

Teachers' Perception on Classroom Observation and Checking of Pupils' Exercise Books by Head Teachers on Performance of Duty in Primary Schools in Nakuru North District, Kenya

Mbatia Jane Wairimu
PhD Student
Faculty of Curriculum and Education Studies
Laikipia University
P.O. Box 163 Bahati, Postal Code- 20113

Abstract

The study sought to establish teacher's perception of head teachers' supervisory practices on performance of duty in public primary schools in Nakuru North district. The supervisory practices investigated were classroom observation and checking of pupils' exercise books by the head teacher in relation to teachers' perceptions on performance of duty. The research design employed was descriptive survey. A total of 20 head teachers and 94 teachers participated in the study. The findings of the study were; head teachers make classroom observation and hold conferences to discuss problems encountered and way forward. Most of the head teachers endorsed and helped the teachers to prepare professional documents, checked pupils books to ascertain the amount of work and comments made on them. Teachers too agreed that instructional supervision helps to improve teaching and learning, head teachers do carry out instructional supervision in their schools, a factor they perceived positively. The study concluded that school heads are making efforts towards embracing collaborative and democratic approaches in supervision. Recommendations were made to improve on the effectiveness supervision by school heads

Keywords: supervision, head teacher, teachers, perception, classroom observation, pupils.

1. Introduction

Education is an investment in human capital and empirical evidence, based on endogenous growth models, shows that human capital is a key determinant of economic growth. Indeed, sustainable development is only possible if there is a critical mass of skilled people (Oketch & Asiachi, 1998). Government involvement in education and training is therefore justified on the basis that human capital development has large social returns. Supervision is an old practice aimed at improving teaching and learning through a deliberate emphasis on way and means of instilling excellence in the quality of instruction. In Kenya, overseeing has been delegated to the Inspectorate, the professional arm of the Ministry of Education.

Personnel at the Inspectorate engage in various activities which are collectively termed as inspection. However, Wango (2009) observes that supervision is one word which has got many different meanings. He argues that to a supervisor, it may mean a positive force for school programme improvement, while to one teacher it may be seen as a threat to his or her position, and another teacher as a source of assistance and support. Okumbe, (1998) adds on to the debate by submitting that for a long time, inspection has been regarded by many teachers and students as a fault-finding, harshly judgmental activity. In addition, the arrival of an inspector to a school system has been thought in many instances, to provoke fear among the personnel as well as pupils. In primary school education in Kenya, supervision is a professional service that involves educational administrators and teachers. According to Olembo, Wanga, and Karagu (1992) this exercise is meant to maintain, change, and improve the provision and actualization of learning opportunities for pupils. Its role is to help, guide, and assist teachers professionally. The overall research problem addressed in this study is that although changes have been made in the inspectorate arm of the Ministry of Education, little has been done to establish how supervision by head teachers contribute to effective curriculum delivery in public primary schools.

As evidenced in the literature review, past studies lay much emphasis on the role and duties of head teachers but fail to indicate how these roles and duties enhance teaching and learning. It is also worth stating that the perceptions of teachers on instructional supervision practices and how it contributes to effective teaching has hardly been investigated. These areas therefore, merit immediate attention as they would offer opportunity for improvement on supervision towards effective teaching and learning. The researcher therefore mainly focused on teachers' perceptions of head teachers supervisory practices on performance of duty in public primary schools in Nakuru North district with a view to creating new understanding as far as the role of head teachers are concerned in Kenyan education system and how teachers perceive instructional supervision function.

2. Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- a) To establish how classroom observation by the head teacher affect teachers' perceptions in the classroom teaching.
- b) To assess how checking of pupils books by the head teacher influence teachers' perceptions in the preparation of lesson notes and class assignments.

3. Review of Literature

According to Ogunsaju (2006), the ultimate purpose of supervision of schools is the improvement of pupil learning but its immediate focus is on the teacher and the whole of the educational setting. It therefore seeks to improve the total educational environment so as to enhance pupil learning. Supervision improves the effectiveness of teachers so that they can contribute maximally to the attainment of the system goals as well as changing some aspects of a person's concept of self, way of behaving and attitude to the school within the school organization. It also enables individuals to increase their knowledge, interest, ideals, and powers, find their place in society, and use their abilities to shape themselves and society towards ever-higher grades Okumbe (1998) identifies 3 aspects of supervision, the administrative aspect, the curricular aspect and the instructional aspect. He observes that the curricular aspect will include the development of curricular programmes and changes, selecting materials and allocating resources, estimating the expenditure needs for the curriculum. It is also said to include assisting the regular staff in upgrading their curricular capacities, informing the public about schools curricular activities and innovation and lastly, relating the curricular activities to the community resources. According to Okumbe (1998), the instructional aspect involves helping in the formulation and implementation of lesson plans, notes, and schemes of work, evaluating the instructional programmes and overseeing modification, delivery of instructional resources, helping in conducting and coordinating staff in- servicing, advising and assisting teachers involved in instructional programmes.

Studies conducted on teachers perceptions on the role of inspectors of schools outside Kenya demonstrated that, at present the impact of inspection on classroom teaching and on student achievement is far below expectation. Some data from International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) Caron and Grauwe (1997) research can highlight the level of dissatisfaction among teachers. In Michigan for example, Kunz (1994) carried out a study on the relationship between leadership of principals and the amount of teachers' compliance to the principals' directives. He concluded that principals perceived by their teachers to be strong initiating structure were complied with more than the principals perceived to be strong consideration structure were.

In Guinea, when teachers were asked about their opinion on utility of different sources of professional support, placed visits by different categories of inspectors at the bottom of the list, below, in decreasing order of importance, personal reading and pedagogical meetings, discussions with colleagues, support by principals, model lessons and in-service training (Martin and Ta Ngok, 1993). Jikobu (1997) in his study on teachers perception of leadership functions in secondary schools in Tanzania, found out that teachers preferred male heads because they were perceived to be more initiating structure whereas the female heads were perceived to be strong in consideration structure (Singleton, 1993). Zuelke and Willerman (1995) in their study on teaching in educational administration and supervision preparation programs in Malaysia found out that teachers and principals showed a strong desire for supervisors to use modern concepts and supervisory techniques during supervision. They used questionnaires to collect data. Fritz and Miller (2003) investigated supervisory practices used by teacher educators in agriculture in the USA. They used a survey questionnaire to elicit information. Their findings were that supervisors expressed significant positive feelings that clinical supervision objectives were being met by the teachers.

Nakitare (2000) in his critical study of supervisory practices in Kimilili division of Bungoma district used interview schedule and questionnaire methods. He used random sampling to gather data. His research revealed that a good percentage of teachers supported the view that teachers be frequently supervised. Some supervisors were friendly and kind in their approach to teachers while others still harassed and threatened the teachers. That frequency of supervision decreased with distance from education office. He recommended further research on the effectiveness of head teachers' supervision of teachers as compared to supervision of teachers by office based officers. Njagi (1981) in his study based on attitudes of teachers towards primary head teachers' administrative behavioral in Kirinyaga district used questionnaires as his instrument to illicit information. He used random sampling. His findings were that teachers possessing highest grades professionally displayed a more positive attitude towards head teachers' supervision.

Those teachers possessing highest academic displayed negative attitudes towards the head teachers' supervision and that there was no difference in attitude towards supervision among teachers of different teaching experiences. The study also revealed that female teachers generally displayed more positive attitudes towards the head teachers' supervisory behavior. Almost a similar study was carried out by Watende (2007) on teachers' perception on supervisory duties of primary school head teachers in Nyandarua district. He used questionnaires. His finding was that teachers neither benefited from supervision by external supervisors nor the head teachers. From the empirical literature available, little has been investigated on whether supervision by head teachers contribute to effective curriculum delivery and how teachers perceive supervision as a function of school heads in relation to teaching and learning, hence the need to fill this knowledge gap.

4. Conceptual Framework

The study was based on a conceptual framework that shows the relationship between teachers' perception of head teachers' supervisory practices and performance of duty. According to the Expectancy Theory of Human Motivation as used in this study, teachers who perceive the head teachers' instructional supervisory practices positively end up being motivated. This leads to good performance in subjects which is an indication of effective teaching. Teachers, whose perception on the head teachers' instructional supervisory practices is negative, usually feel demotivated resulting in poor performance in their subject areas. This explanation is as illustrated in the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1.1.

5. Research Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The study population consisted of 941 teachers, 40 principals in Nakuru North Sub County. Stratified random sampling was used to select 20 principals and 94 teachers. Two sets of questionnaires were used to collect data. Face and content validity was ascertained by presenting the instruments to three experts in the educational research whose input was incorporated. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained by test re-test method whereby Pearson's coefficient of 0.7 and above at a p-value of 0.05 was considered reliable. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means, frequency counts, and percentages while qualitative data was transcribed, analyzed, and systematically organized into themes and sub-themes as they emerged.

6. Results

6.1 Research Question One

The research question responded to was, "How does classroom observation by the head teacher affect teachers' perceptions in the classroom teaching." To realize the first objective on classroom observation, the head teachers were supposed to respond to various items so as to establish whether they practiced classroom observation and whether this helped in the improvement of teaching and learning. Findings are as presented in table 1. The findings showed that all the head teachers 12 (100%) agreed that they supervise teachers in the classroom and hold conferences later on to discuss the problems encountered and the way forward. This is in line with literature and practitioners who propose that the principal is the key figure in teacher development through instructional supervision. This is further supported by the findings of a limited survey among elementary school principals and teachers in two states, by Krajewski, Robert, and Ben (2009) which revealed that both teachers and principals rated "instructional supervision" as one of the top three roles that principals should perform. In another study by Blumberg (2005), principals saw themselves spending about thirty-five percent of their time in the supervision of teachers and desirous of increasing that time to about fifty percent.

In addition, 83.3% of the head teachers agreed that observing teachers in classroom has helped in provision of quality teaching and learning; while 16.7% of the head teachers disagreed. This is so because the problems encountered during this process are discussed and solutions provided to the teachers. The head teacher needs to work very closely with teachers in the classroom as some of them may have unique instructional problems (Olembo, Wanga and Karagu 1992). In addition, it is common knowledge from research into effective schools across the world that the most successful head teachers are focused on and spend the majority of their time improving teaching and learning. This is in agreement with Frazer (2000) who argues that learning is central to the functions of a school and it is important that instruction which is used as a basic tool to promote learning is perfected. On the other hand, classroom visitation may also help head teachers discover individual teacher potentialities that need to be tapped and developed to enhance teaching/learning (Sergiovanni & Robert, 2009). Dube (2007) submits that it is generally believed that if teachers are left to themselves they may not try to develop their teaching skills. This then, underlines the significance of instructional supervision to help teachers improve their teaching skills.

On the other hand, teachers had to respond to various items based on classroom observation by the head teachers. The findings were as presented in table 2. Findings indicated that a majority of the teachers 54(64.3%) agreed that classroom observation by head teachers help teachers improve their teaching and pupils learning. This is supported by Ngware et al. (2010) who contend that teachers may be qualified and trained but still no effective learning may take place in the classroom. They further advocate for the institutionalization of lesson observation, feedback and professional guidance in schools. Komoski (2007) further contends that supervision is a leadership act whose ultimate purpose is to improve classroom instruction. He submits that if supervision is seen in this light it would be beneficial to supervisors, teachers, and students. Acheson and Gail (2003) stress that supervision should not be an autocratic exercise but collaborative and interactive. They argue that in instances where school heads act as autocrats in their supervision, they are bound to face challenges such as resistance from teachers and the whole purpose of supervising for curriculum improvement is defeated. This is probably the reason why 35.7% of the teachers disagreed with the proposition that classroom observation by head teacher's help teachers improve their teaching and pupils learning. Holland and Adams (2002) contend that teachers' negative views about the supervisor's supervision tasks are normally caused by wrong supervision.

A majority of the teachers (73.8%) agreed with the proposition that problems encountered during the process were discussed and provided with solutions after classroom observation. This is in agreement with Baffour-Awuah (2011) who argues that once classroom visitations are made a common practice, and teachers are informed in advance of its purpose, then teachers will accept it as an important supervisory technique and will not look at it as a kind of fault finding. This however contradicts the findings of Sibanda, Mutopa, and Maphosa (2011), which revealed that in some instances heads held no post observation discussion with teachers. They simply produced a report which they asked teachers to sign. Such supervisory practices confirm Veir's (1990) view of school heads who operate with a dominant model of supervision. The way such heads operate is characterized by either giving no feedback to teachers or giving no suggestions for improvement. The findings in this study are however in line with Zuelke and Willerman (1995), who found out that teachers and principals showed a strong desire for supervisors to use modern concepts and supervisory techniques during supervision. This also concurs with the MoEST report (2010) on Quality Assurance and Standards that judgment on the quality of education can be provided through classroom observation of the teachers.

6.2: Research Question Two

The research question responded to was, "How does checking of pupils books by the head teacher influence teachers' perceptions in the preparation of lesson notes and class assignments?" The respondents were also required to respond to items on the effectiveness of checking of pupils' exercise books in order to assess the quality of teaching and learning by head teacher. Data collected from the head teachers is as presented in the table 3. The findings show that 58.3% of head teachers disagreed with proposition that they don't check pupils' exercise books to ascertain whether teachers prepared lesson notes and class assignments. However, 41.7% agreed with the statement. On the other hand, 100% of the head teachers agreed that checking of pupils exercise books helped them to assess the quality of teaching and learning offered. This however raises a question why such a big percentage (41.7) would fail to implement a practice which they knew was crucial in implementing their mandate. Hallinger and Heck (1998) observes that effective execution of this task area requires an astute leader and this greatly affects pupils' achievement.

To play the leadership role effectively, the head teacher is expected to develop a school climate and culture that help motivate pupils, teaching and non-teaching staff, leading to a better teaching and learning environment which is conducive to higher levels of pupils' achievements. Olembo, Wanga, and Karagu (1992) assert that the supervisor has to check the teachers' classroom work and assess their overall performance based on pupil achievement. The teachers also responded to items on checking of exercise books by head teachers and their responses were as presented in table 4. Most teachers (72.6%) agreed that the head teachers checked pupils' exercise books to ascertain the kind, amount and quality of work done by the teachers. However, 27.4% disagreed with the proposition. The findings are supported by Wekesa (2003) who observes that head teacher's supervisory role should influence instructional behaviors of teachers directly through supervision of the teaching process and indirectly through developing school level-policies. Further, the head teacher should monitor program implementation at the classroom level, contribute in resource-material development, especially textual materials and program evaluation. On the other hand, 55.9% of the teachers agreed that stamping of pupils' books by the head teacher encourages the teachers, while 44.1% disagreed. This shows that a majority of the teachers feel encouraged when they find the head teacher has stamped pupils exercise books an indication that head teachers were concerned with pupils' achievement. However, Wekesa (2003) argues that while the role of head teachers in instructional supervision is directly linked to performance, the Kenya' public education system has been blamed for being unaccountable leading to poor supervision. Further, poor supervision leads to poor performance due to haphazard curriculum implementation and unprofessional misconduct among teachers such as absenteeism.

7. Conclusion

Based on the study findings, a majority of the head teachers employ classroom observation as a method of instructional supervision. Teachers too agreed that head teachers observed them in classrooms, a method they perceived positively. That head teachers check pupils' exercise books to ascertain whether teachers prepared lesson notes and class assignments. Teachers on their part said they felt encouraged whenever they find that the head teacher has endorsed pupils' books which to them resulted to positive attitudes towards this head teacher's supervisory practice.

8. Recommendations

In the light of the research findings, the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations:

- a) KICD to organize on how the head teachers should be trained in order to administer best supervisory practices. In-services courses to be organized in order for the practicing supervisors to be equipped with the best supervisory methods
- b) The Ministry of Education and Teachers Service Commission should ensure that there are transparent laid down policies governing promotion and placing of teachers based on qualifications and merits.
- c) The school administration and the staff should openly discuss issues pertaining to required standards in performance of duties and be up dated on what is required of them.

9. Suggestions for Further Research

Taking the limitations and delimitations of the study the researcher makes the following suggestions for further research:-

- a) Investigate the causes of great gender disparity in the primary schools in the district.
- b) Studies on perceptions of teachers on instructional supervision should be undertaken in other parts of the country.
- c) Causes of great dissatisfaction on the policy used in placing and promoting teachers in primary schools.

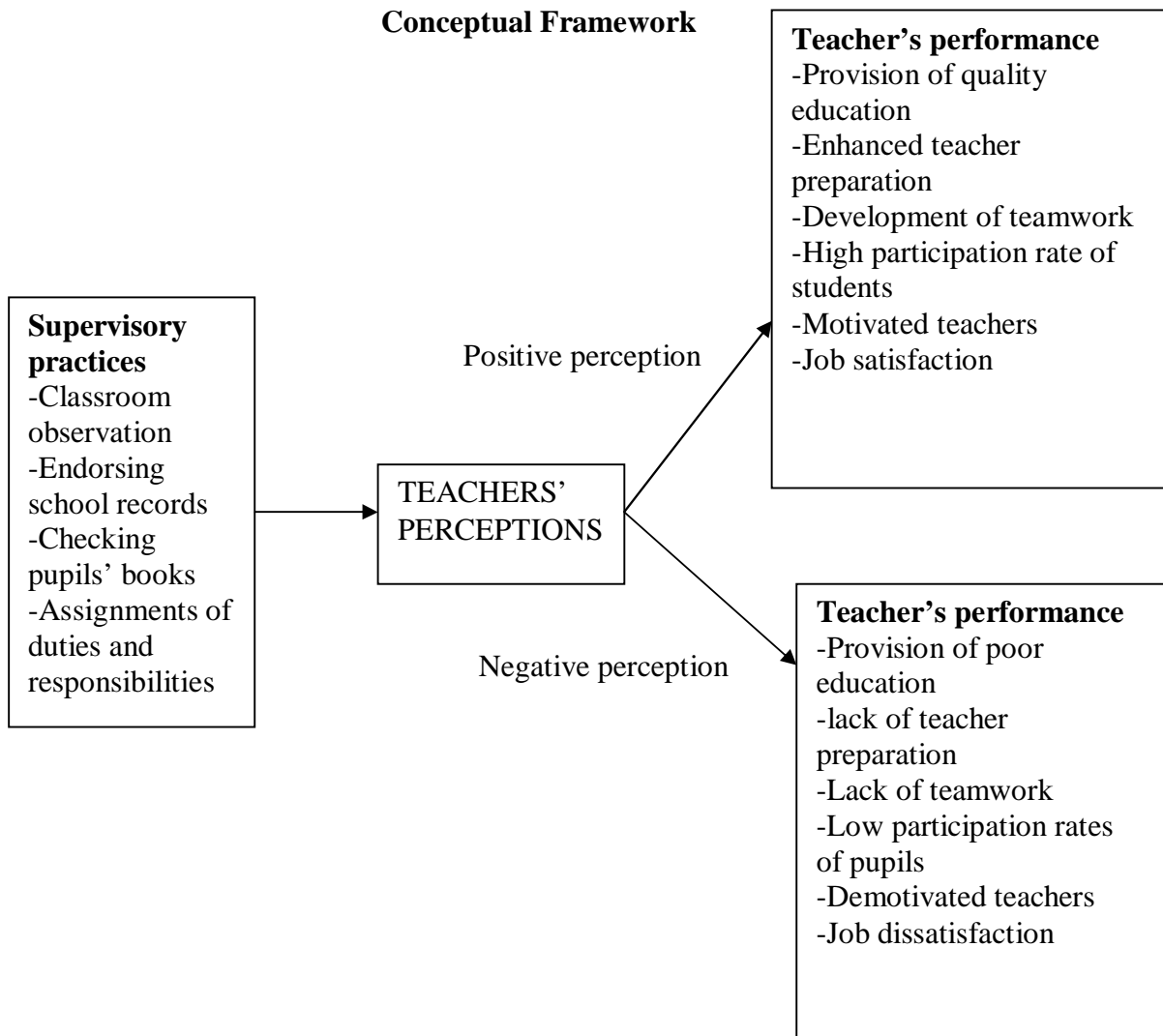


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Watende (2007)

Table 1: Head teachers' response on classroom observation

Classroom observation	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I conduct Classroom observation and conferences	4	33.3	8	66.7	-	-	-	-
Classroom observation leads to Improvement of teaching and learning	4	33.3	6	50	2	16.7	-	-

Table 2: Teachers' response on classroom observation by head teachers

Classroom observation	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Classroom observation helps improve teaching	12	14.3	42	50.0	11	13.1	19	22.6
Problems are discussed after observation	23	27.4	39	46.4	13	15.5	9	10.7

Table 3: Head teachers' response on checking of pupils' exercise books

Checking pupils books	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I don't check pupil's exercise books	3	25	2	16.7	3	25	4	33.3
Checking books helps assess quality of teaching and learning	7	58.3	5	41.7	-		-	-

Table 4: Teachers' response on the checking of pupils exercise books

Checking pupils' books	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Head teacher checks books	20	23.8	41	48.8	8	9.5	15	17.9
Stamping encourage teachers	8	9.5	39	46.4	18	21.3	20	23.8

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