

**INFLUENCE OF STUDENTS' COUNCIL INVOLVEMENT IN CURRICULUM
IMPLEMENTATION ON DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN TAITA SUB-COUNTY, TAITA-TAVETA COUNTY, KENYA**

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Abstract

In previous years, cases of students unrest have gone very high and performance deteriorated in Kenyan secondary schools. The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which students' council involvement in curriculum implementation influences discipline management in public secondary schools in Taita Sub-County. This study adopted an embedded mixed research design. The study was conducted in Taita sub-county Taita Taveta County which has a total of twenty-one public secondary schools. The target population for the study was 5702 students, 21 principals and 21 Deputy Principals in 21 public secondary schools in Taita Sub-County who made a population of 5744. 574(10%) of the population was sampled for the study. The researcher carried out a pilot study to test the validity of the research instruments. To avoid bias, the schools were categorized into National schools, extra county schools, county schools and sub-county public secondary schools before using stratified sampling to collect the sample respondents from principals, deputy principals and students from the population. The researcher administered questionnaires to students, Deputy Principals and the Principals of the sampled schools. Quantitative data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistical means while content analysis was used for qualitative data. The study found that there is a moderate involvement of students' council and the rest of the students in appraising teachers. The students' council rarely takes part in setting academic targets in the schools or setting teaching and exam timetables. The study revealed that involving students' council in curriculum management has a positive impact in the management of discipline among students at school. The study recommends that the school management should part in the management of curricular activities such as allocating time and resources.

Keywords; *Students' Council Involvement, Curriculum Implementation, Discipline Management*

INTRODUCTION

Discipline in schools is crucial for the safety of both students and teachers, ensuring an uninterrupted learning environment (Bechuke & Debeila, 2012). However, involving students in school discipline management has been a challenging topic for school administrators Gatt (2005,

cited in Maore, 2014) argues that schools should establish formal mechanisms for students to share their views and participate in decisions directly affecting them. Shatilova (2014) notes that engaging students in overseeing school changes poses challenges because many view student participation as a waste of time and a potential hindrance to school development projects. Despite societal changes, some secondary school administrators cling to traditional, autocratic administration styles that limit student involvement in decision-making (Jeruto, Kiprop, & Bomett, 2011). Researchers and advocates find that students are often neglected or actively denied a role in school improvement (Fletcher, 2005). Educators, however, argue that involving students fosters responsible citizenship, streamlines school management, and improves school performance and discipline.

Decentralization of decision-making in education, known as school-based management (SBM), has increased the participation of parents, students, and the school community in school management (Caldwell, 2004). Involving students in school management is one aspect of SBM, ensuring that students play a role in determining how schools operate. SBM promotes democracy, accountability, and transparency, contributing to discipline maintenance (Basic Education Act, 2013). Student participation in school management is a practice that has been in place in the USA since the No Child Left Behind Policy (NCLB) introduction in 2001 (Hall & Kennedy, 2006). Brazil and the USA have school councils involving students, parents, and teachers in decision-making, reducing resistance to change and improving discipline (Ghanen, 2012).

In Kenya, the concept of involving students in school management emerged in 2008, aiming to reduce unrest, address student grievances, and improve school management. The Basic Education Act 2013 acknowledges students' participation by including a student, preferably from the student council, as a member of the Board of Management (BoM) (Basic Education Act, 2013). Incorporating individuals in decision-making within an organization, such as a school, leads to greater satisfaction, better decision-making, and higher commitment among subordinates (Cheng & Cheung, 2008). Democratic leadership, which allows all members to make decisions, increases morale, adherence to rules, and productivity (Surbapriya & Ishita, 2012).

Studies have shown that students desire involvement in school decision-making, which can lead to more compliance with rules and regulations (Kinyua, 2015). Magadla (2007), Njozela (1998), and Huddleston (2007) advocate for students' participation in decision-making, emphasizing the importance of their inputs in school life. Research indicates that most schools in Kenya do not involve students in decision-making beyond matters directly affecting them (Jeruto & Kiprop, 2011). However, the majority of students express a desire to be involved in school decision-making, suggesting that such involvement can promote discipline and adherence to school rules (Mulwa, Kimosop, & Kisivu, 2015). Reports from the Taita sub-county education department (2020) showed that in public secondary schools indiscipline cases have been on the rise. These reports highlight trends, types of offenses, and the number of disciplinary incidents in the area.

Statement of the Problem

Misbehavior among students in public secondary schools in Taita sub-county is common and many schools are finding it very hard maintaining it within the recommended limits. Riak (2007) alleged that school discipline has continued to deteriorate despite all the efforts made by the authorities to curb it and this has brought in frequent complaints from the local community. He said that despite the public outcry, a lasting solution to this problem has not yet been found. The

government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education has done a lot to bring about change in discipline in secondary schools and this includes but not limited to setting commissions and formulating the Basic Education Act (2013) which advocates voting in student council and not imposing it to the students. Despite all this effort, it has been noted that school discipline has become a tall order in secondary schools in Taita sub- County. Morals degradation has eaten so deep into the character and values of school going students. Students have become disrespectful to the teachers, school administration, the parents and even the community at large. The epitome of the problem is characterized by boycotting of lessons, drug abuse, vandalism, student school dropout, sexual relationships among learners, disobedience to teachers, stealing and rioting. For instance, in 2013, St. Mary's secondary school closed down indefinitely and 11 students suspended after 300 students became unruly after refusing to sit for external examination (Taita sub-county education office). At times the community and the educational administrators in public secondary schools have continued expressing their distress over the indiscipline cases in many secondary schools and the management procedures undertaken in public secondary schools in Taita sub-county.

Abubakar (2000) defined discipline as the willingness to do what one ought to do without external control. This implies that to manage school discipline there should be a mechanism to ensure that students are brought on board in school activities. Fletcher (2003) noted that despite being many ways that students can be involved in the management of the school, students were only allowed to make limited contributions. In many circumstances in Kenya, students are considered to be minors and that their judgments have not matured hence almost all decisions are made by the Board of Management (BoM), the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) and the teachers. A school as an organization should have all types of communication even to accommodate the feelings and the voice of the students in the management body; this will lead to better management practices that will ensure that discipline at school is upheld at all times. This study therefore sought to investigate the fundamental questions of whether involvement of the students' council in school management has an influence on students' discipline.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Improving school performance requires the school heads and the policy makers to look closely into some of the basic issues that are likely to add up to students' achievements. The term curriculum is very dynamic, from time to time and from one society to the other. Shao-Wen Su (2012), came up with different perspectives from which the term curriculum can be defined; Curriculum can mean the means of achieving an education goal, a process of selecting a course of study or a blueprint to systematically implement education act, a course outline written on a piece of paper or even plans of experience a student is subjected to during the study period. Chen (2007 cited in Shao-wen Su, 2012) defined curriculum as an integrative process developed among learners, teachers, materials and the environment and functions as the mirror that reflects the cultural and political values of an organization. In Kenya, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) Act no 4 of 2013 defines curriculum as the planned learning programmes that facilitate formal, non-formal and informal learning in a school set-up.

Parents, teachers, the general community, students make the biggest part of the educational stakeholders. Their views on the kind of curriculum to be subjected to and how the curriculum is managed and delivered in class have an impact on the student's learning outcomes. There has been a tendency of teachers not involving students in curriculum management and that students

should just be secondary consumers of what has been prescribed from the adults and the teachers. Shatilova (2014) conducted a study to establish how students can be heard in the Finnish context. The study involved students from the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary in Jyväskylä. The study established that students in this school could be able to participate in decision making through suggestion boxes, Students boxes, and even thorough children parliament. It was proved that in this school students were given chances to participate in classroom decision making. According to the research, students' participation in management of the curriculum has increased their autonomy which in turn improves the students' comfort, engagement in learning, ownership of the class and hence better school discipline.

Parry (2014) conducted another study to find out the initiatives in schools to implement the student voice, more so their success, and the challenges teachers and school managers face when trying to implement it. Despite the research finding out that students' voice assists in empowering, motivating and engaging the students, it was found out that there is a big challenge in school when trying to implement it. This is because of the difficult situation existing when sharing the control between the students and the teachers. It was recommended that educators should come up with time for listening to students' views and also find a way of reaching students who fear giving their views in order to incorporate them in decision making since it's though satisfying the needs of students that it can be said that the management of a school is becoming better. The school mangers were also advised to come up with school values that promote students to give their views, and in addition to that they were also encouraged to involve themselves in professional development courses that encourage the students' voice.

Jeruto and Jematia (2011) conducted a study to find out if students have been involved in decision making and to what extent in secondary schools in Kenya came up with various findings on the extent students have been played part level of in curriculum management. The study focused on the choice of textbooks used, the teachers' appraisal, teaching methods and setting of class targets. Findings about student participation on choice of textbooks confirmed that students are never involved to predetermine the type of textbooks to be used in class. They gave a reason that books used in Kenyan classes are always strictly prescribed by the Ministry of Education. Involving students in making decisions in a school environment, more so in matters of academics is taught to be a satisfying factor to the students and a sign of motivation which can lead to better performance and can ease pressure which at times leads to indiscipline among students.

Gerhard and Skedsmo (2016 as cited in Papay, 2016) define teacher appraisal to be an external tool employed to assess teacher performance and that educational authority can use it to hold teachers accountable and also to reward high performers. Despite students being the first beneficiaries of education at school, the research by Jeruto and Jematia (2011) established that students were not involved in teachers' appraisal to assess their performance. Teacher appraisal was only done by the Head teachers and the educational officers. Since the introduction of the teachers' appraisal here in Kenya in 2014, inclusion of students in appraising teachers has not been considered to be of any significance. Better management of teaching and learning in a school can only be done through students who in this case are the first recipients of education. The current proposed study sought to establish if students in public secondary schools in Taita sub-county are involved in teacher appraisal and whether they feel their involvement in

appraising teachers would better the teaching and learning process and would help alleviate indiscipline cases as a result of non-inclusive teaching practices among secondary schools.

A study by Mulwa, Kimosop and Kasivu (2015) that aimed at determining the state of participation of students in decision making established that in most schools in the eastern region of Kenya, teachers were the key decision makers when it comes to matters concerning curriculum and instructional programme. It was perceived that since the principle is a teacher and had a direct link to the higher authority in the education system, he or she was the one to have a say in matters to do with making curriculum and instruction programmes. Taking and implementing decisions in curriculum matters is a sensitive process that determines teaching and learning effectiveness of any school. It is only through bringing on board the school family as whole and making decisions and implementing them together that class discipline and effectiveness can be upheld.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the human relation theory. The human relation theory was developed by George Elton Mayo (1880 – 1949) in the 1930's. According to him, workplaces should be made social; the managers should make the environment in an organization to be as social as possible. According to Thamarasseri (2016), "The human relation approach steers managerial focus towards and emphasis on employee enthusiasm, morale and contentment rather the productivity alone". In 1924, Elton conducted an experiment which came up with a discovery that it is not the physical conditions of the organization, or of the workplace that leads to better production, but it is the attention that the workers received from the group leader. In the experiment, a group of people who were set aside to act as a control experiment produced more because they had a feeling that their views and voice were being heard. The workers were motivated to work because the ideas which they felt could help produce more and effectively were being factored into the production plant. According to Elton Mayo's perspective, school discipline cannot be achieved by rewarding the teaching, the non-teaching staff and other school stakeholders, students inclusive. As put forward in the Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, human beings are social beings and have a social need. The human relation theory helps the school management team which includes the Board of Management, Principal, Deputy Principal, and the teachers to appreciate the fact that students can play a great role in the management of school discipline and the running of the school in general.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an embedded mixed methods design. This design falls under mixed methodology and it aimed at collecting both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously. According to Jonson et al. (2007) mixed methodology is a design of data collection where the researcher uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches for the purpose of deep understanding and corroboration. Embedded mixed methods design was therefore appropriate for this study as it sought to overcome a weakness in using one method with the strength of the other. The study was carried out in Taita sub-county in Taita-Taveta County. The research used public secondary schools in Taita sub-county in Taita-Taveta County, Kenya. The sample schools were selected from different school categories available in Taita sub-county. From each sampled schools, the Principal, the Deputy Principal were selected for an interview. Students from each class from form one to form four were also selected to add up to the list respondents. To avoid biasness, the researcher applied stratified sampling.

Since the population of the respondents in the study was less than 10,000, the researcher used 10% of the population as the sample size to represent the population. There were 134 respondents from extra county schools, 190 respondents from county schools and 250 respondents from sub-county schools. Since there are only two extra county schools, both of them were used for data collection while representatives for the county, and sub-county were selected. Both the principal and the deputy principal from the selected schools also represented the population.

The researcher administered questionnaires to students, Principals and Deputy Principals of sample schools from which the data was collected. Descriptive statistics was used in the analysis of the quantitative data. This was fit for the study since it described and summarized the features of the data to enable better understanding. Qualitative data was coded and common responses were found through identifying patterns and connections. Content analysis was applied to make inferences.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study sampled a total of 574 respondents including students, Principals and Deputy Principals out of these, 510 respondents were able to fill in and complete the questionnaires. This resulted to a response rate of 88.6%.

The findings established that the students' council and the rest of the students are moderately involved in appraising teachers. The schools have academic targets but the students' council is rarely allowed to take part in setting academic targets in the schools. The findings showed that choosing subjects by the students according to their career choice was independent. The findings also showed that all the schools had a teaching and exam time table but the students' council is not involved in timetabling.

Table 1: Students' Views Towards Students' Council Contribution Towards Management of Curriculum

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Students' council should play part in teacher appraising	476	1	5	4.21	0.36
Students' council should have a say in setting of academic targets	476	1	5	4.04	0.34
Students' council should be involved in subject selection and career choice	476	1	5	4.19	0.35
Students' council should take part in designing the school teaching and exam timetables.	476	1	5	3.85	0.34
Involving students' council in curriculum management has a positive impact in management of discipline among students at school.	476	1	5	4.13	0.36

From the findings on the statements in Table 1, the students agreed that the students' council should play a part in teacher appraising and that the students' council should be involved in subject selection and career choice as shown by a mean of 4.21 and 4.19 respectively. In addition, the students agreed that involving the students' council in curriculum management has a positive impact in the management of discipline among students at school as demonstrated by a mean of 4.13. In the same vein, in a study by Shatilova (2014), it was found that in this school, students could engage in decision-making through suggestion boxes, student boxes, and even a

children's parliament. Additionally, the study showed that students were given opportunities to participate in classroom decision-making. Through such participation, students had increased autonomy, which in turn improved their comfort, engagement in learning, sense of ownership in the classroom, and ultimately, better school discipline.

More so, the students also agreed that the students' council should have a say in the setting of academic targets and that the students' council should take part in designing the school teaching and exam timetables as indicated by a mean of 4.04 and 3.85 respectively. Similarly, according to Fletcher (2005), for students to be meaningfully involved in educational matters, they need to have an understanding of why, when, how well, and what they are learning in class. He further emphasized the importance of involving students in curriculum design, school day planning, and other activities that enhance the quality and appeal of education.

Table 2: Principals' and Deputy Principals' Views Towards Students' Council Contribution Towards Management of Curriculum

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Students' council should play part in teacher appraisal	34	1	5	3.79	0.24
Students' council should have a say in setting of academic targets	34	1	5	4.00	0.28
Students' council should be involved in subject selection and career choice	34	2	5	4.24	0.30
Students' council should take part in designing the school teaching and exam timetables.	34	3	5	3.44	0.17
Involving students' council in curriculum management can have a positive impact on management of discipline among students at school.	34	1	5	3.82	0.25

From the findings, the principals and deputy principals agreed that the students' council should be involved in subject selection and career choice and should have a say in the setting of academic targets as shown by a mean of 4.24 and 4.00 respectively. They agreed that involving students' council in curriculum management can have a positive impact on the management of discipline among students at school as illustrated by a mean of 3.82 and that students' council should play part in teacher appraisal as shown by a mean of 3.79. The respondents were undecided on whether the students' council should take part in designing the school teaching and exam timetables as illustrated by a mean of 3.44. Similar findings were established by Fletcher (2005) who contends that for students to participate meaningfully in educational issues, they must understand the why, how well, when, and what they are studying in class. He made a point of saying that students ought to be involved in defining the curriculum, organizing the school day, co-designing the school, and other suggestions that would improve and make learning more enjoyable.

Conclusion

The study concludes that there is a moderate involvement of students' council and the rest of the students in appraising teachers. The students' council rarely takes part in setting academic targets in the schools or setting teaching and exam timetables. However, choosing subjects by the students according to their career choice was independent. The study revealed that involving

students' council in curriculum management has a positive impact in the management of discipline among students at school.

Recommendations

The study established a non-involvement of the students' council in the setting of academic targets and thus recommends that the school management should ensure that the students' council takes part in designing the school teaching and exam timetables as well as in the setting of academic targets.

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