

## **CORRELATION BETWEEN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BARINGO COUNTY, KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The significance of instructional leadership as it relates to students academic performance has assumed greater importance in education today as stakeholders demand for greater accountability. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between instructional leadership and student achievement, considering the dismal academic performances of students in public secondary schools in Baringo County. The study adopted the cross sectional survey research design. The target population of the study was 1070 secondary school teachers from 122 public secondary schools. A sample size of 291 teachers was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data was collected by use of questionnaire and Document analysis. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarize and describe data whereas the Spearman correlation analysis was used to establish relationship of the variables in the study.*

**KEYWORDS:** Instructional leadership, Academic Performance, Teachers, Students, Secondary Schools

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In Kenya secondary education is regarded as the most important stage in the educational cycle of a child. It is the level at which learners are expected to acquire proficiency in both academic and applied subjects (Government of Kenya, 2005). Secondary school education is important because it is the foundation for further education, training and work (Koech, 2006).

According to Boit et.al (2012), the purpose of education is to equip the citizenry to reshape their society and eliminate inequality. In particular, secondary education is an important sector in national and individual development. It plays a vital role in creating a country's human resource base at a level higher than primary education (Achoka et.al 2007). One of the indicators of quality of education being provided is cognitive achievement of learners (UNESCO, 2004). According to Adediwura & Tayo (2007), academic achievement is designated by test and examination scores or marks assigned by the subject teachers. It could also be said to be any expression used to represent students' scholastic standing.

Thakur & Thakur (2004) state that secondary school leadership is a major determining factor of the quality of education and school performance. Leadership is essential in improving school management and raising standards of education. The quality of education depends on the nature of leadership provided by the school principal, his or her ability to control, direct and guide teachers and students. The quality of leadership also plays a vital role in students' achievement as it is concerned with teachers, pupils, rules, regulations and policies that govern the school (Buhere, 2007).

Recent policy discussions in the United States of America and elsewhere suggest there is broad support for expanding teachers' participation in leadership and decision-making tasks besides the principals. These discussions are supported by research suggesting that increased teacher participation in schools has the potential for significant positive effects on school improvement including students academic achievement (Huber, 2004; Leithwood & Beatty, 2007; Leithwood *et al.*, 2008; Matthews & Sammons, 2005). Studies on leadership have focused at principals when it should be on the classroom teachers. Teachers play a key role in the delivery of quality instruction. Their responsibilities include ensuring educational strategies are in place that support effective learning for all students (Wango, 2009). They serve as a facilitator, guide and provider of quality instruction (Bakhda, 2006). Good subject teachers understand that that quality instruction is essential for improving students' academic achievement.

### **Instructional Leadership and Students Academic Achievement**

According to Hallinger (2005) defines leadership as the art of getting people to do what they might not otherwise do and like. Leadership has also been defined using the traits or attributes of leadership or the leaders themselves. Spillane (2000) contends that leaders should be honest, forward looking, competent and inspiring. Bennis and Thomas (2002) state that great leaders possess four essential skills: an ability to engage others in a shared meaning, a distinct and compelling voice, a sense of integrity and an adoptive capacity.

Leadership is also crucial for the success of schools, Mc Guffin (2011) observed that schools which perform well are led by principals and subject teachers who have the ability to set pace, lead and motivate staff and students to perform to their highest potential. Schools require good leaders to organize the process of teaching and learning to ensure that the mission of the school is achieved (Lydia & Nasongo, 2009). Thakur & Thakur (2004) posit that leadership is a major determining factor of the quality of education and school performance. The quality of education depends on the nature of leadership provided by the school principal, his/her ability to control, direct and guide teachers and students. Recent policy discussions in the USA and elsewhere suggest that there is broad support for expanding teachers' participation in leadership and decision-making tasks besides the principals (Huber, 2004).

Instructional leadership is a difficult concept to define as its definitions are as numerous as the number of scholars engaged in its study. It is about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen (Ross & Gray, 2006). Lezotte (2001) contends that the core role of the instructional leader is to ensure the achievement of the established mission through creating a good environment for the school. A study by Njuguna (2005) on the instructional leadership established that frequency of teachers supervision of classroom activities, involvement in tuition, revision, pupils' homework, testing and team building contribute towards students academic performance.

Effective instructional leaders are intensely involved in curricular and instructional issues that directly affect student achievement (Cotton, 2003). Studies on leadership and academic performance have tended to focus on principals with only little attention on classroom teachers despite the fact that they play a key role as instructional leaders. Their responsibilities include ensuring educational strategies are in place that support effective learning for all students (Wango, 2009). They serve as a facilitator, guide and provider of instruction (Bakhda, 2006). Good subject teachers understand that that quality instruction is essential for improving students' academic achievement. Literature reveals students taught by teachers with excellent

instruction leadership abilities tend to perform better in their academic work (Matthews & Sammons, 2005).

Instructional leadership resides with the principal to effectively manage resources and staff. Leithwood (1994) discussed the development and importance of instructional leadership in school management and supervision. Instructional leadership accentuates the behavioral traits of teachers that influence students' performance. Loeb *et.al* (2010) asserted that school leaders must have or develop the competence to become knowledgeable in instructional strategies and effective methods of content delivery. They noted that the supervision of teachers should be viewed as instructional leadership's efforts to improve classroom management.

The principal serves as the team leader who assesses and evaluates improvements in instruction and the quality of student learning. Leithwood (1994) and Loeb *et al.* (2010) contended that school leadership comprises not only formal authority but also expert knowledge of instruction, teaching, management, and safety within schools. Supervising teaching staff and managing schools require knowledge, application, and the development of methods in instructional leadership to enhance commitment, morale, and motivation. Instructional leadership entails being responsible for developing teachers' capabilities and paying attention to administrative matters such as budgeting, building maintenance, and school nutritional programs. This level of administrative support allows principals to focus their energy and time on academic performance.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Secondary education is the basic requirement for selection into tertiary institutions and further skills training (MOE, 2005). Considering that teachers play a major role in the teaching and learning process, there was need to examine teacher leadership influence on academic achievement. Secondary school students' academic achievement in Baringo has been low despite the infrastructural, material and technical support from the government and other development partners. For example, reports from County Education Office, Baringo indicate that in 2009 majority (72%) of the students in the county, scored below C+ grade in Kenya Certificate Secondary Examination (KCSE). Only (28%) of the students who sat for KCSE qualified for admission for a degree programme in that year given that the minimum qualification for admission to a public university is C+ grade. This dismal performance is of concern to parents, the government and the general public because they expect good results from the students after investing heavily in secondary school education

Research confirms that those principals who place academics as a priority experience increased student achievement (Bartell, 1990; Cotton, 2000; Johnson & Asera, 1999; Short & Spencer, 1990). Also Instructional coaching is a promising model for teacher development intended to improve teaching and learning (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Symonds, 2003). This study therefore sought to analyze the relationship between instructional leadership and students' academic achievement in public secondary school in Baringo County.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study adopted descriptive survey design. The design involved gathering of facts or obtaining pertinent and precise information concerning the current status of phenomenon and whenever possible draw possible conclusions from the facts discovered (Orodho 2008). The

target population of this study was 1070 respondents from 122 public secondary schools in Baringo County. The accessible population was 122 head teachers and 948 teachers from selected schools. From the target population of 1070 respondents, the researcher will use proportionate sampling to select 291 respondents from the six sub counties in Baringo County. Proportionate sampling was used to determine the number of teachers in each sub county, Mogotio, Koibatek, North Baringo, South Baringo, Tiaty, and Baringo Central respectively.

Questionnaire and content analysis were used to collect data in this research to obtain the required data from the respondents. All analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Spearman's rank correlation Coefficient was used test the hypothesis of the study which states that:

**Ho1:** There is no statistically significant relationship between teachers' instructional leadership and student academic achievement.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The objective of the study was to establish the extent to which teachers instructional leadership influenced students academic performance in Baringo county. The relationship between teachers' instructional leadership and students 'academic achievement was determined using the descriptive and inferential analysis.

### Descriptive Statistics on Instructional Leadership

Teachers instructional leadership was measured using a set of 21 statements questionnaire. The respondents were requested to establish the extent they agree or disagree with statements relating to the instructional leadership using a 5 point Likert scale. The mean of each item was computed and as well as their standard deviations were summarized in Table 3.1

**Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistics on Instructional Leadership**

Statement n = 243	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers are part of the team that develops the academic calendar of their schools	4.44	0.75
Teachers influence instructional change in schools	2.92	1.09
Teachers serve as representatives of leadership building teams in schools	3.20	1.33
Teachers share their instructional strategies with colleagues to help them improve their instructional practices	2.91	1.12
Teachers function as mediators between the needs and responsibilities of school administration and their needs at the classroom level	2.81	1.10
Teachers bring school administration and teachers together to solve instructional problems	2.73	1.27
Teachers plan content delivery by preparing scheme of work/lesson plans	3.64	1.0
Teachers play a key role in availing and organizing instructional materials	3.30	1.36

Teachers are the main facilitators in the search for knowledge in a classroom	4.06	1.177
Teachers create a conducive learning environment in the classroom	2.62	1.38
Teachers facilitates content delivery during lessons	2.94	1.25
Teachers ensure learning takes place during lessons	2.77	1.22
Teachers encourage students to attend classes	2.87	1.22
Teacher instill in students a culture of learning	3.83	1.25
Teachers guide students on how to solve problems	3.76	1.27
Teachers motivate their students to excel in academic work	4.01	1.15
Teachers help student understand difficult concepts through use of demonstrations and examples	3.61	1.32
Teachers show students how to develop realistic study times and follow them	3.12	1.28
Teachers take their responsibilities of organising and administering tests and assessments seriously	3.84	1.28
Teachers significantly influence their students' academic progress	3.61	1.31
Preparing students to sit for national examinations is one of the key responsibilities of teachers	3.69	1.06
<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.366</b>	<b>.568</b>

The results showed that the mean scores of the statements were between 2.62 (SD = 1.38) to 4.44 (SD = 0.74) whereas the overall mean was 3.37 (SD = 0.57) out of a maximum of 5. Some statements had low mean scores, an indication of weakness in instructional leadership. Among these were; teachers create a conducive learning environment in the classroom (M = 2.62, SD = 1.38), teachers to bring school administration and teachers together to solve instructional problems (M = 2.73, SD = 1.22) and ensure learning takes place during lessons (M = 2.77, SD = 1.22). However, the teachers instructional leadership was rated as fair given that its overall mean was 3.37 (SD = 0.57) out of a maximum of 5.

From the 22 statements used to explain teacher instructional leadership had an overall mean score of 3.37 indicating that respondents agreed on its contribution towards academic achievement. This implies that the instructional leadership was averagely rated by the respondents. Instructional leadership is concerned with organizational management for instruction and day-to-day teaching and learning (NAESP 2001). This concurs with Farr, (2011); Spillane, (2005) and Townsend, (2010) that school leaders are action oriented and response centered can help teachers to be role models who embody values and success in teaching and learning. The instructional leadership accentuates the behavioral traits of teachers that influence students' performance. This agrees with Loeb, Elfers, and Plecki (2010) that school leaders must have or develop the competence to become knowledgeable in instructional strategies and effective methods of content delivery.

The supervision of teachers should be viewed as instructional leadership's efforts to improve classroom management. Instructional leadership entails being responsible for developing teachers' capabilities and paying attention to administrative matters such as budgeting, building



maintenance, and school nutritional programs. This level of administrative support allows principals to focus their energy and time on academic performance. This agrees with Loeb *et al.*, (2010) that school leadership comprises not only formal authority but also expert knowledge of instruction, teaching, management, and safety within schools. Supervising teaching staff and managing schools require knowledge, application, and the development of methods in instructional leadership to enhance commitment, morale, and motivation.

### **Influence of Teachers Instructional Leadership on Students Academic Achievement**

The relationship between teachers instructional leadership and students academic achievement was determined by performing Spearman Correlation Coefficient test. The teacher's instructional leadership mean score and students' academic achievement overall KCSE mean grade were correlated using the Spearman Correlation.

### **Mean KCSE Academic Performance in Baringo County**

The dependent variable during the study was the academic performance in KCSE in Baringo County. The Kenya Certificate Secondary Examination (KCSE) results were provided by Directors of Studies. The students academic performance was measured using the KCSE mean grades of the schools that participated in the study for the years 2009 to 2013. The students' academic achievement was measured by the overall mean grade considered for each year, the overall mean and their standard deviations were summarized in Table 3.2. The mean grades for the years were transformed into aggregate mean (overall mean). An examination of the results showed that the KCSE mean grades ranged from 4.67 (SD = 1.08) to 5.02 (1.05) while the overall mean grade was 4.90 (SD = 0.96). This indicated that the performance of the students in Baringo County was low.

**Table 3.2 Descriptive Statistics of KCSE Performance for the Years 2009 to 2013**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
2009	4.8832	.84765	.05438	4.7761	4.9903	3.92	7.54
2010	4.9916	.93591	.06004	4.8734	5.1099	4.03	8.27
2011	5.0249	1.05298	.06755	4.8918	5.1579	3.67	7.93
2012	4.9498	1.15956	.07439	4.8033	5.0963	3.50	8.00
2013	4.6740	1.08059	.06946	4.5372	4.8109	3.31	7.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.9049</b>	<b>1.02717</b>	<b>.02948</b>	<b>4.8471</b>	<b>4.9627</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<b>8.27</b>

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the variation in the academic performance between 2009 and 2013 as shown in (Table 3.3). There was a statistically significant difference  $p < .05$  in academic performance in KCSE between 2009 to 2013 [ $F(1,1209) = 4.513, p = .001$ ]. Since the effects in performance in KCSE between 2009 to 2013 were found to be significant, it implies that the means differ more than would be expected by chance alone. School academic performance was low and teachers would be the core component of such achievement. School leadership assists in managing and shaping the flow of cultural information to support students' academic progress.

**Table 3.3 ANOVA on KCSE performance**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	18.826	4	4.707	4.513	.001
Within Groups	1260.974	1209	1.043		
Total	1279.800	1213			

### Relationship between Teachers Instructional Leadership and Students Academic Achievement

The relationship between teachers instructional leadership and students academic achievement was determined by performing Spearman Correlation Coefficient test. The teacher's instructional leadership mean score and students' academic achievement overall KCSE mean grade in table 3.2 were correlated using the Spearman Correlation. This gave a correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) which showed the direction of association between the variables as summarized in Table 3.4. Spearman Correlation Coefficient was used to establish the relationship between teacher's instructional leadership and students' academic achievement. There was a positive relationship between the teachers instructional leadership and students' academic achievement ( $r=.165$ ,  $n=216$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table 3.4 Relationship between Teachers Instructional Leadership and Students Academic Achievement**

		Academic Achievement	Instructional leadership
Academic Achievement	Correlation Coefficient	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Instructional leadership	Correlation Coefficient	.165*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

c. List wise N = 216

This indicated that an increase in teacher's instructional leadership the students' academic achievement in public secondary school improved. This implies that students taught by teachers with high instructional leadership abilities tend to perform better in their academic work. Leadership is essential in improving school management and raising standards of education. The quality of education depends on the nature of leadership provided by subject teachers, his ability to control, direct and guide teachers and students. There was a positive and significant relationship between teachers' instructional leadership and students' academic achievement. Thus the null hypothesis of the study is not accepted ( $r=.165$ ,  $n=216$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

This agrees with Thakur & Thakur (2004) state that secondary school instructional leadership is major determining factor of the quality of education and school performance. Wango (2009) asserts that teachers are recruited, appointed, deployed and promoted by TSC. They are

responsible for the actual implementation of school curriculum in their subject areas. As implementers of the curriculum how they deliver content and manage their classes directly affect students academic achievement. Teachers can be assigned duties of a class teacher by the head teacher. Head and assistant teachers are critical for the academic achievement of students.

This agrees with Thakur & Thakur (2004) that schools with teachers with good leadership traits perform well in national examinations. They noted that such teachers have strong affective traits and cognitive analytical skills. Also it concurs with Nasongo (2009) that in order to improve academic achievement teachers must provide instructional leadership so as to manage and control their lessons well. This is because leadership is a social influence which the achievement of the desired goals.

This view is supported by Odhiambo (2005) who suggested that teachers' ability to organize and manage students' behaviors would result in positive educational outcomes. Teachers' abilities to organize the classroom and manage their students' behaviors are prerequisites to effective classroom management. Teachers who are capable of managing their classroom effectively enhance learning leading to better educational outcomes. Emmer & Stough (2001) were of the view that educators who provide instructional leadership minimize disruptive classroom behaviors. Conroy, Sutherland, Snyder and Marsh (2008) found that students who are engaged in well planned and managed class are less likely to display indiscipline and bad behaviors, and this translates into good learning outcomes.

Research has shown that there is a strong association between instructional leadership and students' academic achievement (Hardman, 2011). McGuffin (2011) found out that outstanding leadership was a key characteristic of schools that perform well in examinations. They noted that instructional leadership of high achieving schools has stronger affective traits and cognitive analytical skills and were more focused. Darling-Hammond (2002), pointed out that in order to improve learning and students' achievement, focus should be on the development of qualified and experienced teachers with strong instructional leadership abilities.

Brown, Smith & Stein (1995), posit that instruction leadership includes the teachers' ability to respond appropriately to the emotional, social, cultural, and cognitive needs of the students. Obadara (2005) is of the view that in order to improve on any aspect of education, it is imperative to involve a well-articulated teacher education programme that will prepare the teachers for the leadership role they are expected to play. The Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 (MOEST 2005) reports that there is a mismatch between the skills learned in training institutions and skills demanded in the industry and that some teachers are inadequately trained and the mechanisms for quality assurance are weak and teacher professional development is weak. The paper acknowledges that the two years training are inadequate for a trainee to acquire content mastery and pedagogical skills. It also reports that there is inadequate in-servicing of teachers. The paper proposes establishment of teacher professional development programme and regular in servicing of teachers.

A research by Hardman *et al.*, (2009) & Kisirkoi (2011) reveal that Teacher Advisory Centres (TACs) which are mandated to conduct teacher professional development tend to be ineffective. Kisirkoi (2011) further found that the Teacher Advisory Centre (TACs) in Nairobi County do not effectively conduct teacher professional development activities but engage in administrative duties of the Ministry of Education. They spend about 60% of their time



performing administrative activities. No Teacher Advisory Centre (TAC) tutor had been found to have held an in-service course as one's initiative. Schools require good leaders to organize the process of teaching and learning to ensure that the mission of the school is achieved (Lydia & Nasongo, 2009). The core role of the instructional leader is to ensure the achievement of the established mission through creating a good environment for the schools (Lezotte, 2001).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study showed that a significant relationship exists between the teachers' instructional leadership and students' academic achievement. The students taught by teachers with high instructional leadership abilities tend to perform better in their academic work. A strong association existed between instructional leadership and students' academic achievement and that an outstanding leadership was a key characteristic of schools that perform well in examinations. The instructional leadership is critical for curriculum implementation, evaluation and supervision aspects that lead to higher students' academic performances. In order to improve learning and students' achievement, focus should be on the development of qualified and experienced teachers with strong instructional leadership abilities.

From the results of the study the researcher recommends that instructional leadership should be improved by introducing instructional leadership training sessions in schools. The teachers can also be encouraged and provided with financial support to attend instructional leadership workshops, seminars and conferences. School administration should also create an environment conducive for the growth of instructional leadership. Teachers should be encouraged to continuously acquire instructional leadership skills within and outside school systems through training, workshops and seminars.

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