

# Assessment of Competencies of Secondary School Principals in Kisii County, Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

The question of performance in education has occupied center stage in educational discourse the world over. Many factors have been attributed to influence performance in schools. At the secondary school level in Kenya, principals have been thought to play a crucial role in the performance of students. In Kisii county, the performance of students in examinations has not been impressive and this has partly been blamed on principals. The purpose of this study was therefore to assess the competencies of the principals in Secondary schools in Kisii. The main objectives of the study were to: Determine the competencies of principals in terms of human resource management, general management, financial management, carrying out action research, curriculum development and implementation; and to assess the competencies of the principal in adhering to established supervision criteria. The study used a mixed method research design and within it used concurrent triangulation design. The target population was 360 principals, 360 Board of Management Chairpersons (BOMs), 11 Sub-County Directors of Education (SCDs) and 11 Quality Assurance and Standard Officers (QASO). The sample population consisted of 36 principals, 9 QASOs, 9 SCDs and 36 BOM Chairpersons selected through simple random sampling. Questionnaires and interview guides were used for data collection. The validity of the instruments was ensured through expert vetting. The reliability of the instruments was ascertained through piloting and use of the test-retest method. It was found out that the principals' competencies in human resource management was poor, general management was average, competencies to carry out action research was average, curriculum development and implementation was average, and supervisory competencies were poor. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the principal should be taken through an education programme to improve their competencies.

**Keywords:** Assessment, Competencies, Principals.

## INTRODUCTION

The central purpose of curriculum supervision is to ensure that quality and relevant education is offered. Loader (1990), even though in agreement that the quality of education is the business of every person who is involved in it, was of the view that quality is essential professional matter that is not easily accessed by the learners and other stakeholders. The professionals concerned should involve other stakeholders in educational management and ensure that the overall quality in education is assured. These professionals are in some counties referred to as principals and in some as Head teachers of schools, supervisors or inspectors (Adikinyi, 2007). Gauwe (2007) is of the view that for Principals and all professionals in charge of education to perform their work effectively, they need to have requisite competencies in terms of the necessary knowledge, skills and correct attitude. These competencies can be obtained through a number of

activities such as appointment, pre-service training, in-service training, and experience in work performance among others. The caliber and quality of employees in any organization depends on the selection and appointment criteria used (Armstrong, 2008). The criteria used for the selection and appointment has a direct impact on the competence and quality of service of the people appointed using such as criteria. This means that the competence of Principals can be traced back to the time they are appointed, their training- both pre-service and in-service and experience gained over time. Different countries in the world have embraced different methods in ensuring education quality and effective curriculum implementation in schools through the appointment and training of school heads or Principals.

There is no formal pre-service training for school inspectors and Principals in Australia. Teachers who have shown exemplary performance are hired on contract basis to be in charge of curriculum supervision. The prospective officers are only subjected to be in-charge of courses as need arises. This, according to Kroehnert (2005) compromises the quality of education offered. The issue of job insecurity also compounds the problem of non-training and hence their work performance.

In early 1980s, the government of Hong Kong began to consider the need for professional preparation for potential Principals of schools and required all senior teachers to undergo training in curriculum management and related issues before they are appointed as Deputy Principals. By March, 1991, the government launched a school management initiative (SMI) all Hong Kong schools. The concern was to provide a framework for school based management and effective schools. This was because it was realized that many Principals are insufficiently experienced and inadequately trained for their task. It was also discovered that because proper management structures and processes were lacking.

Some Principals are insufficiently accountable for their actions and see their post as an opportunity to become little emperors with dictatorial powers in the school (Wong & Ng, 2003). In the late 1999, the education department of Hong Kong further proposed that all Principals and potential Principals must undertake a needs assessment an attitudinal and paradigm change and attend core modules including learning and teaching human resources development, financial management, strategic management and school administration.

Wee & Chong (1990) have indicated the same situation in Singapore. By 1980s the job demands of Principal's had changed drastically. Principals were no longer to participate as passive managers but as "Chief Executive officers" responsible for designing the future of their schools. The Ministry of education therefore begun to provide for formal training and preparation of school leaders by requiring potential Principals to attend a leadership training course, the Diploma in Education Administration designed and conducted by the Institute of Education. This led to a change in the process by which prospective Principals were identified and groomed (Chew, Stott & Boon, 2003).

The Kenya government has come up with a number of policy and statutory frameworks in order to provide quality education through the appointment and training of school Principals. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has in its structure among other departments the Department of Basic Education.

There are a number of Semi-Autonomous Government Agencies (SAGAS) which have been established to safeguard and ensure that quality education is provided in the schools. Some of the SAGAS include; The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) which develops syllabus carries out research, in-services teachers and develops content and the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) which sets and administers national examinations.

The Kenya education management institute (KEMI) which in-services and trains education managers, supervisors and Principals so as to increase their capacity in the provision of quality education and the Teachers Services Commission (TSC) which registers, employs, promotes, transfers and appoints teachers

to headship positions (TSC ACT 2012). The current TSC requirements for one to be appointed as Principal of a secondary school in Kenya include a Master’s Degree in Education, a Diploma from KEMI and experience as Deputy Principal and satisfactory performance as a classroom teacher.

The TSC as established and mandated by TSC Act (2012) has been appointing and deploying

Principals competitively for the last 5 years. The guidelines on the appointment and deployment of Principals draw a picture of schools receiving well trained, efficient and competent Principals ready to produce excellent results in national examinations and excellent schools. It is unfortunate that the situation is still wanting as reflected on the performance of various counties as shown on the table that follows;

Table 1 Nyanza Region KCSE Analysis for The Past Four Years

| S/N | SUB-COUNTY | 2021 | 2020 | 2019 | 2018 |
|-----|------------|------|------|------|------|
| 1   | KISII      | 4.07 | 3.98 | 4.10 | 3.34 |
| 2   | KISUMU     | 4.33 | 4.70 | 4.49 | 4.16 |
| 3   | SIAYA      | 4.58 | 4.12 | 4.80 | 4.47 |
| 4   | HOMABAY    | 4.98 | 4.76 | 4.68 | 3.69 |
| 5   | NYAMIRA    | 5.19 | 4.74 | 4.34 | 3.56 |
| 6   | MIGORI     | 5.35 | 4.14 | 4.14 | 4.10 |

From table 1, Kisii County has consistently been performing below other Counties in the Nyanza Region. This indicates challenges in quality education and supervision of school programmes. Researches have been done in the field of quality education and supervision of school programmes, such as Ondicho (2004), Wanzane (2006), Gachoya (2008) and Adikinyi (2007) who are in agreement that Principals and other education officers still need training. The type of training required for the Principals still remain unknown.

### Statement of the Problem

Performance of students in national examinations in Kisii County has been below that of other counties in the Nyanza region as already established in the introductory section. This scenario has been blamed on educational administrators, among them, secondary school principals, whose competencies and actual supervision in schools are in doubt.

### Objectives of the study.

The purpose of this study was to assess the competence of Secondary School Principal in Kisii County. The objectives of this study were:

1. To determine the competencies of secondary principals in terms of:
  - i. Human Resource Management.
  - ii. General Management.
  - iii. Financial Management.
  - iv. Carrying out action research.
  - v. Curriculum development implementation.
2. To assess the competencies of the principals in adhering to established supervision criteria.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Meaning of competency

Competency according to Widyaiswara et. al (2020) is a set of knowledge, skills and behaviors that must be posed, internalized and controlled by professionals such as teachers and principals in carrying out their duties. The competences of the principals therefore, would be the ability of the principals to carry out the responsibilities be stored upon them with efficiency

### Competencies of the principal in general

Given that the competencies of principal play the central part in the performance of the students, studies have been done in the resent past related to this topic. Keykha (2022) carried out the study to identify the competencies of principals for effective leadership in schools. Results of the study indicated that interactive competencies, human resource management, job recognition, organization competencies and financial competencies are importance for the principal. The present study as well focused on assessing some of these attributes among principals in Kisii County.

Komalasari et. al (2020) investigated the management competencies of the principal improving the quality of education. The results showed that the management competence of the principals in improving the quality of education in the study was good. The current study endeavored to find out if the management competencies of principals in Kisii County are good or otherwise.

Tai (2018) investigated the practice of leadership competencies by principal in Taiwan. The study found out that the important competencies of the principal included: strategic operation, management planning and execution, communication, team operation, self-management, global cognition, innovative integration and marketing.

Evy et.al (2020) investigated the principals strategy in developing the professional competence of teachers using a qualitative and descriptive methods. Data collection was done through interviews, observation and documentation. The research subjects were principals and teachers. The results showed that in order to improve and develop the professional competencies of teachers, the principal should implement a strategy in the form of supervision. The present study as well focused on the principals strategy in developing teachers professional competence. Interview schedules as well as qualitative method of data collection were adopted.

Usul et.al (2021) examined the roles and competencies of principal in term of accountability based on the views of the principals in Istanbul. Data was obtained using interview schedules. In this context, school principals felt themselves most accountably since they had a right to determine managers and teachers they had to work with. It was concluded that school principals cooperate with their internal and external stakeholder in all matters for development of their schools.

Long et. al (2020) studied factors affecting school principals competencies in Vietnam's mountainous provinces. The study employed qualitative research approach and used the questionnaire considered eight areas of the principals competencies including; self-development and development of others, school organization and operation, staff development, instructional programme management, quality assurance management, management of financial resources, engagement with families, community and government, and schools' strategic planning. Analyses of variance and correlation were used and the finding demonstrated that the principals' competencies were affected by both internal and external factors. Like the present study, the study under citation used qualitative methods including use of questionnaire.

### **Competencies of the principal in supervision.**

According to Widyaiswara et. al (2022) supervision is a period of continuous monitoring, supervision and evaluation activity. The purpose of monitoring is to ensure that the stages of planning and implementing quality improvement activities are in accordance with the principles of effective and efficient planning and according to the planned procedures.

The commonly used approach to classroom supervision is called clinical supervision. According to Acheson & Gall (1987) clinical supervision means that the implementation of the supervision suggests a face-to-face relationship between the teacher and the supervisor, focusing on the actual behavior of the teacher in the classroom. The characteristics of the clinical supervision approach is that teachers are expected to consciously convey about problems in learning to the principal or school supervisor, and expect a solution from the principal. In the implementation of clinical supervision, there is a constructive, democratic and humanistic collaborative relationship between the principal and the supervised teachers.

According to Ammanuel (2009), regular supervision should generally yield the following; improvement of communication skills, development and evaluation of adequate instructional materials and development of problem solving skills in teachers. Principals as supervisors therefore need to be well grounded in knowledge and skills that make it possible in the realization of those benefits.

According to Olembo (2008), instructional supervision is a cycle of events going through several phases. The success of the exercise majorly depends on the Principal's skills and attitudes. The cycle is elaborated and requires well trained Principals to make the exercise beneficial to the teacher, the learner and other stakeholders. They need patience, supervisor skills, interpersonal skills, planning and report writing skills in order to make the exercise meaningful. Ajugo, Indoshi & Agak, (2010), found out that most of the curriculum supervisors were below average in their supervisory approach competencies. There was need for training of the curriculum supervisors so as to change this scenario and make instructional supervision more beneficial to the teachers, learners and schools in general.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study used a mixed method research design and within it used concurrent triangulation design. The venue of the study was Kisii County, chosen because of the relatively low performance in national examinations compared to other Counties in Nyanza Region in Kenya. The target population was 360 principals, 360 Board of Management Chairpersons (BOMs), 11 Sub-County Directors of Education (SCDs) and 11 Quality Assurance and Standard Officers (QASO). The sample population consisted of 36 principals, 9 QASOs, 9 SCDs and 36 BOM Chairpersons selected through each group being stratified and selection within the group done by simple random sampling. Questionnaires and interview guides were used for data collection. The validity of the instruments was ensured through expert vetting. The reliability of the instruments was ascertained through piloting and use of the test-retest method.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Competencies of Principals**

In this section, the respondents were required to rate the Principals' competency in the different competency areas that the study focused on. The responses from the three categories of respondents (QASOs, SCDs and Principals) which were collected by the use of Principals questionnaire, QASOs questionnaire and interview guides for the three groups of respondents were received and analyzed as follows:

Frequency counts were first worked out for the data collected through the Likert scale questionnaire. Mean scores of the respondents on each item of the Likert scale were then worked out for both the QASOs' and Principals' responses. The overall mean for each category of competencies was also worked out. The statements on the Likert scale were scored as follows:

Very competent (V.C), = 5 points, Competence (C) = 4 points, Undecided (U) = 3 points, Incompetence (I) = 2 points, Very Incompetent (V.I) = 1 point.

In the interpretation of the scores, a mean score of more than 4 denoted a very competent situation, a mean score of between 3 and 4 denoted a competent situation, a mean score of 3 denoted a neutral situation, a mean score of between 2 and 3 denoted an incompetent situation. Interview data was analyzed by searching through the interview data for words and phrases relating to the objectives of the study and the specific sub sections of the objectives. Quantitative data was first analyzed then followed by the qualitative data which assisted in supporting or refuting the quantitative data in the context of the reviewed literature.

The competence areas that were considered in this study were generically and broadly categorized as: Human Resource Management, competencies in general management, financial management, competencies in carrying out action research, curriculum development and implementation competencies and supervisory approach competencies. The Principals' competence in these competence areas was analyzed and discussed as per the forgoing generic categories as follows:

**Principals competencies in Human Resource Management**

Data collected from QASOs, Principals, BOM Chairs and Sub County Directors competencies in human resource management is tabulated in Table 4.8. The sub categories of competencies under this generic phrase of 'competencies in human resource management' that were studied include the following:

- i. Recruitment, interviewing and employment
- ii. Motivation, remuneration and staff appraisal
- iii. Employee and industrial relations
- iv. Training needs analysis
- v. Organization of training
- vi. Evaluation of training
- vii. Assessment of the impact of training on performance
- viii. Personnel administration

Table 2 contains the response of QASOs, Principals, BOM Chairs and Sub County Directors on the competence level of Principals as per each of the sub category of the competency area in human resource management.

Table 2 Principals' Competencies in Human Resource Management

| Skills/Knowledge                           | QASOs Response |   |   |   |   | Principals' Response |      |   |    |    |    |   | Overall |      | Rank |
|--|----------------|---|---|---|---|----------------------|------|---|----|----|----|---|---------|------|------|
|  | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | M                    | 1    | 2 | 3  | 4  | 5  | M | (M)     | (R)  |      |
| Recruitment, interviewing & employment     |                | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 1                    | 3.77 | 0 | 6  | 10 | 13 | 2 | 3.35    | 3.56 | 1    |
| Motivation, remuneration & staff appraisal |                | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2                    | 3.66 | 0 | 10 | 15 | 4  | 2 | 2.93    | 3.29 | 2    |

|   |  |   |   |   |   |   |      |    |    |    |   |   |      |      |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|------|----|----|----|---|---|------|------|---|
| Employee & Industrial relations                     |  | 0 | 7 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2.44 | 0  | 10 | 13 | 8 | 0 | 2.93 | 2.68 | 5 |
| Training needs analysis                             |  | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2.22 | 4  | 10 | 13 | 3 | 1 | 2.58 | 2.4  | 7 |
| Organizing training                                 |  | 0 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3.57 | 14 | 3  | 10 | 0 | 4 | 2.25 | 2.91 | 3 |
| Evaluation of training                              |  | 0 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 3.00 | 3  | 10 | 10 | 6 | 2 | 2.80 | 2.90 | 4 |
| Assessment of the impact of training on performance |  | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2.29 | 13 | 10 | 6  | 2 | 0 | 1.90 | 2.09 | 8 |
| Personnel   |  | 5 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2.29 | 0  | 12 | 12 | 5 | 2 | 2.90 | 2.59 | 6 |
| administration Overall Mean                         |  |   |   |   |   |   | 2.90 |    |    |    |   |   | 2.70 | 2.8  |   |

### Key

5. Very Competent 4. Competent 3. Undecided 2. Incompetent 1. Very Incompetent

M. Mean (M) Overall Mean (R) Rank

As it can be seen from Table 2, on average Principals are competent in only two areas which include employee resourcing which has the aspects of recruitment, interviewing and employment and motivation, remuneration and staff appraisal which posted an overall mean of 3.56 and 3.29 respectively. The other areas had an overall mean of less than 3 as it can be seen from the table. This shows that Principals are less competent in most of the remaining sub categories. The overall mean of this group of human resource management competence areas is 2.8 which means that the Principals' competence in human resource management generally is below bar. This was also confirmed by the SCDs who reiterated that most Principals were not well grounded in some aspects of human resource management such as carrying out training needs assessment and organizing training. One respondent was categorical on this and said:

*Newly appointed principals lack basic skills in mounting required training programmes in their schools. The training programmes such new principals attend are poorly and hurriedly done and organized by the ministry of education after the principals' incompetencies have caused damage to the institutions.*

One of the QASOs when asked to comment generally on the Principals competence in human resource management during the interview, said:

*Some of the Principals I have worked with during employment of teachers' interviews display a worrying trend of incompetency. They display lack of basic interviewing skills and are not well conversant with meeting procedures...it is a terrible trend and this calls for regular in-service courses to update them on some of these job requirements.*

This shows that Principals competence in human resource management is below average and this might compromise their performance. This is in line with the findings of Hoves (2004), who while studying the recruitment of secondary school teachers found out that most people who constituted the selection panel in schools were illiterate and entirely depended on the skills of the Principals and SCDs representatives who in most cases were QASOs. The SCQASOs were as well not found to be competent enough to handle the exercise well including sensitizing the other panelists. This affirms the government's position (MoEST, 2002) that school administrators and education managers need skills in interviewing and appraisal in order to perform some of their functions to the expected standards. These findings are also well correlated with Ajuogo et al. (2010) who found out that the Principals' competence in most areas studied ranged between below average and average where human resource management was one of the aspects studied. Table 2 has ranked the sub categories of the competence area of human resource management in terms of Principals' competence in them. Those with the highest mean were ranked ahead of those with a lower mean. When planning the training of these officers, and in case the needed resources for the training are not enough, the

training may be prioritized starting with the lowest in the rank moving upwards.

### Principals' competencies in General Management

The study also sought to find out the competence levels of Principals in the area of general management. The sub categories that were studied under this competence area included the following: Communication skills and Information Communication Technology (ICT), change and performance management, legal and mediation skills; Discipline, disaster management, Safety and security; Policy development, interpretation and implementation; Code of Ethics for civil servants and teachers; Project development and Management and Leadership & Management. The responses that were obtained from the Principals, SCDs, BOM chairs and QASOs questionnaires are presented in Table 3 which follows.

Table 3 Principals Competencies in General Management

| Skills/Knowledge                                     | QASOs Response |   |   |   |   | Principal's Response |   |    |    |    |   | Overall mean | Rank  |   |
|--|----------------|---|---|---|---|----------------------|---|----|----|----|---|--------------|-------|---|
| Communication skills & ICT                           | 0              | 2 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 3.1                  | 0 | 4  | 20 | 5  | 2 | 3.16         | 3.13  | 5 |
| Change & Performance Management                      | 0              | 6 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2.44                 | 0 | 21 | 5  | 4  | 1 | 2.64         | 2.54  | 7 |
| Legal & Mediation skills                             | 0              | 4 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2.77                 | 0 | 5  | 20 | 4  | 2 | 3.03         | 2.9   | 6 |
| Discipline, disaster management, safety and security | 0              | 0 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 3.88                 | 0 | 0  | 20 | 9  | 2 | 3.41         | 3.645 | 3 |
| Policy development, interpretation & implementation  | 0              | 0 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 4.22                 | 0 | 1  | 9  | 19 | 2 | 3.70         | 3.96  | 2 |
| Code of Ethics for civil Servants & Teachers         | 0              | 0 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 4.00                 | 0 | 0  | 5  | 20 | 6 | 4.03         | 4.01  | 1 |
| Project development & Management                     | 0              | 6 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2.44                 | 0 | 19 | 8  | 3  | 1 | 2.55         | 2.49  | 8 |
| Leadership & management                              | 0              | 0 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 4.11                 | 0 | 3  | 22 | 6  | 0 | 3.09         | 3.6   | 4 |
| Overall Mean   |                |   |   |   |   | 3.36                 |   |    |    |    |   | 3.23         | 3.28  |   |

#### Key

5. Very Competent 4. Competent 3. Undecided 2. Incompetent 1. Very Incompetent

M. Mean (M) Overall Mean (R) Rank

As indicated in Table 3, 5 of 8 competence areas under the general management category, Principals competence was rated average with a mean of 3.23. The competencies in the categories were varied with some having relatively high means and some very low means. Principals' competence in change and performance management (mean = 2.64) and project development and management (mean = 2.55) was found to be below average with all of them having a mean of less than 3 (the average mean). The rest of the other sub categories had means ranging between 3 and 4 which portrayed a satisfactory competence situation even though not highly competent as is required.

Information received from interviewing the QASOs, BOM Chairs, SCDs and Principals was in line with the information from the questionnaires where most of them were of the view that the Principals competence in general management was average. However this information goes against the views of some SCDs who were of the view that the Principals they supervised were competent in the general management area. The rest of the SCDs concurred with the Principals and the QASOs that the Principals' competence in general management was average. One of the SCEO's who was of the view that QASOs were competent in the



general management area uttered the following words in support of his stand:

Most officers are conversant in those aspects of general school management mentioned. Very few or no issues have emerged in the recent past to suggest incompetency in these areas. This does not mean that principals do not require training in these areas, for such training can help them match with the changing environment in the Ministry of Education and The Teachers Service Commission

This implies that Principals' competence in this category of general management from the SCDs perspective ranges between average and above average. As opposed to Principals and QASOs perception that Principals competence ranges between average and below average. In general the Principals in the sub categories in this competence area of general management going as per the overall mean of 3.34 can be said to be average.

This findings conflict with what was found out by Ajuogo et al (2010) that the Principals who were studied at this time were below average in the general management category. This means that the situation has improved a bit and the trend should be encouraged. This improvement is in the right step towards the attainment of what happens in Britain where one is required to posses and display superior knowledge and skills in general management before they are allowed to practice as school administrators (Wanjohi, 2005). This result of average competence if improved to the competence level and beyond will help in addressing the Kenyan government's concern that Principals are not competent in most areas including development and interpretation of policies, conversant with code of ethics for civil servants and teachers and resource development among other areas (RoK, 2007).

The Principals competence in the sub competence areas has been ranked as shown in Table 4.9. Those which are lowly ranked portray a dire need for training while those at the top of the rank reflect some level of satisfactory competence. Priority for training should therefore be given to those sub competence areas which are lowly ranked and moving up the radar as resources and time may allow.

### Competencies in Curriculum Issues

Curriculum activities constitute the major part of the Principals' work as they play a major role in curriculum development, curriculum implementation and curriculum evaluation. It was therefore necessary for the study to find out how competent the Principals were in this important aspect of their role. The following sub categories of this competence area of curriculum issues were studied: Curriculum development, curriculum implementation, curriculum evaluation, specialization in a given subject area, teaching strategies and methods, special needs education, early childhood education, development of educational materials, use of educational materials and co-curricular activities. Table 4 shows the Principals' competence level in curriculum development issues as indicated by Principals and the QASOs themselves.

Table 4 Competencies in Curriculum Issues

| Skills/Knowledge                | QASOs Response |   |   |   |   | Principals' Response |   |    |    |    | Overall mean | Rank |      |     |
|---------------------------------|----------------|---|---|---|---|----------------------|---|----|----|----|--------------|------|------|-----|
|                                 | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | M                    | 1 | 2  | 3  | 4  |              | 5    | M    | (M) |
| Curriculum development          | 0              | 0 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 4.11                 | 0 | 4  | 5  | 15 | 7            | 3.80 | 3.95 | 1   |
| Curriculum implementation       | 0              | 0 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 3.77                 | 0 | 6  | 5  | 16 | 4            | 3.58 | 3.67 | 2   |
| Curriculum evaluation           | 0              | 0 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 3.88                 | 0 | 13 | 8  | 7  | 3            | 3.0  | 3.44 | 5   |
| Subject area specialization     | 0              | 2 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 3.44                 | 0 | 10 | 14 | 6  | 1            | 2.93 | 3.18 | 7   |
| Teaching strategies & 0 methods | 0              | 0 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 4.0                  | 0 | 16 | 4  | 9  | 2            | 2.90 | 3.45 | 4   |

|                                      |   |   |   |   |   |      |   |    |    |    |   |      |      |    |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|------|---|----|----|----|---|------|------|----|
| Development of educational materials | 0 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2.55 | 0 | 17 | 8  | 5  | 1 | 2.67 | 2.61 | 9  |
| Use of educational materials         | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 3.44 | 0 | 4  | 23 | 3  | 1 | 3.03 | 3.23 | 6  |
| Special needs education 0            |   | 6 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2.44 | 0 | 11 | 16 | 4  | 0 | 2.77 | 2.60 | 10 |
| Early childhood education            | 0 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2.55 | 0 | 8  | 17 | 8  | 0 | 3.06 | 2.80 | 8  |
| Co-curricular activities 0           |   | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3.33 | 0 | 3  | 6  | 16 | 6 | 3.80 | 3.56 | 3  |
| Overall Mean                         |   |   |   |   |   | 3.3  |   |    |    |    |   | 3.15 | 3.22 |    |

### Key

5. Very Competent 4. Competent 3. Undecided 2. Incompetent 1. Very Incompetent

M. Mean (M) Overall Mean (R) Rank

As shown in Table 4 Principals competence in general is not pleasing as the overall mean is 3.15. A good number (3 out of 10) of the various aspects of curriculum that were considered recorded a mean of less than 3, an indication that they were not well grounded on curriculum matters and yet the implementation of the curriculum was their main concern. Those aspects that registered a mean of less than 3 include: development of educational materials (mean – 2.61), special needs education (mean 2.6) and early childhood education (mean = 2.88). The other sub sections in this competence area of curriculum issues (7 out of the total 10 sub sections) were found to be average in them as the means from these sub sections ranged between 3 and 3.95 and none of them had a mean of more than 4. This scenario is also corroborated by the interviews that were conducted to the QASOs, SCDs and Principals themselves. One of the QASOs had this

to say:

*Efforts to update us on our teaching subject areas are rare. In-service training is only on other aspects and not pedagogy. One wonders why this is so....We are ready to assess quality standards but nobody updates us on new trends. Those who supervise using some new concepts like ICT integration are seen as bringing in foreign ideas which have no room in the current dispensation. Principals are required as supervisors to know whether their teachers are technologically updated and apply the same in content delivery.....They should be knowing more than their teachers and demand that the teachers be as competent as they are. This will empower us to perform our quality assurance work well.*

Some of the Principals when asked about their competence in the areas of Early Childhood Education and Special Needs Education were of the view that since they are not specialist in these areas, they should not be entrusted with the supervision of institutions dealing with early childhood education and special needs education. In fact they were not remorseful that their competencies in these areas were low. They were advocating for these institutions to have their own quality assurance officers and not them. One of these officers quipped!

*These are special areas which need special people to handle them. We are not such people. Even when we sometimes go to these institutions, in most cases, we only oversee them in a more general sense.*

This shows that the general feeling of these Principals is that this is not their area and other different specialized officers should be entrusted with the responsibility of supervising these institutions. Perhaps the County Governments are moving towards this direction by employing officers in charge of early childhood education at the County, Sub County and Ward levels. The Central Government should as well ensure that there are enough officers who are in charge of special education institutions so as to ensure that the regular Principals are left with the supervision of regular schools only. This will as well improve the quality of

supervision of regular schools only. This will as well improve the quality of supervision in both types of institutions. Concerning the development and use of instructional materials, the Principals were categorical that they did not have the up to date skills in the development and use of these materials. They said that most of the skills they have are those that they learned when they trained as teachers which sometimes according to them are out of date and no longer in use. One of the officers said:

*Technological advancement has produced teaching and learning materials that are current and practical. This technology has left us behind. Some of our teachers have trained in ICT leaving us behind.... We are not as technical as they are.... A case of a blind man giving direction!*

According to Olembo (2008), a good instructional supervisor should possess superior skills in their area of subject specialization beyond what an average teacher has. This will help them to do meaningful supervision. As it has been seen the Principals' competence in the area of subject specialization is below average and this implies that they have a problem when doing instructional supervision in schools. The areas of special needs education, early childhood education and development of teaching and learning materials where Principals have been found to be below average are very important for the performance of their roles. Even though these are special areas in education, Principals as the overall custodians of quality, need to have some knowledge and skills in these areas in order to supervise them well.

According to Marwanga (2004) Principals have a mandate of advising the government on all aspects of education and teaching and learning resources among other issues in their jurisdiction. This therefore necessitates that Principals should be properly trained so as to increase their competence in these areas in order to be able to advice the government well.

### Principals Competencies in Financial Management

On how competent the Principals were on financial management issues, the study sought the respondents' view on how competent the Principals were in the following aspects of financial management: Budget preparation, procurement procedures, accounting and auditing and financial reporting. The responses that were obtained are contained in Table 5.

Table 5 Principals competencies in Financial Management

| Skills/Knowledge       | QASOs Response |   |   |   |   | Principals' Response |   |    |    |    | Overall mean | Rank |      |     |
|------------------------|----------------|---|---|---|---|----------------------|---|----|----|----|--------------|------|------|-----|
|                        | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | M                    | 1 | 2  | 3  | 4  |              | 5    | M    | (M) |
| Budget Preparation     | 0              | 4 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 2.66                 | 0 | 10 | 15 | 4  | 2            | 2.93 | 2.79 | 3   |
| Procurement Procedures | 0              | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3.44                 | 0 | 7  | 14 | 10 | 0            | 3.09 | 3.26 | 1   |
| Accounting & Auditing  | 0              | 7 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2.44                 | 0 | 21 | 5  | 5  | 0            | 2.48 | 2.46 | 4   |
| Financial Reporting    | 0              | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3.00                 | 0 | 7  | 15 | 9  | 0            | 3.06 | 3.03 | 2   |
| Overall Mean           |                |   |   |   |   | 2.88                 |   |    |    |    |              | 2.91 | 2.88 |     |

Key

5. Very Competent 4. Competent 3. Undecided 2. Incompetent 1. Very Incompetent

M. Mean (M) Overall Mean (R) Rank

From Table 5 it can be seen that the Principals competencies in financial management in overall is below average with an overall mean of 2.91. This shows that they need training in all aspects of financial management as they exhibited low level of competence as indicated by low means across the four sub

categories in the competence of financial management.

The information obtained from the interviews also affirms the information in the table that

Principals' competence is below average in terms of financial management. The Sub County Education Officers were of the view that the Principals were not well grounded in financial matters. One SCD was attributing this to the fact that there are bursars in school who do the accounting and Sub County auditors in the Ministry of Education who do the auditing on how school funds are expended. The Ministry has not been putting the necessary effort in improving the financial skills of the Principals. Limited training programmes on financial matters for education staff are not in most cases done to Principals, Deputy Principals, heads of departments, school accounts clerks and bursars. Insufficient training is done to the Principals and yet they are the ones to ensure overall quality in education. He was of the view that more needs to be done to ensure Principals have good knowledge in financial matters.

Most of the Principals who were interviewed on their competence on financial matters said that they had little knowledge and they need to undergo training so as to understand the basic issues in accounting.

Most of these Principals and QASOs display a lot of ignorance when it comes to issues to do with finances. One of the interviewed Principals had this to say:

One officer visited a school recently and requested for a balance sheet and he was presented with one, he started looking for the information to do with how the funds received for the construction of a science laboratory was utilized. When he was reminded that such information is contained in the income and expenditure account, he felt embarrassed and when he was presented with the income and expenditure account he looked at it strenuously and never asked any question. A sign that the figures were "Greek" and he did not understand them.

This shows that these officers are not well versed with financial matters, a situation which might compromise their role performance. This is in line with what was found out by Ondicho (2004), that Principals exhibited a lot of ignorance when it came to financial matters. Even though Principals are not accountants or auditors to exhibit expert knowledge and skill in financial matters, they need to have an overall view and basic knowledge about finances. According to Okumbe (1999) for effective supervision, supervisors need to possess three basic supervisory skills namely; technical, interpersonal and conceptual. Principals therefore being supervisors need to have these skills in a balanced proportion in order to perform their work better. This knowledge and skills in finance will help them in doing general supervision in school (Olembo, 2008).

### **Principals Competencies in Carrying out Action Research**

The responses that were obtained about quality assurance and standards officers' competence in carrying out action research were solicited and received. The Sub sections of this competence area that were considered in the study are as follows: problem identification, proposal development, data collection, data analysis and report writing. The resulting responses are tabulated in Table 6.

Table 6 Principals Competencies in Carrying out Action Research

| Skills/Knowledge       | QASO's Response |   |   |   |   | Principal's Response |   |   |    |   | Overall mean | (M)  | Rank |   |
|------------------------|-----------------|---|---|---|---|----------------------|---|---|----|---|--------------|------|------|---|
|                        | 1               | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | M                    | 1 | 2 | 3  | 4 |              |      |      | 5 |
| Problem Identification | 0               | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3.00                 | 0 | 4 | 18 | 4 | 5            | 3.25 | 3.13 | 4 |
| Proposal Development   | 0               | 0 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3.72                 | 0 | 2 | 17 | 7 | 5            | 3.48 | 3.6  | 2 |

|                 |   |   |   |   |   |      |   |    |    |   |   |      |      |   |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|------|---|----|----|---|---|------|------|---|
| Data collection | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4.11 | 0 | 5  | 16 | 9 | 1 | 3.19 | 3.65 | 1 |
| Data analysis   | 0 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 3.11 | 0 | 20 | 7  | 4 | 0 | 2.48 | 2.79 | 5 |
| Research Report | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4.11 | 0 | 10 | 13 | 8 | 0 | 2.93 | 3.52 | 3 |
| Overall Mean    |   |   |   |   |   | 3.61 |   |    |    |   |   | 3.06 | 3.33 |   |

Key

5. Very Competent 4. Competent 3. Undecided 2. Incompetent 1. Very Incompetent

M. Mean (M) Overall Mean (R) Rank

The findings in Table 6 indicate that Principals on overall were rated as being averagely competent in carrying out action research with an overall mean 3.33. They need training in all the aspects of carrying out action research even though priority should be given to the aspect of data analysis which had a mean of 2.79 which is below average.

From the interview, the Principals were saying that they have never been in-serviced on how to carry out action research.

One of them said:

*It's rare for us to be invited for in-service courses on our work, leave alone action results. We have some skills on action research from the postgraduate studies we have done but without in-service training, we find ourselves on opposing sides when it comes to professional issues. It is in-service training for all of us that can bring us to the same page, this will make us more focused and prepared in performing our work....a terrible situation.*

One Principal when asked how they cope with the situation since they don't have the skills in carrying out action research had this to say:

*Oh, Yes!....we have always depended on others who have these skills or engaged professionals in this area of research. The main issue here is the completion and handing over of assignments not the person doing it. This has really kept us lagging behind.*

This confirms the findings of Aluogo et al (2010), when it was found that Education Officers – Principals competence was average. According to the Ministry of Education, Principals are the first people to be called upon whenever there is a problem in school. They are supposed to carry out their own research to understand the problem and write a report on the same (RoK, 2007). To do this effectively, they need to have skills and knowledge on how to do research now that their competence in this area is average.

The Kenya Policy Framework on education, Training and Research (RoK, 2007) recognizes action research as a basis for attaining quality education. Hence, there is need for Principals to have action research knowledge to undertake research on teaching and learning methodologies to improve quality education, standards and performance. When the Principals in this competence area of carrying out action research carried out will suffer and as a consequence the quality of education may be compromised.

This therefore implies that the training of Principals in this competence area of carrying out action research is important so as to bridge the gap between the skills they have and the ones they need in carrying out action research. All the aspects of carrying out action research should be handled starting with the one which is ranked lowly that is data analysis. This will help the Principals to be competent enough in carrying out action research and hence cushioning them against relying on the same. When the reports are generated

may not be accurate and this compromises the quality of education.

### Principals/QASOs' Supervisory Approach Competencies

The approach that Principals use in carrying out instructional supervision is key to the success of the exercise. It was therefore considered important to find out from the study, the extent to which Principals were using the established instructional supervision criteria. Quantitative data on this competence area was corrected by the use of QASOs' and Principals' questionnaires. Frequency counts were first worked out for the data through the Likert scale questionnaire. Mean scores of the respondents on each item of the Likert scale were then worked out. The statements on the Likert scale were scored as follows: Always (A) = 5 points, Frequently (F) = 4 points,

Sometimes (S) = 3 points, Seldom (SL) = 2 points and Never (N) = 1 point. In the interpretation of the scores, a mean score of above 3.5 denoted a good rate use, a mean score of between 2.5 and 3.5 denoted a satisfactory level of use and a mean score of below 2.5 denoted an unacceptable level of use.

The sub sections of this competence area of instructional supervision approach which were considered in the study were:

- i. Planning with the teacher in terms of Subject, the Lesson and the Class to be observed
- ii. Establishing rapport with the teacher during the pre-observation conference enquiring about the characteristics of the learners before observation
- iii. Considering the teacher's views during post observation conference
- iv. Making the teacher aware of the contents of the supervisory report
- v. Giving a copy of the supervisory report to the Head of Department.
- vi. Making a follow-up supervision to find out the progress of the teacher Table 7 contains what was obtained from the study.

Table 7 Principals'/QASOs' Supervisory Approach Competencies

| Skills/Knowledge   | QASOs Response |   |   |   | Principals' Response |      |   |    |    | Overall mean | Rank |      |      |     |
|--|----------------|---|---|---|----------------------|------|---|----|----|--------------|------|------|------|-----|
|  | 1              | 3 | 4 | 5 | M                    | 1    | 2 | 3  | 4  |              | 5    | M    | (M)  | (R) |
| Planning with the teacher in terms of the Subject, the Lesson and the Class to be observed | 1              | 3 | 4 | 1 | 0                    | 2.55 | 7 | 8  | 13 | 3            | 0    | 2.38 | 2.47 | 3   |
| Establishing rapport with the teacher during the preobservation conference                 | 0              | 4 | 4 | 1 | 0                    | 2.66 | 9 | 15 | 7  | 0            | 0    | 1.93 | 2.29 | 6   |
| Enquiring about the characteristics of the learners before observation                     | 3              | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0                    | 2.11 | 5 | 10 | 9  | 7            | 0    | 2.58 | 2.34 | 5   |
| Considering the teachers views during post observation conference                          | 2              | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0                    | 2.22 | 0 | 18 | 10 | 3            | 0    | 2.51 | 2.36 | 4   |
| Making the teacher aware of the contents of the supervisory report before leaving          | 0              | 6 | 2 | 1 | 0                    | 2.44 | 0 | 9  | 12 | 11           | 0    | 3.16 | 2.69 | 2   |
| Giving a copy of the Supervisory report  | 0              | 2 | 5 | 2 | 2                    | 4.00 | 0 | 8  | 15 | 8            | 0    | 3.00 | 3.5  | 1   |

|  |    |   |   |   |      |    |    |   |   |   |      |      |   |
|--|----|---|---|---|------|----|----|---|---|---|------|------|---|
| Making a follow-up supervision to find out the progress of the teacher | 34 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1.88 | 10 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.67 | 1.77 | 7 |
| Overall Mean   |    |   |   |   | 2.55 |    |    |   |   |   | 2.46 | 2.5  |   |

Key

5. Very Competent 4. Competent 3. Undecided 2. Incompetent 1. Very Incompetent

M. Mean (M) Overall Mean (R) Rank

Table 7 shows that Principals competence in approaching instructional supervision was below average as revealed by an overall mean of 2.45. The Principals did not effectively establish rapport with teachers (mean = 1.93) and ineffectively planned with the teachers on the class, lesson and the time when supervision should be done (Mean = 2.38. Most QASOs (mean = 2.55) did not make the teachers aware of the supervisory report before leaving. They frequently give such a report to the Principals (mean = 4.0). It was also been established that they hardly make up a follow up visit to find out the progress of the teacher (mean = 1.88). This means that they were never interested whether the teachers improved their performance after the supervision or not. From the interviews conducted, one Principal said that:

These officers normally visit the Principal’s office and then get into any class where they spot a teacher. Once in class they harass the teacher demanding to see the professional documents and welcoming no explanation when it is found that some are missing. After the lesson they tell the teacher how disorganized he is and after which they go seclusion to write a report, then they are seen going to the Principal’s office most probably to leave a copy of the supervisory report with the Principal.

When asked how they do their instructional supervision, the Principals indicated that even though they were aware of the professional steps that should be followed in instructional supervision, they didn’t follow them always. They gave varied reasons in explaining this scenario. One of them said:

*These teachers need to be put on toes so as to work. If you agree with them on everything, including when to be supervised, they cannot work. Remember they are supposed to be ready all the time. If you inform them in advance on when they are going to be assessed, they will prepare well for the sake of the supervision and then slid back to normal practice when the assessment is over. This will not improve the quality of teaching in our schools.*

This is a clear testimony that Principals are not ready to follow these procedures in supervision even if they are aware of them. They are still using the old methods in supervision and their attitudes have not changed. This therefore calls for thorough training of these officers to ensure that their attitudes are changed so that they can embrace the professional way of doing instructional supervision.

The Principals’ competence in instructional supervision can therefore be said to be below average as they were still applying traditional supervisory approaches which are autocratic in nature and cannot stand the test of time (Wanzare. 2006).

It has also been seen that Principals hardly make a follow up visit to find out the progress which has been made after the supervision. This compromises the essence of supervision which according to Wanjohi (2005) and Kinaiya (2010) is to help the teachers to improve in the weak areas. How can they check on whether an improvement has been made or not if they do not make a follow up supervision?

The current Principals in Kisii County therefore need training in this competence area of instructional supervision so as to change their attitude and enhance their skills in instructional supervision.

## CONCLUSION

From the findings of this study, it is concluded that the competencies of principals in Kisii County are not good and that the supervisory approaches of the principals in Schools are out of date.

## RECOMMENDATION.

The study findings indicates that there is need for principals in Kisii county to be taken through training programme. This training programme should include modern approaches to human resource management, general management, financial management, action research, curriculum development and implementation and supervisory approaches.

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