



Strategies for Enhancing Instructional Supervision to Improve Education Quality in Public Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Makueni County, Kenya

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Abstract

The study investigated the effectiveness and perceptions of various instructional supervision strategies in the context of public secondary schools in Kenya. The study examines four primary strategies employed by instructional supervisors: direct assistance, group development, curriculum development, and action research. The aim is to provide insights into the most impactful approaches for enhancing educational quality. This study was based on the concept that the supervisory role of the principal is significant in enhancing teacher's professional development. There was a total of 392 public secondary schools in Makueni County with a total of 3,364 teachers. The sampled population was 119 principals and 357 teachers making a total of 476 respondents. The study combined qualitative analysis with quantitative metrics like rankings and percentages. The results reveal that direct assistance strategy, particularly immediate feedback, is highly valued by all parties, including principals (58.8%), heads of departments (62.5%), and teachers (67.6%). This approach provides personalized support to teachers by offering constructive feedback on teaching methods, materials, and styles. It was found that providing timely feedback is crucial for effective instructional supervision, especially for new and less experienced teachers. The study also highlights the significance of group development strategy, wherein collaborative groups of teachers come together to address instructional issues and make important decisions. The findings emphasize the need for fostering an environment of collaboration and idea-sharing among educators, enhancing the collective problem-solving capacity within the school community. Furthermore, the research underscores the importance of curriculum development strategy. While advising teachers on new curriculum developments is recognized as vital, the study identifies a gap in providing guidance on executing the new curriculum. In conclusion, this study offers comprehensive insights into the effectiveness of instructional supervision strategies in enhancing educational quality within public secondary schools.

Key words: Instructional supervision, Educational quality, Supervision strategies, Public secondary schools

INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of educational excellence has long been at the forefront of educational systems globally (Glickman *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, the pivotal role of instructional supervision in shaping classroom practices and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning cannot be overemphasized (Alkhaldeh, 2017). Liu and Liao (2019) discovered that professional development programs containing content relating to curriculum, instructional techniques, school administration, and technology were favorably connected with teacher efficacy. These formats supported job-embedded, inquiry-oriented, and collaborative learning. Establishing bonds with teachers and creating the right conditions for their growth as leaders in and outside of the classroom are important aspects of instructional supervision that go beyond understanding how to conduct classroom observations (Zepeda, 2016). The effectiveness of instructional supervision strategies directly influences the educational experiences of students and the overall success of educational institutions (Zepeda & Mayers, 2014). Since its beginnings in colonial times, supervisory practice has changed, and its efficacy as a tool for improving instruction rests on the capacity of educational leaders to continue being sensitive to the needs of teachers and students (Sullivan & Glanz, 2005). In this context, the present study delves into the multifaceted realm of instructional supervision, with a focus on identifying strategies that hold the promise of elevating educational quality.

Education is a cornerstone of societal advancement, with the quality of education playing a critical role in shaping a nation's socio-economic development (Tram & NgoCHuy, 2021). Public secondary schools occupy a central position within the educational landscape, molding the academic journeys of students and equipping them for future challenges (Barakaevich, 2020). However, the quest for consistent and high-quality instruction across diverse classrooms remains a persistent challenge (Knight, 2007). In the past decade, massive expansions have been witnessed in the Kenya's secondary schools with a concomitant increase in young teachers. The difficulties new teachers encounter as they enter the profession are largely a result of inadequate preparation and support, as well as a lack of direction, professional counsel, understanding, and appreciation (Zhukova, 2018). These difficulties may impair their work and have an effect on the caliber of their instruction and professional growth (Mena *et al.*, 2017). This is perhaps the most crucial challenge in the current secondary schools education ecosystem in Kenya since its rapid expansion as a result of the 100% transition policy.

Instructional supervision emerges as a potent tool to address these challenges, providing educators with tailored support, expert guidance, and avenues for professional growth (Nolan & Hoover, 2008). Central to this study is an exploration of four distinct instructional supervision strategies: direct assistance, group development, curriculum development, and action research. These strategies form the cornerstone of instructional supervision practices in public secondary schools within Makeni County. Direct assistance entails providing teachers with immediate feedback and tailored guidance on teaching materials and styles (Zepeda, 2016). Group development emphasizes collaborative teacher groups that collectively address instructional challenges and make informed decisions (Zhukova, 2017). Collaborative conversations can aid in teachers' professional development. Inexperienced teachers can benefit from the advice and analysis of more seasoned and successful colleagues regarding their classroom work (Rowland, 2017). Curriculum development focuses on advising

teachers on new curriculum implementations while promoting effective execution. Action research involves encouraging teachers to engage in self-evaluation and reflective practices to enhance teaching and learning (Hendricks, 2017; Brew *et al.*, 2020).

Despite the acknowledged significance of instructional supervision, a critical gap exists in understanding which specific strategies yield the most significant impact on enhancing educational quality (Gore *et al.*, 2017). The effectiveness of professional development in enhancing teaching methods or student results is not adequately supported by robust evidence (Sancar *et al.*, 2021). Further, previous research about how confident teachers feel in their teaching and how it affects students' learning has been studied however, little is known about the helpful methods and techniques that can make teachers feel more confident in their teaching (Kennedy, 2019). It becomes difficult for governments and educational systems to defend the financing and resources dedicated to these programs without solid evidence of teacher's professional development benefits (Gore & Rosser, 2022). The collective voices of principals, heads of departments, teachers, and researchers echo the need to pinpoint the most effective approaches to instructional supervision. Thus, this study endeavors to address a fundamental question: Which instructional supervision strategies, when applied in public secondary schools, hold the greatest potential for improving classroom instruction and, consequently, elevating educational quality? Moreover, the study contributes substantively to the broader discourse on educational quality improvement. The insights garnered from this research transcend geographical boundaries and can resonate within a variety of educational contexts, both regionally and globally. The findings may serve as a lodestar for educators and policymakers seeking evidence-based approaches to elevate the overall quality of education, not just in Makueni County, but also in analogous educational landscapes worldwide.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a mixed methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively investigate the research questions. The methodology encompassed a sequential process, beginning with quantitative research and subsequently building upon those findings through a more in-depth qualitative analysis.

Makueni County comprises 392 public secondary schools, with a corresponding number of principals and a teacher count of 3,364, as reported by the Quality, Assurance and Standards Office of Makueni County in 2021. In the initial phase of the study, quantitative data analysis was conducted, followed by targeted sampling for the subsequent qualitative phase. The process involved employing a stratified sampling strategy, categorizing the schools into extra-county, county, and sub-county groups. To ensure proportional representation, 30 percent of schools in each category were sampled, except for the national category, which consisted of two schools. Purposeful sampling was applied to select principals from the national schools.

Equal allocation sampling was then implemented to choose an equitable number of principals from each of the three categories, resulting in a total sample size of 119 principals, with 117 from other school categories and 2 from national schools. For teachers' participation, the Yamane (2007) formula was employed to compute an appropriate sample size, considering a significant number of responders.

The quantitative phase included a survey with 476 respondents, comprising 119 principals and 357 teachers. In the qualitative phase, the sample size consisted of 30 principals who responded to interviews, and 357 teachers were represented through a 3-teacher selection from each participating school.

Data collection encompassed the use of three distinct instruments: a questionnaire for the quantitative phase, an interview schedule for the qualitative phase, and a document review checklist to supplement the comprehensive data collection process. This methodological approach allowed for a robust and holistic exploration of the study's research objectives.

Test-retest reliability for this study was established through a procedure involving the administration of the same test to identical respondents on two separate occasions. This approach facilitated a comparison of outcomes to evaluate the consistency of results over time. To initiate reliability testing, a pilot questionnaire was administered twice to two principals and two teachers from each of the nine sub-counties within Makueni County. This pilot sample totaled 36 respondents and adhered to Creswell's (2014) recommendation that a pilot group of fifteen individuals in large samples is sufficient to yield dependable outcomes. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was employed to quantify correlation and ascertain the level of agreement.

For the qualitative phase's reliability assessment, one principal was selected from each of the three school types in Makueni County to serve as a pilot for testing the tool. Notably, the school where the piloting occurred was excluded from the study's final sample to avoid potential bias.

All the responses from the survey were loaded to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 24) followed by data cleaning. Qualitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength of the relationship between principals' approaches to instructional supervision and school performance. Pearson Chi test was used to determine the influence, the acceptable level of significance for the Pearson chi test was 0.05 at 1 degree of freedom. Levels of significance found to be greater than 0.05 implied that principals' supervisory role did not enhance teacher professional development in public secondary schools while that less than 0.05, indicates that principals' supervisory role enhanced teacher professional development in public secondary schools in Makueni County. A P -value ($P < 0.05$) indicated that the results were statistically significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The strategies of supervision applied were curriculum development, direct assistance, group, and action research. In order to improve classroom instruction, direct assistance entails the supervisor's tasks providing his or her opinions on the material to be used first, then directing the instructors on the next action plan to be undertaken, and finally showing the teachers the right teaching style to be employed. There are several modes of direct assistance. In the application of the direct assistance strategy, 23 (67.6%) of the principals ranked giving teachers immediate feedback as the most essential task, while 7 (20.6%) ranked giving teachers personal assistance in classroom instruction methods and observation and assistance in classroom instruction as the least vital (Table 1).

Table 1. Detailed percentage proportions of the responses of the various forms of Direct Assistance

Direct Assistance	Least Important			Somewhat Important			Most Important		
	P	HoD	T	P	HoD	T	P	HoD	T
Provision of personal assistance in methods of teaching classroom instruction	20.6	67.2	66.9	58.8	27.6	24.5	20.6	5.2	8.6
Observation and assistance in classroom instruction	20.6	67.2	66.9	38.2	27.6	27.3	41.2	5.2	5.7
Provision of immediate feedback to teachers	2.9	30.6	39.2	29.4	44	39.2	67.6	25.4	21.6

Key: P; Principals, HoD; Heads of Departments, T; Teachers

Likewise, giving teachers immediate feedback when administrators use the direct support technique was the most crucial responsibility, according to 34 (25.4%) of the head of departments. However, in the deployment of the direct assistance strategy by the principal, 90 (67.2%) of the Heads of Department regarded providing personal assistance in teaching methods and supporting teachers in the classroom as the least significant activities. Of the teachers interviewed 53 (21.6%) said it was crucial when principals used direct help as a tactic to give teachers timely feedback. However, when principals used direct assistance as an approach, 164 (66.9%) of the teachers evaluated the principals' supply of personal aid in teaching strategies, including watching and supporting instructors in the classroom, as the one that was least significant.

As a result, when principals used direct help as a tactic, all the groups of respondents—principals, head of departments, and teachers—ranked giving teachers feedback on their performance as the most crucial responsibility. The results of this study are consistent with the study by Glickman and Burns (2021), which claims that direct help is the ideal tactic to use when the supervisor wants to give an individual teacher effective feedback. For newly hired and inexperienced teachers, direct help is strongly advised, according to (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2017). This will offer them an edge in their careers as teachers, direction on where to begin, and self-assurance. Many of the teachers in this study had only had five years of experience or fewer. Therefore, the most appropriate course of action in this situation is to provide direct support. When asked which task was least important when principals provided direct support, all the parties agreed that giving personal aid in teaching methods, observation, and assistance in classroom instruction. This result aligns with the findings of Mobegi, *et al.*, (2010) study, which revealed that principals' instructional supervision methods were primarily restricted to checking the professional records of the instructors and paid little attention to class visits.

Systems that facilitate gatherings for teachers' groups to collaborate on solutions to issues are necessary for group development strategy. When using this technique, principals placed creating collaborative groups to accomplish educational goals and bringing teachers together to make significant choices on instructional matters as the two most crucial duties. However, when principals used the group development technique, Heads of Departments and teachers only considered bringing teachers together to arrive at significant decisions on instructional concerns as the most

important duty (Table 2), rather than promoting collegial groups to accomplish instructional goals. Wanzare (2013) aptly puts it that group growth as an approach to education comprises teacher interaction with fellow educators and idea sharing among people cooperating with one another. Similarly, Tesema (2014) claimed that the discussion should focus mostly on the evaluation of pertinent information in instruction and the acceptance of group development as a method of instructional monitoring. This could lead to gatherings where teams of teachers can collaborate to address issues pertaining to instruction (Jacklyn, 2008).

Table 2. Detailed percentage proportions of the responses of the various forms of Group Development Strategy

Group Development	Least Important			Somewhat Important			Most Important		
	P	HoD	T	P	HoD	T	P	HoD	T
	Gathering teachers together to make important decisions on instructional concerns	5.9	24.6	26.5	32.4	41.8	40	61.8	33.6
Encouraging collegial groups to achieve instructional goals	0	15.7	23.3	38.2	59.7	53.5	61.8	24.6	23.3
Dealing with group dysfunctional behaviours	11.8	24.6	24.5	29.4	53	52.2	58.5	22.4	23.3

Key: P; Principals, HoD; Heads of Departments, T; Teachers

Despite the fact that all respondents placed advising teachers on recent curriculum developments as the most crucial task in the application of curriculum strategy by principals (Table 3), instructional supervisors nevertheless have to do more of all of the tasks related to curriculum development. However, it is critical to highlight that when using curriculum development as a technique, principals themselves placed providing guidance to teachers concerning how to execute the new curriculum as the least crucial responsibility. This result conflicts with a study by Wanzare (2013) that views instructional supervision to be closely tied to the instructional process, which involves teachers, students, and the curriculum.

Table 3. Detailed percentage proportions of the responses of the various forms of Group Development Strategy

Curriculum Development	Least Important			Somewhat Important			Most Important		
	P	HoD	T	P	HoD	T	P	HoD	T
	Modification and revision content and material resource for classroom instruction	8.8	26.9	33.1	61.8	55.2	51.4	29.4	17.9
Advising teachers on how to implement the curriculum	41.2	27.6	28.6	50	56.7	52.7	8.8	15.7	18.8
Advising teachers on new developments in the curriculum	2.9	6	11	5.9	32.1	29.4	91.2	61.9	59.6

Key: P; Principals, HoD; Heads of Departments, T; Teachers

The job of the instructional supervisor under the framework of curriculum creation as a technique is also to create a venue or layout resources for teacher curriculum debate, according to DiPaola and Wagner (2011), who adds this to support the authors' argument. They go on to say that the supervisor should assist with curriculum needs assessments, manage the curriculum, and encourage the coverage of syllabus content with the goal of ensuring that the delivery of the curriculum is effective. Johnson *et al.* (2012) add that helping individual teachers choose more suitable instructional objectives is one of the main duties of an instructional supervisor when it comes to curriculum development as an approach. The instructional supervisor ought to additionally develop and implement a proven in-service curriculum development training program.

Table 4. Detailed percentage proportions of the responses of the various forms of Action Research strategy

Action Research	Least Important			Somewhat Important			Most Important		
	P	HoD	T	P	HoD	T	P	HoD	T
	Systematically studying classroom activities in order to plan for how to improve teaching and learning	8.8	35.8	40.8	58.8	52.2	47.3	32.4	11.9
Directing teachers to do need assessment based on their classroom instruction	5.9	12.7	15.5	32.4	53	53.1	61.8	34.3	31.4
Encouraging teachers to do self- evaluation in order to improve teaching and learning	2.9	9	13.9	5.9	32.8	31.4	91.2	58.2	54.7

Key: P; Principals, HoD; Heads of Departments, T; Teachers

When administrators implement action research as a technique, encouraging teachers to conduct self-evaluation in order to enhance teaching and learning was ranked as the most crucial responsibility by principals, heads of departments, and instructors (Table 4). Although Jacklyn's (2008) claim in her study that action research enables teachers to assess their own ideas and teaching in light of changes in instruction is backed up by the findings, it is distinct from other scholars on the subject of self-reflection. The use of action research by instructional supervisors is supported by Cunningham (2011) and calls for reflective opinions. Action research, according to Cunningham (2011), is a self-reflective investigation carried out by teachers to enhance the logic of their own practices, their knowledge of these practices, and the contexts in which they carry out these practices. When used properly, it can have incalculable advantages, such as developing a broad mindset system for bettering schools, encouraging reflection, self-improvement, and systematic research and reflection on work before making changes to their informed practices (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

A comprehensive approach to instructional supervision that combines timely feedback, collaborative group activities, effective curriculum development, and action research can significantly enhance educational quality in public secondary schools. Principals and instructional supervisors should prioritize these strategies, tailor their efforts to the

needs of individual teachers, and continuously seek opportunities for professional growth and improvement.

Direct assistance strategy, particularly immediate feedback, is highly valued by all parties (principals, heads of departments, and teachers) for effective instructional supervision. Group development strategy is seen as important for collaboration and decision-making among teachers. Curriculum development strategy is considered crucial, but there is a disconnect between the importance placed on advising teachers about new curriculum developments and providing guidance on execution. Action research is highly regarded for encouraging self-evaluation and improvement among teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Emphasize the importance of timely feedback, especially for newly hired or inexperienced teachers.
2. Implement training programs for principals to enhance their ability to provide constructive feedback.
3. Foster collaborative groups among teachers to address instructional issues.
4. Provide training for principals on creating and facilitating effective teacher groups for problem-solving and decision-making.
5. Principals should take a more active role in assisting teachers with the execution of new curriculum.
6. Develop resources and training programs for instructional supervisors to support teachers in curriculum implementation.
7. Encourage and support teachers in conducting action research to enhance their teaching practices.

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