



# Contribution of Principals' Instructional Leadership on Learners' Academic Achievement in Public Secondary Schools in Baringo County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to examine the contribution of principals' instructional leadership practices in enhancing quality instructional activities in public schools in Baringo County, Kenya. The target population was 6901 Form Four students, 1266 teachers, and 140 principals, during the 2017-2020 school years, 6(six) Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (SCQASOs) and 1(one) County Director of Education (CDE). The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Stratified random sampling technique was applied to sample 30% of each of the categories of the study populations. The sample consisted of 2,070 students, 380 teachers, 42 school principals, six SCQASOs and CDE. The research instruments were questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. The quantitative statistics used included frequencies, means, percentages and standard deviations and the results presented using tables and charts. Qualitative data were thematically clustered in relation to the objectives of the study. The study found that principals were not up to date in their mandate since they gave less emphasis on some key issues such as: class-visits, inspection and approval of teachers' lesson plans, inspection and approval of teachers' lesson notes and inspection and approval of students' lesson notes. The study recommended that principals should be thorough in their instructional leadership responsibility by ensuring that teachers are up to date in their preparation and delivery of content. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the body of knowledge on how to improve instructional leadership in educational institutions.*

**Keywords:** *Contribution, Enhancing, Principals, Quality, Execution, Instructional Activities*

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## 1. Introduction

Instructional leadership is a key component of the principal's job, and principals are central figures in school efforts to improve teaching (Sopan, 2019). Instructional leadership is a necessary component of high-quality principals' practice (Bush, 2020). For any educational program to succeed fully, efforts have to be made to

enhance the instructional leadership practices in schools (Brooks et al., 2019).

Effective instructional leaders are intensely involved in curriculum and instructional issues that directly influence student achievement. A principal needs to demonstrate effective leadership in efforts aimed at improving student's achievement, in spearheading needed changes in the instructional program, and in implementing and

monitoring the school improvement plan (Hallinger et al., 2020).

The effectiveness of the principal is critically linked to the success of any school. A principal's engagement with school, community, students, teachers and all educational stakeholders is crucial if the school is to achieve its objectives. The principal should be able to establish a safe and positive school climate that will facilitate high academic performance on the part of the students. School principals should have the ability and the right perspective to clearly define the goals and objectives of the school. However, the practical reality that school principals find themselves in may not be conducive to meeting the desired standard (Dou et al., 2017).

Republic of Kenya (2001) emphasize the role of a school principal which comprise the organization and control of teaching and non- teaching staff. As the immediate supervisor of the schools, the instructional leader, must check the teaching standards by reference to teachers' professional records namely: scheme of work, lesson notes, and records of works.

The Ministry of Education mandates school Principals to take key control of supervision of instructional activities in schools. In this mandate, the Head teacher as an instructional supervisor is to develop clear work plans on how to ensure that each and every teacher carries his/her responsibilities appropriately for the benefit of the learner. School Principals have been entrusted with the responsibility to ensure that quality results are achieved in schools. However, despite the measures put in place by the Education Ministry, Baringo County documented poor learners' achievements over four time periods, from 2017 to 2020. This kind of results denied most students opportunity of further education in universities and other tertiary institutions. The stakeholders and parents of the local schools of the county invest huge amounts of money with the expectation that their children would achieve quality results in their academic achievements. The low-quality results have led to a growing concern by stakeholders-parents, politicians and Education Officers who persistently questioned whether Principals play their roles effectively as instructional leaders in order to improve learner achievement in schools. This trend triggered uproar from the local communities who questioned whether the low learner achievements could be attributed to the management of instructional processes and instructional supervision performed by principals in schools. The research study was guided by the following research question: How do the principals' instructional leadership practices enhance quality teaching and learning in secondary schools in Baringo County?

## 2. Literature Review

Instruction is defined as the process of setting objectives, arranging goals, organizing the learning content, imparting knowledge, attitudes and skills and hence providing feedback in form of the final outcome of these processes (Kruger, 2013). Leadership, according to Graczewski (2015) refers to actions concerned with the ability to inspire and motivate others to implement institutional innovations. It involves concerted effort to work as a team by all stakeholders in order to achieve common goals by influencing others to understand and accept what is required to be accomplished and how it can be implemented more significantly.

A study done by Brooks et al., (2019) showed that in order to achieve quality teaching and learning, the principal should make certain that knowledge and skills is diffused in the best way for the benefit of the learner. To ensure such quality is achieved it is paramount to encourage active participation, and collaboration among various stakeholders in the school.

The school principal is mandated to set guidelines and directions that are aimed at enhancing educators on aspects related to school progress. Varied knowledge and skills of the principal are important in ensuring quality instructional activities in schools (Leithwood, et al., 2019).

According to Bush (2020) principals who are the key players in instructional leadership roles will organize as well as coordinate programs that are in line to the school goals of implementing effective teaching and learning. The leader should therefore strive to develop a common ground of understanding what students' needs encompass and the training requirement of the teachers. This calls for a skillful leader who is good at doing a continuous assessment of his staff hence resulting in quality instructional activities in the classrooms.

The principal has a crucial role of leveraging improvement in instruction, teacher competence, efficiency and the other side that is not supervised, incompetent and inefficient. The principals should therefore endeavor to catalyze the implementation of instruction which is vibrant and effective. The principal should be involved with managing all elements of administration which features around teaching and learning and hence promoting quality instruction in the classrooms in schools (Eisenschmidt, et al., 2019).

According to McNeill (2018) the principal is challenged to create the culture of quality that penetrates to the smallest elements, processes and the systems of an institution. Principal is the main person behind the successful teaching

and learning process. School principals are the most visible and directly accessible representatives of the school who highly influence the the quality of instruction in the classrooms.

In Nigeria Ondo State, Sabaitu and Ayandoja (2012) investigated the impact of instructional supervisory activities on students' academic performance in English Language in Senior Secondary schools The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between instructional supervision and students' academic performance in senior secondary schools. The study aimed at establishing the relationship between class visitations, checking of teachers' punctuality, checking of students' notes, by principals, and attendances, moderation of examination questions and marking schemes on students' academic performance in English Language. The study revealed that there was significant impact of instructional supervision of teachers and quality instruction and hence improving academic performance of students' English language.

A study conducted in Kajiado North, Kenya by Moraa (2010) with the objective of establishing among others the extent to which principals were trained to embark on instructional supervision and also to establish supervisory practices that are done by the principal supervision. The study concluded that school heads who had experience, training and were competent had proven to provide quality instructional activities in the classrooms.

A research study conducted in Narok County by Sankale (2015) established that principals checked and approved teachers' schemes of work weekly while no head teacher responded that they checked on daily basis hence it could affect curriculum implementation. The usage of scheme of work is an internal quality assurance process that ensures that the syllabus is implemented throughout the academic

year. To support this assumption, Watsulu and Simatwa (2011) explain that scrutiny of schemes of work is an important role that internal curriculum supervisors perform to enhance quality curriculum implementation. The current study investigated how principals implemented instructional in order to enhance quality instruction in schools in Baringo County Kenya.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This research study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The major purpose being to describe the state of affairs as it exists. It involves measurement, classification, analysis comparison and interpretation of data (Orodho, 2009). The data collected were used to describe the nature of existing conditions. For instance, how the Principals' Instructional Practices were enhancing quality teaching and learning in Secondary Schools in Baringo County.

### **3.2 Area of Study**

The research study was carried out in Baringo County, Kenya which is divided into six Sub-Counties as follows: Baringo Central, Mogotio, Koibatek, Marigat, Tiaty, and Baringo North.

### **3.3 Target Population**

Lior (2012) defines a population as an entire group of people or institutions, events or any other objects of the study that one wants to describe and understand. The target population in this study was 6901 Form Four students, 1266 teachers, and 140 principals, during the 2017-2020 school years, 6 (six) SCQASOs and the County Director of education (CDE) of Baringo County. Table 1 shows the distribution of the target population of the study.

**Table 1: Target population**

Sub-County	Students	Teachers	Principals	SC-QASOs	CDE
Baringo Central	1613	323	32	1	-
Mogotio	1223	231	26	1	-
Koibatek	1356	283	36	1	-
Marigat	1030	171	16	1	-
Tiatiy	522	92	6	1	-
Baringo North	1157	166	24	1	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>6901</b>	<b>1266</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>

Source: Baringo CDE's office (2020).

### 3.4 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

Sampling involves selecting a given number of persons from a defined population in such a way that the sample selected is representative of that population (Orodho, 2009). The study selected a sample size which was a representative of the population. Gall and Borg (2007) recommend that in descriptive research, 10-30% of the target population can be chosen as the sample for the study. Thus, this study selected 30% of each of the categories of the target population (students, teachers, and principals). Out of 140 schools 42(30%) were selected for the study. By using stratified sampling method, the population of schools was divided into strata according to sub-counties. There were six sub-counties, which formed six strata. After stratification of the schools, simple random sampling technique was used to get the sample from each stratum. This technique ensured that all the elements in the universe had equal chance of being selected as well ensuring greater representativeness of the entire population and reducing sampling error and enabling greater precision in estimation (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2015).

In order to get a representative sample from each of the categories of respondents, in each stratum, the technique of comparative distribution was followed under which the sample sizes from the diverse strata were set aside proportionately to the sizes of populations in each of the stratum using the procedure below;

$$n = \frac{p\% \times q\% \times [z / e\%]^2}{N_1} \quad (\text{De vaus, 2002})$$

Where;

n = sample size

p = proportion belonging to the specified category

q = proportion belonging to the unspecified category

z = value corresponding to the level of confidence required

e = margin of error

For example, in the case of students in Baringo central sub-county on the table below with  $N_1 = 6901$ , we have  $P_1 = 1613/6901$  and hence  $n_1 = n.P = 2070(1613/6901) = 483.83$  which is rounded to 484 students as a sample for Baringo central sub-county. This implies that from a population of 6901 students in the entire county, 484 students formed a proportional sample to the size of the stratum of Baringo central. The same formula was applied to the sample for teachers and principals in each stratum.

The researcher obtained the list of schools in each sub-county (stratum) from the office of the county director of education, Baringo County. In order to select schools from each stratum, a number was assigned to each school. The researcher later used a table of random numbers to draw a sample from the list based on the sub-county the schools were selected. To use the random numbers table, the researcher randomly selected a row as a starting point, and then selected all the numbers that followed in that particular row. The researcher later proceeded to the next rows until the proportionate number of schools was obtained from each stratum. For example, from the list of

schools in Baringo central sub-county, out of 32 schools which were proportionately assigned to this stratum, 10 schools were randomly selected.

The first step was to select the sample of students from each stratum. The lists of students were provided by the principals of each of the selected schools in each stratum. A random number was assigned to each student. Further, the researcher used a table of random numbers to draw a sample from the list based on the sub-county the schools were selected. To use the random numbers table, the researcher randomly selected a row as a starting point, and then selected all the numbers that followed in that particular row. The researcher later proceeded to the next rows until a sample of students assigned to each stratum was obtained. For example, out of 1613 who were proportionately assigned to Baringo central sub-county, 484 students were selected from 10 schools selected from the stratum.

The second step was to select the number of teachers from each stratum. The lists of teachers were provided by the

principals of each of the selected schools in each stratum. A random number was assigned to each teacher. Further, the researcher used a table of random numbers to draw a sample from the list based on the sub-county the schools were selected. To use the random numbers table, the researcher randomly selected a row as a starting point, and then selected all the numbers that followed in that row. The researcher later proceeded to the next rows until a sample of teachers proportionately assigned to each stratum was obtained. For example, out of 323 teachers who were proportionately assigned to Baringo central sub-county, 97 teachers were selected from 10 schools selected from the stratum. Principals of each of the selected schools formed the sample for principals. The principals of each of the selected schools formed the sample for the principals. Purposive sampling method was used to select 6 sub county quality assurance and standard officers from each sub-county and the County Director of Education. Purposive sampling was used as a method of extending knowledge by deliberately selecting sample participants who are known to be rich source of data.

**Table 2: Sampling Frame**

Sub-County	Students		Teachers		Principals		SCQASOs CDE	
	Population sample	population sample	population sample	population sample	population sample	population sample	population sample	population sample
Baringo central	1613	484	323	97	32	10	1	-
Mogotio	1223	367	231	69	26	8	1	-
Koibatek		1356	406	283	85	36	10	1
Marigat	1030	309	171	51	16	5	1	-
Tiaty		522	157	92	28	6	2	1
Baringo North		1157	347	166	50	24	7	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>6901</b>	<b>2070</b>	<b>1266</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>6</b>
								<b>1</b>

Source: Field Data

Table 2 indicates that out of a total population of 6901 students, 2070(30%) formed the sample. Out of a total population of 1266 teachers, 380(30%) formed the sample for the study. The proportionate samples which were picked from each stratum are also shown. The sample for the students is 2070 divide by the schools selected which is 42. Therefore 49 students were selected from each of the sampled schools. The sample for teachers is 380 divides by 42 selected schools which comes to 9 teachers to be picked from every selected school. Purposive sampling method was used to select 6 sub county quality assurance and

standard officers from each sub-county and CDE of Baringo County.

### 3.5 Research Instruments

Questionnaires and interview schedules were utilised as the research instruments for collection of primary data.

### 3.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

After all the data had been collected, data cleaning followed for the purposes of identifying any incomplete, inaccurate or unreasonable data for the purpose of

improving on quality through correction of detected errors and omissions. The data collected for this study were analysed using quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data collected was analysed using descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis describes patterns and general trends in the data sets and is used to examine or explore one variable at a time (Serem et al., 2013). The descriptive statistics used included frequencies, means, percentages and standard deviation respectively. Quantitative data were presented using tables and charts. The descriptive analysis was appropriate for this study because it involved the description, analysis and interpretation of circumstances prevailing at the time of study.

With regard to qualitative data, responses were thematically clustered in relation to the objectives of the study. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend thematic analysis for its ability to help identify, analyse, and report on patterns (themes) of data, as well as for its ability to potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data. Thematic analysis goes beyond descriptions by interpreting various aspects of the research topic.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1 Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices and Quality Instructional Activities in Schools**

The objective of the study was to examine the contribution of instructional leadership practices in enhancing quality instructional activities in schools. Participants were asked to provide their views on the contribution of instructional leadership practices in enhancing quality instructional activities in schools. The study is guided by the following question: How does principals' instructional leadership practices enhance quality teaching and learning in Secondary schools in Baringo County? To answer the research question, participants were asked to rate their levels of agreement on a five- point Likert scale where: strongly agree = 1, agree = 2, Undecided = 3, disagree = 4 and strongly disagree =5. Table 3 below shows a summary of the combined average responses of participants.

**Table 3: Summary of Combined Average Responses of the three Categories of Participants (students, teachers and principals).**

		<b>Respondents' Combined disagreement Scores (%)</b>	<b>Respondents' Combined Agreement Scores (%)</b>
<b>1</b>	Regularly inspects students' lesson notes	<b>57</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>2</b>	Frequently makes supervisory visit to classrooms	<b>53</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>3</b>	Regularly motivates well performing students	<b>33</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>4</b>	Regularly checks students class attendance register	<b>42</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>5</b>	Regularly checks students class attendance register	<b>42</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>6</b>	Regularly meet individually with teachers and students to discuss academic progress	<b>20</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>7</b>	Regularly meet individually with teachers and students to discuss academic progress	<b>25</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>9</b>	Frequently approves teachers' schemes of work	<b>21</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>10</b>	Regularly approves teachers' records of work	<b>20</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>11</b>	Regularly checks and approves teachers' lesson plans	<b>68</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>12</b>	Observes teachers' lesson notes	<b>62</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>13</b>	Conducts induction of new teachers	<b>22</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>14</b>	Normally have face to face discussion with teachers on student progress	<b>25</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>15</b>	Updates teachers on the schools' performance	<b>14</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>16</b>	Monitors assessment progress	<b>20</b>	<b>64</b>

Table 3 shows a summary of the responses of participants on principals' instructional leadership practices which aims at attaining quality instructional activities in schools.

The respondents were found to have high scores in agreement that principals pay the necessary attention in checking and approval of schemes of work (65%), records of work (66%), discussion of students' progress (58%), induction of new teachers (68%), motivating well performing students and teachers (61%) and regular checking of class attendance registers (51%). However, it was evident from the high disagreement levels of respondents that principals gave less emphasis on class-visits (53%), inspection and approval of teachers' lesson plans (68%), inspection and approval of teachers' lesson

notes (62%) and inspection and approval of students' lesson notes (57%) respectively.

From the qualitative outcome, participants pointed out that proper dispensation of instructional practices for instance checking and approving of professional documents forms the basis to quality instruction. When principals fail to supervise teachers, they relax hence perpetuating poor results in schools because of wastage of time. The quality of instructional activities in classrooms is improved through close supervision.

## 4.2 Views of Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (SCQASOs) and County Director of Education (CDE) on Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices and Quality Instructional Activities in Schools

The study also sought views from SCQASOs and CDE on the contribution of instructional leadership practices in enhancing quality instructional activities in schools. By responding to interview items posed by the researcher in relation to instructional leadership roles of the principals in schools, the CDE had the following to say:

*School principals are the key players in the implementation of what is going on in the classrooms, specifically teaching and learning. It is their mandate to monitor and evaluate teachers' instructional activities in the classrooms and to ensure that teaching and learning take place effectively in the classrooms.*

Still on the same issue, one of the SCQASOs said that:

*I think it is the responsibility of the principal to regularly approve lesson plans, schemes of work and other related activities in the school that will cater for the needs of the learners. Through supervisory activities, teachers get to know their areas of strength and weakness and hence improve on them.*

Similarly, Lovell and Wiles (2011) asserted that supervision is essential in the ultimate delivery of successful teaching and learning in the classrooms. At the forefront of ensuring this, is the principal who has been given the mandate to organize the system accordingly.

On the issue of scrutiny of teachers' professional records by Principals, the same Quality Assurance Officers said that:

*During my routine supervisory duties, I noticed that principals irregularly checked and approved the professional records of teachers which include teachers' schemes of work and teachers records of work covered.*

The responses made by the education officers suggest that implementation of instructional leadership roles were not up-to-date since all the elements of instructional leadership activities were not put into consideration. The views of the education officers mirror Watsulu and Simatwa (2011)

who asserted that professional documents assessments assist to guide teachers in preparation of content, delivery skills and required learning resources for quality education provision. This implies that when a school principal knows the strengths and weaknesses of teachers and build on their strengths and weaknesses and give them support and proper feedback, then teachers work much better to improve their instruction resulting in quality instruction in the classrooms.

Most SCQASOs that were interviewed also observed that Principals rarely checked and approved teachers' Lesson Plans and lesson notes, as well as students' lesson notes. This, according to one of the officers could be:

*“Due to the fact that principals are always preoccupied with immense schools' administrative duties”*

While replying to the interview question on classroom visitations by the school principals another Quality Assurance Officer said:

*We encourage our principals to frequently make classrooms visitations to observe teachers deliver lessons. However, these visits according to my observations during field supervisory visits are irregularly made. The reason given by principals is that they have many responsibilities to attend to.*

In relation to the impact of classroom visitations on the quality of instructional activities another officer remarked saying:

*I believe that frequent classroom visitations by principals tend to exert a lot of attention to the efforts of teachers and hence they perform their instructional roles effectively. Principals' actual presence in the classrooms is the best way of judging efficiency in teaching methods hence improving quality of instruction.*

Pertaining to the interview question on checking of professional records of teachers by principals, the CDE in response summarized that:

*According to the reports that I receive from my field quality assurance officers in their routine inspections, some principals fail to live up to the expectations of their mandate. Even though principals approved and checked the professional records of teachers they rarely extended to other areas which they consider less important. For example, inspecting teachers' lesson notes and students' lesson*



*notes are rarely extended beyond the minimal expectations. This could be due to the multiple tasks assigned to them (principals).*

Furthermore, concerning principals providing timely feedback to teachers, the CDE remarked:

*We encourage school principals to provide timely feedback to their teachers by making suggestions for improvement which contain clear, practical examples and strategies that a teacher can begin to implement immediately.*

Still on the same issue of timely feedback, one of the quality assurance and standard officer answered in affirmation saying:

*Yes, teachers do benefit from the timely feedback of the principals. Timely feedback enables teachers to know their areas of weakness and strength. It also helps teachers to build their capacities through expertise guidance from their principal.*

The remarks of the education officers imply that feedback is crucial in the process of supervision, and evaluation. Teachers should know, how they perform, and the school principal should indicate areas of weakness and improvement.

This result support the findings of Sergiovanni (2006) who concluded that feedback provides possible development to teachers as they will be aware of shortcomings and will improve on them.

Pertaining to whether principals assist the class teachers to reach their potential mentioned that:

*School principals are required to assist teachers to reach their potential by improving their skills and performance. It is true to say the quality of education is the net result of the performance of teachers. To some extent some of our principals do attempt to guide their teachers and providing them information on how to prepare lessons well.*

In relation to the interview question on whether school principals send teachers to workshops, the CDE had this to say:

*Due to lack of finance school principals particularly in the sub-county schools rarely sent teachers to attend workshops and seminars. The remedy for this scenario is to*

*ask the government to intervene and sponsor teachers for these seminars whenever they are organized.*

This implies that some school principals were not able to send their teachers for professional training to equip them with knowledge and skill on classroom instruction. This contradict Betts, (2012) stated that the quality of instruction can be improved through rigorous professional development of teachers which enhances the expected quality of feedback which in turn advances the level of the desired leadership and resulting in improved student learning.

With regard to the interview question concerning motivation of teachers by principals

One of the quality assurance and standards officer said:

*It is crucial for instructional leaders to be present always in their school for them to reward teachers for discharging their responsibilities effectively with minimal supervision. During my routine supervisory visits I noticed in some of their records that principals do encourage their teachers by providing prizes to those who perform well in their subject areas.*

This concurs with the work of Creswell (2011) who asserted that instructional leaders ought to provide instant feedback of teaching and learning process in the classrooms. This in turn is reflected on teacher response to their assignments and become more concerned on the instructional process.

In response to the interview question on supervision of classroom activities and quality instructional activities in the classroom, the CDE made the following remarks:

*I believe that the principal's involvement in the supervision of classroom practices has a marginal impact in the quality of teaching and learning and in turn improve quality instruction in the classrooms.*

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

It was concluded that principals were not up to date in their mandate since they gave less emphasis on some key issues such as: class-visits, inspection and approval of teachers' lesson plans, inspection and approval of teachers' lesson notes and inspection and approval of students' lesson notes respectively.

Rigorous and proper dispensation of instructional practices for instance checking and approving of professional documents forms the basis to quality instruction.

## 5.2 Recommendation

The study recommended that principals should be thorough in their instructional leadership responsibility by undertaking all it takes to ensure that teachers are up to date in their preparation and delivery of content. More so, there was need for MOE to formulate a policy on which domains of practices of instructional leadership ought to be prioritized by school principals to strengthen and enhance quality instruction in the classrooms.

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