

INFLUENCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' MODES OF COMMUNICATION ON STUDENTS' DISCIPLINE IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The manner and the modes of communication can determine the level of organizational harmony. Whereas all modes of communication have some merits, it is worth noting that some of those modes of communication can reduce reported incidents of indiscipline in an educational institution. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of administrators' mode of communication on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Baringo County, Kenya. The study investigated the extent to which modes of communications (written communication, open door policy and barazas) influenced students' discipline. The study adopted Charles Osgood's Model (1954) which postulates that communication is a dynamic process, in which there is an interactive relationship between the sender and the receiver. In this study, the communication from the principal to students can be the genesis of harmony or a trigger of student unrest. The research applied descriptive survey research design employing stratified random sampling technique. The target population was 121 principals, 920 class teachers and 242 students. Stratified proportionate sampling was used to sample 41 principals 292 teachers and 80 students. Questionnaires for teachers and students were used for data collection. Reliability was determined through test-retest method and calculated using Pearson's correlation coefficient resulting in coefficient value of 0.8 for student representative questionnaire and 0.9 for principals and deputy principals and class teachers' questionnaire. Validity was ensured through discussion with the experts (supervisors) and using questions

framed in less ambiguous way. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics that included mean and standard deviation while inferential statistics included correlation analysis assisted by SPSS and presented in tables and graphs. The findings showed the existence of a positive relationship between the principal mode of communication and students' discipline ($r=0.614$; $p=0.00$). At least (45.9%) of the student leaders found the principal communication through official letters, circulars and memos to be ineffective, with (37.9%) to be effective and (16.2%) fairly effective. Most of student leaders (54.1%) agreed that the principal use of open-door policy to be effective mode of communication, with (17.6%) fairly effective and (28.4%) as ineffective mode of communication. Most of the principals use assembly to communicate discipline cases to the student. Schools must build the necessary frameworks and communication avenues for relaying information in public secondary schools. The study concluded that participatory communication is critical for reducing reported incidences of student indiscipline. The study recommends that principals enhance the open-door policy as a mechanism of reducing incidences of student indiscipline.

Key words: Communication, modes of communication, student discipline

INTRODUCTION

Discipline is an important component of human behavior as it directly defines the character of a human being. Burden (2016), Ngwokabuenui (2015), Kiwale (2017), Habyarimana (2018) considered indiscipline as a social quagmire disrupting the harmony and peaceful-coexistence in virtually all educational institutions, as it serves to promote disrespect for rules, regulations and constituted authorities among members of the school community (principals, teachers, students, parents etc.); and in furtherance produces uncongenial school atmosphere, which are not conducive for effective teaching and learning (Nadunga, 2019).. The forms of communication include written communication, open door policy and barazas (Katolo, 2016). Discipline is widely acknowledged to be essential for creating a peaceful school climate thus leading to sound academic performance (Simba, Agak, & Kabuka, 2016). It is a basic requirement of successful teaching and learning in schools and necessary for effective school management and accomplishment of its goals (Odoyo, Odwar & Kabuka, 2016). Based on the evidence by UNICEF (2011) it is also estimated that about one in every five adolescents suffer from behavioral problems throughout. Therefore, behaviour problem is a global issue faced in many countries.

There are three modes of communication that teachers use to address discipline.

These are Oral communication, Written Communication and Non-verbal Communication (Campbell, 2013). Oral mode of communication usually occurs with the help of the spoken word Oral mode of communication can effectively be used to inform, satisfy, praise, criticize, please, inquire and many other purposes. However, according to Griff (2016), oral mode of communication has shortcomings of the message being misunderstood, as a mode of communication that requires a good speaker otherwise it will not be meaningful as well as lacking permanent record of what has been said.

Written communication is a type of verbal communication that is expressed in form of writing. According to Andrzej and David (2011), written communication includes memos, letters, electronic mail, fax transmission, institutional periodicals, notices placed on bulletin boards among others. Written mode of communication has an advantage of fewer chances of being misunderstood and the facts that doubts can be removed by reading it again. Written mode of Communication however has its own limitations. For instance, written communication is slow and time consuming, has no immediate feedback and it is only meant for literate people (Dean, 2012).

In Ghana, Danso (2010) decried the high rates of indiscipline and lawlessness in educational institutions.

Not a single day passes without a report of an act of indiscipline perpetrated by teenagers of primary and secondary schools. It has been noted that in countries where computer and internet use is low, young people vigorously look for access whenever possible, most often in internet cafes. This has been the case in African countries whereby radios, televisions and mobile phones stand out in Africa's media of communication. Samora (2012) reported that 72 percent of all Ghanaians in Ghana had mobile phones in their homes and 86% own radio nationally, while Kenyans had 71% mobile phones at home and 87% homes had radio. In connection to this, mobile phones are rivaling radio and televisions as the most accessible communication media and entertainment platforms in both Kenya and Ghana.

In Tanzania discipline is valued since it is seen as a way of maintaining order. One of the goal and responsibility in the school is management of pupils' discipline. Discipline is valued in Tanzania since it is seen as way of maintaining order. The teacher goal is to ensure discipline is maintained and the school activities run without interference (Semali & Vumilia, 2016). In Uganda, primary schools are managed by Board of Management who manages the school on behalf of the patron and the minister.

The head teacher is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, including guidance and direction of the teachers and other staff of the school (Ssekiziyivu, 2014). A study done in the Eastern Region of Kenya found that the necessary structures that allow students to participate in decision making process had not been established in secondary schools (Mulwa, Kimosop, & Kasivu, 2015). The governance of schools without structures that provide for student participation in decision making has seen secondary school educators in Kenya contend with student indiscipline for a long period of time (Njoroge & Nyabuto, 2014). It is manifested in different forms such as boycotting of classes, sneaking from school, failing to do cleaning duties and assignments, absenteeism, fighting, theft, drug and substance abuse, violent unrests, riots, strikes among others (Ndaita, 2016). A study done by Muriithi (2013), to examine the influence of teachers' communication strategies on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Mukurweini district. The study findings indicated that holding of classroom meetings, use of school prefects, communication during assembly, use of guidance and counseling, use of rewards and incentives, holding of open forums, encouraging members to pass information among themselves are some of the communication strategies commonly used by teachers' in Mukurweini District on student's discipline.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The success of school governance is depended on communication among students, teachers and the school management (Mati, Gatumu & Chandi, 2016). Limited communication among students and the school management is the main course of indiscipline cases (Kiprop, 2012). The indiscipline cases reported in Kenya show evidence of a communication breakdown between the school's administration and the prefects. Thus, the procedures of communication are a two-way flow of information from top to bottom and bottom-up involving prefects. For principals to maintain students' discipline, they should communicate in time through the best means to pass the information or the message depending the type and urgency of the message. The study findings by Muriithi (2013), indicated that holding of classroom meetings, use of school prefects, communication during assembly, holding of open forums, encouraging members to pass information among themselves are some of the communication strategies commonly used by teachers' in Mukurwe-ini District on student's discipline. Majority of the teachers also indicated that they often used notice boards on student discipline. However, facial expression was rarely used on student discipline.

Majority of the teachers 89% indicated that school category affects the way they communicate on the student discipline. The study results revealed that the category of the school, boys only, girls only and mixed for both boys and girls affect the way teachers communicate on student discipline. The study also found that communication strategies with the least preferences for teachers on student discipline included the use of reward system, the use of eye contact and facial expression. According to the study, conditions which reduce effective communication ranged from distortion of information, language barrier to lack of proper mechanisms that ensures conducive environment for students to express themselves to their teachers. In an attempt to improve communication and involve students more in decision making in Kenya, other structures such as students open forums 'barazas' and the suggestion boxes have been designed.

A study done by Kiprop (2012), in a paper on discussion of the role of various stakeholders in the management of discipline in schools in Kenya observed that most principals adopt master or servant superior or inferior attitude in dealing with students. They rarely listened to students' grievances because they believe that they have nothing to offer. This creates a lot of tension, stress and misunderstanding and eventually leads to frustrations and violence as manifested in

strikes. The study recommended a creation of opportunities to enable teachers, students and administrators to sit down and discuss issues affecting their school freely without inhibition, intimidation or victimization. Hence, for effective management of school discipline the cooperation between the principal, staff, students, parents and the community is a prerequisite. Thus, where students are denied a chance to express their views and vent out frustrations, it breeds a situation where students have no way of expressing their grievances leading to frustrations and resulting into disruptive behaviours and such incidences could be prevented by involvement of students for collaborative decision-making during class meetings.

Mulwa (2014) conducted a study to investigate the effects of principals' alternative disciplinary methods on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya. The study objective sought to establish the use of class meetings with students for collaborative decision making on students' discipline. The study established that class meetings for collaborative decision making were done within the school set up to enhance discipline. The principals reported that class meetings enhanced decision making and learners concerns were communicated during class meetings. This implies that both the learners and the principals had an

opportunity to converse together hence sharing concerns that were affecting learners at that particular moment.

Riang'a, (2013) researched on principals' leadership strategies that influenced students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kisii Central District, Kenya. Findings revealed that principals who used democratic leadership style experienced few cases of indiscipline in their schools. The findings further revealed that principals who involved students in decision making in matters of discipline had few cases of indiscipline in their schools. The study further established that there is a need for principals to be clearer when communicating rules and regulations to students to avoid misinterpretation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is premised on Charles Osgood's and Schram Model (1954). This model shows that communication is the dynamic process, in which there is an interactive relationship between the sender and the receiver. When the individuals are engaged in the communication processes, they send as well as receive messages; a two way process. The process is dynamic and imparts information through methods of encoding, decoding and interpreting the messages. These practices are carried out through the number of feedback mechanisms.

This model focused upon the social nature of communication.

This model was found more applicable in interpersonal communication, in which the sources and the receivers of messages are physically present. For example, when the principal is able to communicate to the students informally without use of memos, circulars and written communicate, the students are likely to open up more than they would do if they were asked to write a formal letter on a given subject. Therefore, the role of interpretation of the message has also been highlighted in this model for decoding a message.

This model focuses upon the perspective that communication needs to get implemented among the individuals in an energetic and lively manner. When the individuals ask questions, the others need to provide answers, which may enable them to acquire an efficient understanding of the concepts. In such cases, it is vital that they should express positive feelings and give proper feedback. There are cases, when certain concepts are difficult to understand. In some cases, individuals may not acquire an efficient understanding of the concepts, when they ask questions. In such cases, the senders of information, who are providing answers to questions need to provide elaborate explanation, so receivers are able to understand easily and communication processes are facilitated in an efficient manner.

Therefore, it is vital for the communication processes to be energetic and lively.

In a school setting, the model becomes critical in appreciating the role of interactive communication that can ease tension by allowing students room to ventilate about issues that affect them.

Whereas the model is critical for dynamic communication; the extent to which open door policy and use of informal communication can be employed in a formal setting is a matter of conjecture. Students can stretch the open door policy to levels that a principal might find challenging to sustain.

METHODOLOGY

The target population comprised of 121 public secondary schools in Baringo County comprising of 121 principals, 974 teachers and 268 student leaders. The study adopted descriptive survey and correlation research design to assess institutional practices influencing student discipline in public secondary schools in Baringo County. The descriptive survey is a commonly used method for gathering information about people attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues (Orodho, 2009). This research design was deemed suitable for the study, as the researcher aimed to establish and report the happening on the institutional practices influencing student discipline in public secondary schools in Baringo County, Kenya.

This study used stratified proportionate sampling in selecting sample sizes for the study. The target populations were grouped into three (student representatives, class teachers and principals) study sample. According to Best and Kahn (2012) a sample size of 30 percent is representative. Therefore, for this study, sampled 30% of the target population for Principals/Deputy principals, teachers and students, while purpose sampling used employed in sampling student leaders.

The schools were stratified into stratum according to national, extra county, county schools and sub-county schools and from a target population of 974 class teachers a sample size of 292 were selected using proportional random sampling. Simple random sampling was used because each respondent has an equal chance of inclusion in the sample. Finally, 80 student leaders were sampled from a target population of 268 students using stratified proportionate sampling.

The study used primary data which was largely quantitative in nature, data was collected from students, teachers and principals by use of questionnaire with structured questions. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics that included mean and standard deviation while inferential statistics included correlation analysis assisted by SPSS and presented in tables and graphs.

STUDY FINDINGS

Principals' Modes of Communication and Student Discipline in Secondary Schools

The study sought to determine the extent to which principal mode of communication influence student discipline in secondary schools in Baringo County. The study investigated whether modes of communications such as written communication, open door policy and barazas influence students' discipline. To achieve this objective, the study sought the views of the student leaders, class teachers and principals on the influence of principal mode of communication on student discipline in public secondary schools. This was determined using the views of the student leaders and class teachers collected from the questionnaires and principals' interviews on principal mode of communication. The findings are presented and discussed in the sections that follow.

Students Views on Principal Mode of Communication

The student leaders' views on principal mode of communication were sought using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from effective to ineffective and responses presented in Table 4.18.

Table 1 Students Views on Principals’ Mode of Communication

Statements	effective		Fairly ineffective		Ineffective		Very ineffective	Mean
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
My principal communicates through official letters, circulars and memos	28	37.9	12	16.2	34	45.9		2.93
My principal uses open door policy	40	28.4	13	17.6	21	28.4		3.47
My principal uses barazas to communicate	24	32.4	13	17.6	37	50		2.62
My principal uses student assembly to pass information	65	87.8	3	4.1	6	8.1		4.54

At least (45.9%) of the student leaders found the principal communication through official letters, circulars and memos to be ineffective, with (37.9%) to be effective and (16.2%) fairly effective. Most of student leaders (54.1%) agreed that the principal use of open-door policy to be effective mode of communication, with (17.6%) fairly effective and (28.4%) as ineffective mode of communication. Majority of the student leaders (50%) agree that principal use of barazas to communicate was effective to be ineffective, with (32.4%) to be effective and (17.6%) fairly effective. Most of student leaders (87.8%) agreed that the principal use of student assembly to pass information was

effective, with (4.1%) fairly effective and (8.1%) as ineffective mode of communication. Use of assembly was perceived as an effective avenue of communication on the basis of its frequency and the limited number of items of communication. It is however important to note that should the process become too regular, it might render the process ineffective.

The student leaders found the principal communication through official letters, circulars and memos. These results concur with Mule, Kalai and Mulwa (2017), who observed that schools had a wide range of methods that could be used to dialogue with students and with the provision of suggestion boxes students would write and drop their grievances. On the principal communication, the student leaders agreed that the principal use of open-door policy to be effective mode of communication. This agrees with Kiprof (2012), recommended creation of opportunities for teachers, students and administrators to sit and discuss issues affecting them and their school freely. Effective management of discipline requires collaboration between the principal, staff, students, parents and the community. This concurs with Nkomo and Fakrogha (2016), who observed that assemblies as main channels of communication because they improved the interaction and relationship between the administration and the students hence leading to unity and peace in the

school. This implies that improving on effective communication by use of school assemblies for important ideas could step up students' discipline in secondary schools.

These results agree with Baumann and Krskova (2016), who argued that during school assemblies the principals and deputy principals constantly reminded the students of their responsibilities. This type of communication during assemblies enhances good attitudes towards teaching, learning and the whole educational processes and systems within the school. The student leaders found the use of Barraza's to be ineffective mode of communication. The dialogue was one of the methods used by schools to enhance effective communication in Schools.

Teachers View on Principal Mode of Communication

The class teachers view on principal mode of communication were sought using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree and responses presented in Table 2.

Table 2: TEACHERS VIEW ON PRINCIPAL MODE OF COMMUNICATION

Statements	agree		Undecided		Disagree		Mean
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	
Our principal communicates through official letters, circulars and memos	88	34	46	17	12	48	2.7
Our principal uses open door policy	14	56	78	30	34	13	3.5
Our principal communication feedback is timely	10	41	54	20	98	38	3.0
The principal uses barazas to communicate	98	38	74	28	86	33	3.0
Our principal pass the information depending the type and urgency of the message.	80	31	28	10	14	58	2.3
The communication of our principal is timely.	86	33	54	20		45	2.7

Most of class teachers (56.6%) agreed that the principal use of open-door policy to be effective mode of communication, with (30.2%) undecided and (20.2%) disagree on the open-door policy communication.

At least (41.1%) class teachers agree that principal communication feedback is timely, with (20.9%) undecided and (39%) disagree. Majority of class teachers (58.2%) disagreed that principals pass the information depending the type and urgency of the message, with (10.9%) undecided and (31.1%) agree on the open-door policy communication. From the study (48.1%) of the class teachers disagree that the principal communication through official letters, circulars and memos, with (34.1%) agreed and (17.8%) undecided. At least (33.4%) class teachers disagreed that the principal use of *barazas* to communicate, with (28.7%) undecided and (39%) agreed. From the study at least (45.7%) of class teachers disagreed that the principal communication was timely, with (20.9%) undecided and (33.3%) agreed. The findings indicate that the formal communication using formal channels may not be the best. Students desire an individualized approach to their challenges and hence the high preference to open-door policy and the student open-assemblies (Malonza, 2020).

The class teacher's view on principal mode of communication found that the principal use of open-door policy to be effective mode of communication and sometime principal communication feedback was timely.

This agrees with Njoroge and Nyabuto (2014) that principals need to encourage open door policy where students are free to see the head of the institution to explain their problems, should encourage students to bring creative ideas, accept that he or she is capable of making mistakes, allow students to question his or her views, show no favourites and treat all students equally, encouraging democratic form of school organization in which students elect their own leaders.

Majority of teachers' responses agreed that principals' communication strategies affect students' discipline, because effective means of communication strategy promotes attitude change and enhances dialogue between the principal and the students as they become more serious and focused. Class teachers disagreed that principals pass the information depending the type and urgency of the message. The class teachers disagree that the principal communication through official letters, circulars and memos, use of *barazas* to communicate and the principal communication was timely. It was evident that, principals use means of communication influence students' discipline where, principals' use well spelt written communication through official letters, circulars, memos, notices, printouts, school magazines and handbooks in their school to communicate.

The findings indicated that the class teachers indicated that their principal uses open door policy. Communication in secondary schools is basically top-down hierarchy with the Board of Management (BOM) at the top of hierarchy, followed by the School Principal, the Deputy Principal, senior teacher, Heads of Departments (HODs), class teachers, and finally the subject teachers with students not being part of the school administration. In this type of administrative structure, communication is generally a one –way process that involves passing of messages and information from top-down fashion, ranging from the school administration to the students. In this case the school administration gives instructions to students rather than encouraging dialogue and open discussion between the students and the school administration (Nkomo & Fakrogha, 2016).

Influence of Principal Mode of Communication on Student Discipline

Pearson's product moment correlations was used to examine whether there exists a relationship between variables.

Table 3: Correlation on Principal Mode of Communication and Student Discipline

		Discipline	Mode of Communication
Discipline	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.614
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	258	258
Mode of Communication	Pearson Correlation	.614	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	258	258

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Findings of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between principals mode of communication and student discipline ($r=0.614$, $p =0.00$) as shown in Table 3. This indicated that an increase in the frequency of principals' mode of communication led to an increase in reduced reported cases of student indiscipline. Student leaders found the principal communication through official letters, circulars and memos to be ineffective. Most of student leaders agreed that the principal use of open-door policy to be effective mode of communication. Majority of the student leaders agree that principal use of barazas to communicate was effective to be ineffective (Klein, 2012).

These findings imply that communication between students and school administration influences students' discipline. Effective Communication between students, teachers and school administration reduces conflicts which may result into indiscipline that may cause confrontations as was witnessed in 2008-2009 when majority of secondary schools in Kenya experienced strikes (Kiprop, 2014). Effective communication must be enhanced. This will enable effective day to day management of schools. Thus, school administration should put in place good communication systems in schools to ensure a smooth two-way flow of information to all prefects, students, and teachers and support staff (Kirea, 2015).

Communication between students and school administration is one of the duties.

The indiscipline cases reported in Kenya show evidence of a communication breakdown between the school's administration and the prefects. Thus, the procedures of communication are a two-way flow of information from top to bottom and bottom-up involving prefects. The main task of the student councils normally is to help in running school on behalf of the teachers Kirea (2015). Secondary school governance has been characterized by authoritarianism and traditional modes of administration where communication and decision making are vested in the school Principals and BOM, (Nkomo&Fakrogha 2016; Kipsoi, Chang'ach, & Sang, 2012). They pass on information to students vertically from top authority to the students (downward communication).

These results agree with Baumann and Krskova (2016), who argued that during school assemblies the principals and deputy principals constantly reminded the students of their responsibilities. This type of communication during assemblies enhances good attitudes towards teaching, learning and the whole educational processes and systems within the school. The student leaders found the use of Barraza's to be ineffective mode of communication. The dialogue was one of the methods used by schools to enhance effective communication in Schools.

From the interviews with the principal one of the interviewee stated that;

Fellow students usually school prefects, the teachers on duty, senior teacher, deputy principal as well as the school principal spell out the consequences of misbehaviour mainly verbally through available communication channels. This enhances the culture of good discipline within the schools. The teachers and the school head sensitize the students on the expected behaviour and spell out well school expectations and order of doing things on daily basis. Good attitudes towards teaching, learning and the whole educational processes and systems within the school are enhanced by this type of communication during assemblies.

The response implies that students' discipline can be enhanced through introduction and reinforcement of communication channels in the school. The communication channels therefore forms the channels of communicating desired behavior to enhance culture of good discipline. It was also reported by the respondents that during these assemblies, the principals and their deputies communicate to the students mostly about discipline issues. (Nkomo and Fakrogha (2016), concurs by stating that communication during assembly is among some of the communication strategies

commonly used by teachers on student's discipline.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that communication between students and school administration influences students' discipline. Effective communication between students, teachers and school administration reduces conflicts which may result into indiscipline that may cause confrontations. The principal should encourage more informal communication particularly by use of open-door policy where students are at liberty to walk in the principal's office to report a matter of concern to the principal or any other relevant office without fear of reprisals or being victimized.

The student leaders found the principal communication through official letters, circulars and memos. The study concludes that schools had a wide range of methods that could be used to dialogue with students and with the provision of suggestion boxes students would write and drop their grievances. All these modes of communication were very critical in enhancing student discipline. The open-door policy was underscored as the most critical and effective in reducing incidences of indiscipline. It was concluded that the open-door was more effective than the formal communication channels or modes.

Writing letters, memos and circulars did not demonstrate as high findings as the informal methods of communication.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that principals enhance the open-door policy so that most of the challenges faced by students can be addressed at a personal level. The school principals should reinforce the necessary frameworks and communication avenues for relaying information in public secondary schools. Thus, school administration should put in place good communication systems in schools to ensure a smooth two-way flow of information to all prefects, students, and teachers and support staff.

The Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) could put a lot of emphasis in different modes of communication during management training of secondary school managers. In addition, open-consultative meetings (barazas) need to be incorporated in all schools as an avenue for allowing students to ventilate their grievances as a measure of reducing incidences of indiscipline.

A further study can be conducted to analyse the channels of communication used by school managers in terms of how they enhanced or impeded student satisfaction with service quality.

Another study can be undertaken to investigate the modes of communication used in classroom management in relation to reported incidences of maladaptive behavior

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