# Principals' Management of Instruction and Its Influence on Learners' Academic Achievement in Public Secondary Schools

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**Abstract:** This study intended to establish teachers' perception of how principals manage instructional programs in public secondary schools in Baringo County. It adopted a survey research design and employed mixed methods of inquiry in a concurrent procedure. It collected data from a sample of 48 public secondary schools, 12 principals and their deputies, and 253 teachers using a structured questionnaire and unstructured interview guide. Descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated and presented on tables; and qualitative data infused in their discussions. From the findings, principals coordinated more than they supervised, and evaluated instruction and monitored students' progress in their schools; there was no significant difference in principals' management of instructional programs between Extra County and County secondary schools (t (251) =.917, p>.05) and among high, average and low performing public secondary schools (F (2,250) = 1.524, p> .05) respectively. However, there was statistically significant relationship (r (251) =.123**, p<.05) between principals' management of instructional programs and students' academic achievement.
**Keywords:** Instructional Leadership, Management, Instructional programs, Instruction, Academic Achievement.

## INTRODUCTION

In coordinating school management, principals are expected to run schools effectively and efficiently to produce quality results every year in external examinations [1]. This is because their leadership makes the difference between the success and failure of a school, since good performance does not just happen; it is a result of overall effective headship [2]. Principals play a significant role in determining academic performance in a school due to their tasks and roles [2] through management of schools. It is for this reason, therefore, that the accountability movement in education placed attention on students' achievement and also placed responsibility on the school leader [3]. Principals provide instructional leadership by defining school mission and goals, promoting a school learning climate, managing the instructional program [4] and developing a supportive work environment [5].

In managing the instructional program, the principal ensures that it must be consistent with the mission of the school [6] and where the principal focus on those activities that involve the principal's working with teachers in areas specific to curriculum and instruction. According to [7], high expectations for teachers and students, close supervision of classroom instruction, coordination of school's curriculum, and close monitoring of student progress is synonymous with the role definition of an instructional leader. [8] observes that managing instructional program requires

the principal to be engaged in stimulating, supervising and monitoring teaching and learning. Improving learning outcomes is dependent on setting up effective curriculum management systems at the school level, and improving instruction in classrooms [9]. He added that principals must take responsibility for leading the learning programme, through directing, supporting and monitoring curriculum delivery. On their part, [10] added that instructional leaders manage the educational production function through supervising instruction, allocating and protecting instructional time, coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student progress.

An instructional leader's role consists of providing supervision of the teachers in order to develop their skills and abilities [11], supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school [12]. Supervision ensures that all staff respect appropriate rules, routines, procedures and regulations to achieve set objectives [13]. Supervision by inspection has long been and still is a major devise employed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to monitor education quality in Kenya. One strategy for monitoring teaching and learning in school and for enhancing quality and revising standards which has received a great deal of attention over the years concerns supervision by inspection [14]. On their part, [15] considered supervision of curriculum implementation as one of the most important roles of the principal.

In evaluating students' performance, teachers reflect on achievement data and design the school instructional program based on the data [16]. Departments use student exemplary performance to clarify teaching and learning tasks or distinguish levels of student performance. He added that teacher evaluation policies reflecting research on appropriate models of teaching and learning, involve classroom visits. Formal evaluation practices are primarily used to document poor performance and evaluation process operate dependently of professional development or goals for students learning. According to [17], there should be on going evaluations that would allow the principals to improve instruction or change the staff to offer students a better chance to learn. [18] observed that head teachers supervise teachers work by inspecting records such as schemes of work, lesson books, records of work covered, class attendance records and clock in /clock out book. They added that internal supervision involve proper tuition and revision, through supervision of teachers and pupils work, proper testing policy, syllabus coverage, teacher induction courses and team building as well as communicating the school vision effectively, providing resources for instruction, and maintaining a high visible presence in all parts of the school-for effective principals.

Head teachers coordinate curriculum delivery by ensuring quality control, facilitating communication in the organization and serving as a resource for the teaching staff [1]. He added that the principal ought to foster individual teacher support to ensure success, designate a point person to coordinate instruction and support staff improvement. In most schools, the principal identifies one such as a director of studies or heads of department to coordinate curriculum implementation in the school. According to [18], principals' supervisory roles will demand that the head teacher assigns responsibilities to heads of departments and other juniors with clear description of duties and specified expected results. The leadership of the school is responsible for facilitating instructional activities and coordinating curriculum across the individual programme and school levels by ensuring congruence through defining the school mission and goals, managing the instructional programmes and promoting a positive school learning climate [1].

In monitoring students' progress, [16] observed that school leaders should have intermittent measures of student learning across classroom and grade levels. He added that there should be collaborative school-wide focus on problems of teaching and learning and current instructional programs build on past initiatives. A principal who provides instructional leadership monitors performance through frequent monitoring of student progress [20]. Strategies for monitoring teachers include; using student data for instructional decision making, meeting regularly with teachers to review

student progress and solve problems, be visible and visit classrooms regularly, pace instruction carefully and student progress data continuously to assess teacher effectiveness(http://www.learnerslink.com/curriculum.htm). The head teachers (principals) should monitor students and teachers to gain skills in areas where their performance is weak [1]. He added that the head teacher should also monitor students and teachers using formal and informal methods by collecting, reading and commenting on teachers' lessons plans on a weekly basis and collecting a writing sample each week from students in each class.

However, despite this fact, the overall Kenya's student performance in KCSE examination is poor. In the last six years (2010 - 2015), 26.81% of the candidates scored C+ and above. This implies that 72.19% of the candidatures failed to get automatic admission into the Kenyan universities. In the same period, similar scenario was replicated in Baringo County where 71.46% of the total candidature in public secondary schools scored a mean grade of C and below; and so only 28.54 % got C+ and above. This is despite very high expectations by education stakeholders in Kenya (and especially Baringo County) of public secondary school; whose success is measured in terms of good performance in national examinations and belief that principals are the persons responsible for this [21].

Little has been done to establish the impact of principals' management of school instructional programs on learners' academic achievement through instructional leadership practices which is an emphasis everywhere in contemporary leadership literature in the developed world [22]. This study therefore sought to determine teachers' perception of actions taken by principals in managing school instructional programs in public secondary schools in Baringo County.

The following objectives guided this study;

i. To determine teachers' perception of how principals' supervise and evaluate instruction in public secondary schools
ii. To establish teachers' perception of how principals coordinate their schools' curriculum and instruction
iii. To determine teachers' perception of principals' actions in monitoring students' academic progress
iv. To find out if there are differences in teachers' perception of principals' management of instructional programs between Extra County and County public secondary schools in Baringo County.
v. To determine whether there is a significant relationship between teachers' perception on principals' management of instructional programs and students' academic achievement at KCSE examination in public secondary schools in Baringo County.

The study further sought to test the following hypotheses;

Ho1: There is no significant difference in teachers' perception of principals' management of school instructional programs between Extra County and County public secondary schools in Baringo County.

Ho2: There is no statistical significant relationship between teachers' perception on principals' management of school instructional programs and students' academic achievement at KCSE examination in public secondary schools in Baringo County.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**
The study was a descriptive cross-sectional survey research that adopted survey research design and employed mixed methods approach of inquiry in a concurrent procedure where quantitative and qualitative data was collected simultaneously to best understand the research problem [23]. Qualitative and quantitative research paradigms are appropriate to address various complex challenges of educational institutions which are social setups [24] and attempts to fit together the insights provided by these empirical research paradigms into a workable solution [25]. It brings an intersection of pragmatic philosophical worldviews, strategies of inquiry and research methods into the study [23, 26]. The complementary strengths of these paradigms strengthen inferences [24] and triangulate the research findings.

A population of 24 Extra County and 31 County public secondary schools in Koibatek, Baringo North, Baringo Central, Mogotio, Baringo South, and Tiaty Sub Counties (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Rift_Valley_Province), 55 principals and their deputies, and 738 subject teachers were accessed.

**Table 1: Research Population and Sample Sizes**

| Sub- County | Number of Teachers | Category of Schools | | Total Number of Schools |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Extra County | County | |
| Koibatek | 221 | 10 | 7 | 17 |
| Baringo North | 128 | 3 | 9 | 12 |
| Baringo Central | 241 | 5 | 8 | 13 |
| Mogotio | 80 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| Baringo South | 50 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Tiaty | 15 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| **Total Pop.** | **738** | **24** | **31** | **55** |
| **Sample Pop.** | **253** | **21** | **27** | **48** |

**Source:** County Education Office of the respective Sub - Counties (Baringo County - 2011)

Based on a precision rate and a 95 % confidence level [27] the sample size calculator (http://www.surveysystem.com/index.htm) was used to draw a sample of 48 schools by simple random method, 48 principals and their deputies and 253 subject teachers from Extra County and County schools respectively as shown on Table 1 above. Quota sampling was then used to obtain the two sub-groups basing on their respective population ratio of the school type. The public secondary schools were stratified into Extra County and County schools to reduce sample error due to difference in group composition [28] since the two categories of public secondary school had heterogeneous characteristics.

A structured questionnaire developed to use a set of five response categories of the Likert type scale was used to collect data from teachers and unstructured interview guides from the sampled principals and their deputies. In a concurrent procedure the quantitative data was collected alongside qualitative data, where the structured questionnaire was a superior instrument while the interview guide was a complementary instrument. The instruments were validated by research experts and the questionnaire piloted, its reliability calculated, and a reliable Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha of 0.912 obtained and used with minimum correction.

The quantitative data was organized, summarized and descriptive statistics worked out. Their outputs are presented using percentages, frequencies and contingency tables for easier understand and conclusions drawn based on the research objectives with regard to principals' management of their schools' instructional programs. As suggested by [29], data from the principals and their deputies was broken down, conceptualized and put together in categories and sub-categories based on the research objectives and the emerging themes reported jointly with the quantitative data.

**RESULTS**
The quantitative data is presented on Table 2 below and the qualitative data reported alongside the analyzed data.

**Table 2: Teachers perception on Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices for Managing Instructional Programs' Subscales**

| Subscale | N | M.R | Std Dev. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Supervising and Evaluating Instruction | 253 | 3.5395 | .73049 |
| Coordinating Curriculum and Instruction | 253 | 3.8066 | .77741 |
| Monitoring Students' Progress | 253 | 3.5606 | .91563 |
| **Overall** | **253** | **3.6356** | **.69326** |

On Table 2 above teachers agreed at a relatively low mean response MR = 3.54 that their principals supervise and evaluate instruction. Qualitative data from interviewed principals' and their deputies' showed that principals in Extra County schools delegated supervision of the implementation of the curriculum to their deputies, heads of departments and the heads of subjects. In County schools, the principals and their deputies supervised the curriculum implementation. In most schools, records of work, schemes of work among other professional records were checked by the HODs then submitted to the deputy principals who in turn submitted to their principals for countersigning after checking the documents before briefing them. Principals evaluated teaching and learning in their schools assisted by heads of subjects and heads of departments who monitored the status of the syllabus coverage while they match with the schemes of work. They checked the prepared records of work every day and submitted to their principals to countersign at the end of every week. However, schemes of work were rarely used to plan for teaching and were prepared as routine requirement. Principals checked student performance after the release of every examination, analysed, and queried teachers in case of deviations from students', subject and class targets. They also often checked syllabus coverage, records of work, went to class randomly to check students' notes, teachers' attendance forms which were signed by teachers and organised academic HODs' meeting to get feedback.

Among other strategies used by principals included offering remedial program to low performers for especially in Extra County and high performing school, analysing student progress from form one to form four, assigning a number of students to each teacher and the principal for monitoring, talking to low performing students with a view to boosting their academic performance. On their part deputy principal reported that subject teachers kept students' performance progress and for weak students or those whose performance went had their parents invited to school to discuss on possible remedial measures. Those students with persistently low performance were referred to the principals. The principals were reported to engage parents during academic days, attach students to teachers and himself/herself for parenting, engaged guidance and counsellors, called parents; used staff meeting to point out areas of deficiency ; calls parents of students with low performance to set new targets.

At MR= 3.81 they agreed that their principals coordinated the implementation of their curriculum and instruction by ensuring curriculum implementation strategies are aligned to achieve school's curricular objectives, making curricular decisions based on results of the school's instructional needs assessment, ensuring instructional materials are consistent with the achievement of school's curriculum objectives. It was established that in established Extra County schools the implementation was coordinated by the director of studies and at times with the help of an academic committee that comprise the academic HODs and an examination officer in the respective schools. The respondents established that the coordination of the curriculum implementation was not effective in County schools as was in many Extra County schools with well-established academic departments. The deputy principals reported that principals use HOS and HODs in Extra County schools or the internally appointed HODs to coordinate curriculum and instruction. Teachers agreed at MR= 3.56 that their principals monitor students' progress. Interviews established that principals monitored students' academic progress by regularly pick students notes to countercheck with schemes of work and records of work to monitor the extend of the syllabus covered. They checked students' performance in CATs and other examination, and invited parents to low performing students to school to talk on the way forward for the concerned students. The overall response was that teachers agreed that their principals manage instructional programs in their schools at MR=3.64 and a standard deviation of 0.69.

An analysis of the responses based on category of schools (Extra County and County) on Table 3 shows that teachers agreed that principals in both Extra County and County manage instructional program though at equally low mean response, it is practised more in Extra County schools than in County schools.

This is confirmed by a relatively higher teachers' mean response index of 3.67 compared to a lower MR= 3.59. However, teachers in high performing, average performing and low performing schools generally agree at MR= 3.71, 3.68 and 3.54 respectively that instructional practices aimed at managing the instructional program are practised by their principals as shown Table 4 .

**Table 3: Teachers perception on Principals' Leadership Practices for Category of schools on Managing Instructional Program**

| Category of Schools | N | M.R | Std Dev. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Extra County | 147 | 3.6707 | .79264 |
| County | 106 | 3.58773 | .82715 |

**Table 4: Teachers perception on Principals' Leadership Practices for school level of Performance on Managing Instructional Program**

| Level of Performance | N | M.R | Std Dev. |
|---|---|---|---|
| High Performing Schools | 83 | 3.71 | .68 |
| Average Performing Schools | 73 | 3.68 | .62 |
| Low performing Schools | 97 | 3.54 | .75 |

The mean responses of the three levels of schools indicate that principals in high performing schools at MR= 3.71 practise the practices more though the difference with the other categories is minimal. This is followed by average performing schools at MR= 3.68 and lastly low performing schools that constitute the majority of the schools (97 schools) at a low MR= 3.54 that almost suggest respondents were indecisive with higher standard deviation of the teachers responses at 0.75.

On whether there is any significant difference in teachers' perception of principals' management of school instructional programs between Extra County and County public secondary schools in Baringo County, an independent sample t-test was run and the results indicated on Table 5.

**Table 5: Independent Sample Test Comparing Extra County and County Means**

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sig. | T | Df | Sig. (2-Tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Extra County and County Means | Equal variances assumed | .688 | .408 | .917 | 251 | .360 | .08088 | .08822 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | .905 | 217.266 | .366 | .08088 | .08936 |

From the table above, no significant difference was found (t (251) =.917, p>.05). The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected and a conclusion drawn that there was no significant difference in teachers' perception of principals' management of school instructional programs between Extra County and County public secondary schools in Baringo County. However, in an attempt to compare the means of the teachers' perception of principals' management of school instructional programs in low performing, average performing and high performing schools a one-way ANOVA was computed and shown on table 6.

**Table 6: A one-way ANOVA**

| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 1.458 | 2 | .729 | 1.524 | .220 |
| Within Groups | 119.563 | 250 | .478 | | |
| Total | 121.021 | 252 | | | |
| | | | | | |

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Data on the table indicate that there was no significant difference (F (2,250) = 1.524, p >.05) was found among low performing , average performing and high performing schools with regard to teachers' perception of principals' management of instructional programs in these schools.

In order to determine whether there was a relationship between teachers' perception on principals' management of instructional programs and students' academic achievement at KCSE examination in public secondary schools in Baringo County, a 2 - tailed Pearson Correlation was run and the output is shown on Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Correlations between School means and Performance at KCSE**

| | | Extra County and County Means | Performance at Y |
|---|---|---|---|
| Extra County and County Means | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .123** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .005 |
| | N | 253 | 253 |
| Performance at Y | Pearson Correlation | .123** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .005 | |
| | N | 253 | 253 |

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

When a 2-tailed Pearson correlation was calculated, a strong positive correlation that was significant (r (251) = .123**, p<.05) was found. The null hypothesis is therefore not accepted and concluded that there was a statistical significant relationship between teachers' perception of principals' management of instructional programs and students' academic achievement at KCSE examination in Baringo County.

**DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Teachers agreed at a relatively low Mean Response (MR)= 3.54 that their principals supervise and evaluate instruction though an instructional leader's role consists of providing supervision of the teachers in order to develop their skills and abilities [11], supervising curriculum and instruction in the school [12]. In Extra County schools, principals delegated supervision of the implementation of the curriculum to the deputy principals, heads of departments and the heads of subjects while in the County schools the principals and deputy principals were reported to be the ones supervising the curriculum implementation. This agrees to [18] who observed that head teachers' internal supervision include looking at teachers' lesson plans, records of work covered and schemes of work, look at students exercise books regularly with the help of deputy head teachers. It was also established that in most schools, the records of work, schemes of work among other professional records are checked by the HODs then submitted to the deputy principal who in turn submit to the principal for countersigning. They added that principals evaluate teaching and learning in their schools using heads of subjects and heads of departments who monitored the status of the syllabus coverage while they match with the schemes of work. This is because on a daily basis head teachers have the responsibilities to ensure that teachers implement the set curriculum and that learning activities take place and in order to support teaching and learning processes the head teachers should ensure quality curricular supervision [30]. However, the schemes of work were rarely referred to during teaching as they were prepared as routine requirement.

Principals checked student performance after the release of every examination, analyses, and query teachers in case of deviations from students', subject and class targets and at times checked syllabus coverage, records of work, went to class randomly to check students' notes, teachers' attendance forms which are signed by teachers and organise academic HODs' meeting for feedback. This is a concurrence to [31] observation that principals show high level of instructional leadership responsibility by assisting their teachers in their classroom instruction by checking the teachers' lesson notes, offer advice where necessary and maintain school climate that is conducive to teaching and learning. It was also established that principals offered remedial programs to low performers for especially in Extra County and high performing school, analysing student progress from Primary school performance to Form four, assigning a number of students to each teacher and the principal for monitoring, talking to low performing students with a view to boosting their academic performance. Subject teachers kept students' performance progress and for weak students or those whose performances were going done their parents were invited to school to discuss on remedial measures which included holding remedial teaching for their children and with persistently low performance were referred to head. The principals engaged parents during academic days, attach students to teachers and himself/herself for parenting, calls to guidance and counsellors, calls parents; use staff meeting to point out areas of deficiency; calls parents of students with low performance to set new targets.

At MR= 3.81 they agreed that their principals coordinated the implementation of their curriculum and instruction by ensuring curriculum implementation strategies are aligned to achieve school's curricular objectives, making curricular decisions based on results of the school's instructional needs assessment, ensuring instructional materials are consistent with the achievement of school's curriculum objectives. This agrees to [12] that the lop-down approach become apparent in leadership that focuses predominantly on the role of the school principal in coordinating and controlling curriculum implementation. It was also established that in established Extra County schools the implementation was coordinated by the director of studies and at times with the help of an academic

committee that comprise the academic HODs and an examination officer in the respective schools.

According to [1], the principal ought to foster individual teacher support to ensure success, designate a point person to coordinate instruction and support staff improvement. The respondents observed that the coordination of the curriculum implementation was not effective in County schools as was in many Extra County schools with well-established academic departments. The deputy principals reported that principals use HOS and HODs in Extra County schools or the internal appointment HODs to coordinate curriculum and instruction. In most schools, the principal identifies one such as a director of studies or heads of department to coordinate curriculum implementation in the school since principals' supervisory roles will demand that the head teacher assigns responsibilities to heads of departments and other juniors with clear description of duties and specified expected results [19].

At a relatively low MR= 3.56 teachers agreed that their principals monitor students' progress though a principal who provides instructional leadership monitors performance through frequent monitoring of student progress [20]. Interviews established that principals monitored students' academic progress by regularly picking students notes to countercheck with schemes of work and records of work to monitor the extend of the syllabus covered. They checked students' performance in CATs and other examination, and invited parents to low performing students to school to talk on the way forward for the concerned students. The head teachers should monitor students and teachers to gain skills in areas where their performance is weak [1]. He adds that the head teacher should also monitor students and teachers using formal and informal methods by collecting, reading and commenting on teachers' lessons plans on a weekly basis and collecting a writing sample each week from students in each class.

Teachers agreed that instructional programs were managed more by principals, though at equally low mean response, in Extra County (MR=3.67) than County schools (MR= 3.59) but the difference in their Mean Response is insignificant (.08). This a concurrence to the inferential statistics, where there was no significant difference was found (t(251) =.917, p>.05) in teachers' perception of principals' management of instructional programs between Extra County and County public secondary schools in Baringo County. There was also no statistically significant difference (F (2,250) = 1.524, p >.05) among low performing , average performing and high performing schools with regard to teachers' perception of principals' management of instructional programs in these schools with high performing at MR= 3.71,

average performing MR= 3.68 and low performing schools at MR=3.54.

The study further established a strong positive correlation (r (251) = .123**, p<.05) between teachers' perception of principals' management of their schools' instructional programs and students' academic achievement at KCSE examination. This therefore means there was statistically significant relationship between teachers' perception of principals' management of instructional programs and students' academic achievement at KCSE examination in Baringo County. This agrees to [2] findings that the most outstanding factor that influence students' performance in examination has to do with the organizational management of schools and head teachers play this significant role due to their tasks and roles. According to Huber & Leithwood *et al* as cited in [32] international literature on school achievement suggests that effective leadership is likely to promote favourable school and learners' outcomes. This is because good performance does not just happen; it is a result of good teaching and overall effective headship that makes the difference between the success and failure of a school [2].

## IMPLICATION ON PRACTICE
Principals should prioritise management of instructional programs through effective supervision and evaluation of instruction, coordinate school curriculum implementation and monitoring students' progress.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH
Similar studies should be carried out in other areas to establish how other principals' instructional leadership practices such as promotion of positive school learning climate and developing supportive work environment jointly and/or separately influence learners' academic achievement in public secondary schools.

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