



# TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND STANDARDS OFFICERS' SUPERVISORY ROLES IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS' ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENTS IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of Quality Assurance and Standard Officers' (QASOs) supervisory roles in public primary schools' academic improvements in Kiambu County of Kenya. The critical role of supervision as one of the dominant strategies for monitoring and improving the performance of education systems in schools cannot be over emphasized. Supervision is concerned with the improvement of learning outcomes and should be an integral part of school improvement programmes. Descriptive survey research design was guided this study. The target population was 6083 public primary school teachers and 515 head teachers. Multi-stage cluster sampling technique was employed to get an adequate sample from the population. Upon calculation, the sample size of the county was as follows: 341 teachers and 154 head teachers. The major finding of this study was that teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance and Standard Officers' supervisory roles in public primary schools academic improvement were positive.

## INTRODUCTION

In Kenya, school inspectors have acquired a new title, the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers' (QASOs'), which on the face value seems to be school-friendly. While QASOs mode of operation may not have significantly changed, this new title may have changed teachers' perception on the inspectors' roles in public primary schools in Kiambu County.

Over the years, schools inspectors' behaviour in Kenya towards teachers has been criticized by teachers. The major concerns are associated with unprofessional conduct of school inspectors. This kind of relationship between teachers and QASOs might have generated a negative perception on the side of teachers towards the QASOs supervisory roles. It may impact negatively to the academic improvements since teachers are not motivated as their efforts may have been watered down by the poor relationship between them and the QASOs.

Ndegwa (2001) noted that inspection of schools in Kenya has at times been marked by impromptu, irregular visits by some inspectors with the objective of 'catching' the teachers doing wrong. Such visits had minimal impacts on the academic improvements of the respective schools. Ndegwa (2001) reported earlier that some schools were visited and teachers supervised more frequently than others. Some inspectors were associated with harsh colonial overtones and a master type of relationship. Such practices were ineffective and inefficient as they did not impart any academic improvements.

Ndegwa (2001) explained that teachers generally felt threatened by inspection and that an inspector's presence in the classroom has been intimidating and that opportunities for meaningful dialogue between teachers and inspectors especially after inspection are highly limited. Ndegwa adds that, teachers do not therefore understand and never have they been engaged to participate in the designing of instruments that are used to evaluate them, while discharging curriculum and co-curriculum duties.

With expressed improved modern management and skills prevalent such as availability of QASOs handbook, improved transport, computers available for proper data storage, the input of teachers on the side of attitude change on the way they perceived the QASOs, supervisory role might highly want in order to enhance efficiency in education system (Republic of Kenya, 2005a).

## Statement of the Problem

During inspections and supervisions, teachers felt threatened since inspectors were intimidating and did not accommodate dialogue with teachers. The current title of inspectors, which is Quality Assurances and Standards Officers (QASOs), seems to be friendly. The new title and is assumed to have changed teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of the supervisory roles of QASOs.

In Kiambu County of Kenya, there have been noted improvements in KCPE since year 2008. The KCPE Mean Standard Score (M.S.S.) for all public primary schools was 213.87 marks out of a maximum of 500 marks. By the year 2012, the M.S.S had improved to 229.4 marks. This could have been attributed to the positive perception of teachers' on QASOs' supervisory roles among other factors and effectiveness of the latter. This study sought to investigate the effectiveness of QASOs supervisory roles in relation to on academic improvements in Kiambu

County as perceived by teachers.

## Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To establish how teachers perceived the effectiveness of Quality Assurances and Standards Officers' supervisory roles in public primary schools academic improvements in Kiambu County
- To determine whether Quality Assurances and Standards Officers' supervisory roles were effective in improvements of academic performance in public primary school of Kiambu County.

## Literature Review

Quality assurance and standards in school is the process of ensuring and maintenance of improvement in instructions, and schools in general through visits by Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs). It helps to support teachers and build expertise and capacity in the education system to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people. Ojogwa (2010) observed that through sharing, understanding and applying standards and expectations, quality assurance helps to raise standards and expectations, and levels of consistency across teachers and schools. It is important in the planning and coordination of professional development activities that a partnership and inter-establishment approach is adopted to ensure cross-service and cross-sector working on standards and expectations.

Quality assurance in education is part of the day-to-day work of pre-school centers, primary, special and secondary schools, services and local authorities. Olayemi (2001) stated that staff uses a wide range of activities to ensure that high standards are maintained and outcomes improved for children and young people. These include monitoring, self-evaluation and planning for improvement. Since assessment is integral to learning, teaching and the curriculum, these quality assurance approaches apply equally to assessment.

Rigorous and robust quality assurance gives confidence in teachers' judgments and provides assurance to parents and others that all learners receive appropriate recognition for their achievements in line with agreed national standards and are progressing in line with expectations.

Gur (1999) noted that in Australia, many institutions in their attempts to reform and innovate supervision, are increasingly relying on in-school or community based strategies to complement, if not replace, external supervision and support. In Nigeria, there was the complaint about the low performance of children, high dropout rate and failure rate, poor reading and writing skills among students at all levels. Olayemi (2001) warned that the depreciation that has endangered public schools is undoubtedly the major cause that led to the emergence of private schools in the country.

Koech (2014) observed that teachers in Kenya needed extrinsic rewards such as polite supervision, cordial relationship with their seniors such as QASOs, favorable teaching environment and important discussion with QASOs on how to achieve improvements in schools. Quality assurance and standard officers' services should be conducted as per Kenya's Education Act, Cap 211 of 1968, which

was revised in 2013.

According to Sanka (2014), monitoring of professional documents by QASOs is a crucial role and must be emphasized. Other important roles of teachers are adequate teaching, adequate learning resources and attitude change by teachers to bring about improved performance. Sanka recommended that classroom observation supervision practice should be due in passive mode to avoid conflict with teachers with negative attitude instead of QASOs confronting them.

Frequency of supervision sessions is a big problem facing education supervision in Kenya as observed by Kamindo (2008). He observed that although there are education supervisors' ways down to zonal levels, most schools stay without supervisors for a long period due to low number of supervisors versus high number of teachers and schools. There exists a kind of a master-servant relationship between teachers and supervisors. The supervisors act as automatic critical fault-finders by exerting influences against teachers.

Sullivan (2000) stated that supervision is all about improving practices, methods and process of working with teachers to enhance their ability to improve classroom practices. According to Wango (2009) supervisors play the roles of facilitating the implementation of curriculum, supporting educational programmes, undertaking help to the needy institutions in terms of ideas, advice and guidance, supervisors assess institutions, appraise and evaluate educational programmes.

According to Kilonzo (2013), support from the Ministry Of Education QASO department is crucial to schools performance. This is so because, quality assurance and standards is concerned with encouraging members of a work unit to contribute positively towards accomplishment of goals and objectives. It is worth noting that QASOs should foster teamwork so that teachers can appreciate and practice the transition of centrally developed curriculum guidelines into interestingly classroom activities, which nurture the initiative, and creativity of learners.

#### Sample and Sampling Procedures

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design was preferable in this study since it was an effective and efficient guide on data collection from a wide range of respondents. It also provided opportunity for respondents to describe phenomenon and events hence provided systematic and firsthand information through effective communication.

Complex probability sampling technique was used in this study as it is commonly used in quantitative and qualitative research. Under this, stratified random sampling was used where the population was divided into two or more homogeneous subpopulations (strata) and a sample was drawn from each stratum.

The target population of teachers was 6083 and 515 head teachers. Samples were drawn from 154 randomly selected schools where a minimum of two and a maximum of three teachers were picked at random to ensure every sub-county had at least fifteen schools for proper representation. All head teachers in the sampled schools were also requested to fill the questionnaires. It was hoped that 341 teachers and 154 head teachers would fill the questionnaires.

#### Research Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

Two types of research instruments were used to collect data: head teachers' questionnaire and teachers' questionnaires, which were self-administered. The two instruments obtained primary data from the two categories of respondents. The questionnaires were adequate in collecting the quantitative data and were also reliable in ensuring confidentiality on side of respondents; hence the respondent was likely to give accurate data.

#### Data Analysis and Presentation Techniques

After fieldwork, questionnaires were examined to ascertain their accuracy, competence and uniformity. Quantitative data was coded and organized in different categories and data file opened and information keyed in. Scientific Packages for Social Science (SPSS) was used for data Analysis.

Analyzed data was presented as descriptive and explanatory discourses and illustrated using tables, bar graphs and pie charts. Finally, conclusions were drawn and suggestions for further studies were made.

#### Findings of the Study

The findings related to the effectiveness of QASOs' supervisory roles in academic improvements were established by questioning respondents on the following:

- (i) Whether QASOs informed teachers about the changes in the curriculum and how such information led to academic improvements in public primary schools.
- (ii) The Frequency of QASOs supervisory visits to public Primary schools and how such visits led to academic improvements in public primary schools.
- (iii) QASOs roles in promoting teachers' professional growth and how such promotion led to academic improvements in public primary schools.

At least 78.3 percent of the respondents acknowledged that QASOs offered them essential information on changes in curriculum on time. Respondents indicated that there has been a wake up on the side of QASOs as far as this role is concerned. The study established that the existing rapport between teachers and QASOs is appreciated so far, but some teachers still feel there is need for improvement. There was a feeling expressed by some teachers that QASOs need to know their roles for efficiency and effectiveness.

About 70.4 percent of the respondents agreed that QASOs made frequent visits with Kiambu County. It is therefore affirmative to conclude that QASOs informed teachers of the curriculum changes during their frequent visits to the school. This study also established that QASOs gave information on curriculum implementation to teachers indicating that they had discussions and dialogues with teachers before and after supervisions. In such forums QASOs informed teachers of changes in curriculum an indication of positive relationship with teachers.

According to Olembo (1992), the frequent visit made by QASOs to schools facilitates a good rapport between the teachers and QASOs. The QASOs could take the lead in educating teachers on curriculum changes. QASOs are also known to communicate with teachers through organized refresher courses and seminars through which they sensitize the teachers on the changes in the curriculum. Such forums are known to be beneficial to the teachers since they also get a chance to meet with other teachers and also socialize with other members.

Some 51 percent of the respondents were assertive that Quality Assurance Officers helped in professional growth and career growth of the teachers. The study established that QASOs need to improve on this area of career development and professional growth.

Teachers' professional growth is an important factor towards their motivation and their willingness to participate in quality improvement of education. From the responses, it was found out that QASOs in Kiambu County participates in academic improvement with adherence to quality assurance standards. According to report corrected at Kiambu West human resource office at Limuru town, many teachers in Kiambu County have gone back to school to upgrade their professional qualifications, some of them are Masters' degree holders, Bachelor's degree holders or diploma holders, an indication that they are motivated to professionally develop themselves. When the majority of the teaching fraternity is educated above the diploma level, the human resource capacity is greatly increased and a consequent improvement in curriculum delivery. This is in tandem with Olembo (1992) that the major objective of instructional supervision is to stimulate staff growth and pupil development.

From the study, it was found that there was improvement in KCPE performance for example, the M.S.S. in the year 2008 was 213.87 which rose to 229.40 in 2012. The M.S.S. rose even further to 253.80 in 2013, a clear indication that there was conspicuous improvement in performance.

#### Conclusions of the Study

The study concludes that teachers felt that QASOs supervisory roles have helped them interpret and deliver the curriculum effectively and efficiently, allowing the students enough time for practice and revision. QASOs have encouraged a child-centered pedagogical approach that has by far led to an interactive and more efficient learning process in public primary schools, leading to improved academic performance. Through the refresher courses offered by QASOs, teachers have been trained how to use their expertise for proper curriculum delivery and consequent academic improvements in public primary schools in Kiambu County.

Another conclusion is that QASOs' supervisory roles have positively impacted on public primary schools' academic improvements in Kiambu County in myriad ways. Their change of approach from the conventional inspectorate mode to a friendlier advisory mode has been instrumental to bringing these changes. The improved perceptions of the teachers to the QASOs supervisory roles is key to creating the right environment and rapport for positive intake of advice and suggestions, thus leading to academic improvements in public primary schools in Kiambu County. Thus the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of QASOs roles in academic improvements were positive.

#### Recommendations

In view of the foregoing findings, the researchers wish to recommend as follows:

- Consultations between teachers and QASOs should be taken as an unavoidable routine aspect in order to develop and harmonize their working relationships as they are supposed to work as a team with friendly atmosphere
- QASOs should spare enough time whenever they visit schools so that they may sit with the teachers to discuss about the challenges the teachers face on the ground.
- QASOs should input in choices of textbooks and other learning materials/resources in order to help schools in value materials selection process. The number of QASOs should be increased in the county and sub-counties so that their school visits can be regular as recommended by head teachers

and teachers in order to enhance improvement in academic performance.

- Frequent refresher courses for QASOs, head teachers and teachers should be organized at different levels of administration to enhance professionalism. The researcher also recommends that the head teachers execute their supervisory roles effectively as recommended by Kilonzo (2013) instead of waiting for the QASOs to take any disciplinary measures on teachers for shortcomings noted.

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