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Teachers' Perceptions on the Influence of Quality Assurance and Standards Officers' Supervisory Roles on Academic Improvements of Public Primary Schools in Kiambu County, Kenya

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Abstract:

The study investigated how teachers perceived the influence of Quality Assurance and Standards Officers' (QASOs') supervisory roles in public primary schools academic improvement in Kiambu County of Kenya. It also provided insights on the relevance of QASOs and standard services on schools academic improvement in Kiambu County. Major players in pupils' quality learning and good performance are ministry of Education, Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, Head teachers, teachers, parents, management committees and pupils themselves, among others. Descriptive survey research design was employed. It was established that the perceptions held by teachers on QASOs supervisory roles in public primary schools academic improvement was positive. Most teachers were appreciative of the role played by QASOs through their supervisory roles in academic improvement. Teamwork was found to be vital to academic improvement.

1. Introduction

Many countries have developed some means of monitoring quality and standards of their education systems. Monitoring process involves inspections and supervision of educational institutions such as schools by the designated personnel such as Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs). UNESCO (2004) stated that the major purpose of inspection is to collect a range of evidence, match the evidence against a statutory set criterion, arrive at judgment and make those judgments known to public. The roles of inspection and supervision are to monitor the standards, quality, efficiency and ethics of the schools and to inform the government and general public. Specifically, supervision checks on delivery of service and assessment of teachers, provision of resources and advisory roles. It is a powerful way of monitoring the education system by assessing the standards and levels of academic performance over a period of time.

Supervision helps in identifying the school failures and successes of an institution. It offers an opportunity to learn about schools and all its stakeholders. In this respect, supervision is a learning experience to those involved. The assumptions made are that the concept of quality assurance in education are well understood by the stakeholders in education and that all look up to see improvements in schools.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the teachers' perception of the influence of Quality Assurance and Standards Officers' supervisory role in public primary schools' academic improvements in Kiambu County of Kenya.

2. Literature Review

According to Oleyemi (2001), supervision in America in the 1960s and 1970s was perceived to be a means of improving classroom work through classroom visitation and the observation technique. Supervision is an integral component and process in operation of schools in countries such as India, Malaysia, Thailand and Australia.

One of the six EFA goals specifically focuses on quality of Education aiming at improving all aspects of education ensuring excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

In Kenya, QASOs were previously known as inspectors of schools under the Ministry of Education's Inspectorate Department. However, the department has so far changed its name and rebranded with an aim of improving its service delivery. Amongst the changes, QASOs have become friendlier to teachers and the rationale demands involvement of teachers in the supervisory process

thus enabling the teachers to own the process. These fundamental changes have led to change of the teachers' perception towards the QASOs, hence imparting positive academic improvements.

According to Kamotho (2001), the mandate of school inspection system was to ensure policy implementation regarding effective instructional procedure and wholesome learning environment. Kimondo (2013) added that supervision should ensure gender equity, equality and ensure appropriate teachers-pupil ratio in order to cater for learning needs of learners and provision of adequate resources, hence achievement of quality education.

According to Sanka (2014) Quality Assurance and Standards is a fundamental activity which should be part and parcel of the school improvement programme. Sanka further recommended that classroom observation and supervision practices should be done in passive mode to avoid conflict with teachers who could be having negative attitude instead of QASOs confronting them.

Kamindo (2008) observed that although there are educational supervisors at the zonal level, most schools stay for a long time without supervision due to low number of supervisors versus high number of teachers and schools. Aduwo (2013) also asserted that QASOs should acquire high level of knowledge than teachers in order to provide an effective supervisory leadership. Supervisors must acquire basic skills such as conceptual, human relations and technical skills which most supervisors lack as they are not trained in supervision practices.

Sullivan (2000) put that supervision is all about improving practices, methods and process of working with teachers to enhance their ability to improve classroom practices. Broad objectives of Quality Assurance and Standards Officers are:

- i. To inspect institution for achievement of quality standards of education and improvements, then report to Ministry of Education.
- ii. To achieve quality development through the work of advisory services, provision of staff development opportunities, developing learning and teaching materials (Republic of Kenya, 2009:4).

According to Mareche (2012), when teachers are well supervised, motivated and guided, they have great influence of learner's performance. Mareche (2012) stated that QASOs performance on their supervisory roles in curriculum implementation has a lot of influence to the teachers job performance hence improved performance in schools.

QASOs are supposed also to advice the government on the trends of learning institutions in areas of equity, access to education, enrolment, and curriculum delivery, materials required for learning, curriculum evaluation and training of teachers in both in-service and pre-service training. QASOs advise teachers on best practices in curriculum delivery leading to improvements in academic work in primary schools. Their supervisory roles are crucial to improvements of schools performance as they are mandated to oversee the well-being of schools performance through monitoring, guiding teachers and advising them of best practices in curriculum delivery.

3. Methods of Investigation

3.1. 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 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.

3.2. Research Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

Two types of research instruments were used to collect data: head teachers' questionnaire and teachers' questionnaires. Primary data were collected using self-administered questionnaires for 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. The questionnaire contained two parts: Demographic factors and perception of teachers on QASOs supervisory role. Likert scaling technique was used; final levels were assigned scale values.

The researcher booked appointment dates on which respondents who were identified by the sampling procedure were issued with the Research instrument (questionnaires), which was left with the respondents as they required enough time to give their responses to the instruments questions. Data and time for collection of instrument from respondents was agreed upon. Three questionnaires were used to collect data: Head teachers' questionnaire, teachers' questionnaires and QASOs questionnaire.

3.3. 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.

3.4. Questionnaire Return Rate

A sample of 499 respondents was identified from the target population and questionnaires issued to them. Amongst the expected respondents were 341 teachers and 154 Head teachers. Teachers had the highest return rate at 98.83 percent and head teachers' questionnaires return rate was at 77.92 percent. The high return rate of the teachers could be attributed to the willingness of the teachers to participate in the academic improvement in primary schools in Kiambu County.

3.5. Findings of the Study

This study established that most of the respondents had furthered their education beyond the diploma level. This shows that the respondents are better placed to contemplate reasonably the issues surrounding their areas of jurisdiction in curriculum delivery and supervision amongst other managerial duties in their respective institutions.

A number of factors were found to have contributed to teachers' perceptions on the influence of QASOs' supervisory roles in academic improvements. These factors are in line with what Okumbe (1999) advocated and ranged from issues related to effectiveness and efficiency of QASOs supervisory roles through interpretation of curriculum objectives and promotion of teachers' professional growth and establishment of school-community relations. Selection of teaching staff, assisting teachers in choosing and securing resources assisting teachers in planning, uplifting academic and disciplinary standards and improvement of performance was the responsibility of QASOs.

The study established, that 85.7 percent of the head teachers agreed that teachers were positive on QASOs' supervisory roles in academic improvement while only 14.3 percent held negative opinion. This is an indication that most teachers embrace the supervisory roles of QASOs with a view that they are meant to improve their standards of education and at the same time make them better curriculum implementers by offering quality education. This data confirms that teachers' perception on QASOs supervisory roles on academic improvements have taken a positive direction in Kiambu County.

It was also established that 87.6 percent of the respondents agreed that their schools were often visited by the QASOs and 12.4 percent of the respondents said that QASOs had not visited their schools often during the year. Frequent visits by QASOs is important in that they interact with teachers often easing the tension that would be existing on the side of teachers, thus making the teachers perceive QASOs as co-workers. If the advice of QASOs is followed, schools have high chances of improving as more expertise is brought onboard. In addition, if QASOs visit schools often, they would be able to establish and understand the challenges faced by teachers and head teachers during curriculum implementation and together they would establish the best problem solving strategies to undertake in order to bring about academic improvement.

In this study teachers acknowledged that QASOs were active players in academic improvements in the county and concurs with Okumbe (1999) that frequent visits to schools would enhance teachers and supervisors relationships, and by working together academic improvement is realized. This study established that QASOs in the course of their frequent visits, impacted on teachers' perception towards QASOs supervisory roles enabling improved academic performance.

It was also established that QASOs in Kiambu County interacted freely with teachers during their supervisory visits. This heightened the chances of teachers implementing the discussed areas as advised by the QASOs during curriculum implementation are high. Teachers are also able to ask questions on challenging areas of curriculum implementation with ease. Good interaction between QASOs and teachers could lead to improved performance as both would be working toward same goals of improving academic performance in schools.

The study established that 60 percent of the respondents were in agreement that indeed teachers welcomed the QASOs warmly whenever they visited their schools for the supervisory roles. This is crucial as it shows that the teachers' perception is positive an indication that they embrace the role of QASOs in curriculum implementation, evaluation and academic improvements. This notion is an indication that teachers are ready to work with QASOs hand in hand in curriculum implementation and at the same time it shows that teachers view QASOs' supervisory roles to be helpful and crucial to academic improvement. Further, it is shows that teachers are concerned with the improvements of their school's performance.

It was established that teachers considered QASOs as facilitators, helpers and partners in improvement of academic standards in public primary schools in Kiambu County. This is an indication of noticeable teamwork in Kiambu County public primary schools and QASOs are major stakeholders in improvement of academic performance. This study reflects that in Kiambu County, QASOs supervisory roles are embraced by the practicing teachers anticipating improved academic improvements.

Head teachers were asked to rate the opinions that best suit QASOs supervisory roles. The following responses were observed;

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
QASOs participation in curriculum development	154	1.32	.508
QASOs have content knowledge in the subject they observe	154	1.36	.544
QASOs have strong interpersonal skills	154	2.14	.943
QASOs induct teachers on suitable teaching methods	154	2.16	.930
QASOs interpret curriculum objectives	154	2.24	.833
QASOs role in selecting teaching and learning materials	154	1.97	.925
QASOs offer to teachers in-service education	154	1.58	.920
QASOs offer opportunities for professional growth to teachers	154	1.99	.997
QASOs offer guidance and counseling to teachers	154	2.00	.714
QASOs interact freely with teachers during their visits	154	2.28	.897
Valid N (listwise)	154		

Table 1: Head teachers' Description of QASOs
Source: Research Data (2013)

The findings of the study as indicated above were based on Likert Scale of 1-5 with scale 1 being strongly agree and scale 5 being strongly disagree. A mean of 2.5 and above would indicate disagreement while a mean below 2.5 indicating agreement. As indicated above, the mean of all responses ranged between a mean of 1.37 to 2.23 indicating that head teachers were in agreement that QASOs were very instrumental as far as the parameters above are concerned. The respondents were affirmative with all the parameters hence showing that the head teachers were positive with the way QASOs were executing their supervisory mandates and that they embraced QASOs supervisory roles as instruments of academic improvements in public primary schools in Kiambu County. Unlike previous assertions that there existed fear among the school personnel which hindered improvement, it was established that teachers no longer feared QASOs but embraced their mandates in the supervision of schools. The study indicates that teachers understood that the mandate of QASOs in supervisory exercise focused on academic improvement.

Teachers' perceptions on QASOs supervisory roles in public primary schools' academic improvements in Kiambu County have been looked from perspectives such as determining the effectiveness and the efficiency of the officers in carrying out their supervisory roles. The study found out that efficient supervisory body would undoubtedly lead to improvement of academic performance and the quality of education.

The findings of this study were that teachers embraced QASOs supervisory roles and there is a likelihood that teachers adhere to the advice given by QASOs. This to a larger extent contributed to academic improvements. Since this was a broad area to look into, instruments of efficiency and effectiveness were used to help the researcher arrive to conclusions depicting on the efficiency and effectiveness of the QASOs in their supervisory roles. Among the factors which contributes to effectiveness and efficiency are; frequent visits of QASOs to schools; supervision and assessment of curriculum delivery; frequent dialogues with the teachers; interaction of teachers and QASOs during their supervisory visits and the way QASOs approach teachers when they want to do classrooms supervision.

This study established that motivation by QASOs through appreciating teachers work is a factor that teachers felt increased efficiency and effectiveness in supervision, 85 percent of the head teachers are seen to appreciate the way the QASOs execute their duties and the interactions they make with the teachers.

Other researchers have indicated that it is the duty of QASOs to inform teachers on syllabus changes since knowledge is dynamic in change. This study established that 78.3 percent of the respondents agreed that QASOs offered them essential information on changes in curriculum. This confirms that QASOs involvement in the education performance is instrumental in proper curriculum implementation. Role of QASOs to notify teachers in the changes in curriculum is not only important but also unavoidable in changing the teacher's perceptions on QASOs and their supervisory roles in academic improvement. Teachers and QASOs must fundamentally create a coherent teamwork approach towards curriculum improvements. It is only when a good rapport exists between the two parties that the QASOs can manage to update the teachers with the changes in curriculum.

Similarly, the study established that 70.4 percent, agreed that QASOs made frequent school visits within Kiambu County. It is therefore affirmative to conclude that QASOs informed the teachers of curriculum changes during their frequent visits in schools. The study showed that QASOs gave information on curriculum implementation to teachers. This means that they had discussions and dialogues with the teachers before and after supervision. In such forums QASOs informed teachers of changes in the curriculum used in schools, an indication of positive relationship with teachers.

4. Conclusions

This study has concluded that the teachers' perceptions on the influence of QASOs' supervisory roles towards academic improvements in public primary schools in Kiambu County is positive. According to the study, teachers acknowledge that QASOs' supervisory roles are vital to academic improvements in public primary schools. Further, from the study, it is observed that the factors that contributes to teachers' perceptions on the influence of QASOs supervisory roles towards academic improvements includes: QASOs informing teachers of changes made in curriculum; QASOs assisting teachers in interpretation of curriculum objectives that directly impact on the quality of education in public primary schools; QASOs are actively involved in promoting teachers professional growth; QASOs are instrumental in promotion of good school-community relations; QASOs hold dialogues with teachers before and after classroom visits; hence cardinal relationship. QASOs are more frequent in carrying out supervisory visits to schools ensuring that the quality standards of education are continuously maintained.

5. Recommendations

QASOs should input in choices of textbooks and other learning materials/resources in order to help schools in value materials selection process.

Positive criticisms should be given to teachers after supervision together with guidance and counseling on the shortcomings of the teachers while professional advice on curriculum and pedagogy is crucial for QASOs whenever they visit schools.

Supervisions by QASOs should be organized in advance, should be orderly, educative, supportive and motivating to the teachers. Satisfactory reports should be issued and be discussed with the relevant teachers after any class observations.

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