

Beyond Appraisals: Navigating Performance Management Challenges in Nigerian Secondary Education

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Abstract:

This study examined performance management practices, implementation challenges, and improvement strategies in Nigerian public senior secondary schools. Performance management is essential for strengthening teacher effectiveness and educational quality. However, appraisal may yield limited improvement when support, resources, and professional development are inadequate. A cross-sectional descriptive survey was conducted with 200 teachers, principals, and vice-principals selected through multistage sampling. Data were collected using the Performance Management and Teacher Effectiveness Questionnaire and analyzed with means and standard deviations. Overall, respondents rated performance management practices very highly, with regular feedback emerging as the strongest dimension. Managers and employees strongly perceived managerial engagement and employee evaluation as positive. Continuous professional development ranked comparatively lower but remained highly rated. Participants identified inadequate instructional resources and insufficient funding as major implementation barriers. Respondents also reported unclear evaluation criteria, limited administrator training, delayed feedback, excessive workload, and resistance to change. The study prioritized capacity building, improved resources, adequate funding, transparent evaluation criteria, and stronger feedback mechanisms as improvement strategies. The study contributes an integrated systems perspective on school-level performance management. It also provides context-specific evidence for policy and administrative reform.

Key Words: Performance Management, Teacher Effectiveness, Professional Development

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers are central to education systems' ability to produce knowledgeable and socially responsible citizens (Pratiwi et al., 2025; Sidqi et al., 2026; Suratman & Sugiyono, 2025). Their effectiveness represents an issue rather

than an internal administrative concern because teaching quality influences student learning, educational equity, workforce preparation, and national development. Recent research shows that teachers' motivation, job satisfaction, professional competence, and classroom practices are shaped by leadership support, working conditions, feedback, and opportunities for professional learning (Rahmawati et al., 2025; Akmansyah et al., 2026; Soim et al., 2026; Syafrudin et al., 2026).

Evidence also indicates that well-designed professional development produces meaningful improvements in teacher knowledge, classroom practice, and student outcomes, particularly when learning is collaborative and connected to teachers' work (Morina et al., 2025; Talafian et al., 2025). These findings show that teacher performance cannot improve through individual effort alone. It requires a coherent management process that establishes expectations, monitors progress, supports learning, and responds to workplace constraints. Accordingly, investigating performance management is important because stronger systems can improve teacher effectiveness, protect educational quality, and generate lasting benefits for students, families, schools, and society.

This study integrates Expectancy Theory, Goal-Setting Theory, Management by Objectives, and Systems Theory to explain how performance management may influence teachers' effectiveness. Contemporary motivation research suggests that teachers invest effort when leadership practices strengthen competence, professional value, autonomy, and confidence that effort will produce meaningful outcomes (Firdausiyah et al., 2026; Tamami et al., 2026). Goal-Setting Theory explains that specific instructional targets, progress information, and professional ownership direct attention and sustain improvement. This logic is supported by evidence that instructional leadership influences classroom practices through shared professional activity and teacher agency (Bellibaş et al., 2022; Fauzan & Sa'dullah, 2024; Maulidah et al., 2023). Management by Objectives emphasizes aligning teachers' responsibilities with curriculum standards and school improvement priorities through participatory planning and review. Research similarly shows that trust and agency mediate the relationship between principal leadership and professional learning (Alazmi & Hammad, 2023). Systems Theory adds that appraisal cannot operate effectively in isolation because leadership, resources, feedback, professional development, culture, and working conditions interact. Recent evaluation studies therefore advocate integrated, comprehensive, developmental, and context-sensitive systems rather than narrow annual ratings (Gloppen, 2023; Asterhan & Lefstein, 2024).

The general problem motivating this study is the difficulty of ensuring effective teaching in senior secondary schools within Bwari Area Council, Abuja. Teachers may be assessed, yet appraisal does not improve instruction when expectations are unclear, feedback is delayed, professional development is disconnected from identified needs, or leaders lack resources to provide support.

International evidence shows that performance evaluation can become compliance-oriented when standards are imposed without professional dialogue, reflection, or attention to local conditions (Gloppen, 2023). Research also shows that teachers' working lives, career stages, workload, and school environments shape how much professional learning translates into classroom improvement (Coppe et al., 2024).

Moreover, job satisfaction is associated with teacher–student interaction, classroom management, instructional support, attendance, and student outcomes (Abdullah, 2025; Ilmi, 2024; Khair, 2025; Rahmawati et al., 2025; Solihin & Wijaya, 2024). These findings suggest that teacher ineffectiveness may reflect limited capacity and fragmented management arrangements. Bwari schools therefore need evidence on whether evaluation, feedback, development, and managerial engagement function as an integrated process or as disconnected administrative activities that provide limited instructional support.

Recent literature provides evidence that several components of performance management can strengthen teaching. Teacher evaluation is more useful when it promotes reflection, peer learning, and developmental dialogue rather than reputational control or punishment (Gloppen, 2023). Feedback interventions produce greater improvements when teachers receive assistance interpreting evidence and planning instructional changes (Röhl et al., 2025), while professional development can build learner-centered feedback literacy through experimentation, collaboration, and reflection (To et al., 2023). Reviews of professional learning show that effective programs should be content-focused, sustained, responsive to teachers' needs, and embedded in workplace collaboration (Asterhan & Lefstein, 2024; Surahman & Wang, 2023; Talafian et al., 2025). Online development also produces positive teacher and classroom outcomes, although program design and participation structures influence effectiveness (Stavermann, 2025; Morina et al., 2025). Leadership studies indicate that instructional leadership, trust, shared practice, and teacher agency support professional learning and classroom improvement (Alanoglu, 2022; Bellibaş et al., 2022; Alazmi & Hammad, 2023). Nevertheless, these studies examine separate practices, different countries, or broad datasets, leaving limited integrated evidence from Bwari Area Council.

This study's novelty lies in conceptualizing performance management as an integrated school-level system rather than limiting it to formal appraisal, annual ratings, or supervision. It uniquely combines employee evaluation, regular feedback, continuous professional development, and managerial engagement to explain teacher effectiveness. In addition, the study examines how these practices are actually experienced by teachers and administrators, including implementation barriers and feasible strategies within Bwari Area Council. This provides a context-sensitive framework that connects performance expectations, support, professional learning, and managerial engagement to sustainable school improvement.

The research problem focuses on the limited understanding of performance management practices, implementation challenges, and improvement strategies in senior secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, Abuja. It examines three key issues: current practices, barriers to effective implementation, and improvement strategies. The study argues that clear expectations, fair evaluation, timely feedback, relevant professional development, and strong leadership support can enhance teacher effectiveness and commitment. Ultimately, it aims to help schools and policymakers transform performance evaluation into better teaching practices, organizational effectiveness, and improved student learning outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive survey design to examine performance management practices, implementation challenges, and improvement strategies in public senior secondary schools. The design enabled systematic collection of numerical data on teachers' and administrators' perceptions at a single point in time without manipulating variables. However, it cannot establish temporal order or causal effects (Duckett, 2021; Pérez-Guerrero et al., 2024). The population comprised full-time teachers, principals, and vice-principals with at least one academic session of experience in their schools. The researchers selected 200 respondents through multistage sampling, using simple random sampling of schools and proportionate stratified random sampling of teachers and administrators.

The study was conducted in public senior secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The area was selected because schools operate within a common educational policy framework while experiencing differences in administrative, staffing, resource, and working conditions. Existing research has identified concerns related to facilities, instructional resources, working conditions, enrolment, and teachers' instructional capacity (Orji et al., 2021). These contextual factors are relevant to understanding how appraisal, feedback, professional development, supervision, reward, and recognition practices operate within schools.

The researcher collected data using the Performance Management and Teacher Effectiveness Questionnaire (PMTEQ). The instrument covered demographic characteristics, performance appraisal, feedback, professional development, reward and recognition, and teacher effectiveness, using a four-point Likert scale from Strongly Agree (4) to Disagree (1) Strongly. Clearly defined response categories promote consistent interpretation (Jebb et al., 2021; Kusmaryono et al., 2022). Expert review established face and content validity, while a pilot study produced Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.81 to 0.88, with an overall reliability of 0.85, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Kishore et al., 2021; Ranganathan et al., 2024; Cheung et al., 2024). We maintained ethical approval, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality.

We screened, coded, and analysed data using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Composite scores were calculated for dimensions measured by multiple items. A criterion mean of 2.50 was used to interpret agreement or relatively high perceived presence, while scores below 2.50 indicated disagreement or relatively low presence. Standard deviations indicated variation among respondents, and item frequencies were considered where necessary (Kusmaryono et al., 2022). The analysis was strictly descriptive; therefore, the findings reflect respondents' perceptions and do not establish causal or predictive relationships between performance management and teacher effectiveness (Pérez-Guerrero et al., 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Performance Management Practices

Performance management was operationally defined as school-level processes for evaluating, supporting, monitoring, and improving teachers through four dimensions: employee evaluation, continuous professional development, regular feedback, and managerial engagement. Measured using the Performance Management and Teacher Effectiveness Questionnaire (PMTEQ) on a four-point Likert scale, the overall implementation was rated very high ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.79$). Regular feedback recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.84$), followed by managerial engagement ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.78$), employee evaluation ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.72$), and continuous professional development ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.81$). All dimensions exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50.

The findings indicate that performance management practices were widely embedded in the participating schools, particularly through feedback and managerial involvement. Employees also strongly recognized employee evaluation, while professional development, although highly rated, appeared comparatively less prominent. The difference between the highest and lowest means was only 0.14 points, indicating a relatively consistent pattern across the four dimensions. Standard deviations ranging from 0.72 to 0.84 suggest some variation in respondents' experiences.

However, the reported results were entirely descriptive and did not include Pearson's correlation, regression coefficients, t-values, F-statistics, confidence intervals, p-values, or R^2 . Therefore, the findings cannot establish whether performance management was significantly associated with, predicted, or influenced teacher effectiveness. The higher mean for feedback compared with professional development also does not demonstrate a statistically significant difference or stronger effect.

Accordingly, the results support conclusions about the perceived implementation and relative prominence of performance management practices but not their causal or predictive effects on teacher effectiveness. Testing such relationships would require respondent-level scores and inferential analyses, including Pearson's correlation and multiple regression. The latter should report

standardized beta coefficients, t-values, p-values, F-statistics, and R^2 to determine each dimension's contribution to teacher effectiveness.

Table 1. Summary of Descriptive and Inferential Results for Performance Management Practices

Variables / Indicators	Descriptive Statistics, Mean and SD	Inferential Statistics: β/r , t-value, p-value
Employee Evaluation	M = 3.81; SD = 0.72; Very High	Not estimable from the supplied summary data
Continuous Professional Development	M = 3.73; SD = 0.81; Very High	Not estimable from the supplied summary data
Regular Feedback	M = 3.87; SD = 0.84; Very High	Not estimable from the supplied summary data
Managerial Engagement	M = 3.84; SD = 0.78; Very High	Not estimable from the supplied summary data
Overall Performance Management	M = 3.81; SD = 0.79; Very High	Correlation/regression analysis not reported

Table 1 shows that regular feedback received the highest mean ($M = 3.87$), followed by managerial engagement ($M = 3.84$) and employee evaluation ($M = 3.81$). The small differences among these indicators suggest a generally consistent implementation pattern; however, without a formal comparison test, their statistical significance cannot be established. Thus, regular feedback is the most prominent practice descriptively, not necessarily the strongest predictor of teacher effectiveness.

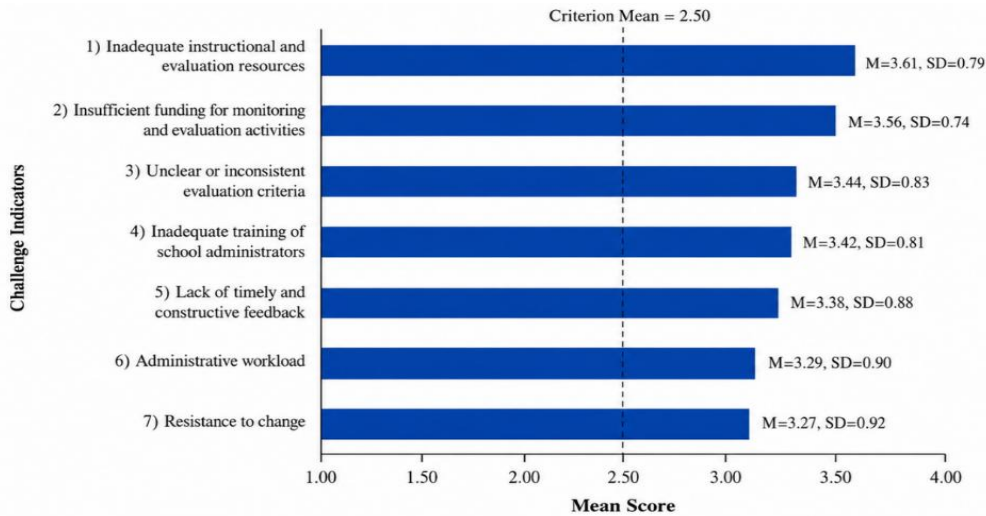
Continuous professional development had the lowest mean ($M = 3.73$), while still falling within the very high category. This indicates that professional-learning opportunities were comparatively less prominent, but does not imply a weaker contribution to teacher effectiveness. Determining the relative influence of each dimension requires inferential analysis, particularly multiple regression using beta coefficients, t-values, p-values, confidence intervals, and R^2 .

Challenges in Implementing Performance Management

Challenges in implementing performance management included institutional, managerial, financial, and behavioral factors that limited teacher evaluation, monitoring, feedback, supervision, and professional development. Researchers assessed seven items from the Performance Management and Teacher Effectiveness Questionnaire using a four-point Likert scale among 200 teachers and school administrators. Overall, respondents perceived implementation challenges as high ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.84$).

Inadequate instructional and evaluation resources represented the most prominent challenge ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.79$), followed by insufficient funding for monitoring and evaluation ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.74$), both classified as very high. Other challenges were unclear or inconsistent evaluation criteria ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.83$), inadequate administrator training ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.81$), lack of timely and

constructive feedback ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.88$), administrative workload ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.90$), and resistance to change ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.92$), all classified as high. Percentage distributions were unavailable and therefore excluded.



Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Figure 1. Mean Scores of Challenges in Implementing Performance Management

Figure 1 presents the seven implementation challenges by mean score. Inadequate instructional and evaluation resources recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.61$), followed by insufficient funding ($M = 3.56$). Unclear evaluation criteria ($M = 3.44$) and inadequate administrator training ($M = 3.42$) were close to the overall mean. In contrast, lack of timely feedback ($M = 3.38$), administrative workload ($M = 3.29$), and resistance to change ($M = 3.27$) were comparatively lower. All indicators exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50.

The findings suggest that performance management is constrained mainly by structural and institutional limitations, particularly inadequate resources and funding, rather than resistance to change. Although formal procedures may exist, insufficient tools, financial support, administrative capacity, and clear evaluation standards can limit their effectiveness.

Overall, structural constraints ranked highest, followed by procedural and capacity-related issues, while workload and resistance to change were less prominent. The mean difference between the highest and lowest challenges was 0.34, with standard deviations ranging from 0.74 to 0.92, indicating some variation in respondents' experiences.

These results highlight the need to strengthen performance management through adequate resources and funding, clear evaluation criteria, administrator capacity-building, timely feedback, and manageable supervisory workloads. Addressing these institutional conditions may provide a stronger foundation for effective implementation.

Strategies for Improving Performance Management

Strategies for improving performance management were defined as organizational interventions to strengthen the implementation, sustainability, and effectiveness of performance management in public senior secondary schools. The seven dimensions covered capacity development, financial support, instructional and technological resources, transparent evaluation criteria, feedback mechanisms, supportive school culture, and workload management. These were assessed using the Performance Management and Teacher Effectiveness Questionnaire (PMTEQ) on a four-point Likert scale, where higher scores indicated stronger agreement regarding the necessity of each strategy.

The findings showed a very high overall level of agreement ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.78$). All seven indicators exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating consistent recognition among respondents that these strategies are important for strengthening the implementation and sustainability of performance management practices.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Strategies for Improving Performance Management

Strategies / Indicators	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation
Regular training and capacity-building programs for teachers and administrators	3.68	0.71	Very High
Improving the availability of instructional materials and ICT tools for effective evaluation	3.66	0.73	Very High
Ensuring adequate funding for monitoring, evaluation, and teacher development activities	3.62	0.75	Very High
Establishing clear, consistent, and transparent performance evaluation criteria	3.59	0.78	Very High
Strengthening feedback mechanisms for timely and constructive communication	3.54	0.80	Very High
Promoting supportive school culture and openness to change	3.47	0.82	High
Reducing workload pressure on administrators for effective supervision and assessment	3.43	0.88	High
Overall Strategy Improvement	3.57	0.78	Very High

Capacity development was the most strongly supported strategy, with regular training receiving the highest mean ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.71$), followed by improving instructional materials and ICT availability ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.73$) and adequate funding for monitoring, evaluation, and teacher development ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.75$). These findings indicate that respondents prioritized professional competence and operational resources as key requirements for strengthening performance management.

Supportive school culture and openness to change ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.82$) and reducing administrative workload ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.88$) received comparatively lower scores but remained important. The narrow range between

the highest and lowest means (0.25) indicates broad agreement across all proposed strategies, with greater emphasis on training, resources, and funding than on organizational adjustments.

Because only descriptive statistics were available, ANOVA could not establish differences among teachers, principals, and vice-principals, nor could correlation or regression analysis assess the relative contribution of individual strategies. Thus, the findings support only a descriptive conclusion that capacity development, resource availability, and financial support were the most prominent strategies.

Practically, the results suggest that effective performance management requires more than formal evaluation procedures. Schools need continuous capacity building, adequate instructional and technological resources, sufficient funding, transparent evaluation systems, effective communication, and supportive leadership. Overall, the findings portray performance management as a system dependent on professional, financial, technological, and organizational support rather than administrative assessment alone.

Discussion

The first finding showed that performance management practices were perceived to be implemented at a very high level ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.79$), with regular feedback receiving the highest rating ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.84$). This finding is consistent with Collie (2023), who found that supportive leadership influences teachers' motivation and work-related outcomes, and Bellibaş et al. (2022), who showed that instructional leadership supports classroom practice through shared professional practice and teacher agency. It also corresponds with Röhl et al. (2025), whose meta-analysis found that feedback can improve teaching quality when teachers receive support to interpret and apply it. However, Gloppen (2023) noted that teacher evaluation may remain compliance-oriented and weakly connected to professional improvement. Thus, while the present study confirms the prominence of feedback and managerial involvement, it also indicates that high implementation ratings do not necessarily guarantee developmental quality.

The second finding identified substantial implementation challenges ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.84$), particularly inadequate resources, insufficient funding, inconsistent evaluation criteria, limited administrator training, delayed feedback, workload, and resistance to change. This result supports Toropova et al. (2021), who emphasized the influence of workload and school working conditions on teachers' professional experiences, and Wartenberg et al. (2023), who linked teachers' job satisfaction with instructional support and organizational conditions. The present study extends these findings by showing that substantial barriers may coexist with highly rated performance management practices. This points to an implementation-capacity gap, where formal procedures exist but institutional resources, training, standards, and supervisory capacity may be insufficient to support effective implementation.

The third finding indicated strong support for improvement strategies ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.78$), particularly training and capacity building, followed by instructional and ICT resources and adequate funding. This agrees with Surahman and Wang (2023), who identified training, workshops, and online learning as important approaches to teacher development. It is also consistent with Staervermann (2025), who found that online and blended professional development generally improves teacher competence and practice, and Morina et al. (2025), who reported medium effects on teacher- and classroom-level outcomes and smaller effects on student outcomes. The present study adds a contextual dimension by showing that professional development should be integrated with funding, infrastructure, resources, transparent evaluation standards, and follow-up feedback rather than implemented as an isolated intervention.

Overall, the findings support a systems-oriented perspective in which evaluation, feedback, leadership, and professional development are interdependent and shaped by enabling conditions. This interpretation aligns with Alazmi and Hammad (2023), who linked leadership with professional learning through trust and teacher agency, and Bellibaş et al. (2022), who demonstrated leadership's indirect role through shared practice and professional agency.

The contribution is threefold. Conceptually, the study advances a systems-oriented understanding of school-level performance management by connecting evaluation, feedback, leadership, professional development, and institutional capacity within one framework. Empirically, it provides context-specific evidence from public senior secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, contributing evidence from a setting that is less represented in the international literature. Practically, it identifies priority areas for policy and school-level intervention, particularly capacity building, resource provision, funding, transparent standards, and developmental feedback. These contributions should be interpreted within the limits of the descriptive design, which does not establish causal relationships between performance management and teacher effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that performance management in public senior secondary schools in Bwari Area Council is perceived as well implemented, particularly through feedback, managerial engagement, evaluation, and professional development, but is constrained by resource and funding shortages, unclear standards, limited administrator training, heavy workloads, and inconsistent feedback. The findings reveal an implementation-capacity gap and contribute to educational management literature by conceptualizing performance management as an integrated system linking evaluation, professional learning, leadership, resources, and teacher effectiveness. The implications are that

education authorities should strengthen funding, infrastructure, evaluation standards, and administrator capacity, while school leaders should ensure timely developmental feedback, continuous professional learning, and adequate supervisory support. These measures can shift performance management from administrative compliance toward sustained professional and instructional improvement. The study is limited by its cross-sectional, self-reported, single-context design and absence of inferential analysis; future research should use longitudinal or mixed-method approaches across multiple settings to test relationships with teacher and student outcomes.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

AI was used solely for language refinement, grammar checking, and clarity. The authors reviewed all AI suggestions and remained fully responsible for the research, analysis, interpretation, and final content. AI did not generate data or conduct analysis.

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