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Head Teachers' Supervisory Role of Monitoring Classroom Progress Influence on Academic Achievements in KCPE, Kandara Sub-County; Kenya

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Abstract:

Kandara Sub-County in Murang'a east was second last among the eight Sub-Counties in Murang'a County, Kenya with a mean score of less than 200 out of the total 500 marks in national examinations. Kiahiti Primary School, which was the worst performer both in the county and in Central Province, registered a mean score 152.37. The researcher, therefore, conducted a study to establish whether head teachers supervisory role of monitoring classroom progress has any influence on academic achievement. The study was guided by the following specific objective: To establish how head teachers' supervisory role of monitoring classroom progress influence academic achievement in Kandara sub-County. The hypothesis was stated as follows: Head teacher's supervisory role of monitoring classroom progress has no statistically significant influence on academic achievements Gatanga Sub- County. The study adopted descriptive research design. Data was collected using questionnaires, document analysis and in-depth interview schedule. Simple stratified random sampling technique was used. A sample of 24 head teachers, 263 teachers and 1 Curriculum Support Officers participated in the study. Validity was ascertained with the help university lecturers who are experts in this area. Reliability was ascertained using test-retest method and it was found to be 0.85. Quantitative data was analyzed using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, while qualitative data from interviews was transcribed and grouped into themes and sub-themes. The most significant finding revealed that head teachers do not monitor classroom progress as indicated by the mean of 1.53. There was therefore a positive relationship between monitoring classroom progress and academic achievement $r = 0.306$, $n = 263$, $p < 0.05$. Hence the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative. These findings can be a reference point for head teachers of schools in Kandara Sub- County in Murang'a east for improvement of learning outcomes. Monitoring of classroom progress should start from early years to avoid unnecessary pressure to the teachers and learners in standard eight, since if it is started early better results would be realized

Keywords: *Monitoring classroom progress and Academic Achievements, Kandara Sub-County, Kenya*

1. Literature Review

Students greatly benefit from using computer-assisted-instruction programs that provide data-based feedback and maintain individual student records of performance (Hill, 2007). Similarly, when head teachers' use data about trends in students' performance to adjust the curriculum or instructional practices being used, instruction is maximized. This ensures a consistent and continuous school-wide focus on pupils' achievement, using data and benchmarks to monitor progress in every child's learning (Epstein, 2009). In schools where students are achieving at high levels, head teachers' structure time to evaluate and monitor students' progress, and lead staff efforts in designing focused instructional approaches to meet the special and specific needs of students. They with the teachers review, modify, and adjust their instructional efforts. Brossard and Harrigan (2011) discussed the positive impact on students' performance when consistent monitoring of students' skill was part of the staff's routine in evaluating instructional methods. Venezky and Winfield (2013) reported that in successful schools careful monitoring of student progress took place. A head teacher of a high achieving school that monitored student progress regularly discovered that, they not only met that goal but surpassed it at the first four levels (Venezky and Winfield, 2013). Murphy (2014) in his study at Prince George County in USA established that the school improved academically after the head teachers' analyzed student data and came up with strategies assisting weak students. Effective teachers determine the academic needs of students with the use of data such as reading inventories.

Similarly, effective head teachers' use data to determine areas of need for staff development activities. In schools where students are high achievers, head teachers' provide and promote professional development opportunities to improve teachers' instructional skills.

Decisions about staff development are made based on students' progress data as well as on teachers' discussions, input, and needs. Brossard and Harrigan (2003) reported that, prompt evaluation of teachers' performance and the provision of assistance, help to improve academic performance of students. This is made possible by use of on-going work place interactions, action planning, monitoring classroom practices, evaluating and celebrating pupils' achievements (South worth, 2009). For effective teaching and learning to take place in a school, the head teacher as a pedagogical leader has to consider focusing on the learning and teaching process. This means that the head teacher and the members of staff need to provide an environment where each student can experience success in academic, personal and social growth (Dinham, 2004). Leithwood (2006) established that the head teacher enhance the provision of effective guidance and counseling services for pupils in the social, academic career domains. The head teachers also facilitate the supply of information to parents and guardians for the effective monitoring of the progress of their children/wards in schooling or performance by providing data needed for planning and decision making. Progress records serve as data bank on which both the school head and staff and even students can draw on (Olson, 2009). Uduchukwu (2010) defined an attendance register as a book in which the presence or absence of students in a school is recorded on a daily basis. It is a statutory record that must be kept by every school.

This record is kept on individual class basis. The class teacher is the custodian of this record. Its importance includes: Providing necessary data that may be requested from time to time to take administrative decisions. It is also helpful in identifying sick students, truants, absentees and students who attend school regularly. The cumulative record folder for students' is a storehouse of information on student cognitive, affective and psychomotor development. Its importance is; it reflects continuous assessment on students' educational or academic progress. It also reflects students' performance in extracurricular activities (De Pree, 2000). Olembo (2004) established that student's report sheet/card keeps data on students' academic performance in termly basis it and assists in monitoring students' academic progress information. Karagu (2002) define the student personnel task area as, those services to pupils which supplement regular instruction. The head teacher's role in this task area is to integrate personnel functions with instruction and coordinate and supervise the various kinds of personnel services. Students' welfare personnel.

Therefore they are involved in activities such as qualitative and quantitative data evaluation. According to Onyango (2003) and Okumbe (2004) quantitative data deals with elaborate programme of student accounting, maintenance of records, and reporting information to various agencies, students' progress, discipline data and projection of students' enrolment. Sergiovanni (2009) posits that qualitative data include those services that seek to help students adjust better to the school, develop more effectively as social and emotional persons, become better learners and develop skills for dealing with the future beyond the school.

Under the qualitative data, Okumbe (2004) identifies three major sub-tasks, which include; establishing and maintaining a system of record keeping which includes data on days present, days absent, credits earned, tardiness, and health problems, developing a fair and equitable system of student discipline in which minor infractions, disruptive behaviour and alcohol and drug abuse, are handled, providing special assistance to students' calls for provision of health guidance and counseling programme to students (Haycock, 2011). Either part-time or full time staff can provide guidance and counseling on improving students' performance. Mantep Institute's handbook for primary school head teachers (2001) concurs with the administrative functions provided by Okumbe (2004) who aptly captures what is involved in student personnel. Since the reason for existence of school administration is to facilitate teaching and learning (Campbell, 2003). The instructional head must be well versed with factors, which lead to poor attendance, wastage and stagnation. Kochhar (2004) captures factors which hinder academic achievement; they include poverty, negative peer influence, lack of a sense of belonging to school and inadequate curriculum. In underscoring the role played by a head teacher in ensuring effective teaching and learning, Mbiti (2005) posits that the school must give direction to young inquisitive minds since at that stage of growth they are prone to being pessimistic or optimistic in worldview. This then calls for constant review of the kind of experiences being offered to students by a way of evaluating the facilitators of such experiences (Moore, 2006).

The guiding question on the appropriate teacher should be; is the teacher able to provide the pupils with the proper educational growth experiences needed in this area? The head teacher must keep in mind the need of reminding the members of teaching staff, constantly the importance of learning experiences being student-centered (Madden, 2009). Exposing students to recreation activities like sports, music, drama, clubs and school publications may reduce such negative effects. Moreover, there is also a dire need for the school to explore diverse ways of addressing students' psychological needs by creating appropriate networks through orientation, guidance and counseling as well as having a deliberate effort to offer sound guidance and counseling programme (Marshall, 2010). Aggarwal (2004) acknowledged that there are various factors that affect students' interests in learning and came up with solutions such as enhancing the physical students through motivation and by giving them exercises that are stimulating and challenging enough to keep them interested in learning. Burt (2007) further conducted a study in London and identified some of the causes of poor academic achievements such as; socio-economic status of the learner, school conditions that included inefficient teaching, poor school organization, lack of individual and group counseling, and absence of the child from school. Proper records on attendance and performance can help students to improve on their performance through remedial teaching and guidance where they are weak. Therefore a head teacher who keeps track on student progress academically and on attendance can assist him make decisions on how to help weak or below average learners (Kinuthia, 2009).

2. Results and Discussions

	F	Mean	Std. Dev.
Records on students' performance are available	1,730	4.01	0.457
Progress Report cards are issued per term	1,718	3.75	0.684
Feedback on students' performance help to improve on their academic achievements	1,681	3.50	0.970
Decisions on staff development are made based on students' progress	1,689	2.63	1.022
Class attendance register is available and updated daily	1,726	3.50	0.759
The head teachers discuss students' progress with teachers	1,705	2.87	1.052
Remedial teaching is done to assist students who are weak academically	1,722	4.01	0.436
Record on students' abilities in co-curricular activities is available	1,676	2.64	1.056
Students are assisted to build their talents based on their performance in co-curricular activities	1,713	2.64	1.047
Students with improved performance are recognized	1,672	2.85	1.054
Average		2.43	0.854

Table 1: Teaches' Response on Monitoring Classroom Progress

As presented in Table 1 teachers were asked to rate the head teachers' on the role of monitoring classroom progress. The study found that records on students' performance were available in most schools as indicated by a mean ($M=4.01$, $SD=0.357$). On issuing progress report cards the study found that they were issued every term as implied by the mean and standard deviation ($M=3.75$, $SD=0.684$). Teachers' expressed agreement, with some disparity that feedback on students' performance helped to improve on their academic achievements as shown by mean ($M=3.50$, $SD=0.670$). However once report cards are issued, teachers and parents do not do a follow up on how to assist students who are weak. Neither do they discuss the progress of the pupils with the head teacher in order to assist the learners or give remedial teaching. A possible explanation to this is that students who have improved are never recognized or rewarded, hence performance in the county has been declining. Teachers expressed uncertainty on whether head teachers' decisions on staff development were made based on students' progress as shown by mean ($M=2.63$, $SD=1.022$); the standard deviation show a wide variance on teachers' responses. The study found that class attendance registers were available and updated daily as shown by mean ($M=3.50$, $SD=1.059$).

The study also found that head teachers do not engage teachers to discuss students' progress as shown by mean ($M=2.87$, $SD=1.052$). In case learners have dropped in performance the head teacher should find out why they are dropping in performance. He should have a progressive record in form of a chart displayed in the classroom and follow up on individual student performance. The class teacher should also be concerned with the performance of the class by checking on the mean grade of his/her class. According to the CSOs progress charts are rarely displayed in schools. Most schools buy commercial tests instead of administering continuous assessment test after every topic. It, therefore, becomes hard to realize the objectives in that particular topic. The standard deviations show variability in the responses. This may be a possible explanation as to why performance in Murang'a County has been declining instead of improving. On provision of remedial teaching to the weak pupils, teachers agreed, that weak pupils were provided with remedial classes to assist them improve on the academic as shown by mean and standard deviation of ($M=4.01$, $SD=0.336$). The study established that recognition of pupils who have improved performance was neutral, although the response were varied ($M=2.85$, $SD=1.054$). Head teachers are also not keen on rewarding the most improved they only reward position 1, 2 and 3. Even if position one dropped in terms of mean grade, they are still rewarded. More emphasis is placed on end term examination but the continuous assessment test is ignored. The CSOs stated that head teachers rarely monitor the lower classes. They further stated that most head teachers focus on Standard Eight, they consider the class as the face of the school.

They disregard progress in other classes and are mostly concerned with the position of learners other than the marks. Co-curriculum activities are very crucial for child development. The study evaluated school involvement on co-curriculum activities. The study found that teachers were neutral on availability of record on students' abilities in co-curricular activities as implied by the mean ($M=2.64$, $SD=1.056$). The standard deviation indicates a wide variation in the responses. Consequently, teachers reported that efforts to assist pupils to build their talents based on their performance in co-curricular activities was average as shown by ($M=2.64$, $SD=1.047$). The standard deviations in imply varied responses on co-curriculum activities. This is an indication that schools overemphasis on knowledge achievement and ignore the talents and abilities outside the classroom. This is an impediment to physical growth and well-being of learners which should go hand in hand with academic progress. This is consistent with a study carried out by Ara & Rakhs (2008) who opined that; co-curricular activities compliment academic activities in attainment of educational goals.

		Performance(Y)	Monitoring class progress(X)
Performance(Y)	Pearson Correlation(r)	1	.306(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	1705	1582
Monitoring Class Progress (X)	Pearson Correlation(r)	.306(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	1582	1623
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Table 2: Hypothesis testing for the Influence of Head Teacher's Role of Monitoring Classroom Progress on Academic Achievements

The value of coefficient indicated in Table 2 shows there is a significant correlation between monitoring of class progress(x) and performance(y) at $\alpha=0.05$. The study then attempted to determine the extent to which monitoring of class progress influence academic performance by computing the coefficient of determination (r^2). The extent to which monitoring of class progress influences academic performance is equal to the Square of Pearson correlation coefficient, that is, $r^2 = (0.306)^2 = 0.093385$. Results obtained indicate that monitoring of class progress affects performance of schools by 9.3% in primary schools in Kandara Sub-County. There is therefore a significant relationship between monitoring classroom progress and academic achievements $r=0.306$, $n=1623$, $p < 0.05$. The $p < 0.05$ value was less than the calculated value, hence the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted. The implications are that monitoring learner progress from lower primary will automatically influence their overall performance in upper primary. It is therefore important to monitor learners' progress and give remedial teaching where necessary in order to improve on their academic achievements. Epstein (2009) supported this by stating that monitoring classroom progress ensures a consistent and continuous school-wide focus on pupils' achievement. It is therefore imperative to use data and benchmarks to monitor progress in every child's learning.

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