

Influence of Principals' Management Competencies on Students' Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Homa Bay County, Kenya

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Abstract— Discipline is a prerequisite to effective and efficient functioning of schools and achievement of their objectives. Despite this, maintaining discipline in secondary schools in Homa Bay county has been a challenge. Principals' management competencies are among factors that have been associated with students' discipline. This paper examined the influence of principals' management competencies on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Homa bay county, Kenya. The study adopted the descriptive research design. Purposive, stratified, proportionate and simple random sampling techniques were utilized to select a sample of 171 Principals, and 267 Heads of Departments (HOD) who participated in the study. Data was collected using Principals' and HODs' questionnaires. The content and face validity of the two instruments were established through expert judgment. The principals' and HODs' questionnaires were also piloted for reliability, and yielded coefficients of 0.76 and 0.81 respectively. Data was analysed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data were transcribed and reported thematically. Influence of principals' management competencies on discipline was established using the Spearman's Correlations. The study established that the level of students discipline was low and principals' management competencies significantly influenced it. The study recommends that principals' management skills be regularly upgraded through training and collaborative decision making that involves all stakeholders be adopted to enhance discipline.

Index Terms— Competencies, Discipline, Influence, Management.

I. INTRODUCTION

Secondary school education

Secondary school education is considered a significant stage of schooling as it provides many pupils with the motivation to remain in primary schools (Secondary Education Master Plan, 2000). It also feeds tertiary institutions and universities with graduates and provides the formal and informal employment sectors with labour (Jidavma, 2012). It is thus the foundation of tertiary education and work. Secondary school education is supposed to make learners proficient in both academic and applied subjects (Kabugi, 2013). It is also supposed to provide for an all-round persons in terms of mental, social, moral, spiritual development. Bogonko (1994) contends that secondary school education enhances cognitive, psycho-motor and affective skills of learners. These outcomes enable learners to acquire positive attitudes, self-respect, self-reliance

adaptability, sense of purpose, integrity and self-discipline, and consideration for others.

Discipline in sec schools

Discipline is necessary in schools for them to function effectively and efficiently and achieve their objectives (Gitome, Katola & Nyabwari, 2013; Simatwa, 2012). Discipline refers to training of the mind and character aimed at producing self-control, and orderly behaviour (Wango, 2009). Students' discipline refers to regulation of learners' behaviour and maintenance of order through rules and regulations (Temitayo, Nayaya & Lukman, 2013). These rules define the expected standards of clothing, timekeeping, social behaviour and learning ethics. Discipline is concerned with respect for others and acceptable norms of behavior such as obedience, self-control, tidiness and use of civilized language. It thus defines not only the degree of order and structure but also the extent to which the school community views the social appropriateness of learners' behaviour (Jinot, 2018). Students discipline in Kenyan secondary schools is under the office of the Deputy Principals (Government of Kenya [GoK], 1987). This is a delegated responsibility since the overall management and discipline in schools is still the responsibility of the principal.

Discipline is the most important component in an educational institution as no progress can be made without it (Bakhada, 2010). Discipline is important because it teaches students to be responsible and trains them to become aware of their actions, and consequences. Kotirde, Yunos and Anaf (2014) assert that a disciplined student is guided in his/her behaviour by moral and social principles and does what is right. Griffins (1994) asserts that discipline inculcates in students good habits such as self-respect, and enables him/her to observe the norms of good conduct even when not under compulsion or supervision. Students are more likely to benefit from education in an environment where high standards of behaviour are adhered to (National Education Welfare Board, 2008). Indiscipline on the other hand interferes with learning, diverts administrative time and contributes to teacher burnout (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010). Students' misconduct in the classroom may also be a precursor to school dropout (Temitayo, Nanaya and Lukman, 2013).

Students' discipline is a major concern in many parts of the world (Rampa, 2014; Kiprop, 2012; Simatwa, 2012). Lack of discipline is a problem that manifests itself in a variety of

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ways such as; vandalism, truancy, smoking, disobedience, intimidation, delinquency, rape, theft and general violence (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010). Indiscipline in secondary schools is one of the most serious problem facing the United States of America (USA) educational system (Gagnon, Gurel & Barber, 2017). In the Caribbean, Chavez *et al* (2021) observed that administrators, policy makers, teachers, parents and the public were struggling to find solutions to the problems of indiscipline in schools. According to Temitayo, Nayaya and Lukman (2013), indiscipline is ranked as a major problem among secondary school students in Nigeria. Moyo, Khewu and Bayaga (2014) reported that teachers in South Africa were becoming increasingly distressed about disciplinary problems in schools. Onditi (2018), and Macharia and Thinguri (2017) observed that the level of discipline in secondary schools in Kenya was very low. Homabay is among the counties in Kenya with discipline challenges in secondary schools, as evidenced by the ever increasing cases of indiscipline such as strikes, riots and, burning dormitories (County Director of Education, 2015).

Factors influencing discipline in schools

Students' discipline is affected by various factors that range from out-of-school to those related to the school (Ekombe, 2010). Out of school factors include; culture and traditions, social and mass media, societal expectations, instability at home, drugs and substances (Katolo, 2016). Factors related to the school include; dissatisfaction, poor performance, competition for limited resources, rules and regulations perceived to be harsh, unreasonable and unfair, curriculum that is deemed unsuitable and unfavourable (Kimani, 2013). Other school factors associated with discipline are; peer pressure, harassment, isolation and rejection, ineffective channels of communication, inappropriate teaching styles, drugs and substances abuse, lack of participation in decision making process and competencies of school managers (Yunesa & Khaidir, 2018; Jinot, 2018; Ngwokuabueni, 2015).

Principals Management Competencies

Schools need competent leaders and managers if they are to provide learners with quality education (Ikediugwu, 2016). Nwune, Nwogbo and Okonkwo (2016) contend that schools do not only require trained and committed teachers but also leadership of highly competent principals to manage and oversee what the teachers do and ensure that learners are provided with quality education. Management is the art of getting things done through and with people (Heller, 2012). It is a process that aims at achieving pre-determined objectives and involves planning, organizing, directing, controlling and co-coordinating (Hissom, 2009). Competency refers to quality of professional behaviour, which is demonstrated when one performs specific tasks assigned to him/her (Noureen, 2003). These tasks are categorised as: Technical - which are specific to the job; Conceptual - those that are directly concerned with controlling and administration; and human resource management. Heller (2012) outlines functions of school administrators as overseeing implementation of instructional programmes, staff and

students' administration, finance and physical resource and community relationship management. Akinfolarin (2017) argues that principals must have competencies in these areas for effective management of schools.

Management Competencies and Discipline

It is the role of the school principal to ensure discipline policy, rules and regulations are developed and enforced in learning institutions for students to be with acceptable behaviour (Kibet *et al*, 2012). Okendu (2012) argues that it is the duty and responsibility of the principals to inculcate discipline by cultivating an environment that compels individuals under them to develop self-drive, build positive behaviour and enthusiasm in whatever they do without being coerced. According to Bosire, Sang, Kiumi and Mungai (2010), student discipline is likely to be high in schools in which the principal is inspirational; integrative and collaborative; involves the community in managing school affairs; and delegates responsibilities to other members of the wider school community. Griffins (1994) attributed high discipline of students to management competences such as effective communication and leadership. Griffin noted that students' discipline was high in institutions whose heads used appropriate leadership styles while schools led by principles with inappropriate leadership styles had many cases of indiscipline. Njami (2018) and Katolo (2016) contend that a competent principal ensures, through use of knowledge, skills and appropriate leadership style, that indiscipline is minimised or eradicated. This makes the school a haven of peace in which every student feels safe and secure.

Speculation

The foregoing discussions have demonstrated that discipline is essential for smooth operations of schools. They have also demonstrated that maintaining discipline is a challenge in many learning institutions. The foregoing discussions have further demonstrated that discipline is affected by out-of-school and school related factors such as principals' management competencies. The low level of discipline in secondary schools in Homa Bay County could have been due to principals' management competencies. This paper explored the relationship between principles management competencies and discipline. It focused on management competencies because discipline can only be maintained in schools when principals are able to successfully perform their duties and responsibilities through use of knowledge, skills and abilities (Jinot, 2018). This requires managerial competency which by definition is ability and skills to accomplish given task (Akinfolarin, 2017). The specific objective of the paper was to determine the influence of principals' management competencies on students discipline in Homa Bay county, Kenya. A hypothesis which stated that principles management competencies do not significantly influence discipline was developed from the objective and tested.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. This design entails gathering data from a population or a

sample and describing the ‘who’, ‘when’ ‘where’ and ‘how’ of a situation, problem, phenomenon, service, opinions, habits or attitudes as they are (Shield & Rangarajan, 2013). The design was deemed appropriate because the aim of the study was to explore the association between management competencies and discipline in its natural setting.

Study Location

The study was conducted in Homa bay County which is in the western part of Kenya. The county borders Lake Victoria to the North West, Kisumu County to the North East, Nyamira and Kisii Counties to the East and South East, and Migori County to the South (County Government of Homa Bay, 2018). It covers an area of approximately 3,183.4 Km² and lies between latitude 0₀15' South and 0₀52⁰ South – 34₀ East and 35₀ East (Homa Bay County, 2016). Homa bay County has six sub-counties, namely; Homa bay, Mbita, Rachounyo North, Rachounyo South, Suba, and Ndhiwa. Majority of inhabitants of the county are from the Luo

community who grow a variety of crops based on the ecological zones (Wikipedia, 2021). The crops grown are, maize, beans, millet, sorghum and tobacco. The inhabitants also keep traditional cattle for milk and meat. The county was chosen because of challenges of maintaining discipline in schools as evidenced by increasing cases of students' indiscipline, (CDE, 2015; Quality Assurance and Standards Inspection Report, 2014).

Population of the study

The target population of the study was 298 principals and 803 Heads of Departments in public schools. The principals were targeted because they are chief executive officers of schools (Bakhada, 2010). The HODs were selected because they coordinate departmental activities and assist the principals and their deputies to manage schools (Wango, 2009). The target population is summarized in Table 1

Table 1: Distribution of the target population by Sub County

Sub County	Principals	HODs
Homa bay	63	183
Mbita	32	88
Rachounyo North	50	142
Rachounyo South	85	242
Suba	25	50
Ndhiwa	43	98
Total	298	803

Source: CDE Office Homa bay County June 2015

Sampling Procedure and Sample size

The number of principals and HODs who participated in the study was determined using Slovin's formula (Dionco-Adetayo, 2011), which is:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + NE^2}$$

Where: n = sample size

N = population size

E = margin of error or error tolerance

1 = is a constant value

The sample sizes of the principals and HODs were 171 and 267 given that their target populations were 298 and 803 respectively. Purposive sampling techniques were used to select the principals and HODs who have been in the targeted schools for at least 4 years. The rationale of this was to choose respondents who knew their schools well and could provide quality data. The number of principals and HODs from each sub county was determined using stratified and proportionate sampling procedures. At the sub county level, simple random sampling was employed to pick the principals and HODs who participated in the study.

Table 2: Samples of Principals and HODs by Sub County

Sub County	Principals	HODs
Homa bay	37	67
Mbita	18	27
Rachounyo North	30	51
Rachounyo South	49	87
Suba	14	12
Ndhiwa	23	23
Total	171	267

Data collection and analysis

Instrumentation

The principals and HODs questionnaires were used to collect data. Questionnaires were chosen because they are efficient, practical, allow use of a large sample and their

administration and scoring is straight forward (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). Salkind (2009) contend that questionnaires are ideal for gathering data from people who are dispersed over a wide geographical area, where travelling demands on the researcher would be excessive. The principals' questionnaire comprised of three sections. The first section

was used to generate data on the demographic characteristics while the second and third ones elicited data on discipline and principals' management competencies. The HODs questionnaire also had three sections that generated respondents' bio-data, principals' management competencies and discipline data.

The principals' management competencies were measured with respect to five dimensions or functions of management namely: planning/budgeting, organizing, coordinating, supervising and controlling (Okumbe, 1998). Planning, organising and coordinating were measured using a set of 4 items each, while supervision and controlling were each measured using a set of 5 items. The 22 closed-ended items that were used to measure the variable were constructed using a 5 points likert scale (1 = Poor, 2 = Average, 3 = Good, 4 = Very Good, 5 = Excellent) rating scale. The tool was adopted from from McReels' 21 Balanced Leadership responsibilities used in evaluating principals in Texas (McRel International, 2014). Discipline was measured by identifying acts of indiscipline in schools and the number of reported indiscipline cases, since that one is the opposite of the other.

Both the principals' and HODs' questionnaires were constructed using close and open ended items. The close ended items were included in the instruments because they allow uniformity of responses, are easy to code and analysis (Sang, 2002). Open ended items on the other hand enable a researchers to get additional information by asking follow-up questions (Janice, 2011).

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The face and construct validity of the principals, and HODs questionnaires, were examined through experts judgment. The recommendations of the experts were incorporated in the instruments before they were used in the actual data collection. The two instruments were pilot tested using a sample of 21 principals and 32 HODs from schools that had similar characteristics in the neighbouring Kisii county. Reliability of the instruments was estimated using the Cronbach Alpha formula:

Cronbach Alpha $\alpha = k \times \bar{c} / \bar{v} + (k-1) \bar{c}$ (Institute of Digital Research and Education, 2016)

Where k refers to the number of scale items

\bar{c} refers to the average of all covariance between items

\bar{v} is refers to the average variance of each item.

The reliability coefficients of the principals' and HODs' questionnaires were 0.76, and 0.81 respectively. The instruments were deemed reliable as their coefficients were above the recommended 0.7 threshold (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000).

Data Analysis

The collected data was coded, keyed in a file, cleaned, and analysed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Science. The responses to the closed ended items that were used to measure the five dimensions of management competencies were scored, averaged and transformed into their indices. Management competencies' measure (overall

index) was derived from the indices of its five dimensions. Discipline as measured by the number of reported cases was categorised as "Low", "Moderate" and "High" and transformed into discipline levels. The influence of principals' management competencies on discipline was established using the spearman's correlations. The procedure was selected because it is recommended for establishing the association between two continuous variables when parametric conditions are not met or in situations where one of the variables is categorical (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Qualitative data generated by the open-ended questions was organized into themes pertinent to the study and summarised using frequencies and percentages.

III. FINDINGS/RESULTS

Principals' management competencies

Principals' management competencies was measured using data gathered using the HODs questionnaire. It was measured with respect to five functions of management namely: planning/budgeting, organizing, coordinating, supervising and controlling. The responses to items in the HODs questionnaire were scored and averaged into indices of the five dimensions. The indices of the five dimensions were averaged to give the overall index (Table 3) which was used as a measure of the construct.

Table 3: Principals' Management Competencies

Management Dimension	N	Mean	SD
Planning	197	3.84	0.54
Organising	195	3.87	0.48
Coordinating	196	3.74	0.38
Supervising	193	3.92	0.48
Controlling	194	4.09	0.13
Management competency index	199	3.90	0.40

Table 3 shows that the indices of the management functions ranged from 3.74 (SD = 0.38) to 4.09 (SD = 0.13) while the competency index was 3.90 (SD = 0.40). This means that the management competencies of the principals were high given that the rating was done using a five point scale. These results support the findings of a study conducted by Bush (2010) which revealed that principals were able to communicate effectively and collaborated with members of school communities, responded to diverse interests and needs, and mobilized resources to promote students' success. Similarly, Bouchamma, *etal* (2014) established that majority of principals were able to develop strategic plans that ensured availability of resources and effective management of human capital and curriculum implementation.

Discipline

Discipline was measured by listing the acts of indiscipline observed in schools and the number of reported cases. This data was provided by the principals, who listed the acts of indiscipline observed in schools and indicated. A summary of acts of indiscipline observed in schools is given in Table 4.

Table 4: Common Acts of Students' Indiscipline in Schools

Act of Indiscipline	Frequency	Percentage
Absenteeism/missing lessons	84	77.8
Drugs and alcohol abuse	72	66.7
Sneaking out of school/truancy	54	50.0
Theft	48	44.4
Lateness	30	27.8
Failure to do community/manual work	24	22.2
Fighting	24	22.2
Making noise	18	16.7
Sleeping in class	18	16.7
Incomplete class assignment	12	11.1
Possession of a mobile phone	10	9.3
Untidy dressing	7	6.5
Engaging in sex	6	5.6

The results reveal that the most common acts of indiscipline were absenteeism/missing lessons (77.85%), drugs and alcohol abuse (66.7%), sneaking out of school/truancy (50.0%), theft (44.4%) and lateness (27.8%). The least common indiscipline acts were engaging in sex (5.6%), untidy/improper dressing (6.5%) and possession of a mobile phone (9.3%). These results confirm that absenteeism/missing lessons, drugs and alcohol abuse and sneaking out of school/truancy were the most prevalent acts of indiscipline in schools. The results are in harmony with those of Temitayo, Nayaya and Lukman (2013) and Macharia *et al* (2014) who noted cases of indiscipline manifested in high number of cases of absenteeism, lateness and theft among secondary school students. The results also support

those of a study conducted in Cameroon by Ngwokabuenui (2015) which identified drugs and substance abuse and vandalism as the most common types of indiscipline in secondary schools.

The number of cases of indiscipline reported in schools for the years 2011 - 2015 were summed, and their totals were between 54 and 298. These totals were converted into indiscipline levels using the scale; Low (99 and below), Moderate (100 – 199) and High (200 - 300). The students' indiscipline levels were then transformed into discipline levels given that absence of indiscipline is discipline and vice versa. Table 5 gives a summary of the students discipline levels.

Table 5: Levels of Discipline in Schools (n = 106)

Discipline Levels	Frequency	Percentage
High	19	17.9
Moderate	74	69.8
Low	13	12.3

An examination of the results in Table 5 indicate that the level of discipline in majority of schools was moderate (69.8%). High levels of discipline were recorded in only a few (17.9%) schools. This means that the level of discipline in secondary schools is moderate. The results are consistent with those of a study done in Uganda by Berna (2012) who noted that discipline in secondary schools in Kampala was not high as evidenced by the numbers of reported indiscipline cases. The results support those of Danso (2010) who noted a

decline in discipline levels in educational institutions in Ghana.

The influence of principals' management competencies on students' discipline was established using the Spearman's correlations test. The principals' management competencies index and the students' discipline levels were correlated (Table 6).

Table 6: Spearman's Correlation Test Showing Relationship between Principals' Management Competencies and Students Discipline

Scale	Student discipline	
Principals' management competencies	Correlation Coefficient (r)	.209
	p-value	.005*
	N	183

*Significant at .05 level

The Spearman's correlations test results show that the

relationship between principals management competencies and students discipline was positive and statistically

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significant at the .05 level, $r(181) = .209$, $p < .05$. This means that the higher a principal's management competencies, the higher the level of students' discipline in the school he/she heads. This is an indication that principals' management competencies influence students' discipline. These results do not support the study hypothesis which stated that principals' management competencies do not influence students' discipline. These results are in concurrence with Kibet, Kindiki, Sang and Kitilit (2012) observation that there is significant relationship between leadership abilities and student discipline. The results are in harmony with those of Griffins (1994) who attributed high discipline of students to competent management and pinpointed that discipline is high when the leadership style is appropriate and low if inappropriate.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

This paper concluded that principals possess competencies required to manage schools. However, maintaining discipline was still a challenge as evidenced by the reported cases of indiscipline. The Spearman's test results indicated that discipline in schools headed by principals with management abilities tended to be high. This means principals' management competencies positively influence students' discipline.

Recommendation

This paper recommends that discipline should be enhanced through effective management and involvement of staff, students and parents in the development and implementation of discipline policies and practices in schools. It is envisaged that this will go a long way in enhancing discipline and creating a conducive environment for teaching and learning.

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