

The Impact of Students' Council Involvement in Administrative Tasks in Public Secondary Schools on Discipline in Narok County of Kenya

Samuel Sakarri^{1*}, Peterson O. Oigara², Victoria Wanambiro³

¹⁻³Mount Kenya University, Kenya

***Corresponding author**

Samuel Sakarri

Article History

Received: 02.01.2018

Accepted: 09.01.2018

Published: 30.01.2018

DOI:

10.21276/sjahss.2018.6.1.10



Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of students' council involvement in administrative tasks in public secondary schools on discipline in Narok County. The study used descriptive research survey design. The target group of this study was the students, teachers and head teachers of the secondary schools in the District. A set of questionnaires containing both structured and unstructured questions was used for the study to collect primary data. This targeted members of the student councils and teachers. Data collected was coded with regard to the type and source then analyzed and interpreted both quantitatively and qualitatively in the light of the research objective. Qualitative statistical techniques were used to describe and summarize data. Data was analyzed for descriptive statistics using frequencies, percentages and the mean. The findings were presented using tables and graphs (bar charts and pie charts) for easy interpretation. The results of the study add to the body of knowledge in the area of students' council involvement in the running of public secondary schools. According to the findings, teachers reported that schools in Narok County involve students' council in administrative tasks occasionally as reflected by the overall index that stood at 3.2. In contrast, students from Narok County schools indicated that students' council is seldom involved in administrative task as indicated by the index of 2.6. From the teachers' perception on the impact of students' council involvement, findings indicated that the impact is moderate as shown by the index of 3.3. Congruently, findings on students' perception on the same indicated that the impact is moderate with the index standing on the same mark of 3.3. The researcher therefore recommends that teachers should learn the role of meaningful student council involvement. This calls for training in Student/teachers Partnerships amongst the school heads.

Keywords: Students Council, Administrative Tasks, Public Secondary Schools.

INTRODUCTION

There exist strong legal and moral imperatives for schools to facilitate student participation in school decision making. United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC), which Kenya adopted on July 30 1990, provide an international human rights context for promoting the participation of children and young people in decision-making in Article 12 and Article 13. In spite of these provisions, students have limited say in some school decisions and often only relatively few students are involved in the form of committees and student organizations. They are rarely involved in core decisions such as pedagogy or school organizations. Important decisions are made for and about them, yet they are not given meaningful consideration or opportunity for participation during the evaluation or assessment process. Fletcher [1] observed that even in schools where students are asked to participate in the process; they are only given a token or passive volunteer assignments and tasks to complete.

Calls for inclusions of students in the decision-making structure in schools have led to various attempts by the Ministry of Education to put in place structures for inclusion. The most prominent of this was the formation of the Kenya Secondary School Student Council (KSSSC) formed in 2009 with a view to making secondary school governance more participatory. In this new arrangement, students would be part of decision-making to ensure their interests are adopted in the administration of schools. However, despite this laudable move by the government, not much research has been conducted to find out how far or to what extent students are involved in decision making in secondary schools since the formation of the student councils and to determine whether their involvement has any influence on discipline in the school setting.

Past studies have investigated students' council participation in management of school discipline. UNICEF [2] undertook a study on the adoption and

nature of the SCs in Kenyan secondary schools. The study established that adoption figures had improved from one percent at the baseline in 2009 to 38.3 percent in 2011. The popular SCs were however welfare at 78 percent. The percentage of pure (SC only) and hybrid (SC and prefects) systems stood at 78.6 percent, with 40.3 percent of the SCs based on elected councilors and 38.3 percent based on the prefect system. This state of affairs depicts secondary schools' reluctance to give SCs full mandate for management. Perhaps, the major cause of this disinclination is the lack of socialization or poor socialization of the SCs on management in many schools. Socializing the SCs in management is the only way the disinclination can be surmounted. To realize this goal, an evaluation study that surveys the effects of socializing SC for management in their schools was necessary. The information obtained would be utilized to suggest guidelines to design a training manual that would equip the schools in Kenya with key competencies to constructively guide SCs in management in their schools. Mwiria and Ngethe [3], analyzed the reforms related to governance, management and planning in Kenyan Universities. They focused more on students representations in governance with less emphasis on decision-making process. In Kenyan universities, the same can be applied in the secondary schools within Kericho West District. Scholars [4] advocate for more meaningful student involvement and believe that it has many benefits for both students and schools. Thus, due to student unrests experienced in some schools, this study sought to investigate the involvement of students' council in the running of public secondary schools and its' impact on student discipline in Narok South District in Narok County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Extent of students' council involvement in administrative tasks

Use of the SC to mediate in management in secondary schools is a cadre peer mediation initiative [5]. It involves training of independent groups of students as mediators [6]. Broekhof [7] views the main objective of peer mediation as to assist pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of conflict in a variety of contexts as well as learn approaches to its resolution by non-violent means. Kapusuzoglu [8] observes that, peer mediation has repeatedly proven itself by reducing violence in schools.

The effects of mediation on management according to Broekhof [9] include reduction in the number of indiscipline cases between pupils, a large majority of indiscipline cases being successfully mediated; and, pupils and parents having a positive perception of the mediation scheme. Johnson and Johnson [10] observed that, untrained students largely use conflict strategies that create destructive outcomes by ignoring the importance of ongoing relationships. They further assert that students' success in resolving

their indiscipline cases constructively tends to result in reduction of the numbers of student-student indiscipline cases referred to teachers and administrators, which, in turn, tends to reduce suspensions. Assessing the performance of SCs to that of the other students was a core concern for this study. The assumption of the study was that the outcome in management by the SCs who had been exposed to intentional socialization would be better than that for those not exposed to this.

The strongest well-documented effects of peer conflict resolution programs according to Bickmore [11] give evidence that intensive instruction and practice in conflict resolution processes could have a profoundly positive effect on those with the positive liberty to participate directly and for a significant period. The mediator helps to build a robust process, which includes safety nets to keep the process going in the event of temporary failure of talks; and, mechanisms to overcome and unlock blocked negotiations [12]. The SCs were established in schools to remove the lethargy associated with the seven deadly sins of mediation that Brahim and Ahmed [13] identified. These sins are; ignorance, arrogance, partiality, impotence, haste, inflexibility and false promises; this study sought to assess the extent to which socialized SCs in the secondary schools under study were able to successfully mediate in indiscipline cases among their fellow students in their schools.

Impact of students' council involvement in running of public secondary schools

Effective discipline requires the head teachers to redefine the role of students' council in schools [14]. According to MOEST [25] there are many problems in Kenyan secondary schools because of the poorly perceived role of students' council among the students body. This has led to open hostility, violence and even murder. Students view prefects as puppets of the administration, traitors and sell-outs [15]. Oyaro adds that they see them as part of the autocratic system that suppresses them and as such, they despise and loathe them. This attitude has prevailed because of the following reasons. The way students' council is chosen.

Special privileges given to student leaders but denied other students like eating and sleeping in privileged situations or rooms; being served meals first and therefore getting the best; Power to discipline, scare and report other students; in some cases, they have more powers than the teachers do. According to Nasibi [16], this negative attitude towards students' council can be changed if school administrators do the following: Form students' council with representatives elected directly by the students. Such prefects would owe their loyalty to fellow students and not the administration. At the same time, it gives the students a say on who is going to lead them. Ensure that the teachers do not abdicate their responsibilities to students' council. Be clear on the role/duties of the prefects. These must be in writing; Encourage prefects to give peer guidance and counseling to fellow students

instead of policing over them. Prefects should treat students with respect so that they can earn the same from the students they are serving.

Student leaders are seen as a bridge between the school administration and the students' body and therefore an effective tool for creating understanding between fellow students and the administration. Prefects therefore, play a very important role in the management of discipline in schools. Their appointment should be democratic and cautiously done to ensure that the right cadre of prefects is appointed for effective administration. To ensure that they perform their roles effectively, they must be inducted to orient them into their roles. They should also be supported and encouraged handle issues by themselves.

A research carried out at the University of Exeter, Institute of Education from 1967 to 1970 by King found out that the major value of students council was to pass out information, suggest valuable ideas about the running of the schools, and allow students bring their discontents into the open forum thus. 'Preventing the growth of ill feeling makes the students feel involved in the school and also help in the process of living together. In addition, the students' council gives the students the responsibility and experience in helping to run the school and an introduction to the methods of democracy.

Students' council activities furnish one excellent opportunity for schools to function as a workshop in democracy. This helps the students themselves to share in some form of decision-making. Students council is meant to promote students activity, develop harmonious relation between the students and the faculty. It is also mandated to assist in the management of the school; to develop attitude of good citizenship; to promote welfare of the school and to provide forum for expression of students' wishes; to develop students' initiative and responsibility; to provide a laboratory for citizenship and to provide opportunity for the training of student leaders [17].

The students association should be all-inclusive in its membership and any student council established should be representative of the total group, that is, students' body should elect student council. Referring to effectiveness of students' council Lipham and Hoch [18] asserts that an effective student's council should be used as a means of achieving organizational goals as well as satisfaction of the students' needs. To maximize the potential of students'

Government, the principal must encourage its active participation in the identification and solution of significant school problems. They further argue that; effective students' participation in a student's government is important because the inherent value of student involvement in decisions that affect them is ethically appropriate and educationally sound. One of the ways in which the Ministry of Education in Kenya could avoid school strikes is have students unions in all secondary schools whose major function would be to act as a bridge of communication between the administration and the students. School management in our country heavily relies on prefects. The Report of the Task Force on Student Discipline and Unrest in Secondary Schools chaired by Wangai says the prefect system is rotten to the core [19].

Wachira [20] avers in many schools prefects are appointed through the patronage of the principal and a clique of a few loyal and pliant teachers. The Wangai Report [21] further states that some prefects wield too much power are harsh and even beat or molest fellow students. Kigotho [22] gave a report on Zimbabwe that the Ministry of Education in this country has published guidelines on criteria to be used in appointing prefects. Schools are urged to involve students. In addition, the Zimbabwe Secondary Schools Heads Association has launched a programme for prefects to attend a three-week seminar in moral leadership during the holidays.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Table-1: Students Council Involvement in Administrative Tasks (Teachers' Perception)

Administrative Tasks	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always	Mean
Co-Curricular Activities	3.0	12.1	6.1	27.3	51.5	4.1
Link between students, teachers and management	6.1	3.0	21.2	42.4	27.3	3.8
Development of School Leadership	6.1	12.1	18.2	39.4	24.2	3.6
Promoting School Spirit	3.0	12.1	39.4	21.2	24.2	3.5
Reforming the School	21.2	6.1	12.1	45.5	15.2	3.3
Budgeting	9.1	24.2	27.3	21.2	18.2	3.2
Administering punishments	12.1	18.2	27.3	36.4	6.1	3.1
School Policies Formulation	21.2	15.2	24.2	27.3	12.1	2.9
Formulation of school rules	24.2	12.1	24.2	33.3	6.1	2.8
Making Principal Decisions	18.2	24.2	33.3	15.2	9.1	2.7
Planning physical facilities	24.2	27.3	30.3	12.1	6.1	2.5
Average	30.3	27.3	21.2	15.2	6.1	3.2

According to the findings, teachers alleged that schools in Narok County involve students' council in administrative tasks occasionally as reflected by the overall index. The involvement is highest in co-curricular activities whose mean was recorded with most (51.5%) of them asserting that it is done always.

They further alleged that the council is least involved in planning physical facilities as indicated by the lowest mean of 2.4%. These findings indicate that although there is some involvement of students' council in the schools, it is not up to the mark.

Table-2: Students Council Involvement in Administrative Tasks (Students' Perception)

Administrative Tasks	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always	Mean
Co-Curricular Activities	7.7	3.3	23.1	28.6	37.4	3.8
Promoting School Spirit	8.8	12.1	16.5	30.8	31.9	3.6
Link between students, teachers and management	9.9	6.6	25.3	42.9	15.4	3.5
Leadership	13.2	7.7	28.6	31.9	18.7	3.4
Administering punishments	24.2	17.6	29.7	19.8	8.8	2.7
Development of School	20.9	27.5	22.0	19.8	9.9	2.7
Reforming the School	30.8	25.3	20.9	17.6	5.5	2.4
Formulation of school rules	34.1	30.8	16.5	11.0	7.7	2.3
School Policies Formulation	47.3	23.1	9.9	16.5	3.3	2.1
Making Principal Decisions	53.8	37.4	5.5	2.2	1.1	1.6
Budgeting	62.6	29.7	4.4	2.2	1.1	1.5
Planning physical facilities	73.6	16.5	6.6	2.2	1.1	1.4
Average						2.6

In contrast, students from Narok County schools alleged that students' council is seldom involved in administrative task as indicated by the index of 2.6%. Nevertheless, congruent findings indicated that the council is often involved in co-curricular activities, which had the highest mean of 3.8%. The students also indicated their low involvement in planning physical facilities as reflected by the lowest mean of 1.4% with majority (73.6%) of them alleging that they are never involved. These findings indicate that the students'

councils in Narok County schools are not adequately involved in the running of the schools. As such, they cannot effectively serve their purpose. Olemba and colleagues [23] described the purpose to be. To develop attitude of good citizenship; to promote welfare of the school and to provide forum for expression of students wishes; to develop students initiative and responsibility; to provide a laboratory for citizenship and to provide opportunity for the training of student leaders..

Table-3: Impact of Students' Council Involvement on Discipline (Teachers' Perception)

Indicators of discipline	Not at All	To a Less Extent	Moderately	To a Great Extent	Very Much	Mean
Loyalty	3.0	12.1	18.2	27.3	39.4	3.9
Respect	3.0	6.1	24.2	39.4	27.3	3.8
Trustworthiness	6.1	12.1	18.2	36.4	27.3	3.7
Cleanliness	6.1	9.1	27.3	33.3	24.2	3.6
Confidence	3.0	12.1	39.4	21.2	24.2	3.5
Kindness	3.0	24.2	21.2	30.3	21.2	3.4
Courtesy	9.1	12.1	33.3	27.3	18.2	3.3
Tolerance	9.1	21.2	27.3	33.3	9.1	3.1
Responsible	21.2	15.2	24.2	27.3	12.1	2.9
Punctuality	21.2	24.2	30.3	18.2	6.1	2.6
Obedience	30.3	27.3	21.2	15.2	6.1	2.4
Average						3.3

From the teachers' perception on the impact of students' council involvement, findings indicated that the impact is moderate as indicated by the index of 3.3. The impact according to the teachers is highest on loyalty which had the largest mean of 3.9 while obedience is least impacted as indicated by the lowest

mean of 2.4. These findings indicate that teachers in Narok County do not greatly acknowledge that involving students' council in the school affairs impacts largely on discipline. No wonder Nasibi [24] noted that effective discipline requires the head teachers to redefine the role of students' council in schools.

Table-41: Impact of Students' Council Involvement on Discipline (Students' Perception)

Indicators of discipline	Not at All	To a Less Extent	Moderately	To a Great Extent	Very Much	Mean
Loyalty	4.4	2.2	16.5	37.4	39.6	4.1
Confidence	3.3	5.5	20.9	33.0	37.4	4.0
Respect	5.5	7.7	12.1	42.9	31.9	3.9
Courtesy	7.7	12.1	14.3	36.3	29.7	3.7
Cleanliness	8.8	9.9	29.7	28.6	23.1	3.5
Responsible	11.0	8.8	26.4	31.9	22.0	3.5
Trustworthiness	6.6	14.3	34.1	29.7	15.4	3.3
Obedience	12.1	18.7	23.1	28.6	17.6	3.2
Punctuality	25.3	20.9	29.7	14.3	9.9	2.6
Kindness	27.5	24.2	26.4	15.4	6.6	2.5
Tolerance	35.2	24.2	14.3	16.5	9.9	2.4
Average						3.3

Congruently, findings on students' perception on the same indicated that the impact is moderate with the index standing on the same mark of 3.3. The students also believed that the involvement affects largest on loyalty and confidence as indicated by the highest mean of 4.1 and 4.0 respectively. Students however felt that there is little impact on tolerance as indicated by the lowest mean of 2.4. These findings imply that the students discipline is positively impacted, but to some extent by the involvement of students' council in the school affairs. According to MOEST [25], there are many problems in Kenyan secondary schools because of the poorly perceived role of students' council among the students body. This has led to open hostility, violence and even murder.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Findings indicated that that schools in Narok County involve students' council in administrative tasks occasionally as alleged by the teachers with the index standing at 3.2. The involvement is highest in co-curricular activities whose mean was recorded at 4.1 with most (51.5%) of them asserting that it is done always. In contrast, students from the schools alleged that students' council is seldom involved in administrative task recording an index of 2.6. Nevertheless, congruent findings from the students' perception indicated that the council is often involved in co-curricular activities, which had the highest mean of 3.8. On the impact of students' council involvement, findings indicated that the impact is moderate as reflected by the index of 3.3 as per the teachers' responses. The impact according to them is highest on loyalty, which recorded the largest mean of 3.9. Congruently, from the students' perception on the same, the impact is moderate with the index standing on the same mark of 3.3. The students also believed that the involvement affects largest on loyalty and confidence as recording highest means of 4.1 and 4.0 respectively.

CONCLUSION

Every school in the country is focused on the question of how to improve student achievement in every content area and in every grade level. Each day, in schools with all types of individual challenges,

educators use the diverse tools of school improvement to help make progress for students. While these tools often cite involvement as a key component of school, improvement, from the findings, that idea has rarely included students. For the sake of the future of education, students need to be heard. Students should be considered as partners in school change hence a meaningful student involvement in the school administration.

REFERENCES

1. Fletcher A. "Meaningful student involvement: Guide to students as partners in school change. 2005. Created for Sound Out.org in partnership with Human Links Foundation". Available at: <http://www.Soundout.org/MSIGuide>. Accessed on May 28, 2015
2. UNICEF. Student Leadership Programme: How Far are We? Reflections from student leaders on the implementation of student councils in secondary schools in Kenya. 2011.
3. Mwiria K, Ng'ethe N. Public university reform in Kenya: Mapping the key changes of the last decade. Mwiria, N. Ng 'ethe, C. Ngome, D. Ouma-Odero, V. Wawire & D. Wesonga (eds) Public and private universities in Kenya. Oxford: James Curry Ltd. 2007.
4. Cook-Sather A. Authorizing students' perspectives: Toward trust, dialogue, and change in education. Educational researcher. 2002 May;31(4):3-14.
5. Broekhof K; Conflict Resolution in Schools. Report on the International Seminar held on March 2nd and 3rd 2000 in Soesterberg, the Netherlands. 2000. Print.
6. Opotow S, Deutsch M. Learning to Cope. developing as a person in complex societies. E. Freydenberg. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press. 2000. Print.
7. Broekhof K. 2000. See note 5.
8. Kapusuzoglu S. An investigation of conflict resolution in educational organizations. African Journal of Business Management. 2010 Jan 1;4(1):96.
9. Broekhof K. 2000. See note 5.

10. Johnson DW, Johnson RT. Restorative justice in the classroom: Necessary roles of cooperative context, constructive conflict, and civic values. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*. 2012 Feb 1;5(1):4-28.
11. Bickmore K. Peacebuilding dialogue as democratic education. *Debates in citizenship education*. 2011:115-31.
12. Giessmann D, Hans J & Wils O. Conflict Parties' Interests in Mediation, Berghof Policy Brief 1/2009. Berlin: Berghof Research Center. 2009.
13. Brahim L & Ahmed S. In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace. *The Seven Deadly Sins of Mediation*. Center for International Cooperation, (New York University). 2008.
14. Nasibi WM. *Discipline: Guidance and Counseling in Schools*. Nairobi. Strongwall Africa. 2003.
15. Oyar K. *Discipline: Where to Draw the Line*. Daily Nation, p. 9. Nairobi. Nation Media Group. 2005.
16. Nasibi W. 2003. See note 14.
17. Olembo JO. *Management in Education*. Nairobi Educational Research and Publication.
18. Lipham JM, Hoeh JA. *The principalship: Foundations and functions*. HarperCollins Publishers; 1974.
19. Wangai Committee. *Report of the Task Force on Student Discipline and unrest in Secondary Schools*. 2001.
20. Wachira M. *Chronology of protest and destruction in schools*. Daily Nation (Nairobi). 2001.
21. Government of Kenya. 2001. See note 18.
22. Kigotho W. *District schools register poor performance in KCSE exams*. East African Standard. Nairobi. Published on March 04, 2011.
23. Olembo J. 1992. See note 16.
24. Nasibi W. 2003. See note 14.
25. Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST); *Report on Causes, Effects, and Remedies of Indiscipline in Secondary Schools in Central Province*. Nairobi: Government printers. (2000/2001).