

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND STANDARDS OFFICERS' SUPERVISION QUALITY AND FREQUENCY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PUPILS PERFORMANCE IN KENYA CERTIFICATE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BUNGOMA NORTH SUB-COUNTY

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Abstract

To ensure quality education is maintained in various parts of the world, certain bodies are set up by governments and stakeholders to monitor the activities that go on in schools. In Kenya Quality Assurance and Standards Officer's (QASO's) are charged with the mandate of overseeing that quality of education is maintained in all institutions of learning. The purpose of this study was therefore to determine whether there is a relationship between quality assurance and standards officers' supervision quality and frequency and pupils performance in Kenya certificate of primary education in public primary schools in Bungoma North Sub-county. The study findings revealed that the Quality, Assurance and Standards Officer's (QASO's) are few compared to the schools in the sub-county. Some of the QASO's had limited knowledge about some of the subjects taught in primary schools. This implied that the frequency and quality of the supervision was being compromised in the county leading to poor performance in KCPE in schools. The study also established that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between quality and frequency of supervision and performance in KCPE in public primary schools in Bungoma North Sub-county ($r=829$, $P<0.05$).

Introduction

Globally provision and maintaining of quality education is paramount in enabling teachers and pupils achieve their highest potential. Improving the quality of schools and the achievement of students remain a priority throughout the world, not least in the developing countries. Many countries throughout the world have developed some means of monitoring the quality and standards of their education systems. School inspection is concerned with the improvement of standards and quality education and should be an integral part of a school improvement program. To ensure quality education is maintained in various parts of the world, certain bodies are set up by governments and stakeholders to monitor the activities that go on in schools (Dick, 1996). To monitor quality, national authorities rely strongly on the schools' supervision system. Despite this De Grauwe (2007) observes that the school systems have not always been able to play that role. They are affected by a lack of resources, an inefficient structure and an ambiguity about its main functions.

In most cases, the monitoring process involves supervision by inspection as one of the dominant strategies for monitoring and improving the performance of education system in schools (Wanzare, 2006). According to Clergg and Billington (1994), in reflecting on the practice of inspection by the Britain's office for standards in Education, a major purpose of inspections is "to collect a range of evidence against a statutory set of criteria, arrive at judgments and make those judgments known to the public. Also Maw (1996), in reflecting on the British Education (schools) Act 1992, noted that the role of inspection in Britain is to monitor standards, quality, efficiency and ethos of the schools

and to inform the government and the general public on these matters. Further to this, McGlynn and Stalker (1995), who wrote about the process of school inspection in Scotland, cited the following three reasons for conducting school inspections. These are (a) to report on the effectiveness of education in schools and other educational institutions and to recommend action for improvement; (b) evaluate the arrangement for assuring quality in schools; and (c) provide frank and objective advice to the higher education authorities and to ensure the educational incentives are implemented effectively. In Northern Ireland, the Education and Training Inspectorate provides inspection services and information about the quality of education and training in Northern Ireland to several departments, e.g. the Department of Education and the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure. The organization is a unitary inspectorate, providing independent advice to all three departments. The legal basis for the Inspectorate's work is set out in the Education Reform (David, 1985).

A comparative research study by De Grauwe (2001) on four African countries: Tanzania, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia on their supervisory systems revealed that all countries, with the exception of Zanzibar, officers function at least at three levels: central, regional, district or local. Supervisors, who are actually in charge of visiting schools, are posted at the lowest level. However, in the less populated countries like Botswana and Namibia, this lowest level does not correspond to an office as such, but to an area of responsibility.

The overall education policy of the government of Kenya is to achieve 'Education For All' (MOEST 2008). The priority is to ensure equitable access and improvement in quality and efficiency at all levels of education. The ultimate goal is to develop an all-inclusive and quality education that is accessible and relevant to all Kenyans for self-reliance (Sifuna 2003). This is guided by the understanding that good education can contribute significantly to economic growth, improve employment prospects and income generating opportunities for suitable development. To achieve this, there is need for quality inspection of schools. The Quality Assurance and Standards Offices (QASO) in every sub-county are charged with the responsibility of inspecting schools to check on the curriculum delivery.

The enacting of the Basic Education Act in 2013 brought forth, a new commission known as Education Standards and Quality Assurance Commission (ESQAC). The functions of this commission is to ensure that standards and qualities are maintained in institutions of learning; administer policies and guidelines set out for basic education; supervise and oversee curriculum implementation and delivery. The commission in co-operation with County Education Boards (CEBS) will monitor the conduct of assessments and examinations in the institutions and evaluate the standards and qualities in learning and teaching (The Teachers Education Magazine, 2014). The following are the objectives of ESQAC are:- to have a regular reporting to the ministry of education on the general quality of education at national, county, sub county and school levels with reports on specific aspects of education as required; monitor the performance of teachers and educational institutions in accordance with all-round standards performance indicators; ensure the equitable distribution of teachers by working out the curriculum based establishment (secondary /college) and classed-based staff (primary); carry out regular and full panel quality assurance and standards assessment of all education institutions on a regular basis; advise on the provision of proper and adequate physical facilities in all educational institutions; ensure that the appropriate curriculum is operational in institutions; and organize and administer co-curricular activities with a view to developing an all-round child.

The data from Bungoma North Sub-County Education Office indicates that the Sub-County Mean Standard Score (MSS) in KCPE has been below the average of 250 marks out of the 500 marks for the last five consecutive years as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: KCPE Performance Trend in Bungoma North Sub-County

YEAR	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Mean Standard Score	246.96	240.89	243.84	243.23	246.57

Source: Bungoma North Sub-County Education office (2013)

This implies that the ESQAC is not carrying out its functions well in Bungoma North Sub-county as stated in the Basic Education Act of 2013. The study therefore sought to determine the influence of QASO's supervision frequency on pupils performance in KCPE in public primary schools in Bungoma North Sub-County.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design. The design was chosen for this study because it was of great importance that we determine the relationship between QASO's quality and frequency of supervision and KCPE performance. The correlational method will enable the researcher to describe in quantitative terms the degree to which the variables relate (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003).

In this study 78 public primary schools were targeted. The sub-county had 78 head teachers, 1419 teachers and 4 QASO's (Bungoma North Sub-County Education Office, 2012). The researchers sampled 30 public primary schools using a stratified proportionate random sampling technique. The sample of 30 is a representation of 38.46% of primary schools in the three zones of the sub- County. Stratified sampling technique was used to obtain a proportionate number of schools from each zone. Two class teachers were selected from the 30 selected public primary schools making a sample of 60 teachers. The research instruments that were used in the study to collect data were questionnaires and interview schedules for head teachers and QASOs. The researcher visited sampled schools personally and administered the questionnaires to head teachers and teachers and held interview schedule with the DQASO, AEOs and head teachers. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize and group study findings relating to demographics and were presented using frequency tables and percentages. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse data.

Findings of the study

The study sought to establish how quality and frequency of supervision relates to performance of students in KCPE in public primary schools in Bungoma North sub-county. A descriptive analysis of the findings is presented in Table 2.

Findings in Table 2 reveal that schools that are regularly assessed perform better than those that are not regularly assessed. From the findings 85% of the respondents were in agreement that regular assessment of schools by QASO's improve the performance of schools in national examinations. On the other hand 95.0% of the respondents believed that assessment was done for convenience favouring schools that are easily accessible as opposed to those in remote areas.

Table 2: Quality and frequency of supervision in relation to KCPE performance

	SA	A	NS	D	SD	TOTAL
Teachers view assessment as a pointer to good performance	75.0	10.0	10.0	5.0	00	100
Assessment is done for convenience favouring schools that are easily accessible as opposed to those in remote areas	80.0	15.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	100
The number of schools out distance the capacity of the existing number of inspectors hence assessment is a mere routine	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
Some inspectors have limited knowledge about some subjects taught in schools thus offer inadequate advice to teachers	70.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	0.0	100

NB: SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; NS=Not Sure; D=Disagree; SD= Strongly Disagree

This made the accessible schools perform better than those that are not easily accessible. This implied that regular assessment of schools by the QASO does enhance performance in schools. The researchers further asked the teachers to rate whether the QASO's were enough to cover all the schools in the sub-county and whether they were knowledge enough on the subjects taught in schools to offer adequate advice to teachers. A hundred percent of them observed that the QASO's were overwhelmed by the number of schools in the sub-county, while a majority of them (80%) observed that some inspectors have limited knowledge about some subjects taught in schools. This finding was supported by one of the QASO's who had the following to say:

"... the reason why we inspect some schools more than the other is mainly due to their previous poor performance in KCPE and or their closeness to our offices. We are few and the schools are many and so we cannot cover all the schools in a term". (Bungoma North Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer, 28th October 2014)

This implies that they the QASO's are bound to offer inadequate advice to teachers resulting in poor performance in some subjects at KCPE level in the sub-county. Observations by the researcher revealed that schools that had been regularly assessed have shown an upward trend in the previous three years while the opposite was true of those that were irregularly assessed. This was evident in the few schools (see Table 3) observed in the study.

Table 3: KCPE Performance of selected schools that were regularly assessed

Name of School	District position	M.S 2013	M.S 2012	M.S 2011
Mukuyuni FYM	3	276	259.16	264.17
Sinoko RC	6	271.14	237.42	219.67
Sawa DEB	8	269.69	218.86	222.36
Maliki FYM	18	256.45	231.50	261.56
Binyenya RC	65	211.67	177.52	210.51
Total		256.99	224.89	235.65

Source: Professional Development office Bungoma North Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Department, 2014.

Table 4: KCPE performance for selected schools that were not regularly assessed

Name of School	District position	M.S 2013	M.S 2012	M.S 2011
Milimani SA	68	236.74	219.37	210.98
Musembe PAG	78	169.13	184.10	181.17
Makololwe PAG	55	215.09	209.60	223.43
Lunao DEB	56	New	New	New
Mwikhupo RC	57	196.79	211.64	222.02
Total		204.64	206.18	209.40

Source: Professional Development office Bungoma North Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Department, 2014.

Based on the findings in Tables 3 and 4, it is evident there is a positive relationship between quality and frequency of supervision and performance of KCPE in the sub-county. This was supported by one of the interviewed head teachers who observed that:

“...the quality and frequency of supervision was still below average due to poor funding, poor roads and other infrastructural challenges that our rural schools face....” (Bungoma North Sub-County Primary School Head teacher, 18th October 2014)

They were also supported by one of the QASO who observed that:

“...more needs to be done to enhance quality supervisions and inspections in schools and that can only be achieved if policies on funding and goodwill from the government are reviewed and number of personnel increased to cope with increase in number of schools...” (Bungoma North Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer, 28th October 2014)

The researcher subjected data collected from questionnaire items on quality and frequency of supervision in relation to performance in KCPE examinations and subjected it to Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. This was meant to determine whether there is a correlation between Quality and frequency of supervision by QASO's and KCPE performance in Bungoma North Sub-County. The findings are as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Relationship between frequency of supervision and performance in KCPE examination.

		Quality and Frequency of supervision
Performance in KCPE	Pearson Correlation	.829**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015
	N	57

**Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2- tailed)

*Correlation significant at 0.01 levels (2- tailed)

Findings in Table 5 reveal a statistically significant positive relationship between quality and frequency of supervision and performance in KCPE examinations in public primary schools in Bungoma North Sub-county ($r=0.829$, $P<0.05$). This implies that an increase in quality and frequency of supervision brings about improved performance in KCPE examinations in public primary schools in Bungoma north sub-county.

Conclusions

The study findings revealed that the QASO's are few compared to the schools in the sub-county. It also revealed that some of the QASO's had limited knowledge about some subjects taught in schools. This implied that the frequency and quality of the supervision was being compromised in the county leading to poor performance in KCPE in schools. The study also established that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between quality and frequency of supervision and performance in KCPE in public primary schools in Bungoma North Sub-county ($r=0.829$, $P<0.05$). This implied that to change the poor performance trend in KCPE in Bungoma North sub-county there is need to increase the numbers of QASO's and frequency of supervision in public primary schools. This is because the process of inspection is supposed to lead to identification of key weaknesses of a school for action. The school would then draw up an action plan to deal with these key weaknesses. Extirpating the weaknesses would automatically lead to improved performance. In order for this to happen, the inspection should be provided constantly.

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