

## The Relationship between Headteachers' Supervision of Professional Documents and Academic Performance in Primary Schools in Embu and Murang'a Counties.

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### ABSTRACT

Supervision is a vital administrative tool employed by headteachers in ensuring teachers' effectiveness and competence in teaching and learning in schools. Over time, pupils' academic performance in examinations has been consistently low in public primary schools and has created concern among education stakeholders in Kenya and the world over. The objective of this study is assess the relationship between headteachers' supervision of professional documents and academic performance in primary schools in Embu and Murang'a counties. A descriptive survey research design was used. The target population was 14,786 respondents; simple random sampling was used to select 256 of these. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews and an observation checklist. To ascertain reliability, the instrument was piloted, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.93. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics involving frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations and inferential statistics, precisely, correlation. The results show that the development of professional documents was common in primary schools and that the best documents supervised by headteachers were schemes of work. The null hypothesis tested was not rejected based on the correlation of  $r = -.044 < 0.05$  and  $P = 0.732 > 0.05$  between headteachers' supervision of professional documents and academic performance. The study recommends that headteachers should guide teachers on the importance of consistency in professional documents. However, headteachers' supervision of teachers' preparation of professional documents did not impact positively on pupils' academic performance at KCPE in Embu and Murang'a counties. The findings of the study will serve as a reference for similar studies in education administration and management.

**Keywords:** relationship; supervision; professional document; academic performance

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## INTRODUCTION

Headteachers' supervision of the activities that take place in learning institutions is central to the levels of performances in the activities engaged in. Supervision is the phase of educational administration which is concerned with improving instructional effectiveness in learning institutions (Okumbe, 2007), and teachers' supervision is viewed as a form of accountability in education (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). As an accountability device, supervision denotes the obligation that people give an account of the tasks they perform for others (Wilcox, 2000). The intention of accountability is to make the providers of education accountable to those who pay for their children's education (Ehren & Visscher, 2006, p. 51-72), (Sergiovanni & Starrat, 2007). Goldsberry (2008) defines supervision as an organisational responsibility, with functions focused upon the assessment and refinement of current practices.

According to Fisher (2005), supervision is a way of stimulating, improving, refreshing, encouraging and overseeing certain groups (in this case teachers), with hope of seeking co-operation and hence boosting pupil's academic performance. It is a useful measure of supporting teachers in identifying their strengths and weaknesses and also of proposing ways of correcting any weaknesses before they affect the entire system (Fisher, 2005). Supervision is viewed as an educational program that helps school teachers review their professional skills and educational weaknesses, which when implemented helps greatly to raise the standard of education, leading to pupils' good academic performance (Onasanya, 2006). Hoyle and Wallace (2005) observed that in England and Wales the accountability of teachers was engineered through payment by results, with teachers' salaries based on pupils' performance in national exams and with funds provided by the government to develop teachers professionally. OECD (2010) stated that over the years, American educational progress had continued to stagnate. They further contended that the graduation rate ranking of the United States ranges to the bottom among developed nations. Studies conducted in the Netherlands, England and Wales and some African countries on pupils' academic performance and headteachers' supervision have differing views. Earley (1998), Nkinyangi (2006), and Ehren and Visscher (2006) believe that headteacher supervision is simply a way of finding fault, which is why despite the practice there is little or no impact on teaching and learning that can be translated into good academic performance.

Novicki (2011) observed that education in the African continent faced challenges regarding supervision. He observed that where teachers were not fully supervised and professionally developed, pupils' academic performance was negatively affected. Therefore, questions related to headteachers' supervision of teachers have been a subject of scrutiny among international, regional and local educationists due to the escalation of poor academic performance in both developed and developing nations. According to Grauwe (2007), African countries introduced teacher supervision after independence. It is perceived as a central frame through which the

government can monitor and ensure school curriculum implementation (Wilcox, 2000; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). Supervision acts as a control device in education and thus it is indispensable and inevitable, as it plays an essential role in monitoring quality teaching and learning, with the resulting aim of improved academic performance (Chapman, 2001, p.59-73; Wilcox, 2000). It is argued that through headteacher's supervision of teachers, the government can ensure the implementation of the national goals and objectives of education, thus enhancing pupils' academic performance. This performance is perceived as a mechanism that prepares a competitive workforce intended to meet the challenges emerging due to the globalisation process (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005).

Musungu and Nasongo's (2008) study of Kenya found that teachers' professional development was perceived as one of the most effective means of improving their professional skills and attitudes and of creating better schools, hence resulting in improved pupils' academic performance. The headteacher is an agent appointed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), entrusted with the overall supervision of other teachers and responsible for improving and maintaining high teaching and learning standards. Primary school headteachers' supervisory role is primarily intended to help teachers improve their instructional performance and consequently the academic performance of their pupils (Okumbe, 2007). Headteacher supervision therefore promotes the capacity building of the individual (teacher) and the organisation that brings a teacher's behavioral change, resulting in better teacher development. This helps them to improve pupils and their learning, and hence realise good academic performance. To facilitate supervision, headteachers occasionally attend in-service training courses and workshops which are intended to improve their supervisory skills and hence improve pupils' academic performance. This study therefore intends to evaluate aspects of headteachers' supervision of teachers' and pupils' academic performance in public and private primary schools in Embu and Murang'a counties. More precisely, the objective of the study is to evaluate the relationship between headteachers' supervision of professional documents and academic performance. However, it is shown that there is no statistically significant relationship between such supervision and academic performance.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a descriptive survey design, with a target population comprising 896 individuals. The researcher further employed purposive, simple random and stratified random sampling procedures. 20% of the teachers from the sampled schools were selected, in line with Mugenda and Mugenda's (2009) view that a representative sample is one that consists of at least 10-30% of the population of interest and is sufficient for providing the required information. Using the simple random sampling technique, three teachers per school were selected, yielding a sample of 192 teachers and 64 head teachers, thus making a total of 256 respondents. The data were collected using questionnaires, scheduled interviews and an observation checklist, as recommended by Creswell (2003). Validity was

ascertained by supervisors and lecturers in the education department. To establish the reliability of the research instruments, the tools were subjected to a pilot study. Reliability was computed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded 0.93, which was considered to be within acceptable limits, as recommended by Kathuri and Pals (1993). Descriptive statistics were used to compute the frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Inferential statistics, particularly Chi-square goodness of fit at a significance level of 0.05, were also used to compare the relationships between the variables. The results are presented using means, percentages, figures, tables and thematic discussion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study seeks to assess the extent to which headteachers supervise teachers' preparation of professional documents in primary schools. The teachers were provided with Likert-scale opinions on such supervision and were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements shown in Table 1.1 on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1= strongly disagree (SD), 2= disagree (D), 3= neutral (N), 4= agree (A) and 5= strongly agree (SA). For the purposes of this study, the researcher collapsed 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' into 'disagree', and 'strongly agree' and 'agree' into 'agree', with neutral indicated as 'undecided'. The responses obtained were further used to compute a mean score ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviation(s) for each statement on a scale of 1 to 5. The maximum mean score was 5, while the minimum was 1, and the scores were interpreted as follows: disagree (1.00-2.33), undecided (2.34-3.66) and agree (3.67-5.00). The responses are shown in Table 1. Descriptive analysis of the head teachers' qualitative data gathered during the interviews was also used to discuss the findings.

Table 1. Teachers' opinions on headteachers' supervision of their preparation of professional documents.

| Statement  |   | SD  | D   | N   | A    | SA   | n   | $\bar{x}$ | s   |
|--|---|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|-----------|-----|
| My headteacher ensures that teachers prepare lesson plans for every subject taught | F | 0   | 8   | 12  | 67   | 72   | 159 | 4.28      | .81 |
|  | % | 0   | 5.0 | 7.5 | 42.1 | 45.3 |     |           |     |
| My headteacher ensures that teachers prepare schemes of work                       | F | 2   | 0   | 4   | 49   | 104  | 159 | 4.32      | .67 |
|  | % | 1.3 | 0   | 2.5 | 30.8 | 65.4 |     |           |     |
| My headteacher ensures that teachers update their record of work                   | F | 1   | 3   | 9   | 71   | 75   | 159 | 4.36      | .73 |
|  | % | 0.6 | 1.9 | 5.7 | 44.7 | 47.2 |     |           |     |
|  | F | 1   | 2   | 5   | 74   | 76   | 158 | 4.41      | .68 |

|  |   |     |     |      |      |      |             |             |     |
|--|---|-----|-----|------|------|------|-------------|-------------|-----|
| My headteacher ensures that teachers prepare learners' progress records                | % | 0.6 | 1.3 | 3.1  | 46.3 | 47.5 |             |             |     |
| My headteacher ensures that teachers prepare and update their lesson notes             | F | 1   | 7   | 7    | 68   | 76   |             |             |     |
| My headteacher encourages teachers to prepare teaching aids for classroom instructions | % | 0.6 | 4.4 | 4.4  | 42.8 | 47.8 | 159         | 4.33        | .80 |
| My headteacher ensures that teachers keep learners' class attendance registers updated | F | 2   | 1   | 9    | 72   | 75   |             |             |     |
| My headteacher ensures that students' counselling records are updated                  | % | 1.3 | 0.6 | 5.6  | 45.3 | 47.2 | 159         | 4.37        | .73 |
| My headteacher ensures that students' health records are updated                       | F | 2   | 2   | 5    | 47   | 103  |             |             |     |
|  | % | 1.3 | 1.3 | 3.1  | 29.6 | 64.8 | 159         | 4.55        | .74 |
|  | F | 1   | 7   | 29   | 71   | 51   |             |             |     |
|  | % | 0.6 | 4.4 | 18.1 | 44.7 | 32.1 | 159         | 4.03        | .86 |
|  | F | 2   | 13  | 40   | 60   | 44   |             |             |     |
|  | % | 1.3 | 8.2 | 25.0 | 37.5 | 27.7 | 159         | 3.82        | .97 |
|  |   |     |     |      |      |      | <b>4.27</b> | <b>0.78</b> |     |

The findings in Table 1 indicate that the majority of teachers, 146 (87.4%), agreed that headteachers ensured that they prepared lesson plans for every subject they taught, as opposed to only 13 (5.0%) who disagreed with the statement. The findings from the interviews support those from the questionnaires. Headteacher (HT1) agreed with the statement that they supervised teachers' preparation of lesson plans, stating that

*“A lesson plan is a compulsory document and every subject taught must have a lesson plan and teachers are expected to present their lessons plan daily.”*

He further stated that

*“... in my school they are regularly checked and stamped by both the deputy headteacher and me to ensure that teachers use and keep them updated.”*

The finding demonstrates that headteachers supervise teachers' preparation of lesson plans, since they value the importance of such preparation prior to teaching as it ensures teachers' readiness and timely curriculum delivery. The finding corroborates those of Fisher (2005), who expressed a similar view that lesson plans are crucial documents which enable the headteacher to know the progress made in topic implementation, the number of pupils attending a session, and the teaching methods the teacher is employing. A lesson plan is the instructor's road map of what students need to learn and how this will be achieved effectively during class time. Similarly, Kimutai and Zacharia (2012) believe that the role of headteachers as supervisors and school leaders is to ensure teachers make advanced, timely and well-structured lesson plans before attending class. The lesson plan is an indication of the standards of a teacher's preparedness and his/her effort in gathering appropriate information for the lesson (Musungu & Nasongo, 2008). However, the findings of our study were not entirely positive. Data gathered from some of the interviewees contrasted with other responses; HT2 declared that

*"In my school some teachers do not prepare all lesson plans due to the huge load work. Some teachers have five different subjects to prepare for on daily basis, making it difficult to prepare these alongside other documents (teaching aids, pupils' mark books, progressive records).*

From the above findings, it is revealed that although the majority of the teachers agreed that headteachers ensured they prepared lesson plans prior to their classes, some need to be relieved of some work in order for them to be adequately and efficiently prepared. Prior preparation will help deliver quality content that will boost pupils' KCPE performance. The findings in Table 1 also indicate that the majority of the respondents, 153 (96.2%) agreed with the statement 'My headteacher ensures that teachers prepare schemes of work', with a mere 4 (2.5%) being undecided and only 2 (1.3%) disagreeing. The findings from the interviews supported those from the questionnaire. HT3, from a private school, remarked that

*"The schemes of work are written before the teachers' proceeds for holiday, and are checked and stamped by the headteacher. If they don't measure up to the standards, the teacher is advised to re-write them".*

He further said that

*"... checking schemes of work is also done in subject panel forums on a monthly basis and compares them with the lessons plans ensuring they are detailed."*

Another interviewee, teacher T1, stated that

*"Schemes of work are expected to be prepared during holidays and submitted on the opening day by every teacher to be checked and stamped by the headteacher and legitimized as legal documents to use when teaching"*

The findings imply that the majority of teachers feel that the headteacher supervises them in their preparation of schemes of work. It should be assumed that teachers have no problems in preparing schemes of work because this is done only once at

the beginning of the term. The findings appear to agree with Maiyo's (2009) study, which found that the responsibility for checking teachers' schemes of work as professional documents lay in the hands of school headteachers, who are also the schools' internal supervisors. This is also in line with Usdan (2001), who asserts that to improve pupils' academic performance in national examination there has to be a teaching scheme of work for each subject. The reason for this is that the scheme of work provides schools with an organised system of content coverage for the full period of the course in each subject. However, although the majority of the teachers agreed with the statement that "My head teacher ensures that teachers prepare schemes of work", it was established from the observation checklist that the documents were not written in depth and that some columns were missing or not completed. The findings from the interviews also support those from the observation checklist. HT4 reported that

*"When teachers are overloaded with teaching of at least five subjects, a lot of document doctoring is done where some teachers resort to purchasing schemes and lesson plans from cyber cafes".*

He further said that

*"... some teachers sat a time scribble documents just in case I or the deputy requires them. So, they don't tally with schemes, syllabuses and class notes."*

From the findings there is evidence that some headteachers were not performing their supervisory role effectively. If they were more efficient and thorough in their professional document supervision, teachers would be made to work harder and always prepare before teaching lessons, resulting in better academic performance. The findings in the same table reveal that the majority of the respondents, 146 (93.9%), agreed that their work records should be up to date, while 4 (2.5%) disagreed with the view and 9 (5.7%) were undecided. However, this contradicts one headteacher's claim that out of nine lessons plans some teachers only prepared three or four since they were overwhelmed with work. This can be explained by the fact that although lesson plans and records of work should be prepared on a daily basis, teachers seem to achieve less in this area. This could be understood by the fact that most teachers have a heavy workload, as stated earlier, and so they have little time outside the classroom to prepare up-to-date professional documents. The findings further show that 150 (93.8%) of the teachers agreed that the headteacher required them to prepare learner progress records, while 3 (1.9%) disagreed, and 5 (2.5%) were undecided. However, although the majority of the teachers agreed that headteachers ensured they prepared such records, data from the interviews indicate that headteachers are not able to conduct supervision effectively. For example, HT5 explained that

*"I am not at times able to thoroughly scrutinize the teachers' professional documents as a result of being overloaded. This is because I have lessons to attend to, administrative duties, and secretarial tasks, and attendance at meetings when called by the sub-county director. Too many tasks hamper my supervisory roles".*

The above findings imply that head teachers do not always supervise all their teachers' professional documents as they also have other responsibilities to attend to. Hence the teachers are many with a lot of documents. Headteachers cannot afford the time to go through every teacher's documents. When asked whether the headteacher ensured that students' counselling records were updated, 122 (76.8%) were in agreement, while 29 (18.1%) had no opinion, and 30 (18.7%) disagreed. This implies that more than a third of the respondents, 59 (36.9%), indicated that some headteachers were not thorough in their supervisory role. This would suggest a reason for poor performance, because if there are no pupil records, following up on their problems and needs would be difficult, which could affect their academic performance.

The same can be seen in the teachers' strong concerns (65.2%) when asked whether headteachers ensured that student records were kept up to date. The responses on the preparation of professional records were not varied, as can be seen in the standard deviation value of 0.7996. This means that the opinions of teachers on the parameters provided regarding the preparation of professional documents were highly similar, as revealed in the statement, 'My headteacher ensures that teachers prepare learners' progress records' where (SD=0.678). Similarly, the opinions of the teachers related to the statement "My headteacher ensures that teachers prepare lesson plans for every subject taught" did not vary greatly, as the SD was 0.811. This implies that the teachers generally agreed that they prepared lesson plans and learner progress records. Musungu and Nasongo (2008) reported that effective headteachers were those who supervised teachers' work, and had appropriate testing policies, schemes of work, lesson plans and lesson notes. They stated that when professional documents are effectively supervised, this leads to adequate syllabus coverage, so resulting in the promotion of good academic performance. However, the findings of this study differ from those of Musungu and Masongo (2008), because despite the teachers admitting that they prepared the required documents, their performance remained very poor. There is therefore no correlation between headteachers' supervision of teachers' professional and pupils' academic performance in the counties under investigation. In order to give a clearer perspective of teachers' opinions on headteachers' supervision of their preparation of professional documents, Figure 1 was computed to indicate the levels of perception. Headteachers' supervision of various documents is reflected, shown in the form of percentages.



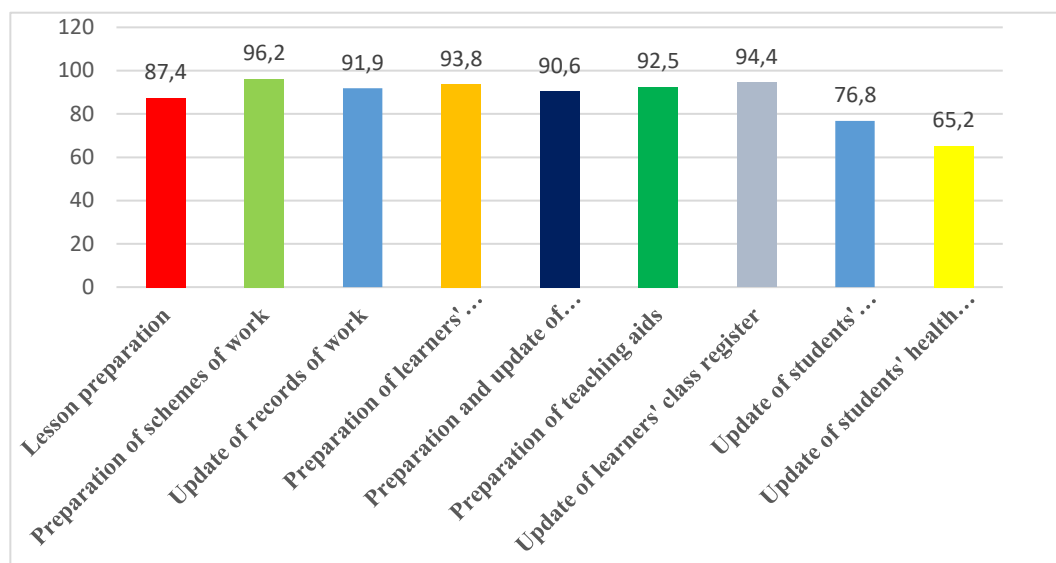


Fig. 1: Teachers' opinions of headteachers' supervision of teachers' preparation of professional documents.

Figure 1 shows a summary of teachers' opinions on headteachers' supervision of the preparation of their professional documents. The figure indicates that the highest supervision aspect was teachers' preparation of schemes of work, as shown by the 96.2% of respondents who affirmed that their headteachers ensured the preparation of schemes of work, followed by the updating of learners' class registers, at 94.4%. The lowest percentage related to headteachers' supervision of teachers' updates of students' health records', at 65.2%, followed by supervision of teachers' counselling record updates. This demonstrates that headteachers need to improve their supervision of health record keeping and pupil counselling record updates.

It was hypothesised that there is no statistically significant relationship between headteachers' supervision of teachers' professional documents development and academic performance. Table 2 shows the computed Pearson correlation to establish the relationship that exists between such supervision and pupils' academic performance in primary schools in Embu and Murang'a counties.

Table 2: Pearson correlation table on head teachers' supervision of professional documents

|  |                     | KCPE performance | Head teachers' supervision of professional documents development |
|--|---------------------|------------------|--|
| KCPE performance   | Pearson Correlation | 1                | -.044  |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                  | .732   |
|  | N                   | 55               | 55   |
|  |                     |                  |  |
| Head teachers' supervision of professional documents development | Pearson Correlation | -.044            | 1  |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .732             |  |
|  | N                   | 55               |  |
|  |                     |                  |  |

The findings in Table 2 reveal that a negative correlation exists between KCPE performance and the supervision of professional document development. The table shows  $r = -0.044 < 0.05$ , implying that a decreasing negative relationship exists between such supervision and KCPE performance. The table further shows that the relationship is not statistically significant, at  $p = 0.732 > 0.005$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis proposing that 'Headteachers' supervision of teachers' professional document preparation has no statistically significant relationship with academic performance in public and private primary schools in Embu and Murang'a counties' is accepted. This implies that as the supervision of professional document development increases, school performance falls. These findings are contrary to those of Musungu and Nasongo (2008) in their study on the impact of head teacher supervision practices on curriculum implementation. They report that supervision of teachers' professional documents positively affected pupils academic achievements, establishing that 8% of the headteachers in high performing schools in Vihiga county regularly checked schemes of work, class attendance registers and lesson notes, resulting in improved student academic performance. However, this study has revealed that teachers' preparation of professional documents is not completed in accordance with the expectations of employers. This could imply that headteachers' supervision techniques need to be addressed in order to make improvements to pupils' academic performance at  $p = 0.732 > 0.005$ , meaning that headteachers need to improve their supervision for a positive effect to be realised on the performance of learners, hence improving examination outcomes.

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to assess the extent to which headteachers supervise teachers' professional document development in primary schools in Murang'a and Embu counties. The teachers' opinions on this show that the majority agreed that headteachers ensured that they prepared lesson plans for every subject. The majority of respondents also agreed that their headteachers ensured that teachers prepared schemes of work and updated their work records. Most teachers also

agreed that their respective headteachers made sure that they prepared and updated learners' progress records and lesson notes. This means that the headteachers recognise the importance of professional documents and their development in improving academic performance in schools. The majority (92.5%) of teachers asserted that their headteachers encouraged them to prepare teaching aids for use in the classroom, which indicates that headteachers understand the importance of teaching aids in the comprehension of content. Concerning the null hypothesis, the study revealed that there is no statistically significant relationship between headteachers' supervision and the academic performance of pupils, so the hypothesis was accepted.

The study aimed at assessing the extent to which headteachers supervise teachers' preparation of professional documents in primary schools. It concluded that headteachers' supervision of lesson plan preparation was good; that teachers' preparation of schemes of work was satisfactorily supervised, as they updated their records of work in line with the expectations of the employer; that pupils' progress records were effectively updated; and that teaching aids were adequately prepared by teachers. The best supervised documents by head teachers were the schemes of work. However, headteachers need to largely improve their supervision of the health and counselling records of pupils. However, from the observation checklist it was established that teachers developed schemes of work which were fairly detailed, and lesson plans and records of work that on average tallied with the schemes of work, together with progress records, lesson notes and syllabus coverage records. Consequently, the lessons plans were found not to tally with the schemes of work, which suggests that they only prepare them for supervisory roles. The lack of consistency and the dismal coverage of the syllabus implies that teachers, despite creating professional records, are not delivering content, but focusing more on accountability to their headteachers and other management personnel. Headteachers' supervision of teachers' preparation of professional documents does not impact positively on pupils' academic performance at KCPE in Embu and Murang'a counties.

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