

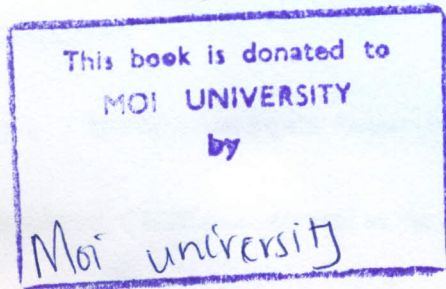
**EFFECT OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN
KCSE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TETU DISTRICT, NYERI
COUNTY, KENYA**

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**A RESEARCH THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION IN
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ABSTRACT

The low student achievement in KCSE in the study area arouses concerns over effectiveness of the leadership perspectives in schools. Principals are required to adopt appropriate leadership approaches to bridge the performance gap that exists in schools. However, empirical studies on the effect of leadership styles on student achievement were rare and often produced mixed results. This may have contributed to confusion over appropriate leadership styles. This study therefore sought to determine effect of leadership styles (democratic and autocratic) on student achievement in KCSE in Tetu District using descriptive survey design. The study was informed by Hersy & Blanchard (1976) Contingency Theory. The 330 secondary school teachers in the 29 secondary schools were targeted. The schools were stratified into high, low performing and improving groups based on average KCSE results for the period 2008-2010. Saturated sampling was used to select 3 high performing while 5 low performing and 4 improving were selected through simple random. Twelve head teachers and 10 teachers per school were selected purposively and through simple random respectively. A total of 121 respondents took part in the study. The data was collected using document analysis and 35 item questionnaire based on 5 variables (mission, vision and goals, school culture, evaluation and professional development, decision making and leadership practices) identified by the Connecticut State Department of Education (USA) as pertinent to instructional leadership. The instruments were validated by experts from the School of Education, Moi University. A pilot study and internal consistency examined reliability. The data was descriptively presented inform of percentages, frequencies, graphs, pie charts and analyzed through means and standard deviation while inferential statistics employed Pearson's Correlation-test and multiple regression. High performing ($M < 3$) and improving ($M < 3$) practice democratic leadership while low performing ($M > 3$) use autocratic leadership. Democratic leadership and the 5 variables were strongly correlated with student achievement while autocratic leadership was moderately negatively related. The mission, vision and goals ($.034 < 0.05$), school culture ($.010 < 0.05$) and evaluation and professional development ($0.031 < 0.05$) were significant between high and low performing. School culture ($0.001 < 0.05$) was significant between high performing and improving. The mission, vision and goals ($0.002 < 0.05$) and evaluation and professional development ($0.021 < 0.05$) were significant between low performing and improving. Leadership predicts 42.8% of student achievement. Evaluation and professional development (0.328 , $0.001 < 0.05$) and school culture (0.130 , $0.046 < 0.05$) were the statistically significant predictors of student achievement. The study may provide answers to questions that policy makers, education administrators and school principals need to cope with critical issue of low student achievement.