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**Influence of Principal Class Visitations Practices on
Students' Academic Performance in KCSE in Public
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Influence of Principal Class Visitations Practices on Students' Academic Performance in KCSE in Public Secondary schools in Mashuru Sub-County

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of principals' class visitations practices on students' academic performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Mashuru Sub-County. According to the records from the office of the Kajiado County Director of Education, the performance of students in KCSE in Mashuru Sub-County has not only been poor but also spiralling downwards. The region has only produced 23 students attaining a grade of C+ in a period of four years. The poor performance calls for a scrutiny of what could be the cause to this status quo. There was therefore need to establish whether despite all efforts put in place, the students' academic performance in KCSE was still declining. The study utilized a descriptive research design. The target population consisted of 45 principals, 540 teachers and 585 student leaders. Purposive sampling was employed to select 13 principals while simple random sampling was used to 54 teachers and 56 student leaders. Data was collected by use of interview schedule for principals and questionnaires for teachers and student leaders. The collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics which consisted of frequencies and percentages with the help of SPSS version 27. The study established that principal management practice on teacher professional records had some influence on student academic performance in KCSE in public secondary schools. The study established that the full impact of the principals' class visitation practices on students' academic performance was not achieved as the frequency of conducting this practice was below par. The principals had no definite time of visiting classes due to other administrative duties which played a negative role in influencing students' academic performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Mashuru sub-county. Leading to missing of lessons, late reporting of students to school, and chronic absenteeism among students. The study recommends that the Boards of Management of schools in Mashuru

Sub-County should conduct awareness programmes among parents so that they can have an understanding of the importance of education. This way they will be motivated to take their children to school on time and to encourage the learners to pursue academic excellence. The Teachers Service Commission should also appoint, promote and deploy principals, deputy principals and senior teachers trained in instructional supervision. This will enlighten the principals on the importance of class visitation as it would aid in boosting class attendance for both teachers and students and thereby improving performance in the long run.

Keywords: *Principals' Management Practice, Class Visitation, Students' Academic Performance in KCSE, Public Secondary Schools*

1.1 Introduction

Educational supervision as the administrative coordination of instruction in schools for effectiveness (Okumbe, 2013). It is a process of checking what the teachers are teaching and what students are learning in order to achieve conventional goals of education – which are knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. It also entails checking what is taking place in classroom, that is, whether teachers are teaching properly and at the same time, provide close direction and motivation in a school to enhance the teaching and learning process (van de Grift, 2007).

De Garuwe (2012) posits that national authorities rely on school supervision system to monitor quality of schools with key measure of student achievement in national exams. He underscores that supervision of instruction has the potential to improve students' performance and open avenues for teachers' professional growth and improvement. In Kenya, principals have the responsibility of directly influencing goal setting, tasks accomplishment and supervising curriculum implementation. They are expected to have working knowledge of effective instructional strategies in order to understand the instructional needs of their students and teaching staff to effectively address emerging needs (Blankstein, 2010; Smljie, 2010). Principals are bound to help teachers to comprehend instructional goals and work with them to improve content delivery with clear understanding that what student learn is critical.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

When the society sacrifices resources so that children attend school, the expectation is that the children gain competence in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Performance in national examinations is a trusted method of measuring the extent that this competence has been attained. According to records available from the office of the Kajiado County Director of Education (2020), the performance of students in KCSE in Mashuru Sub-County has not only been poor but also spiralling downwards. This has culminated in only 23 students attaining a grade of C+ in a period of four years. The poor performance calls for a scrutiny of what could be the cause to this status quo. There was therefore need to establish whether efforts being put in place by all educational stakeholders reveal any link between the principals' class visitation practice and the students' academic performance in KCSE.

1.3 Research Objective

To determine the influence of principals' class visitations practices on students' academic performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Mashuru Sub-County.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was informed by two theories; namely the systems theory and the role theory.

2.1.1 Systems Theory

The Systems Theory which was developed by Ludwig Von Batenlaffe (Patton & McMahon, 2006). A school as a system is composed of various parts which work in an interrelated manner for accomplishment of stated goals. A school exists in the form of an open system because it receives input from the society and it also gives output to the society. The school receives curriculum, teaching materials, finances, teachers, parents and students. The principal coordinates the activities as he/she performs the instructional supervision tasks. Checking of professional documents, class visitation, checking students' academic progress records and implementation of instructional programmes play a major role in the realization of the institution's objectives.

The teacher, students and parent as representatives of the environment influence the function of the system at greater percentage. It is also applicable that the institution as a process unit shapes the environment. Therefore, effective instructional supervision such as principal class visitations practice plays a major role in the success of an individual student, school and the entire society. This is owing to the fact that the students receive quality education as the teachers are keen to use the provided instructional resources appropriately.

2.1.2 Role Theory

Role Theory which was advanced by Gatzels and Egon (1975). They looked at an organisation as a social system. The theory espouses a social system where individuals define their role, role of others and expectations (Nyongesa, 2007). The theory postulates that people in their position use their roles to perform their functions and their roles dictate their outward mannerisms. This affects the responsibilities and the expectations in regard to the roles and more so in educational institutions (Hindsin, 2007).

According to this theory, education has various positions; namely, principals, HODs, teachers, parents, education officials, the government, and students and if one fails in their role then the system fails. A school receives teachers and students from the society and the head teacher coordinates the activities as he/she performs his/her instructional supervision tasks: checking of the professional records, pupils' notes/exercise books, classroom visitation, provision of learning and teaching resources, checking of students and instructional programmes play a major role in the realization of good performance (Perker & Wikman, 2005).

2.2 Empirical Review

Class visitation of the principals in lesson observation enhances professional growth of teachers and improves teachers' teaching techniques. As the instructional supervisors, principals are encouraged to spend most of their working times in classrooms observing the teaching and learning process (DiPaola & Hoy, 2008). Class observation allows principals to experience the classroom situation, enabling them to make sound decisions on the basic requirements for effective instructional needs of the students.

Mutunga (2011) holds that principals need to observe their teachers formally on a regular basis and discuss classroom performance to help teachers to improve on their teaching. Classroom visitations and observations are geared towards improving teachers' pedagogical skills. Fischer (2011) indicates that class visitation and observation includes principals' getting into class and observing how teaching and learning is taking place. Principals' efficient use of

administrative leadership skills in instructional supervision help teachers utilize their professional techniques and skills in classroom teaching (Mugambi, 2017).

According to Kieti *et al.* (2017), class observation and visitation centre on the improvement of the teaching/learning situation which benefits teachers and learners and thus enabling the identification of areas of strengths and weaknesses of teachers. The on-the-spot assessment helps teachers to be committed to teaching in line with the curriculum, conscious of students’ needs and capacities which in turn help them to improve their performance (Memduhoglu & Zengin, 2012; Archibongs, 2013).

Wanzare (2013) points out that instructional supervision with classroom visitation serves as an opportunity for the principals to assess teaching styles, classroom management skills, various aspects of teaching and allows teachers to receive constructive feedback in their teaching and in the process improves their teaching techniques. Peretomode (2011) argues that teachers who are adequately observed in the classroom perform more effectively than their counterparts who are left on their own devices. This is because a teacher who experiences class observations would put in effort to please the principals. The teacher’s mistakes are noted and corrections given. Peretomode (2011) is emphatic that classroom observation procedure is of great assistance in aiding teachers improve instructional and learning process, thus improving effectiveness.

Farrel (2011) asserts that classroom visitation and observation is critical in reflecting on pedagogical practices which help teachers evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Allan (2015) agrees with Dangara (2015) by postulating that it is in principals’ checking of the actual classroom teaching that they are able to know whether teachers are teaching and whether students are adhering to the objectives noted at the end of schemes of work. Such observations make teachers to be focused when teaching and even master the content when delivering it to the students. This study sought to establish the relationship between principals’ class visitation and students’ academic performance in KCSE in Mashuru Sub-County.

3.1 Research Methodology

A descriptive survey design was used to guide this study. The target population consisted of 45 principals, 540 teachers and 585 student leaders. Purposive sampling was employed to select 13 principals while simple random sampling was used to select 54 teachers and 56 student leaders. Data was collected by use of interview schedule for principals and questionnaires for teachers and student leaders. The collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics consisting of frequencies and percentages. Data was analysed with the help of the SPSS version 27. Analysed data was presented using frequency tables, pie-charts and bar graphs.

4.0 Research Findings

4.1 Response Rate

The response rate is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Response Rate

Response	Sampled Respondents	Successful Participants	Return Rate
Principals	13	11	84.6%
Teachers	54	47	87.0%
Students	56	56	100%

Results presented in Table 1 demonstrate that all the students filled in and returned the questionnaires while 47 questionnaires administered to the teachers were properly filled and

returned. Of the 13 targeted interviews, the researcher managed to successfully interview 11 principals. The results show that the study had a response rate of over 80%.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics

4.2.1 Gender of the Respondents

Results in Table 2 outline the gender of the principals, teachers and students.

Table 2: Gender of the Principals, Teachers and Students

Gender	Respondents' Category	Frequency	Percent
Male	Principal	7	63.6
	Teachers	32	68.1
	Students	24	42.9
Female	Principal	4	36.4
	Teachers	15	31.9
	Students	32	57.1

Results from Table 2 illustrate that for the principals 63.6% were male while 36.4% were female. For the teachers, 68.1% were male while 31.9% were female. Considering the students 42.9% were female while 57.1% were female. The results show that for the principals, teachers and students the proportion of males is slightly higher than that of females. This implies the Schools in Mashuru Sub-county attract both genders and so there is a slightly small disparity. It also shows KCSE performance doesn't depend on gender.

4.2.2 Education Level of the Principals and Teachers

Results in Table 3 outline the level of education for both the principals and teachers.

Table 3: Education Level of the Principals and Teachers

Respondents	Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Principals	M.Ed	6	54.5
	B.Ed.	5	45.5
Teachers	M.Ed	1	2.1
	B.Ed.	44	93.6
	B.A. with PGDE	1	2.1
	B.Sc. with PGDE	1	2.1

Results in Table 3 demonstrate that 54.5% principals have attained a Masters of Education degree while the rest 45.5% had only attained a Bachelor's degree in Education. Considering the teachers, results illustrate that most (93.6%) had a Bachelor's degree in Education, 2.1% had attained a Masters of Education degree. Another 2.1% had attained a Bachelor's of Science degree with PGDE while 2.1% had a Bachelor of Arts with PGDE. The results show that both the teachers and principals have the requisite qualifications (university degree) to serve in their positions. However, it is apparent that a higher percentage of principals have taken the initiative to further their education to higher levels than the teachers. It also shows that principals are in position to understand and influence students' academic performance positively.

4.2.3 Age of the Teachers and Students

Table 4 shows the age of both the teachers and students.

Table 4: Age of the Teachers and Students

Respondents	Age	Frequency	Percent
Teachers	24 yrs and below	4	8.5
	25-30 yrs	9	19.1
	31- 35 yrs	13	27.7
	36-40 yrs	14	29.8
	46 yrs and above	7	14.9
Students	12-15yrs	18	32.1
	16-19 yrs	32	57.1
	20yrs over	6	10.7

Results from Table 4 show that 29.8% of the teachers were aged between 36-40 years, 27.7% were aged between 31-35 years, 19.9% were between 25-30 years, 14.9% were 46 years and above while only 8.5% were 24 years and below. Results also show that, for the students, majority (57.1%) were aged between 16-19 years, 32.1% were between 12 -15 years while 10.7% were 20 years and above. Further, the results show that most of the teachers are middle aged with less proportion being 24 years and below which can be explained by the fact that most university students graduate at this age and it takes time before job placement by the TSC. Similarly, it can be observed that there is decline in the proportion of teachers aged 46 years and above which can be explained by the fact that some teachers choose to retire early while others advance their education and get promotions to other ranks such as university lecturers.

4.2.4 Teacher Experience

The results depicted in Figure 1 presents the experience of the teachers.

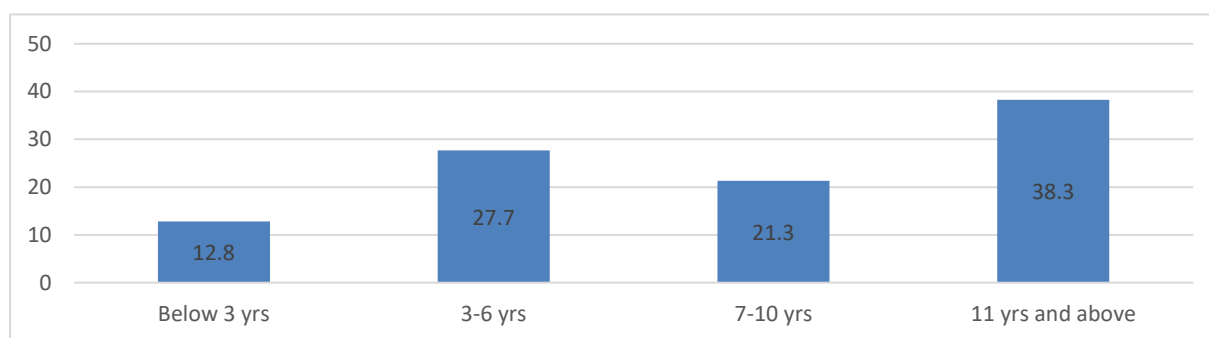


Figure 1: Teacher Experience

Results in Figure 1 show that 38.3% had an experience of 11 years and above, 27.7% had an experience of 3-6 years, 21.3% had an experience of 7-10 years while the rest (12.8%) had an experience of less than 3 years. The results indicate that the teachers had a wealth of experience in their profession and thus possess requisite skills to execute their professional duties. In the same way, they provided relevant information needed to conduct this study

4.2.5 Schools' Sex Composition

Results in Table 5 outline the school's sex composition for the principals, teachers and students.

Table 5: School Sex Composition

Respondents	Sex Composition	Frequency	Percent
Principals	Boys	2	18.2
	Girls	3	27.3
	Mixed	6	54.5
Teachers	Boys	16	34
	Girls	6	12.8
	Mixed	25	53.2
Students	Boys	15	26.8
	Girls	15	26.8
	Mixed	26	46.4

Results from Table 5 show that 54.5% principals interviewed were from mixed public secondary schools, 27.3% were from girls’ public secondary schools, while 18.2% were from boys’ public secondary schools. With regard to teachers, 53.2% teachers who were reached were from mixed public secondary schools, 12.8% were from girls’ public secondary schools, while 34% were from boys’ public secondary schools. Further, considering the students, 46.4% students reached were from mixed public secondary schools, 26.8% were from girls’ public secondary schools, while another 26.8% were from boys public secondary schools. The results show that majority of public secondary schools in Mashuru Sub-County are mixed.

4.2.6 School Category

Results in Table 6 outline the school’s category as indicated by the principals and teachers.

Table 6: School Category

Respondents	School Category	Frequency	Percent
Principals	County	4	36.4
	Sub-County	7	63.6
Teachers	Extra-County	5	10.6
	County	27	57.4
	Sub-County	15	31.9

Results presented in Table 6 reveal that most (63.6%) principals headed schools at the Sub-County level while the rest 36.4% headed schools at the county level. For the teachers reached, results illustrate that 57.4% taught on county public secondary schools, 31.9% taught in sub-county level public secondary schools while only 10.6% taught in Extra-County level schools. The disparity in the school categories for principals and teachers reached can be explained by the response to the research instruments. It is also evident that there are few Extra-County schools in Mashuru Sub-County.

4.2.7 Training on Instructional Supervision

Results in Figure 2 portray the results for the proportion of principals who had received training on instructional supervision.

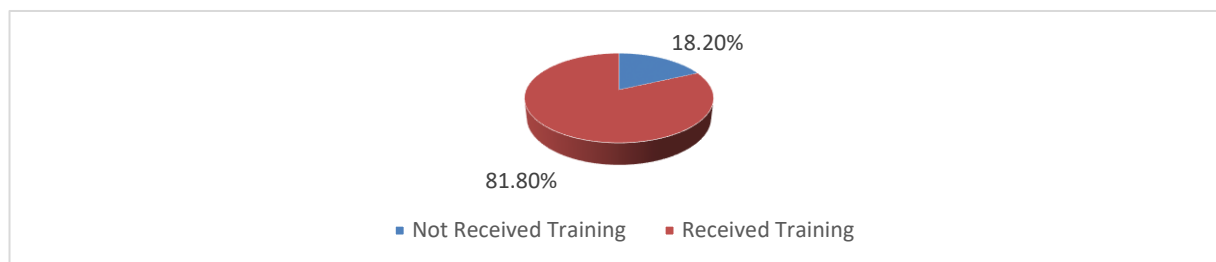


Figure 2: Training on Instructional Supervision

Results depicted in Figure 2 illustrates that most principals (81.8%) had received training on instructional supervision while only 18.2% were yet to be trained. The results point out to the effectiveness of the government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education in training principals on instructional supervision with an aim of improving academic performance in public secondary schools.

4.2.8 Institution of Training on Instructional Supervision

Results in Figure 3 present the respective institutions that the principals received training on instructional supervision.

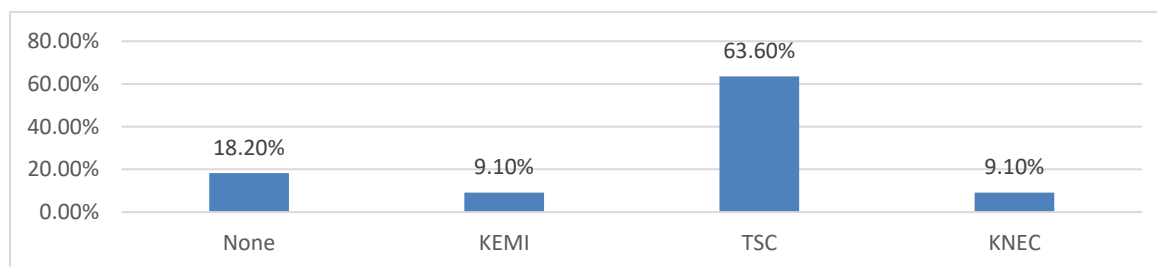


Figure 3: Training Institution

Results from Figure 3 show that most of the principals (63.6%) had been trained by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), 18.2% had not been trained while the rest 9.1% were trained by KNEC and KEMI respectively

4.3 Principal’s Class Visitation Practice and Students’ Academic Performance in KCSE in Public Secondary Schools

Data was gathered from the principals, teachers and students. Descriptive statistics for the teachers and students are presented in Table 7 and 8 respectively while descriptive information for the principals is presented in continuous prose. The teacher’s response to principal’s class visitation practice is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Teachers Response to Principal’s Class Visitation Practices

Statement	No defined time	Termly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Checking of the lesson attendance forms	4.3%	4.3%	6.4%	57.4%	27.7%
Checking students’ notes	40.4%	14.9%	21.3%	21.3%	2.1%
Visiting learning sessions in classroom	38.3%	12.8%	10.6%	25.5%	12.8%
Giving feedback after the lesson observation	38.3%	14.9%	14.9%	25.5%	6.4%
Management of students’ discipline	14.9%	4.3%	4.3%	14.9%	61.7%

The results presented in Table 7 show that majority (57.4%) teachers stated that the principals checked the lesson attendance forms weekly, 27.7% stated daily, 6.4% stated monthly, 4.3% pointed out that there was no definite time of checking the lesson attendance forms while another 4.3% stated termly. Regarding principals checking students notes, results revealed that 40.4% teachers opined that there was no defined time of checking, 21.3% stated weekly, another 21.3% stated monthly, 14.9% stated termly while only 2.1% stated daily. These results tally with the assertions of Musungu and Nasongo (2008) that principals as instructional supervisors should make it their policy to regularly interact with students and call for their exercise books to see whether they are given tasks by their subject teachers and that their books are checked, marked and corrected and as such these records should be clear and available.

Regarding principals visiting learning sessions in classrooms, results revealed that 38.3% teachers opined that there was no defined time of such visitations, 25.5% stated weekly, 12.8% stated termly, another 12.8% stated daily while 10.6% stated monthly. Further, regarding giving feedback after the lesson observation, results illustrate that 38.3% teachers opined that there was no defined time of giving feedback, 25.5% stated weekly, 14.9% stated termly, another 14.9% stated monthly while only 6.4% stated daily. Considering the principals management of students’ discipline, results show that most (61.7%) teachers posited that this happened daily, 14.9% stated that it happened weekly, another 14.9% opined that there was no defined time, while 4.3% stated that it happened monthly and termly respectively.

On the other hand, student’s response to principal’s class visitation practice is depicted in Table 8

Table 8: Students Response to Principal’s Management Practices of Teachers’ Professional Records

Statement	No defined time	Termly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Principal’s observation of lesson	42.9%	23.2%	28.6%	0.0%	5.4%
Checking my assignments	28.6%	33.9%	33.9%	0.0%	3.6%
Checking students’ class attendance form	32.1%	23.2%	39.3%	0.0%	5.4%
Checking my notes	33.9%	35.7%	23.2%	3.6%	3.6%
Dealing with class indiscipline cases	5.4%	17.9%	37.5%	0.0%	39.3%

Concerning principal's observation of lesson, results in Table 8 reveal that most (42.9%) students opined that there was no defined time, 28.6% stated monthly, 23.2% stated termly while only 5.4% stated daily. Regarding checking of assignments, results reveal that 33.9% stated monthly, 33.9% stated termly, 28.6% stated that there was no defined time while only 3.6% stated daily. Concerning checking students class attendance form, results revealed that 39.3% stated monthly, 32.1% stated that there was no defined time, 23.2% stated termly while only 5.4% stated daily. These results are supported by Allan (2015) who agrees with Dangara (2015) by postulating that it is in principals' checking of the actual classroom teaching that they are able to know whether teachers are teaching and whether students are adhering to the objectives noted at the end of schemes of work. Such observations make teachers to be focused when teaching and even master the content when delivering it to the students.

Taking into account checking the students notes, results showed that 33.9% stated that there was no defined time, 35.7% stated termly, 23.2% stated monthly, 3.6% stated weekly while 3.6% stated daily. Further, regarding dealing with class indiscipline cases results revealed that 39.3% students stated daily, 37.5% stated monthly, 17.9% stated termly while only 5.4% stated that there was no defined time. From the results, it is evident that principals lack sufficient time to carry out most of class visitation activities at least weekly or daily apart from while handling indiscipline issues. This has led to chronic absenteeism among students as well as contributing to poor performance in KCSE.

These findings are congruent with the findings of Alimi and Akinfolarin (2012) who conducted a study on the impact of instructional supervision on students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. Their study found out that there is significant impact on checking pupils' notes on academic performance in English language subject. These findings are related to those of DiPaola and Hoy (2008) who argued that class visitation of the principals in lesson observation enhances professional growth of teachers, improving teaching techniques of teachers. As the instructional supervisors, principals are encouraged to spend most of their working times in classrooms observing the teaching and learning process.

To support these results, the principals revealed that they conducted various activities during class visitation. These activities included lesson observation, checking students notes, checking syllabus coverage, assessing the presence of teacher in class, checking discipline, checking lesson plans, checking absenteeism, and checking class arrangement. These results align to the findings of Mutunga (2011) who holds that principals need to observe their teachers formally on a regular basis and discuss classroom performance to help teachers to improve on their teaching. Classroom visitations and observations are geared towards improving teachers' pedagogical skills.

However, the principals stated that they experienced various challenges which impeded the class visitation practices. These challenges included wrong attitude by teachers who think it is witch-hunting, tension among students who also misunderstood the principals thinking that teachers ought to be supervised privately, some students do not have notes while others are absent and teachers lack lesson plans. They also said that teachers become nervous which hinders them from giving feedback, high number of students which makes it impossible to check for all the students, failure of students to do assignments, inadequate qualified staff, poor payment of fees, inadequacy of report forms for result analysis, administrative burden that they hardly find time to visit the classroom and observe how teachers are teaching and parents in attendance during class visitations. These contradict with the assertions of Wanzare (2013) who points out that instructional supervision with classroom visitation serves as an opportunity for the principals to assess teaching styles, classroom management skills, various aspects of

teaching and allows teachers receive constructive feedback in their teaching and in the process improve their teaching techniques.

To solve these challenges, the principals stated that teachers should be sensitized on the importance of class visitation on students' performance, setting deadlines for preparation of professional documents, employment of more BOM teachers, introduction of make-up classes and delegate some roles to HoDs. This aligns to the assertions of Halverson (2005) who observed that school leaders should have intermittent measures of student learning across the classes and that collaborative focus should be encouraged on problems of teaching and learning.

5.1 Conclusions

The study established that the full impact of the principals' class visitation practices on students' academic performance was not achieved as the frequency of conducting this practice was below par. The principals had no definite time of visiting classes due to other administrative duties which played a negative role in influencing students' academic performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Mashuru sub-county. Leading to missing of lessons, late reporting of students to school, and chronic absenteeism among students.

6.1 Recommendations

The Boards of Management of schools in Mashuru Sub-County should conduct awareness programmes among parents so that they can have an understanding of the importance of education. This way they will be motivated to take their children to school on time and to encourage the learners to pursue academic excellence. The Teachers Service Commission should also appoint, promote and deploy principals, deputy principals and senior teachers trained in instructional supervision. This will enlighten the principals on the importance of class visitation as it would aid in boosting class attendance for both teachers and students and thereby improving performance in the long run.

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