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Influence of Principals' Controlling Functions on Student Academic Achievement in Public Senior Schools in Kipipiri Sub-County, Nyandarua County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of principals' controlling functions on students' academic achievement in senior schools in Kipipiri sub-county Nyandarua County, Kenya. The study was guided by research questions: In what ways does the principals' controlling function influence student academic achievement in public senior schools? Fayol's Administrative Theory of Management guided the study. The study employed a convergent mixed method design, using a cross-sectional survey and phenomenology approaches. The target population comprised of 15 public senior school, 15 principals, 214 teachers,1012 form four students, 1 Teachers Service Commission Sub-County Director and 1 Sub- County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. Purposive and Stratified simple random sampling techniques were used to select 383 respondents for this study. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis. Validity was tested by research experts and pilot testing and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.92. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics while qualitative data was subjected to thematic content analysis. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. The findings demonstrated that principals controlling functions have influence on students' academic achievement. The study concluded that principals' controlling function provides an important mechanism for maintaining instructional quality and responding to academic performance gaps, controlling function influenced the conditions under which teaching and learning occurred through several interconnected mechanisms. The study recommends that Education quality assurance and standards officers should strengthen school-based monitoring and evaluation, while the government should ensure adequate staffing and instructional resources. Principals should strengthen classroom supervision and monitoring students' academic progress through regular observation, assessment, feedback and timely interventions.

Key words: principals controlling functions, academic achievement

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Background to the Study

Student academic achievement is an important indicator of the effectiveness of an education system and the extent to which schools accomplish their instructional goals. In secondary schools, academic achievement is reflected in learners' attainment in examinations, mastery of curriculum content, progression to higher levels of education, and acquisition of competencies necessary for further education and employment. One of the important administrative responsibilities through which principals influence school effectiveness is the controlling function. In administrative management, controlling involves establishing performance standards, monitoring activities, comparing actual performance with expected standards, identifying deviations, providing feedback, and taking corrective action where necessary. However, the influence of principals is often indirect because leadership practices operate through teachers, school climate, instructional quality and other organizational conditions (Leithwood et al., 2020; Pietsch et al., 2025). Consequently, principals' controlling function is important because it provides a mechanism for monitoring whether school activities and instructional practices are being implemented according to established academic expectations.

In India, Kılınç et al. (2022) examined the relationship among principal instructional leadership, school climate, and teacher job performance and student achievement. The study found that principals influence student achievement by creating conditions that enable teachers to perform their instructional responsibilities effectively. Similarly, Chen, Ning, and Bos (2022) compared principal leadership styles and student achievement in Germany and China. The study found that instructional and integrated leadership were associated with higher student achievement in Germany, although the pattern differed in China. The findings demonstrate that the effect of principal leadership on student achievement is context-dependent and that leadership practices emphasizing instruction may contribute to improved academic outcomes in some settings. Li, Chan, and Hu (2023) investigated the effects of principals' instructional leadership in India and reported that principals influence academic achievement not simply through administrative authority but through actions that shape teaching and learning processes such as monitoring instruction, evaluating progress and responding to identified weaknesses. Further, Cox and Mullen (2023) examined principals' instructional leadership practices in the United States, the findings emphasized the importance of principals' direct engagement with instruction and school improvement.

In a comparative study of six Sub-Saharan African countries, Babalola, Asiyai, and Atanda (2024) examined instructional leadership policies and practices in Ghana, Benin Republic, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa and Eswatini. The study identified instructional management, supervision, resource allocation, delegation and management of teaching and learning as important dimensions of school leadership across the countries. A study conducted in Ghana by Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2024) demonstrated that principals' instructional responsibilities extend beyond general administration to include monitoring and supporting teaching and learning processes. Similarly, Tesfaye, Edamo, and Bareke (2026) investigated principals' instructional leadership and teachers' classroom practices in Ethiopia and reported that effective management of instructional programs,

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including supervision of teaching, curriculum coordination and monitoring of student progress influence academic achievement. Research reviewed by Babalola et al. (2024) in South Africa indicates that school leaders are expected to supervise instruction, coordinate curriculum activities and manage resources in ways that support improved learning outcomes.

Ndambuki, Kasivu, and Mwanza (2020) investigated the influence of principals' instructional supervision practices on KCSE performance in Makueni County and concluded that that monitoring and supervision of instruction can contribute to improved academic achievement in Kenyan public secondary schools. Similarly, Mutoro, Musera, and Kikechi (2023) in Bungoma examined the influence of principals' instructional supervision on students' KCSE academic achievement and reinforced the importance of principals' monitoring of instructional activities as a mechanism for maintaining academic standards and improving student outcomes. A study conducted by Chepkoech and Cheboi (2024) examining the influence of principals' monitoring and evaluation of instruction on student performance in Londiani Sub-County reported that monitoring and evaluation involve assessing whether instructional activities are being implemented as planned and identifying areas requiring improvement.

Investigating on principals' instructional supervisory roles in Meru County, Kinyua (2025) concluded that principals' instructional supervisory roles significantly influenced student performance. In South Kinangop, Nyandarua County, Ruminjo and Achieng (2025) examined principals' management practices and KCSE performance in South Kinangop Sub-County. The findings provided strong evidence that principal management practices, particularly instructional supervision, are associated with academic performance within Nyandarua County. Further, Lmempina (2025) examined principals' instructional supervision strategies and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Samburu North Sub-County. The study investigated clinical supervision, classroom visitation and monitoring of student progress. Findings indicated that principals who actively implemented supervisory activities were associated with higher student academic achievement than schools where principals were less engaged in supervision.

Despite evidence that effective school leadership functions contribute to improved student academic achievement, academic performance has remained low and inconsistent in many public senior schools in Kipipiri Sub- County over the last five years. This situation has raised concern among religious leaders, political leaders, parents, teachers and education officials, who question whether school leadership and administration are adequately supporting improved academic outcomes. Although most studies have examined instructional supervision or individual management practices, there still remains a significant conceptual gap in understanding how principal's controlling function as a broader administrative function Influences students' academic achievement. There is therefore a need for a study specifically examining how principals' controlling functions influence students' academic achievement. Thus, the study seeks to examine the influence of principals' controlling function on students' academic achievement in public senior schools in Kipipiri Sub-County, Nyandarua County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

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Empirical studies indicate that effective school leadership significantly contributes to improved student outcomes. (Leithwood et al., 2020; Özdemir et al., 2022; Wu & Shen, 2022). In addition, studies have established that effective supervision and monitoring enhance academic achievement (Juma, 2021; Gatama et al., 2023; Bayat et al., 2022; Tedla & Kilango, 2022). These findings suggest that the execution of controlling functions by school principals plays a critical role in shaping academic achievement. Yet schools in Kipipiri Sub-County continue to experience unsatisfactory academic achievement in KCSE. This trend has raised concern among various stakeholders including researchers, religious leaders, political leaders, parents, teachers and education authorities who question the effectiveness of school principals in enhancing students' achievement. The problem raises questions about whether principals are effectively practicing their controlling functions of monitoring instructional processes, supervising teachers analyzing assessment outcomes and implementing timely corrective intervention practicing .This underscores the need to examine how principals' controlling functions influence KCSE achievement in the sub-county. This study therefore seeks examine influence of principals' controlling functions on student academic achievement in public senior schools in Kipipiri Sub-County, Nyandarua County Kenya.

Research Question

In what ways does the principals' controlling function influence student academic achievement in public senior schools in Kipipiri Sub-County Nyandarua County?

Theoretical underpinnings

This study was guided by the Administrative Theory of Management, originally advanced by Henri Fayol and widely applied in organizational and educational management contexts. The theory holds that key managerial functions; planning, organizing, directing, and controlling as essential processes for achieving organizational goals (Fayol, 1949/2016; Daft, 2021). Fayol conceptualized management as a process involving interconnected functions through which organizational objectives can be achieved.

One of the most enduring strengths of Fayol's theory is that it provided a logical framework that simplifies complex administrative roles thus enhancing managerial effectiveness (Nkonge & Mudulia, 2024). Similarly, Bush (2020) argues that the enduring relevance of Fayol's functional approach lies in its ability to provide a foundational "management language" that informs both theory and practice in educational leadership. According to Wren, Bedeian, and Breeze (2002), Fayol's principles are broadly adaptable across industries, time periods, and organizational contexts. Bacud (2020) further strengthens the theory by noting that organizations applying Fayol's principles demonstrate improved coordination, accountability, and overall achievement. Stephen P. Robbins and Mary Coulter (2021), also strengthens the theory by noting that clearly defined managerial functions improve accountability by ensuring that "managers know what is expected of

Although the theory is very strong, there are also limitations. Wren et al., (2020) recognize that critics have misunderstood the principles of Fayol to be strict, or even dictatorial in nature. It is a mechanistic and hierarchical perspective of organizational structure that presupposes that

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human behavior is predictable and that organizational settings are consistent, such rigidity can inhibit the creativity, flexibility, and employee engagement factors required in dynamic systems like education (Robbins and Coulter, 2019).According to Pryor and Taneja (2020), the theory developed by Fayol is clear and structured but has a tendency to be overly authoritative, hierarchical, and centralized, which restrains creativity and participation and flexibility in contemporary organizations. Bacud (2020) also warns that implementing the ideas of Fayol without any changes can cause bureaucratic inflexibility that prevents innovation and collaboration between teachers.

To address this, the study interpreted Fayol's functions planning, organizing, and controlling as participatory processes, where principals involve teachers and other stakeholders in decision-making. In addition, the theory was complemented with instructional leadership perspectives to ensure a stronger focus on teaching and learning outcomes. The principle of controlling was also applied in a developmental sense, emphasizing feedback and continuous improvement rather than strict supervision. These adaptations help align Fayol's framework with contemporary educational leadership while retaining its analytical value.

The Administrative Framework proposed by Fayol is quite applicable in the present study since it provides systematic and organized perspective of evaluation of school leadership practices where the effectiveness and unity of administrative operations are the major determinations of school success. The theory offers a structured framework for school leadership. The managerial functions guide principals in monitoring teaching and learning, controlling instructional processes and providing feedback to enhance student achievement. Therefore, Fayol's theory provides a strong foundation for examining how effective practices of controlling influence academic achievement in schools.

Empirical Review of Related Literature

According to Hallinger (2020) controlling function is a managerial role of instructional leader who is the school principal. Controlling function involves monitoring teaching and learning activities, supervising curriculum implementation, evaluating achievement and ensuring adherence to school policies (Musingafi et al., 2020). According to Nwankwo, (2020) regular classroom observation, checking of lesson plans and monitoring students' progress contribute to better academic outcomes. Principals who actively supervise and control school operations help maintain high academic standards, which positively affect students' achievement (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020)

According to Enwezor and Nzeri (2025) monitoring is the continuous tracking and evaluation of students' engagement, achievement, and conduct through both physical observation and digital tools, aimed at enhancing effective teaching and learning. Aku (2023) observed that inadequate monitoring of teachers is a significant factor contributing to poor academic achievement. Nwankwo (2020) noted that effective monitoring minimizes student behavioral problems, thereby allowing more time to be devoted to teaching and learning.

A study by Rebecka, Kristina and Wennberg (2025) examined the influence of Principals instructional leadership on student achievement in Sweden. Employing longitudinal research

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design, the study conceptualized instructional leadership to include key controlling function elements such as overseeing instructional programs, monitoring teaching, and ensuring alignment of school goals with classroom practices. Findings revealed that continuous monitoring and evaluation of teaching practices enhanced consistency in instruction, which contributed to improved learner outcomes. While the study provide empirical evidence from Sweden context, it relied heavily on existing datasets, which limited the ability to capture detailed context specific information on how principals implement controlling practices such as monitoring and evaluation. The study also dwelt majorly on quantitative methods that could not provide deeper insights into how controlling function influencing students' academic achievement. The current study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods in data collection and analysis.

A study by Hallinger and Heck (2020) in the United States examined the relationship between instructional leadership practices and student achievement using quantitative survey data. The study found that principals who actively monitored instruction, used achievement data, and provided feedback significantly improved student academic outcomes. The findings emphasized that controlling practices enhance instructional quality by ensuring alignment between teaching activities and curriculum goals. Although the study provides strong empirical evidence linking leadership to achievement, it conceptualizes controlling broadly within instructional leadership without isolating it as a distinct managerial function. Methodologically, it relies heavily on structured quantitative surveys, limiting deeper understanding of how controlling is practically implemented in schools. Contextually, the findings are situated in a highly resourced education system, reducing applicability to developing contexts such as Kenya. Theoretically, the study is grounded mainly in instructional leadership theory, without integrating classical management theories such as Fayol's Administrative Theory, which would better explain controlling as a systematic managerial function.

Viviane Robinson (2021) in New Zealand investigated leadership practices influencing student outcomes using a mixed-methods approach. The study revealed that leadership actions such as monitoring instruction, evaluating teaching quality, and providing feedback had a strong positive influence on student achievement through improved teacher effectiveness and engagement. While the study highlights the importance of leadership practices, it does not disaggregate the controlling function into its core components such as standard setting and corrective action. Methodologically, the study emphasizes general leadership behaviors rather than specific control mechanisms. Conceptually, controlling is subsumed under broader leadership categories, making its independent contribution unclear.

In Anambra State in Onitsha North, Nigeria, Enwezor and Nzeri (2025) examined the relationship between the monitoring processes of the teachers and the academic achievement of the students. The study involved 260 participants who completed a self-administered questionnaire whose research method is correlated. Findings revealed that management of tabs on the behavior, attendance, and academic achievement of the students had a positive and significant influence on the end result of the grades of students. Teachers monitoring achievement of students improve their conduct, attendance and achievement in school.The research although found that monitoring

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procedures of the teachers were significantly influencing the academic achievement of students, it largely involved classroom level of monitoring. The study did not consider monitoring as an administrative task of school leadership or research on the role of school administrators in monitoring instructional processes. To address this gap in knowledge, the current study considers monitoring by principals as a role of the administration in the academic achievement of students.

Kwasi (2021) investigated the impacts of school monitoring on the student grades of junior high school students at the North Municipality of Ghana. The findings were that the relationship between monitoring and the grades of the students was significantly correlated. The findings of the study that regular evaluation was not a part of the study were also identified to impede the ability of teachers to give students a regular and prompt feedback on their achievement. However, this survey is not only about establishing how frequently teachers are monitored and how they are engaged in terms of the administration of tests, but about examining how school principals are engaged in terms of monitoring activities such as physical lesson observation; monitoring student discipline and classroom visitation.

Based on the example of Cornerstone Leadership Academy, Nabea (2022) examined the impact of assessment and monitoring on the academic achievement of the students in the private senior school of Tanzania, which is located at the elite level. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Data was collected by use of questionnaires. Based on the findings of the study, the ability to improve the academic achievement largely relies on effective monitoring and assessment frameworks. The study continued to indicate that assessment and monitoring processes assist in the education process by identifying issues concerning the instruction and school achievement in general. The observed beneficial effect of monitoring and assessment on the academic achievement of the students may have been missed by the study due to its descriptive nature and over-dependence on the information gathered through questionnaires as opposed to the fact that it identified that monitoring and assessment had a positive influence on student learning outcomes. To close this knowledge gap, this study will employ a mixed approach to examine the connection that exists between administrative role and the academic achievement of students.

Michael (2022) researched on the issue by observing the results of various management practices in the public high schools in the Yumbe District, Northern Uganda in relation to their impact on grades of students. The mixed-methods cross-sectional survey methodology of the study involved selecting individuals that were surveyed and interviewed. To enhance the achievement of kids in school, proper methods of control are needed. The study found that the control can be achieved by setting and applying achievement standards, internal policies, and applying control measures in key aspects to the teaching and learning aspect, staff welfare, safety and security, financial management, and instructional supervision in the public senior schools. Although the proposed study examined the same thing through the perspective of principals in Uganda, the current study will examine it through the perspective of Kenyan principals and the direct relationship between the control functions of principals and academic progress of students.

Ochieng and Karina (2024) examined the influence of supervision of principals over instructional assessment and their effects on the outcomes of instructions and student achievement

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in Kenya. The research used the philosophy of result-based management as the blue print. In the investigation, the use of descriptive survey design was applied. The data were collected through surveys and predetermined interviews. In the results, it was revealed that monitoring can be used in enhancing the attendance of teachers and the preparation of their lessons. Timely feedback on their classroom achievement can help teachers to cover more ground in their lessons and improve their professional development. The study did not examine the role of principals in monitoring instruction in relation to student academic achievement, but it addressed them. However, this study was examining the relationship between academic achievement of students and the number of times principals visit classes to monitor their progress in classes.

Kinyua (2025) in Igembe North Sub-County; Meru County, Kenya investigated the influence of principals' instructional supervision on students' academic achievement in public senior schools. The study focused on examining supervisory techniques used by principals, identifying factors influencing academic achievement, assessing teachers' perceptions of instructional supervision, and exploring challenges faced by principals in executing their supervisory responsibilities. It was guided by the Psychological Theory of Supervision, which advocates for supportive and developmental approaches to enhance teacher effectiveness.

Employing a concurrent triangulation mixed-method design, the study integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The population included principals, teachers, and Form Four students from all public senior schools in the sub-county. The findings indicated a statistically significant relationship between principals' instructional supervisory practices and student academic achievement, suggesting that effective supervision contributes positively to learning outcomes. Despite its contributions, the study has some limitations. Its focus on a single sub-county limits the generalizability of the findings to other contexts, such as Nyandarua County. Moreover, reliance on self-reported data may have introduced response bias.

Research Methodology

This study was carried out in senior school within Kipipiri Sub-County, Nyandarua County. The Sub- County is characterized by limited resources, teacher shortages and infrastructural challenges. These disparities created a situation where some schools perform relatively well while others consistently registered low academic achievement. This inconsistency suggests possible gaps in how school principals executed their administrative roles. The study adopted convergent mixed method design combining descriptive cross-sectional survey for quantitative data and phenomenology design for qualitative inquiry, allowing concurrent data collection, triangulation and deeper interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The target population was 15 public senior schools, 15 school principals, 214 teachers, 1012 form four students, 1 Sub- County Director of Teachers Service Commission and 1 Sub-County quality assurance and standards officer. Using stratified random sampling, simple random sampling, census and purposive sampling techniques, a sample of 383 participants was selected. This comprised of 15 senior school, 15 principals, 69 teachers 284 students, 1 TSC Sub- County director and 1 SQASO.

Data was collected using multiple instruments: questionnaires, interview guide and document analysis guide. Validity was through experts review and pilot testing and its reliability

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was tested Pearson's correlation yielding Cronbach's alpha 0.092. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS Version 27. The entered data in SPSS was then analyzed using descriptive statistics: means, percentages, and frequencies. Regression analysis was conducted using ANOVA to determine the extent to which controlling functions influence student academic achievement in public senior schools which was presented as variance, standard deviation, and P-value. The qualitative data obtained from open-ended questions, interview guide, and document analysis guide were coded to generate themes and presented through narratives based on direct quotations.

The study was approved by the Department Post Graduate Studies in Education department of Catholic University of Eastern Africa and issued with a research introduction letter. A research permit was obtained from National Council for Science Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI). The researcher obtained research authorization from various institutions and Educational officers. Written informed consent was obtained from the participants. The researcher ensured anonymity, confidentiality and voluntary participation throughout the study.

Results and Discussions

The research question asked in what ways principals' controlling function influences student academic achievement. Table 1 and Table 2 present the ten teacher items and five student items measuring this construct, which covers supervision, monitoring, and the use of performance data.

Table 1

Teachers' Ratings of the Principal's Controlling Function

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M
A1. The principal regularly supervises classroom teaching.	2 (3.0)	10 (14.9)	4 (6.0)	36 (53.7)	15 (22.4)	3.78
A2. Schemes of work are regularly checked for completeness	2 (3.0)	1 (1.5)	2 (3.0)	47 (70.1)	15 (22.4)	4.07
A3. Teachers' lesson plans are regularly reviewed by the principal or deputy principal.	3 (4.5)	3 (4.5)	6 (9.0)	35 (52.2)	20 (29.9)	3.99
A4. The principal monitors curriculum implementation throughout the school year.	1 (1.5)	1 (1.5)	5 (7.4)	47 (69.1)	14 (20.6)	4.06
A5. Teacher performance appraisal is conducted regularly.	1 (1.5)	0 (0.0)	8 (11.9)	31 (46.3)	27 (40.3)	4.24
A6. The principal regularly monitors the availability and condition of school resources.	1 (1.5)	3 (4.4)	6 (8.8)	38 (55.9)	20 (29.4)	4.07

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Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M
A7. KCSE examination results are analyzed to identify strengths and weaknesses.	1 (1.5)	1 (1.5)	4 (5.9)	31 (45.6)	31 (45.6)	4.32
A8. Teachers participate in developing strategies to improve academic performance.	1 (1.5)	5 (7.4)	2 (2.9)	42 (61.8)	18 (26.5)	4.04
A9. The principal regularly reviews progress toward academic targets.	0 (0.0)	3 (4.4)	10 (14.7)	32 (47.1)	23 (33.8)	4.10
A10. Corrective measures are implemented when academic targets are achieved.	0 (0.0)	1 (1.5)	10 (14.7)	39 (57.4)	18 (26.5)	4.09

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral/Undecided, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree. Values in the SD through SA columns are counts, with column percentages in parentheses; M = item mean on the 1–5 scale.

Source: *Researcher, 2026*

Teachers rated controlling highly (grand mean = 4.08, SD = 0.55), the lowest standard deviation of the four constructs, meaning teacher opinion on this function was more tightly clustered than for the others. The item with the strongest endorsement was that KCSE examination results are analyzed to identify strengths and weaknesses (M = 4.32), whereas the principal regularly supervises classroom teaching recorded the lowest, though still generally favorable, mean (M = 3.78).

Table 2

Students' Ratings of the Principal's Controlling Function

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M
B1. The principal monitors teaching and learning in the school.	20 (8.6)	11 (4.7)	15 (6.5)	68 (29.3)	118 (50.9)	4.09
B2. Teachers complete the syllabus on time.	33 (13.9)	21 (8.8)	14 (5.9)	68 (28.6)	102 (42.9)	3.78
B3. Students' academic progress is regularly monitored.	13 (5.6)	22 (9.4)	27 (11.5)	92 (39.3)	80 (34.2)	3.87
B4. Examination results are discussed and used to improve performance.	12 (5.1)	19 (8.1)	15 (6.4)	76 (32.3)	113 (48.1)	4.10

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Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M
B5. Appropriate action is taken when academic performance declines.	33 (14.0)	12 (5.1)	20 (8.5)	81 (34.5)	89 (37.9)	3.77

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral/Undecided, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree. Values in the SD through SA columns are counts, with column percentages in parentheses; M = item mean on the 1–5 scale.

Source: *Researcher, 2026*

Students rated controlling at a grand mean of 3.91 (SD = 1.04), the largest spread of opinion recorded for any of the four functions among students, again in the "high" band. Agreement was strongest for the statement that examination results are discussed and used to improve performance (M = 4.10), and weakest for appropriate action is taken when academic performance declines (M = 3.77), where close to one in five students (19.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The findings established that controlling function was generally strongly practiced by principals in public senior schools in Kipipiri Sub-County is consistent with Juma (2021), who found a statistically significant relationship between principals' controlling function and students' learning outcomes. Teachers recorded a grand mean of 4.08 (SD = 0.55), while students recorded a grand mean of 3.91 (SD = 1.04). The teachers' relatively low standard deviation indicates a high degree of consistency in their perceptions, while the larger variation among students suggests that experiences of monitoring and control differed somewhat across schools. Nevertheless, both groups rated the function within the high range, demonstrating that monitoring, evaluation, supervision, performance analysis, and corrective action were important components of school administration. The controlling function provides the feedback mechanism through which principals determine whether planned academic activities are being implemented as intended.

The study finding established that KCSE examination results were analyzed to identify strengths and weaknesses, which recorded the highest teacher-rated mean of 4.32. This indicates that principals placed considerable emphasis on using examination performance as a source of feedback for school improvement. The findings are in agreement with Hallinger and Heck (2020) findings that principals who actively used achievement data and provided feedback significantly improved students' academic outcome. Results can provide evidence about areas in which students are performing well and subjects or topics where weaknesses persist. The quantitative findings are strongly supported by the qualitative evidence. One principal reported that, *"Every examination is followed by a detailed performance analysis involving teachers, Heads of Departments, students, and parents. Weak areas are identified and intervention measures are immediately implemented."* This account demonstrates that examination analysis formed part of an ongoing improvement cycle rather than being a purely retrospective exercise. Performance information was used to identify weaknesses, discuss possible causes and determine appropriate actions.

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Students also supported this finding, rating the statement that examination results are discussed and used to improve performance at M = 4.10. The findings support perspective advanced by Li, Chan, and Hu (2023) that principals influence academic performance by evaluating progress and responding to identified weaknesses. The convergence between teachers and students demonstrates that performance analysis was not confined to administrative discussions but was sufficiently visible within the school environment. The involvement of teachers, Heads of Departments, students, and parents described by the principal further indicates that controlling involved a participatory process in which different stakeholders contributed to identifying academic weaknesses and developing appropriate interventions.

The finding that teacher performance appraisal was conducted regularly (M = 4.24) also received strong support from the qualitative interviews. This indicates that teachers generally perceived performance appraisal as a regular administrative practice. Teacher appraisal can contribute to academic achievement by providing opportunities to assess instructional practices, identify professional strengths and weaknesses and encourage teachers to improve their performance. Participants described classroom supervision and professional document checks as important mechanisms for maintaining instructional quality. One principal stated, *"Classroom supervision plays an important role in ensuring that teachers remain focused on curriculum implementation and the achievement of intended learning outcomes. Lesson observations and professional document checks help maintain instructional quality."* This suggests that principals used both direct and documentary forms of supervision to monitor teachers' preparedness and classroom practices.

Besides, the TSC Sub-County Director of Education emphasized the importance of classroom supervision, noting that "Schools recording consistent academic improvement have principals who regularly monitor classroom instruction and closely monitor syllabus coverage." This observation reinforces the quantitative finding that principals monitored curriculum implementation throughout the school year (M = 4.06) and checked schemes of work (M = 4.07) and lesson plans (M = 3.99). These findings indicate that principals and their deputies paid substantial attention to teachers' professional records. Such monitoring can help ensure that teachers plan their lessons, organize content systematically and maintain alignment with the curriculum. According to Nwankwo, (2020) regular checking of schemes of work can also help principals determine whether teachers are progressing through the syllabus at an appropriate pace. Similarly, lesson-plan reviews can provide an indication of whether teachers have adequately prepared for classroom instruction. The convergence of the quantitative and qualitative findings suggests that instructional supervision was an important component of the controlling function. The findings were in agreement with Enwezor and Nzeri (2025) that teacher monitoring processes had a positive and significant influence on student grades and Nabea (2022) that assessment and monitoring frameworks improved academic performance.

However, the comparatively lower teacher rating for regular classroom teaching supervision (M = 3.78) deserves attention. Although the rating remained positive, it was the lowest among the ten teacher-rated controlling items. This may indicate that principals were more consistent in

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reviewing professional documents and examination results than in directly observing classroom instruction. The qualitative evidence, however, emphasizes that classroom supervision is important for ensuring curriculum implementation and instructional quality. This suggests that schools could benefit from strengthening the frequency and consistency of direct classroom observation alongside documentary monitoring. The findings corroborate those of Nurhikmah (2024) who established that continuous monitoring and assessment ensure that activities align with established plans and goals.

Students' responses similarly indicate generally strong monitoring of teaching and learning. The statement that the principal monitors teaching and learning in the school recorded M = 4.09, while students' academic progress is regularly monitored recorded M = 3.87. The latter, although positive, was comparatively lower. This may suggest that students recognize general school-level monitoring but experience less consistency in individualized or continuous monitoring of their academic progress. The finding therefore suggests that principals may need to strengthen the learner-centered dimension of controlling by ensuring that monitoring systems provide regular feedback on individual and group student progress. In the same way, the finding that teachers complete the syllabus on time recorded M = 3.78 suggests that syllabus coverage remains an area requiring continued administrative attention.

The findings further demonstrate that, controlling involved the use of academic targets and corrective action. Teachers rated regular review of progress towards academic targets at M = 4.10, while implementation of corrective measures when academic targets were not achieved recorded M = 4.09. The findings are in agreement with Hallinger and Heck (2020) findings that principals who actively used achievement data and provided feedback significantly improved students' academic outcome. Regular review allows principals and teachers to determine whether students and departments are moving towards expected performance levels. Where progress is below expectations, additional support or alternative strategies can be introduced. Thus, the controlling function provides the feedback necessary to make academic targets operational. The qualitative evidence strongly supports this pattern. The principal reported that weak areas identified after examination analysis were followed by immediate intervention measures. Participants further agreed that continuous monitoring promotes accountability, timely corrective interventions, and sustained improvement in student academic achievement.

Nevertheless, students gave a comparatively lower rating to the statement that appropriate action is taken when academic performance declines (M = 3.77), with 19.1% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This difference between teacher and student perceptions is important. It may indicate that corrective interventions are more visible to teachers because they are directly involved in implementing academic improvement strategies, whereas students may not always recognize or experience the administrative actions taken following poor performance. It may also suggest that some interventions need to be communicated more clearly to students so that they understand the measures being implemented to improve their performance. The monitoring of school resources was another positively rated aspect, with teachers reporting that the principal regularly monitors the availability and condition of school resources (M = 4.07). This suggests that controlling

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extended beyond teachers and academic outcomes to include the material conditions necessary for effective teaching and learning. Monitoring resources can help principals identify shortages, misuse, or deterioration and initiate corrective measures before such challenges substantially affect instructional activities.

The quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrate substantial convergence regarding the importance of the principal's controlling function. Teachers and students generally perceived monitoring, examination analysis, curriculum supervision, teacher appraisal, and academic progress reviews positively, while interview participants emphasized that continuous monitoring facilitates accountability and timely intervention. The evidence also suggests that effective control is a continuous process rather than an activity undertaken only after examinations. It involves monitoring classroom instruction, checking professional documents, tracking syllabus coverage, analyzing examination results, reviewing academic targets, monitoring resources, and implementing corrective measures.

Conclusion

The study concluded that principals' controlling function provides an important mechanism for maintaining instructional quality and responding to academic performance gaps. The strong emphasis placed by interview participants on monitoring and evaluation, together with the high quantitative ratings, suggests that effective control may contribute to improved student academic achievement by ensuring that school activities remain aligned with academic expectations and that emerging weaknesses are addressed promptly. However, the relatively lower ratings for direct classroom supervision, student progress monitoring, and corrective action from students indicate areas where principals could strengthen their controlling practices. The subsequent inferential analysis is therefore necessary to establish whether the observed controlling practices have a statistically significant influence on student academic achievement.

From the researcher's perspective, principals' controlling function influenced the conditions under which teaching and learning occurred through several interconnected mechanisms. Classroom and curriculum monitoring helped ensure that teachers remained focused on curriculum implementation. While, checking professional documents provided a means of assessing teacher preparedness. Teacher appraisal created opportunities for evaluating and improving professional performance. Examination analysis provided evidence for identifying academic strengths and weaknesses additionally. Progress monitoring enabled schools to assess movement towards academic targets. Corrective action provided a mechanism for responding to identified weaknesses. These processes collectively create a feedback loop through which schools can identify problems, respond to them and monitor subsequent progress.

The findings established that principals used supervision, professional document checks, teacher appraisal, curriculum monitoring, examination analysis, academic target reviews, and resource monitoring and corrective measures to maintain academic standards. The qualitative evidence further showed that monitoring was associated with accountability, identification of weaknesses and timely interventions. However, the findings also demonstrate that the effectiveness of controlling depends on the extent to which monitoring information is translated into timely and

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visible action. Strengthening direct classroom supervision, continuous monitoring of student progress, syllabus coverage and communication of corrective interventions could therefore enhance the contribution of the controlling function to student academic achievement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the study recommends that Education quality assurance and standards officers should strengthen school-based monitoring and evaluation, while the government should ensure adequate staffing and instructional resources to enable principals implement effective monitoring, supervision and other academic improvement interventions. Principals should strengthen classroom supervision and monitoring students' academic progress through regular observation, assessment, feedback and timely interventions. Schools should also ensure that identified academic weaknesses are followed by targeted interventions which are clearly communicated to students.

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