The Impact of Head Teachers’ Supervision of Teachers on Students’ Academic Performance

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Abstract
This paper examines the influence of supervision of teachers by head teachers on students’ academic performance in secondary schools in Bureti District, Kenya. Average mean scores of secondary schools in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examinations (KCSE) results for the years 2004, 2005 and 2006 were used to create three categories of schools in the District: Highly Performing (HPS), Averagely Performing (APS) and Low Performing (LPS) Schools. All the schools whose head teachers had served in their stations for a period of three or more years up to 2006 were chosen. Simple random sampling was used to select teachers in every school and descriptive survey design was used to show the nature of relationships between supervision of teachers and students’ academic performance. Questionnaires were used to collect data. The data were analysed using Chi-square and Pearson’s Coefficient of Correlation. Results revealed that supervision had positive relationship with the schools’ overall mean scores in KCSE examinations. The study recommended that head teachers should improve on teacher supervision if schools were to register improved performance in KCSE examinations. The findings and recommendations of the study are useful in the efforts towards improvement in teacher supervision in secondary schools in Kenya.

Keywords: head teachers, teacher supervision, students’ academic performance, Kenya certificate of secondary examinations

INTRODUCTION
Educational Management in secondary schools involves the application of management principles in designing, developing and effecting resources towards achievement of educational goals. Today, the demand for effective management of schools is rapidly taking centre stage more than ever the world over (Okumbe, 1999). This effectiveness is judged by the extent to which schools acquire the necessary instructional materials and teachers, and how they provide a congenial organizational climate and generally meet the expectations of the society within which they are established (Okumbe, 1999). It is in our schools that education takes place and it is there that the success or failure of the national educational objectives will be determined (Orora, 1997). To achieve this objective, school executives are expected to apply appropriate management skills. The head teacher of any secondary school has a crucial obligation in discharging management duties in the school. Therefore, the overall management of schools rests with the head teacher working with and through the teachers to maximize their capabilities in the profession and achieve the desired educational goals. The head teachers’ visionary and moral contributions are expected to give teachers direction and the ability to perform in school. According to Drucker (1974), such contributions, in the final analysis, define school managers because their leadership positions demand from them knowledge of personnel management among others things. This is vindicated in the case of a school head teacher with the management responsibility of a team of teachers. The head teacher’s skills in school management influences the behaviour of the school in terms of how teachers teach, how much students learn and the overall school performance. This is because the significant proportions of key decisions made within the schools are made with the consent of the head teacher.

Teachers play a crucial role in ascertaining whether or not the desired educational results are achieved. However, they expect to be provided with proper conditions for good teaching and learning (Mbti, 1974). The head teachers have the endowment to create such conditions. Many scholars have attributed, to a large extent, the success of schools to those in the helm of leadership (head teachers). School heads give their institutions images of their potentialities through drive, support and skills to mould the mission, vision and motto statements to an approximate reality. School principals have a responsibility of removing administrative constraints that may prevent teachers from maximizing their efforts in rendering services to students. It is vital to note that teachers are key players in the school and
the major determinants of school performance. Management of teachers in schools is bestowed upon head teachers who have a responsibility of making and enhancing every teacher’s productivity.

The Need for Head Teachers’ Supervision of Teachers

The performance of students in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examinations (KCSE) has not been satisfactory in general. Analysis of KCSE results showed that more than half of the students who sat for KCSE examinations in 2006 attained a mean grade of D+ and below. This indicates that a number of schools with adequate facilities and instructional materials have low mean grades in examinations, while those less endowed with educational resources usually attain higher mean grades. A number of factors have been highlighted to explain differential achievements and causes of poor performance between schools and amongst students. But one factor which needs investigation is the style of head teachers’ staff supervisory role. The foregoing study therefore sought to investigate the influence of head teachers’ staff management practices on students’ academic performance in Bureti District in the Rift Valley Province, Kenya. This paper discusses the influence of supervision of teachers by the head teachers in secondary schools on students’ academic performance.

There has been a growing focus on effective management of secondary schools in Kenya and since management of teachers is part and parcel of school management, the study anticipated that its findings and recommendations would be useful to heads of secondary schools. Henceforth, the practitioners of educational management, policy makers, education officers, head teachers, teachers, parents, PTA, BOG and school sponsors would be able to base their management functions, decisions and actions on concrete knowledge of issues as supported by research findings and recommendations. This would help educational stakeholders have a conceptual illumination of the art of head teachers’ supervisory role in secondary schools and discourage them from relying on haphazard personal experiences or subjective expert judgments in the management of educational institutions. It was hoped that the study would form a basis for further research on the management of teachers in secondary schools and management of educational institutions in general. This should lead to the generation of new ideas for the better and more efficient management of secondary school teachers in secondary schools in Kenya.

Importance of Teacher Supervision in Schools

According to Wehmeier (2004), supervision is the act of being in charge and making sure that everything is done correctly and safely. In our contemporary society, schools are considered as social systems, because they are bounded by sets of elements (subsystems) and activities that interact to constitute a single social entity. The effective functioning of every social system, schools included, is assumed to be dependent on the quality of their leadership.

According to Mbiti (1974),

*Leadership is an essential factor among all social animals, from insects ...to the apes and man himself. The necessity for leadership stems from the fact that each organization has needs which must be met. The nature of leadership is largely determined by the nature of the organization... The history of man is one of the organizations which are formed to meet group needs. Where there is an organization, there arises a need for a leader... if the activities of the organization are to be successful* (p. 17).

All schools, like other organizations, require leaders if they are to remain in business. Their products are knowledge, skills and values, and are delivered through teaching and learning processes. The inputs required by the school in processing of its products are infrastructure, teachers and teaching/learning materials. Students are customers of school products, who desire to acquire adequate knowledge to enable them pass examinations, acquire competitive skills for the job markets and wisdom to succeed in life (Birgen, 2007). Head teachers are mandated with the responsibility and duty to bring together and coordinate all the resources within the school for the achievement of desired educational goals. According to Birgen (2007), the ultimate responsibility for effective functioning of the school is the province of the head teacher, the chief executive of the school. Maranga (1977) gave a comprehensive historical account of supervisory and inspectorial activities during the pre-independence and post-independence periods in Kenya.

Supervision is, however, considered as that dimension or phase in educational administration which is concerned with improving educational effectiveness. This management practice evolved after it was realized that there was little that could be achieved by grouping employees together without a leader (Okumbe, 1999). In a school set up, supervision draws its foundation and data from the events that take place inside and outside the classroom. The analysis of events in the school and the relationship between the teacher and the head teacher form the basis of the programmes, procedures and strategies designed to improve the teaching and learning process (Mbiti, 1974). Eshiwani (1993) holds the following role of the head teacher as a supervisor in school:
...The head is responsible for the overall running and control of the school and for the maintenance of the tone and all-round standards. The organization and control of staff, both teaching and non-teaching, is all part of the head’s duties. In particular, he/she must check the teaching standards by reference to schemes of work, lesson notes, records of work done and pupil’s exercise books (p. 124).

It is through supervision that the head teacher gets a clear framework of activities and responsibilities of each member of staff in school. The management practice enables head teachers to evaluate the extent to which policies, objectives, activities and events laid down in the long and short term plans are successfully carried out. Supervision, therefore, as a basic requirement in school administration, brings on board tactics of efficient and proper personnel management with an aim of steering their efforts towards the desired educational goals of a community. As an aspect of administration, it assists in checking of punctuality, discipline, as well as facilitating change from old ways to modern ways of doing things at the work place (school). The above implies that it is a process of overseeing people at their places of work in order to ensure compliance with established plans and procedures (Saleemi & Bogonko, 1997).

Head teachers, as immediate supervisors in secondary schools, are responsible for maintaining punctuality, discipline and academic standards in schools. While stressing on the importance of quality and standards in education, the Ministry of Education, pointed out that with increased demand for education, some institutions might be tempted to compromise on standards, which would affect the quality of education. The Ministry also warned that undercover inspectors would soon be dispatched to educational institutions to establish the level of conformity with standards (Daily Nation, 2008). Although the sentiments from the Ministry of Education targeted institutions of higher learning, the message put across was adherence to quality and standards at all levels of the Kenyan 8.4.4 system of education.

The Ministry of Education portrays supervision as an attempt, through second party intervention, to ascertain, maintain and improve the quality of work done (Olembo et al., 1992). It involves the aspects of administration, which are aimed at maintaining the efforts of personnel in line with the goals of the organization. If head teachers perform their supervisory roles well, there is bound to be remarkable efficiency in the work carried out by the subordinates. Olivia (1976) conceptualizes supervision as a service to teachers, both as individuals and in groups, as a means of offering specialized help in improving instruction. Supervision improves teaching and learning through a deliberate emphasis on ways and means of instilling excellence in the quality of instruction. As a management practice, it offers professional service to secondary school executives for the purpose of interacting and influencing teachers so as to maintain or change and improve their service delivery to the students. It is through supervision that teachers are guided and influenced to strive towards the desired educational goals and objectives. In order for the teaching and learning process to function efficiently, there must be a proper system of supervision (Mbiti, 1974).

Ngala (1997) suggests that head teachers need to supervise teachers by ensuring that: lessons are planned early; lessons are structured with an interesting beginning; revision of previous knowledge and teachers’ use of voice variation and summary of major points at the end; teachers use backups/teaching aids properly; teachers have a good relationship with their students and teachers follow up the curriculum strictly. Okumbe (1999) considers supervision as an administrative strategy aimed at stimulating teachers towards greater pedagogic effectiveness and productivity. The stimulation function of supervision enhances teachers to play important roles aimed at excellence in examinations, which reduces risks of teacher burn out. Although the duties and responsibilities of the head teacher are enormous, all are geared towards the attainment of the preset broad aims and specific objectives of the educational system. The school as an organization cannot escape its responsibility to the community in which it is set. The responsibilities range from effective use of human resources, to continued customer satisfaction and value for their money.

Instructional supervision aids head teachers in coordinating, improving and maintaining high teaching and learning standards in schools. Educational institutions aim at imparting learners with knowledge that develops them mentally, emotionally, socially and spiritually, apart from equipping them with economic skills for full participation in the development of the society (Maranya, 2001). It is, however, prudent to note that the greatest strength of any school is its personnel, the human resources. Teachers combine their relevant skills, experiences and positive attitudes towards the profession, in order to raise the quality of the schools’ academic performance to high and reputable standards (Mbiti, 1974). This combination is achieved through instructional supervision.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
In order to make a comprehensive evaluation of the problem, it would have been appropriate to:
• Include all the 62 schools in the District. However, the study selected only those schools whose head teachers had served for three or more years in their stations to participate in the study.
• Consider other factors that contribute to students’ performance in examinations. Although there are other factors that contribute to students’ academic performance in examinations, this study only considered head teachers’ supervisory role as a variable that influences academic performance.
• Consider the feelings of respondents about the study. Although most head teachers and teachers were positive about the study, a few of them were very impatient and viewed the study as an interference with the school programme. It therefore, may not have been possible to collect some of the desired data from some schools, if it were not for the physical presence of the authors. Introduction letters attached to the questionnaires provided the requisite assurance to the respondents that their views were confidential. The authors felt that by assuring the respondents of the confidentiality of their views, they gave true, reliable and objective answers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
This study was conducted, through descriptive survey design, in Bureti District in Rift Valley Province of Kenya. The District lies between latitudes 0.25° and 0.43° South of the equator and between longitudes 35° 05’ and 35° 35’ East of the Greenwich Meridian. It covers a total area of 1100 Sq.km. (Bureti District Development Plan, 2000-2008). The district had a total of 62 secondary schools, staffed by 627 teachers and approximately 14,000 students (Bureti District Education Officers’ Office). Out of the 62 schools, 30 schools, whose head teachers had served for three or more years as head teachers in their stations, participated in the study. The 30 schools had a total of 396 teachers.

Out of the 30 schools, 5 were boys-only, 8 were girls-only and 17 were mixed boys’ and girls’ schools. The teachers were composed of those with Masters in Education, Bachelor of Education Degree holders, Bachelors Degree graduates with Postgraduate Diplomas in Education and those with Diploma in Education, all employed by the Teachers Service Commission. For the purpose of data collection, mean scores in the KCSE examinations for the years 2004, 2005 and 2006 for every selected school were added. The sum was then divided by three to come up with a calculated mean score for every school for the three years. The calculated mean scores were used to stratify the schools into 3 categories. From the sample frame, 3 schools with a calculated mean score of 7 and above were considered as High Performing Schools (HPS). Similarly, 9 schools with a calculated mean score of 5 and below were considered as Low Performing Schools (LPS). Simple random sampling was used to select half (50%) of the teachers in every school to participate in the study. A total of 198(50%) questionnaires were administered, with a return rate of 140(70.7%). The mass raw of data collected was presented by the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The Chi-square ($X^2$) statistic was used to test the relationship between the head teachers staff management practices and students’ academic performance. Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the different degrees of correlation between individual teachers’ scores from the questionnaires and their respective schools mean scores over the period under study. The open-ended responses were used strengthen the findings in this study.

RESULTS
The head teachers interviewed were professionally qualified with 8(26.7%) having Masters Degrees in Education and 22(73.3%) being Bachelor of Education graduates. It was noted that 20(66.7%) of the head teachers were male and the rest, 10(33.3%), were female. All the female head teachers interviewed were Principals of Girls-only secondary schools and the male head teachers were Principals of either Boys-only or Mixed secondary schools.

Supervision of Teachers and Students’ Academic Performance

• Inspection of Lesson Plans
The results showed that 41(29.3%) teachers supported that head teachers occasionally inspected their lesson plans, while 21(15%) itemized that head teachers always inspected their lesson plans and a similar number, 22(15.7%), were of the opinion that it was never done. It emerged that 27(19.3%) teachers chose ‘frequently’, while 29(20.7%) answered ‘rarely’. Of those who indicated ‘occasionally’, 18(43.9%) were from the APS category, while 11(50%) of those who responded ‘never’ and 10(47.6%) of those who chose ‘always’, were from the same category (APS). The data was analyzed using Chi-square statistic, and a calculated statistic of $X^2 = 3.872$ at a significance level of 0.868 was obtained. The calculated statistic, $X^2 = 3.872$, was found to be less than the tabled critical value of $X^2 = 15.507$. This showed that, statistically, there was no relationship between students’ academic performance and head teachers’ inspection of lesson plans at $\alpha = 0.05$. 


Inspection of Lesson Notes
The results indicated that 53(37.9%) of respondents said that head teachers never inspected their lesson notes, 31(22.1%) conceded that it was occasionally done, while 7(5%) were of the opinion that it was always done. It was noted that 33(23.6%) teachers answered ‘rarely’, while 16(11.4%) chose ‘frequently’. Out of those who chose ‘always’, 4(57.1%) were from the APS category, while 15(48.4%) of those who itemized ‘occasionally’ were from the LPS category, and 9(17%) of those who answered ‘never’ came from the HPS category. The data, analysed using Chi-square statistic, gave a calculated value of $X^2 = 5.749$ at a significance level of 0.059. The results statistically showed that there existed no relationship between students’ academic performance and head teachers’ inspection of teachers’ lesson notes at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Inspection of Records of Work Covered
From the results, 30(21.4%) teachers said that the inspection was always done, 38(27.1%) considered it an occasional practice while 16(11.4%) were of the opinion that it was never done. The results showed that (20.7%) teachers itemized ‘frequently’, while 27(19.3%) settled for ‘rarely’. Almost half, 14(46.6%), of those who answered ‘always’ were from the APS category, while 10(62.5%) of those who responded ‘never’ were from the LPS category. It was noted that 8(26.7%) of those who chose ‘always’ were from the HPS category, and none of the respondents in the category chose either ‘rarely’ or ‘never’.

Cross tabulation was done which gave a Chi-square value of $X^2 = 18.298$ at a significance level of 0.019. The calculated statistic $X^2 = 18.298$ was found to be greater than the tabled critical value of $X^2 = 9.488$. It was concluded that, statistically, there was a positive relationship between head teachers’ inspection of records of work covered and performance of students in national examinations at $\alpha = 0.05$. Pearson’s Coefficient of Correlation was used to correlate teacher’s individual scores to this statement with the average mean scores of their schools over the period under study. A calculated value of $+0.578$ was attained. The authors concluded that there existed positive relationship between head teachers’ inspection of teachers’ schemes of work and performance of students in national examinations.

Inspection of Students’ Progress Reports
The findings showed that 22(15.8%) of the respondents supported that their students’ progress reports were always inspected, $34(24.5%)$ shared the view that it was occasionally done while another 22(15.85%) said that it was never done. It was noted that 31(22.3%) respondents chose ‘rarely’, while 30(21.6%) answered ‘frequently’. It emerged that 40.9% of those who responded ‘always’ came from the APS category and majority, 14(63.6%), of those who chose ‘never’ were from the LPS category. It was observed that none of the respondents from the HPS category either answered ‘rarely’ or ‘never’, while 7(31.8%) of the respondents who itemized ‘always’ were from this category.

Data drawn from responses to the statement were cross-tabulated and a Chi-square statistic of $X^2 = 23.786$ at a significance level of 0.002 was arrived at. The calculated statistic $X^2 = 23.786$ was found to be greater than the tabled critical value of $X^2 = 9.488$. It was therefore concluded that statistically, there existed significant relationship between head teachers’ inspection of students’ progress reports and students’ academic performance at $\alpha = 0.05$. Pearson’s Coefficient of Correlation was used to correlate teachers’ individual scores to this statement with the average mean scores of their schools over the period under study. A calculated value of $+0.606$ was attained. The authors concluded that there existed positive relationship between head teachers’ inspection of students’ progress reports and performance of students in national examinations.

Ensuring all Lessons are Attended/Made for
The authors observed that 42(30.4%) of the respondents were of the view that head teachers always ensured that lessons were attended and made
up for. It was also observed that 26(18.8%) considered the practice occasional while 16(11.6%) said that it was never done. It was the feeling of 32(23.2%) teachers that the practice was frequent, while 22(15.9%) were of the view that it was rarely done. Out of the respondents who answered ‘always’, 17(40.5%) were from the APS category, while half 8(50%) of those who answered ‘never’ were from the LPS category and the other half, 8(50%), from the APS category. It was observed that none of the respondents from the HPS category either answered ‘occasionally’, ‘rarely’ or ‘never’, while majority, 10(66.7%), of the respondents in the category chose ‘always’.

Data were analysed and a Chi-square value of \(X^2 = 16.158\) was obtained at a significance level of 0.040. The calculated statistic \(X^2 = 16.158\) was found to be greater than the tabled critical value of \(X^2 = 5.991\). From the results, it was evident that, statistically, there existed significant relationship between head teachers’ ensuring that all lessons were attended/made up for and students’ academic performance at \(\alpha = 0.05\). Pearson’s Coefficient of Correlation was used to correlate teacher’s individual scores to this statement with the average mean scores of their schools over the period under study. A calculated value of +0.575 was attained. The authors concluded that there existed positive relationship between head teachers’ ensuring that teachers attended all lessons and/or made up for those missed and performance of students in national examinations.

**Ensuring Adherence to Prescribed Lesson Time**

Results showed that 33(23.6%) of the respondents conceded that head teachers occasionally impressed upon them to teach for the whole prescribed time(s), while 26(18.6%) said that the practice was always done and 22(15.7%) were of the opinion that it was never done. It was noted that 22.1% teachers answered ‘rarely’, while 28(20%) chose ‘frequently’. A few, 4(14.3%), of those who answered ‘frequently’ were from the HPS category, while 14(53.8%) of those ticked ‘always’ were from the APS category and 13(59.1%) of those whose response was ‘never’, fell under the LPS category. After Chi-Square analysis was done, a statistic value of \(X^2 = 8.519\) was obtained at a significance level of 0.385. The calculated statistic \(X^2 = 8.519\) was found to be less than the tabled critical value of \(X^2 = 15.507\). This showed that there was no relationship between head teachers’ ensuring that teachers gave assignments, marked, did corrections and students’ academic performance at \(\alpha = 0.05\).

**Asking for Reports at the End of Every Week**

It was found out that 26(18.6%) of the respondents indicated that head teachers required them to make reports at the end of their week(s) as teachers(s) on duty, 35(25%) felt that the practice was occasional, while 21(15%) said that they had never been required to make any such reports. The findings further showed that 32(22.9%) teachers held the view that the practice was frequent, while 26(18.6%) considered it a rare practice. The findings revealed that 20(57.1%) of those who chose ‘occasional’ were drawn from the APS category and 16(76.2%) of those who responded ‘never’ were from the HPS category. None of the respondents from the HPS category chose either ‘rarely’ or ‘never’, while 11(42.3%) of those who marked on ‘always’ were from the HPS category. The data was analysed using Chi-square and a statistical value of \(X^2 = 45.866\) was obtained. The calculated statistic \(X^2 = 45.866\) was found to be greater than the tabled critical value of \(X^2 = 9.488\). From the results, it was evident that statistically, there was a significant relationship between head teachers’ ensuring that teachers gave reports at the end of their weeks as teachers on duty and students academic performance at \(\alpha = 0.05\). Pearson’s Coefficient of Correlation was used to correlate teacher’s individual scores to this statement with the average mean scores of their schools over the period under study. A calculated value of +0.709 was attained. The authors concluded that there existed strong positive relationship between head teachers’ ensuring that teachers gave assignments, marked, did corrections and students’ academic performance at \(\alpha = 0.05\).

**Areas Recommended for Improvement in Supervision**

It was found out that 29 respondents recommended head teachers to improve on submission of marks of continuous assessment tests by teachers. Of the 29
teachers, it emerged that 13(44.8%) were from the LPS category, 10(34.5%) were from the APS category, while 6(20.7%) were drawn from the HPS category. The table further revealed that 33 teachers recommended head teachers to improve on remedial teaching. It emerged that 14(42.4%) of those who made this recommendation were from the LPS category, while 10(30.3%) came from the APS category and 9 were from the HPS category.

**Problems Encountered by Head Teachers in Supervision of Teachers**

It was found out that 14 head teachers responded that in their daily supervision of teachers, they had encountered problems of teachers either coming late to work or sneaking out of school at every opportune time. Of the 14 head teachers who noted the problems, it emerged that 10(71.4%) were from the LPS category, while 4(28.6%) were from the APS category and none from the HPS category. The results further revealed that 17 head teachers pointed out that they had also experienced the problem of teachers missing lessons for no apparent reasons. It emerged that 11(64.7%) of the head teachers who had encountered the problem were from the APS category, while 5(29.4%) were from the APS category and 1(5.9%) was from the HPS category.

**DISCUSSION**

Supervision of teachers is one of the responsibilities delegated to the head teachers by the Teachers Service Commission. Silsil (2008) recognizes the head teacher as the overall supervisor of all academic and administrative activities in the school, and the one responsible for improving and maintaining high teaching and learning standards in the school. Teachers therefore perform their duties under the directions and guidance of the head teacher. The significance of instructional supervision in lesson planning, preparation of lesson notes, inspection of records of work covered, schemes of work, students progress reports, lesson attendance, utility of the lesson prescribed times, giving class assignments and corrections and giving reports at the end of every week as teacher on duty, have all been argued to contribute to better performance of students in examinations. This study found out that head teachers’ inspection of lesson plans did not have any relationship with performance of students in national examinations. Therefore, the findings implied that inspection of lesson plans by head teachers was not a predictor of students’ performance in national examinations. These findings contradicted the findings by Eshiwani (1993).

It was found out from the study that head teachers’ inspection of records of work covered had positive relationship with students’ performance in national examinations. Positive relationship implied that head teachers’ inspection of records of work covered was a predictor of students’ performance in national examinations. These findings were in tandem with the findings by Ngala (1997) and Eshiwani (1993). From the study, it was found out that head teachers’ inspection of records of work covered had positive relationship with the performance of students in national examinations. These findings co"
examinations. These findings were consistent with the findings by Kariga (2007).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
In view of the findings, the study concluded that: Effective supervision of teachers by head teachers enhances teaching and learning which in the long run improves students’ performance in national examinations. Based on the findings of this study, the authors recommend that head teachers should develop a time framework within which teachers mark examinations and hand over students’ marks. This is because in some schools, results for continuous assessment tests were never released or if released were at the end of the term. In addition, similar studies should be carried out on the influence of head teachers’ supervisory roles on students’ academic performance in other districts. There is need also to consider the influence of other factors, such as learners’ entry behaviour, students’ gender, students’ discipline, time management and delegation of duties on students’ academic performance.

REFERENCES


