



Research article

CHALLENGES FACING HEADTEACHERS IN MANAGING DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KEUMBU SUBCOUNTY, KISII COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The management of the student discipline ranks as one of the emerging issues within the Kenya public in educational parlance. A number of cases have been documented in which the management of discipline by the head teachers has brought them in a collision with the law; provision of the law regarding the practice, the type and extent of discipline raise substantial conjecture which inspire the current study. The study zeroed in on the views of head teachers, deputy head teachers, classroom teachers and board of management (chairpersons) from keumbu sub-county

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Simple random sampling was used to select 34 head teachers, 64 class teacher and 10 head of board management. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents who were selected to participate in the study

Analysis of data collected was done both quantitatively and qualitatively. The study found out that despite ministry of education policy on aspects of discipline, still corporal punishment was being practised, alternative methods of discipline were not yet effective and the education ministry needed to carry out an aggressive training for teachers on strategies of enforcing discipline. Stakeholders within the school systems needed to be involved in crafting a strategy of discipline that involves the community. .

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KEY WORDS: Discipline, corporal punishment, stakeholders, the legal framework, secondary school, *Loco parentis*.



INTRODUCTION

School discipline is among the major concerns voiced by the public about school and the school systems in countries worldwide (Slee 1995; Owen, Flasherty & Laybourne, 1997) as cited in Busienei (2012) these concerns come up when students riot, bully colleges and mete violence in classrooms and playgrounds across Kenya. There are concerns that behaviour problems are endemic in schools with poor management and where management is unable to guarantee the safety of students (Mc Cathy et al 1992) as cited in Busienei (2012) Githome et al (2012) avers that, owing to the broad and new challenges arising from socio-economic challenges and technological advancements, the task of managing discipline in secondary has become very complex. Legal notice no. 40(1968) section 19 of Kenyan's educational act indicates that schools are expected to be centers of formation of good behaviour and acceptable moral and social conducts among students. To ensure success in domestication of discipline, the head teachers are a critical factor that will ensure that discipline is anchored in their schools, in their leadership positions, the head teachers face a number of bottlenecks that are thus a concern of this study. The concept that the head teacher is acting in *loco parentis* has gradually evolved through legal precedent. This means that the teachers stand in relation to the students in the position of a caring parent and as an unofficial guardian. This concept brings with itself added responsibilities for the protection of the pupil, where the teacher conduct falls below the standards of care commonly accepted as being reasonable in a parent-child relationship. essentially this position makes the head teacher vulnerable to legal suit in view of discipline of students within his station especially when certain policy guidelines are by-passed. As a result of foretasted the legal relationships, head teachers are permitted to take reasonable steps as maybe required to maintain discipline among students. However in most cases related to discipline, the best protection is for teachers to maintain fidelity to the law.

Kindiki (2009) cited in kimani et al (2012) opines that corporal punishment was banned in Kenya through legal notice No. 56 of Kenya gazette supplement No. 25:199 of 30th march, 2001) since then the school discipline has been deteriorating to such extent that the schools may be soon unmanageable than the chagrine of head teachers who are the custodians of school discipline. In line with corporal punishment ban the government of Kenya implemented several measures aimed at curbing indiscipline among students in learning institutions. Among these has been the establishment of guidance and counselling units, in all schools, good classroom management practices, effective teaching method and the inclusion of learners in the making of the school rules among others. (MOEST,(2005),in spite of all these efforts, there has been several reported cases if teacher use of corporal punishment in schools thus implying failure of interventions to yield expected results in improving school discipline. The united nation (UN) committee on the rights of children (2007) review on the rights of the child in Kenya has expressed concerns of the corporal punishment at home and at school

Head teachers require appropriate training and preparation in their role as discipline givers within the school context; this will enable them to get skills, knowledge and attributes (Bush and Oduor, 2006, Walter and Dimmock: 2006)

Davies (2002)notes that the work of head teachers especially dealing with discipline of students from diverse socio-economic background who are at the peak of their adolescent age is very daunting, Harris (2003) cited in Ibrahim (2011),opines that school leaders are viewed as people who can solve challenges schools face. Principals in Kenya are not well prepared to deal with challenges and issues rising from Kenya's economic diversity (makori), (2004) cited in Rameya (2007) opines that knowledge and problem solving skills need to be learnt through preparations and development. The education ministry needs to give training seminars and manual to school managers that will be vital for effective benchmark for effective discipline in their schools.

Discipline should have a strong legal backup and goodwill from all the stakeholders to give the head teachers a strong legal backup for action, Businei (2012) states that any education changes requires planning from the ministry of education. Stoner (1995) cited in Wagithimu et al (2004) states that change in organizations is inevitable and for any change in organization to be effective, it has to be planned. The feeling or opinions of teachers and parents need to be sought, head teachers need to be adequately trained on the alternative disciplines strategies while providing legal cushions and prescription to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of discipline.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were to find out the following;

- I. Challenges facing head teachers in managing discipline in public secondary schools in Kenya
- II. Measures to improve the head teacher's role of discipline in their schools.

THEORITICAL FRAME WORK

The study was based on Getzel's and Guba's theory cited in Okumbe (2005) which conceptualizes administration as a social process. Getzels suggest that administration may be conceived structurally as a hierarchy of sub-ordinates, super-ordinate relationships within a social system. It's through this hierarchical setup that the social system achieves its goals. This is done by assigning positions, provision of facilities organization of procedures, and regulation of activities and evaluation of performance

Getzels and Guba (1977) cited in Okumbe (2005) illustrated the basic assumptions of social systems as;

- I. Social systems are comprised of interdependent elements which receive from and contribute to the whole. There is a feedback mechanism
- II. Social systems are comprised of people acting in specific roles
- III. Social systems are goal oriented. This is a multiplicity of goals in an educational system. However these goals must be conflict
- IV. Social system are structurally differentiated- each component carries specific functions
- V. Social structure are a sanction bearing, that is, there is use of carrot-and-stick or reward and punishment to enforce the norms

The characteristic of the open system as espoused by Getzel and Guba are relevant to the study as they illustrate the dependence of various factors in the head teacher's role of discipline of students in schools. Schools being open system import inputs (students) from their environment (community) and after converting them within the school system discharge them to the environment; as such for school discipline to be ensured a number of factors must interact. First there must be an apt training and development of head teachers in matters of discipline so as to clearly make them to be tandem with global and local expectation regarding their expected role of disciplining students. Secondly, there is need to have clear policy guidelines given and an effort made to ensure adherence to these guidelines by all stakeholders within the school system. The BOM, students and teachers need to have a clear understanding of the beacons against which discipline is given within the school under the oversight of the head teachers. The BOM, as managers of the institution must clearly ventilate on discipline matters and give a clear policy insight to the parents as an umpire between the parents, students and teachers in the school systems.

Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) cited in kimani et al (2013) decry the poor state of alternative discipline services in Kenyan schools. They assert that there is need for a robust legal frame work to augment discipline in secondary schools in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive research design. After getting consent from MOE(ministry of education), data was collected randomly selected 34 head teachers, 64 class head teachers and 10 chair persons of board of school management. Using a questionnaire, the study used content validity, with the research arriving at this content validity through the results and the comments of the pilot study which was conducted among teachers and chairpersons of BOM in two public secondary schools. Items that do not measure the variables were amended and others discarded completely. The schools used in the pilot study were excluded from the main study

To establish reliability of the questionnaire, the results of the pilot study were compiled and correlation computed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS). The split half technique was used to ascertain the coefficient of internal consistency of reliability; the reliability of the teacher's questionnaire was found to be 0.86. While for class teachers was 0.88. BOM chairperson were interviewed and data collected was analysed



both qualitatively and quantitatively. The data was presented in frequency tables, bar graphs and pie charts. Interpretation was done within the frame of reference of research objectives.

4. RESULTS

The following results were obtained from the study;

4.1 Challenges of managing discipline in public secondary schools.

The concern of the study was to establish the extent to which head teachers in public secondary schools are challenged in regard to the management of discipline in the schools. The data obtained overwhelmingly indicated a number of Hiccups in regards to the management of discipline; 50% of the head teachers reported poor policy guidelines as non-observation of the corporal punishment ban was a major challenges in their schools. Similarly 80% of the interviewed persons of BOM identified the poor policy guidelines with corporal punishment ban ignorance top on their challenge list. 75% of the class teachers indicated a challenge in regard to policy and corporal punishment ban in the various schools in regard to discipline. The almost similar response rate in regard to the discipline concern can be explained by the fact that most schools have internal disciplinary strategies which are guided by MOE though they tend to disregard the notice on corporal punishment ban because they believe that corporal punishment is a more effective way of discipline in comparison to other alternative disciplinary measures.

The respondents were asked to list the major challenges towards management of discipline in schools. The data obtained is summarized below.

Table 1. Challenges towards management of discipline in public schools.

| challenge | Frequency | Percentage% |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Poor guidelines | 72 | 66% |
| Corporal punishment | 90 | 83% |
| Legal framework | 20 | 18% |
| Ineffective alternatives | 81 | 75% |

Source: field data (2017)

The major challenge in the management of discipline in public secondary schools is on the continual use of corporal punishment contrary to the legal notice which abolished its use. This ranked at 83%. The ineffectiveness of other alternative punishment strategies like guidance and counselling among other ranks, in second at 75%, poor policy guidelines regarding the discipline is another major challenge towards management of discipline and this is ranked third at 66%, legal frame work which by precedent gives head teachers a responsibility to parent the studies while at the same time exposing them to legal discipline was seen as another challenge at 18% response rate. The findings indicate to a possibility that the non-observance of the corporal punishment is the greatest nightmare that head teachers face in their quest, this is hinged on the fact that most teachers prefer the traditional corporal punishment as the most effective method of giving discipline.

4.2 forms of anticipated corrective measures to management of discipline

| Measure corrective | frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Appropriate training and Devt of head teachers | 62 | 57% |
| Clarity of policy guidelines | 72 | 66% |
| Strengthening of alternative discipline | 80 | 74% |
| Fidelity to corporal punishment ban(total adherence | 95 | 87% |

Source: field data (2017)

The head teachers, teachers and BOM chairpersons were unanimous on the fact that there should be total fidelity to the ban on corporal punishment ban for it was the greatest challenge to discipline in their schools. This response was ranked at 87%. Similarly, 74% of the respondents noted that the strengthening of other alternative discipline measures will be a solution to the challenges of discipline. In this regard, it was noted that the MOE should give appropriate training and clear policy guidelines that will aptly anchor alternative forms of discipline other than corporal punishment. 57% of the head teachers, class teachers and BOM chairpersons noted that appropriate training and development of head teachers should be done regarding the aspect of discipline. These



should include in servicing and provision of short courses on discipline management plus production of manuals and modules touching on the issue of discipline management

4.3 Views of head teachers, class teachers and chairpersons of BOM on the management of discipline in schools

To ascertain the head teachers view on the management of discipline in public secondary schools. They were provided with predetermined response calibrated on a Likert scale. They were expected to indicate whether they 1) strongly agree 2) agree 3) undecided 4) strongly disagree

Table 3: Head teacher’s responses on the management of discipline in their schools

| | Statement | n | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1 | Corporal punishment is a challenge to discipline management in schools | 34 | 55% | 26.7% | 13.3% | 5.0% | |
| 2 | training and development on discipline vital in ensuring proper discipline management | 34 | 48% | 21.9% | 10.0% | 13.0% | 7.0% |
| 3 | The appropriate development of alternative strategies is vital for discipline management | 34 | 50% | 25% | 12.5% | 7.5% | 2% |
| 4 | There is need for clear policy guidelines regarding the managements of discipline in public secondary schools | 34 | 42% | 21.0% | 12.8% | 10.2% | 4.0% |
| 5 | Legal frame wok need to be cater for head teachers’ liability in dispensing discipline mandate | 34 | 40% | 21.0% | 13.0% | 16.0% | 4.0% |
| 6 | Schools need to come up with discipline strategies that address their peculiar problems | 34 | 35% | 17.0% | 20% | 20% | 80% |

Source: field data (2017)

The data presented in the table above indicates that the majority of the head teacher 81.7% agreed that the ignorance on the ban of corporal punishment was the greatest challenge to discipline management in the schools. Significantly, 74% of the head teachers felt that the proper development of alternative strategies of punishment was vital in enhancing school discipline compared to 12.5% who were undecided as to the vitality of the development alternative discipline measures. 70% of the head teachers were in agreement that training and development of head teachers was crucial on issues relating to discipline management in their schools compared to 20% who thought otherwise. 63% of the respondents were of the view that lack of clarity in regard to the policy guidelines was an impediment that blurs apt management of discipline in their schools. On the other hand 24.2% of the respondents were of the view that discipline management and policy guidelines were critical. 61% of the head teachers felt that there was need for the legal frame work to address the liability in regards to dispensing discipline. This because there is a gap which needs to be sealed for them to effectively act. However 20% of the respondents disagreed on this respectively, lastly the head teachers indicated that there was need for contextualised discipline strategies to adopt within their schools to ensure proper management of discipline. This was at 52%. the response given above clearly indicate pertinent focal areas that the MOE should address to make management of discipline effective in the public secondary schools in line with MOEST (2005) strategies of alternatives discipline.

4.4 Board of Management views on challenges to management of discipline in their schools

The chairperson of the BOM were asked to provide their opinion on the challenges to the management of corporal punishment in their schools. Six chairperson (60%) reported that corporal punishment ban ignorance was the greatest hiccups towards discipline management. Seven (7) chairperson 70% noted that there was need to strengthen the use of alternatives punishment measures so as to ensure fidelity to policy pronouncement. Five chair persons 50% were of the opinion that proper training was needed for the teachers which should include manuals and modules provision to properly in-service them on issues of management of discipline. These findings seem to suggest regard in regard to training and compliance to policy as a major challenge to discipline management. This is a tandem with Ibrahim (2013) assertion that head teachers needs training on aspects of discipline and many other management aspects which are out of their curriculum implementation mandate.



4.5 Measures required to improve the head teachers' role in managing discipline in their schools

The head teachers, teachers and heads of BOMs were asked on measures to be taken by the ministry to ensure proper discipline management and they were unanimous aspect of: improving alternative discipline measure apt training of school managers on issue of discipline and carrying out a comprehensive education on why corporal punishment should not be an alternative discipline in schools.

Conclusion

The study concluded that indeed the school head teachers faced a challenge in discipline management due to poor policy guideline frame work, continued use of corporal punishment and inappropriate training on aspects of discipline management on the part of the head teachers and improvement of alternative strategies to maintain discipline, be anchored to ensure the smooth implementation of school objectives.

Recommendations

The study recommended that the MOE should train the head teachers and teachers on alternative strategies to deal with discipline problems. Head teachers should properly be in-serviced and trained on the various aspects of discipline management. Further there should be provision of manuals and modules to assist teachers in making clear some policy guidelines that guide the management of discipline. Lastly there is need for routine inspections of the schools by quality assurance and standard officers to ensure that the ban on corporal punishment is enforced.

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