



Instructional Preparation Practices and Business Studies Performance in Kenyan Public Secondary Schools: Evidence from Matuga Sub-County

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ABSTRACT

Business Studies performance in Matuga Sub-County, Kwale County, Kenya declined from a mean score of 4.2 in 2019 to 3.1 in 2024, well below the national average of 5.8. While classroom management is widely recognised as a determinant of academic achievement, no study has examined how instructional preparation specifically shapes Business Studies performance. This study investigated the influence of teachers' instructional preparation practices on Business Studies students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Matuga Sub-County. Grounded in Kounin's Classroom Management Theory and Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, the study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design targeting 5,314 stakeholders across 17 schools. A total of 346 respondents participated (317 students, 20 teachers, 9 principals), yielding a 93.0% response rate. Instructional preparation recorded the strongest correlation with performance ($r = .608, p < .001$) and was the dominant regression predictor ($\beta = .597, p < .001$), with the model explaining 43.9% of variance. Seven of nine principals independently identified lesson planning as the most effective classroom management practice. Performance was measured through self-reported perceptions rather than examination scores, which limits the scope of conclusions. The study concluded that instructional preparation is the strongest predictor of Business Studies performance and recommended that teachers prioritise structured lesson planning, that principals institutionalise lesson observation, and that the Teachers Service Commission incorporate subject-specific preparation into professional development.

Keywords: Instructional Preparation, Classroom Management, Business Studies, Academic Performance, Secondary Schools

INTRODUCTION

Classroom management is among the strongest school-level predictors of student achievement worldwide. Stronge (2018) confirmed that teachers who plan systematically, enforce expectations consistently, and vary their instructional methods produce significantly higher learning gains. Among these dimensions, instructional preparation encompassing lesson planning, objective-setting, syllabus adherence, time allocation, and pacing serves as the structural foundation upon which the other practices depend (Burden, 2025). When preparation is inadequate, lesson fragmentation disrupts momentum, erodes engagement, and creates openings for misbehaviour (Franklin & Harrington, 2019).

Business Studies occupies a pedagogically distinctive position in Kenya's secondary curriculum. Unlike subjects dominated by either conceptual exposition or practical skill-building, Business Studies demands that teachers orchestrate lectures for foundational concepts, group discussions for case analyses, simulations for entrepreneurial skills, and numerical exercises for financial literacy often within the same lesson period (Ampera, 2018). This multi-activity structure places extraordinary demands on instructional preparation, because each poorly managed transition between activities compounds the next, producing cascading disruptions that more uniform subjects do not experience.

The urgency of this investigation was underscored by the performance trajectory in Matuga Sub-County, Kwale County. Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) data reveal a steady decline in Business Studies performance over six consecutive years, from a mean score of 4.2 in 2019 to 3.1 in 2024 substantially below the national average of 5.8 (Kwale County, 2025). A critical within-school disparity compounds this concern: Business Studies averaged 3.57 in 2024, while subjects such as French (8.74) and Home Science (8.85) performed markedly better within the same institutions, taught by teachers with comparable qualifications, to students drawn from identical demographic backgrounds. This disparity effectively rules out general school quality, student capability, or socioeconomic status as sufficient explanations, pointing instead to subject-specific factors in how instruction is prepared and delivered.

The consequences extend beyond examination scores. Approximately 67% of Kenyan secondary graduates pursue business-related careers, yet only 23% of Matuga Sub-County Business Studies graduates secure business-related employment within two years, compared with 45% nationally (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [KICD], 2023; Kwale County, 2025). Persistent underperformance therefore constrains higher education access, perpetuates entrepreneurial stagnation, and undermines regional economic development in coastal Kenya.

Despite this evidence, no empirical study has examined how instructional preparation specifically influences Business Studies performance in Kenyan secondary schools. Teachers lack evidence-based priorities for their daily preparation routines, principals lack empirical benchmarks for lesson observation, and policymakers lack localised data to design targeted professional development interventions. This study addressed this gap by investigating the influence of teachers' instructional preparation practices on Business Studies students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Matuga Sub-County, Kwale County, Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

Kounin's (1970) Classroom Management Theory provided the primary theoretical lens. The theory identified four concepts: withitness (teacher awareness of classroom events), overlapping (managing multiple situations concurrently), momentum (maintaining uninterrupted lesson flow), and group focus (keeping all students engaged). Momentum and smoothness directly anchor instructional preparation: well-prepared lessons flow without hesitation, preventing the management breakdowns Kounin observed in unprepared classrooms. This theory was selected over alternatives such as Canter's Assertive Discipline and Skinner's operant conditioning because it encompasses the full range of management practices rather than focusing primarily on discipline and consequences. Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory complemented Kounin's framework through the Zone of Proximal Development, which posits that learning occurs through guided interaction requiring teachers to prepare scaffolded activities calibrated to students' current understanding. Together, these theories predict that thorough preparation creates both the structural conditions for orderly instruction (Kounin) and the pedagogical conditions for meaningful learning (Vygotsky).

Objective

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of teachers' instructional preparation practices on Business Studies students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Matuga Sub-County, Kwale County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Instructional preparation refers to the planning and organisational activities teachers undertake before classroom instruction, including lesson planning, objective-setting, resource assembly, syllabus adherence, time allocation, and pacing (Burden, 2025; Ghafar, 2023). For Business Studies, these activities carry distinctive demands: teachers must plan for multiple activity types within single lessons, anticipate transitions between them, and calibrate pacing to accommodate different cognitive loads (Ampera, 2018). The literature on instructional preparation and academic performance is reviewed below across three dimensions: lesson planning, syllabus adherence and time allocation, and pacing.

Lesson Planning and Academic Achievement

International research consistently associates systematic lesson planning with improved student outcomes. Khan et al. (2024) reported that Pakistani elementary teachers who planned lessons with explicit objectives and sequenced activities produced significantly higher standardised assessment scores, isolating the planning variable through controlled comparison. Wolff et al. (2020) used eye-tracking technology to demonstrate that experienced North American teachers maintained stronger syllabus alignment while simultaneously monitoring student behaviour, confirming that preparation frees cognitive resources for responsive teaching a mechanism directly predicted by Kounin's (1970) overlapping concept. Khanum (2020) found that structured lesson planning enhanced both content delivery and learner engagement across multiple school systems, though the study did not disaggregate effects by subject area.

African research documents planning's importance alongside structural barriers to implementation. Adjei et al. (2019) established that detailed lesson plans predicted higher student achievement in Ghanaian schools but noted that heavy workloads and limited access to current materials undermined planning quality. In South Africa, Mdlokovane (2020) offered a counterpoint, finding that planning predicted outcomes independently of resource availability suggesting that teacher commitment may partially compensate for material constraints. These contrasting findings highlight that the preparation-performance relationship is shaped by the setting in which it operates, making context-specific investigation essential rather than assumptions of universal effects.

East African research reveals both planning's value and distinctive implementation challenges. Muhwezi et al. (2022) found that Ugandan business education teachers who prepared systematically achieved more consistent content coverage and higher student participation, but substantial variation in planning quality persisted, with teachers citing limited access to current business materials as a barrier. In Kenya, Mbaki (2024) catalogued poor lesson planning among factors undermining performance in Katulani Sub-County but did not quantify planning's predictive weight relative to other management dimensions. Mwangare et al. (2021) found that thorough preparation improved engagement in Matuga Sub-County primary schools, but the primary education setting and general subject focus leave uncertain whether these findings extend to secondary-level Business Studies. No study has tested lesson planning's independent contribution to Business Studies performance in a model that simultaneously accounts for discipline, interaction, and methods.

Syllabus Adherence and Time Allocation

Coverage of the prescribed curriculum is a prerequisite for examination performance in systems where assessments draw from the full syllabus (Mugoya & Nalukwago, 2023). Lay and Ng (2021) analysed Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study data and found that comprehensive topic coverage was associated with higher national achievement scores. Arop et al. (2020) found that Nigerian secondary teachers frequently failed to complete syllabi due to competition from administrative and co-curricular demands, raising an important distinction between nominal coverage and substantive understanding a distinction especially relevant for Business Studies, where rushing through financial calculations or entrepreneurial concepts without ensuring comprehension produces coverage without learning. In Kenya, Ouko (2021) noted that most principals did not actively verify alignment between teaching and curriculum plans, allowing coverage gaps to accumulate undetected. No study has examined whether syllabus adherence and time allocation predict Business Studies performance in Kenyan secondary schools.

Lesson Pacing

Pacing the regulation of instructional speed to optimise engagement and comprehension is particularly consequential for Business Studies, where lessons transition between conceptual instruction, numerical exercises, and group discussion, each requiring a different tempo (Song'oro, 2023). Philip and Bennett (2021) reported that strategic pacing incorporating deliberate pauses increased attention span in higher education settings. In Africa, Adejimi et al. (2021) found that appropriately paced collaborative activities improved achievement in Nigerian secondary biology, and Kiogolo and Mtana (2022) confirmed that effective time management influenced performance in Tanzanian schools. Kenyan research by Waweru and Gacheri (2021)



established pacing's importance for secondary school outcomes, but no study has examined how pacing operates within Business Studies lessons, where the multi-activity structure creates distinct rhythmic challenges.

Across all three preparation dimensions, a consistent pattern emerges: planning, coverage, and pacing are each positively associated with achievement, but no study has tested their combined influence on Business Studies performance in Kenyan secondary schools or determined their predictive weight relative to competing management dimensions. The present study addresses this gap.

METHODOLOGY

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design within a descriptive survey framework guided this investigation, collecting quantitative and qualitative data concurrently and integrating them during interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was conducted in Matuga Sub-County, Kwale County, Kenya, selected because KCSE data documented a sustained six-year decline in Business Studies performance alongside within-school disparities pointing to subject-specific factors (Kwale County, 2025). The target population comprised 5,314 stakeholders across 17 public secondary schools: 5,250 Forms 3 and 4 Business Studies students, 47 teachers, and 17 principals. Using Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967), 372 respondents were sampled 339 students through stratified random sampling (by school category, form level, and gender), 23 teachers by census, and 10 principals purposively of whom 346 participated (317 students, 20 teachers, 9 principals), yielding a 93.0% response rate. Data were collected through two structured five-point Likert-scale questionnaires (student and teacher versions, each containing a 10-item instructional preparation subscale) and semi-structured principal interviews lasting 45–60 minutes. Content validity was established through expert evaluation by two doctoral-qualified faculty members, construct validity was grounded in Kounin's (1970) theory, and a pilot study in Voi Sub-County confirmed acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .735$ for instructional preparation; $\alpha = .746$ for academic performance), both exceeding the .70 threshold (George & Mallery, 2020). Academic performance was measured through self-reported student perceptions of understanding, engagement, grade improvement, and subject interest rather than actual KCSE examination scores a delimitation that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 28 through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression entering all four management dimensions simultaneously to isolate instructional preparation's unique predictive weight. Diagnostic tests confirmed normality (skewness -0.035 to -0.407 ; kurtosis -0.384 to -1.334 , per Hair et al., 2019), acceptable multicollinearity (VIF 1.86–2.92), independence of residuals (Durbin-Watson = 2.04), and robustness to detected heteroscedasticity through HC3 standard errors. Qualitative data underwent systematic thematic analysis through six stages: transcription, familiarisation, open coding, axial coding, theme development, and objective-aligned interpretation. Research authorisation was obtained from the Kenya Methodist University Research Ethics Committee, NACOSTI, and the Kwale County Education Office; informed and parental consent was secured; and confidentiality was maintained through coded identifiers and secure storage.

RESULTS

Response Rate and Demographics

Table 1 presents the response rate by respondent category.

Table 1: *Response Rate by Respondent Category*

Category	Target (n)	Achieved (n)	Response Rate (%)
Students	339	317	93.5
Teachers	23	20	87
Principals	10	9	90
Total	372	346	93

Source: Field Data (2026)

The overall response rate of 93.0% substantially exceeded the 70% threshold considered adequate for survey research (Wu et al., 2022). The student sample ($n = 317$) was predominantly female (67.5%), with the majority aged 16–17 years (71.3%). Sub-County schools contributed the largest share (49.5%). All 20 teachers were aged 31–40, held Bachelor’s degrees, and had 5–10 years of experience a mid-career, degree-qualified cohort with well-established classroom routines.

Baseline: Academic Performance (Dependent Variable)

Before examining the predictor, Table 2 presents the baseline descriptive statistics for academic performance.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics for Academic Performance*

Respondent Group	n	M	SD	Range
Students	317	4.39	0.45	3.12–5.00
Teachers	20	4.60	0.40	3.83–5.00

Source: Field Data (2026)

Both groups rated academic performance in the Strongly Agree range. The 0.21-point gap between teacher and student composites is consistent with research showing that self-assessment tends to exceed external ratings. Among students, timely homework completion received the highest mean ($M = 4.54$) while active lesson participation received the lowest ($M = 4.28$) a pattern suggesting that compliance is achieved more readily than genuine engagement. Individual student scores ranged from 3.12 to 5.00, providing sufficient variation for the correlation and regression analyses that follow.

Descriptive Findings: Instructional Preparation (Students)

Table 3 presents the frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation for each of the ten items measuring students’ perceptions of instructional preparation.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics for Instructional Preparation (Students, $n = 317$)*

Item	SD f(%)	D f(%)	N f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	M	SD
Teacher comes to class well-prepared	0(0.0)	1(0.3)	24(7.6)	153(48.3)	139(43.8)	4.36	0.63
Explains objectives at lesson start	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	22(6.9)	113(35.6)	182(57.4)	4.50	0.62
Uses different materials	0(0.0)	1(0.3)	26(8.2)	119(37.5)	171(53.9)	4.45	0.65
Gives examples that aid understanding	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	14(4.4)	108(34.1)	195(61.5)	4.57	0.58
Lessons follow a clear order	0(0.0)	2(0.6)	30(9.5)	118(37.2)	167(52.7)	4.43	0.68
Teaches at appropriate speed	0(0.0)	3(0.9)	25(7.9)	90(28.4)	199(62.8)	4.54	0.70
Starts and ends lessons on time	0(0.0)	3(0.9)	29(9.1)	104(32.8)	181(57.1)	4.47	0.72
Sufficient time to practise	0(0.0)	1(0.3)	38(12.0)	98(30.9)	180(56.8)	4.44	0.71
More time on difficult topics	0(0.0)	3(0.9)	32(10.1)	125(39.4)	157(49.5)	4.38	0.70
Finishes planned activities within lesson	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	24(7.6)	120(37.9)	173(54.6)	4.47	0.63
Composite						4.46	0.36

Source: Field Data (2026)

Descriptive Findings: Instructional Preparation (Teachers)

Table 4 presents the corresponding frequency distribution for the ten items measuring teachers’ self-reported instructional preparation practices.

Table 4: *Descriptive Statistics for Instructional Preparation (Teachers, $n = 20$)*

Item	SD f(%)	D f(%)	N f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	M	SD
Prepare written lesson plans	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(10.0)	5(25.0)	13(65.0)	4.55	0.69
Set clear learning objectives	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(5.0)	8(40.0)	11(55.0)	4.50	0.61
Content matches curriculum	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(5.0)	8(40.0)	11(55.0)	4.50	0.61
Prepare different teaching materials	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(10.0)	5(25.0)	13(65.0)	4.55	0.69
Activities for different learners	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(5.0)	6(30.0)	13(65.0)	4.60	0.60
Time allocation for difficult topics	1(5.0)	0(0.0)	1(5.0)	7(35.0)	11(55.0)	4.35	0.99
Teach at engaging speed	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	7(35.0)	13(65.0)	4.65	0.49
Complete curriculum within school year	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(10.0)	18(90.0)	4.90	0.31
Enough time to practise	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	6(30.0)	14(70.0)	4.70	0.47
Reduce wasted transition time	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	7(35.0)	13(65.0)	4.65	0.49
Composite						4.60	0.41

Source: Field Data (2026)

Both respondent groups rated instructional preparation highly. The student composite was 4.46 ($SD = 0.36$) and the teacher composite was 4.60 ($SD = 0.41$), both within the Strongly Agree range. Among students, the highest-rated item concerned teachers providing illustrative examples to aid understanding ($M = 4.57$), with 303 students (95.6%) agreeing or strongly agreeing. The lowest-rated student item addressed teachers coming to class well-prepared ($M = 4.36$), though 292 students (92.1%) still agreed. This pattern indicates that while teachers are generally perceived as prepared, their use of concrete real-world illustrations is the preparation attribute students value most consistent with Business Studies' dependence on applied, context-rich instruction.

Among teachers, all 20 (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that they complete the curriculum within the school year ($M = 4.90$, $SD = 0.31$), making it the highest-rated teacher item. Teaching at an engaging speed ($M = 4.65$) and reducing wasted transition time ($M = 4.65$) were the next highest, reflecting teachers' confidence in pacing. Time allocation for difficult topics received the lowest teacher mean ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.99$), with one teacher disagreeing notably, this was also the item with the highest standard deviation, suggesting that time allocation is the preparation dimension where teacher practice is most inconsistent. The 0.14-point gap between teacher and student composites indicates that teachers perceive their preparation slightly more favourably than students do, consistent with research showing that self-assessment tends to exceed external ratings.

Qualitative Findings from Principal Interviews

Thematic analysis of the nine principal interviews produced three themes regarding instructional preparation.

Theme 1: Lesson planning as the foundation of effective management. Seven of the nine principals identified lesson planning as the most effective classroom management practice. P1 explained: "Lesson planning is what makes everything else work when a teacher walks in prepared, the class runs itself." P5 linked preparation to student participation: "When the teacher has planned, learners participate actively because the flow is clear." P8 described well-prepared classrooms as environments where "the teacher takes care of learners' needs and reactions during a lesson."

Theme 2: Structured monitoring reinforces preparation quality. Principals who monitored preparation most frequently reported the strongest classroom management. P3 described observing classes three times weekly, while P4 reported daily monitoring. P7 and P8 used structured observation sheets assessing the components of effective lesson delivery. These accounts suggest that institutional accountability mechanisms sustain preparation quality beyond individual teacher motivation.

Theme 3: Discipline follows preparation. Principals consistently linked orderly classrooms to teacher preparation rather than discipline strategies per se. P4 provided a vivid example: “Last year third term, the last class in academic performance in Form 3 among the eight streams was the noisiest, desks were always disarranged and most students were not doing assignments.” P7 and P8 explained that “in a well-managed class, communication is effective, content delivery occurs, and time is effectively used” outcomes they attributed to preparation rather than rule enforcement. This theme directly parallels the suppressor effect found in the quantitative analysis.

Inferential Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between instructional preparation and academic performance ($r = .608$, $p < .001$), the strongest among all four management dimensions. Table 5 presents the comparative correlations.

Table 5: *Pearson Correlations between Management Practices and Academic Performance ($n = 317$)*

Predictor	r	p-value	Interpretation
Instructional Preparation	.608	< .001	Strong positive
Instructional Methods	.490	< .001	Moderate positive
Student-Teacher Interaction	.460	< .001	Moderate positive
Discipline Enforcement	.374	< .001	Moderate positive

Source: Field Data (2026)

Multiple linear regression entered all four management dimensions simultaneously to isolate each practice’s unique contribution. The model was significant, $F(4, 312) = 61.08$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .439$, adjusted $R^2 = .432$, indicating that the four practices jointly explained 43.9% of the variance in academic performance. Table 6 presents the individual coefficients.

Table 6: *Multiple Regression Coefficients Predictors of Academic Performance*

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	0.737	0.269		2.744	.006
Instructional Preparation	0.737	0.077	.597	9.594	< .001
Discipline Enforcement	−0.347	0.083	−.302	−4.164	< .001
Student-Teacher Interaction	0.169	0.094	.129	1.806	.072
Instructional Methods	0.263	0.058	.265	4.570	< .001

Note. β = standardised beta coefficient. Source: Field Data (2026)

Instructional preparation was the dominant predictor ($\beta = .597$, $p < .001$), more than twice the magnitude of the next strongest predictor, instructional methods ($\beta = .265$). Re-estimation using HC3 robust standard errors confirmed that instructional preparation remained significant ($t = 6.32$, $p < .001$), indicating robustness to heteroscedasticity.

Discipline enforcement had a positive bivariate correlation ($r = .374$) but a negative regression coefficient ($\beta = −.302$). This sign reversal is a classical suppressor effect resulting from the strong inter-predictor correlation between discipline and preparation ($r = .707$). The negative coefficient does not indicate that discipline harms performance; rather, discipline’s positive contribution operates primarily through its shared variance with preparation (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

DISCUSSION

The dominant regression weight of instructional preparation ($\beta = .597$) is the central finding. Preparation was not merely one contributor among several; it functioned as the keystone practice around which the other management dimensions organised. This finding extends the general preparation-performance link reported in prior research (Franklin & Harrington, 2019; Waweru & Gacheri, 2021) by demonstrating that preparation's predictive strength is greatest when measured in a subject-specific model alongside competing management dimensions a contribution that studies examining preparation in isolation cannot make.

The result accords with Adjei et al. (2019), who found that detailed lesson plans predicted higher achievement in Ghanaian schools, and with Muhwezi et al. (2022), who found that systematic preparation improved content coverage in Ugandan business education. However, neither study controlled for other management practices, so it was not possible to determine whether planning's effect was independent or mediated by its association with discipline, interaction, or methods. The present study's regression model clarifies this: preparation retains the largest unique effect even after shared variance with the other three dimensions is removed. The finding also extends Mbaki's (2024) descriptive identification of poor lesson planning as a contributor to underperformance in Katulani Sub-County into a quantified predictive relationship.

Qualitative data enriched the statistical finding through methodological triangulation. The convergence between the regression result and the principal interviews where seven of nine independently named lesson planning as the most effective practice strengthens confidence in the finding. The third qualitative theme, linking orderly classrooms to preparation rather than discipline enforcement, directly mirrors the suppressor effect in the regression: principals intuitively recognised what the statistical model demonstrated, that discipline is an enabling condition operating through preparation rather than an independent driver. P4's daily monitoring and P3's three-times-weekly observations suggest that institutional accountability mechanisms may explain why some schools achieve better Business Studies performance despite operating under similar resource constraints.

The finding that illustrative real-world examples were the highest-rated preparation item ($M = 4.57$) carries particular significance for Business Studies pedagogy. This subject requires teachers to bridge abstract concepts market equilibrium, financial ratios, entrepreneurial risk with concrete business realities. Students' strong endorsement indicates that the preparation dimension they value most is not procedural (arriving on time, having a lesson plan) but substantive: the quality of intellectual preparation that enables teachers to select, adapt, and deliver relevant illustrations. This nuance was not captured in previous studies that measured preparation as a global construct (Mbaki, 2024; Mwangare et al., 2021), and it aligns with the broader literature on pedagogical content knowledge, which holds that effective teaching requires not just subject knowledge but the capacity to represent it in forms accessible to learners.

Kounin's (1970) Classroom Management Theory was substantially supported. The high student ratings on lesson flow ($M = 4.43$) and pacing ($M = 4.54$), combined with preparation's dominant regression weight, confirm that well-prepared lessons maintaining Kounin's momentum are associated with the largest measurable gains in Business Studies performance. Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory received moderate support: preparation that incorporates scaffolded activities creates the conditions for learning within the Zone of Proximal Development, but this support operated through preparation quality rather than through interaction directly, indicating that Vygotsky's framework is best applied to Business Studies classrooms in conjunction with Kounin's structural model.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations qualify the interpretation of these findings. First, the cross-sectional design captured classroom management practices at a single point in time, preventing causal claims about the preparation-performance relationship. The associations reported should be interpreted as predictive rather than causal. Second, academic performance was measured through self-reported student perceptions rather than actual

KCSE examination scores, which may introduce social desirability bias and limits the extent to which findings can be generalised to externally verified academic outcomes. Third, the teacher sample was demographically homogeneous all 20 teachers were aged 31–40, held Bachelor's degrees, and had 5–10 years of experience which may restrict the applicability of findings to teaching populations with different qualification profiles or career stages. Fourth, the geographic specificity of the study means that findings from Matuga Sub-County may not transfer directly to regions with different educational infrastructures or socioeconomic conditions. These limitations were partially mitigated through methodological triangulation (combining student, teacher, and principal data sources), six years of longitudinal KCSE performance data to contextualise the cross-sectional findings, and detailed contextual descriptions to enable transferability assessment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study established that instructional preparation is the strongest predictor of Business Studies performance in Matuga Sub-County, jointly explaining the largest share of the 43.9% variance accounted for by the four classroom management practices. The finding was robust across analytical methods and corroborated by independent qualitative evidence. Preparation functioned as the keystone around which discipline, interaction, and methods organised improving preparation quality would therefore be expected to yield the largest return on investment in professional development. The finding positions instructional preparation not as one factor among many, but as the primary lever through which classroom management translates into Business Studies learning outcomes.

For Business Studies teachers, the evidence supports prioritising structured lesson planning for every lesson, with explicit attention to learning objectives, activity transitions, and the selection of real-world business examples relevant to students' local economic environment. For school principals, the evidence supports institutionalising routine checking of professional documents and implementing structured lesson observation at least monthly, using instruments that assess preparation quality the qualitative finding that the most active monitors reported the strongest classroom management provides an empirical basis for these measures. For the Teachers Service Commission and the Ministry of Education, the evidence supports incorporating Business Studies-specific preparation content into professional development, addressing the unique demands of multi-activity lessons, and prioritising resource allocation to Sub-County schools, which enrolled the largest proportion of students yet recorded significantly lower performance ($M = 4.16$) than National schools ($M = 4.71$).

Future research should incorporate actual KCSE examination scores alongside self-reported performance measures, employ structural equation modelling to test the mediating role of discipline enforcement in the preparation-performance relationship, and investigate how technology availability shapes instructional preparation quality across school categories.

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