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**AN EVALUATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRINCIPALS'
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MWINGI EAST
SUB-COUNTY, KITUI COUNTY, KENYA**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF
EDUCATION DEGREE IN ADMINISTRATION, LEADERSHIP AND
MANAGEMENT OF MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of the principals' instructional leadership skills on academic achievement in secondary schools in Mwingi East Sub-County, Kitui County, Kenya. This study was guided by the following research objectives: to investigate the influence of principals' interpersonal skills on students' academic achievement, to assess the impact of principals' planning skills on students' academic achievement, to explore the effect of principals' instructional observation skills on students' academic achievement and to assess the impact of principals' evaluation skills on students' academic achievement. The research adopted a mixed methodology and concurrent triangulation research design. The study used questionnaires and interview guides to collect data. A pilot study was conducted in two secondary schools in the neighboring Mwingi Central Sub-County. The scores were correlated using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation formula to determine the reliability and a correlation coefficient of $r=0.75$ was achieved. The sample size of this study constituted of 40 teachers, 8 deputy principals and 8 principals. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the teachers and deputy principals whereas interview guide was used to collect data from the principals. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 21.0) was used to analyze data. Analyzed data was presented in form of tables, percentages and frequencies. Open ended questions and responses from interview schedules which elicit qualitative data were analyzed by use of descriptive analysis and presented according in themes based on the research questions and objectives. From the analysis, the following key findings were obtained: The majority of the teachers rated the principals' interpersonal skills either as very good or good. An overwhelming majority of the teachers were positive by indicating that the planning skills of their principals were very good. Slightly more than two thirds (67.5%) of the teachers indicated that their principals gave feedback after observation. Almost all the teachers (95%) were in agreement that there is an evaluation policy in their schools. The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant influence of the principals' instructional leadership skills on students' academic achievement. The following recommendations were given: The principals need to be trained on how to create linkages between their interpersonal skills and students' academic performance; there is a need for parents to be educated on the impact of retrogressive cultural practices and the need to foster positive attitude towards education; the principals should ensure the supervision of curriculum delivery and give feedback to the teachers, and the emphasis of the TSC on KCSE results as a basis of promotion needs re-evaluation.