

## **The Role of Head Teachers in Ensuring Quality and Standards in Secondary Schools: Evidence from Schools in Eldoret West District in Kenya**

Josephine G. Ongori;

*Moi University: Jonah Nyaga Kindiki; Moi University.*

---

**Abstract:** *The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of head teachers in enforcing quality assurance and standards in secondary schools in Eldoret West District. Based on the findings of the study, this paper specifically examines the role of the head teachers in ensuring quality and standards in secondary schools. The study utilized the descriptive research design. The study targeted head teachers and teachers in both public and private secondary schools in Eldoret West District. To obtain the study sample, the target population was stratified into two categories, i.e. private and public schools. From each stratum, 30 per cent of the total numbers of schools were selected for inclusion in the study. All the head teachers from the selected schools automatically qualified to participate while the teachers were selected through simple random sampling. Data was collected using a questionnaire and an interview schedule. The collected data was analyzed descriptively using means and percentages. This is because the mean is considered as the most efficient measure of central tendency. The data analysis was done with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) software which makes it easy to compare variables whose relationships are being studied. The study findings revealed that the procedure of supervision involved the head teacher calling a meeting to discuss the purpose of supervision, the objectives of supervision, both parties agreeing on the objectives and as well as determining the criteria of supervision. The role of the head teacher in supervision include: enforcing teacher compliance with quality and standards in teaching, providing leadership towards enforcing quality and standards, providing moral and material support and motivating the teachers during the process of supervision. The study recommends that there is need to incorporate the elements of quality and standards in the supervision criteria and purpose.*

**Keywords:** *Role, Head Teachers, Ensuring Quality, Standards, Secondary Schools, Evidence, Eldoret West District, Kenya.*

---

### **I. Introduction**

The Kenyan education system places the head teachers of schools in a position of considerable responsibility. They are in charge of a community of teachers and students; they thus should be the one in control of the school operations; they should be able to call the advice of others but still retain decision-making authority; head teachers are able to delegate authority and still know what is happening in all the departments of the school. Among the responsibilities of a school head teacher include that of supervising the educational activities in the school he or she heads (Okumbe, 1999).

The head of a school is the centre of both the teaching and the administration processes, that is, he/she is the middle-person between the staff members and the school board. In other words, the head teacher plays a bureaucratic role. The head teacher is an organizer. He/she organizes all the school tasks to be accomplished. This means the upkeep and cleanliness of the buildings, such as classrooms, the provision and maintenance of equipment including desks, textbooks, writing materials, the distribution of duties among the teachers as along the lines of subject and heads of departments and an those responsible for guidance and counselling to advise students with their problems.

The head teacher stands in an intermediate position between the central office and the teachers, as well as between the community and the entire school population. In this capacity, the head teacher interprets official policies to the teachers and non-academic staff members. The head teacher also transmits orders from the school board to the teachers. At the same time, he/she communicates the teachers' request to the board of governors or the school management committee. The head teacher delegates decision-making responsibilities to members of both the teaching and non-teaching staff. For example, he/she may delegate to the deputy-head teacher the responsibility of designing the school timetable. The head of the school is a link in the chain of authority in the school system. The head teacher has two types of authority, namely vested and entrusted authority. The head teacher is given responsibility over his/her staff and the students. The head teacher links the board of governors or the school management committee, the teachers' service commission and the members of the community.

The head teacher must merit this kind of authority through and competence. This competence involves the ability to: improve educational programmes in the school, select and develop personnel, work with the community and manage the school operations. To do all this, the head teacher must have sound educational philosophy, high qualification at least equivalent or superior to those of his staff members, adequate professional training, proficiency in human relations and sound qualities or personality such as sound judgement without bias and good self control.

The head of the school is a consultant for the staff members. He/she gives legal and professional advice to his teaching and non-teaching staff. The head teacher must therefore provide a democratic atmosphere where the staffs, students and community feel at ease to expose and discuss their problems. This is because whatever problem affects teachers also indirectly affect the student. The head teacher's prime responsibility is therefore to pay attention to the problems that affect the entire school community. Teachers should in particular be given more consideration than the students. It must also be noted that schools operate along given lines or policies and as such there must be consultation (Mbiti, 1974).

According to Mbiti (1974), the head teacher is held responsible for two categories of duties: specific and general. The specific duties of a head teacher include supervision of teachers and the school plan, management and development of the school, special services, such as attending meetings both at local and national levels. General duties include making sure the school has enough personnel, equipment and physical facilities.

### **Supervision and the Role of the Head Teacher**

The government policy and the Ministry of Education guidelines are implemented at school level where the head teacher has to be involved in all activities, including curriculum implementation, discipline of teachers, staff and the students (Olembo et al., 1992). Supervision has been regarded as a service to teachers and students as a means of offering special help in improving instruction (Olembo et al., 1992). Supervision is meant to improve teaching and learning by emphasizing on ways and methods of instilling excellence in the quality of instruction. Supervision in the secondary education is assumed to be a professional service involving relevant educational personnel with a purpose of interacting with teachers to maintain change and improve delivery and actualization of learning opportunities among the students (Olembo et al., 1992). As such the head teacher is the manager of the school responsible for organizing, providing requisite resources, implementing policies, communicating and evaluating the daily activities within the school.

Supervision is concerned with overseeing, conducting, regulating and controlling teachers and students. It also involves guiding and influencing teachers and students to strive towards desirable teaching and learning behaviours in order to achieve educational goals and objectives. The head teacher, therefore, serves as an agent who gives instructions to the entire staff. The head teacher is responsible for planning and undertaking supervision of the activities and life of the school. It is the duty of the head to give direction to the school staff. It is the responsibility of the head teacher to create a working climate with the school and setting the working standards through co-operation. In meeting these standards, the head teacher must be the lead role model to be emulated by the other teachers.

Head teachers serve as agents of quality education to the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). Their task is to translate educational objectives and policies and implement the policies at the school level. They organize and lay down the school philosophy of excellence upon which supervision of teachers and staff is conducted to ensure the planned curriculum implementation activities are conducted so as to achieve academic excellence. Supervision helps maintain the spirit of punctuality and discipline in work; it facilitates positive changes by identifying new techniques. Therefore, it is the duty of the head teacher as a supervisor to give the school workers clear directions on what they have to do and how they have to do it. Maranga (1977) argues that unless the school staff are supervised properly, their performance will always remain poor.

### **Process of Evaluation in Schools**

Evaluation can be described broadly as the collection and use of information to make decisions about educational programmes. It involves obtaining and providing useful information for judging decisions and alternatives (Simons, 1987, p. 19). Classroom supervision focuses not so much on what the pupils can demonstrate to have learned but rather what transpires in the process of teaching and learning. Supervision in classroom sessions allows supervisors to make judgments about the adequacy of learning and the quality of pupils' learning experience.

The following procedure was adopted in Britain in internal supervision schemes: appraisal interview scheme, observation interview, appraisal by the senior management team, acceptance, expectation and follow-up. For the foregoing, it is clear that there is a close relationship between supervision and staff development. A supervision scheme will lose credibility if ideas and expectations, especially those related to career development, raised during supervision are not followed up. It is recommended that schemes should form part

of a school-focused staff development policy in each institution (Hewton, 1988). Supervision conducted in good faith has the potential to lead to improvement of instruction. This exercise may be meaningless unless administrators are willing to discuss and explain their findings and perhaps provide teachers with training opportunities. Supervision should not be used to discredit teachers. Effective quality assurance exercise could perhaps be achieved if teachers and head teachers are assured that no punitive measures can be taken against them after the exercise. Supervision should only be determined in particular context of each school in relation to the time available, the personnel who will take supervision and the ethos of the school.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Personnel supervision is very essential if the goals of education are to be achieved. Any institution where students learn to attain a particular purpose has to be organized and controlled effectively. A survey conducted by Stones (1982) in Kenya (as cited in Maji vane, 2007) has revealed that there are deficiencies in school supervision. Stones advocates for development of other approaches in supervision. Consequently, western countries' focus on supervision is aimed at reducing feelings of teacher isolation and stress which demonstrate an increased level of professionalism developed by the participating teacher. Supervision manipulates the instructional variables in which the teacher is made responsible for pedagogical preparations or operations in the classroom. When supervision deficiencies are attributed to heavy duty assignments, lack of adequate funds, poor roads, high and increased supervisor and the teacher pupil ratio, training in peer supervision seems appropriate and supervision generates a climate which pursues issues in support of teachers becoming self directing and self correcting (Hanko, 1990). Rhye and Byrans (1993), in their research on the state of teacher supervision in Africa, point out the weakness in the supervision methodology. They argue that supervision is not about grouping teachers together, but about making supervision a shared responsibility programme between the head teacher and the teacher.

According to Rugut (2003), in a review of teaching and learning state in Kenya, inspection services have been serving only particular schools thereby disadvantaging inaccessible and remote schools. Due to the increase of the number of secondary schools, inspection has been haphazard, sporadic and inadequate. Maranga (1977, p. 261) also emphasizes the same situation. He observes that it is not possible for few supervisors to adequately visit all schools and all classrooms to provide the instructional assistance required for improved quality education. To circumvent this situation, it would be economically and educationally viable for head teachers after adequate training in clinical supervision to provide instructional supervision.

Massive efforts have been made over the past few decades to reform supervision and approaches have been developed to assist both teachers and supervisors to come up with the intellectual content of tasks. Among the proposed and complementary approaches in the Western countries is peer supervision, school-based supervision and partnership supervision.

In Eldoret West District in particular, teachers interpret supervision in various ways. The author's previous experience as a teacher in the District reveals that supervision of female is difficult since some of these teachers are also spouses to the education officers in the district. Moreover, these female teachers prefer working in schools within the urban set-up compared to schools outside the urban set-up. This has resulted in uneven distribution of teachers based on gender thus making supervision difficult. Besides, there have been reported of conflicts between teachers and head teachers concerning the rationale and the modalities of supervision in some schools. As such, supervision is effective in some schools only and not in others. Therefore, the study sought to investigate the role of head teachers in ensuring quality and standards in their schools in Eldoret West District.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study confined itself to the role of head teachers in personnel supervision in their capacity as quality assurance and standards officers in secondary schools within Eldoret West District. The study also limited itself to the process of supervision by head teachers and head teachers' role in supervision. Because of time and financial constraints the school Board of Governors (BOG), currently known as Board of Management (BOM), and Parents Teachers Association (PTA) were not included in the study.

## **II. Materials And Methods**

The study was conducted in Eldoret West District, Rift Valley Province. Descriptive survey was the means through which views, opinions and suggestions for improvements of educational practice can be collected. The target population was 54 head teachers and 437 teachers of all the schools in Eldoret West District. The head teachers were earmarked because they are the ones who carry out the supervisory roles in their schools. The teachers were also involved since they are the ones supervised. They are thus better positioned to rate the nature and quality of supervision by the head teachers. The target population was divided into two categories, i.e. private and public schools, through stratified random sampling. From each stratum, 30

per cent of the total number of schools was selected for inclusion in the study. All the head teachers from the selected schools automatically qualified to participate while the teachers were selected through simple random sampling.

Both primary and secondary sources of data were used in the study. For primary data, interrogation communication was adopted. Through this method, the author questioned the subjects and collected their responses by personal and impersonal means by using an interview schedule. This data was supplemented by use of the questionnaire. In secondary data, the author made use of the existing literature on the related fields, including inspection reports from the District Education Offices. Quantitative data from the study was analyzed through descriptive statistics with the help of the Scientific Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) software. Quantitative data which was not coded was verified against known and published information to determine its validity and appropriateness for use in the study.

### III. Results And Discussion

#### Role of Head teachers in Ensuring Quality and Standards in Secondary Schools

Views were sought from the respondents regarding the role of head teachers in ensuring quality and standards in secondary schools. Their responses are as summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Role of Head teachers in Ensuring Quality and Standards in Secondary Schools**

Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Explaining the purpose of supervision to the teachers	7	9.0	57	73.1	4	5.1	6	7.7	4	5.1	78	100.0
Establishing criteria of supervision and discussing it with teachers	18	23.1	44	56.4	6	7.7	6	7.7	4	5.1	78	100.0
Guiding and influencing the teachers	23	29.5	43	55.1	2	2.6	6	7.7	4	5.1	78	100.0
Planning and supervising activities at school	23	29.5	41	52.6	4	5.1	6	7.7	4	5.1	78	100.0
Creating a working climate within which supervision can occur	17	21.8	49	62.8	2	2.6	6	7.7	4	5.1	78	100.0

As shown in Table 1, majority (73.1%) of the respondents agreed that explaining the purpose of supervision to the teachers improves quality and standards, 9.0% strongly agreed while 7.7% disagreed. Equal proportions of 5.1% strongly disagreed and were neutral on this issue as well. On whether or not establishing criteria of supervision and discussing it with teachers improves quality standards in schools, majority (56.4%) agreed, 18(23.1%) strongly agreed while an equal proportion of 7.7% each disagreed and were neutral. Only 4(5.1%) strongly disagreed. Moreover, 43(55.1%) of the respondents agreed that guiding and influencing the teachers ensures quality and standards in secondary schools, 23(29.5%) strongly agreed while 6(7.7%) disagreed. Another 5.1% and 2.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed and were neutral respectively. In addition, 52.6% of the respondents agreed that planning and supervising activities at school influenced quality and standards in secondary school, 29.5% strongly agreed while 6(7.7%) disagreed. Another equal proportion of 5.1% were neutral and strongly disagreed respectively. On creating a working climate within which supervision can occur, majority (62.8%) agreed, 17(21.8%) strongly agreed while 7.7% disagreed. The remaining 5.1% and 2.6% strongly disagreed and were neutral respectively.

#### The Process of Ensuring Quality and Standards by the Head Teachers in Secondary Schools

This study sought to determine how the process of ensuring quality and standards by the head teachers in secondary schools was conducted. The head teachers interviewed generally agreed that most head teachers follow a systematic procedure while supervising the instructional activities in school. They thus listed the following general steps as being followed by the head teachers when supervising the instruction process:

- i. The head teacher calls a meeting to discuss the purpose of supervision
- ii. The head teacher and teachers discuss the objectives of supervision
- iii. The head teacher and teachers decide on the criteria of supervision
- iv. The head teacher and teachers draw up the objectives of supervision
- v. The head teacher uses the agreed criteria for supervision
- vi. The head teacher and the teachers hold a meeting after supervision
- vii. The head teacher implements the suggestions agreed in a supervisory meeting.

The respondents generally felt that the process of supervision should bring all the stakeholders on board; that it should be systematic, well coordinated and focused.

#### **IV. Conclusion And Recommendations**

From study results, it was concluded that head teachers ensure compliance with quality assurance standards, provide leadership on the process of ensuring quality and standards and moral as well as material support to the teachers throughout the process of supervision. It is therefore recommended that there is need to incorporate the elements of quality and standards in the supervision criteria and purpose. The head teachers and the teachers should often hold discussions on how well these elements of quality and standards can be incorporated in supervision process to make supervision an effective method of ensuring quality and standards in teaching and learning.

#### **References**

- [1]. Hanko, G. (1990). *Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Classrooms: Supporting Teachers* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- [2]. Hewton, E. (1988). *School Focused Staff Development: Guidelines Policy Makers*. Thames and Oxen: Imago Publishing Ltd.
- [3]. Maranga, J. (1977). *Guidelines for Training Educational Supervisors*; Teachers College (Unpublished PhD. Thesis). Columbia University.
- [4]. Mbiti, D. (1974). *Foundation of Educational Administration*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- [5]. Okumbe, J. A. (1999). *Educational management theory and practice*. Nairobi: Nairobi University Press.
- [6]. Olembo, J. et al. (1992). *Management in Education*. Nairobi: Educational Research Publication (ERAP).
- [7]. Rugut, E. (2003). *Teachers Inspectors and Educational Officers Perception of the Expected roles of Peer Supervision in Kenyan Primary Schools* (Unpublished M.Phil Thesis. Moi University, Eldoret.
- [8]. Simons, H. (1987). *Getting to know Schools: The Politics and Process of Evaluation*. London: Philadelphia.