

Relationship between Type of School, Principals' Management Approaches and Level of Students' Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Nyandarua and Laikipia Districts, Kenya

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Abstract

Students' discipline is a critical determinant of successful learning in schools. The level of discipline is dependent on the extent to which a principal enlists the support of teachers and parents. The study hypothesised that the level of principals' inclusiveness is dependent on the school-type. The latter referred to school categorisation on the basis of whether a school was Day, Boarding, or Day and Boarding. In this regard, school-type was used as the unit of analysis. The objective was to determine whether there was any relationship between school-type, principals' level of inclusiveness and level of students' discipline. The study applied the survey research design. Data were collected through a questionnaire which was self-administered to a sample of 306 teachers, 28 principals and 28 chairpersons of Parent-Teachers Association in public secondary schools in Nyandarua and Laikipia districts, Kenya. Formulated hypotheses were tested through chi-square at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that the level of principals' inclusiveness was highest in Day and Boarding schools, followed by Boarding schools, and lastly Day schools. A similar pattern was observed with regard to teachers' and parents' input on discipline management. However, the level of students' discipline was highest in Day schools, followed by Day and Boarding, and Boarding schools. This has the implication that an inclusive management approach has a positive effect on teachers' and parents' support in discipline management. However, the latter may not generate the expected impact in Boarding, and Day and Boarding schools which implies that a different factor is needed to enhance discipline in these institutions. These findings have important implications on principals'

approach to discipline management irrespective of the type of school a principal could be heading.

Introduction

Kenya's education has had a phenomenal growth at all levels since 1963. At the secondary level for instance, enrolment rose from 30,000 in 1963 to 632,000 in 1995 representing a 2000% increase in about three decades (Republic of Kenya, 1997). By 2006, total enrolment in this sub-sector had increased to 1,030,080 (Republic of Kenya, 2007)

Expansion of secondary education is premised on the belief that it is at this point that learners are prepared to make a positive contribution to the development of the society (Republic of Kenya, 1976). This has the implication that the secondary school curriculum should be effectively implemented so that learners may realise their full potential. However, it is instructive to note that successful learning in schools is dependent on students' discipline (Reynolds, 1989). This is because, discipline *inter alia* provides a sense of direction among learners and hence commitment to school values. Moreover, a disciplined student body has a high likelihood of increasing teachers' job satisfaction, which is a critical correlate of commitment to school goals (Imber and Neidt, 1990).

In spite of the crucial role that disciplined behaviour plays in the overall school outcomes, the quality of students' discipline in Kenya's secondary schools has been disheartening. This is because, hardly a school term goes by without an incident of violent behaviour being reported in the mass media. This kind of behaviour has more often than not led to unfortunate occurrences such as destruction of school property, assault, and indecent acts such as rape and in extreme cases death of students (Republic of Kenya, 1991; Republic of Kenya, 2001). Such incidents tend to impact negatively on the gains made so far at this level of education. For example, death of students in the wake of violence is a loss of valuable investment in human capital. On the other hand, destruction of physical infrastructure such as laboratories, dormitories and classrooms leads to loss of teaching time. Besides, putting up new infrastructure overburdens parents financially. This may compel the low-income bracket parents to withdraw their children from schools. This has a high likelihood of increasing wastage at this level of education.

In view of the rising trend of students' indiscipline, the government set two task forces (Republic of Kenya, 1991; Republic of Kenya, 2001) whose terms of reference were to establish the causes of indiscipline in these institutions and come up with recommendations for addressing the problem.

Some of the implemented recommendations include training of principals on human resource management and strengthening of student guidance and counselling services in schools (Republic of Kenya, 1995; Education Team, 2006; Ndichu, 2006). However, in spite of these positive moves by the government the problem of indiscipline is still persistent. This is illustrated by the fact that while 7% of secondary schools in the country experienced mass indiscipline in 1974 (Kinyanjui, 1976), the figure had risen to 10% between 1986 and 1991 (Nasibi, 2003).

Although available data show that cases of students' indiscipline have gone down to 8% since 1991 (Republic of Kenya, 2001) it is important to observe that some cases of indiscipline may go unreported by the mass media and school managers. For this reason, the seemingly downward trend in indiscipline cases could be masking the reality on the ground. In this regard, it would be erroneous to adopt a complacent attitude if we expect our secondary schools to nurture positive values and thus make it possible for learners to mature into responsible citizens.

The general documented causes of students' indiscipline in Kenya include drug abuse by students, poor parenting, negative influence by the mass media and politics (Republic of Kenya, 2001; Ruto-Korir, 2003). It is worthwhile to note that cases of indiscipline in Kenya's secondary schools tend to vary markedly between schools with comparable locality and both the entry behaviour and social background of students they admit from primary schools. The scenario suggests that secondary schools could be experiencing an impact (either positive or negative) related to the behavioural characteristics of pupils they select from primary schools. A similar view was expressed by Docking (1989) in his contribution to the 1988 Elton committee in Britain which had been set to establish ways of controlling disruptive behaviour among pupils in the country. Docking based his observation on researches by Rutter *et al.* (1979) whose findings had revealed that pupils' social background and their behaviour in primary schools had no significant influence on the way they behaved in secondary schools.

The foregoing has the implication that comparatively in-school factors have a significant influence on students' behaviour. For this reason, it would be a gross simplification to entirely attribute indiscipline problems in Kenya's secondary schools to out-of school factors. Young (1985) has indeed cautioned that we should guard against the belief that learners' academic and social development is influenced solely by non-school factors lest it becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy.

One of the significant in-school factors that influences students' discipline is the schools social environment or organisational climate (McManus, 1989; Reynolds, 1989). This refers to the way members of the school community, especially teachers, students, and parents, relate and interact with each other. If the school's organisational climate is favourable, the members are likely to increase their level of interaction and consequently enhance learners' capacity to attain learning goals. The reverse is applicable. This is particularly so when the school is viewed as a social organisation whose principal participants are teachers, students and parents.

Members of a social organisation, it needs to be noted, do not act in a social vacuum. On the contrary, their actions are influenced by the organisation's managerial policies (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001). This implies that the extent to which members of the school community will direct their efforts to the laid down goals depends on the kind of organisational climate created by a principal. This is because, the principal is the school's chief executive (Mbiti, 1982). In this regard, if a principal applies a democratic/inclusive managerial approach, teachers and parents are likely to play a proactive role in nurturing learners' behaviour towards the desired direction and vice versa (Kent, 1989; Griffin, 1996). The thrust of this observation is that in a democratic school environment teachers and parents are likely to work as a team and thus produce more in discipline management than they could through their own individual efforts (Pollard, 1982; Kiumi, 2008). This underscores the need for principals to create a democratic managerial environment in order to enable teachers and parents realise their maximum potential in the management of learners' behaviour.

Theoretical Framework

Literature on organisational leadership shows that different leaders adopt different approaches to accomplish organisational goals. Lue and Byars (1993) have observed that a leader's attitude towards his/her co-workers has a bearing

on the approach (whether inclusive or exclusive of co-workers) he/she applies to attain the stipulated organisational goals. If the leader's attitude is favourable, he/she is likely to apply an inclusive approach and vice versa.

The relationship between a leader's attitude towards fellow workers – and hence his/her willingness to involve them in organisational affairs – is expounded in McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Y assumptions about human motivation. McGregor has posited that Theory X leaders view their co-workers as lazy, self-centered, work avoidant, and indifferent to organisational goals. For this reason, such leaders distrust their co-workers thereby tightly controlling organisational activities. Consequently, their co-workers have limited opportunities to participate in the organisational decision making process.

In the context of school management, principals subscribing to Theory X are those who hold a negative attitude towards other members of the school community. For instance, they may have the belief that teachers and parents have little interest in the school's social-academic life. For this reason, this category of principals will rarely enlist the support of teachers and parents in their effort to enhance discipline. This may impact negatively on the behavioural development of learners.

Theory Y by contrast is grounded on a human relations leadership approach for it exhibits a positive orientation towards members of the organisation. The basic tenet of this theory is that organisational members are honest, industrious, responsible and always willing to take initiative to better the organisation. Leaders espousing Theory Y attitude towards fellow workers are therefore more inclined to delegate authority, share responsibility and enable co-workers participate in making various organisational decisions (Copland, 2003).

Theory Y orientation towards co-workers is typical of principals who hold the view that teachers and parents are crucial allies in realising the desired school goals. Such principals are therefore more likely to bring teachers and parents on board during the formulation and implementation of students' discipline policies. In such a school environment, teachers and parents are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to play their role expectations in discipline management. This may in turn stem negative behaviour and nurture societal values among learners.

Statement of the Problem

The success of the teaching-learning process is dependent upon the quality of student discipline. Since students' discipline management is a corporate responsibility between teachers and parents, a school principal – as the overall manager of the school – is expected to incorporate the two categories of members of the school community in his/her school's discipline management programme. Specifically, a principal should view teachers and parents as crucial allies in his/her endeavour to promote students' learning.

Studies done in Kenya, specifically Asunda (1983) and Kariuki (1998) have shown that the type of school – weather Day or Boarding – has a bearing on the extent to which a principal will integrate teachers and parents in his/her school's management programmes. However, the studies are not explicit on how a school-type may influence a principal's level of inclusiveness in discipline management. Moreover, the studies have not established whether there is a relationship between teachers' and parents' input in discipline management and the level of students' discipline. This study was therefore conceived to fill in these knowledge gaps in regard to the management of students' discipline in Kenya's public secondary schools.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The overall purpose of the study was to investigate whether there was any relationship between principals' discipline management approaches and the level of students' discipline. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives.

1. To determine whether there was any relationship between the type of school and principals' level of inclusiveness in discipline management.
2. To determine whether there was any relationship between the type of school and the level of teachers' and parents' input in students' discipline management.
3. To establish whether there was any relationship between the type of school and the level of students' discipline.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

HO₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between the type of school and principals' discipline management approaches.

HO₂: There is no statistically significant relationship between the type of school and teachers' and parents' input in students' discipline management.

HO₃: There is no statistically significant relationship between the type of school and the level of students' discipline.

Methodology

The study utilised the survey research design. This is a type of design whereby the researcher gathers data from a large number of respondents in regard to their attitudes or opinions (Marczyk *et al.*, 2005). The design has an advantage in that it offers a simple and straightforward approach when selecting information from a large population (Robson, 1993). In this regard, the design was found appropriate since a large population comprising 133 principals, 133 Parent-Teachers Association (PTA) chairpersons and 1537 teachers was targeted by the study.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The schools (N=133) in the two districts (Nyandarua and Laikipia) had a staff of 1537 teachers and 133 principals. The total number of PTA chairpersons in the schools was 133. The schools were initially stratified into Boarding, Day, and Day and Boarding. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining the ideal sample size in a given population, a total of 8 Boarding schools, 12 day schools, and 8 Day and Boarding were sampled through simple random sampling technique. Through simple random sampling a total of 362 respondents were in turn selected from the sampled schools. Table 1 shows the number of teachers, principals and PTA chairpersons who were selected from the three types of schools.

Table 1: Distribution of Selected Respondents by Category and School-type

Category of Respondents	School-type			Total
	Boarding (n=8)	Day (n=12)	Day & Boarding (n=8)	
Teachers	137	106	63	306
Principals	8	12	8	28
PTA chairs	8	12	8	28
Total	153	130	79	362

Instrumentation

Data were collected using three sets of questionnaires which were administered to principals, teachers and PTA chairpersons. The questionnaire for principals gathered data on the type of school. The questionnaire for teachers and PTA chairpersons had two sections labeled A and B. Section A had 13 five-point likert scale items which gathered data on the extent to which principals involved teachers and parents in the management of students' discipline. This constituted principals' Discipline Management Approach (DMA) index which ranged from a possible minimum of 13 points to a possible maximum of 65 points. Section B had 20 five-point likert scale items. The items gathered data on teachers' and PTA chairpersons' perception of the extent to which fellow teachers and parents respectively played their role expectations in discipline management. Data from the 20 items constituted Teachers' and Parents' Input (TPI) index on discipline management. The index ranged from a possible minimum of 20 points to a possible maximum of 100 points.

Teachers' questionnaire had an additional section C which had 26 items that measured the level of students' discipline on a five-point likert scale. The 26 items generated Level of Students' Discipline (LSD) index which ranged from a possible minimum of 26 points to a possible maximum of 130 points.

The scores in the three indices were grouped into four quotas respectively as very low, moderately low, moderately high, and very high as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Perception Scores by Perception Types

Perception Type	Very Low	Moderately Low	Moderately High	Very High
DMA	13-26	27-39	10-52	53-65
TPI	20-40	41-60	61-80	81-100
LSD	26-52	53-78	79-104	105-130

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

One of the major problems in social science research is the measurement of human behavioural attributes with accuracy. Yet, it is a vital component in scientific research (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). In this regard, efforts were made to ensure that the instruments were not only valid but also reliable. The former was accomplished through an extensive literature review on school management, especially students' discipline management. The objective was to identify the relevant content areas and thus indicators of students' discipline management that were to be focused by the instruments.

Furthermore, the instruments were piloted in three schools with a view to ensure that they were accurate, relevant and clear. Items that were either unclear or open to misinterpretation were rephrased accordingly. The three pilot schools were excluded during the main study. This was in order to control extraneous influence on the findings due to the prior knowledge of their subjects on the information being targeted by the study.

A reliability analysis on the items that measured principals' DMA, TPI in discipline management, and LSD yielded a coefficient value of 0.82 using Spearman Brown Prophecy formula (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1976). A reliability coefficient ranging between 0.8 and 1.00 was deemed acceptable. Since the items generated a coefficient value of 0.82, they were regarded as reliable in collecting the data required for this study (Marcysk, *et al.*, 2005).

Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

Questionnaires were self-administered and subsequently collected after two weeks. Twenty eight principals, 22 PTA chairpersons and 211 teachers returned the questionnaires. This represented 100%, 79% and 69% response rate respectively. Data extracted from the questionnaires were used to test the hypotheses. This was accomplished through the administration of chi-square test which according to Bryman and Crammer (1997) and Amin (2005) is a

reliable statistic for testing whether there is a relationship between variables. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

Calculation of the chi-square test was based on respondents distribution with respect to DMA, TPI and LSD in the four range of scores presented in Table 2. It was assumed/expected that respondents' distribution in the four range of scores would be even. To generate the chi-square value, a comparison was made between the actual and expected distribution of respondents.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of the Relationship between Type of School and Principals' Discipline Management Approaches

The first null hypothesis stated that there was statistically no significant relationship between the type of school and principals' DMA. Thus, according to this hypothesis, principals' level of inclusiveness in students' discipline management was not related to the type of school. The result of analysing the hypothesis is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents (Teachers and PTA Chairpersons) according to Scores on DMA by School-Type

School-type	Distribution of Respondents by DMA Scores				
	13-26	27-39	40-52	53-65	Total
Day	3(3)	23(21)	59(54)	24(22)	109(47)
Boarding	-	20(21)	52(54)	24(25)	96(41)
Day & Boarding	-	6(21)	9(32)	13(47)	28(12)
Total	3	49	120	61	

(Figures in parenthesis represent percentages)

$\chi^2 = 26.360$; $df = 6$; $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows that none of the respondents in Boarding, and Day and Boarding Schools scored below 27 points. It is further learnt from the table that nearly half (47%) of respondents in Day and Boarding Schools scored more than 52 points out of the maximum (65) points. The corresponding proportion with respect to Boarding and Day Schools was 25% and 22% respectively.

The emerging picture from Table 3 seems to indicate that respondents in Day schools scored lower on DMA index than their counterparts in Boarding, and

Day and Boarding schools. The data in Table 3 further indicate that there was a significant relationship between principals' DMA and type of school ($P < 0.05$). In this regard, the first null hypothesis was rejected and conclusion made that principals' level of inclusiveness in students' discipline management and type of school were associated. This implies that principals heading Day and Boarding, and Boarding schools are more likely to enlist the support of teachers and parents in students' discipline management compared to their counterparts in Day schools.

Analysis of the Relationship between Type of School and Teachers' and Parents' Input in Students' Discipline Management

The second null hypothesis stated that TPI in students' discipline management and school-type were not related. The result of testing the hypothesis is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents according to Scores on TPI on Students' Discipline Management by School-Type

School-type	Distribution of Respondents by TPI Scores				
	20-40	41-60	61-80	81-100	Total
Day	5(5)	24(22)	66(60)	14(13)	109(47)
Boarding	1(1)	23(24)	55(57)	17(18)	96(41)
Day & Boarding	-	4(14)	18(64)	6(22)	233(100)
Total	6	51	139	37	233

(Figures in parenthesis represent percentages)
 $\chi^2 = 5.191$; $df=6$; $p > 0.05$

Table 4 shows that six respondents scored in the lowest (20-40) range of points, the majority (83%) of whom came from Day schools. It is also clear from the table that 86% of respondents in Day and Boarding schools scored over 60% (more than 60 points) of the maximum (100) points. The proportion of respondents in Boarding and Day schools who scored more than 60% of the maximum points was 75% and 73% respectively.

From the foregoing analysis it seems that the extent to which teachers and parents were committed to discipline management increased from Day schools towards Boarding, and Day and Boarding schools. However, the relationship between level of TPI in discipline management and school-type was not significant ($p > 0.05$). In this regard, the second null hypothesis was accepted

and conclusion made that statistically, TPI in students' discipline management and school-type were independent.

Data on principals' level of inclusiveness in students' discipline management (see Table 3) had indicated that the extent to which principals integrated teachers and parents when managing students' discipline increased from Day and Boarding schools towards Boarding schools, and lastly Day schools. Since a similar trend has been observed in regard to TPI in discipline management it is logical to conclude that principals who are more democratic with regard to discipline management are likely to motivate teachers and parents to fulfill their role expectations in discipline management. The opposite is the case.

Analysis of the Relationship between Type of School and Level of Students' Discipline

The third null hypothesis postulated that type of school and LSD were not related. The result of testing the hypothesis is summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents (Teachers) according to Scores on LSD by School-Type

Principals'	Distribution of Respondents by LSD Scores				
	26-52	53-78	79-104	105-130	Total
Day	-	24(25)	63(66)	9(9)	96(45)
Boarding	3(3)	32(35)	50(55)	6(7)	91(43)
Day & Boarding	-	8(33)	13(54)	3(13)	24(12)
Total	3	64	126	18	211(100)

(Figures in parenthesis represent percentages)
 $\chi^2 = 11.192$; $df=6$; $p > 0.05$

From Table 5 it can be learnt that very few respondents (3) scored below 53 points. Of these none came from schools that were either Day, or Day and Boarding. The table further reveals that 75% of respondents in Day schools scored over 78 points (60%) out of the maximum (130) points. Conversely, the proportion of respondents in Day and Boarding, and Boarding schools who scored more than 78 points was 67% and 62% respectively. This implies that LSD increased from Boarding schools towards Day schools. The relationship between the type of school and LSD, the data further indicate, was not significant ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the third null hypothesis was accepted and conclusion made that school type and LSD were independent.

It needs to be noted that both the level of principals' inclusiveness (see Table 3) and TPI in discipline management (see Table 4) increased from Day schools towards Day and Boarding schools. However, LSD as shown in Table 5 depicted a reverse trend. This is because, it decreased from Day schools towards Boarding schools. This seems to indicate that indiscipline cases were less likely to occur in Day schools compared with schools in which all or a section of students were boarders. This finding appears to suggest that the boarding factor may have a depressing effect on principals' inclusiveness in discipline management.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn on the basis of the findings generated by the study:

- (i) Principals heading schools in which all or a section of the students are boarders are more likely to involve teachers and parents in students' discipline management compared with their counterparts in schools where all students are day scholars.
- (ii) Principals who apply an inclusive DMA are more likely to enhance TPI in discipline management compared with principals who apply an exclusive DMA.
- (iii) The likelihood of students' indiscipline occurring is higher in Boarding, and Day and Boarding schools compared with Day schools. Since the level of principals' inclusiveness and TPI in discipline management were comparatively higher in Boarding, and Day and Boarding schools, it can be concluded that an additional factor may be needed to enhance discipline in these institutions.

Recommendations

The study came up with the following recommendations:

- (i) Principals heading Day schools should upgrade their partnership with teachers and parents on matters pertaining to students' discipline management. For instance, they could regularly discuss with teachers the most effective ways of addressing students' behaviour problems in the school. Besides, they need to strengthen home-school partnership with a view to encourage parents to play their role expectations more effectively on matters pertaining to the character training of their children.

- (ii) Although Boarding, and Day and Boarding principals were more inclusive in discipline management, LSD in these institutions was comparatively low. This implies that these categories of schools require a different factor to enhance discipline. Principals in those institutions could, for instance, strengthen student guidance and counselling services with a view to promote self-discipline among learners. In addition, they should regularly invite outsiders (e.g. educationists or former students who have excelled in life) to motivate learners on educational matters. This will go a long way in encouraging learners to concentrate on their studies rather than engage in negative and unproductive behaviour practices.

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