

Challenges facing Student Councils on Management of Discipline in Secondary Schools and Measures Put in place in Kirinyaga East District, Kenya

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ABSTRACT: Student involvement in decision making in secondary schools refers to participation of students in matters concerning organization, administration, functions and control of discipline through delegation of powers and responsibility to the student body and student themselves who furnish valuable feedback. This study was based on two theories, social change and functionalism guided the study. From these findings it was revealed that in some schools, however, students failed to take instructions from student councils where they felt that the election of student council members was not free and fair.

Key Terms: Student councils; Discipline; Leadership; Election; Selection; Appointment

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I. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Student councils are representatives' structure through which students in post-primary schools can become involved in the affairs of the schools, working in partnership with school management and staff and parents for the benefits of the school and its students (O'Gorman, 2003). Student councils are an integral part of education institution administration. These councils, therefore, are present at all levels of education administration including primary or elementary, high schools, colleges and universities. Student councils consist of student leaders in different types of institutions. Student leadership at different levels of education is charged with varied responsibilities. At the elementary or primary level, students' leadership is mainly related to enforcement of the school administration's policy (Loukas, Suzuki, & Horton, 2006). Students leaders remain in close proximity with the school's administration and thus are able to inform the administration of any unbecoming behavior among fellow students (McGregor, 2007).

Empirical evidence that exists demonstrates the positive aspects of student councils. These are, assistance in management, improving staff and student relationships, reduction in indiscipline cases, unrests in schools and improved performance in both academic and co-curricular programmes (UNICEF/KSSHA, 2013).

Vundi, Majanga and Odollo (2014) conducted a research in Kenya to look into the effects of socializing student council leaders on conflict management in secondary school training in conflict management had improved their competence in resolving conflicts among fellow students.

Administration support is a key factor in the enhancement of the effectiveness of student councils. Obiero (2012) did a study and assessed the influence of University administration on the involvement of student leaders in the governance of university. He based his case study on Kenyatta University, Kenya. He conducted his study after the University had restored some calm after a period of successive unrests. He attributed the calmness experienced to adequate consultation between the student leaders and the university administration. But even though the students indicated that they were involved in the decision making process, there were times they felt they were being ignored on sensitive issues where decisions were made without consulting them Kinyua (2015).

Mule (2011) conducted a study on factors influencing student leaders' involvement in governance of public secondary schools in Mwala District. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and the study participants included 17 principals and 255 student leaders. The study found out that all principals are aware of the importance of participatory school management as a way of governance. The study established that there was no significant difference between level of students' involvement in school governance and principals' administration experience. Student councils are a new system of governance in the Kenyan secondary schools as opposed to prefect system. The learners elect their leaders and in some cases the elected leaders are

confirmed by the teachers. Student councils system allows adequate participation of students in the running of school. Students are involved in decision making process, policies and structures of the school.

Students' leadership at the high school level is of critical importance. High school students mainly consist of adolescents and thus it is imperative for the teachers and other stakeholders to understand the behavioral impulses associated with the stage. The adolescence stage is characterized by several physical, social and cognitive changes (Whitehead, 2009). Some of the physical changes are largely related to increased hormonal production that leads to development of distinct features in both boys and girls. Social change is mainly associated with an identity crisis. In this case, adolescents have an increased need for belongingness and thus increased need to belong to a particular group whose norms they are able to identify with.

According to Otieno and Ambwere, (2000) there is a great need to select, train and equip prefects with skills to manage themselves, fellow students, time, school duties and their studies. When responsibilities are delegated to prefects without proper guidance they get confused, stressed and more often than not destroyed. Expecting prefects to tame hostile adolescent students when they are going through the same internal turmoil's is asking a bit too much from students. Special attention should be dedicated to guidance on how to harmonize prefects' roles as students as well as student leaders.

Conflict between school administrations and students often leads to violent protests and strikes. Strikes are manifestation of serious discipline issues in a school. High school students' unrest is a common phenomenon experienced in different countries across the world. In the United States for example, students often voice their dissatisfaction with the school administration's conduct of affairs through several ways. One of the most popular tools used by high school students is abandoning classes where students fail to attend classes and often seek audience with the administration. In the United States, high school students unlike college or university students are not allowed to hold demonstrations outside of the school premises by the law (Holland & Andre, 1999). However, incidences of direct or indirect assault on school administrators are common where high school students perceive it as a viable method of expressing their discontent.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

School administrators continue with maintaining conducive learning environment by ensuring the operation of discipline in school for academic performance. However, schools are facing challenges; UNICEF (2011) 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 SCLs full mandate for conflict management. Perhaps, the major cause of this disinclination is the lack of socialization or poor socialization of the SCLs on conflict management in many schools. Socializing the SCLs in conflict management is the only way the disinclination can be surmounted. Despite the presence and vital role of prefects in public schools, there has been an increasing discipline problem in public secondary schools (Angeng'a and Simwata, 2011). This has led to poor performance, arson, loss of property and even life. The rampant indiscipline cases in public schools questions the influence of prefects in maintenance of discipline in public schools. This study was prompted by these observations and seeks to fill in the gap by finding out the challenges facing student councils on management of discipline in secondary schools and measures put in place in Kirinyaga East District, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives;

- i. To examine challenges facing student councils in management of discipline in secondary schools in Kirinyaga East District.
- ii. To determine the measures put in place by student councils in managing discipline in secondary schools in Kirinyaga East District.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study sought to establish the influence of student councils on management of discipline in secondary schools in Kirinyaga East District, Kenya. The theoretical framework that guided the study was the House (1974) Path-Goal Theory. The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design. Purposive samplings technique was used to sample schools while simple random sampling technique was used to sample teachers, members of student councils and students. The sample size comprised a total of 20 principals / deputy principals, 40 teachers, 160 members of student councils and 100 students from both Boarding and Day secondary schools in Kirinyaga East District. Questionnaires were used as the tools of data collection in the

study. The data was analysed by use of descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution tables and graphical techniques were used for data presentation.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two theories, social change and functionalism guided the study. Social change is defined as a social process whereby the values, attitudes, or institutions of the society become modified because of the belief that a particular group is at risk for a problem with serious consequences unless a suggested behavior is adopted lessen or eliminate the problem (Macionis, 2011). The functionalism theory focuses on the homeostatic nature of social systems: social systems work to maintain equilibrium which is attained through the socialization of members of the society into the basic values and norms of that society (Fish, 2005). In order for social change to occur, a group of people must have certain characteristics. The study adopted Vundi et al (2014) which argued that, for Student Council Leaders (SCLs) to effectively manage conflicts in secondary schools, they must be well socialized with adequate knowledge, skills and relevant attitudes for their role. The desired outcome for using SCLs is to attain a peaceable school where the number of strikes, suspensions and cases reported to teachers is reduced. The function of the SCLs organs in the school is to ensure that the equilibrium of a peaceable school is maintained. Socialization is expected to contribute to the success of this process.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework comprised of independent variables which were, students' perception towards the methods of establishment of student councils, role of the student councils in managing discipline in secondary schools. Independent variables interacted with each other as they got modified by the intervening variables consisting of children's rights, constitution of Kenya, political factors, media and democratic ideals to produce dependent variables represented by effective school discipline whose indicators are punctuality, adherence to school rules, decency, good behavioral, good human relations and good academic performance (See Figure 1:1).

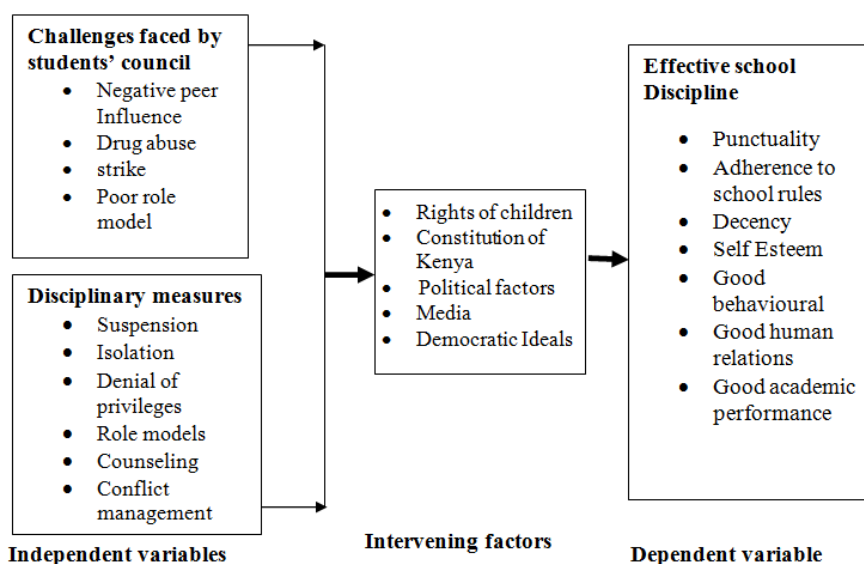


Figure 1:1 Conceptual Framework

Source: Authors model from Literature Review (2014)

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

Students' councils in Secondary Schools in Kenya

According to Mutua (2014) persistent sporadic waves of strikes in secondary schools in Kenya since independence constitute a major test to the effectiveness and quality of education system hence the need to allow students' to be heard through their representatives (Wachira, 2010). There has been countless interviews and research in Kenyan schools where students' council leadership has been embraced. Students' councils in Kenya started off as a project initiated by UNICEF and KSSHA (2008). All stakeholders in education sector were alarmed when a number of schools faced a wave of students' unrests that swept across the country in 2008. School principals were blamed for not being open to dialogue with their students'. A good number of students held the view that the prefect system was an instrument used by administration to suppress their views and discourage their participation in school management (Indimuli, 2012) for such reasons; unrest served as the preferred a venue to vent their frustrations with the school administration. The need for reform in education

sector was imperative. The government of Kenya (GOK), the Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association (KSSHA), UNICEF and other stakeholders considered several ways to get students involved in their school affairs.

Role of Student Councils and Discipline in Kenya

The research in Ireland has highlighted a number of particular issues which impact on the successful operation of student councils. O'Neil (1997) emphasizes the need for planning, support and commitment for effective student councils. One of the most important issues is that there should be clarity about the role of the student council and realism about what a student council can achieve. Dowling (2003) states that great disparity seemed to exist in his study between how the principals viewed the role of the student councils and what the student councils' representatives believed their role to be.

Monahan (1999) surveyed 190 senior students in 7 schools. Four of the schools had councils and three did not. The main functions of the student council according to students was to represent the views of students, to organize events for the students, help first years settle in and take on special projects such as improving locker facilities, involvement in an anti-bullying structure and assisting students with special needs. The most important functions according to students were to represent the views of students, involvement in an anti-bullying structure and assisting students with special needs.

Monahan (1999) states that difficulties arise when there is lack of clarity in relation to the three distinct yet linked areas of partnership, responsibility and decision-making. He says that where there is clarity regarding the responsibility and input into decision-making, there is a greater possibility of a positive and productive relationship between partners.

Dowling (2003) argues that notions of partnership and collaboration must be accompanied by a clear definition for the context in which they are used. Recognizing the student as a significant partner in the enterprise of the school requires us to discern with them how their influence and contribution can be respected and integrated into the daily life and direction of the school. Browne (1996) identified that there was needs to have a clearer role definition for the student councils and its members and that adequate preparation and ongoing training and development be made available to students. She argued that if school authorities were more aware of the advantages and disadvantages of membership of student councils, they would be more understanding and supportive of the members.

Muli (2007) put duties assigned to student councils in Kenya into four major categories. These include areas of study, supervisory duties within the school, monitoring students and assisting the administration in management. Similarly, different schools have established different student councils system where different duties and tasks are associated with different posts (Sushila & Bakhda, 2006). One of the most common students' council rank systems includes school captains at the helm of the student councils body. The school captain is primarily responsible for coordinating the activities of the student councils body with those of the administration. In most cases, he/she is assisted by two or more assistant captains who primarily co-ordinate the activities in the captain's office.

Other members of student councils include dining hall captains whose role is to ensure that meals are taken on time and in an orderly manner (Muli, 2007). They are also expected to ensure that high standards of hygiene are maintained around the dining area. Games captains are primarily responsible for co-coordinating co-curricular activities with the help of the games tutor. Also, they are charged with responsibility of supplying various teams with the appropriate games gear and ensuring safety of such games equipment. Laboratory captains work closely with the laboratory technicians in ensuring that students have adequate access to the laboratories and that necessary materials are supplied. Dormitory captains are mainly characteristic of boarding secondary schools where their main role is to ensure safety of students in the dormitory. Therefore, they are expected to work closely with their dorm masters and report incidences that likely to cause harm to students in the dormitory.

a) Students Regulations and Discipline

As students from various socio-economic backgrounds meet in the school environment; the need to observe rules and regulations becomes imperative so that order, discipline, and conducive learning environment may be created. Saya (2005) argues that rules are very important because they help to set academic excellence and also contribute to all round development of students.

In Kenya, the Education Act permits the authority structure in any school to make administrative rules pertaining to the discipline of the students and to prescribe appropriate punishment for breach or non-adherence to such rules (Republic of Kenya, 1980). The purpose of the school rules is to create a safe and warm environment (Chaplain, 2003). All students and teachers are supposed to be familiar with the rules and it is the first thing students are given whenever they join a new school. Not knowing the school rules can be termed as defiance of authority and is punishable in some schools. Shannon and McCall (2005) indicate that rules should not be very restrictive because students like adults resent unrealistic restrictions and struggle against them.

Human Rights Watch (2005) adds that when the rules are broken specific punishment given should be immediate, appropriate and remedial.

Classroom Discipline Plan (2005) suggests that the students can be encouraged to come up with rules that could be incorporated in the old school laws. This would give them a feeling of ownership since they will view them as their own creation and thus strive to obey them. Students are far more likely to internalise and respect rules that they helped create than rules that are handed to them. Classroom Discipline Plan (2005) notes that such involvement must be genuine and should include all students and not limited to just a few students in student government. Such students may be least likely to challenge the rules in the first place. It is the role of the student councils to observe that other students follow the school rules (Arthur-Kelly et al. 2006).

Student Councils and Disciplinary Measures

Throughout history student councils are known to participate in disciplinary matters. These matters include conflict management, participation in decision making and engagement of students.

a) Conflict Management in schools.

In the Kenyan education system, various legislations serve as guidelines for management and administration of educational institutions. However, it appears that most educational institutions have been less successful in management of conflicts MOE (2002). The Ministry of Education (2002) report indicated that in spite of the government policies put in place, Kenyan educational institutions have continued to report increased cases of conflict. In the recent past, the concern has shifted to the changing nature and increased number of organizational conflicts. Most of these conflicts occurred in secondary schools, middle level colleges and tertiary institutions MOE (2002). Many of the conflicts were characterized by violence and wanton destruction of institutional property.

Between 1980 and 2008, the number of conflicts in public secondary schools alone increased from 22 (0.9%) to 300 (7.5%) (MOE, 2008). School unrest in secondary has escalated and this has raised the level of conflict between the students and administration. This has resulted to a need to address the unrest in schools using avenues like the student councils.

b) Students' Participation in Decision Making and Discipline

In the history, student councils are known and expected to participate in disciplinary issues. Magadla, (2007), states that the extent of students' involvement in decision making is debatable with often conflicting viewpoints propagated by differing stakeholders depending on their background and world view. Basically there are three viewpoints that guide the extent of student involvement in decision making. The first is that students must remain passive and receive instructions from parents and teachers (Sithole, 1998).

This view will mean that policies must be designed by adults and students are to follow them to the letter. The second viewpoint suggests that students can participate but only to a certain degree. In support of this view, Huddleston (2007) suggests that there is a tendency among some teachers and school leaders to define the issues which affect students quite narrowly. Student consultation and decision-making is often limited to aspects of school life that affect students only and which have no immediate relevance to other stakeholders, e.g., playgrounds, toilets and lockers.

Aggrawal(2007) adds that while student representatives may not participate in matters relating to the conduct of examinations, evaluation of student performance, appointment of teachers and other secret matters, their participation should be ensured in all other academic and administrative decisions taken by these bodies. Though this view appears to support student participation in decision making, it however confines student involvement in decision making to specific areas of school life. Defining the limits of student participation in this way is however not only likely to give students the impression that the school's commitment is tokenistic and therefore not to be taken seriously, but it also severely limits the possibilities for experiential learning (Huddleston, 2007).

The notion is authoritarian and paternalistic, rather than democratic. It not only assumes that school students have a legitimate interest only in student-specific issues, but it also assumes that students have no right to decide for themselves the issues in which they want or do not want to be involved. For this reason many commentators have suggested that opportunities for student participation should go beyond specifically student-related issues and extend to wider aspects of school life, as well as to society beyond the school. Effective involvement, it has been said, would go beyond student comment on aspects of their lives which are seen as safe or without significant impact on the work of adults in the school, embedded at classroom level, at institutional level and at the interface between local, national and international community's (Fielding & Rudduck, 2002). There are very few aspects of school life and decision-making in which, principle at least, school students

cannot be meaningfully involved – depending upon their age and experience hence the need to examine the third level of student involvement in decision making.

The third viewpoint suggests that students should fully participate in decision making (Magadla, 2007). This view is supported by Njozela (1998) who points out that principals and other stakeholders should not underestimate the contributions of students especially if they are given the opportunity to develop their skills and their level of maturity. In their support, Huddleston (2007) feels that students should be involved in all areas of school life. He adds that the range of activities that make up the work of a school can be categorized in a number of different ways, but, however it is categorized, one should expect students to have opportunities for involvement in each major area – in particular in a school's: ethos and climate – including rules, rewards and sanctions, curriculum, teaching and learning, management and development planning.

Over the last few years there have been increased calls for increasing the extent of inclusion of students in decision making in secondary schools in Kenya owing to the frequent occurrences of student unrests in the sector (Kamuhanda, 2006; Ogot, 2003; Buhere, 2008; Kindiki 2009). Proponents of students' participation in decision making have justified their support for this idea on premise that decisions in a school affect the student in latent and manifest ways. Largely they are recipients of final decisions hence the recommendations made by students may be very constructive and if approached in the right manner would work positively (Sushila & Bakhdha, 2006). In this way, students rejectionist tendencies of decisions imposed upon them by school administrators would change to ownership and acceptance of decisions arrived at with their participation.

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 and parcel of decision-making to ensure their interests are adopted in the administration of schools (KSSSC, 2009).

c) Engagement of Students and Discipline

Vibert and Shields (2003) examine student engagement conceptually as an inescapably ideological term, and thus assign differential meanings of student engagement according to three ideological lenses: 1) a techno-rational lens 2) an interpretive/ student-centered lens, and 3) a critical/ transformative lens. These different ideological lenses yield different educational and Political consequences. I conceive of student engagement through the critical/ transformative lens; hence, I see student leadership as a means of providing possibilities for a just and equitable education system. Vibert and Shields' (2003) identification of ideological lenses is complimented by McMahan and Portelli's (2004) conception of three popular notions of student engagement: 1) The conservative or traditional conception; 2) The liberal or student oriented conception; and 3) critical-democratic conception of engagement. The conservative or traditional conception envisions student engagement in a hierarchical, narrow or limited way.

As enacted, engagement is generated through the interactions of students and teachers, in a shared space, for the purpose of democratic reconstruction, through which personal transformation takes place (McMahan & Portelli, 2004). This conception of engagement is one that recognizes the capacity of students and educators to co-construct the educational environment. Likewise, it values substantive student involvement. It is also predicated upon the important relationship between teachers and students; only through a positive and respectful rapport can genuine teaching and learning occur.

Mitra (2008) sees student voice as an integral part of school improvement and sees it in partnership with the school organizational leadership. Although it is sometimes called consultation, Mitra points to projects that "partner teachers and students" and which led to a greater empowerment of the students. She argues that even at its simplest level, student voice initiatives give young people the opportunity to share with administrators and faculty their opinions about school problems.

Challenges Facing Student Councils in Management of Discipline

This section presents some of challenges student councils face in managing discipline in secondary schools which include democracy in schools and rights of students.

a) Democracy in Leadership and Discipline

Leadership without authority has little or minimum effect. To ensure that the school leadership is effective the leaders have to be voted in through a democratic process and they are able to govern through laid structures. Mabovula (2009) observes that politically, democracy is the right of everyone in an organization, to vote on matters that affect them and to be treated equally. Democratic societies emphasize the principle that all people are equal before the law. Equality means that all individuals are valued equally, have equal opportunities, and may not be discriminated against because of their race, religion, ethnic group, gender or sexual orientation.

However, the concept of democracy is wide and vague and needs to be clarified because democracy tends to be taken to be a form of political organization and an arrangement for government than it is viewed as a way of life. Rutto and Njoroge, (2001) assert that the call to democracy has always been associated with political restructuring and is rarely associated with social institutions such as education. This view is supported by studies on democracy and education. In education, democracy is a word much used by educational leaders, yet it is rarely defined beyond general statements. According to Mabovula (2009) this means that learners at school should be given a degree of choice, both as individuals and as a group, but within the parameters provided for by all stakeholders in the school. In secondary schools, the main stakeholders for purposes of democratic governance comprise of parents, teachers, students, and representatives of the broader community served by the school. But, despite a number of laws and policies that have been passed regarding learner rights and learner participation in governance of schools, there is still no comprehensive evidence and understanding of how learner participation has shaped the experiences of school stakeholders in Kenya.

Effective education for democracy, therefore, combines formal instruction with access to democratic role models and opportunities for active participation in school life and decision-making. It entails a shift from authoritarian to democratic child adult relationships; from students as passive to active participants in their education, sharing responsibility for school decision-making with other stakeholders. This view is supported by Starrat (2004) who asserts that student inclusion in decision making is situated in a democratic governance structure and policies that sustain the public institutions of schools that provide education for the citizens, by the citizens and with the citizens of democracy. This means that school authorities must embrace their responsibilities to cultivate and sustain a rich educating environment for the young members of their democratic society so that they will gradually embrace and participate fully in the democratic way of life of their society. Fagbongbe, (2002) posits that the social importance of democracy in school governance has also not been lost to African countries such as Nigeria and South Africa. In Nigeria, a series of student unrest in secondary and post-secondary institution of learning in the late 1970s to early 1980s has led to the acceptance of companion related dialogues between students and administrators together with reasonable participation in the running of school. Republic of South Africa, (1996) argue that student participation in decision making is also accepted practice in South African secondary schools where it is mandated by law that all public state schools in South Africa must have democratically elected school governing bodies composed of teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and learners.

Kenya, despite the move towards democracy by means of multi- party politics in the 1990s, democracy still remains an elusive goal (Sifuna, 2000). This is because the democracy debate has tended to over emphasize the need to develop democratic institutions through law as a prerequisite for democracy while de-emphasizing the need to revolutionise Kenyan society through re-entrenchment of socio economic forces and the deconstruction of undemocratic institutions such as schools (Kanyinga, 2006).

This means that democracy in the Kenyan society has failed to flourish because it is not practiced in schools which, according to Ezewu (2005); Chege (2006) are charged with the social responsibility of socializing the individual into a cultured, mature, well-spoken and useful member of the society, that is, a democratic citizen. The schools in Kenya reflect the prevailing mood of no confidence in governance and lip service to democracy. Rajani (2003) adds that in Kenyan schools there is virtually no space for students to organize or speak about their concerns. With the partial exception of universities, colleges, polytechnics and a few elite schools such as Starehe Boy's Centre, there is no credible students' organization which may be used as a platform for student representation and inclusion in decision making.

The institution of prefects and monitors is considered antithetical to true democracy because the agents are selected by teachers and their primary function is to "keep order" including meting out punishments to their fellow students. Consequently, students with grievances or constructive critique have no substantive space to air their opinions and ideas. When students are heard, their views are often treated with paternalism and rarely taken seriously into account.

Obondoh, (2006) states that the recurrent student unrest in the Kenyan secondary schools scene are often reflections of student demands for democracy through their participation in decision making. Rejectionist tendencies of students and their negative reactions to policy statements from the school authorities indicate that ordinary students are not adequately involved in processing of decisions. It is thus clear that students do not have opportunity and mechanism to participate in school governance and this situation sets the conditions that spark student unrest. The prevailing situation has had the effect of convincing students that real gains only come from forceful forms of action and not through dialogue and deliberation (Kiprop, 2007). The strongest well-documented effects of peer conflict resolution programs according to Bickmore (2012) 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 of time.

To manage discipline effectively and to reduce unrests, involvement of student leadership is crucial. The current structure requires that students be represented by councils elected from among their peers with

certain traits through an agreed criterion. Whereas this structure has not effectively taken root in all Kenyan schools, where it is effective it has yielded positive results.

b) Rights of Students and Decision Making

The rights of students in decision making should not be undermined. The students should play a critical role in making decisions that affect them.

Human Rights Watch (2005) argues that the purpose of children’s education, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, should be the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and preparation for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, and tolerance. Students have several basic rights which they are entitled and which they should expect, but which unfortunately they often do not enjoy. However, the penetration of human rights movements into schools in Kenya has created awareness among children about their rights.

Various acts of parliament are also in their defense (Eshiwani, 2001). Some of the basic rights include: The right to a learning environment that is appropriately well ordered, peaceful, safe, non-threatening, and conducive to learning; The right to having a caring, well-prepared teacher who instructs effectively and who limits students inappropriate self-destructive behavior; and the right to choose how to behave, with full understanding of the consequences that automatically follow their choices. Rights of children are a challenge that students council face in discipline management in secondary schools in Kenya.

VI. FINDINGS

Challenges Facing Student Councils in Managing Discipline in Secondary Schools in Kenya

The study sought to get responses from respondents regarding challenges facing student councils in managing discipline in secondary schools in Kenya. The researcher also wanted to find out whether the challenges were internal or external. Results indicated that 77(51.1%) of respondents were for opinion that student councils faced internal challenges, for example, students refusing to take orders from them and being victimized. A number of respondents 58(36.6%) agreed that challenges were external (See Table 1).

Table 1: Challenges facing student councils in managing discipline

Responses	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Note sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Being reported to school authorities	36	22.5	39	24.4	25	15.6	32	20.0	28	17.5
Parents' interference	59	36.9	29	18.1	25	15.6	27	16.9	20	12.5
Community interference	17	45.0	43	26.9	26	16.3	11	6.9	8	5.0
Media interference	92	57.5	33	20.6	18	11.3	11	6.9	6	3.8
Students refusing to take orders from us	16	10.0	9	5.6	12	7.5	44	27.5	79	49.4
Being victimized	26	16.3	16	10.0	19	11.9	45	28.1	54	33.8
Being treated as social outcasts	44	27.5	30	18.8	13	8.1	33	20.6	40	25.0
Being target of violence	49	30.6	23	14.4	28	17.5	26	16.3	34	21.3
Being sued for infringing students' rights	67	41.9	25	15.6	24	15.0	29	18.1	15	9.4
Political interference	87	54.4	24	15.0	16	10	12	7.5	21	13.1
Average	50	34.2	27	16.9	21	12.8	27	16.8	31	19.8

Source: Field Survey (2014).

The student councils faced challenges, one of the challenges being that, students refused to take orders from councils. Inadequacy of student councils’ orientation on their roles creates conflicts between them and students hence problem of internal management of discipline.

Student Councils Measures in Managing Discipline

The study sought to get responses from respondents regarding the measures put in place by student councils in management of discipline in schools. It further checked whether there were adequate measures put in place in administration of punishment and guidelines used by student councils to enhance discipline.

a) Aspect of Administration of Punishments

Responses were sought regarding measures put in place by student councils in management of discipline. Results indicated that 74(45.7%) of student councils had not put adequate measures in managing discipline in schools. For example, Student councils did not maintain a disciplinary file for recording students’ punishments; they did not have a disciplinary committee to handle students’ cases and student councils did not give students opportunity to participate in decision-making about discipline. Only 66(41.6%) had put measures to manage discipline (See Table 2).

Table 2: Aspect of Administration of Punishments as a Measure to Enhance Discipline

Responses	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student councils ensures that students are punished for the right cause in this school	37	23.1	30	18.8	10	6.3	57	35.6	26	16.3
Student councils maintain that all students have a disciplinary file for recording their punishments.	64	40.0	28	17.5	20	12.5	31	19.4	17	10.6
Student councils have a disciplinary committee to handle students’ cases in this school.	54	33.8	27	16.9	30	18.8	33	20.6	16	10.0
Student councils ensure that students are given reasonable punishments.	36	22.5	17	10.6	23	14.4	58	36.3	26	16.3
Student councils observe that students serve the given punishments in this school.	58	36.3	34	21.3	16	10.0	28	17.5	24	15.0
Student councils maintain that all students are equally punished in this school.	36	22.5	17	10.6	23	14.4	58	36.3	26	16.3
Student councils solve conflicts amongst students	62	39.2	31	19.4	12	7.0	33	20.6	22	13.8
Student councils gives students opportunity to participate in decision-making about discipline	45	28.1	45	28.1	15	9.4	28	17.5	27	16.9
Average	48	29.7	26	16.0	20	12.7	44	27.6	22	14.0

Source: Field Survey (2014).

This implies that most of members of student councils lacked adequate skills and knowledge for management of discipline. This could affect discipline management negatively in schools.

b) Guidelines Used By Student Councils to Enhance School Discipline.

The respondents had a combination of the guidelines used by student councils in different schools to enhance discipline. Results indicated that 92(57.6%) of the respondents stated that there should be prior knowledge of rules and regulations, a disciplinary action should be applied immediately while 39(24.5%) of the respondents observed that there should be prior knowledge of rules and regulations, disciplinary actions must be objective and 27(18.1%) maintained that there should be prior knowledge of rules and regulations, allow right of appeal (See Table 3).

Table 3: Guidelines Used By Student Councils to Enhance School Discipline

Responses	Frequency f	Percentage %
There should be prior knowledge of rules and regulations, allow right of appeal	27	18.1
There should be prior knowledge of rules and regulations, a disciplinary action should be applied immediately	92	57.6
There should be prior knowledge of rules and regulations, disciplinary actions must be objective	39	24.5
Total	160	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2014).

Rules should be objective and not subjective to avoid resistance from the students. Students should participate in formulation of school rules.

VII. DISCUSSION

The first objective was to establish the challenges facing student councils in managing discipline in secondary schools in Kenya. Results indicated that 77(51.1%) of respondents were of opinion that student councils faced internal challenges while 58(36.6%) agreed that challenges were external. The study established that members of the student councils participated to a small extent in the school governing activities; the councils had limited powers and decisions were made without taking their views into account. It was thus clear that students did not have opportunity and mechanism to participate in school governance and this situation sets the conditions that spark student unrest.

The findings were also supported by Rajani who affirmed that in Kenyan schools there is virtually no space for students to organize or speak about their concerns (Rajani, 2003). This is also in line with Obondoh who stated that the recurrent students' unrest in the Kenyan secondary schools scene is often reflections of student demands for democracy through their participation in decision making (Obondoh, 2006).

Results indicated that 123 (76.9%) of the respondents agreed that students refused to take orders from student councils. Students can be encouraged to come up with rules that could be incorporated in the old school laws. This would give them a feeling of ownership since they will view them as their own creation and thus strive to obey them. Students are far more likely to internalize and respect rules that they helped create than rules that are handed to them.

Students should be involved in all areas of school life. The range of activities that make up the work of a school can be categorized in a number of different ways, such that students have opportunities for involvement in each major area –including rules, rewards and sanctions, curriculum, teaching and learning, management and development planning.

The second objective was to find out measures put in place by student councils in management of discipline. Student councils had put some preventive measures by ensuring that students were punished for the right cause in school. However student councils had not put adequate measures in managing discipline in schools. Results indicated that 74(45.7%) of student councils had not put adequate measures in managing discipline in schools while 66(41.6%) had put measures to manage discipline. Student councils did not maintain a discipline file for recording all the punishments of the students; had no disciplinary committee to handle the students' cases in schools; did not give students opportunity to participate in decision-making about discipline and had not put a mechanism to solve conflicts amongst students. These findings were supported by Browne, who argued that there was need to have a clearer role definition for the student councils and its members and that adequate preparation and on-going training and development be made available to students (Brown, 1996). This was also supported by O'Neil who emphasized the need for planning, support and commitment for effective student councils (O'Neil, 1997).

Student councils should be supported and encouraged to maturely handle issues by themselves. If student councils could be involved in school governing activities they would learn management skills and tend to have a more positive impact on the management of discipline.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Based on the summary arising from the study findings, the following conclusions were made:

- i. Student councils have not been properly inducted into their roles hence lack of adequate skills to manage discipline.
- ii. Planning, support and commitment by schools administration for effective student councils was inadequate.
- iii. Involvement of student councils in decision making in school governing activities would reduce indiscipline in schools.
- iv. Schools had a hybrid of student councils and prefect system.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study, the following recommendations are made;

- i. All secondary schools should establish student councils in a free and fair process for effective management of school discipline. The election process should be democratic.
- ii. The ministry of education should organize capacity building programmes for educators to equip them with adequate skills and abilities to handle the emerging issues like the establishment of student councils.

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