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Extent to Which Principal's Communication Influence Students' Discipline in Secondary Schools in Nandi County

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which principals' forms of communication influence students' discipline in secondary schools in Nandi County, Kenya. The study used systems theory. Descriptive survey design was adopted. The study sample consisted of 118 public and private schools' principals, 108 teacher and 1534 student leaders. Each school provided 13 student leaders. Questionnaires for principals, interview guide for teachers and student leaders were used as instruments of data collection. Data was analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse data then, tabulate and present data. The results generated were reported in tables. The study establishes that communication clarity is a key component to adherence of instructions given. The information has highest clarity when given in student baraza. The principal is able to explain himself to the satisfaction of the students and issues raised are promptly answered. The students are able seek clarifications on issues they want sorted out. This enhances discipline. The national and county quality and standards officers should be designed by MOEST to bolstering their assessment capabilities to adequately report accurately on true causes of discipline cases in schools and particularly in Nandi County and give out specific remedies to work out on how to reduce the prevalence.

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Introduction

Discipline is a based desire synonymous with self-control. It is what is gained by requiring that rules or orders be obeyed and punishing bad behaviour. A study by Hollenbeck, Drilman and Furgua (2003) on relationships between leadership and motivation factors established increased respect for the student as an individual, greater opportunity for freedom and initiative in thought and conduct enhances students' discipline. Hitchens and Hector (2005), focused on ethical issues, out of class experience and benefits accrued in involvement with governance. They argue that students have to be involved in all areas of their concern to respect process outcomes. Undemocratic school administrators do not consider students meeting as important channels of communication.

School discipline is a system whose roles and behaviour strategies are appropriate to the regulation of students and the maintenance of order in school. In United States of America, many researchers conducted have revealed serious discipline issues and the most prevalent is possession of guns, racial abuse, drugs and substance abuse, sell of drugs in school and indiscriminate killing of fellow student and teachers during a rage. The problem of discipline cases in schools is not unique to Kenya. It is a global issue of great concern spanning political, economic, geographical, racial, gender and social spectrum. There is growing concern of students discipline cases in the United Arab Emirates (Khaleej Times, 2006) where teaching methods were blamed for the students' discipline cases with parents getting anxious and frustrated by the increased discipline cases and violence.

The major area of concern was the destruction of property and personal injuries. The same trend was reported in India (India Parenting PVT online Ltd, 2007) and the need to find lasting solution to the same. It was concluded that a solution to the issue of discipline cases would make students education and schooling experience more productive. Discipline cases reported in England and Wales, the government planned a crackdown on school discipline cases by giving schools powers to search students for weapons and other arms. Schools should be encouraged to arrange for surprise police searches of the premises to reduce the problem of indiscipline (BBC, UK version 2004, Nov 18).

In Springfield USA, one student was reported dead and 30 wounded in a shooting associated with discipline cases while in Kobe, Japan a student was decapitated by a fourteen-year-old. Killing, physical attacks, robberies, attempted arsons and fights between students which ended in tragedies have been making headlines the world over. School violence that involves knives, baseball bats, marijuana, guns have become common. The other incidents are reported from Mexico, Italy, Comoros and Spain (UNESCO 1998). According to (UNESCO, 2015) positive discipline is found in inclusive, learning friendly classrooms. Schools in Botswana marred their image by student's rampant discipline as some perished and others became blind after breaking into a laboratory and drinking toxic amounts of methanol and ethanol. A survey undertaken on the provincial schools revealed that discipline cases had caused a major deterioration in academic performance (BOPA, 2006 July 6).

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McMains (1989) carried out a study in schools in Britain and Scotland with aim of establishing the reasons behind suspension in schools. The information gathered was that 80 percentage are factors within the confines of the school and the remaining 20 percentage was background (home environment) based issues. This study confirmed that the realignment in schools, its stability and performance is as a result of the principals' inclination on discipline matters. The schools with low suspension rates, the principal had nurtured a democratic approach to discipline issues and involved the students in decision making. Republic of Kenya (2001) and highlighted the importance of open and interactive communication when carrying out administrative tasks. Armini (2000), Creese (2005), Pascareela and Terenzini (2005) aver that due to their involvement in leadership roles, students learn how to handle conflict and responsibilities, co-operate with others and listen to other people's opinion and ideas.

Communication is very important in school administration and in essence, what the principal does involves communication. It contributes greatly to effective discipline. Many institutions have failed because of poor communication, misunderstood messages and blurred orders. Communication transmits information of rules and regulations, policy guidelines, structural changes, new positions and changes to the students. The student leaders use it to give feed back to the teachers, departments and administration on the progress.

The study by Kibet, Kindiki, Sang and Kitilit (2012) recommended that principals be encouraged to change tact on communication such as involvement in administrative tasks to realise positivity, increase students inputs in planning and implementations. The prevalence of discipline is resultant of punishments to correct mistakes. The participation could make students reflect on their actions and make the correct decisions thus improving on their discipline. This study thus identifies a research gap on the principal's use of Barazas for enhanced student's discipline.

Kindiki (2009) conducted a study on effectiveness of communication on student discipline in Naivasha, Kenya. The study used questionnaires as instruments of data collection. The study established that during Barazas there is effective communication and it's only due to poor communication student's defied authority. It advocated use of Barazas as main channels of communication as it improved the interaction between the students and principal. The Barazas have to be enhanced for collaboration, pertinent issues discussed and agreed on, rules and regulations enhanced and discipline improved. Despite the methodology applied the study identifies a research gap for the effectiveness of Barazas in enhancement of discipline in Nandi County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Republic of Kenya (2001) on students discipline and unrest in schools established that lack of communication in schools, freedom for students to express themselves, their opinions and frustrations was curtailed creating mistrust between students and principals. It breeds a deadlock that students can't express their grievances leading to disruptive behaviours. The students in a Baraza need to agree on menu, dress code, preps hours after thorough consultations and agreements after views, suggestions and grievances are expressed and the principal giving guidelines that do not contravene ministerial guidelines to be adhered to. This gives

a room to ventilate and continue to hold order. The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which communication influence discipline in secondary schools in Nandi County, Kenya.

Literature

Discipline of students

School discipline is a system of whose punishment and behavior strategies appropriate to the regulation of students and the maintenance of order in school. It aims to control the student actions and behavior and its compliance with school rules and code of conduct (Henry, 2004). In United States of America, many researchers conducted have revealed serious discipline issues and the most prevalent is possession of guns, racial abuse, drugs and substance abuse, sell of drugs in school and indiscriminate killing of fellow student and teachers during a rage. In dealing with school discipline holistic approach is paramount as it is dealing with human beings who live in a complex lifestyle and environment. The principal must be aware of factors and agents influencing of formation of certain habits, attitudes and inclinations. Okumbe (1998) defines discipline as the values that students should live by within the school, the family, neighbourhood, village and social units. It's a learning process and entails a willingness to put forth all the efforts which is required to achieve set goals. It is a system of guiding the individual to make reasonable decisions responsibly.

The student and student leaders while at school are expected to abide by rules, be obedient and respectful to authorities and those who contravene the consequences must be well stipulated and clear. The schools have increased in numbers with resultant high enrolments and involvement of students in governance is so crucial that if not checked indiscipline can get out of hand. The social media having a lot of influence on young brains, different styles of upbringing, the urban and rural child, new challenges of drugs and substance abuse. This becomes an issue for students in governance positions to discuss and agree on which way to handle discipline issues that disruptive behaviors don't crop up in schools.

Discipline is the assertion of a based desire synonymous with self-control. It is what is gained by requiring that rules or orders be obeyed and punishing bad behavior. A study by (Hollenbeck, Drilman & Furgua, 2003) on relationships between leadership and motivation factors established increased respect for the student as an individual, greater opportunity for freedom and initiative in thought and conduct enhances students' discipline. Hitchens & Hector, (2005), (Magolda & Ebber, 2006) focused on ethical issues, out of class experience and benefits accrued in involvement with governance. They argue that students have to be involved in all areas of their concern to respect process out comes.

The principal management styles play a major role in the discipline of the students and if styles are good and positive students discipline will be good, but if in contrary disciplinary issues will occur. There are two types of discipline; preventive and corrective discipline. The principals mostly use preventive measures whereby he takes administrative action aimed at encouraging the students to follow the school rules, regulations and culture. It's for instilling self-discipline which enhances morale and productivity. The students no longer uphold the question of discipline and obedience as primary pillars for them to perform in schools. They are concerned more and more with their rights than what they came to school to learn. They can easily challenge educators'

decisions. School governance system exists to establish an atmosphere of mutual confidence, respect in school and community with the School rules drawn up to emphasize their value to individuals and their community. It depends on well-defined articulated policy done in conjunction with all concerned parties, the teachers, students and this consensus building makes it easy for enforcement. This entails all participants' issues and views are considered and listened to with equal respect.

Principals' forms of communication and student discipline

Barasa and Ngugi (1990) postulate that punishments reduce overt signs of misconduct but create bitterness and resentment, hostility and fear to the affected student and should be avoided. Rewards in converse increases sycophancy and student will behave in certain ways to be recognised and rewarded. These procedures are becoming less characteristic in present day school management Beech et al (2004). Child psychology and enhancement of democracy into education theory and practice have forced principals to start modifying their ideals on nature and function of school discipline.

Discipline is based on appropriate school learning theory and educational philosophy strategies for preventing violence and promoting order (Greenberg 2001). The Adlerian theory emphasises the understanding of students with maladaptive behaviours and helping same students alter their behaviours while at the same time finding ways to get their needs met, (Alfred Adler, 2007). It has a positive effect on self-concept, attitudes, school atmosphere, academic performance, personal and professional growth. Throughout history of education common means of maintaining discipline in schools was corporal punishment as the teacher was a substitute parent. This was by the cane, paddle or strap. This has disappeared in western world and Europe. Kenya used it for so long until it was outlawed, (Basic Education Act, 2013). Discipline cases are failure of students to do their work as well as being punctual to school. The students no longer uphold the question of discipline and obedience as primary pillars for them to perform. They are concerned more and more with their rights than what they came to school to learn. They can easily challenge educators' decisions.

The principal must be aware of factors and agents influencing of formation of certain habits, attitudes and inclinations. should live by within the school, the family, neighbourhood, village and social units. It's a learning process and entails a willingness to put forth all the efforts which is required to achieve set goals. It is a system of guiding the individual to make reasonable decisions responsibly. The principal communication styles play a major role in the discipline of the students and if styles are good and positive students discipline will be good, but if in contrary disciplinary issues will occur. There are two types of discipline; preventive and corrective discipline. The principals mostly use preventive measures whereby he takes administrative action aimed at encouraging the students to follow the school rules, regulations and culture. It's for instilling self-discipline which enhances morale and productivity. Corrective is about inflicting pain and dissuasion.

Theoretical Framework

This is based on general systems theory whose proponent is Ludwig Von Bertalanffy. The theory was proposed in 1968. The theory is interdisciplinary study of systems. A system is

an entity with interrelated and interdependent parts. It is defined by its boundaries and it is more than the sum of its parts (subsystems). Change in one part of the system affects other parts and the whole system with predictable patterns of behaviour. Positive growth and adaptation of a system depend upon how well the system is adjusted with its environment, the system exist to accomplish a common purpose.

The systems theory originates from Ludwig Bertalanffy general systems theory (GST). Bertalanffy looks at a system as a configuration of parts connected and joined together by a web of relationships. In this regard, the school is a complex pair informed predominantly by democratic, socio-economic and political environment in which it operates. A school in a democratic environment is likely to espouse the same democratic ideals whereas a school is an autocratic regime is likely to export the same to the educational institutions (Rudolf, 2011). Since the schools of modern times exist in progressive participatory settings, reforms demand involvement of students in governance of schools. It is in this regard that the Basic Education Act 2013 demands involvement of students in management of schools. Change of titles from head boy/girl to presidents and cabinet secretaries in charge of certain dockets is seen in this realignment of duties and responsibilities.

The strengths of the systems theory include considering the existing environment as part of the inputs of the system. Progressive environments equally influence institutions in terms of whether they will embrace progressive or retrogressive practices in management of students in discipline, involvement of students in decision making influence discipline in schools. The limitations of the theory include a stereotype of associating certain environments with certain discipline outcomes such a weakness could also make principals negatively predisposed towards certain schools and students' discipline. The social class, political orientations and economic environment of school's families and classes largely influence students discipline in both public and private secondary schools both positively and negatively, hence the need for this study.

Research Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted in conducting the study. Descriptive research is designed to depict the participants in an accurate way by observational which is viewing and recording, case study which is in-depth study of individuals or group of individuals. The target is 356 schools and 4628 student leaders. A sample is a subset of a particular population that represents the whole. At the time of conducting the research, there were 356 principals in Nandi County and for a descriptive research, 30 per cent was deemed an effective representation (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This translated to 118 principals, 108 teachers and 1534 student leaders all obtained through stratified proportionate sampling. Stratified sampling was used for the schools to ascertain that categories to do with national schools, extra-county schools, county schools and day schools were represented. The schools comprised boys schools, girls boarding, mixed day and boarding, day schools hence a simple random sample in each type will be done. Stratified sampling was used to realise and this translates to 4602 student leaders 30 percentage translated to 1534 student leaders. Interview schedules for teachers were administered to 108 with a 100 per cent return rate. Using stratified proportionate sampling, 108 teachers were sampled on the basis of school categories and school types. Interview

schedules obtain respondents' perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitude towards a service, concept or idea.

Questionnaires were developed and used for the collection of data from principals and student leaders. The instrument was aligned to the research questions. Specifically, it explored teachers' views on the extent to which principals involved students in decision making employed by secondary school principals. The students' questionnaire focused on study variables on principals' use of participatory practices which largely captured involvement in decision making such as formulation of school rules, type of menu, duty rota, purchase of school bus, school infrastructure, entertainment schedules, prep hours and clubs' membership, fairness in of principals on student leadership assuming leadership.

The responses in the instruments were coded, processed and tabulated using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 22.0 (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as group Means, frequencies and percentages were used. The quantitative data from the coded closed- ended items.

Results

Principals' forms of communication and student discipline

Communication is the act of conveying intended meanings from one entity to another. It is the use of mutually understood signs and semiotic rules. It is the art and act of transferring information from one place to another. Figure 1 shows the students response with schools use of baraza. In relation to the schools undertaking barazas before making major decisions, students were asked to indicate whether schools hold barazas to solicit student's views before making school decisions.

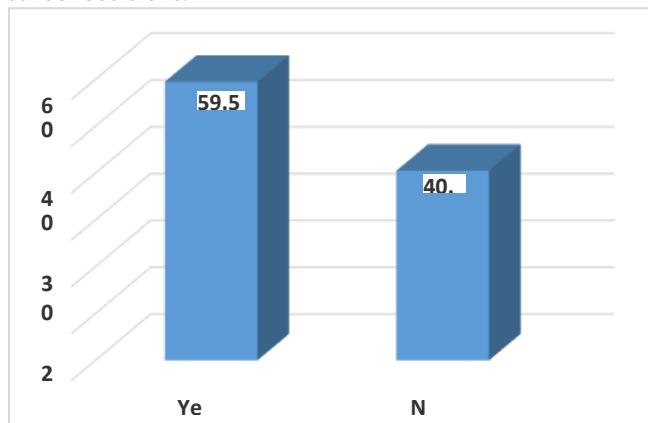


Figure 1. Students opinions on whether schools organize barazas.

The study findings indicate that students in most of the schools reported that the schools organise students' barazas before making major decisions. This is as attested by 60 percentages. The results also show that 40 percentage of the schools do not organise barazas but instead make decisions and pass them to students without prior consultations. The study established that the baraza system was prevalent in many schools and from it which the study established had less disturbances as majority of decisions made were collegially accepted (Waweru, 2008).

The study finding is that baraza system was a critical aspect in many schools as issues of discipline, violations and resultant punishments were agreed upon. The issues that were of great concern are fully discussed in a panel and agreed on. Agreed on issues are easily adopted and accepted forming parts of the culture of the school. The study established that communication on academic guidelines and standards are

important for effective schools. The communication stipulates the minimum entry marks to a given school and cushions the principal from pressure. The above issues once well addressed will enhance discipline in the school. This concurs with Astin's theory of student involvement on desirability outcomes for institutions in relation to how students change and develop in results for been involved in all schools affairs decisions. The barazas and student's involvement in their organization, leadership positions correlates with retention, completion, discipline and academics.

Perception on the forms of communication

The principals had response on the main challenges that face the schools. This indicates the main forms of discipline cases as they occur in the sampled schools. The communication is very critical in addressing the discipline issues that arise. Table 1 represents the principals' conclusions on the discipline concerns that face them in schools as represented in the prevalence of occurrences in the sampled schools. Table 1 indicates that the teacher's perception on the forms of communication and the impact on discipline in respect to assembly announcements was the highest at 90.7 percentage indicating it is the most prevalent form of communication. The teachers did indicate the most of the announcements were hinged on challenge to join for common purposes, hope and understanding, plans underway, calling for understanding when in shortfalls, how to respond, behave, act and grow with principally within their power to choose. Teachers did indicate that this form of communication had the greatest impact on student as was for entire school and improved discipline.

Teacher's perception on the use of memos was varied and seemed not a very popular mode of communication as was very common at 34.3 percentages. It is very formal mode of communication and not highly appreciated as its top – down communication. This is a main issue of communication and designed hierarchically for monitoring and controlling duties. In the study it was observed that the teachers felt principals use class teachers was at 56.5 percentage and attributed this to the art of communication. This involves listening and speaking as well as reading and writing an attribute to teachers. They observed that are able to transmit knowledge, skills, values, principal's instructions and orders as well as their caring for the students entrusted to them. They help their students achieve academic success and in the process the communication from the principal is passed on. When the communication is effective both the student and teacher benefit as it makes learning easier and thus improving discipline. Class teachers are really effective in communication that their students are able to follow their footsteps and this propels the information from the principal.

In the study it was observed that teachers valued the use of baraza and was commonly at 72.2 percentages of the sampled schools an indicator that was common form used by the principal to communicate with students. The teachers did not approve of it as was only the principal in attendance. The principals use the forum to provide clear focus in relation to excellence performance, deepen the school culture and discipline improvement, deepen trust and conditions for collective responsibility to improve student learning outcomes, enable the spread and adoption of evidence based insights, behaviours and new practices and enabled sustainable deep learning and adoption of high impact strategies that optimise student learning growth through collaborative conversations amongst school improvement

leaders. This form of engagement greatly improves discipline. In summary the study establishes that the most common mode of communication as perceived by the teachers was assembly considering two aspects of very common and common at 100 percentages followed by barazas the 95.3 percentages. With least influence been the usage of memos and for discipline to prevail the two components to be enhanced.

Table 1. Forms of communication

		Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of use of assembly announcement	Very common	98	90.7%
	Common	10	9.3%
Frequency of use of memos	Very common	37	34.3%
	Common	33	30.6%
	Fairly common	29	26.9%
Frequency of use of Student Council	Rare	9	8.3%
	Very common	53	49.1%
	Common	47	43.5%
	Fairly common	8	7.4%
Frequency of use of Class teachers	Very common	61	56.5%
	Common	32	29.6%
	Fairly common	11	10.2%
	Rare	4	3.7%
Frequency of use of Barazas	Very common	25	23.1%
	Common	78	72.2%
	Fairly common	4	3.7%
	Rare	1	0.9%

Teacher observed that schools depend on their communication but this does not form relationship, positive culture and climate. Teachers observed though not popular it secures sufficient information flow across the departments and students. When the principals write memos it is a positive communication experience and relates to job satisfaction and performance a position supported by Demirhan, Kula and Karagoz, (2014). The teachers observed that though not a popular mode of communication the implementation of the instructions becomes a show case for identity management.

Effectiveness of modes of communication

Table 2 indicates the effectiveness of different forms of communication that the teachers perceive the principals use to

communicate issues with the students. This forms clearly indicate the levels of effectiveness in each of the modes. The study in table 2 indicates that assemblies are common features of schools across the globe and features students and teachers. They are effective at variance of very effective and effective at 89.8 percentage.

In the study finding it's established that Barazas are the most effective mode of communication at 97.3 percentages a factor of great concern. It helps students get through rough times and keep on reading as knowing is an issue that affects all. Enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and plans.

Barazas the study establishes are effective as provide for joint problem solving and shared learning in out of class meeting. This is effective with shy students who are reluctant to ask questions or challenge a teacher directly.

The study establishes that the principals use teachers as a form of communication since they understand the student rights and responsibilities coupled with home- school partnership and with it able to effectively communicate the instructions from the principal and this enhances discipline. The study established that the teacher's perception on the effectiveness of the use of memos as a form of communication was the least desired at 70.4 percentages. The memos though said so have advantage of presumption of privacy for the persons intended and in this is to the students and may not reach non-interested persons. The message is precise and permanent for later references and this serves as a reminder of supposedly earlier agreements and forms part of the school history.

The use of student councils as a form of communication established that of the sampled teachers 83.3 percentages felt it was very effective and fairly effective. The student's council are effective as the leaders are conversational with specific issues at hand and because they have participated in the passing it will be easily accepted by the students. The student leaders require concrete answers and it becomes effective when no abstractions are used. The information required is done effectively. The students raise a specific issue that needs to be particularly addressed and if the forum is for the principal control measures put in place that the issues are fully discussed to avoid digression. This enhances discipline.

The study findings established that Communication is very key on the aspects of discipline There are three key pillars in communication and the respective finding. The frequency of communication determines the mode of

Table 2. Effectiveness of modes of communication

		Frequency	Marginal Percentage
Effectiveness of Assembly announcements as a form of communication by principals	Very Effective	55	50.9%
	Effective	42	38.9%
	Fairly Effective	10	9.3%
	Ineffective	1	0.9%
Effectiveness of memos as a form of communication by principals	Very Effective	26	24.1%
	Effective	50	46.3%
	Fairly Effective	27	25.0%
	Ineffective	5	4.6%
Effectiveness of Student Councils as a form of communication by principals	Very Effective	21	19.4%
	Effective	69	63.9%
	Fairly Effective	16	14.8%
	Ineffective	2	1.9%
Effectiveness of Class teachers as a form of communication by principals	Very Effective	55	50.9%
	Effective	44	40.7%
	Fairly Effective	9	8.3%
Effectiveness of Barazas as a form of communication by principals	Very Effective	17	15.7%
	Effective	88	81.5%
	Fairly Effective	3	2.8%

communication. This finding clearly indicate many principals would comfortably use this and because the frequency is able to establish the school culture, maintain the traditions and culture of the school and in the process improve discipline. In the study class teachers play a key role as are with the students on daily basis and can easily communicate principals concerns as well as pass students grievances. This enhances discipline. The least frequently forms of communication is the use of student councils and memos.

Assembly provides a foundation of understanding for the community in which students understand the big picture of their learning and school life. By being in the assembly together it becomes a rallying point fostering solidarity and the school spirit. This teaches good behaviour, patience, affording new perspectives in life with the act of sitting and showing respect to the speakers. The reason could be that the assemblies are used mostly for academic pronouncements and advise for better school (Gitome, Katola & Nyabwari, 2013).

In general the study establishes that the teacher's perception on the principals' effective form of communication is the use of baraza system followed by use of class teachers and the most disliked method is the use of memos to enhance school discipline. The perceptions the teachers have on the level of clarity in the forms of communication used by the principal to the student. They form the basis of understanding the kind of instructions and information that is being passed on. This concurs with Kiprop (2012) who found out that principals adopt master/servant attitude while dealing with students and rarely listen to students concerns as had no worth suggestions. This creates animosity leading to frustrations and violence manifested in strikes. The study establishes that communication clarity is a key component to adherence of instructions given. The information has highest clarity when given in student baraza. The principal is able to explain himself to the satisfaction of the students and issues raised are promptly answered. The students are able seek clarifications on issues they want sorted out. This enhances discipline. This is contrary to a study by Kibet, Kindiki, Sang and Kitilit (2012) who found out that principals frequently involve students in the governance of their schools, communicate clearly to students but retained veto on major issues. School discipline holistic approach is paramount as it is dealing with human beings who live in a complex lifestyle and environment.

Conclusion

The study establishes that frequent, effective and clear communication critical in upholding school discipline. The study establishes that in a school set up student baraza is the most critical avenue of student communication. The class teachers, school assemblies, student council and memos play a key role in communication that enhances understanding and discipline in schools.

Recommendation

In schools the principals could espouse a simple paradigm shift and accept participatory management practice and fully involve students in all managerial procedures for compliance and acceptance. Kenya Education Management Institute to

enhance their training manuals to include participatory practices and inclusivity as a factor of discipline enhancement in schools. This will make principals and teachers appreciate the new concept as will be in their training manual. The principals, deputies and HoD will appreciate new thinking and approach and subsequently will improve on discipline in the schools.

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