%)	25 (9.4%)	3.60	1.33
Teachers feel motivated when empowered and involved in school decision making process.	79 (29.8%)	127 (47.9%)	17 (6.4%)	30 (11.3%)	12 (4.5%)	3.90	1.06
Rewarding teachers through promotional opportunities and empowerment encourages retention, commitment and retention	84 (31.7%)	120 (45.3%)	25 (9.4%)	21 (7.9%)	15 (5.7%)	3.94	1.05
Promotional opportunities and empowerment of teachers by the principals leads to teacher commitment at work place	56 (21.1%)	80 (30.2%)	53 (20.0%)	46 (17.4%)	30 (11.3%)	3.40	1.23
Promotional opportunities and teacher empowerments by the principals motivates teachers to work harder.	91 (34.3%)	109 (41.1%)	28 (10.6%)	22 (8.3%)	15 (5.7%)	3.93	1.10
Promotion of teachers by principals encourages teachers to be more committed to work in such schools..	98 (37.0%)	139 (52.5%)	11 (4.2%)	9 (3.4%)	8 (3.0%)	4.20	0.84
Teachers like working in schools where principals recommend them for promotions and empower them.	138 (52.1%)	100 (37.7%)	14 (5.3%)	9 (3.4%)	4 (1.5%)	4.37	0.82
Teacher empowerment and promotion by the principal is a key factor for teachers' retention in a school.	139 (52.5%)	86 (32.5%)	15 (5.7%)	17 (6.4%)	8 (3.0%)	4.29	0.95
Promotional opportunities and empowerment of teachers helps in developing competency on teachers.	92 (34.7%)	106 (40.0%)	29 (10.9%)	26 (9.8%)	12 (4.5%)	3.92	1.10
Teachers feel motivated when empowered and given opportunity involved in school decision making process.	62 (23.4%)	112 (42.3%)	57 (21.5%)	14 (5.3%)	20 (7.5%)	3.71	1.08

Key: SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-Undecided, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree and Std. Dev.-Standard Deviation

To establish whether there was any statistical influence of teacher promotional opportunities on teacher retention, null hypothesis that "there is no statistically significant influence of teacher promotional opportunities on teacher retention" was tested. This relationship was investigated

by use of a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis. The pre-requisite analyses were done to ensure that there is no violation of the necessary assumptions. Table 3 shows a Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis results.

**Table 3:** Correlation between Teacher Promotional Opportunities and Teacher Retention in Secondary School

		Teacher Retention	
Teacher opportunities	Promotional	Pearson Correlation	.382**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	422

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

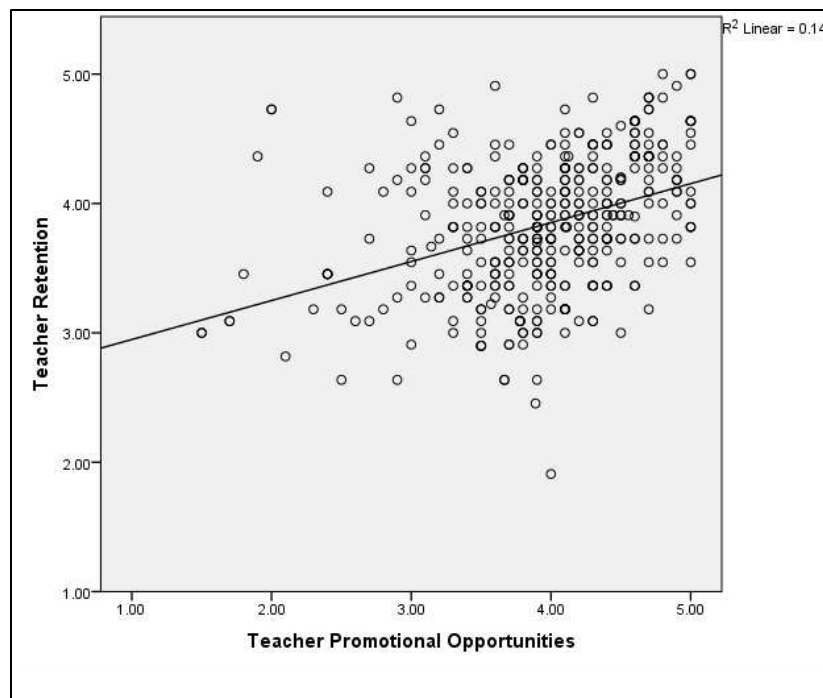
Table 3 gives the results of a Pearson Moment Correlation analysis on the influence of teacher promotional opportunities on teacher retention in secondary schools of Homa Bay County. The results indicate that although there was weak positive correlation between the two variables, it was statistically significant [ $r = .382$ ,  $n = 422$ ,  $p < .05$ ]. The fact that a statistical significant positive relationship was established (sig. level  $< .05$ ), the hypothesis that “there is no statistical significant influence of teacher promotional opportunities on teacher retention in secondary schools in Homa Bay County” was therefore rejected.

In addition, a coefficient of determination R was computed to find out how much variance the two variables shared. Since the two correlated at  $r = .382$ , it means they shared 23.1 per cent of their variance. This shows that there was reasonable overlap ( $R = .231$ ) between the two variables. This imply that availability of teacher promotional opportunities helps to explain about 23 per

cent of the variance in respondents’ scores on the perceived teacher retention scale. This is a significant amount of variance explained by one independent variable.

It was therefore concluded that availability of teacher promotional opportunities has a positive influence on the decisions teachers make concerning transfer to other schools. The findings of the study show that more than a quarter (23%) of the teacher retention is accounted for by availability of teacher promotional opportunities alone. Secondary schools with good policy on teacher promotion and empowerment is likely to retain their teachers longer compared to the schools where teachers feel they do not have opportunities for promotion to higher positions or even to be empowered.

In addition, to further illustrate this relationship, a scatter plot was generated as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Teacher Promotional Opportunities and Teacher Retention

The scatter plot indicates that there was some correlation between availability of teacher promotional opportunities and teacher retention. It is clear that although the patterns of dots do not make clear pattern, the dots seem to slope

from lower left to upper right, which is a sign of a positive correlation between the variables. The line of best fit reveals that there was correlation between the variables; the line inclines to the upper right an indication of positive

relationship. However, to estimate the level of influence of availability of teacher promotional opportunities on teacher retention, a coefficient of determination was computed.

This was done using regression analysis and the results were as shown in table 5.

**Table 5:** Model Summary of Regression Analysis: Influence of Availability of Teacher Promotional Opportunities on Teacher Retention

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.382 <sup>a</sup>	.146	.144	.47249

a. Predictors: (Constant), Teacher Promotional Opportunities

The model shows that availability of teacher promotional opportunities accounted for 14.4% as signified by coefficient of Adjusted  $R^2 = .144$  of the variation in teacher retention in secondary schools in Homa Bay County. This implies that over 85% of the variability in the perceived teacher retention was attributed to other factors. Hence,

this was a weak effect of one variable on the dependent variable. However, to determine whether availability of teacher promotional opportunities was a significant predictor of teacher retention, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was computed as shown Table 6.

**Table 6:** ANOVA–Influence of Availability of Teacher Promotional Opportunities on Teacher Retention

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	16.049	1	16.049	71.889	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	93.764	420	.223		
	Total	109.813	421			

a. Dependent Variable: Teacher Retention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Teacher Promotional Opportunities

From Table 6 above, it can be noted that availability of teacher promotional opportunities was a significant predictor of teacher retention [ $F(1, 420) = 71.889, p < .05, R^2 = .144$ ]. This means that although availability of teacher promotional opportunities has low effect, it really has statistical significant influences in teacher retention. It

was therefore concluded that availability of teacher promotional opportunities has a positive influence on the decisions teachers make concerning transfer to other schools. However, linear regression was generated to find the actual influence of teacher promotional opportunities on retention as shown in Table 7.

**Table 7:** Coefficients of Linear Regression: Influence of Availability of Teacher Promotional Opportunities on Teacher Retention

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error				Beta	Lower Bound
1	(Constant)	2.648	.142		18.607	.000	2.368	2.927
	Teacher Promotional Opportunities	.301	.036	.382	8.479	.000	.231	.371

a. Dependent Variable: Teacher Retention

$$Y = B_0 + B_1X_1 + \epsilon_0; Y = .541 + .526X_1 + \epsilon_0$$

Where Y = Teacher Retention

$B_0 + B_1 = \text{Constant}$

X = Availability of Teacher Promotional Opportunities

It is evident from Table 7 that if the teacher promotional opportunities were increased by one standard deviation, then perceived scores in level of teacher retention would increase by .382 standard deviation units. Similarly, if the availability of promotional opportunities increases by one unit then teacher retention would improve by .301 units.

Therefore, the findings of the study show that teacher retention is dependent on the availability of teacher promotional opportunities, among other factors. Secondary schools with good policy on teacher promotional opportunities is likely to make retention of teachers longer compared to the schools where teachers

feel they do not have opportunities for promotion to higher positions. Conclusion was therefore made that teacher retention is dependent on the availability of teacher promotional opportunities and its absence influence decisions teachers make concerning transfer requests.

## Discussions

The findings of the study show that the principals in Homa Bay County appreciate that provision of promotional opportunities to teachers form part of teacher motivation because it creates chances for the teacher to grow and to be promoted internally or externally. This finding is in line with the generally held opinion that teachers, like other employees, should not only be rewarded financially but also be offered opportunities to grow within the organization, because those who feel stagnated in their positions are generally demotivated. These findings resonates the arguments of Dockel (2011) when he stated that teachers who feel stagnated in their positions within a school generally aren't motivated and that they may not stay longer in such schools.

When employees are empowered, their confidence and self-reliance increases, which translates to job satisfaction and high levels of productivity, the findings of the study show that many 134 (85.3%) of the principals agreed that promotion and empowerment of teachers by principals encourage teachers to be more committed to work in such schools as reflected by a mean of 4.20 (SD=.94). Another 124 (79.0%) of the principals alluded that it encourages commitment and retention. These findings contrast with Komba and Nkumbi (2014) who postulates that continuous teacher professional development provides teachers with the opportunities to explore new instructional techniques and strategies; improve their practice and broaden themselves as educators and individuals which can make them move to higher level positions which eventually leads to transfer to other institutions on promotional capacities or to other organizations with better pay.

It came out from the study findings that, at a mean of 3.55 (SD=1.08) translating to 53 (33.8%) of the principals who took part in the study strongly argued that provision of promotional opportunities and empowerment of teachers by the principals is the best rewards that a principal can give teachers. This is so because, it helps the teachers to develop and grow in the profession and exhibit their potentials, as asserted by 124 (79%) of the principals who took part in the survey. This finding agreed with Mohammad (2009) in Iraque whose study reported that the way in which people are managed, empowered, developed and promoted at work is one of the primary factors in achieving improvement in organizational performance and retention.

It emerged from the findings of the study that more than nine out of ten 143 (91.1%) of the principals who took part in the survey believed that teacher recognition by the principal through recommendation for promotion enhances teachers' commitment to work, some 75 (47.8%) of the principals believed that teachers like working with

principals that recommends them for promotions and many 145 (92.3%) of the principals were of the opinion that teachers feel motivated when empowered and involved in school decision making process. However, the findings equally noted that some 94 (59.9%) of the principals believed the teachers who feel stagnated at job groups within a school usually seek transfer to other schools. A fact that confirms the argument of Brown and Wynn (2014) that the primary reason why teachers leave school to another is due to lack of empowerment by school principals.

The findings of the study show that 132 (84.1%), translating to a mean of 4.06 (SD=.80), of the principal who took part in the study generally believed that teacher empowerment and recommendations for promotion by the principal is a key factor for teachers' retention in a school. In fact, 62 (39.5%) of the principal respondents observed that teachers like working in schools where they are given tasks and left to work independently. This finding is in tandem with Komba and Nkumbi (2014) who stipulated that teachers empowered by the school principals to have autonomy in their work are more satisfied from their work and have intentions to stay longer in such schools. It emerged that the principals are quite aware that empowering their teachers and providing them with opportunity for promotion is an important factor in retaining the teacher in the same school.

This fact was supported by the findings that most (mean=4.47 and SD=.80) of the principals who took part in the survey confirmed that teachers like working in schools where principals recommend them for promotions. The findings of the study show that a significant proportion 93 (59.2%) of the principal respondents held strong perception that teachers feel more motivated when empowered and involved in school decision making process. A fact that confirms the findings of Quaglia, Marion and McIntire (2011) that satisfied teachers experience significantly more empowerment within their schools than teachers who are dissatisfied. In addition, 124 (79%) of the principals were of the view that teacher empowerment and recommendation for promotion by the principal is a key factor for teachers' retention in a school.

The findings of the study show that most of the teachers who took part in the study agreed that they would not seek for transfers from schools where the principals empower them and give provisions for promotional opportunities. It was discovered that majority 167 (63.0%) of the teachers who were sampled for the survey held the assertion that when teachers are provided with chances of promotions and are empowered by their principals their level of commitment increases and would always wish not get transfers from such schools. This finding agrees with Beth (2012) who outlined that when teachers are assured upward mobility, their confidence degree at work place and self-reliance will increase.

This point of view was further supported by 216 (77.7%) at a mean of 3.90 (SD=1.06) of the teachers who indicated that they always feel motivated when empowered and involved in school decision making process, more than three quarters 204 (77.0%) of them

argue that rewarding teachers through promotional opportunities and empowerment encourages commitment to work in a school, 198 (74.7%) of them said they develop competency on teachers when they are empowered by the administration and another 91 (34.3%) strongly believed that creating teachers' awareness on promotional opportunities and empowering them motivates the teachers to work hard. Findings that were strongly supported by Ingersoll (2011) who indicated that teachers leave one school to another because of lack of empowerment, poor administrative support, lack of promotional opportunities and dissatisfaction within school environment.

It emerged from the results of the survey that majority 109 (51.3%), translating to a mean of 3.40 (SD=1.23) of the teachers' value and feel more motivated when they are informed of available promotional opportunities by their principals than to be given rewards. In fact, a significant majority of 238 (89.9%) of the teachers who took part in the study asserted that they like to work in schools where principals can recommend them for promotions and some 225 (85.0%) others alluded that teacher empowerment and prospect of promotion in a school is a key factor for teachers' decision regarding retention in a school. This was in line with Burke (2012) in Kenya who alluded that building capacity in schools and ensuring their retention depends strongly on the principals' empowerment and capacity building.

## Conclusion

The study established that principals and teachers in Homa Bay County appreciate that recommendation by principles for promotional opportunities to teachers form part of teacher motivation as it creates chances for the teacher to grow professionally within a particular school or in another school. This was confirmed by 96 (61.1%) reflected by a mean of 4.47 (SD=.80) and demonstrated in Table 2. True to the generally held belief by most teachers that when empowered by the principals, their confidence and self-reliance increases, which transverse into job satisfaction and high level of productivity, the findings equally noted that promotional opportunities and empowerment is the best reward that school principals can offer to their teachers.

## Recommendations

Secondary school principals through the Ministry of Education should be able to empower teachers at their work places as this will give intrinsic satisfaction to the teachers. The administrators should recommend teachers for upward mobility at their work place as this increases teachers confidence at work place and self-reliance. Principals should recommend teachers for professional growth either within or outside their schools. A functional teacher professional development strategy needs to be put by the government through the Ministry of Education to control teachers transfer rates. The Teachers Service Commission needs to ensure that teachers are transferred

annually and only by the end of each year and this made a guiding policy to all County Directors of Education in Kenya.

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