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Principals' Communication Practices, Teachers' Job Descriptions, and Students' Academic Performance in Lagos State Junior Secondary Schools, Nigeria

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Abstract

The quality of school leadership and the precision with which teaching responsibilities are articulated are widely acknowledged as determinants of educational success. This research explored the interplay between principals' communication practices, teachers' understanding and execution of their professional roles, and the resulting academic achievement of students in public junior secondary schools across Lagos State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey and correlational research design was adopted for the study. The investigation involved a population of 327 principals and 8,865 teachers distributed among the six Education Districts in Lagos State. A multi-stage sampling procedure produced 563 participants, with 551 usable responses retained for final analysis, representing a 97.9% response rate. Measurement tools included a Principals' Communication Practices Questionnaire, a Teachers' Job Description Questionnaire, and a Record Observation Format capturing Basic Education Certificate Examination outcomes. The instruments demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with Cronbach alpha values of 0.87 and 0.85 respectively. Statistical analysis involved Pearson's correlation and multiple regression, with significance set at the 0.05 level. Findings revealed substantial positive associations between principals' communication practices and students' achievement scores ($r = 0.682$), between instructional role execution and learning results ($r = 0.711$), and between leadership communication and role performance ($r = 0.624$). The regression model was highly significant, with the predictor set accounting for 71.6% of the variability in academic outcomes ($R = 0.846$, $R^2 = 0.716$). It was concluded that when school heads communicate with clarity and consistency, and when teaching staff possess a precise understanding of their duties, student attainment improves markedly. Recommendation include the need for compulsory communication training

for school administrators and the formalization of unambiguous job Description for classroom practitioners.

Keywords: Leadership communication, Role definition, Student achievement, Junior secondary education, School administration

1. Introduction

Across the globe, education serves as a cornerstone of societal progress, and the personnel who operate within schooling systems are indispensable to the realization of its objectives. Within secondary institutions, two groups school principals as administrative and instructional leaders, and classroom teachers as learning facilitators hold the greatest responsibility for converting educational policies into measurable learner gains. The connection between these parties is frequently sustained through communicative processes, which constitute the vital link in any organized setting. When principals deploy sound communication techniques, they acknowledge the professionalism of their teaching corps, inspiring and directing them to carry out their assigned functions with competence [1, 26]. An atmosphere defined by openness, transparency, and mutual support fosters the alignment of staff actions with institutional aims while minimizing misinterpretation.

However, the deterioration of communicative exchanges between school heads and their teaching personnel has surfaced as a pressing managerial concern in numerous secondary institutions. Notwithstanding widespread acknowledgement of its critical role, the practice of proficient communication is frequently irregular and deficient [17]. Across many Nigerian secondary settings, information flow tends to be unsystematic and unidirectional, restricting the involvement of teachers in governance matters and producing a divide between organizational aspirations and classroom realities [1, 13]. Such communicative shortcomings breed confusion, erode collegial bonds, and result in diminished educator morale, weakened occupational dedication, and less-than-optimal instructional delivery [22].

Related to these communication problems is the challenge of unclear or poorly defined teaching responsibilities. In many government-owned secondary schools, teachers are often expected to perform different tasks, including teaching, administrative duties, and supervision, without a clear understanding of their specific responsibilities. This situation creates uncertainty and conflicting expectations, which can increase stress, reduce productivity, and affect teachers' performance [19, 20]. Akinyele and Olatunde [4] confirmed that unclear roles are a major cause of teacher dissatisfaction, emotional stress, and reduced focus on teaching activities. The combination of poor communication and unclear job descriptions can negatively affect students' learning outcomes. Teachers may find it difficult to plan effective lessons, apply appropriate teaching methods, and provide consistent feedback to students [2, 23].

Although previous studies have examined principals' communication practices [7, 18] and teachers' job responsibilities separately [6, 12], limited attention has been given to how these two factors work together to influence students' academic achievement, especially in Lagos State junior secondary schools. This study was therefore designed to address this gap in existing research.

2. Literature Review

Two leadership frameworks served as the theoretical foundation for this study. The Transformational Leadership perspective [8, 9] highlights a leader's capacity to galvanize and energize team

members by conveying an inspiring vision and offering personalized attention. Transformational leaders motivate their followers to transcend self-interest for the greater good of the organization, fostering commitment and encouraging innovation. In the school context, transformational principals inspire teachers to embrace institutional goals, enhance their professional practice, and contribute meaningfully to student learning outcomes. Recent studies have applied this framework to understand principal effectiveness in Nigerian secondary schools, demonstrating that transformational leaders foster teacher commitment and innovation [24, 25].

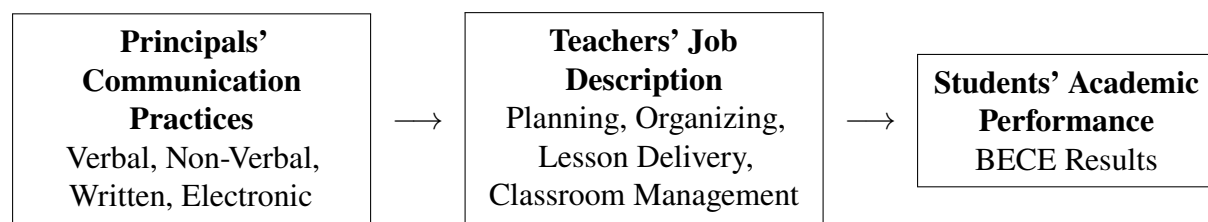
The Path-Goal framework [16] asserts that a leader's success rests on their skill in elucidating targets, making clear the route to success, eliminating hindrances, and supplying assistance. According to this theory, effective leaders clarify the path to goal attainment, remove obstacles, and provide the necessary support to enable followers to achieve their objectives. In the educational setting, principals who practice path-goal leadership ensure that teachers understand what is expected of them, have access to needed resources, and receive appropriate guidance and encouragement. Contemporary research has employed path-goal theory to examine how principals clarify expectations and remove obstacles to teacher performance in resource-constrained environments [11, 3].

Together, these models offer complementary viewpoints for comprehending how a principal's communicative actions shape a teacher's role execution and, subsequently, student outcomes. Transformational leadership provides the motivational dimension, while path-goal theory offers the structural and supportive dimension. Both frameworks emphasize the critical role of communication in effective leadership.

3. Conceptual Framework

This study is built on the premise that principals' communication practices influence teachers' understanding and execution of their job descriptions, which in turn affects students' academic performance. The conceptual framework for this study is presented below.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationships Among Variable



Variable 1: Principals' Communication Practices

Verbal Communication (Meetings, Speeches, Oral Feedback, Briefings, Discussions)

Non-Verbal Communication (Body Language, Gestures, Facial Expressions, Eye Contact, Proximity)

Written Communication (Memos, Circulars, Official Letters, Notices, Reports, Minutes)

Electronic Communication (Emails, Text Messages, School Websites, WhatsApp, Online Platforms, Digital Announcements)

Variable 2: Teachers' Job Description

Planning (Lesson Plans, Schemes of Work, Materials Development)

Organizing (Resource Coordination, Time Allocation, Activity Sequencing)

Lesson Delivery (Concept Explanation, Pedagogical Methods, Student Engagement, Feedback Adaptation)

Classroom Management (Behavioural Expectations, Discipline, Supportive Environment, Student Engagement)

Variable 3: Students' Academic Performance

Measured through BECE Examination Results (Aggregated Scores)

Subject Achievement and Overall Performance

3.1. Conceptual Clarification of Key Variables

The three key variables are defined and operationalized as follows:

1. Principals' Communication Practices

Principals' communication practices refer to the various methods, channels, and strategies that school principals use to convey information, instructions, feedback, and expectations to teachers and other school stakeholders.

Communication is defined as the process of transmitting information, ideas, thoughts, and feelings from one person to another through various channels to achieve mutual understanding [26]. In the school context, communication is the vital link between school leadership and classroom practice. Effective communication ensures that teachers understand institutional goals, receive clear instructions, and feel valued and supported in their professional roles [1].

Principals' communication practices in this study are operationalized across four dimensions:

(a) Verbal Communication: This involves the use of spoken words to convey messages. In the school context, it includes principal-led meetings, staff briefings, oral feedback during classroom observations, speeches during school assemblies, and one-on-one discussions with teachers. Effective verbal communication is characterized by clarity, active listening, and appropriate tone [13].

(b) Non-Verbal Communication: This involves the transmission of messages without the use of words. It includes body language, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, and proximity. In the educational setting, a principal's non-verbal communication can significantly influence teachers' perceptions of approachability, sincerity, and support [22].

(c) Written Communication: This involves the use of written words to convey information. In schools, it includes official memos, circulars, notices, staff handbooks, policy documents, letters, minutes of meetings, and reports. Written communication provides a permanent record of instructions and decisions, ensuring clarity and accountability [7].

(d) Electronic Communication: This involves the use of digital and technological platforms to convey messages. It includes emails, text messages, school websites, WhatsApp groups, online platforms, and digital announcement systems. Electronic communication facilitates rapid dissemination of information and enables timely feedback [18].

For the purpose of this study, a principal who practices effective communication across all four dimensions is expected to foster better teacher understanding of institutional expectations, enhance teacher morale, and ultimately contribute to improved student performance.

2. Teachers' Job Description

Teachers' job description refers to the formal specification of the duties, responsibilities, and expectations that define the professional role of a teacher in the school system. A job description is a formal document that outlines the specific tasks, responsibilities, reporting relationships, and working conditions associated with a particular position [5]. In the educational context, a teacher's job description provides clarity on what the teacher is expected to do, how they should do it, and the standards against which their performance will be evaluated.

Teachers' job description is operationalized across four core instructional dimensions:

(a) Planning: This encompasses the preparatory activities that precede classroom instruction. It includes the development of lesson plans, schemes of work, and instructional materials aligned with curriculum standards. Effective planning establishes the cognitive architecture for all subsequent teaching activities and is foundational to instructional coherence.

(b) Organizing: This refers to the logistical coordination of instructional resources and activities. It involves the arrangement of classroom materials, the allocation of time across learning tasks, and the sequencing of instructional events. Effective organizing ensures that the conditions necessary for learning are in place before and during instruction.

(c) Lesson Delivery: This is the core performance dimension where teaching directly interacts with learning. It encompasses the explanation of concepts, the use of appropriate pedagogical strategies, the engagement of students in active learning, and the adaptation of instruction in response to student feedback.

(d) Classroom Management: This dimension involves the establishment and maintenance of an orderly, supportive learning environment. It includes the communication of behavioural expectations, the management of student conduct, and the creation of a classroom climate that promotes engagement and minimizes disruptions.

These four dimensions are not discrete, isolated tasks but form a sequenced and interdependent instructional system. Weaknesses in planning propagate to organizing, which in turn constrains delivery and complicates classroom management [20].

3. Students' Academic Performance

Students' academic performance refers to the measurable outcomes of students' learning, as demonstrated through their achievement in standardized examinations.

Academic performance is the extent to which students have achieved their educational goals and demonstrated mastery of subject content [15]. It is the most commonly used indicator of educational effectiveness and is typically measured through grades, test scores, and examination results.

In this study, students' academic performance is operationalized as the aggregate scores obtained by students in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). The BECE is a standardized, nationally recognized examination administered at the end of junior secondary education in Nigeria. It assesses students' achievement in core subjects and provides a reliable measure of overall academic attainment.

The use of BECE results as a measure of academic performance is appropriate because:

1. It is a standardized examination with uniform marking and grading procedures across all schools.
2. It provides an objective measure of student achievement that is comparable across different schools and contexts.
3. It is the official examination used to certify students' completion of junior secondary education in Nigeria.

BECE results were obtained from the official records of the participating schools, covering the period from 2022 to 2025. The aggregate scores were used as the dependent variable for this study.

4. Statement of the Problem

Despite the formal existence of communication channels and job descriptions for teachers in Lagos State public secondary schools, concerns persist regarding the academic performance of students. Educational stakeholders have identified several factors that may contribute to this problem, including inadequate communication from school leadership, unclear professional

responsibilities, and ineffective instructional practices. While some studies have examined principals' communication practices and teachers' job description separately, limited empirical research has investigated how these two factors work together to influence students' academic achievement. The combination of poor communication and unclear job descriptions creates a challenging environment where teachers struggle to fulfil their professional obligations effectively. This study was therefore designed to examine the interplay among principals' communication practices, teachers' job descriptions, and students' academic performance in Lagos State junior secondary schools

5. Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were examined at a significance threshold of 0.05:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between principals' communication practices and students' academic performance.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between the execution of teaching roles and students' academic performance.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between principals' communication practices and teachers' job description.

H₀₄: There is no significant combined relationship among principals' communication practices, teachers' job description, and students' academic performance

6. Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey combined with a correlational approach. The survey component enabled systematic information from a broad sample to characterize existing conditions, whereas the correlational aspect permitted exploration of inter-variable relationships without deliberate alteration.

The population consisted of all 327 school heads and 8,865 teaching staff across 327 government junior secondary schools within Lagos State's six Education Districts.

A multi-stage procedure was implemented. First, the six Education Districts served as natural clusters. The Taro Yamane [27] formula was applied to the educator population at a 5% precision level, producing a minimum requirement of 383 teachers. Through simple random selection, 30 schools were chosen from each district. Disproportionate stratified random sampling was then used to select teachers from these schools. This process resulted in 563 participants—180 principals and 383 teachers—from whom 551 valid responses were secured, representing a 97.9% return rate.

Two structured instruments were employed for data gathering: the Principals' Communication Practices Questionnaire (PCPQ) and the Teachers' Job Description Questionnaire (TJDQ). Each instrument comprised a demographic section and 20 items rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale (4 = Strongly Agree through 1 = Strongly Disagree). The PCPQ assessed verbal, non-verbal, written, and electronic communication dimensions. The TJDQ evaluated planning, organising, lesson delivery, and classroom management. A Record Observation Format captured aggregated Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) scores from 2022 to 2025 as the measure of academic achievement.

Face and content validation were conducted by specialists in Educational Management and Psychometrics. Their inputs guided the modification of items to ensure clarity and relevance. A preliminary trial involving 50 respondents from non-participating schools was executed.

Cronbach alpha coefficients were 0.87 for the PCPQ and 0.85 for the TJDQ, surpassing the benchmark of 0.70 [21].

Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential procedures were employed. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation tested the first three hypotheses, while Multiple Regression examined the fourth. All testing was conducted at the 0.05 significance threshold using SPSS Version 24.

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the research process. Permission was obtained from the relevant educational authorities before data collection commenced. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and assured that participation was entirely voluntary. Anonymity and confidentiality of responses were guaranteed. All data collected were used exclusively for academic research purposes.

7. Results and Findings

7.1. Hypothesis One

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between principals' communication practices and students' academic performance.

The analysis indicated a robust, favorable, and statistically meaningful association between school heads' communication practices and students' academic attainment ($r = 0.682$, $N = 551$, $p < 0.05$). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. This signifies that proficient communication on the part of principals has a beneficial influence on student achievement outcomes.

Variable Relationship	Test Statistic	df	p-value	Decision	Remark
Principals' Communication Practices and Students' Academic Performance	$r = 0.682$	549	< 0.05	Reject H_0	Significance

7.2. Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between the execution of teaching roles and students' academic performance.

Results demonstrated a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between the execution of teaching responsibilities and students' performance ($r = 0.711$, $N = 551$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that educators who capably discharge their instructional obligations make a substantial contribution to enhanced student outcomes.

Variable Relationship	Test Statistic	df	p-value	Decision	Remark
Teaches' Job Description and Students' Academic Performance	$R = 0.711$	549	< 0.05	Reject H_0	Significance

7.3. Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between principals' communication practices and teachers' job description.

The data revealed a moderately robust and statistically meaningful correlation between principals' communication practices and the performance of teaching duties ($r = 0.624$, $N = 551$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis was rejected. This suggests that proficient communication practices by school heads augment teachers' capacity to fulfil their professional roles.

Variable Relationship	Test Statistic	df	p-value	Decision	Remark
Principals' Communication Practices and Teachers' Job description	$r = 0.624$	549	< 0.05	Reject H_0	Significance

7.4. Hypothesis Four

H₀₄: There is no significant combined relationship among principals' communication practices, teachers' job description, and students' academic performance.

Variable Relationship	Test Statistic	df	p-value	Decision	Remark
Principals' Communication Practices, Teachers' Job Description 'n Students' Academic Performance	$R = 0.846$, $R^2 = 0.716$, Adj. $R^2 = 0.713$, $F(2, 548) = 263.512$	2,548	< 0.05	Reject H_0	Significance

H₀₄ regression model includes Beta values: Principals' Communication Practices ($\beta = 0.541$, $t = 9.097$, $p < 0.05$); Teachers' Job Description ($\beta = 0.498$, $t = 8.396$, $p < 0.05$).

However, the multiple regression output produced an R-value of 0.846, denoting a very powerful positive correlation between the combined predictor variables and the criterion variable. The R-squared figure of 0.716 reveals that 71.6% of the fluctuation in pupils' scholastic attainment is explained by the joint contribution of school heads' communication and teachers' role execution ($F = 263.51$, $p < 0.05$). Both predictors were individually significant: principals' communication ($Beta = 0.541$, $t = 9.097$, $p < 0.05$) and teachers' job description ($Beta = 0.498$, $t = 8.396$, $p < 0.05$). Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 1: Regression Model Summary

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	p-value
Constant	15.23	2.10	—	7.52	less than 0.05
Principals' Communication	0.564	0.062	0.541	9.097	less than 0.05
Teachers' Role Performance	0.487	0.058	0.498	8.396	less than 0.05

Note: $R = 0.846$, $R\text{-squared} = 0.716$, $Adjusted\ R\text{-squared} = 0.713$, $F(2, 548) = 263.51$, p less than 0.05

8. Discussion of Findings

The first outcome a significant positive link between school heads' communication behaviours and student attainment reinforces the notion that proficient communication represents a fundamental

leadership responsibility. School principals do not directly produce examination success; instead, they set in motion a sequence whereby lucid, regular, and multi-channel messaging clarifies instructional targets, harmonizes staff efforts, and furnishes the professional backing necessary to elevate classroom practice. This result aligns with the work of Grissom et al. [14] regarding the indirect yet potent effects of leadership and situates it within the resource-limited Nigerian schooling environment, where communication functions as an essential coordinating device.

When principals communicate effectively, they ensure that teachers understand institutional goals, receive timely feedback on their performance, and feel supported in their professional endeavours. This finding is consistent with the path-goal theory of leadership [16], which emphasizes the leader's role in clarifying the path to goal attainment and removing obstacles. In the Lagos State context, where teachers often face resource constraints and large class sizes, effective communication from principals can help mitigate these challenges by providing clarity, direction, and moral support.

The second outcome a strong significant association between teaching role execution and student results concurs with international scholarship that identifies educator effectiveness as the most powerful institutional determinant of learner attainment [15, 10]. Importantly, this finding moves past merely possessing a role description; it is the performance of a well-comprehended role that propels achievement. Consistent with role theory [20], when the demands contained within a role specification are unambiguous, educators can channel their mental and emotional resources toward instruction rather than managing uncertainty.

Teachers who clearly understand their responsibilities planning lessons, organizing instructional activities, delivering content effectively, and managing classroom behavior are better positioned to create learning environments that promote student success. This finding underscores the importance of clear job descriptions and the need for teachers to internalize their professional responsibilities. When teachers are uncertain about what is expected of them, they may experience role ambiguity, which has been linked to reduce job satisfaction, increased stress, and diminished instructional quality (Akinyele & Olatunde, 2023).

The third finding, which established a significant link between principals' communication modes and the dimensions of teaching duties, provides a detailed view of how leadership operates. A principal who exclusively conducts meetings but never supplies written directives, or who distributes memos but never observes instruction and offers feedback, is essentially curtailing their instructional influence. A blended communication strategy is what builds a fully operational instructional setting.

Effective principals employ multiple communication channels verbal, non-verbal, written, and electronic to ensure that messages are received and understood by all staff members. They provide clear expectations, offer constructive feedback, and create opportunities for two-way communication. This finding aligns with the work of Basil et al. [7] and Imelda and Mutilu [18], who found that principals' communication strategies significantly influence teachers' job performance. In the Nigerian context, where teachers may have varying levels of access to technology and different communication preferences, a multi-modal approach is particularly important.

The most compelling result was the rejection of the fourth null hypothesis, confirming a strong, significant combined association, with the model explaining above 71% of the variance in learner outcomes. This constitutes the central contribution of the investigation. It empirically corroborates the conceptual framework that leadership communication and role enactment are not separate predictors but synergistic elements of an instructional system. Within this system, communication from the school head clarifies and magnifies the teacher's function, which directly shapes student learning. This result contests overly simplified models of educational effectiveness

and advocates for a systemic perspective wherein reinforcing leadership communication and reinforcing teaching roles are treated as a unified intervention.

The high explanatory power of the regression model ($R^2 = 0.716$) suggests that the combination of principals' communication practices and teachers' job descriptions accounts for a substantial portion of the variation in students' academic performance. This finding has important implications for educational policy and practice. It suggests that efforts to improve student outcomes should focus not only on individual teacher effectiveness but also on the leadership and communication practices that support and enable teacher performance. When principals communicate effectively and teachers understand their roles clearly, the resulting synergy produces significantly better learning outcomes for students.

9. Conclusion

It is concluded that the route to enhancing student attainment in Lagos State junior secondary institutions is fundamentally shaped by the interaction between proficient leadership communications and clearly articulated, well-internalised teaching roles. A school head's strategic communication functions as the institutional catalyst that transforms a formal role specification into a vibrant, practicable, and inspiring professional structure. When synchronised, these elements produce a unified and potent instructional mechanism that surpasses the mere addition of its components.

The findings of this study demonstrate that principals' communication practices and teachers' job descriptions are not isolated factors but interconnected elements of an effective instructional system. When principals communicate clearly and consistently, teachers develop a better understanding of their professional responsibilities, which in turn leads to improved instructional practices and better student outcomes. The strength of the combined relationship ($R^2 = 0.716$) underscores the importance of addressing both leadership communication and role clarity in efforts to improve educational quality.

10. Recommendations

In light of the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Compulsory Communication Training: The Lagos State Ministry of Education should create a compulsory, continuous professional growth program centered on strategic and multi-modal communication competencies for school principals, making such training a condition for posting and career advancement. This training should cover verbal, non-verbal, written, and electronic communication skills, with a focus on how these skills can be applied in the school context to enhance teacher performance and student outcomes.

2. Formalization of Role Specifications: A comprehensive document titled "Lagos State Teacher's Role Specification and Professional Benchmarks" should be reassessed, formalized, and circulated, plainly defining ordered instructional and non-instructional duties. This document should be provided to all teachers upon appointment and reviewed regularly to ensure relevance.

3. Blended Communication Approach: School principals should embrace a deliberate, blended communication approach that merges textual precision for planning, spoken feedback for instructional delivery, non-verbal encouragement, and effective digital instruments. They should institute consistent, organized feedback systems, such as pre-scheduled post-observation discussions, to ensure that teachers receive timely and constructive feedback on their performance.

4. Proactive Teacher Engagement: Classroom practitioners should proactively request clarification on any ambiguous elements of their role specifications and utilize available

communication pathways to offer feedback to school leadership concerning workload, resource requirements, and instructional difficulties. Teachers should be encouraged to participate in decision-making processes and to communicate their needs and concerns to school leadership.

5. Regular Performance Evaluation: School administrators should implement regular, structured performance evaluation mechanisms that are directly aligned with the dimensions of the job description. Such evaluations should be formative in nature, providing constructive feedback that supports professional growth rather than merely identifying deficiencies.

6. Addressing Systemic Constraints: Government and educational authorities should address the systemic constraints that limit teachers' ability to fulfil their job descriptions effectively. This includes reducing class sizes, providing adequate instructional materials, and ensuring that teachers' non-instructional workloads are manageable.

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