



ESTABLISHING HOW HEAD-TEACHERS' CLASSROOM VISITATION PRACTICE INFLUENCES STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC JUNIOR SCHOOLS IN KEREN SUB-ZONE, ERITREA

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to establish how head-teachers' classroom visitation influences students' performance in public junior schools in Keren Sub-zone. The study was guided by systems theory and employed mixed-method approaches with a concurrent triangulation design. The study targeted public junior schools in Keren Sub-zone Anseba Region. Systematic sampling, simple random sampling and purposeful sampling were used to select 44 teachers, 326 students, five head-teachers, and two Educational Officers of the Keren Sub-zone. A total of 377 respondents took part in the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and students, whereas interview was conducted to get information from head-teachers and Educational Officers. The quantitative data was analysed descriptively with the help of SPSS Version 21 and reported in frequency tables and percentages. The qualitative data was organized into themes based on the research questions and reported in a narrative form and direct quotations. The study established that in the high-performing schools, head-teachers practiced the classroom visitation activities better than those in poorly performing schools thus the reason for low performance in some public junior schools in Keren Sub-zone. The study concluded that in low-performing schools, head-teachers have not been considering some of the key classroom visitation practices such as supervision by walking around, monitoring of students' discipline, and physical lesson observation. The

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study recommended that the ministry of education intensify supervision in the public junior schools to strengthen the quality of instructional supervision by the head-teachers. The study suggested that a similar study be done in other sub-zones in Eritrea to find out if the same findings can be established.

Keywords: establishing, head-teacher, classroom, visitation, students, performance

1. Introduction

Scholars believe that instructional supervision at the school level determines a school's success or failure. Mutinda (2016) viewed supervision as a method used by school leaders to achieve acceptable performance standards. According to Clark (2015), supervision is defined as the role of improving classroom instruction through ongoing checking and teacher in-service education. Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2017) defined supervision as the practice of leading, monitoring, supervising, and evaluating individuals to achieve organizational objectives. Instructional supervision according to Day and Sammons (2016) is conducted with the purpose of improving classroom instruction for students. The techniques used by supervisors to supervise instruction are referred to as supervisory practices (Beach & Reinhartz, 2000).

According to Okumbe (1998), current supervisory practices emerged from a former United States education system in which teachers were supervised by city authorities. The clergy, school management, trustees, local elected officials, and citizen committees were in charge of supervision. Supervisory practices were more concerned with school management and meeting curricular requirements than with improving the process of classroom instruction. This was referred to as inspection because of its autocratic nature. Supervision of instruction in today's world is focused on enhancing classroom instruction for the advantage of both students and teachers. It also assists in determining teachers' strong and weak points as well as follow-up procedures targeted at strengthening the identified areas of weakness (Pont, 2020).

Inadequate classroom supervision, according to Ayot and Briggs (2000), leads to poor student performance. Comfort, Aina, and Idowu (2017) recommend principals spend more time visiting classrooms to enhance teachers' instructional duties and students' level of performance. This implies that schools cannot function effectively as learning organizations when teachers are unable to realize their key role and full potential in the teaching-learning process. Besides, effective teaching and learning may not occur if adequate and regular classroom supervision is lacking. Several scholars have conducted studies on instructional supervision. Tyagi (2010), for example, researched supervision of instruction and professional development for teachers in India. The study discovered that in private schools, classroom supervision practice was more common and has helped teachers in improving their teaching methods. However, head-teachers of public schools spent most of their time teaching regular classes as opposed to classroom supervision, homework inspection, and observing the general impact of teaching.

According to research conducted in the United States by Archibong (2012), school principals take on the role of school administration and classroom supervision by frequently visiting classes. The author further stated that observing classroom instruction to provide feedback to teachers is an important part of a head-teacher's supervisory practice that helps to enhance classroom instruction. It is recognized as a communication tool in which principals communicate various issues influencing classroom instruction. Nawaz and Yasin (2015) also observed that successful head-teachers are greatly visible in the school and focus on making critical observations about learning and professional progress while providing direct and immediate feedback. Ekpoh and Eze (2015) conducted a study in Nigeria on principal supervision techniques and teacher job performance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone, Cross River State. The findings of the study revealed that the more the principals used the supervisory technique of classroom visitation, the better the teachers' work performance in terms of instructional ability, classroom discipline, communication effectiveness, teaching techniques, and use of teaching aids. The study concluded that a supervisory technique of frequently visiting classes to monitor not just how teachers teach, but also the whole learning environment and teacher-student interaction, increases teachers' work performance. The researcher recommended that school principals conduct effective supervision of teachers' classroom teaching to improve teaching and learning in schools. Mavindu (2013) conducted a study in Kenya on the impact of principals' instructional supervision strategies on students' performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination in the Trans-Mara west district. The study concluded that principals who conducted consistent classroom observations and held post-observation conferences with teachers had a significant influence on teacher performance and hence students' performance. According to the study, principals should conduct post-observation conferences to analyze lesson observation, provide assistance, and minimize the observed challenges.

In Eritrea, the educational supervision system is organized at national, regional, sub-regional, and school levels. It is believed that improved supervision of instruction and support enhances the quality and standard of educational provision. However, due to various constraints, supervisory activities and support services have remained mostly under the mandates of head-teachers (MoE, 2012). Head-teachers are therefore required to supervise instructions through regular classroom visitations (MoE, 2017).

The current study attempted to answer the question: To what extent do head-teachers carry out classroom visits in their respective school?

A study conducted in Eritrea by Tedla (2012) on instructional leadership and school climate in secondary school concluded that only one-fourth of the head-teacher's time is spent on instructional activities; the rest of his time is spent on non-instructional activities. This research agrees with research conducted by Adgoy (2018) on the impact of head-teachers' leadership qualities on teacher motivation in public secondary schools in the Anseba Region of Eritrea. According to the study's findings head-teachers rarely visit classrooms. Musungu and Nasongo (2008) observed that in schools where students

perform well, the head-teachers spend a lot of time supervising classroom instructions. This means if head-teachers are fully committed in carrying out classroom visitations the students perform well.

Statistics from the Keren Sub-zone Office (2019) show that poor performance has been recorded in the National General Examinations Certificate (NGEC) in most public junior schools for the last four years (2016-2019). Junior schools in Eritrea refer to grades six, seven and eight. All students who complete grade eight are required to sit for the National General Examination Certificate (MoE, 2009). The successful students who achieve a minimum average of forty percent transit to the secondary level. In Keren Sub-zone, public junior schools are five in number and each has a significant number of annual admissions. However, most of the students in three public schools did not attain a minimum average of forty percent. For example, in 2016-2019, out of 4,378 students who sat the National General Examination, 2,716 students didn't meet the target (Keren Sub-zone Office, 2019). This translates that more than half percent of the students either repeat or drop out of the school system. In other words, for four years consecutively the three junior schools in Keren Sub-zone have been performing poorly in National Exams, even though performance in Eritrean National Examination is paramount to all learners.

Mwangi (2014) asserted that schools can enhance students' success through the supervisory practices of head-teachers. According to the author, it is the task of the head-teacher to set the pace, guide, and supervise the staff and students so that they can perform to their best. The findings of the local studies indicated that head-teachers' instructional supervision is inadequate; however, none of the studies focused on how head-teachers' classroom visitations affect students' performance. With increasing poor students' performance in the Keren Sub-zone, it is important to find out if head-teachers' classroom visitations have an impact on the academic achievement of students in public junior schools in the Keren Sub-zone.

2. Statement of the Problem

Even though it is the policy of the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of learning in Eritrea, students' performance still remains below the standards. It is clear from the study background that effective school supervision is a predictor of students' achievement; without it, all efforts are fruitless. Since the students' academic performance in public junior schools in Keren Sub-zone does not meet government standards, it is viable to carry out a research to determine if performance outcomes are connected to the head-teachers' classroom visitation. Unless this situation is addressed, public junior schools in the Keren Sub-zone will continue to record lower transition rates from junior to secondary schools. In addition, little has been done in Keren to address the poor performance of students in NGE. To bridge this gap, the study sought to investigate the influence of head-teachers' classroom visitation on students' performance in public junior schools in the Keren Sub-zone.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish how head-teachers' classroom visitation influences students' performance in public junior schools in Keren Sub-zone. Once the link is confirmed, the head-teachers will effectively play their classroom visitation tasks and consequently improve performance in the region and help the country's effort to achieve quality education for all the citizens.

2.2 Research Question

- How does classroom visitation by head-teachers influence students' performance in public junior schools in Keren Sub-zone, Anseba Region of Eritrea?

3. Conceptual Framework

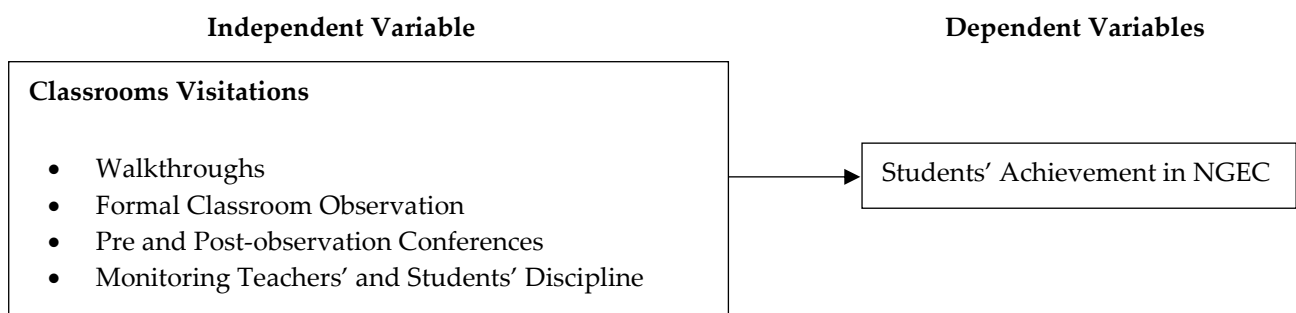


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
(Source: Researcher, 2022)

4. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by systems theory which was developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1973). The theory is characterized as a collection of various independent parts that work together in an interconnected way to achieve a goal. According to McShane and Von Glinio (2003), the organizational management system is made up of various internal subsystems that must always be in harmony with one another. They further stated that when organizations grow, they acquire more complex sub-systems that should work together to transform inputs into outputs. They also claimed that the interdependencies may easily become so complicated that a simple event in one sub-system can have significant unintended implications somewhere else in the organization. Schools, according to Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008), are complex and interdependent social systems. Teachers, students, resources, supervision, and facilities are units in a system which is the school. Thus, principals as school supervisors integrate and align the units and make each unit play its role. According to Mugambi (2015), the best way to research an institution like a school is to look at it as a system. Mugambi further stated that a school, as an organization, is made up of numerous subsystems that work together to make the greater system fit. If one of the inputs into the system fails to perform, then the larger performance of the system is affected. For example, if the head of school does

not supervise the teaching and learning process, teachers may become relaxed and learners may score poorly on National Examinations. Schools are social institutions in which two or more people engage in an organized way to attain common goals (Norlin, 2009).

Owens and Valesky (2011) described some main characteristics of schools in this definition: they are made up of people; they have goals; they accomplish their objectives through certain ways of collaborative work, and they interact with the surrounding environment. Head-teachers, in their positions as instructional supervisors, are required to coordinate the efforts of teachers to achieve the objective. Hoy and Miskel (2013) defined an educational institution as an open system that gets supplies of resources from the surroundings and converts them into output. According to these authors, an open system has five parts: inputs, transformations, outputs, feedback, and the environment. Lunenburg (2010) stated that:

“Schools use four types of environmental resources as input: human resources, which involve administrative, and personnel talent and labor. Financial resources like capital the school use to finance both ongoing and long-term operations. Physical resources such as supplies, materials, facilities, and equipment. Information resources are knowledge curricula, data, and other kinds of information by the school.” (p. 2).

As part of their supervisory practice, the head-teachers' job is to bring all of these resources together and to create a supportive atmosphere for classroom instruction that meets the objectives of the institution. According to Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008), student-teacher interaction is an important aspect of the learning process or transformation of students into becoming well-educated people who can contribute to society. To produce output, work is done in the system. Head-teacher's supervision of classroom instruction is an input to the school and can affect the school's outputs.

Feedback is information about the quality of the process. It serves as a control mechanism and allows the system to self-correct and improve (Bozkus, 2014). Negative feedback for example may be used to identify and fix the weakness in the process of transition inputs, or both, which together influence the institution's upcoming results. The school's immediate environment as stated by Lunenburg (2010) contains the political, social, and financial factors that impose on the institution. The work of the school head-teacher is distinguished by pressure in these situations. Therefore, today's head-teachers must plan and enhance internal operations while simultaneously monitoring and adjusting to external pressures.

According to Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008), head-teachers encounter several challenges that are unique to each school, such as teachers who are unwilling to cooperate, shortage of resources, and indiscipline of students among others. Despite the difficulties, head-teachers are required to look at the school as a whole and harmonize operations by frequently visiting classroom to increase student success.

5. Empirical Literature Review

5.1 Head-Teachers' Classroom Visitation and Students' Performance

The practice of a head-teacher visiting a classroom as a superior to see the teacher and students in action is referred to as classroom visitation (Ekpoh & Eze, 2015). Classroom visitation according to Mustiso, Kirim, & Itegi, (2020) is a supervisory technique used by supervisors to help teachers in the effective teaching and learning process. This is consistent with Sergiovanni and Robert (2009), who argue that classroom visits help instructional supervisors in identifying the potential of teachers who need to be improved. According to Nzabonimpa (2011), classroom visitation comprises not only visiting the classroom during the teaching and learning process but also carefully creating an environment conducive to the teaching and learning process.

This is backed by Fisher (2011) who said classroom visits include walkthroughs and formal lesson observations. The presence of the head-teachers in school, as well as managing by walking around ensures that the activities run smoothly (Kimeu, 2010). This is supported by Zepeda (2014) who asserted effective supervisors do a walk-through which is a brief, unstructured, non-evaluative classroom observation to alert teachers to make sure that they are making proper use of teaching time and to monitor the classroom atmosphere. According to Saleh Garba, Waweru, & Kaugi, (2019) classroom visit is important to ensure teachers' regular attendance, punctuality and use of appropriate resources and methods.

A qualitative study conducted in China by Li (2014) found that principals carry out frequently classroom visits as a chief evaluative action. According to the results of the study principals' primary key role in their daily routines was supervision. The study by Li investigated how principals' leadership practices affect the work performance of teachers, while the current study looked at how classroom visitation of head-teachers influence students' performance. The information was obtained from ten elementary school principals in Shenzhen using interviews whereas the data for the current study was collected through different tools such as questionnaires, interviews, and documentary analysis.

In Uganda secondary schools, Malunda, Onen, Musaazi and Oonyu (2016) conducted research to assess the supervision of instruction and pedagogic practices of teachers. The study respondents were teachers, principals, and educational officers. The researcher employed a descriptive cross-sectional research approach. The study concluded that head-teachers prefer frequent walk-throughs to determine exactly what was going on in the classrooms and to ensure that the teaching-learning process was progressing as expected. This implies principals who use walk-throughs as a type of supervision of instruction can improve educational quality, resulting in higher students' performance.

In Mwala Sub-county of Kenya, Ngui (2018) conducted research in public secondary schools on the impact of principals' supervision of instruction on students' learning outcomes. The researcher adopted a descriptive survey research method and

information was collected from 7 principals and 86 teachers. The study's findings indicated that principals were not monitoring what was going on in classes and throughout the school. Poor students' performance, according to the study, is linked to principals who sit in their offices for long periods without going to see what is going on outside the office. The examined literature from Uganda and Kenya were focused on secondary schools, and both employed a descriptive survey research technique. However, the current study was conducted in junior schools and employed a mixed method. The study also involved students who were excluded from both studies to add knowledge to their conclusions.

Griffins (1994) emphasized formal classroom observation, arguing that to provide school-based professional development, head-teachers must conduct regular formal observations of their teaching staff, take detailed notes in the lesson observation, and also work with a strong sense of dedication to communicate their reflections with teachers. Ankomah (2002) added that in many successful schools, the head-teachers sit in the classroom during instructional time and take notes, which they later review with the teachers. Zepeda and Mayers (2004) also stated that physical classroom observation is the only appropriate method for providing teachers with detailed information about their teaching and interactions with their students. During physical lesson observation according to (Okumbe, 2012), head-teachers need to pay close consideration to the integration of lectures, the ability of the teacher to manage student discipline, and the effectiveness of the teacher to offer fitting feedback.

Al-Kiyumi and Hammad (2019) conducted research in the Sultanate of Oman in Western Asia to look at the opinions of local teacher supervisors on their evolving responsibilities during a time of educational renewal using mixed methods. According to the findings of the study, classroom observation was the most commonly used supervisory practice, followed by observation conferences with teachers. Al-Kiyumi and Hammad's study focused on regional teacher supervisors' perceptions of their new roles and practices, leaving out how classroom observation impacts students' performance hence, the focus of the current study.

According to the findings of research conducted in Ethiopia by Tesema (2014), head-teachers did not perform appropriate classroom observation. The outcome of the study was also showed that many of the supervisors left the classroom before the period was over. The study aimed to investigate Kamashi zone public secondary schools' internal supervision approaches and challenges. The data was collected and analyzed using a descriptive survey approach. The study recommended that supervisors get adequate in-service training to improve their supervisory skills. Tesema's research centered on Kamashi zone public secondary schools' internal supervision approaches and challenges. However, the study did not attempt to investigate how head-teachers' classroom observations impact students' performance. The current study, therefore, addressed the gap by investigating how head-teachers' classroom visitation influence students' performance in public junior schools.

After the actual lesson observation, as stated by James, David, and Thinguri (2014) the head-teacher and teacher come together to perform the post-observation discussion. According to these researchers, the aim of meeting after the real lesson observation is to provide teachers with feedback on their teaching performance. Constructive feedback provided by head-teachers enables teachers to change for the better, and they are also able to correct their mistakes and improve classroom instruction (Usman, 2015). According to Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2005), supervisors can use directive, collaborative, as well as non-directive approaches to resolving issues that arise during post-observation conferences. Supporting this view, Ghamrawi, Ghamrawi, and Shal (2019) argued that education supervisors vary their approaches with teachers in school taking into account their years of experience, preferences, needs, and abilities.

In Zimbabwe, a case study was conducted by Tshabalala (2013) on teachers' perceptions of classroom instructional supervision in the Nkayi District. Teachers who took part in the research pointed out that they valued timely post-instructional discussion. According to the study, teachers appreciate constructive feedback from their supervisors since it helped them in improving their teaching methods. The study concluded that classroom observations alone are insufficient unless immediate feedback is provided to the supervisee. More discussions should take place immediately after lesson observation between supervisors and supervisees. Tshabalala's study used a qualitative research method to assess teachers' perceptions of classroom instructional supervision. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. However, the current study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate how classroom visitation by head-teachers influences the students' academic achievement in junior public schools of Keren.

6. Research Methodology

The study employed mixed-method approaches with a concurrent triangulation design, whereby both quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently. The study targeted all public junior schools in Keren Sub-zone Anseba Region. The schools were stratified as high-performing and low-performing schools based on the students' performance in General National Examinations. Then systematic sampling, simple random sampling and purposeful sampling were used to select 44 teachers, 326 students, five head-teachers, and two Educational Officers of Keren Sub-zone. A total of 377 respondents took part in the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and students, whereas interview was conducted to get information from head-teachers and Educational Officers. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data with the help of SPSS Version 21, and reported in frequency tables, percentages, graphs, and charts. The qualitative data was organized into themes based on the research questions and presented in a narrative form and direct quotations.

7. Research Findings

The researcher, with the help of a research assistant, distributed 326 questionnaires to grade 8 students and 44 questionnaires to teachers at public junior schools in the Keren Sub-zone. The researcher also interviewed five head-teachers and two educational officers. The total response rate for this study was 95.5%. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2018), a response rate of 70% and above is classified as excellent. Therefore, the response rate for the current study was excellent for processing the analysis.

7.1 The Influence of Head-Teachers' Classroom Visitation on Students' Academic Performance

The study sought to investigate the extent to which head-teachers' classroom visitation influences students' performance in Keren Sub-zone public junior schools. The researcher administered questionnaires to teachers and students and interviewed head-teachers and educational officers. Responses from the teachers were classified into two categories: high-performing schools and low-performing schools. In a similar way, the responses from students were considered. Teachers and students were given five choices and were requested to choose the response that best represented their feelings on a five-point scale ranging from "SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, and SD = Strongly Disagree." The findings were presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Teachers' Responses on Classroom Visitation by Head-Teachers (H/T= Head-Teacher)

Statements (n=16)	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
H/T carries out supervision by walking around.	2	12.5	12	75.0	1	6.3	0	0.0	1	6.3
H/T monitors students' discipline.	1	6.3	10	62.5	2	12.5	1	6.3	2	12.5
H/T monitors teachers' discipline.	3	18.75	11	68.8	1	6.3	1	6.3	0	0.0
H/T comes to sit in class and observes the teaching.	1	6.3	10	62.5	2	12.5	1	6.3	2	12.5
H/T conducts pre-observation discussion with teachers	2	12.5	9	56.3	3	18.8	0	0.0	2	12.5
H/T provides feedback on lesson observation.	2	12.5	11	68.8	1	6.3	2	12.5	0	0.0
H/T employs a friendly approach during supervision.	4	25.0	6	37.5	6	37.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Low Performing Schools (n=26)										
H/T carries out supervision by walking around.	3	11.5	4	15.4	4	15.4	8	30.8	7	26.9
H/T monitors students' discipline.	2	7.7	10	38.5	6	30.1	5	19.2	3	11.5
H/T monitors teachers' discipline.	5	19.2	18	69.2	1	3.8	2	7.7	0	0.0

H/T comes to sit in class and observe the teaching.	3	11.5	4	15.4	1	3.8	13	50.0	5	19.2
H/T conducts pre-observation discussions with teachers.	5	19.2	13	50	5	19.2	3	11.5	0	0
H/T provides feedback on lesson observation.	1	7.7	10	38.5	3	11.5	7	26.9	5	19.2
H/T employs a friendly approach during supervision.	3	11.5	12	46.2	3	11.5	7	26.9	1	7.7

Table 1 indicates that out of the 16 teachers in high-performing schools, 2(12.5%) strongly agreed with the statement that head-teachers carry out classroom visitation by walking around; 12(75%) agreed, 1(6.3%) remained undecided, and 1(6.3%) strongly disagreed. This shows that the majority of the teachers (87.5%) reported that their head-teachers carry out classroom visitation by walking around. This can give a reason why performance in these schools was better compared to low-performing schools. During the interviews, one of the head-teachers confirmed the findings by saying:

“I usually conduct walk-throughs and observe educational activities, and sometimes I delegate the responsibility to department heads” (Head-teacher 4, interview, February 24, 2022).

In low-performing schools, out of 26 teachers, 3(11.5%) strongly agreed, 4(15.4%) agreed, 4(15%) were undecided, 8(30%) disagreed, whereas 7(26.9%) strongly disagreed with the statement that the head-teacher carries out supervision by walking around. From the presentation, it can be concluded that the majority of the teachers, 56% felt that head-teachers' classroom visitation by walking around was not satisfactory. This indicates that poor supervision of instructional activities influences performance because teachers and students lack proper guidance and support. The interpretation is that head-teachers need to strengthen the supervision systems in their schools to improve students' performance. These findings agree with Fullan (2007), who stated that there is no effectiveness in instructional supervision because principals and vice-principals spend much time in their offices.

Regarding supervision by walking around, the interviewed head-teachers from low-performing schools said:

“I always conduct walk-throughs because this method of supervision helps me to know how the teaching and learning are progressing and to monitor the discipline of teachers and students.” (Head-teacher 3, interview, February 23, 2022).

“I visit classrooms to see how teachers are teaching. If there is any problem, I provide guidance and directions to the teachers.” (Head-teacher 1, interview, February 21, 2022).

The findings from the interviews with the head-teachers in low-performing schools show that they always conduct classroom visitations. This may not be the case, since the majority of teachers from low-performing schools reported poor supervision by head-teachers, particularly in terms of supervision by walking around. The argument is that head-teachers must increase their supervision mechanisms in order to encourage teachers and students to work hard in order to meet the school's academic goals.

Classroom visitation comprises not only visiting the classroom during the teaching and learning process but also carefully creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning (Nzabonimpa, 2011). In consideration of this, the researcher wanted to explore the extent to which head-teachers supervise teachers' and students' discipline. Out of 16 respondents in high-performing schools, 1(6.3%) strongly agreed that head-teachers monitor students' discipline, 10(62.5%) agreed, 2(12.5%) remained undecided, 1(6.3 %) disagreed, whereas 2(12%) strongly disagreed with the statement. From the data, the majority of teachers 11(67.8%) agreed with the statement. Therefore, it could be concluded that head-teachers adequately monitor students' discipline. However, in low-performing schools, out of the 26 respondents, 2(7.7%) strongly agreed with the statement, 10(38.5%) agreed, 6(30.1%) were undecided, 5(19.2%) disagreed, and 3(11.5%) strongly disagreed with the same statement. According to the report, only 12(46.2%) of teachers agreed with the statement. The rest, 14(53.8%), were not satisfied with head-teachers' monitoring practices for students' discipline. From the finding, it is clear that head-teachers overlooked this supervision practice and contributed to the poor performance of students. The findings concurred with Musungu and Nasongo (2008), whose study concluded that in schools where students perform well, the principals spend a lot of time supervising instructions.

The researcher further sought to investigate the extent to which head-teachers supervise teachers' discipline. Respondents from the high-performing schools 3(18.75%) strongly agreed with the statement, 11(68.8%) agreed, 1(6.3%) undecided, and 1(6.3 %) disagreed, with the statement. This indicates that the majority, 87.6%, of the respondents agreed with the statement. From the data, it is clear that head-teachers in high-performing schools put a lot of effort into monitoring teachers' and students' discipline. Njogu (2020) indicated that head-teachers often move around the classrooms observing teaching and the classroom environment supports these findings.

Similar results were obtained from low-performing schools, which show that 5(19.2%) strongly agreed, 18(69.2%) agreed, 1(3.8%) were undecided, and 2(7.7%) disagreed with the statement. From the data, 88.4% agreed that head-teachers supervise teachers' discipline. In the interpretation, head-teachers in low-performing schools were more concerned with the monitoring of teachers' discipline while tend to reject students' discipline. It can be suggested that head-teachers need to monitor the whole system of the school. These findings concurred with the theory that is guiding the study. According to systems theory if one of the inputs into the system fails to perform, then the larger performance of the system is affected. Therefore, the low performance of students can be attributed to a lack of adequate monitoring systems in some public junior schools.

In the open-ended questions, teachers agreed that head-teachers' classroom visitation influence students' performance. Some of the responses quoted from low-performing schools are as follows:

"Regular classroom visits by the head-teacher have a significant influence on students' academic achievement; nevertheless, classroom visits are rarely prioritized by head-teachers." (Teachers' Comment, February 2022)

"Classroom visitation contributes a lot to students' performance however, there is not enough supervision as needed due to overloaded work of head-teacher." (Teachers' Comment, February 2022)

Based on these findings, it is possible to conclude that principals should delegate some of their administrative responsibilities. This can help them to dedicate more time to important aspects of school management, such as instructional supervision and students' performance.

On the item whether head-teachers come to sit in class to observe the lesson, out of 16 respondents in high-performing schools, 11(68.5%) were in agreement with the statement, 2(12.5%) were undecided while 3(18.8%) disagreed. From the data majority of the respondents agreed that head-teachers conduct actual lesson observation. However, the responses in low-performing schools were quite different, out of 26 teachers, 7(26.9%) agreed, 1(3.8%) remained undecided and 18(69.2%) disagreed with the statement that head-teachers conduct lesson observation. From the results, it is clear that head-teachers rarely conduct lesson observation. The findings from poorly performing schools contradicted with Al-Kiyumi and Hammad (2019) who in their study found that classroom observation is the most commonly practiced supervisory technique, followed by observation conferences with teachers.

During the interviews, the head-teachers in both categories of schools reported that they do lesson observation. However, according to the interviewed Educational Officers¹, the lesson observation was not adequate. The researcher asked the Educational Officer the following question: "Do head-teachers accompany teachers to classes for lesson observation?" The response was as presented:

"Head-teachers conduct lesson observation when the teachers are teaching but it is not adequate. We used to encourage head-teachers to make regular classroom observations to be sure that what the teachers delivered in the classroom is appropriate and beneficial to the students. The reason is that visiting the classroom makes the teacher prepare the lesson as required." (Educational Officer 1, February 28, 2022).

The researcher further sought to investigate the extent to which head-teachers conduct pre-observation discussions with teachers before they come for lesson observation. From the data, in high-performing schools, 2(12.5%) strongly agreed with

the statement, 9(56.3%) agreed, 3(18.8%) were undecided, while 2(12.5%) strongly disagreed. This shows that 68.8% of the respondents were in agreement with the statement. Correspondingly, in non-performing schools 5(19.2%) strongly agreed, 13(50.0%) agreed, 5(19.2%) were undecided, while 3(11.5%) disagreed with the statement. From the data, 69.2% of respondents were in agreement with the statement. This implies that head-teachers conduct pre-observation discussions with the teachers about the lessons before the actual observations, which may have a positive impact on classroom instructions and ultimately, student performance.

Regarding the item on whether head-teachers provide feedback on lessons observation, the results show that the majority 81.3% of the respondents in high-performing schools were in agreement with the statement. Similarly, 53.9% of the respondents in low-performing schools agreed with the statement that head-teachers provided feedback. However, the teachers' responses previously presented, confirmed that head-teachers in low-performing schools do not conduct lesson observation. In this regard, one of the interviewed head-teachers from low-performing schools said that:

"Once a year, I conduct a lesson observation and hold a brief discussion with teachers and provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. This allows a subject teacher to develop in the teaching and learning process." (Head-teacher 3, interview, February 23, 2022)

One Educational Officer added;

"Many of the head-teachers do not have time to conduct lesson observation and provide feedback. Besides some of the head-teachers lack the basic required skill to supervise teachers, especially with the newly introduced student-centered approach to teaching. Teachers need more regular lesson observations for more guidance." (Educational Officer 2, interview, February 28, 2022)

Based on these responses, it is clear that class observation sessions were limited to only once a year, resulting in inadequate feedback. It is an indication that a lot still needs to be done.

Instructional supervisors therefore should engage teachers in frequent, continuous, and more concrete discussions about teaching to improve students' performance (Atieno, 2019). The data also implies that head-teachers lacked the basic supervision skills required for successful lesson observation. The notion is that head-teachers should be given opportunities for training and development to improve their supervisory practices and students' level of performance. These results are supported by Okumbe (1998) who indicated that an instructional supervisor requires basic supervisory skills such as technical, conceptual, and interpersonal skills.

On the statement whether head-teachers employ a friendly approach during lesson observation discussion, in high-performing schools 4(25%) strongly agreed with

the statement that their head-teacher employ a friendly approach during lesson discussion, 10(62.4%) agreed, 1(6.3%) remained undecided, 1(6.3 %) disagreed. Equally, in low-performing schools, 3(11.5%) strongly agreed, 12(46.2%) agreed, 3(11.5) were undecided, 7(26.9 %) disagreed while 1(7.7 %) strongly disagreed. This indicated that the majority of the teachers from high-performing and low-performing schools agreed with the statement that their head-teachers employ a friendly approach during the lesson. This allows teachers to voice their concerns about classroom instruction. Researchers have shown empirically that respectful relationships between teachers and their supervisors can improve teaching. Rous (2004) for instance, found that supervisors who showed respect for staff and families and demonstrated caring for children facilitated effective classroom instruction. Head-teachers in low-performing schools, therefore, have room to improve student achievement.

Table 2: Students' Responses on Head-teachers' Classroom Visitation (H/T= Head Teacher)

Statements (n=102)	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
H/T carries out supervision by walking around.	11	10.8	57	55.9	5	4.9	26	25.5	3	2.9
H/T monitors students' discipline.	17	16.7	38	37.3	9	8.8	32	31.4	6	5.9
H/T monitors teachers' discipline.	37	36.3	29	28.5	7	6.9	16	15.7	13	12.7
H/T Comes to sit in class and observes when a teacher is teaching.	23	22.6	39	38.2	9	8.8	16	15.7	15	14.7
Low Performing Schools (n=211)										
H/T carries out supervision by walking around.	18	8.5	75	35.5	9	4.3	74	35.1	35	16.5
H/T monitors students' discipline.	19	9.0	68	32.3	35	16.6	73	34.6	16	7.6
H/T monitors teachers' discipline.	23	10.9	78	36.9	17	8.1	86	40.8	7	3.3
H/T comes to sit in class and observes when a teacher is teaching.	29	13.7	75	35.5	12	5.7	50	23.7	45	21.3

Table 2 indicates that out of 102 student respondents in high-performing schools, 11(10.8%) strongly agreed with the statement that head-teachers carry out supervision by walking around, 57(55.9%) agreed, 5(4.9%) were undecided, while 26(25.5%) disagreed, and 3(2.9%) strongly agreed with the statement. The findings of the study demonstrate that the majority of the students 60.8 % agreed that their head-teachers perform walk-around in the classrooms to monitor school activities. This implies that head-teachers were mostly present in school and had time to supervise instructional activities. It is, therefore, possible to conclude that at schools where head-teacher supervision practices are well-practiced, students' academic performance increases. These findings agreed with Nawaz and Yasin (2015), who discovered that successful principals are very visible in the school and focus on making critical observations about learning.

In comparison to high-performing schools, the findings from low-performing schools were quite different. The majority 109 (51.7 %) of the students who participated in the study, disagreed with the statement that head-teachers supervise instructional activities by moving around the classrooms, 93 (44.0 %) agreed, and 9 (4.3%) were uncertain. Based on the presentation, it is clear that the visible presence of the head-teachers around the classrooms was limited. This lack of presence and concern can be interpreted as contributing to poor academic achievement in schools. These findings were supported by Adgoy (2018) in Eritrea, who discovered that head-teachers rarely visit classrooms.

To confirm the extent to which head-teachers classroom visitation influences student performance the researcher asked the students the following question "Explain how head- teachers' classroom visitation influence students' performance." Some responses of students from both categories of schools were as follows:

"Visitation of classrooms has a significant influence on students' performance because the presence of the head-teacher in school inspires students and teachers to respect and follow the school policies." (Students' Comment, February 2022)

"The head-teacher discourages student's misconduct, such as missing class and disrespecting school rules, and encourages students to study hard so for me it has a positive impact on performance." (Students' Comment, February 2022)

"Classroom visits and inspections by the head teacher, in my opinion, have a significant impact on students' performance since teachers keep class time when the head-teacher is there." (Students' Comment, February 2022)

Other students had different opinions. The following were a few of their responses:

"The head-teacher constantly comes to class and walks around the classroom, but he doesn't do anything to assist us to prepare for National General Exams, like revision lessons, thus for me, the head- teacher's classroom visitation has no positive effect on our performance." (Students' Comment, February 2022)

"Strong classroom visitation is needed to help us to get quality education and to perform well because sometimes teachers either miss the class or come late to the class. The head-teacher must monitor both students and teachers to ensure that instructional time is respected." (Students' Comment, February 2022).

According to the findings, effective head-teacher supervision is key in schools. The data also implies that head-teachers classroom supervision was inadequate since they

were not monitoring teachers in respecting the instructional time and assisting students in improving their academic performance.

The researcher further investigated the extent to which head-teachers monitor students' discipline, the majority 55(54.0%) of the students in high-performing schools were in agreement with the statement, 9(8.8%) were undecided, and 38(37.3%) disagreed with the statement. From the findings, it can be said that there was a relationship between students' discipline and academic performance because head-teachers adequately monitored students' performance. These results are in line with the study findings by Bernard (2015). According to the study head-teachers frequently monitored students' discipline in primary schools.

On the same item, in low-performing schools, 87(41.3%), agreed with the statement that head-teachers supervise students' discipline, while 89(42.2%) disagreed and 35 (16.6) were uncertain. These findings are consistent with teacher responses observed earlier, indicating that in low-performing schools, monitoring of students' discipline is insufficient. Based on data, it is reasonable to conclude that head-teachers neglect their supervisory obligations of supervising students' discipline, resulting in low student performance. These findings supported the notion of Scientific Management Theory, which states that inadequate supervision leads to the poor achievement of organizational goals.

To investigate whether the head-teachers monitor teachers' discipline, out of 102 students who participated in the study in high-performing schools, 66(64.8) agreed with the statement, 7(6.9) were undecided, whereas 29(28.4) disagreed with the statement. The data indicate that head-teachers supervise teachers' discipline in high-performing schools. Similar results were obtained in low-performing schools, out of 211 students, 101(47.8%) agreed with the statement that head-teachers supervise teachers' discipline, while 17(8.1%) did not take any side, whereas 93(44.1%) disagreed with the statement. These findings agreed with the responses of teachers observed earlier who indicated adequate monitoring of teachers' discipline by head-teachers. From the data, it is clear that in low-performing schools, head-teachers supervise teachers' discipline. Therefore, students' low performance may be attributed to other supervisory practices. The researcher was also interested to investigate whether head-teachers come to sit in class and observes when a teacher is teaching, the findings showed that 62(70.6%) of the students at high-performing schools agreed with the statement that head-teachers come to observe lesson presentations, while 31(30.4%) disagreed and 9(8.8 %) were uncertain. From the data, it is possible to conclude that head-teachers of high-performing schools undertook formal classroom observations, which explains why they consistently do well in national exams. These findings concurred with Chapman (2001) who observed that when education in the school is frequently observed, teachers plan and arrange their classes better, which has a significant effect on the students' success. In low-performing schools, 104(49.2%) agreed with the statement that head-teachers come to observe lessons, while 95(45.0%) disagreed and 12(5.7%) were undecided. According to the majority of student responses, head-teachers undertake formal class observations;

nevertheless, this contradicts the teacher responses observed previously, thus head-teachers must re-evaluate their supervisory practices in terms of formal lesson observation.

The researcher was also interested to find out if there is a significant difference in the responses of teachers and students in high-performing schools compared to the responses of teachers and students in low-performing schools. An independent samples t-test was carried out to compare responses regarding the head-teacher's class visitations. The result showed that there was a significant difference in the responses of the teachers from high-performing schools (mean= 3.72; SD = 0.56) and teachers from low performing schools (Mean = 3.26; SD = 0.60). The computed value of t [40 degrees of freedom (df)] = 2.434, and the p-value = 0.020. These results suggest that the head-teacher's classroom visitations are viewed differently by teachers from high performing schools as compared to teachers from low performing schools.

Similarly, there was a significant difference in the responses of students from high-performing schools ($M = 3.35$; $SD = 0.88$) and the students' responses from low-performing schools ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.71$). The computed value of t [at 311 degrees of freedom (df)] = 3.98, and the p-value = 0.00. This means head-teachers' classroom visitation was also viewed differently by students from high-performing schools as compared to students from low-performing schools. This may explain why students' performance in these schools varied.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study established that in high-performing schools, head-teachers practiced classroom visitation activities better than those in poorly performing schools, thus low performance in some schools in Keren Sub-zone. Head-teachers were found not to be keen on some classroom visitation aspects such as supervision by walking around, monitoring of students' discipline, and physical lesson observation which are commonly practiced by head-teachers in high-performing schools. The computed independent sample T-test also revealed a significant difference in the views of respondents in high performing schools compared to low performing schools, which may explain why students' performance differed. It was further noted that the results obtained from the field support the Systems Theory, which looks at the relationships between the parts and how they work and interact as a whole.

The study recommends the head-teachers improve their practices of physical lesson observation because conducting instructional supervision by checking only some documents without observing how teachers teach in the classrooms did not assist teachers in improving classroom instruction and students' performance. The ministry of education should intensify its supervision in the public junior schools to strengthen instructional and supervisory practices by the head teachers. The study recommends that similar studies be done in other sub-zones in Eritrea as such would help determine if the same findings can be established.

Conflict of Interest Statement

As authors of this Journal Article, we have no conflicts of interest to declare. We have all seen and agreed with the contents of the manuscript and there is no financial interest to report. We certify that the submission is original work and is not under review at any other publication.

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