PRINCIPALS USE OF SOCIAL FUNCTION IN ENHANCING TEACHER QUALITY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH WEST REGION, CAMEROON

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Abstract

This study aimed at examining the use of principals' social function in enhancing teacher quality by specifically evaluating the ways in which the principals' use of interpersonal relationship enhances teacher quality and to examine the ways in which the principals' use of recognition enhances teacher quality. The convergent parallel mixed method research design was used in the study. The population of the study comprised of all secondary school teachers and principals in public, confessional and lay-private schools in the South West. The purposive and proportionate sampling techniques were used to select 707 participants, 695 teachers and 13 principals with the aid of a self-structured questionnaire and a research diary administered respectively. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings showed that 39.1% of principals used their interpersonal relationship in enhancing teacher quality. Further analysis revealed that principals attended out of school events, offered emotional help to teachers in affliction and gave teachers a listening ear. Findings also showed that 42.0% of principals used recognition in enhancing teacher quality. Further analysis revealed that principals provided verbal praise, appreciated work done by teachers and applauded teachers efforts during classroom visitations. Despite the level of execution of principal's social functions there is need for improvement in enhancing teacher quality. The researchers recommended that principals should provide a conflict-free school climate that is conducive for teachers and acknowledge the efforts of teachers by issuing certificates of honour to outstanding teachers. Further research could be carried on this same topic in other Regions of Cameroon.

Keywords:

Principal, Principals' Social Function, Teachers, Teaching Quality and Secondary Schools.

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Résumé

Cette étude visait à examiner le rôle social des chefs d'établissement dans l'amélioration de la qualité de l'enseignement, en évaluant plus précisément comment leurs relations interpersonnelles et la reconnaissance qu'ils accordent y contribuent. Une méthodologie mixte convergente parallèle a été utilisée. La population étudiée comprenait l'ensemble des enseignants et chefs d'établissement du secondaire des écoles publiques, confessionnelles et privées laïques du Sud-Ouest. Un échantillonnage raisonné et proportionnel a permis de sélectionner 707 participants (695 enseignants et 13 chefs d'établissement) à l'aide d'un questionnaire auto-administré et d'un journal de recherche. Les données ont été analysées à l'aide de statistiques descriptives et inférentielles. Les résultats ont montré que 39,1 % des chefs d'établissement utilisaient leurs relations interpersonnelles pour améliorer la qualité de l'enseignement. Une analyse plus approfondie a révélé que les chefs d'établissement participaient à des événements extrascolaires, offraient un soutien moral aux enseignants en difficulté et étaient à leur écoute. Les résultats ont également montré que 42 % des chefs d'établissement utilisaient la reconnaissance pour améliorer la qualité de l'enseignement. Une analyse plus approfondie a révélé que les chefs d'établissement adressaient des félicitations verbales, appréciaient le travail accompli par les enseignants et saluaient leurs efforts lors des visites de classe. Malgré le niveau d'exercice des fonctions sociales des chefs d'établissement, des améliorations sont nécessaires pour améliorer la qualité de l'enseignement. Les chercheurs recommandent que les chefs d'établissement instaurent un climat scolaire apaisé et propice au travail des enseignants et reconnaissent leurs efforts en décernant des certificats d'honneur aux enseignants les plus méritants. Des recherches complémentaires pourraient être menées sur ce sujet dans d'autres régions du Cameroun.

Mots-clés : Chef d'établissement, Fonction sociale du chef d'établissement, Enseignants, Qualité de l'enseignement, Enseignement secondaire.

Introduction

Teacher quality is a contested term with multiple meanings, often reflecting the perspectives and interest of different writers, researchers and policymakers. According to Goe (2007) teacher quality includes both teacher qualifications and characteristics (inputs) that influence teachers' instruction (process) and student outcomes. Teacher quality includes the knowledge that a teacher possesses, effective teaching practices, skill development, teacher evaluation and teacher preparation (Gottlieb, 2015). Teacher quality also refers to the ability of teachers to display the right attitude to work by being committed and dedicated to the teaching job and making frantic efforts towards the accomplishment of school goals and objectives. Regardless of which angle, the principals' role becomes pertinent in ensuring that teachers carry out their required functions.

In Cameroon, a principal is the most ranking administrator in a secondary school with the fundamental role in ensuring that teachers teach well and students learn (Kurland et al., 2010). The role of a school principal has become increasingly complex as the nature of society, political expectations, and schools as organizations have changed (Valentine & Prater, 2011). The principal is the most important administrator in a secondary school charged with administrative, pedagogic, financial and social functions. However, a lot of

focus has been on the principals' administrative and somewhat pedagogic function. Chukwu et al. (2021) evaluated the administrative roles of principals on teacher's job performance in private secondary schools and found out that principal's administrative roles in the area of staff personnel administration enhanced teachers' job performance. Some other research related to this was carried out by Ekemezie and Anyaogu (2021). They conducted a study on the roles of principals in internal supervision for the development of teacher quality and standards in secondary schools and found out that the roles of principals in internal supervision for development of teacher quality and standards include: encouraging and providing for teacher growth and development, aiding the beginning teachers to grow professionally by helping them identify methods to adopt in teaching, encouraging co-curricular activities in the school and ensuring that financial records are kept up to date.

But little research has been done on social functions, however Nwosu (2017) conducted a study on Principals social function. That is principals' Communication Strategies and Teachers' Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools. Even though Nwosu (2017) conducted a study on the social function, he looked at it from the perspective of communication. However, the interpersonal relationship and recognition was left out. This study is therefore coming in to look at the principal's social function in enhancing teacher quality from the perspective of principals' interpersonal relationship and principals 'recognition in public, confessional and lay-private secondary schools in the South West Region.

Specifically, this study seeks to:
1) Evaluate the ways in which principals use interpersonal relationships in enhancing teacher quality in secondary schools in the South West Region.
2) Examine the ways in which principals use recognition in enhancing teacher quality in secondary schools in the South West Region.

It was anticipated that this study may be beneficial to teachers, providing an in-depth knowledge of how principals social functions affect teacher quality. As a result, teachers may develop strategies at improving their quality by enrolling in a programme or through individualized learning. Also, it can help school principals' by bringing to their awareness how the performance of duties can either enhance or diminish teachers' quality. Consequently, it can permit the principal to adjust these management practices accordingly, in order to improve on teacher quality and school performance.

Previous Research on Principals' Social Function and Teacher Quality
Teacher quality is defined as the essential characteristics of a good teacher. The characteristics include the knowledge that a teacher possesses such as effective teaching practices, skill development, teacher evaluation and teacher preparation (Gottlieb, 2015). Goe (2007) extends this definition further arguing that teacher quality includes both teacher characteristics and teacher qualifications and characteristics that influence teachers' instruction and student outcomes. Notwithstanding, Mbua (2003) opined that the effectiveness of a teacher is partly dependent on the type of leadership offered by their school head. He further opined that in Cameroon, the head of a secondary school is the principal. According to Mbua (2003) principalship refers to the duties, job or responsibilities of principals. Botha (2004) defines principalship as the duties of the school principal in a school establishment. The discharge of these duties and responsibilities can be well categorised into four including the administrative, pedagogic, social and financial functions.

The principal's social functions include creating a collaborative work environment that is site-based, supports teamwork, and promotes cohesion and cooperation (Mullen, 2007). It is the ability to motivate, facilitate, coordinate, lead, communicate, manage conflict, and get along with others (Arnett, 2010). In this paper, principals' social function was operationalized as interpersonal relationship and recognition. In the study of Angelle (2006), she posits that the instructive leader is one that contributes to the organizational socialization of a teacher. The principal that is supportive and friendly enhances the teacher's inclusion in the school unit and makes sure there is continuity in his or her work.

Davis (2003) indicated that effective instruction comprises high quality interaction between educators and leaners and also amongst peers. Davis opicits that appropriate outcomes appear when there is collaboration between educators and learners. Therefore, teachers play a significant role in achieving the required outcome. Bergin (2009), revealed that attachment-based approach to teacher-learner interpersonal relationship is on the premise that educators who provide sincere, secure and helpful interactions with their learners act as central non-parental attachment. The quality of teacher-learner interpersonal relationship can affect some positive psychological constructs including academic engagement, foreign language enjoyment, resilience, self-efficacy and wellbeing among learners in order to improve the learner's healthy behavioral functioning (Derakhshan, 2021.) In educational institutions whereby the relations between students and teachers, and amongst teachers are harmonious, friendly, collaborative and respectful, they provide the students with positive models.

Teacher recognition is a measure in achieving high quality education and students' academic performance in secondary schools. According to Lee & Kim (2023), teacher recognition includes acknowledging and valuing the efforts and achievements of educators. It does not only boost teachers' morale and job satisfaction but also has a ripple effect on student performance. A study by Tadesse & Bekele (2020) in Ethiopia found that teacher recognition through awards and public acknowledgment was positively correlated with students' academic performance. Similarly, Ali & Ahmed (2021) in Pakistan demonstrated that schools with formal recognition programmes for teachers witnessed higher student achievement levels compared to those without such programmes. Johnson and Williams (2023) examined the correlation between teacher recognition programmes and students' academic performance in secondary schools. The researchers utilized a mixed-method approach, including surveys and academic performance data from various schools. Findings indicated a significant positive relationship between teacher recognition and students' performance, highlighting the role of teacher motivation and job satisfaction. Another study carried out by Patel & Desai (2023) reported that community-based recognition events, peer-nominated awards, and publicizing teacher achievements in local media significantly enhanced teacher morale and performance.

Smith and Brown (2022) conducted a study to explore how recognition and reward systems for teachers influence their motivation and effectiveness, and subsequently, student academic outcomes. The study used longitudinal data from secondary schools across several districts and found that schools with robust teacher recognition programmes recorded improved student performance in standardized test.

Saiteu (2024) studied the effects of teachers' recognition on secondary school students' academic performance in Arusha District Council, Tanzania. The study assessed the extent

to which teachers' recognition influences students' academic performance and the effective strategies to enhance teachers' recognition in public secondary schools. Social Action theory guided the study. Sequential explanatory design was adopted. Sample size consisted of 172 respondents, the stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting the respondents. Instruments used for data collection was a questionnaire and an interview guide. The findings showed teacher recognition plays a crucial role in influencing various aspects of the teaching and learning process leading to improved students' academic performances.

When teachers feel recognized and appreciated, they are more motivated and engaged, leading to more effective teaching practices and a positive classroom environment. In South Africa, Williams & Green (2021) in their study on teacher recognition in low-resource settings: challenges and solutions contend that low-cost recognition strategies such as verbal acknowledgments, certificates, and small tokens of appreciation had a positive impact on teacher motivation and student outcomes in low-resource settings.

Theoretical Framework
The Social Function theory by Emile Durkheim (1800-1900) and Talcott Parsons (1940s - 1950s) provided a framework that informed this study. This theory is often associated with functionalism because it examines how various social institutions like schools contribute to the stability and functioning of society. According to this theory, school principals play a critical role in enhancing teacher quality through fostering a positive and collaborative environment within the school, building relationships and strong community ties, addressing conflicts that arise within the school environment, motivating teachers to strive for excellence in their teaching practices that contributes to the overall environment. This theory is relevant to this study in that when principals effectively manage their schools, teachers thrive, ultimately contributing to better student outcomes and a more cohesive educational system.

Methods
This study adopted a mixed method approach with focus on the convergent parallel mixed-method design. In this design, the quantitative and qualitative methods were used to obtain triangulated results. Data was collected from teachers and principals concurrently using questionnaires and diary methods respectively. The data was later analysed independently using quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches as opined by Dawadi et al. (2021). This study was carried out in secondary schools in the South West Region.

Participants
707 participants including teachers and principals constituted the sample size of the study. Overall, the sample constituted of 356 males and 351 females drawn from 34% of respondents from public; 28% of respondents from confessional and 38% of respondents from lay private schools in the South West Region. On this note, a sample of 694 teachers and 13 principals made up the sample size for the study selected using the purposive and proportionate sampling techniques.

Instruments
The researcher used a self-developed questionnaire in collecting data for teachers and a research diary for principals. The questionnaire consisted of 65 items, both open and closed-ended items. The closed ended items were put on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree (SA=4), Agree (A=3), Disagree (D=2) and Strongly Disagree (SD=1). The items were

clear, short and proficient enough in order to discard every form of misunderstanding of items. The Likert-type close-ended items were used because of the ease of responding and the short time required answering. Reasons for the choice of questionnaire was because it was a source of primary data, free from bias, required less time to complete and could cover a large sample size within limited time. The research diary constituted of five questions, to be completed within a duration of five weeks by principals. The reason of the research diary was to give principals the opportunity to give more details about the performance of their duties thereby providing more data for the researcher as well as strengthening the weaknesses of the questionnaire

Quantitative data was analysed using the descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The descriptive statistical tools used were frequency count, percentages, mean, standard deviation, and multiple responses set which aimed at calculating the summary of findings for each variable for a quick comprehension of the overall findings. The addition of mean was to better appreciate the level of principals' execution of their function and teacher quality. Qualitative data derived from principals' diary and open-ended questions gotten from teachers were analysed using the thematic analysis approach with the aid of themes, and quotations.

In order to ensure content validity, the instrument was designed with the aid of related literature reviewed in the study. This was to ensure that the test items on the instruments corresponded to the indicators of the variables in the study. The questionnaire was constructed under the guidance of the research supervisors who ensured that all items were related to the objectives. Copies of the instrument were given to lecturers in the Department of Educational Foundations and to a statistician for scrutiny and suggestions. The researcher also worked together with supervisors in formulating questions to be responded to by principals. It required principals' to better express themselves in detail within a duration of five weeks other than the interview guide which could limit their expressions and idea due to limited time. After this, the data from the diary was transcribed and some changes were made in terms of language. Some of the questions were fine-tuned to be explicit and clear for the participants to respond to questions easily within the stated duration.

Construct validity of the instruments was ensured by formulating test items using related literature reviewed, the instruments were verified by comparing it to other tests items that measured similar qualities to see how highly correlated the two measurements were. In other to ensure face validity of the items, they were formulated and submitted to the supervisors, departmental lecturers and statistician for necessary corrections so as to guide research items to be orderly and reader-friendly to the respondents. The questionnaire was reviewed in terms of structure, and item formatting, clarity, appropriateness of language and expressions. All the items on the instruments were critically examined, some reframed to be clear, simple and unambiguous while the unsuitable ones were eliminated. The reliability of the questionnaire was established through pilot testing using 10 teachers who were not part of the study. The reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach Alpha test and the recommended threshold value was 0.7.

Ethical Consideration
In carrying out this study, authorization was obtained for the field work. The researchers obtained verbal consent from participants before administering the instruments. The researcher also informed the respondents that their participation was voluntary and they

could withdraw at any time when they felt uncomfortable. Privacy and anonymity were ensured by assuring respondents their responses were to be handled confidential. Respondents were asked not to write their names on the instruments so that their identities will not be revealed. Respondents were made to understand that the information provided was to be used only for the purpose of research.

Findings

This section presented the findings on the Use of Principals' functions in improving teacher quality in secondary schools in the South West Region. The quantitative findings were first presented followed by qualitative data.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Teachers

Demographic information		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	356	50.4
	Female	351	49.6
Longevity in service	Less than 5 years	184	26.0
	5-10 years	358	50.6
	11-20 years	151	21.4
	21-30 years	14	2.0
School type	Public	240	33.9
	Confessional	200	28.3
	Lay Private	267	37.8
Highest qualification	Advanced Level/Equivalent	199	28.1
	Higher National Diplomat	356	50.4
	Bachelor's Degree	133	18.8
	Master's Degree	10	1.4
	Doctorate	9	1.3

Findings on table 1 revealed the demographic data of respondents, among the 707 respondents sampled, 50.4% (356) were males and 49.6% (351) females. From the statistics, it is seen that there was no significant difference between males and females. With respect to longevity in service, 26.0% (184) of the respondents have been in service less than 5 years, of the teachers 50.6% (358) were in service for 5-10 years, 21.4% (151) have been in service for 11-20 years and 2.0% (14) have been in service for 21-30 years. With respect to school type, 37.8% (267) of respondents were from Lay Private schools, 33.9% (240) respondents were from public schools, and 28.3% (200) respondents were from Confessional schools. Finally, 50.4% (356) of teachers were holders of Higher National Diplomat as their highest educational qualification, while 28.1% (199) were Advanced Level holders/Equivalent, 18.8% (133) Bachelor's Degree, 1.4% (10) Master's and 1.3% (9) Doctorate. By this, it shows that majority of the teachers 78.6% (555) have not been to the university rather, they are holders of diplomas while just 21.4% (152) have been in the university. This again signify that majority of the teachers may not show adequate mastery of their field of study because a teacher who have gone to the university to further his/her education is more advanced than someone teaching merely with knowledge obtain from higher school.

Table 2 presented findings on teacher quality

Table 2
Evaluation of Teacher Quality

Items	Stretched				Collapsed		Mean	Std. Dev
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD		
In the last two years, I have taken refresher courses on teaching.	59 (8.3%)	104 (14.7%)	101 (14.3%)	443 (62.7%)	163 (23.1%)	544 (76.9%)	1.69	1.006
My students often generally perform well.	76 (10.7%)	98 (13.9%)	84 (11.9%)	449 (63.5%)	174 (24.6%)	533 (75.3%)	1.72	1.061
I always feel confident about the classes that I teach.	80 (11.3%)	104 (14.7%)	114 (16.1%)	409 (57.9%)	184 (26.0%)	523 (74.0%)	1.79	1.067
I am often involved in continuous professional development.	62 (8.8%)	138 (19.5%)	92 (13.0%)	415 (58.7%)	200 (28.3%)	507 (71.7%)	1.78	1.043
All teachers' lessons are mostly engaging.	63 (8.9%)	120 (17.0%)	106 (15.0%)	418 (59.1%)	183 (25.9%)	524 (74.1%)	1.76	1.029
I am needless of technical support to teach my lessons.	69 (9.8%)	140 (19.8%)	108 (15.3%)	390 (55.2%)	209 (29.6%)	498 (70.4%)	1.84	1.057
MRS and overall mean	**409 (9.6%)**	**704 (16.6%)**	**605 (14.3%)**	**2524 (59.5%)**	**1113 (26.2%)**	**3129 (73.8%)**	**1.76**	**1.044**

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree and SD= Strongly Disagree; Std. Dev; Standard Deviation

Table 2 shows that overall teacher quality was low as 74% (3129) of the respondents disagreed to teacher quality indicators with an overall mean score of 1.76. Several of the indicators fell below the mean. Most notably, about 77% (544) of the teachers have not taken refresher course in the last two years neither do they perceive their students are often performing well 75^% (533). Similarly, majority 74% (524) indicated their lessons are not engaging and they are often not involved in continuous professional development 74% (507). Most teachers 74% (523) do not always feel confident about the classes that they teach. Regardless of these low perceptions majority of the teachers 70% (498) indicated that they do not need any technical support for their lessons.

Therefore, one could say the low teacher quality could be attributed to the fact that in the last two years teachers have not taken refresher courses on teaching and are not involved in continuous professional development. When teachers do not feel confident about the classes they teach, their lessons will not be engaging. More also, they cannot teach without technical support and as a result, their students cannot perform well. An evaluation of Principals use of Interpersonal Relationship revealed that teachers perceive principal's interpersonal relationship as low. These findings are presented in table 3.

Table 3
Evaluation of Principals' Use of Interpersonal Relationship

Item Description	Stretched				Collapsed		Mean	Std Dev
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD		
My principal attends out of school events organized by teachers.	114 (16.1%)	187 (26.4%)	148 (20.9%)	258 (36.5%)	301 (42.6%)	406 (57.4%)	2.22	1.108
My principal often offers emotional help to teachers in the case of an affliction.	98 (13.9%)	190 (26.9%)	165 (23.3%)	254 (35.9%)	288 (40.7%)	419 (59.3%)	2.19	1.072
I am often given a listening ear by my principal.	100 (14.1%)	186 (26.3%)	159 (22.5%)	262 (37.1%)	286 (40.5%)	421 (59.5%)	2.18	1.082
My principal is always very approachable.	90 (12.7%)	191 (27.0%)	168 (23.8%)	258 (36.5%)	281 (39.7%)	426 (60.3%)	2.16	1.058
My principal ensures the social work condition is conducive for teachers.	84 (11.9%)	174 (24.6%)	165 (23.3%)	284 (40.2%)	258 (36.5%)	449 (63.5%)	2.08	1.057
My principal always provides solutions to conflicts that arise amongst teachers.	80 (11.3%)	166 (23.5%)	119 (16.8%)	342 (48.4%)	246 (34.8%)	461 (65.2%)	1.98	1.083
MRS and overall mean	**566 (13.3%)**	**1094 (25.8%)**	**924 (21.8%)**	**1658 (39.1%)**	**1660 (39.1%)**	**2582 (60.9%)**	**2.14**	**1.077**

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree and SD= Strongly Disagree; Std. Dev; Standard Deviation

Table 3 shows that principals use of interpersonal relationship was low as 61% (2582) of the respondents disagreed to teacher quality indicators with an overall mean score of 2.14. majority of the respondents 65% (461) of the teachers said their principal do not always provide solutions to conflicts that arises amongst teachers neither do their principal ensure the social work condition is conducive for teachers 64% (449). Similarly, majority, 60% (426) of teachers indicated their principal is not easily approachable and often do not give teachers a listening ear 61% (421). Most teachers 59% (419) said their principal often do not offer emotional help to teachers who are afflicted. Regardless of these low perceptions, majority of the teachers 57% (406) indicated that their principal attends out of school events. When these findings were triangulated with principals' view of how they use interpersonal relation using the diary method, findings revealed three core themes as presented on figure 1.

Contrary to teacher's views, analysis of qualitative data evaluating principal's view related to their use of interpersonal relationship revealed three core sub themes as presented in figure 1.

Figure 1
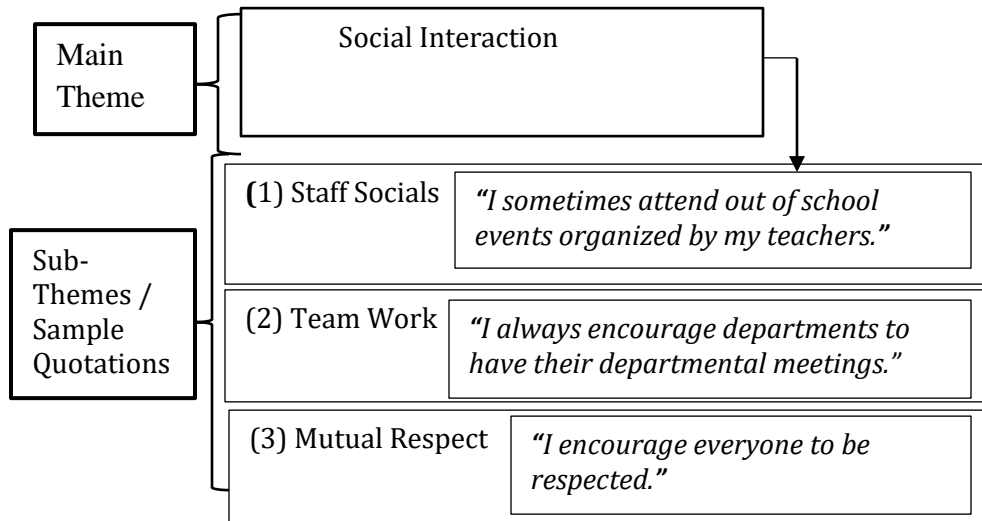Principal's Evaluation of their use of Interpersonal Relationship

Figure 1 indicated the responses of principals on their use of interpersonal relationship. Their responses were grouped under one main theme social interaction. The theme was subdivided into three sub-themes. Findings revealed that principals used their interpersonal relationship through staff socials as depicted in the statement "*I sometimes attend out of school events.*" Others reported they ensured there was team work as reported in the statement *"I always encourage departments to have their departmental meetings."* Others indicated they ensured mutual respect as indicated in the statement *"I encourage everyone to be respected."*
Table 3 presented the quantitative data gotten from questionnaires of teachers on their evaluation of principals' use of recognition.

Table 4
Evaluation of Principals' Use of Recognition

Item Description	Stretched				Collapsed		Mean	Std
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD		Dev
My principal often acknowledges the efforts of teachers.	95 (13.4%)	123 (17.4%)	116 (16.4%)	373 (52.8%)	218 (30.8%)	489 (69.2%)	1.92	1.111
My principal often appreciates work done by teachers.	130 (18.4%)	232 (32.8%)	189 (26.7%)	156 (22.1%)	362 (51.2%)	345 (48.8%)	1.78	1.010
My principal often applauds the efforts put in by teachers during his/her classroom visitations.	127 (18.0%)	232 (32.8%)	183 (25.9%)	165 (23.3%)	359 (50.8%)	348 (49.2%)	1.83	1.104
My principal often issues certificates of honour to teachers who are outstanding.	76 (10.7%)	150 (21.2%)	85 (12.0%)	396 (56.0%)	226 (32.0%)	481 (68.0%)	1.67	.969

My principal usually gives financial motivation to teachers.	82 (11.6%)	150 (21.2%)	94 (13.3%)	381 (53.9%)	232 (32.8%)	475 (67.2%)	1.71	.972
My principal often provides verbal praise.	149 (21.1%)	237 (33.5%)	163 (23.1%)	158 (22.3%)	386 (54.6%)	321 (35.4%)	1.69	.990
MRS and overall mean	**659 (15.5%)**	**1124 (26.5%)**	**830 (19.6%)**	**1629 (38.4%)**	**1783 (42.0%)**	**2459 (58.0%)**	**1.76**	**1.026**

Based on teachers' evaluation of principal's use of recognition, table 4 shows that principals use of recognition was low as 58% (2459) of the respondents disagreed to principal's use of recognition indicators with an overall mean score of 1.76. Majority of the respondents 69% (489) of the teachers indicated their principal often do not acknowledge their efforts, neither does he honour teachers 68% (481). Also, majority 67% (475) of teachers indicated their principal financially motivates teachers. Irrespective of these low perceptions, majority of teachers 49% (348) of teachers indicated their principal often applauds the efforts of teachers and appreciates work done by them 48% (345). More also, 35% (321) teachers indicated their principal often provides verbal praise. Contrary to teacher's views, analysis of qualitative data evaluating principals' view related to their use of recognition revealed three core sub themes as presented in figure 2.

Figure 2
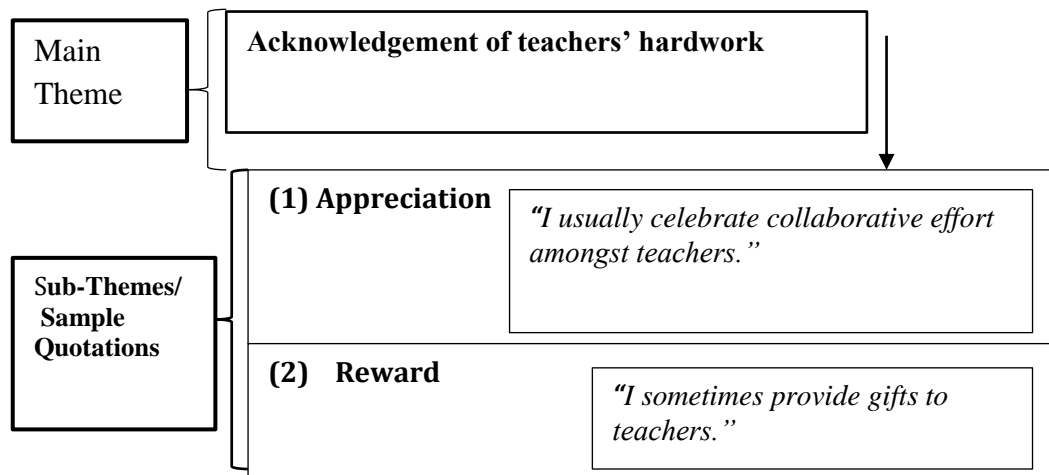**Principal's Evaluation of their use of Recognition**

Figure 2 above indicated the responses of principals regarding their use of recognition. Their responses were grouped under one main theme with two specific sub-themes. Principals reported they used their recognition by appreciating teachers' collaborative efforts as indicated in the statement "*I usually celebrate collaborative effort amongst teachers.*" Others indicated they used their recognition by rewarding teachers as reported in the statement "*I sometimes provide gifts to teachers.*"

Discussion of Findings
This study sought to examine the influence of principals' use of social function in enhancing teacher quality using interpersonal relationship and recognition in secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon. The findings indicated that interpersonal relationship is low thus affecting teacher quality. Teacher quality might be hindered due to limited cordial relationship that exists between principals' and teachers.' When there is no cordiality, the attendance during out of school events will be poor, teachers will find it difficult approaching their principals. Many teachers reported that principals are not always very approachable and are not often soft spoken. When a principal is not soft spoken, teachers turn to shy away from them because they cannot be listened to in the case of an affliction. The low interpersonal relationship has a significant and strong influence in enhancing teacher quality as justified by high positive coefficient value and a high predicted explanatory power. In other words, teachers are more likely to enhance their quality when principals ensure a cordial interpersonal relationship amongst them. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis that states that the use of principals' interpersonal relationship significantly enhances teacher quality in secondary schools in the South West Region was accepted.

The issue of fostering inter-personal relationships amongst teachers tied with the findings of Maduagwu & Nwogu (2008) which revealed that   social conditions of work have to do with assignment of responsibilities, inter-personal relationships with subordinates, and inter-personal relationship with colleagues. This social interaction goes a long way in influencing the level of teacher's productivity. Also, Suzanne et al. (2010) found out that the social environment described as interpersonal relationship, labour-management relations, motivation, workers' training and development has high influence on the workers` morale and efficiency at workplace and this forms part of the social work condition. This evidently implies high productivity. We must therefore understand that relationship is a very important aspect that increases the productivity in a school setting. Therefore, principals should ensure that good inter-personal relationships are maintained.
This finding also tied with the work of Sinisa (2016) who carried out a study titled "The Curriculum of Social Competences and Relations in School." The correlation analysis confirmed a low negative statistically significant correlation between the years of service and the subscale rough verbal and physical treatment (Rho=-0.101). In view of the subscale of rough verbal and physical treatment between pupils and teachers, such results on a negative correlation implied older teachers as opposed to their younger colleagues use more corporal punishment in schools, treat pupils rudely, use nasty and impolite words, and call pupils insulting names.

The findings showed that teacher recognition is low as many teachers disagreed than agreed their principals recognized their work. The low recognition may be due to the fact that their principals often do not give them certificates of honour when they work hard and do not appreciate work done by teachers. Findings revealed many teachers reported their principals often do not praise them verbally when they exhibit extraordinary performances. Also, many teachers reported their principals usually do not give them financial motivation. When principals' do not appreciate the work done by their teachers', the tendency is that they feel reluctant to work as a result their quality drops and the performances of students' also drops. The low teacher recognition has a significant and strong influence in enhancing teacher quality as justified by high positive coefficient value and a high predicted explanatory power. Teachers are more likely to improve on their quality when principals recognise the work they do. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected while the

alternative hypothesis that states that the principals' use of recognition significantly enhances teacher quality in secondary schools in the South West Region was accepted.

Regardless of how impactful the use of recognition by principals on teacher quality can be, the descriptive analysis revealed that more teachers reported that their principals do not recognize their efforts when compared to those who said their principals sufficiently recognized their efforts. By this, it shows a good number of principals need to improve on their social function by recognizing the effort of teachers. Despite this need for improvement, some teachers said their principals acknowledged the efforts of teachers, appreciate work done, applauds teachers, give certificates of honor to teachers, gives out small tokens as a means of motivating teachers who work hard and provides verbal praise when they exhibit extraordinary performances.

This finding tied with that of Johnson and Williams (2023) who conducted a study to examine the correlation between teacher recognition programmes and students' academic performance in secondary schools. The findings indicated a significant positive relationship between teacher recognition and students' performance, highlighting the role of teacher motivation and job satisfaction. Also, in another study by Smith and Brown (2022) on how recognition and reward systems for teachers influenced their motivation and effectiveness, and subsequently, student academic outcomes in secondary schools across several districts found out that schools with robust teacher recognition programmes recorded improved student performance in standardized tests. More also, in another study by Williams & Green (2021) on teacher recognition in low-resource settings: challenges and solutions contend that low-cost recognition strategies such as verbal acknowledgments, certificates, and small tokens of appreciation had a positive impact on teacher motivation and student outcomes in low-resource settings.

In the above studies it was evident that the principal's use of recognition if adequately applied would play a significant role in bringing about teacher quality. On this note, it is essential that every principal irrespective of school type should not ignore recognizing the efforts of teachers within their institution. This is because when principals fail in appreciating teachers, they may feel discourage to work effectively.

Conclusion
This paper addressed the link between principals social functions and   teacher quality in secondary schools in the South West Region. Principals' social functions were operationalized as principals' use of interpersonal relationship and principals' use of recognition. Data was gathered from teachers and principals and findings revealed a significant proportion of teachers reported that principals do not adequately use their social functions. When principals do not adequately use their social functions teacher quality will be low. Apart from principals' social functions, there are other variables that influence teacher quality such as teacher workload and well-being, motivation and professional development. Teacher workload and well-being influences teacher quality because very long hours of work inhibits teacher quality. This could be caused by work-load stress (National Education Union, 2018). This leads to declining levels of teacher retention among teachers (Foster, 2019). According to Jerrim & Sims (2019), declining levels of retention hinders the quality of instruction provided by schools.

Motivation is an important factor that influences teacher quality. According to Nadeem et al. (2011), social and financial factors significantly influence female teachers' performance

such as low pay, instructor's public image, work place stress, their emotional well-being, relationship with staff and headteachers, the working environment and lack of office space. Olumide-Aluko & Linda (2013) posits that the relationship between job performance and motivation can have big effects if motivation is ignored. Effective professional development is designed to trigger positive changes in teachers practices in the classroom which brings about improvement in students learning attainment (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

There is therefore need for improvement in principals' social functions in improving teacher quality. Principals therefore need to adopt strategies that fosters growth, professional development and productivity such as providing a conflict free school climate, always appreciating the efforts of teachers, encouraging cordial relationships, promote social events, give emotional support to teachers in affliction, encourage team work, provide certificates of honor to outstanding teachers, foster respect and communication. When principals do not properly carry out their social functions, it will lead to low teaching quality and consequently poor academic performance of students. The researchers recommended that Principals of secondary schools should provide a conflict free school climate and always appreciate the efforts of teachers. Further research could be carried out on this similar topic in other regions of Cameroon

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