Role of Financial Resources in the Implementation of Safety Standards in Secondary Schools in Trans-Nzoia County

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ABSTRACT

Education is bound to be affected if safety and security concerns of students are not addressed fully. The objective of the study was to determine the role of financial resources in implementation of school safety measures in public boarding secondary schools in Trans- Nzoia County, Kenya. The study used descriptive survey research design. The study targeted 754 teachers from 40 public boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County. Stratified and simple random sampling was used to select boarding secondary schools. The total sample was 143 teachers. Questionnaires were used as data collection instruments. Data was analysed using descriptive statistical techniques that were frequencies and percentages. Data was presented in tables. The study found out the ministry of education had no provisions for allocation of funds to take care of safety needs and requirements in the institutions. It ascertained that the secondary schools have vote heads allocated for the purpose of catering for the safety needs and requirements though in many instances the schools diverted the funds to other needs that they felt were more pressing owing to situation of shortfalls in financing and budgetary deficits. The government through the Ministry of Education should ensure that Standard Safety Guidelines are availed to all schools and the schools be allocated sufficient funds to be able to implement the guidelines. Funds should always be availed at the required times to allow for the provision of infrastructure for safety requirements and the allowing of purchase of tools and implements for safety needs.

Introduction

School administrators bear the primary responsibility for working with teachers and other partners to create an environment in which individual students and adults are treated fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect. Schools as macro- organizations requires principals with courage and capacity to build new cultures based on trusting relationships and a culture of disciplined inquiry and action (Fullan, 2003). School managers need to identify appropriate strategies; tools and resources they can use to create awareness among the students, teachers and support staff in order to address specific challenges.

Students' safety is an important aspect of human life that needs to be taken care of so that it is safeguarded from any form of risk in a given situation. As such, a safe school environment is a place free from violence and fear with respect to disciplinary procedures (Hernandez, Floden, & Bosworth, 2010). Security preparedness is a combination of structural and non-structural measures designed to reduce risks and ensure effective response to a range of threats (Chemeli & Mwongeli, 2015). No school management/ may claim to be efficient if it has not considered security preparedness as an important aspect of its administration.

All over the world, there had been an upward trend in the numbers of school children dying or getting injured in school violence, disasters and emergencies. These had been avoided if safety policies were strictly adhered to. In the incidences such as the ones in America and European schools, the 2004 Besian massacre in Russia to the Chinese school blast and India school fires, hundreds of school's children had died in preventable incidents (Cavanagh, 2004; Soomeren, 2002 & Reuters 2004).

As the study by Dinker, Kemp, Baum and Syder (2009) show, internationally, according to Arkansas School Facility Manual, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) was charged with overseeing the design and construction of school facilities. The Arkansas School Facility Manual provides consistent, clear information for school districts and professionals as a new generation of schools is being created for Arkansas. The standards and guidelines contained in the manual are the culmination of standards, accepted procedures, statutory requirements, and experience of experts and authorities across the United States and establish a uniform level of quality of all public-school buildings.

The education budgets for many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa go towards financing the huge wage bills and meeting the requirements for the human resource component. This deprives many countries the opportunity to invest in the requisite infrastructure required to guarantee the schools of safety and occupational health requirements, (World Bank

Report, 2010). The financing of education has been a tough call for African countries. Most of the budgetary requirements have been met by way of pegging the funding to institutional support from development partners and this has really constrained the African states in terms of development of infrastructural capacities and meeting the thresholds of the requisite safety requirements. Shortfalls in institutional support and have exposed the soft underbelly of the African jurisdictions in the event of having situations of dire need for the meeting of safety requirements and at the same time provide the basic requirements.

In Ghana, the prevalence of safety issues in schools is due to inadequate attention given to Occupational Health and Safety issues by the government (Regional Committee for Africa Report, 2004). According to the report, one perspective to the above concern is that majority of schools in Ghana have poor health and safety culture. In Uganda, it has been established that safe schools' contract has been implemented as one of the identified interventions which strengthen the roles of teachers, pupils, parents and their involvement in children's education to enhance quality learning (Lulua, 2008).

Kenya has had the benefit of having a safety standards manual which is the result of a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Education and the church world service. The need to develop the safety standards manual was borne out of the situation of unprecedented levels of insecurity, witnessed in the country during the post- election violence period in the year 1998 and previous incidences of safety breaches whereby schools and allied learning institutions bore the brunt of it all, (GOK, 2010). The Ministry of Education has also made efforts towards having circulars in place for the defined health and safety standards required in learning institutions and the education act and the public health act guide and specify the thresholds in turns of safety standards which the learning institutions should adhere to.

The main sources of funding in secondary schools in Kenya today are the Ministry of Education which provides funds for free secondary school project. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST) disbursed 810 million shillings to all 717 provincial boarding schools by then to purchase fire equipment. The provincial secondary schools were selected because of their high enrolment and boarding facilities. The National schools were left out because they had received similar funds in the past while the District schools were left out because they are in most cases day schools.   The parents also contribute funds for development. A cross scrutiny of the various vote heads of the ministerial budgetary' allocation reveal that there are no funds allocated to safety except for payment of school watchmen.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the government efforts, majority of students in our educational institutions are exposed to mishaps and accidents daily in schools (Ministry of Education Report on School Safety, 2011). In a study conducted in Kisumu, Omolo and Simatwa (20l0) found out that inadequate funds were by far the most significant factor influencing the implementation of safety policies. A majority of head teachers (86.67%) and QASOs (100%) stated it as influencing the implementation of safety policies. The implementation of safety policies involves extensive modification of existing buildings, the purchase of expensive safety equipment and fittings and capacity development at all levels. Without adequate funds, all the safety policies may not be implemented at once. Safety can be enhanced greatly by utilizing available resources.

Public secondary schools in Kenya rely on monies granted from the fees paid by the parents and disbursements from the government free secondary education programme. The disbursements are many at times slow and irregular thus exposing the secondary schools to budgetary constraints of enormous proportions. The schools are forced to operate on shoes string budgets and work out their programmes on budgetary deficits almost on a school calendar (Mutwiri, 2010). The foregoing situation has seen the risk of some school head teachers almost getting committed to civil jail owing to non-payment of suppliers after failing to honor contractual obligations to services providers. This has caused the situation of only having the every essential required for the learning programmes and what is considered non-essential relegated to the periphery. Safety and health assurance programmes have borne the brunt of it all. In Trans-Nzoia County, there have been a number of cases compromising student safety in boarding secondary schools. Studies have been carried out under different areas of school safety in Kenya but still our schools are being faced with tragedies and Trans-Nzoia County has not been spared. This study sought to establish the role of financial resources in the implementation of school safety.

Literature Review

Theoretical framework

This study is based on Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (1943). The proponent, Abraham Maslow presented a hierarchy of needs model using the terms physiological, safety, social, esteem and self- actualization to describe the pattern that human motivations generally move through. Physiological and safety needs are considered lower level while social, esteem and self-actualization are said to be the high-level needs. He believed that human beings possess a set of motivation systems that are not related to rewards or unconscious desires. According to Maslow, individuals are motivated by the unsatisfied needs in each level. The human psychological needs are arranged with the understanding that people are incapable of paying higher attention to higher level needs when lower level needs remain unmet. Once the needs are met, they cease to be motivators and the individual moves up to the next level. The lower level needs include food, shelter, clothing, shelter and safety. With their physical needs relatively satisfied, the individual's safety needs take precedence and dominate behavior. The safety needs are protection from elements, security, order, limits and stability financial security, health and well-being of an individual.

The theory supposes that humans prefer a safe, organized and predictable world. They avoid physical harm and chaos and in cases of threats, safety needs predominate. Maslow supposed that all humans struggle to reach the highest levels of their abilities and that everyone is capable and has the desire to esteem needs and self- actualization levels. This theory is relevant to this study because it prioritizes safety as a basic human need. In regard to this study, for a school to achieve its education mission it is important to make students feel safe and secure. Depriving students of a safe and secure learning environment is simply denying them their fundamental human right.

School safety

The Safety Standards Manual provides standards and guidelines for use in all Kenyan schools. Chapter six of the

manual incorporates the following key components: Safety on School Grounds, Safety in Physical Infrastructure, Health and Hygiene Safety, Safety in School Environment, Food Safety, Safety Against Drug and Substance Abuse, Safe Teaching and Learning Environment, Social-cultural Environment of the school, Safety of Children with Special Needs/Disabilities, Safety Against Child Abuse, Transportation Safety, Disaster Risk Reduction and School Community Relations.

The Government of Kenya has committed itself to improving the standard of education at all levels as indicated in the Ministry of Education Safety Standards Manual (2008). This commitment has been driven by several reasons including the need to provide education as a fundamental human right and education as an integral and indispensable vehicle for achieving the goals of national development, integration and peace (Republic of Kenya, 2008). It is for this reason that the government has from time to time appointed various educational commissions, committees and task forces to address various challenges facing our education sector.

The Kenya Education Commission (1964), National Committee on Education Objectives and Policies (1976), the Presidential Working Party on the Second University in Kenya (1981), The Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for the Next Decade and Beyond (1988). The Commission of Inquiry in the Education System in Kenya (2000), in reference to safety, recommends that clear rules governing the minimum standard of infrastructure be approved before any educational institution may be established and be run.

School safety is an integral and indispensable component of the teaching and learning process. Indeed no, meaningful teaching and learning can take place in an environment that is unsafe and insecure to both learners and staff. The Kenyan ministry of Education recognizes that all students require a caring and safe environment in order to learn, develop their potential and stay in school. Despite the importance of school safety, a new wave of mayhem had emerged in our society and the school had not been spared. There was an upsurge of violence arising quite rapidly. In some schools' students result to senseless destruction, burning, maiming or even killing those they think are harsh on them.

Funding and safety in schools

The development of a comprehensive health and safety programme in schools is important and it calls for the costs being quantified in monetary value. There is also need to ascertain the pertinent requirements as regards health and safety. Monetary values assigned to these variables should be quantified as well. This should be followed with the projection of data and monetary values for future safe and health schools. Apart from advocacy within the various stakeholders, feasibility of a school safety policy should be accessed and its financial implication established to make a critical decision on what safety measures affordable and sustainable for a country (UNICEF, 2009).

A report by the Kenya Institute of Policy and Research Analysis on the efficacy of the free secondary education cites the risk of having academic programmes grinding to a halt and the deterioration of the quality of programmes owing to the lack of the capacity for pubic secondary schools to meet the obligations and provisions for pertinent and immediate needs, (Ombogi, 2010). Instances of safety breaches and occurrences of incidences like fires have seen the school managers run to the local communities and well-wishers for aid to have the re-construction of physical facilities and the cases have at times been very punitive to the parents in the institutions who are many at times forced to cater for the damages and losses. The situations on the other hand could be easily checked by way of having the school properties under indemnity covers by insurance companies.

Omolo and Simatwa (2010) found out those factors influencing the implementation of safety policies in public secondary schools in Kisumu East and West District as stated by head teachers include; inadequate funds, late school fee remittances, low enrolment, inadequate time, inadequate capacity and lack of coordination from the Ministry of Education.

According to Otieno, Too, Anyuor & Okwayo (2010), the Principal Kisumu girls whose school has 1,045 students stated that the school has fire extinguishers which are not enough and even the few which are available are expensive to maintain. In the past years due to the rising incidents of fire outbreaks the government was forced to give 810 million shillings to schools to buy fire equipment. Otieno (2010), report that the Principal Wayaga secondary school contends that most schools are poor and cannot afford fire extinguishers.

Kukali (2013) found out that financial resources and its management are factors influencing implementation of safety policy in secondary schools. The category of teachers and Quality Assurance and Standards Officers argue that funds may be adequate but management is wanting. The studies entrust the principals with the whole load of planning and implementation.

Research Methodology

This study utilized descriptive survey research design. Kothari (2009), views a research design as an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy and procedure.

The study targeted 754 teachers from 40 public boarding secondary schools. The schools are categorized into four groups comprising of 2 national schools, 8 extra county schools, 21 County schools and 9 sub- County schools. Creswell (2006) suggest that a sample of 30% and above can be enough for a study. The researcher selected 20(50%) of the 40 public boarding secondary schools in the study area using stratified and simple random sampling techniques.

The researcher used simple random sampling to select 387 teachers from the 20 sampled schools representing 51.3% of the total number of teachers (754). For the purpose of this study, the teachers' samples were obtained using coefficient of variation. Nassiuma (2000) asserts that in most surveys, a coefficient of variation in the range of 21%≤ C≤ 30% and a standard error in the range 2%≤ e ≤ 5% is usually acceptable. Nassiuma (2000) gives the formula as follows:-

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)\, e^2}$$

Where, n=S size, N=Population, c=covariance, e=standard error

For the teachers, N=387, therefore:

$$n = \frac{387*(0.3)^2}{(0.3)^2 + (387-1)*(0.02)^2}$$

$n = 143$ respondents

Questionnaires with closed and open-ended questions were administered to 143 teachers in the 20 sampled boarding secondary schools.

Financial resources and implementation of safety standards

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Institution have vote heads allocated to safety management	20	16.7	28	23.3	0	0.0	60	50.0	12	10.0
The funds allocated for the safety management provisions are adequate	12	10.0	12	10.0	6	5.0	50	41.7	40	33.3
Funds are used for Purchasing of first aid kits	25	20.8	65	54.2	6	5.0	20	16.7	4	3.3
The funds are used for Fencing of all school land	30	25.0	42	35.0	0	0.0	40	33.3	8	6.7
Funds are used for Provision of insurance covers	6	5.0	24	20.0			50	41.7	40	33.3
Disbursed funds are utilized for Purchase of fire extinguishers	35	29.2	43	35.8	36	30.0	6	5.0	0	0.0
Funds are used for Payments of security personnel	25	20.8	65	54.2			20	16.7	10	8.3

Results

Data was collected from teachers through questionnaire. The teachers' responses on this variable are presented in Table 1.

The results show that majority 60(50.0%) of the teachers disagreed that Institutions have vote heads allocated to safety management, with 28(23.3%) agreed and 12(10%) strongly disagreed. This implies that schools had no vote heads allocated to safety management. At least 50(41.70%) of the teachers disagreed that funds allocated for the safety management provisions are adequate with, 40(33.3%) strongly disagreeing and 6(50%) were undecided. This implies that majority of the schools had no adequate funds allocated for the safety management provisions. From the study 50(41.70%) of the teachers disagreed that funds allocated were used for the purchase of fire extinguishers. 40(33.3%) strongly disagreed and 6(50%) were undecided. This implies that majority of the schools had no funds allocated for purchase of fire extinguishers.

The results also show that majority 65 (54.2%) of the teachers agreed that they use funds in payments of security personnel, 25(20.8%) strongly agreed and 4(3.3%) strongly disagreed. This implies that schools had funds used in payments of security personnel.

Majority 65 (54.2%) of the teachers agreed that the funds are utilized for Purchasing of first aid kits. 25(20.8%) strongly agreed and 4(3.3%) strongly disagreed. This implies that schools had funds used in purchasing of first aid kits. The results indicate that only 42 (35.0%) of teachers agreed that the funds are used in fencing of all school land and 8(6.7%) strongly disagreed. This implies that a good number of schools had fenced off all school land. The study also established that 43(35.8%) of the teachers agreed that they purchase fire extinguishers. 36(30.0%) were undecided and 6(5%) disagreed.

The study sought to find out how financial resources affect the implementation of safety standards in secondary schools. Public secondary schools in Kenya rely on monies granted from the fees paid by the parents and disbursements from the government free secondary education programme. The disbursements are many at times slow and irregular thus exposing the secondary schools to budgetary constraints of enormous proportions. The schools are forced to operate on shoes string budgets and work out their programmes on budgetary' deficits almost on an entire school calendar (Mutwiri, 2010). The foregoing situation has seen the risk of some school head teachers almost getting committed to civil jail owing to non-payment of suppliers and failing to honor contractual obligations to service providers. This has caused the situation of only handling the very Essential requirements for the learning programmes and what is considered non-essential relegated to the periphery.

Safety and health assurance programmes have borne the brunt of it all. The principals alluded to the fact that financial resources had a big bearing on the institutions capacities to acquire implements and accessories for safety. The response showed that 67% of the schools had managed to acquire safety accessories by virtue of the fact that they had access to financial resources while 33% had not. This confirmed that financial resources impacted on the institutions' capacities to adopt and implement safety standards

Conclusion

The study found out that the ministry of education had no provisions for allocation of funds to take care of safety needs and requirements in the institutions. It ascertained that the secondary schools have vote heads allocated for the purpose of catering for the safety needs and requirements though in many instances the schools diverted the funds to other needs that they felt were more pressing owing to situation of shortfalls in financing and budgetary deficits. The study thus concluded that the schools had overwhelming needs which caused them to neglect the function of safety.

Recommendations

The government through the Ministry of Education should ensure that the Standard Safety Guidelines availed to all schools are monitored and the schools be allocated sufficient funds to be able to implement the guidelines.

Funds should always be availed at the required times to allow for the provision of infrastructure for safety requirements and the allowing of purchase of tools and implements for safety needs. The provision and allotting of funds for tuition requirements by the government should always be done and disbursed in a quick manner to ensure regular provisioning for the institutions and enable them to meet all their pertinent requirements to avoid situations whereby funds are diverted from safety kitties to fund other more pressing needs.

Tools and implements like fire extinguishers and first aid kits should be availed by the parents and ministry to the schools in a specified and organized manner. This will ensure that no school lacks the basics on the premise of lack of money to purchase the requisites. Grants and donor support should be sought to tackle the situation of lack of provision for funds to meet the requirements. This will always ensure that the schools have access to the safety requirements regardless of their statures and cash flow requirements.

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