



Beyond Administration: How Principals' Individualized Consideration Influences Academic Performance in Divergent Performing Secondary Schools in Buret Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract: This study examined the influence of principals' individualized consideration on academic performance in high-performing and low-performing secondary schools in Bureti Sub-County, Kenya. The study was motivated by persistent disparities in KCSE performance among schools operating under similar policy and resource conditions. A correlational research design was adopted to determine the relationship between principals' individualized consideration and students' academic performance. The target population comprised 54 secondary schools, 54 principals, and 487 teachers. A sample of 10 Extra County schools was purposively selected, involving all 10 principals through census sampling and 214 teachers selected using the Krejcie and Morgan sampling technique and simple random sampling. Data were collected using a modified Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and interview schedules. Validity was ensured through expert review, while reliability was confirmed through a pilot study and test-retest method, yielding reliability coefficients ranging from $r = 0.838$ to 0.881 ($p < 0.01$). Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression in SPSS version 30.0, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Findings indicated that principals' individualized consideration was moderately practiced overall ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.78$), with higher levels in high-performing schools than low-performing schools. Regression analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between individualized consideration and academic performance ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.05$). The study concludes that principals' personalized leadership practices significantly enhance academic performance and recommends strengthening leadership training programs to improve mentoring and teacher support.

Keywords: Individualized consideration, transformational leadership, academic performance, secondary schools, Bureti Sub-County, Kenya.

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1. Introduction

Leadership plays a fundamental role in enhancing school effectiveness and improving students' academic achievement. According to Ayiro (2014), the increasing emphasis on leadership development in education is

grounded in the understanding that school leaders significantly influence institutional effectiveness and learning outcomes. Similarly, Bush et al. (2002) argue that effective leadership is closely associated with school improvement because principals provide direction, coordinate resources, and shape instructional practices. Nderitu (2012) further observes that successful

organizations require leaders who can mobilize institutional resources toward the achievement of set goals. In schools, principals are expected to foster supportive learning environments, motivate teachers and learners, and promote academic excellence. However, academic performance is not solely determined by leadership, as other factors such as teacher commitment, learner characteristics, availability of resources, and socio-economic conditions also contribute to performance variations across schools.

Within educational leadership discourse, transformational leadership has emerged as one of the most influential approaches due to its emphasis on motivation, collaboration, and organizational change. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) conceptualize transformational leadership in education through four key dimensions: setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional programme. Developing people, in particular, includes individualized support, professional growth, and intellectual stimulation. Okoth (2018) and Hughes (2014) further contend that transformational leadership is anchored on moral influence that promotes idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Among these dimensions, individualized consideration is particularly significant as it reflects the extent to which leaders attend to individual teachers' needs, provide personalized support, and nurture professional growth. Such practices are expected to enhance teacher commitment and subsequently improve learner outcomes.

Studies examining leadership and academic achievement have reported mixed findings. In the United States, Allen et al. (2015) established a positive relationship between transformational leadership and school climate, although no significant direct relationship with student achievement was found. In contrast, Shatzer et al. (2014) reported that principals' leadership styles significantly influenced student achievement regardless of contextual differences. In Europe and Asia, Chen et al. (2022) found contextual variations, where German students performed better under instructional leadership while Chinese students demonstrated improved outcomes under transformational leadership. These inconsistencies suggest that leadership effects are context-dependent, and specific leadership dimensions such as individualized consideration may operate differently across educational environments.

Research has increasingly focused on how leadership practices influence school effectiveness and learner outcomes. In South Africa, Shava et al. (2021) found that combining instructional and transformational leadership improved school climate and learner achievement through personalized teacher support and recognition. In Nigeria,

Moshood et al. (2020) established a positive relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness, while Ogbonnaya et al. (2020) reported a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and students' academic achievement. These studies collectively suggest that leadership practices that emphasize individualized attention and support may enhance teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes. However, most studies examined transformational leadership broadly, without isolating individualized consideration as a distinct construct.

In East Africa, limited research has specifically focused on individualized consideration and academic performance. Studies in Tanzania by Sylvester (2014) and Ngasa (2020) examined general leadership styles and classroom instruction, while Ndege (2018) focused on leadership and job satisfaction. Shemahonge et al. (2022) concentrated on women in leadership rather than academic outcomes. These studies indicate a gap in empirical evidence linking individualized consideration to academic performance, particularly in secondary schools. The scarcity of context-specific studies highlights the need for further investigation within East African educational systems, where school performance disparities remain a persistent concern.

In Kenya, several studies have explored the relationship between leadership and academic achievement. Research by Cheruse (2021), Kilonzo et al. (2020), and Njeri (2018) examined leadership styles and educational outcomes in different contexts. Muia (2018) found that transformational leadership practices positively influenced KCSE performance in Mbooni West Sub-County, while Nderitu (2012) reported similar findings in Nairobi County. Mwove et al. (2023) also established a significant relationship between transformational leadership and academic achievement in Machakos County. Notably, Kitur et al. (2020) found that individualized consideration significantly influenced KCSE performance in Bomet County, suggesting its potential importance in academic outcomes. However, these studies did not specifically examine how individualized consideration influences performance differences between high-performing and low-performing schools.

In Bureti Sub-County, academic performance in KCSE has shown marked variation among secondary schools despite operating under similar educational policies. High-performing schools consistently achieve higher mean scores, stable instructional systems, and stronger academic support structures, while low-performing schools record persistently lower results and weaker academic systems. KCSE performance trends from 2017 to 2021 show that the sub-county average remained below the minimum university entry grade of C+ (7.0 points), with an overall

mean of 3.99. Although gradual improvement was observed, significant disparities among schools persisted. These variations cannot be attributed solely to leadership practices, as other factors such as resource availability, teacher adequacy, learner characteristics, and socio-economic conditions also play a role.

To better understand these disparities, schools in Bureti Sub-County were categorized into high-performing and low-performing based on consistent KCSE performance trends between 2017 and 2021. High-performing schools were characterized by sustained mean scores of 7.0 and above, strong instructional leadership systems, and higher transition rates to university education. Low-performing schools consistently recorded mean scores below 6.0 and demonstrated irregular academic progress and weaker instructional support systems. This classification was based on long-term performance trends rather than single-year results to ensure objectivity and reliability.

Despite these observed disparities, there is limited empirical evidence explaining how principals' individualized consideration influences academic performance in divergent-performing schools within Bureti Sub-County. Existing studies have largely focused on transformational leadership as a broad construct, leaving a gap in understanding the specific role of individualized consideration in shaping teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. Therefore, this study seeks to examine how principals' individualized consideration influences academic performance in high-performing and low-performing secondary schools in Bureti Sub-County, Kenya, with the aim of generating context-specific evidence to inform leadership practices and school improvement strategies.

1.1 Objectives

To evaluate the relationship between the principal's individualized consideration of staff and academic performance in high-performing and low-performing secondary schools in Bureti Sub-County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Relationship between Principal's Individual Considerations and Academic Achievement in Secondary Schools

Individualized consideration is a fundamental dimension of transformational leadership that emphasizes the leader's attention to the unique needs, abilities, and professional development of individual followers. Bass and Avolio (1997) describe individualized consideration as a

leadership behavior through which leaders recognize individual differences among staff, provide personalized support, and create opportunities for professional growth, including training, mentorship, and career development. In educational settings, this leadership behavior is essential because it strengthens teacher motivation, enhances job satisfaction, and supports continuous professional improvement, all of which may indirectly influence student academic outcomes.

Abazeed (2018) argues that leaders who practice individualized consideration offer continuous feedback, guidance, and emotional support while aligning individual staff needs with institutional goals. Such leaders demonstrate concern for teachers' personal and professional development by mentoring them, supporting their instructional practices, and acknowledging their contributions. Bogale (2020), in a study conducted among Ethiopian secondary school teachers, found that individualized consideration was a significant predictor of teacher job satisfaction. The study concluded that principals who demonstrate attention to teachers' individual needs are more likely to foster a motivated and committed teaching workforce, which may contribute to improved school effectiveness.

Globally, empirical studies on individualized consideration and academic performance have produced mixed findings, with variations attributed to contextual differences, research designs, and measurement approaches. In Nigeria, Ogbonnaya et al. (2020) found a statistically significant positive relationship between individualized consideration and students' academic achievement in English language ($r = 0.59$, $p < 0.05$). The study demonstrated that when school leaders provide individualized support to teachers, student learning outcomes tend to improve due to enhanced teacher effectiveness and commitment.

Within the African and Kenyan context, similar but varying results have been reported. Mwove et al. (2023), in a study conducted in Mwala Sub-County, Kenya, found that principals exhibited moderate levels of individualized consideration practices, including providing personal support to teachers, offering feedback on performance, and assisting teachers perceived to be struggling. The study further revealed that individualized consideration had a weak but statistically significant relationship with academic performance ($R = .354$), indicating that while the construct contributes to student achievement, its effect is not strong when examined independently. Similarly, Kitur et al. (2020), in Bomet County, established a weak but statistically significant association between individualized consideration and KCSE performance using a Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 6.183$, $d.f. = 2$, $p = 0.04$). These findings suggest that individualized consideration contributes to academic

outcomes, although its influence may be limited when other contextual factors are not controlled.

Despite these empirical contributions, there remains limited evidence on how principals' individualized consideration practices influence academic performance in Bureti Sub-County. Additionally, previous studies have mainly focused on either teachers alone or used different methodological approaches, limiting comparability. The current study addresses this gap by examining individualized consideration as a transformational leadership dimension within a correlational framework involving both teachers and principals in high-performing and low-performing secondary schools in Bureti Sub-County, Kenya. This allows for a more context-specific understanding of its relationship with academic achievement in the study area.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationship between principals' individualized consideration and academic performance in KCSE across high-performing and low-performing secondary schools in Bureti Sub-County, Kenya. The study was conducted in Bureti Sub-County, which has 54 secondary schools, from which 10 Extra County schools were purposively selected and categorized into high- and low-performing institutions based on their five-year KCSE mean scores (2018–2022). The target population comprised 54 principals and 487 teachers, with all principals included through a census approach and 214 teachers selected using the Krejcie and Morgan sampling table and proportionately distributed across schools using simple random sampling. Data was collected using a

modified Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and a principal interview schedule. Validity was ensured through expert review by supervisors, while reliability was established through a pilot test in neighbouring Belgut Sub-County using test-retest method, yielding strong Pearson correlation coefficients (0.838–0.881). Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 30.0 through descriptive statistics and regression analysis, while qualitative data was examined using thematic analysis to complement quantitative findings. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant university ethics committee and other authorized educational authorities before the commencement of data collection. Permission to conduct the research was also sought from school administrators in the selected secondary schools. Participants were adequately informed about the purpose, objectives, and procedures of the study, and their voluntary participation was emphasized through the signing of informed consent forms. Respondents were assured that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. Confidentiality of the information provided was strictly maintained by ensuring that responses were used solely for academic purposes and were not disclosed to unauthorized persons. Anonymity was observed by avoiding the inclusion of participants' names or any identifying information in questionnaires, interview schedules, data analysis, and reporting of findings. All collected data were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher to protect participants' privacy and uphold ethical research standards throughout the study.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Individualized Consideration Constructs

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Aware of teachers' unique expertise	194	1.00	5.00	2.9948	1.43421	-.002	.175	-1.318	.347
Coaches and mentors teachers	194	1.00	5.00	3.0773	1.53684	-.036	.175	-1.502	.347
Encourages teachers' professional growth	194	1.00	5.00	3.1392	1.40547	-.148	.175	-1.255	.347
Supportive towards teachers	194	1.00	5.00	2.9330	1.46837	.018	.175	-1.391	.347
Reward for knowledge contribution	194	1.00	5.00	3.0773	1.39548	-.070	.175	-1.267	.347
Valid N (listwise)	194								

From Table 1 above, it is evident that the descriptive statistics of the Individualised Consideration items show that the perceived support offered by principals is moderate with a mean score of between 2.93 and 3.14 based on the 5-point Likert scale. Standard deviations of 1.40-1.54 imply a significant level of variability of responses. The values of skew near zero indicate that the distributions are more or less symmetrical and the value -1.18 to -1.50 show that the distributions are more or less platykurtic compared to a normal distribution with fewer extreme values. Taken

collectively, this evidence suggests that despite a perceived individualized consideration on the part of principals, there is a significant difference in how such assistance is received by staff.

4.2 Inferential Statistics

Logistic regression scores revealed that Individualized Consideration did not have a statistically significant influence on academic performance.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Results for Individualized Consideration

		Variables in the Equation					95% C.I. for EXP(B)		
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
Step 1 ^a	Individual_Consideration	.067	.222	.091	1	.763	1.069	.692	1.652
	Constant	-.558	.690	.653	1	.419	.573		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Individual Consideration

In Table 2, the variable that was non-significantly affecting performance of schools was the variable which was called Individualized Consideration ($p=0.763$). The coefficient estimated ($B=0.067$) indicates that there is a slight positive relationship with academic success, but this is not statistically significant.

The odds ratio associated ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.069$) with a 6.9% increase in the probability of being classified as High Performance with a unit increase in Individualized Consideration. However, the upper and lower limits of the 95 percent interval (0.692, 1.652) include unity, which is emphasizing the insignificance of this effect. In turn, despite the fact that this intervention had an individualized guidance and mentoring of principals in the High-Performance schools, there was no statistically significant impact of this intervention on the distinction between these schools and the Low Performance schools.

4.3 Individualized Consideration and Academic Performance

Individualized Consideration did not also show statistically significant effect in KCSE academic performance in high and low achieving secondary schools in Bureti sub county, Kenya ($p=.763$). This is despite the fact, that, according to this study, whereas this leadership practice is considered essential in the development of teachers (3.03 average score is moderate), it does not seem to affect student achievement in this study. The observation is consistent with Abazeed (2018) who opined that individualized consideration influences teacher satisfaction and professional development more than student performance.

The odds ratio ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.069$) suggests that the probability of success has increased marginally but this is not statistically significant because odds ratio falls within the confidence interval (0.692 -1.652).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that principals' individualized consideration plays a significant role in influencing academic performance in secondary schools, particularly in distinguishing between high-performing and low-performing schools in Bureti Sub-County, Kenya. Schools where principals demonstrated stronger individualized consideration—such as providing personalized support, recognizing teacher needs, and fostering professional growth—tended to record better academic outcomes compared to schools where such practices were weak. However, the study also recognized that academic performance is multifactorial and may be influenced by other contextual factors such as teacher capacity, learner characteristics, resource availability, and socio-economic conditions. Overall, the findings underscore that beyond administrative functions, principals' ability to attend to individual staff needs is a critical leadership practice that contributes to improved school performance.

5.2 Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Education and school leadership development agencies such as Kenya Education Management Institute should strengthen training programs for principals on transformational

leadership, with particular emphasis on individualized consideration as a key leadership competency.

2. School principals should intentionally adopt more personalized leadership practices by mentoring teachers, addressing individual professional needs, and creating supportive work environments that enhance teacher motivation and instructional effectiveness.
3. Boards of Management should support leadership development initiatives that promote staff-centered leadership practices in schools.
4. Future studies should explore how individualized consideration interacts with other leadership dimensions and contextual factors to influence academic performance across different categories of schools.

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