

**INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION
PRACTICES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MANDERA EAST SUB-COUNTY,
MANDERA COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Statement of the Problem: Principals play an important role in ensuring that students register impressive academic grades in internal and national examinations. However, in public secondary schools in Mandera East Sub-county, the situation is quite different with academic performance of public secondary schools being low.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of principals' instructional supervision practices on academic performance in public secondary schools in Mandera East Sub-county, Mandera County, Kenya.

Methodology: The study adopted mixed methodology and concurrent triangulation design. Target population was 214 respondents comprising 16 principals and 198 teachers from which a sample of 138 respondents was selected using the Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create two different strata based on the number of zones in Mandera East Sub-county. From each zone, five (5) principals were sampled using purposive sampling. However, from each zone, simple random sampling was applied to select 64 teachers. This sampling procedure enabled the researcher to obtain a sample size of 10 principals and 128 teachers. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically based on the objectives and presented in narrative

forms. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 23) and presented using tables and charts.

Findings: The study established that, in many public secondary schools, performance of students in KCSE has been on a downward trend with a progressive decrease in the number of students who scored grade C+ and above for the last five years (2017 to 2021). However, principals' instructional supervision has not been effective in improving students' academic performance.

Recommendations: The study recommends that principals must create time to provide sound instructional leadership by undertaking instructional supervision activities geared towards improving teachers' classroom pedagogy.

Keywords: *Principals' instructional supervision practices, academic performance, public secondary schools.*

INTRODUCTION

Supervision of teachers is a very important tasks performed by principals. It is an ongoing process of supervision where information and data about teachers in secondary schools are gathered before, during, and after instruction to better facilitate the learning. It entails assessing teachers' syllabus coverage, preparation of professional documents and mastery of content. According to Briggs and Dominique (2011), such a process ensures success for all students in the differentiated class with data provided from a variety of sources assisting in giving an overall view of students' achievement. It is essential that when assessing teachers in the differentiated class, assessment is authentic meaning it offers teachers a variety of tasks demonstration real-life skills, tells the evaluator if the teacher has acquired the skills or concepts, is based on standard criteria to achieve validity, and guides students for roles in adult life (Briggs & Dominique, 2011). However, the extent to which such principals' instructional supervision practices influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools is yet to be fully established.

According to Reusen (2013), academic performance entails achievement of students in internal and national examinations. For example, in Yemeni, any learner in secondary school who scores a mean grade of 75% and above is considered to manifest excellent academic performance (Agran, 2012). Such is the case in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany

and United Kingdom (Agran, 2012). Despite these postulations, many students still register low grades in their internal and national examinations. In a study conducted in Austria, Glatthorn (2012) developed a model for differentiated supervision that blends the old and new approaches of teacher supervision. Glatthorn (2012) proposed that there is no need to be stuck in the lock step of tradition to effectively evaluate and supervise secondary school teachers. In other words, there is a place for the clinical model of supervision, cooperative options that allow teachers to work with peers, and self-directed options guided by the individual teacher. An attractive attribute of the Glatthorn (2012) model is that, depending on needs, it gives the administrator different ways to evaluate different secondary school teachers.

Under this strategy, the non-tenured teacher can be given a more rigorous supervision while the tenured, experienced, department chairperson can be afforded more freedom. Glatthorn (2012) observed that differentiated supervision operates on the belief that teaching is a profession and as members of a profession, teachers should have more control over their professional development, within generally accepted professional standards. In the same vein, Glatthorn (2012) asserts that, as skilled professionals, teachers need both support and feedback, but from colleagues and students and not always from administrators or supervisors. Consistent with these assertions, Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern and Keeling (2013), in a study conducted in Mexico, indicated that differentiated supervision provides teachers with options about the kinds of supervisory and evaluative services they receive. According to Weisberg et al (2013), individual teachers setting personal growth goals, acting on those goals, gathering feedback from students, and completing a final assessment of progress, characterize self-directed development. Weisberg et al (2013) revealed that along with the three supervision options are two evaluative options: intensive supervision and standard supervision. Intensive supervision accompanies the intensive development option.

Based on teacher accountability, not professional growth, an administrator conducts intensive supervisions (Toch, 2013). Methods include research-supported criteria, observations, conferences and performance of non-instructional functions. The second evaluative option, standard supervision, is for experienced, known competent teachers and associated with the cooperative and self-directed development options. These findings attest to the fact that teachers' supervision fosters collegiality, cooperation, emphasizes the importance of professionalizing teaching, and is a realistic solution to the problem of time for administrators to deliver effective supervision. In most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, most secondary schools have adopted differentiated supervision to allow teachers to choose from a menu of

supervisory and evaluative processes, instead of using the same strategy to supervise all secondary school teachers.

In Nigeria, Enueme (2010) posits that principals are tasked to train and supervise teachers, participate in curriculum development and coordinate collaboration among stakeholders in secondary schools. Besides, they are also tasked to conduct inspection of secondary schools, but in the process, make secondary school teachers feel relaxed that they benefit from the inspection experience (Enueme, 2010). According to Akyeampong (2011), this supervision should be based on understanding and respect of the judgments that emerge from the officers' reports so as to have positive results towards the quality development of a more inclusive environment of all secondary school students. This information is aimed at benefiting parents and members of the counties who have a right to know about the students' academic achievement provided by secondary schools since concerned parties have a right to see education standards and get satisfaction. Furthermore, principals play a role in identifying secondary schools where the students' academic achievement provided is not satisfying and makes provision for additional support.

In view of this, Sergiovanni (2012) suggests that teachers should take an active part in deciding which options for supervision will work well for them and accept responsibility for making options work. For example, a study conducted at the secondary schools in South Africa by Nolan and Hoover (2011) revealed that differentiated supervision also involves the use of informal classroom visitations to assess and assist individual secondary school teachers. Nolan and Hoover (2011) suggested that principals should view themselves as coaches and teachers by working side by side with teachers in planning lessons together, teaching together, and trying to understand what is going on in the lectures together. Sergiovanni (2012) posits that principals who supervise by practicing coaching by walking around can make significant impact in helping, in building trust, and in learning with their secondary school teachers.

In Kenya, the scenario is similar. Principals consider teacher supervision as a framework or philosophy for effective teaching that involves providing different students with different avenues to learning in terms of acquiring content; processing, constructing, or making sense of ideas; and developing teaching materials and supervision and assessment measures so that all students within a classroom can learn effectively, regardless of differences in ability (Chisholm, Hayes, LaBrecque & Smith, 2011). Students vary in culture, socioeconomic status, language, gender, motivation, ability/disability, personal interests and more, and teachers must be aware of these varieties as they plan curriculum. Chisholm et al (2011) noted that, in public

secondary schools, the goals of differentiated instruction and supervision are to develop engaging tasks that challenge and enhance learning for each student.

Instructional activities are flexible, and based and evaluated on content, process, product, and learning environment. In this case, the instructional approach and choice of content are driven by the data from students' assessment results and from the outcomes of other screening tools. Chisholm et al (2011) suggest that pre-assessments can gather information about each student's strengths, comforts, or areas of weakness. This leads to appropriate differentiation that accommodates each secondary school student's learning needs and preferences. These assessments should be used as a tool to create clear, and meaningful instruction that guide each student towards challenging but not frustrating activities. Despite all the benefits that may accrue from secondary school as stated above and the commitments made by the government to achieve Basic Education for All (BEFA) through secondary school, there is still poor performance of secondary school sub-sector characterized by low academic performance in internal and national examinations caused by school factors (Abenga, 2010). This calls into question the practices adopted by principals.

According to Njoroge (2011), principals' instructional supervision practices are crucial in ensuring holistic student development. In Mandera East Sub-county, Abdille (2012) posits that principals' management practices are regarded as key to the academic success of students in public secondary schools. However, in public secondary schools in Mandera East Sub-county, the situation is different with many students registering low academic grades in KCSE (Ministry of Education, 2022). For example, a report by the Ministry of Education (2022) shows that Mandera East Sub-county registered 14.7% in 2014, 10.3% in 2015, 9.1% in 2016, 8.7% in 2017, 8.1% in 2018, 7.3% in 2019, 4.2121% in 2020 and 3.9577% in 2021 painting a decreasing trend in academic performance. Despite these statistics, many empirical studies have not interrogated the extent to which principals' instructional supervision practices influence academic performance in public secondary schools, hence the need for this study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Principals play an important role in ensuring that students register impressive academic grades in internal and national examinations. This is done by adopting myriad instructional supervision practices. However, in public secondary schools in Mandera East Sub-county, the situation is quite different with academic performance being low. As indicates earlier in the background, a report by the Ministry of Education (2022) shows that Mandera East Sub-county

registered 14.7% in 2014, 10.3% in 2015, 9.1% in 2016, 8.7% in 2017, 8.1% in 2018, 7.3% in 2019, 4.2121% in 2020 and 3.9577% in 2021 painting a decreasing trend in academic performance. Efforts to mitigate on these challenges have not yielded much remarkable progress and have compromised the quality of education offered in public secondary schools. Despite these findings, many empirical studies have not exhaustively interrogated the extent to which principals' instructional supervision practices influence academic performance in public secondary schools, hence the need for the study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. To assess the status of academic performance in public secondary schools in Mandera East Sub-county.
- ii. To assess the influence of principals' instructional supervision practices on academic performance in public secondary schools in Mandera East Sub-county;

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by the management theory which was postulated by Kuo (2009). This theory addresses how managers and administrators relate to their organizations in the knowledge of its goals, the implementation of effective means to get the goals accomplished and how to motivate employees to perform to the highest standard. The central focus of this study is that although school managers could have achieved managerial success without having basic theoretical knowledge in management, those managers, who have adopted this theory in their day-to-day practice, have had better chances of managing their organizations effectively by considering communication to ensure prudent management of schools. Thus, the rationale of using this theory in this study is that to enhance effective school performance in schools, principals ought to understand how to organize resources and effectively communicate the same to the teachers, learners and support staff.

The study was also guided by Walberg's academic achievement theory. This theory posits that learners' psychological traits coupled with their immediate learning environments influence educational outcomes. Walberg (2002) proposed nine main aspects which impact on learners' educational outcomes. These include; learners' ability or prior achievement, motivation, age or developmental level, quantity of instruction, quality of instruction, classroom climate, parental involvement, home environment, peer group, and exposure to mass media outside of school. Walberg (2002) show that psychosocial characteristics of classroom learning environments demonstrate incremental validity in predicting learner achievement. Thus, the relevance of this

theory is that educational process goals are interpreted to include learner perceptions of the social environment, creativity, self-concept, participation in extra-curricular activities, and interest in subject matter. In other words, ignoring these perceptions and experiences in favor of traditional goals measured by test scores would decrease motivation and ultimately lower educational achievement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted mixed methodology and concurrent triangulation design. Target population was 214 respondents comprising 16 principals and 198 teachers from which a sample of 138 respondents was selected using the Yamane’s Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create two different strata based on the number of zones in Mandera East Sub-county. From each zone, five (5) principals were sampled using purposive sampling. However, from each zone, simple random sampling was applied to select 64 teachers. This sampling procedure enabled the researcher to obtain a sample size of 10 principals and 128 teachers. A questionnaire was applied to gather quantitative data from teachers whereas interview guides were used for collecting qualitative data from principals. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically based on the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferentially using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Analysis with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 23) and presented using tables and charts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the objective. It also outlines the methods of presentation of the study findings and discussions.

RESPONSE RATE

In this study, 128 questionnaires were administered to teachers out of which 126 questionnaires were filled and returned. At the same time, the researcher also interviewed eight (8) principals. This yielded response rates shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Response Rate

Respondents	Sampled Respondents	Those Who Participated	Achieved Return Rate (%)
Principals	10	8	80.0
Teachers	128	126	98.4
Total	138	134	97.1

Table 1 shows that principals registered a response rate of 80.0% whereas teachers registered 98.4% as the response rate. On average, this yielded a response rate of 97.1%, which affirmed the assertions of Creswell (2014) that a response rate above 75.0% is adequate and of suitable levels to allow for the generalization of the outcomes to the target population.

Status of Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools

The study sought to assess the status of academic performance in public secondary schools in Mandera East Sub-county and was measured by focusing on KCSE performance (mean points) between 2017 and 2021. Descriptive data were collected and results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: KCSE Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Mandera East Sub-county (Mean scores) between 2017 and 2021

KCSE Results in Mean Score (Points)	Years of Examination				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	%	%	%	%	%
1-2.9 points (Poor)	40.2	43.5	44.2	47.3	48.9
3-4.9 points (Below Average)	36.9	35.1	34.9	33.5	32.5
5-6.9 points (Fair)	15.4	15.1	14.8	13.7	13.4
7-8.9 points (Good)	5.3	4.4	4.3	3.8	3.6
9-11.9 points (Excellent)	2.2	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6

Table 2 show that, in 2017, 40.2% of the secondary schools had mean points ranging between 1-2.9 in KCSE, 36.9% scored between 3-4.9 points, 15.4% scored between 5-6.9 points, 5.3% scored between 7-9 points whereas only a paltry 2.2% of the secondary schools scored between 9-11.9 points in KCSE. In the subsequent years, the performance has been on a declining trend. For example, from Table 2, 43.5% of secondary schools scored between 1-2.9 points in 2018, 35.1% scored between 3-5 points, 15.1% scored between 5-7 points, 4.4% scored between 7-8.9 points whereas 1.9% scored between 9-11.9 points in KCSE. In 2019, 44.2% of secondary schools registered between 1-3 points in KCSE, 34.9% scored between 3-5 points, 14.8% scored between 5-7 points, 4.3% scored between 7-8.9 points whereas 1.8% scored between 9-11.9 points.

Table 2 further shows that, in 2020, 47.3% of secondary schools scored between 1-2.9 mean points in KCSE, 33.5% scored between 3-4.9 mean points, 13.7% scored between 5-6.9 mean points, 3.8% scored between 7-8.9 mean points while 1.7% scored between 9-11.9 mean points in KCSE. In a similar trend, 48.9% of the secondary schools scored between 1-3 mean points, 32.5% scored between 3-4.9 mean points, 13.4% scored between 5-6.9 mean points, 3.6% registered between 7-8.9 mean points whereas 1.6% registered between 9-11.9 mean points in

KCSE in 2021. These findings corroborate the findings of a report by MoE (2022) that the performance of students in Mandera East Sub-county in KCSE has been on a downward trend with a progressive decrease in the number of students who scored grade C+ and above.

Academic performance constitutes a key component of quality education offered in secondary schools and outcome indicators can be defined based on the extent to which outcome measures are connected to learning content. In other words, classroom evaluation through academic performance plays an important role in shaping views of educational quality in secondary schools.

This further implies that academic performance is the outcome of quality education and the extent to which a student or secondary school has achieved their educational goals. According to Rubin *et al.* (2010), students' academic performance represents one of the essential building blocks for transparent secondary education systems and qualifications. Smith et al (2011) also noted that academic performance forms an important part of quality assurance approaches to secondary education and the reconsideration of such vital questions as to what, who, how, where and when to teach and assess. This affirms the fact that academic performance is a crucial tool for clarifying the results of learning for the students and teachers. It is evident that academic performance has been progressively decreasing in public secondary schools.

Principals' Instructional Supervision Practices and Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools

The study sought to assess how instructional supervision practices adopted by principals influence academic performance in public secondary schools. Descriptive data were collected from teachers and results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Teachers’ Views on Influence of Principals’ Instructional Supervision Practices on Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
In public secondary schools, syllabus coverage by teachers is sometimes supervised as a way of improving students’ academic performance	50.8	3.9	4.8	26.2	14.3
Principals usually supervises teachers’ preparation of professional documents to improve academic performance in public secondary schools	53.2	8.7	4.0	21.4	12.7
In public secondary schools, teachers’ mastery of content is often being supervised as a strategy of improving academic performance	57.1	7.9	4.1	19.8	11.1
Despite teacher supervision practices adopted in public secondary schools, academic performance is still low	63.5	5.6	4.7	16.7	9.5

Source: Field Data (2023)

Table 3 shows that 64(50.8%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, syllabus coverage by teachers is sometimes supervised as a way of improving students’ academic performance with 5(3.9%) agreeing, 6(4.8%) undecided, 33(26.2%) disagreeing and 18(14.3%) strongly disagreeing. Slightly more than half, 67(53.2%), of the teachers were in strong agreement that principals usually supervise teachers’ preparation of professional documents to improve academic performance in public secondary schools while 11(8.7%) agreed. However, 27(21.4%) disagreed with 16(12.7%) strongly disagreeing. Slightly more than half, 72(57.1%), of the teachers strongly indicated that, in public secondary schools, teachers’ mastery of content is often being supervised as a strategy of improving academic performance whereas 10(7.9%) agreed. On the contrary, 25(19.8%) disagreed whereas 14(11.1%) strongly disagreed. A fair proportion, 80(63.5%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, despite teacher supervision practices adopted in public secondary schools, academic performance is still low, 7(5.6%) agreed, but 21(16.7%) disagreed whereas 12(9.5%) strongly disagreed.

These findings corroborate the findings of a study carried out in Austria in which Glatthorn (2012) found that instructional supervision is crucial for improving teachers’ classroom pedagogy. According to Glatthorn (2012), supervision operates on the belief that teaching is a profession and as members of a profession, teachers should have more control over their professional development, within generally accepted professional standards. Braun (2010) also noted that measures have been put to develop proper assessments for secondary school teachers

entering their profession for the first time. These findings indicate that, for effective delivery among teachers, supervision of their classroom activities is crucial. In other words, consistent supervision of teaching activities is the main root cause of educational success in any country.

This further points to the fact that activities undertaken by secondary school principals to supervise teachers are crucial in providing feedback about teaching and learning processes which go on in classroom settings and the quality of education of education. This affirms the fact that academic performance of students depends on strict supervision of teachers’ preparation of professional documents. Competent teachers should be skilled in scheming and lesson planning of content to be taught to students. In other words, though not fully undertaken by principals, supervision of teachers’ teachers’ syllabus coverage, preparation of professional documents and mastery of content is a critical process in improving academic performance in secondary schools.

Inferential Analysis

To verify the possibility of the influence of principals’ supervision practices and academic performance, data were collected on how often (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) and academic performance in KCSE for the year 2021). The results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4: How Often Principals Undertake Supervision Activities and Academic Performance in KCSE for the Year 2021

How Often Principals Undertake Supervision Activities	2021 KCSE Results
2	3.603
3	3.781
2	3.831
3	3.897
2	3.189
3	3.954
3	4.072
4	4.153

Table 4 shows that the higher the number of times principals supervise teachers’ classroom activities, the higher the students’ academic performance. The data in Table 4 were run through Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Test Analysis. Results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Relationship between Frequency of Principals’ Instructional Supervision Practices and Academic Performance in KCSE

		Frequency of Principals’ Instructional Supervision	Academic Performance in KCSE
Frequency of Principals’ Instructional Supervision	Pearson Correlation	1	.766*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.027
	N	8	8
Academic Performance in KCSE	Pearson Correlation	.766*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	
	N	8	8

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Test Analysis which generated correlation coefficients of $r = 0.766$ with corresponding significant level (p-value) of 0.027 which was less than the predetermined level of significance, 0.05, that is, $p\text{-value} = 0.027 < 0.05$. This further implies that supervision of teachers’ teachers’ syllabus coverage, preparation of professional documents and mastery of content is a critical process in improving academic performance in secondary schools.

Thematic Analysis

During the interviews, the principals, however, indicated that they frequently undertake their instructional supervision activities such as syllabus coverage by teachers as a way of improving students’ academic performance. Principal, P1, noted;

Though I usually have a very busy schedule, I always create time to ensure that I do follow-up of whether teachers cover syllabus in time to accord students enough time to do revision. This has ensured that classroom delivery is improved which, in turn, has led to improved academic performance among students.

Despite these contradictions, these findings further underscore the vitality of principals’ instructional supervision with regard to syllabus coverage by teachers. On the question of supervising teachers’ professional documents to improve academic performance, the principals stated that they always ensure that teachers have schemes of work, lesson plans, lesson notes and records of work done. Principal, P2, observed;

In my school, I ensure that teachers have schemes of work for the term and continually track how they accomplish the schemes of work through daily lesson plans and weekly records of work. This has made it easy to monitor the content coverage and quality of education offered to students.

This further affirms the fact that supervision of teachers' classroom activities is crucial since consistent supervision of teaching activities is the main root cause of educational success. Just as noted earlier, supervision of teachers' syllabus coverage, preparation of professional documents and mastery of content is a critical process in improving academic performance in secondary schools.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

From the study findings, it is evident that, in many public secondary schools in Mandera County, performance of students in KCSE has been on a downward trend for the last five years (2017 to 2021). Principals undertake supervision of syllabus coverage, mastery of content as a strategy for improving students' academic performance in public secondary schools. However, the effectiveness of such instructional supervision practices is yet to be fully realized.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that principals must create time to provide sound instructional leadership by undertaking instructional supervision activities geared towards teachers' classroom pedagogy. This will go a long way in improving teaching approaches whose consequence will be improved academic performance in secondary schools.

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