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Leading the Instructional Program and its effect on Academic Achievement of students in National Examinations in Public Secondary Schools: a survey of secondary schools in Tinderet Sub County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between instructional program and academic achievement of students in national examinations in public secondary schools in Tinderet sub county Kenya. The objective of this study was: to determine the impact of leading the instructional program on the students' academic achievement in national examinations. The study was guided by the effective schools model by Lezotte (2010), which states that an effective school is characterized by seven correlates namely: leading the instructional program, focus on school mission, safety and orderliness of schools, expectations for success, home-school relations, frequent monitoring of students progress and opportunity to learn for students. The researcher employed a survey design targeting all the 18 public secondary schools in Tinderet Sub County, all the 18 principals and the 225 teachers. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 10 schools for the study from the total 18 schools in the distinct. The sampled schools were stratified according to the academic performance for the last three years (2011-2013). All the principals of the sampled 10 schools took part in the study. Simple random sampling was used to select 90 teachers (9 teachers from each school selected). The sample size was 100 respondents. Questionnaires and interview guide were used to collect data. The descriptive survey allowed the generation of both qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data was analyzed using the descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and Anova were used to make inferences. Qualitative data was put under themes consistent with the research objectives. The analyzed data was then presented in form of graphs, pie charts and tables for easy interpretation. Findings from the study showed that, majority of the principals indicated that they always led the instructional program. Majority of the teachers on the other hand indicated that, principals did not always engage in these leadership practices but did engage sometimes. Analysis of variance between principals' and teachers' responses on similar issues indicated that there was a significant difference in the manner teachers and principals were responding to questions. Findings on the effect of leadership practices on academic performance were consistent as the teachers and principals were in agreement that these leadership practices when applied had a positive effect on academic performance. Correlation test however revealed that the effect was weak as indicated by the correlation coefficients which were below 0.5. The study concluded that; leading the instructional program was not being implemented fully. The study recommended that; Implementation of leading the instructional program practices should be effected in schools by all principals. Various stakeholders that is teachers, students, Board of Management and principals should be involved in the setting of school mission and vision. By so doing, participants will feel they are in control of the process and will respond positively.*

KEY WORDS: *Instructional Program, Academic Achievement*

I. INTRODUCTION

Background Information :Researchers, policy makers and practitioners increasingly recognize the role of school leaders in developing high – performing schools with a national focus on raising achievement for all students. There has been a growing attention to the pivotal role of school leaders in improving the quality of education. Maicibi (2005) observes that proper leadership practices lead to effective performance in learning institutions. Leadership effectiveness is most conveniently quantified by the organizational outcomes. Leadership increases the effectiveness and proficiency of management and sustainable performance.Educational leadership in the 21st century is expected to be focused on the purposes of the MDGs and vision 2030 especially in Kenya. Malusu (2007) observes that the increase in secondary education necessitates instituting responsible leadership practices in secondary education institutions. It has been observed that many schools still perform

poorly due to poor leadership practices besides inadequate funds and poor facilities. This implies that schools have to be effective under the leadership of the principals. The poor performance in schools indicates lack of effectiveness, thus necessitating the investigation of factors leading to effective schools and especially the leadership practices.The quality of education here in Kenya as measured by students' achievement in national examinations is considered as below average standards (Ongiri and Abdi, 2004). This fact concurs with what government of Kenya noted in its master plan on Education and training (1997 – 2010) that the majority of schools fall short of providing for the learning needsof their students leading to poor academic performance (Republic of Kenya, 1998**).**The above situation indicates that most schools are not effective. In comparison to effective schools, the American Federation of Teachers (2000) established that low performing schools are characterized by lack of academic standards, high levels of disruptions and violence, absenteeism of staff and students and an overall negative school atmosphere where parents are hardly involved in school programmes and activities.Carrim and Shalem (1999) reported findings of two school effectiveness research projects conducted in the Johannesburg area of Gauteng Province in South Africa. Their findings demonstrated that schools in South Africa operated in complex and sometimes contradictory contexts, though the schools may have similar socio- economic backgrounds. A study conducted by Lloyd, Mensh & Clark (2000) in Kenya found out that low performing schools were characterized by inadequate school facilities, lack of active participation of students in the teaching learning process and poor overall school atmosphere in terms of organization, rules and students' interactions. This study aimed at furthering research on the area of academic performance by advancing the effective schools research in Kenya. The current study was guided by the effective schools model by Lezotte (2010) which argues that an effective school is a school that can, in measured students' achievement terms, demonstrate quality and equity. The study was carried out in Tinderet Sub County, where statistics from the Sub County Education office records, 2014 indicated that while some school in this sub county have consistently performed well in K.C.S.E, others have consistently performed poorly. By utilizing the Effective schools model, the study sought to find out how the principals' practices of: Leading the instructional program, focus on mission and creating safety and orderliness impacted on the academic performance of students in K.C.S.E in public secondary schools in Tinderet Sub County .

Statement of the Problem : Despite the policy of the Kenyan government being the provision of quality education, the K.C.S.E performance of Public secondary schools in Tinderet Sub County of Kenya has remained poor for the last three years. Statistics from the Sub County Education office records, 2014 showed that the sub county had consistently been below the average of 6 in K.C.S.E performance, out of the possible 12.Unless this trend was reversed, it would be un economical to continue investing large volumes of resources in public secondary schools in this sub county which did not give value for the resources in return. This revelation therefore motivated the researcher to carry out an investigation to assess the influence of principals' leadership practices on academic achievements in national examinations in public secondary schools in Tinderet Sub County.Studies conducted in Kenya on the reasons for low K.C.S.E performance have indentified inadequate school facilities, lack of active participation of students in the teaching – learning process and other teacher related factors as contributing to low K.C.S.E performance. Very few studies if any have related the principal's leadership practices to academic achievements of learners. The problem of this study therefore is to find out the impact of the principals' leadership practices on the academic achievement of students in Tinderet Sub County in K.C.S.E Examination.

Table 1: Tinderet Sub County public secondary schools KCSE Analysis from 2010-2013.

YEAR	ENTRY	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E	X	MSC
2010	699	2	18	53	53	62	84	114	188	102	75	16	2	-	4.605
2011	781	3	22	47	75	74	94	112	145	118	76	15	-	-	5.146
2012	886	5	19	49	69	83	102	124	130	150	114	27	1	-	5.027
2013	876	3	34	45	79	66	78	108	125	153	133	44	0	6	4.767

Source: S.C.E. Office Records, 2014.

Table 1 shows that Tinderet Sub County has been registering below average performance for the last four years. The problem to be addressed was whether there had been use of the principals' leadership practices or lack of their use which could be responsible for the low grades in KCSE performance.

The findings if found that there has been non-use of leadership practices and hence the poor performance could encourage their use. If their use could be found not to support good scores, then further studies on likely underlying causes of poor performance in examination could be suggested.

Objective of the Study : To determine the impact of leading the instructional program on the academic achievement of students in national examinations in public secondary schools in Tinderet Sub-County.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of Theory : This study was based on the effective schools model by Lezotte (2010). According to Lezotte (2010), there are seven correlates of effective schools. According to this model, an effective school is a school that can, in measured students' achievement terms, demonstrates the joint presence of quality and equity. The seven correlates are: Strong leading the instructional program, clear and focused mission, safe and orderly schools, climate of high expectations for success, frequent monitoring of students' academic progress, positive home school relations and opportunity to learn/time on task.

According to Lezotte (2010) strong instructional leaders are proactive and seek help in building team leadership and a culture that is conducive to learning and professional growth. In the effective school, the principal and others act as instructional leaders and effectively and persistently communicate and model the mission of the school to staff, parents and students.The theory is relevant to this study because the seven correlates advanced by Lezotte (2010) of an effective school require effective leadership on the part of the administrator (school principal). The principal is the one to initiate and influence the seven correletates of an effective school, the seven correlates can therefore be termed as the principals' leadership practices which is the independent variable in this study. Lezotte (2010) asserts that in an effective school, in measured students' achievement terms there is quality and equity. An effective school facilitates high academic achievement. This assertion is the dependent variable of this study.By identifying the first three correlates of an effective school according to Lezotte (2010): leading the instructional program, focus on the mission and creating safety and orderliness in the school Environment, this study tests Lezotte's (2010) Effective schools model, and also suggests measures that low performing schools can take to improve on the academic achievement of students.

Leading the instructional program and Academic Achievement : Instructional leadership models emerged in the 1970s and 1980s from early research on effective schools (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds, 1982). These scholars emphasized the role of the principal as primary agent of school improvement, more specifically within highly challenged urban schools (Purkey & Smith, 1983). This research posited a relationship between strong instructional leadership and student academic performance (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982: Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), defining instructional leadership according to specific instruction-related dimensions of the job including defining the school's mission, managing curriculum and instruction, and promoting a positive learning climate (Hallinger, 2003). Subsequent research and scholarship raised doubts about principals' general capacity and inclination to engage in this more active and directive form of instructionally focused leadership (Bossert et al., 1982; Heck, 1992), especially in secondary schools where teachers' command of their subject content typically surpasses that of their supervising principal. Further, more traditional notions of instructional leadership, emphasizing the principal's coordination and control of classroom instruction in heroic fashion, fueled these doubts (Heck, Larson, & Marcoulides, 1990). Critiques of these more conventional notions emphasize the limitations of middle manager authority to provide direct supervision of teaching, as well as the inappropriateness of what some perceived as a hierarchical approach that failed to acknowledge teachers as the school's primary instructional experts (Hallinger, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003).
Contemporary educational reform places a greater emphasis on the effective leading the instructional program in schools. Effective leading the instructional program is generally recognized as the most important characteristic of school administrators (Hoy & Hoy 2009; Lezotte, 2010). According to Lezotte (2010) leading the instructional program is one of the correlates of effective schools. Effective instructional leaders are proactive and seek help in building team leadership and a culture conducive to learning and professional growth. In the effective schools, the principal, deputy principal and Heads of Departments (H.O.Ds) act as instructional leaders and effectively and persistently communicate and model the mission of the school to staff, parents and students.

Effective leading the instructional program has been shown to result in school improvement and effectiveness (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997).The indicators of schools having effective instructional leaders have been shown through research to include factors like teacher morale and satisfaction (Macneil, 1992), teacher self-efficacy (Lubbers, 1996) and improved academic performance (Wilson, 2005). Research by (Lezotte et al, 2002) led to a conclusion that in the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and continually communicates the mission of the school to staff, parents and students. The principal is not the sole leader he or she is a leader of leaders (Lezotte, 1991) empowering teachers and including them in decisions about the schools' instructional goals .Cibulka and Nakayama (2000) argue that in order to achieve significant changes in classroom practices, teachers must have an opportunity to participate in shaping a school's vision.
The literature reviewed above point out that the principals' practice of leading the instructional program leads to high academic achievement of students, because it is a characteristic of a highly effective school. The current

study sought to find out whether the practice of leading instructional program by the principal can affect the academic achievement of students in public secondary schools in Tinderet subcounty.

More recently, instructional leadership has been "conceptualized as a mutual influence process, rather than as a one-way process in which leaders influence others" (Hallinger, p. 346, emphasis in original). Such a view underscores the necessary affects of instructional leadership, at the same time acknowledging "it's evolving nature in the context of teacher professionalism" (Marks & Printy, p. 391). Recent research advances more reciprocal and inclusive models of instructional leadership within which principals share authority with designees (Heck, 1992; Heck Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990), instructional coaches (Mangin, 2007), and classroom teachers themselves (Marks & Printy, 2003). Here empowering principals encourage collaborative inquiry rather than rely upon more conventional, principal-centered supervisory practices (Blase & Blase, 1999; Halverson, Grigg, Prichett, & Thomas, 2007; Reitzug, 1997). In response to these shared instructional leadership practices, teachers grow in their commitment, involvement, and willingness to innovate (Sheppard, 1996).

In a comparison study, the principals of exceptionally high-achieving schools, as measured by consistent academic achievement in a variety of curricular areas, differed from their counterparts in consistently low-achieving schools "in terms of the type and effectiveness of instructional leadership they provided" (Heck, 1992, p. 28). In a study of 23 California elementary schools, 15 of which were high performing, and 17 California high schools, seven of which were high performing, Heck determined that three instructional leadership behaviors were significant in predicting the levels of student achievement of these schools, including "the amount of time principals spend directly observing classroom practices, promoting discussions about instructional issues, and emphasizing test results within these discussions" (p. 30).Across the 27 studies analyzed by Robinson and colleagues (2008), research involving between-group comparisons rendered large leadership effect sizes. Researchers, including Heck and his associates, found substantial differences in the leadership of otherwise similar high- and low- performing schools. Further, these differences "mattered for student academic outcomes" (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 657). Teachers in high-performing schools reported that their principals served as a valuable instructional resource, actively participating in their learning and development.

A recent review of research published since 2000 sought to explain the various ways leaders influence the quality of instruction in US schools (Printy, 2010). Qualitative and quantitative findings across these studies suggest that principals influence student learning as they work "with (and through) teachers …" (p. 112). Thus, Printy suggested future research will extend our understanding of this important instructional leadership dynamic to the degree it probes the relationship of leadership to teaching, moving beyond general leadership characteristics to focus on the specific tasks of the role (Wimpelberg, Teddlie, & Stringfield, 1989). Ultimately, as Robinson et al. (2008) concluded, "If we are to learn more about how leadership supports teachers in improving student outcomes, we need to measure how leaders attempt to influence the teaching practices that matter…[that is] how teachers make a difference to students" (p. 669). Instructional supervision and classroom observations are common strategies leaders employ to influence teaching practices.A Kenyan study by Musungu and Nasongo (2008) on the leading the instructional program role of the secondary schools principals revealed that they supervised teachers' work by inspecting records such as schemes of work, lesson books, records of work covered, class attendance records and clock in clock out book. This research established that head teachers frequency of internal supervision, contributed towards better performance. Similar findings have emerged from various Kenyan studies, all which reveal that poor performance in secondary school examinations is a function of poor administrative and leadership practices (Ackers & Hardman, 2001; Githua & Nyabwa, 2008). One of the goals of this research therefore was to compare the leading the instructional program practices of well performing schools and poor performing ones.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design : The survey design was used in this study to obtain the research data. According to Lockesh (1984) survey studies are designed to obtain a persistent and precise information concerning the current state of phenomena and whenever possible to draw varied conclusions from the facts discovered. Survey methods are non-experimental for they deal with the relationships among the non-manipulated variables since the events or conditions have already occurred or exist the researcher merely selects the relevant variables for the analysis of their relationships (Best and Khan, 1993) . The choice of this design for the study was based on the fact that the researcher did not manipulate the variables. The dependent variable of the study was academic achievement, which was measured by the K.C.S.E grades and mean scores obtained by schools for the period 2011 – 2013.

The independent variables of the study are the extent to which principals practice the three practices: Leading the instructional program, focus on vision and vision and promoting school safety and orderliness.

Target Population :

The target population refers to all the members of a real or hypothetical set of people, events or objects to which a researcher wishes to generalize the results of the research study (Borg & Gall, 1989).This research targeted 225 teachers and the 18 principals in the 18 public secondary schools in Tinderet Sub County.

All the public secondary schools in Tinderet Sub County were targeted in this study. There are 18 public secondary schools that have presented candidates for K.C.S.E examination for the last three years (2011 – 2013). The 18 public secondary schools are distributed as follows:

Table 2: Targeted schools for the study based on gender

Type of school	No of schools
Boys' schools	2
Girls' schools	3
Mixed schools	13
Total	**18**

(Source: Sub County Education Office records, 2014).

All the principals of the 18 public secondary schools in Tinderet Sub County were targeted in this study. Another group of respondents for this study were teachers in all the public secondary schools in the sub county. According to the Sub county Education Office records, Tinderet Sub County has 225 teachers.

3.3 Sampling Size and Techniques

This study adopted the multiphase sampling technique whereby both probability and non-probability sampling design were used as described below.

3.6.1 Stratified sampling

In a stratified sample the sampling frame is divided into non-overlapping groups or strata, such as geographical areas, age groups and even gender. A sample is taken from each stratum and when this sample is a simple random sample it is referred to as stratified random sampling. Stratification achieves greater precision provided that members of the same stratum are as similar as possible in respect to the characteristics of interest. In this regard, the researcher used stratified sampling to select 10 schools for the study.

The schools were stratified according to K.C.S.E performance. The first stratum comprised of schools with a mean score of 6.0 and above in K.C.S.E for the last three years, the second stratum comprised of schools with a mean score of 5.0 – 5.9 for the last 3 years and the last stratum will comprise of schools with a mean score of below 5.0 for the last three years (2011 – 2013).

According to Lockesh (1984),a percentage of at least 20% of the total population of less than 100 is acceptable sample in descriptive research. The 10 schools chosen as a sample from a population of 18 public secondary schools account for 56% of the total population therefore it meets the requirement suggested by Lockesh (1984).

Table 3: showing the strata of the target population of schools based on academic performance

Strata (Based on K.C.S.E mean score 2011 – 2013)	No of schools
6.0 and above	3
5.0 - 5.9	3
Below 5.0	12
Total	**18**

(Source: Sub County Education Office records, 2014).

To achieve desired representation from the various strata in the population the researcher took 56% of schools from each stratum so as to arrive at the sample size of schools to be included in the study. According to Mugenda & Mugenda, (1999) atleast 50% of the target population in each stratum should be considered for the sample size. This sample size was therefore considered enough to represent the target schools.

Table 4: Sample size of schools for the study

Strata (Based on K.C.S.E Mean score 2011 – 2013)	**Sample size**
6.0 and above	2
5.0 – 5.9	2
Below 5.0	6
Total	**10**

Source: Researcher 2014

The researcher wrote names of the schools from each stratum on pieces of papers and picked the required sample size from each stratum at random.

Purposive Sampling: Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that is used to select individuals from a given population who have unique characteristics and hold specific information desired for the study. The power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information rich-cases for in-depth analysis related to the central issues being studied (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). For this reason purposive sampling was used to select schools from each stratum based on the K.C.S.E performance.

Simple Random Sampling: A sampling procedure in which each an every item in the population is given equal chance of inclusion in the sample (Kathuri, N & Pals, D, 1993). Simple Random Sampling was used to select the teachers from the different strata of schools identified for the study. According to Tinderet Sub County Education Office 2014 records, there are 225 teachers in the district. To ensure a fair representation, (Lockesh (1984) recommendation was used. The researcher took 40% of the total teachers for the study. This brought a number of 90 teachers to be involved in the study. Each of the 10 schools provided 9 teachers for the study. The researcher randomly selected 9 teachers from each of the 10 schools selected for the study to come up with a sample size of 90 teachers. To select the individual teachers from the schools, the researcher sought a list of the teachers from each school from the principal, arranged them alphabetically and selected the first 9 teachers who formed the sample size for the study.

Table 5: Sample size of Respondents

Category	**Target Population**	**Sample Size**	**%**
Teachers	225	90	40
Principals	18	10	56
Total	**243**	**100**	

III. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The researcher obtained an introduction letter from Kisii University and a Research permit from the National Council of Science Technology and Innovation (NCSSTI),. The Sub County Education Officer was informed of the study to be conducted in the sub county. Also permission to conduct this research was sought from the County Director of Education.

The researcher then booked appointments with the sampled schools through the principals, so as to visit and familiarize himself with schools. The researcher informed the respondents the purpose of the research, after which the respondent signed the informed consent form. The researcher then administered the questionnaires himself. The principals and the teachers were given instructions and assured of confidentiality after which they were given one week to fill in the questionnaires, after which the researcher collected the filled in questionnaires as he interviewed the respondents.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments: Validity is defined as the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences which are based on the research results (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). Face validity refers to the likelihood that a question will be misunderstood or misinterpreted; therefore the pilot study will help to iron out ambiguity. Pre-testing a survey is a good way to increase the likelihood of face validity. Content validity refers to whether an instrument provides adequate coverage of a topic. Experts opinions help establish content validity. As such, assistance was sought from the supervisors and other experts from the university in order to help improve content validity of the instruments. This is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). In order to improve the reliability of the instrument, an assessment of the consistency of the responses was considered. Piloting enabled the researcher to test the reliability of the instrument. The researcher with the help of the supervisor critically assessed the consistency of the responses on the pilot questionnaires to make a judgment on their reliability.

The reliability of the instrument was established through piloting, whereby principals and teachers of the two pilot schools were given the measuring instrument to fill. Test-retest method of reliability was used, whereby the pilot questionnaires were administered twice to the same group, with a time span of two weeks. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was determined, and the coefficient was above 0.7 which was deemed reliable and acceptable. A correlation coefficient of at least 0.6 will be acceptable as a good measure of the reliability as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (1999).

Table 3.5 Reliability Statistics

Formula	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.880	3

3.6 Data Analysis

This study generated both the qualitative and quantitative data; hence both qualitative and the quantitative techniques were used to analyze the data obtained. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics .Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) assert that the purpose of descriptive statistics is to enable the researcher to meaningfully describe a distribution of scores using a few indices or statistics.

Descriptive statistics involves the use of means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages. The process of data analysis required the use of a computer spread sheet, and for this reason the statistical package for social Sciences SPSS version 20 was used.

Qualitative analysis considered the inferences that will be made from the opinions of the respondents. Qualitative data was analyzed qualitatively using content analysis based on analysis of meanings and implications emanating from respondents' information and comparing responses to documented data on practices influencing academic performance. The qualitative data was presented thematically in line with the objectives of the study.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Academic Performance of the Schools

Information on academic performance of the schools was sought since this was the dependent variable according to the study. Academic performance was assumed to be dependent on principal leadership practices. On a three point scale, respondents were asked to indicate their level of academic performance.

Table 6: Academic Performance of the Schools

Performance	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Good	10	10
Average	20	20
Below Average	70	70
Total	**100**	**100**

Source, Field data, (2014)

It was established that, majority of the schools had a performance below average as indicated by (70) 70%. According to the data collection tool, a performance rated as below average was identified as having a mean of 5.0 and below. On the other hand, (20) 20% of the respondents had a mean of 5.0 -5.9 which according to the study was described as average. On the other hand, (10) 10% of the respondents had a good performance as described by an average of 6.0 and above. Such poor performance in national examinations can be as a result of several factors such as low entry marks, teacher qualification, students' attitudes and other home factors that are linked to academic performance. Majority of the teachers and principals further described their academic performance for the period 2011 to 2013 as below average. In expressing the dissatisfaction by the teachers and principals, one of the teachers had this to say;

> This school has been performing poorly since the last three years I have been here. As far as our administration is to blame, I think there is a problem with our students' entry marks. We admit students with marks as low as bellow 200 and this in my view has affected our performance generally. For the past three years, the year we recorded a high mean scores was when we scored a

mean of 5.172. Last year we had a mean of 3.79. This is clearly a dropping trend in our performance and it is an issue of concern. Respondent, (2014).

Leading the instructional program Practices : The study sought to identify leading the instructional program practices used by principals in the various schools. Findings were summarized as in table 7 and 8.

Principals' response

Table 7: Extent of practice of leading the instructional program

Leading the instructional program practices	**A**	**S**	**N**
Making sure teachers keep updated professional documents	8	2	0
supervising teachers to ensure that they complete the syllabus on time	8	2	0
Carrying out the staff appraisal process fairly	8	2	0
Building team work among teachers	8	2	0
Holding regular staff meetings to discuss academic progress	8	2	0
Mean percentage	**8(80%)**	**2(20%)**	**0**

Source: Field Data (2014)

The study established that, majority of the principals always practiced leading the instructional program as indicated by (8) 80% of the respondents, (2) 20% cited that they sometimes used leading the instructional program practices while no principal indicated that he/she never practiced this form of leadership. Further, one of the principals noted that;

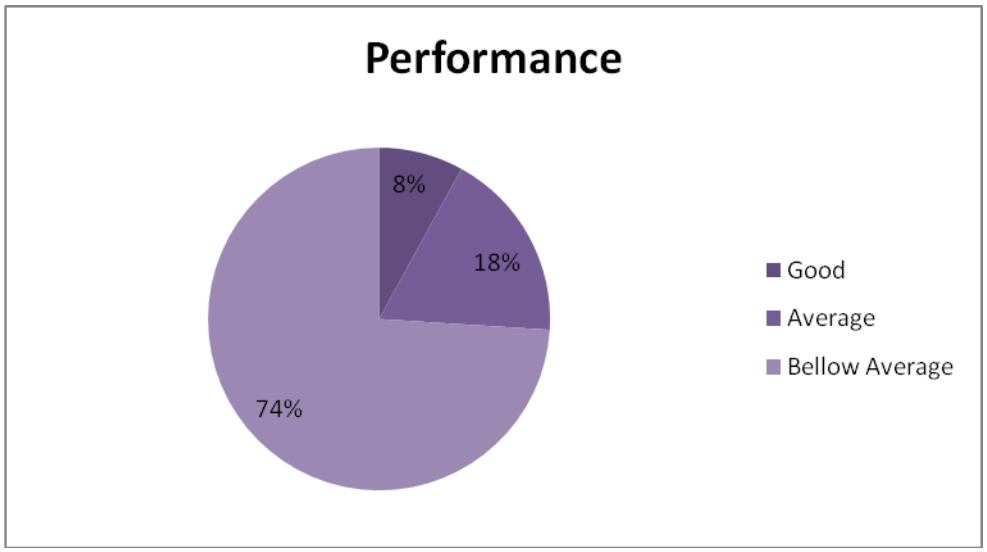
> I personally check on the availability of documents that teachers are supposed to keep such as schemes of work, lesson plans, notes and any other document that our teachers are required to keep. I do this regularly whereby, I ask teachers to present their documents just to ensure that they are up to date. In so doing, we have been able to move together and I think teachers are also comfortable with this because rarely have I been given incomplete records and this is something I am proud of (Respondent, 2014).

The researcher was also keen to identify whether there were some of the leading the instructional program practices that the schools used not to practice in the past. The researcher proceeded to enquire from the principals whether there were leading the instructional program practices that they used not to practice. Majority of the principals noted that, they had been implementing some of the practices gradually such as supervision of teachers, team work building among teachers and staff appraisal. As such, one of the principals in a discussion noted that,

> Sometimes back I used not to check teachers' records especially teachers' notes. Rather, I used to check randomly students' notes just to enquire how far they had gone with the syllabus and I did this at the end of the year. From this; I noticed that the class notes were just as they appeared in the text books. This was a show of lack of preparation by the teachers on class work. I therefore decided to check on teachers' notes other than students' notes (Respondent, 2014).

Having established that the schools had implemented some of the leading the instructional program practices gradually, the researcher was interested in ascertaining the performance of the schools during those times when some of the leading the instructional program practices lacked in the schools. Findings of this item are as shown in figure 1.

Fig 1: Performance of Schools before implementation of leading the instructional program practice



Source, Field data, (2014)

The study established that, majority of the schools were below average as indicated by (7) 74%. (2) 18% had an average performance while (1) 8% had a good performance. These findings indicate that there was a slight improvement in performance of the schools when these results are compared to the results of the year 2011-2013. At least 2% of the schools moved to an upper bracket thus registering an improvement.

Teachers' response

Table 8: Extent of practice of Leading the instructional program

Extent of Practice	Frequency	Percent
Always	35	39
Sometimes	50	55
Never	5	6
Total	**90**	**100**

Source, Field data, (2014)

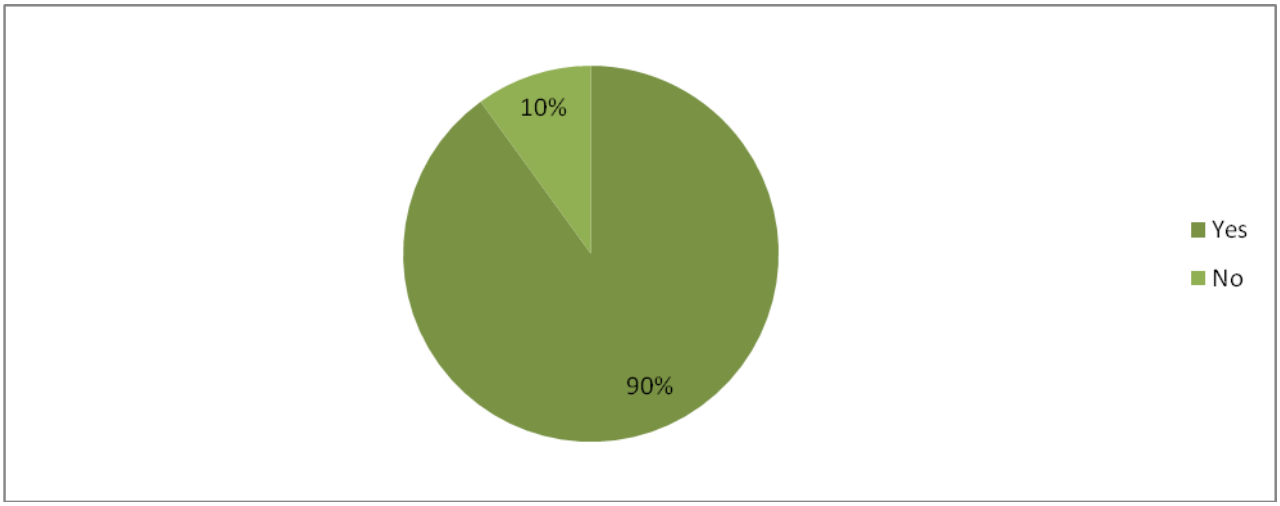
The study established that, majority of the teachers, (50) 55% cited that, principals sometimes practiced leading the instructional program, (35) 39% cited that principals practiced leading the instructional program always while (5) 6% cited that principals in their schools never practiced any form of leading the instructional program. These findings are inconsistent with findings of the principals. Such a scenario is however acceptable since principals may have viewed the exercise as a self evaluation process. However, there is still the aspect of practice of leading the instructional program in the schools despite the difference in responses. Just like the principals, the teachers were however in agreement that leading the instructional program practices had an effect on academic performance of the schools as indicated by 100% response rate. Those that had cited that their schools did not practice leading the instructional program; they were of the view that if adopted the schools would improve. One of the teachers noted that;

> If leading the instructional program practices are adopted, I am certain that we are going to achieve better results (Respondent, 2014).

This view was as per one of the teachers in the schools that were not practicing leading the instructional program. It can be concluded that, academic performance is expected to improve if leading the instructional program is implemented in schools.

On enquiring from the principals and teachers, whether there was any difference in performance after incorporating leading the instructional program practices that were lacking then, the study established that, majority of the respondents (90) 90% were in agreement that there was a difference. (10) 10% however noted that there was no difference. These findings are summarized in figure 2.

Fig 2: Whether there was a difference in academic performance after incorporation of leading the instructional program practices



Source: Field data, (2014)

The study deduced that, leading the instructional program affects academic performance positively. The present study is in line with (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997; Skaife & Holstead; 2002; Lezotte, 2010) studies that established that, effective leading in the instructional program has been shown to result in school improvement and effectiveness. The indicators of schools having effective instructional leaders have been shown through research to include factors like teacher morale and satisfaction (Macneil, 1992), teacher self-efficacy (Lubbers, 1996) and improved academic performance (Wilson, 2005).

In order to ascertain the reliability of responses from the principals concerning their practice of leading the instructional program, it was essential to seek teachers' response concerning extent of application of leading the instructional program practices by principals. Findings of this item were summarized as shown in table 4.9.

Analysis of Correlation between Variables

The study sought to ascertain the relationship between variables. This relationship was sought between the dependent variable (academic performance) and the independent variable (leading the instructional programme). This test was necessary since it would ascertain the strength of the relationships between the variables of the study. Findings of the analysis are presented in table 9.

Table 9: Correlation Analysis

		Performance	Leading the instructional program
Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.359**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Leading the instructional program	Pearson Correlation	.359**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

Source, Field data, (2014)

The study established that, there is a weak relationship amongst the dependent and independent variables. The correlation coefficient between, leading the instructional program and academic performance is 0.359 (35.9%).

This implies that, though the leadership practices identified by the study had a positive effect on

academic performance, the effect was weak, below 0.5 (50%). Studies by (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Spillane *et al*, 2004; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008) concluded that leadership matters when it comes to academic performance. However, the validity of this claim is questioned as indicated by (Witziers, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003). The present study disputes (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Spillane *et al*, 2004; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008) whose studies concluded that leadership matters when it comes to academic performance. Some empirical studies, especially in the Netherlands, have reported finding of no significant influence of school leadership on students' academic performance (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). The present study concurs with (Hallinger & Heck, 1998) that the influence of principals' leadership practices has a very weak effect on academic performance of learners.

One Way Analysis of Variance between Principals' and Teachers' Responses

Having established that there was variation in response among principals and teachers concerning similar issues, the researcher proceeded to determine whether there was any statistical significance in the manner the two groups were responding on similar issues. One way analysis of variance was computed on extent of principals' practice of leading the instructional program. Findings of the study were summarized as in table 10.

Table 10: One Way Analysis of Variance between Principals and Teachers Responses

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Leading the instructional program	Between Groups	1.960	1	1.960	6.078	.015
	Within Groups	31.600	98	.322		
	Total	33.560	99			

Source, Field data, (2014)

Findings showed that, there was a significant difference between teachers' and principals' views on extent of practice of leadership practices. This conclusion is per the p values (0.015) that was less than the level of significance (P<0.05). It can therefore be deduced that, principals and teachers had a different view on the extent of leading the instructional programme in the schools. This scenario is however expected since the principals may have seen the exercise as a self evaluation process. They therefore responded strictly emphasizing on the positive side. Teachers on the other hand may have reported the situation as it is.

Table 11: One Way Analysis of Variance between the extent of leading the instructional programme among the different strata of schools (based on Academic Achievement)

		Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Instructional leadership	Between Groups	4.339	2	2.169	7.201	.001
	Within Groups	29.221	97	.301		
	Total	33.560	99			

Findings on whether there was any significant difference on the extent of leading the instructional programme in the various schools considered in the study, the findings revealed that the results were significant. The P Values for the F statistics was 0.001. This values is less than 0.05, P< 0.05). This implies that there was a significant difference in the extent of leading the instructional programme.

Heck, (1992) in his study involving high and low performing schools established that the principals of exceptionally high-achieving schools, as measured by consistent academic achievement in a variety of curricular areas, differed from their counterparts in consistently low-achieving schools "in terms of the type and effectiveness of instructional leadership they provided". In a study of 23 California elementary schools, 15 of which were high performing, and 17 California high schools, seven of which were high performing, Heck determined that three instructional leadership behaviors were significant in predicting the levels of student achievement of these schools, including "the amount of time principals spend directly observing classroom practices, promoting discussions about instructional issues, and emphasizing test results within these discussions" (p. 30). Across the 27 studies analyzed by Robinson and colleagues (2008), research involving between-group comparisons rendered large leadership effect sizes. Researchers, including Heck and his associates, found substantial differences in the leadership of otherwise similar high- and low- performing schools. Further, these differences "mattered for student academic outcomes" (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 657). Teachers in high-performing schools reported that their principals served as a valuable instructional resource, actively participating in their learning and development.

it can be deduced that, the difference in extent of leading the instructional programme in the schools in Tinderet Sub County may have been the cause of the difference in academic achievement.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Leading the instructional program practices lead to improvement in academic achievement of students in national examinations. Schools that were not implementing fully leading the instructional program practices were in agreement that their poor performance in national examinations could be improved if leading the instructional program practices were adopted. Mechanisms that can be put in place to ensure effective implementation of leading the instructional program include; cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction, emphasizing research-based strategies to improve teaching and learning and initiate discussions about instructional approaches, both in teams and with individual teachers. They should pursue these strategies despite the preference of many teachers to be left alone.

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