

INFLUENCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ON IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY YEARS OF EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN MOIBEN SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

Beatrice Jebiwot Cherono, Orpha Kemunto Ongiti and Charles Nyaranga
School of Education, Africa Nazarene University, Kenya
Corresponding Author's Email: cheronobeatrice40@gmail.com

Abstract

This study sought to examine the influence of school leadership on the implementation of Early Years of Education (EYE) curriculum in Moiben Sub County, Kenya. It also sought to examine how school leaders contribute to the successful implementation of the EYE curriculum. A sample of pre-primary curriculum teachers, school administrators, and Board of Management participated in the study to gather their perspectives on the leadership practices that facilitate or hinder curriculum implementation. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining questionnaires and interviews, thematic and document analysis to collect and analyze data. The findings of the study indicate that at 0.95 confidence interval level, $r = 0.258$. This proves that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. The results also show a statistically significant relationship ($p \leq 0.05$) between instructional leadership on implementation of early years of education. The study concludes that school leadership significantly influences the implementation of the Early Years of Education curriculum, with administrative leadership having the strongest impact, followed by supervisory practices and instructional leadership. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with Teacher Service Commission (TSC), should provide targeted professional development for headteachers to strengthen instructional leadership skills, focusing on curriculum guidance, teacher mentorship, and fostering learner-centered teaching practices.

Keywords: curriculum, early years of education, instructional leadership

Introduction

School leadership practices are pivotal in shaping educational outcomes and fostering an environment conducive to teaching and learning. According to Agbenyega and Klibthong (2022), school leadership is a critical determinant of students' learning outcomes and influences the extent to which students follow instructions. Effective school leaders indirectly impact students by creating conditions that support teaching and learning, setting clear directions, fostering collaboration among teachers, and promoting professional development aligned with school goals. Similarly, Grissom, Egalite, and Lindsay (2021) identified key leadership styles—transformational, instructional/pedagogical, and distributed leadership—that positively influence academic outcomes. These styles often operate together to strengthen school organization, culture, and teaching quality. Successful leadership practices encompass setting directions, developing people, redesigning organizational structures, and improving instructional programs. Fabry, Barbelett, and Knaus (2022) emphasized that such practices are instrumental in achieving school objectives, while Ackah-Jnr (2022) highlighted that effective leadership fosters collaboration among teachers, builds organizational capacity, and empowers teacher leaders—factors critical to sustained school improvement.

The effectiveness of school leadership, however, is highly context-dependent. In India, factors such as school size, location, and student demographics influence how principals adapt their strategies. During crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, school leaders demonstrated flexibility by managing crises while maintaining educational continuity. In

Morocco, the implementation of early years of education has been guided by ambitious government programs and partnerships aimed at improving access, quality, and governance. Khennou et al. (2023) emphasized that Moroccan leaders play a critical role in creating enabling environments, enhancing teacher training, and strengthening management capabilities, aligning institutional practices with the government's strategic education reforms (2015–2030). Initiatives include pre-primary education for children aged 4–5 by 2027, ensuring equitable access and establishing quality standards for preschool services.

Despite these initiatives, challenges persist across many contexts. In Nigeria, Obiweluzor (2022) noted that inadequate funding, insufficient trained personnel, and poor infrastructure hinder effective early childhood education implementation, despite recognition of pre-primary education as essential in the National Policy on Education. In Kenya, school leadership similarly plays a pivotal role in shaping early childhood development programs. Mulandi (2019) observed that effective leaders act as catalysts for curriculum reforms by aligning institutional practices with national goals, while Ameli, Ouda, and Ayaga (2022) highlighted that administrators' guidance and supervision ensure teachers adhere to prescribed curricula, improving teacher performance and student outcomes.

While the importance of effective school leadership is widely acknowledged, there remains limited empirical evidence on how specific leadership practices influence the implementation of early childhood education across diverse contexts. Most existing research tends to focus on general leadership styles or the management of secondary and primary schools, often overlooking the unique dynamics and challenges present in early childhood settings. This creates a significant knowledge gap in understanding the mechanisms through which school leaders directly or indirectly support teachers, foster professional development, and shape classroom practices that enhance young children's learning outcomes. Additionally, early childhood education presents distinct requirements, such as developmentally appropriate pedagogy, play-based learning, and individualized attention, which necessitate specialized leadership approaches that may differ from those effective at higher levels of education. Addressing this gap is therefore crucial, not only for informing policies and interventions that strengthen leadership capacity but also for ensuring that early childhood programs achieve their intended outcomes, provide equitable access, and support holistic development for all children.

Objective of the Study

To examine the influence of instructional leadership on the effective implementation of the Early Years Education (EYE) curriculum in Moiben Sub-County, Kenya, with a view to informing policies and practices that enhance school leadership, teacher support, and learner-centered teaching.

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between instructional leadership and implementation of early years of education curriculum in Moiben Sub-County, Kenya.

Literature Review

Rehman, Khan, and Waheed, (2019) investigated the role of instructional leadership in the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in Pakistan. The study explored school heads' perceptions regarding their school leadership styles. The study adopted a

qualitative research design. The sample of the study consisted of 10 male and 10 female head teachers from Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed that school heads adopted several leadership styles. The main leadership styles included instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and moral leadership. These different leadership styles were adopted keeping in view the needs of different situations that heads found themselves working in. The study has important implications for school management, schoolteachers, researchers, and policy makers. Limited research on culturally adaptive instructional leadership models specific to -economic context. Moreover, Lack of standardized teacher training programs tailored for EYE curriculum implementation and poor alignment between national education policies and classroom realities remain underexplored.

The Implementation of early years of education (EYE) curriculum in Nigeria faces systematic challenges linked to instructional leadership practices. According to Ugwuanyi and Pietech (2024) examined a study on instruction leadership on implementation of new curriculum in Nigeria. Leadership for learning has emerged as a holistic leadership behavior that combines aspects of instructional leadership, transformational leadership and shared leadership. Little is known about how this type of leadership develops and what was ECE teachers, school leaders, and caregivers in public and private early childhood.

Instructional leadership is widely recognized as important for school improvement and a significant tool for creating an effective teaching and learning environment. The British Council is committed to promoting and developing instructional leadership and is offering programmes to be developed in several African countries, including Tanzania. These programmes focus on developing and improving instructional leadership in schools. The programme is provided by British Council facilitators to school leaders and is delivered over a period of six to nine months, including time for a school-based project. Previous research shows that leadership in many sub-Saharan African countries, including Tanzania, is primarily administrative and that instructional leadership is often neglected. Data were collected with 20 participants of the British Council programme, all primary school leaders, chosen through volunteer and purposive sampling. The findings reported gains from participation, notably greater understanding of key concepts such as vision and missions distributed in leadership, and instructional leadership processes, notably classroom observation. The study noted that alignment between national education policies and classroom realities remain underexplored.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, specifically a convergent parallel design, where quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and then integrated to provide comprehensive insights into the influence of instructional leadership on EYE curriculum implementation. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to pre-primary curriculum teachers and school administrators, while qualitative data were gathered via semi-structured interviews with the same participants and selected members of the Board of Management (BoM) to capture in-depth perspectives on leadership practices that facilitate or hinder curriculum implementation. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants based on their involvement in curriculum delivery and school management, ensuring that those most knowledgeable about instructional leadership and EYE curriculum implementation were included. The sample size comprised teachers, administrators, and BoM members.

The reliability of the questionnaire was established using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of <0.7 indicating acceptable internal consistency. Content validity was ensured through expert review by the study supervisors. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns and relationships, while qualitative data from interviews and document analysis were analyzed thematically, following systematic coding procedures to identify key themes related to leadership practices and curriculum implementation. Finally, findings from both data strands were integrated to provide a holistic understanding of how instructional leadership influences EYE curriculum implementation.

Findings

The study's objective sought to establish the relationship between Instructional Leadership and Implementation of Early Years of Education. To achieve this objective, the following null hypothesis was formulated:

H01: There is no significant relationship between Instructional Leadership on Implementation of Early Years of Education. The findings are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Correlation between Instructional Leadership and Implementation of Early Years Education (EYE)

Variable	Implementation of EYE	Instructional Leadership
Implementation of EYE	1.000	0.258
Instructional Leadership	0.258	1.000
Significance (1-tailed)	—	0.017
N (Sample Size)	298	298

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

As indicated in table 1, At 0.95 significant level, the results show that the sig. (1- tailed) 0.017 and $r = 0.258$. this proves that there is a positive, weak relationship($r = 0.258$) and statistically significant relationship ($p \leq 0.05$) between instructional leadership on implementation of early years of education. The positive correlation indicates that when school leaders engage in these activities, there is a favorable effect on the implementation of early years education. The weak correlation suggests that other variables may mediate or moderate this relationship, such as resource availability or teacher motivation. The findings align with literature by Rehman et al. (2019), who noted that instructional leadership is a cornerstone of curriculum fidelity, particularly in transitional or reform environments such as the CBC era in Kenya. The findings were supported by Bust and Anania, (2023) who examined a study on instructional leadership on implementation of early years of education curriculum in Tanzania. Instructional leadership is widely recognized as important for school improvement and a significant tool for creating an effective teaching and learning environment. The findings show many reported gains from participation, notably greater

understanding of key concepts such as vision and missions distributed leadership, and instructional leadership processes, notably classroom observation.

Conclusion

The study concludes that instructional leadership has a significant impact on the implementation of the Early Years Education (EYE) curriculum by shaping effective curriculum delivery, enhancing teacher motivation, and influencing classroom practices. Headteachers who actively guide and monitor instructional activities create supportive environments that facilitate adherence to pedagogical standards and improve learning outcomes. Beyond confirming the positive relationship between leadership and curriculum implementation, the findings suggest that instructional leadership can serve as a strategic tool for school improvement, highlighting the need for targeted professional development programs for school leaders. These insights have practical implications for policymakers and education managers, emphasizing that strengthening instructional leadership capacity is essential not only for improving teacher performance but also for ensuring quality and equitable early childhood education across schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Teacher Service Commission (TSC), design and implement targeted professional development programs specifically for headteachers. These programs should aim to strengthen the instructional leadership capacity of school leaders by equipping them with the necessary skills to provide effective curriculum guidance, mentor and support teachers, and promote learner-centered teaching practices. By enhancing headteachers' ability to supervise and guide classroom instruction, these initiatives can ensure that teachers are supported in delivering high-quality education, fostering an environment that encourages active student engagement, critical thinking, and the holistic development of learners. Furthermore, professional development should incorporate practical workshops, coaching sessions, and follow-up mentorship to ensure that headteachers can translate theory into practice effectively. Emphasis should also be placed on monitoring and evaluating the impact of these interventions to continuously refine strategies that improve instructional leadership and, ultimately, learner outcomes across schools.

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