
INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL CULTURE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TIATY EAST AND TIATY WEST SUB-COUNTIES, BARINGO COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

An ideal collaborative school culture in the two sub-counties should entail teachers' collaboration, effective open communication, and mentorship. The situation in Tiaty East and Tiaty West sub-counties was marked by poverty and frequent banditry. This made the school environment in these areas hostile, and the safety of both learners and teachers was not assured. A hostile school culture of collaboration can perpetuate the problem of poor performance since there are no harmonious relations among teachers, and teachers work in isolation. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of school principals' leadership practices on collaborative school culture in public secondary schools in Tiaty East and Tiaty West sub-counties. The study sought to determine the influence of principals' mentorship and communication practices on collaborative school culture. The research approach adopted was qualitative research, and a cross-cultural study design was used, with two cases and multiple units of analysis within each case. The target population was 770 individuals, including principals (10), teachers (156), support staff (276), and student leaders (328). A sample of 161 respondents, consisting of 10 principals, 31 teachers, 56 support staff, and 64 student leaders, was selected using purposeful sampling. The primary data collection instruments included interview schedules and focus group discussion guides. Data analysis was conducted using Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), specifically ATLAS.ti 9. The study found that principals invited mentors for staff development to improve collaboration, ultimately positively impacting student outcomes and promoting a collaborative secondary school culture. Moreover, regarding principals' communication practices, school meetings and social media, especially WhatsApp groups, were used to engage the school community in effective communication. The study recommends that principals should involve teachers and other stakeholders in mentorship processes within the schools.

Keywords: *Principals' Leadership, Mentorship, Communication, Collaborative School Culture*

INTRODUCTION

Schools operate within certain belief systems and values, which Fullan (2007) refers to as school culture. Deal and Peterson (2016) observe that school culture enhances improvement through

collaborative decision-making, staff professional development, and student learning. Learners are more likely to perform better in positive collaborative environments (Deal and Peterson, 2016). School managers should strive to improve the learning process, collaboration, shared responsibility, mentoring, conflict resolution, parental engagement, fostering collegial relationships, setting SMART goals and achieving results, and providing timely and relevant information (Deal and Peterson, 2016). Recent studies underscore the significance of collaboration in improving educational provision in schools (Fullan & Edwards, 2022; Harris & Jones, 2020; Pinchot & Fullan, 2021). For example, Harris and Jones (2020) exposed weaknesses in the learning culture of schools and provided opportunities for new developments. Fullan and Edwards (2022) and Pinchot and Fullan (2021) agree that the experiences of Covid-19 have fostered deeper forms of collaboration that may persist beyond the pandemic. Hargreaves (2019) observes that ad hoc collaborative cultures were established in the 1990s but were not sustained, making collaboration an area of particular interest.

Burnham et al. (2007, 2018) suggest that school culture is the personality of the school and reflects the level of interactions among the school community, management, leadership, principles, and rules that form the foundation of the school's constitution. A school's culture comprises norms, rules, regulations, ideas, and other elements accepted by the public and used within the school (Ruhani Mat Min, 2009). Effective leaders can influence organizations, and even better leaders can positively impact people. Changing individuals can create a positive culture, contributing to the development and growth of the school organization (Hoer, 2018). According to O'Brien, Draper, and Murphy (2008), there are various forms of leadership, including authoritarian, charismatic, transformational, transactional, ethical, situational, and visionary leadership. Principals, as school leaders, need to understand the professional and personal needs of their teachers, subordinates, informal groups, and other stakeholders to promote a positive school culture (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). School leadership requires a collective effort by all stakeholders, and Schein (2017) emphasizes the need to study leadership practices alongside school culture. Deal and Peterson (2016) assert that the association between school culture and leadership can positively or negatively influence the former.

In commercial organizations, substantial expenditures are allocated to leadership development, and Arcdichvili et al. (2016) identify several traits that leaders should develop, including personality traits, knowledge, skills, and behaviors. Alagaraja and Kerrick (2016) stress the importance of synthesizing research studies to support organizations in selecting and developing successful leaders. Jabbar and Tohid (2012) attempt to distinguish management from leadership, asserting that administration has a relationship with culture, while management does not. In the African context, Staiger (2008) and Adebajo (2012) recognize that it's not only classroom pedagogy that affects pupils' education in Ghana and Nigeria but also the entire school culture. Nsubuga (2009) asserts that collaborative leadership practices are the best in Uganda. Durkan (2006) argues that in strong school cultures, individual goals are more likely to be transformed into shared goals through participatory leadership practices because of the established collective consciousness. Therefore, the most crucial role of the school leader is to align the shared vision with the school culture, making it possible to translate the vision into action.

Lee and Louis (2019) suggest that school managers should celebrate success in meetings and ceremonies, share success stories and stories of cooperation, and use clear and shared language to strengthen the commitment of staff and students toward the development of a robust collaborative school culture. Nguyen (2016) concluded that student achievement can be

enhanced within the context of school culture and leadership. In Kenya, Ibrahim and Orodho (2014) observed a national debate on the leadership practices that principals, teachers, and school management should adopt to effectively implement school curricula and achieve better outcomes. The functions of School Boards of Management are outlined in the Basic Education Act (2013). Student performance can be accelerated when these functions are well executed, and school operations are effectively supervised. As a result, principals' role is to create an enabling school climate that fosters the development of a collaborative school culture. Okoth (2016) examined the influence of principals' leadership styles on teachers' motivation in public secondary schools in Sabatia Sub County. The study found that democratic leadership style should be enhanced in schools to motivate teachers by involving them in decision-making processes. However, this study was conducted in a different location, not similar to the current study's context.

Statement of the Problem

An ideal collaborative school culture in the two sub-counties should encompass the involvement of teachers in decision-making practices, high teacher motivation, the establishment of mentoring programs for teachers, and effective communication. Tiaty East and Tiaty West sub-counties face challenges related to poverty and banditry, which have rendered the school environment in these areas insecure, jeopardizing the safety of both students and teachers. Furthermore, the school feeding program in the region is on the brink of collapsing, despite previously attracting many children, given the families' struggles due to prolonged drought. Schools that have previously performed well have become inadequate, leading to accusations of cheating by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC), which resulted in the cancellation of examination results for more than 200 students from 2017 to 2021.

In response to these challenges, the government has intervened by employing more teachers in these hard-to-staff areas, reinstating the school feeding program, and enhancing security operations. Teachers in the area have resorted to innovative methods, such as teaching two different classes in the same classroom, in an effort to impart knowledge to the few students who manage to attend school. However, these measures have not fully resolved the situation in Tiaty East and Tiaty West sub-counties. A hostile culture of collaboration can perpetuate the problem of poor performance because there are no harmonious relations among teachers, and teachers tend to work in isolation.

Therefore, encouraging teachers' involvement in decision-making processes, fostering high teacher motivation, providing teacher mentorship, and enhancing effective communication practices by principals can serve as intervention measures to counteract a negative school culture of collaboration. Negative cultures, as observed in the two sub-counties by the researcher, may lead to low teacher motivation and poor communication. Establishing a conducive school environment can empower teachers and administrators to be positive, organized, outgoing, and confident in addressing the needs of their students. If the current situation persists, there will likely be fewer enrollments and student retentions, high school dropouts, indiscipline, teenage pregnancies, and early marriages within schools. The underlying cause of this negative school culture is the gap that this study aims to bridge. Without the creation of a positive culture of collaboration, the substantial government investment in education risks going to waste, underscoring the importance of this study.

Objectives of the Study

- i. Determine how mentorship practices affects collaborative secondary school culture in Tiaty East and Tiaty West Sub-Counties.

- ii. Establish how communication practices influence collaborative secondary school culture in Tiaty East and Tiaty West Sub-Counties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Review

Principals' Mentorship and Collaborative School Culture

Mentoring plays a critical role in sharing information within organizational learning, promoting collaboration and cooperation among employees (Sabaityte, Davidaviciene & Karpoviciute, 2020). Different mentoring roles and skills are essential in shaping change and development (Naillioğlu Kaymak, 2017; Sowell, 2017; Turpeinen, 2018). Principals view mentoring as significantly improving their professional values as school leaders and fostering an information-sharing culture that enhances self-confidence and practical knowledge of school leadership (Khan et al., 2016). The process of mentoring and the creation of a learning culture in schools are expected from school principals (Ozdeimer & Sahin, 2020). Mentoring also contributes to creating a long-term sustainable learning culture (Morgan & Rochford, 2017). However, there is a limited number of studies examining the mentoring practices offered by school principals in developing a collaborative learning culture. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the mentoring roles and behaviors of school administrators in the context of developing a collaborative learning culture in schools. School-based education mentoring is crucial for focusing on teacher development (Bakioğlu, Hacıfazlıoğlu, & Özcan, 2013).

Mentoring-based learning is part of the information shared in organizational learning that promotes collaboration and cooperation among employees (Sabaityte, Davidaviciene, & Karpoviciute, 2020). It transforms teaching and learning methods and partner relationships (Margolin, 2011). Identifying learning goals, supporting progression, and increasing control over learning are essential components of mentoring (Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education [CUREE], 2010). Mentoring impacts the organization's culture by creating a new learning environment and opportunities, fostering innovative ideas and problem-solving, and providing support for practical mentoring and coaching approaches (Margolin, 2011).

Mentoring is seen as an opportunity for knowledge transfer and creating a learning culture among colleagues. It is different from other professional development interventions and plays a key role in enhancing an organization's learning culture (Morgan & Rochford, 2017). Effective communication by mentors emerges as a primary feature of mentoring and learning (Lim, 2005). In the process of communicating, teachers who become school principals after mentoring experiences can learn how to build trust from mentors who serve as essential models dedicated to education (Lim, 2012). Mentors also personally benefit from the mentoring process. One of the key benefits for mentors is increased personal satisfaction (Ragins & Verbos, 2007). They find satisfaction in helping others improve their job performance and in sharing personal experiences beneficial to colleagues (Schechter & Firuz, 2015). Mentoring fosters increased enthusiasm, motivation, and energy to teach when mentors see prospective teachers or students achieving something (Botha, 2012).

Principals' Communication Practices and Collaborative School Culture

Communication is crucial for addressing issues that affect both students and teachers. Effective communication can help resolve problems before they escalate to the point of picketing, strikes, or work slowdowns. School principals interact with students, staff, and parents on a regular basis, serving as a unifying factor. A study by McEwen (2003) revealed that successful principals communicate 100% of the time through listening, speaking, writing, and reading.

A study in Nyando District by Achieng (2005) aimed to understand head teachers' communication strategies and their impact on academic performance in public secondary schools. The research results indicated that effective communication from head teachers created a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning, positively influencing academic performance. Collaborative leadership is developed through effective leadership in educational institutions, fostering connections between institutional systems and the people they work with. Successful principals seek input from both teachers and students to set clear goals and collectively take responsibility for achieving success. The way a principal communicates influences how they are perceived and their ability to drive necessary changes. Effective communication is essential for creating a supportive environment in which staff members feel comfortable approaching their leaders. Communication and culture are closely linked, with communication serving as the medium through which a school's culture becomes visible. The communication process helps identify the invisible patterns within schools, and these patterns are closely tied to the prevailing culture. Open and effective communication can create a culture of trust, teamwork, and support among staff members.

In Hong Kong public secondary schools, Walker et al. (2014) stress the importance of communication, professional development, resource management, appraisal, recognition, and engagement in decision-making for achieving school goals, accountability, and positive organizational culture change. Effective communication accounts for significant differences in students' academic outcomes. Communication also significantly impacts teachers' job satisfaction, with fairness in work assignments, teacher evaluation, and promotion being critical areas where communication strategies make a difference. Job satisfaction, morale, and well-being improve when staff feels that principals are empathetic and caring. The study by Kariuki (2016) aimed to explore the relationship between principals' communication skills and academic performance in secondary schools. The findings revealed a positive influence of communication skills on students' academic performance.

Theoretical Framework

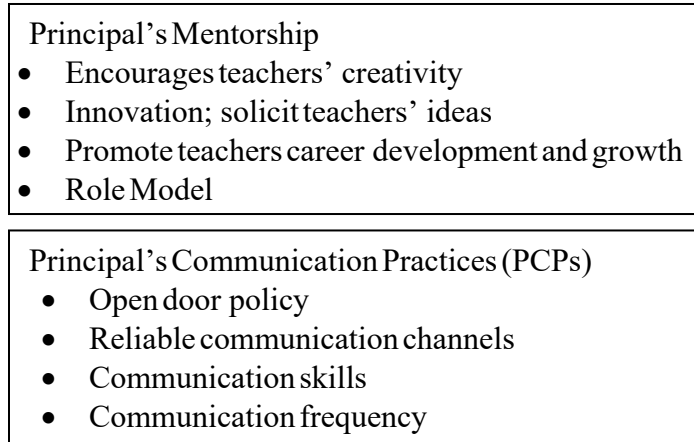
Transformational Leadership Theory, Bass (1985, 2017)

Bass's perspective on leadership focuses on a leader's ability to change the attitudes of workers to enhance their commitment to the organization. This school of thought places a strong emphasis on the interpersonal relationships between leaders and their subordinates and how these relationships impact the behavior and attitudes of both parties. According to Bass (1985, 2017), effective leaders exhibit qualities such as empathy, reduced supervision, and encouragement of participation among their team members. In return, workers perceive their leaders as inspirational figures, and this perception fosters loyalty and enthusiasm among the workforce. Leaders leverage their personal qualities, including charisma, skills, knowledge, and principles, to transform and motivate those around them, turning them into willing followers. This theory is relevant to your study as it seeks to strike a balance between emphasizing the achievement of school goals and individual needs. The transformational leadership style of the principal plays a pivotal role in influencing how teachers and stakeholders perceive the school's climate and culture. When transformational leadership is effectively employed, it can create an environment in which individuals feel safe, valued, and wanted. This, in turn, leads to a stronger commitment to achieving the organization's goals. In the context of the study, transformational leadership is a valuable approach for school principals, as it can help shape a positive school culture and climate that fosters commitment among teachers and stakeholders to the shared goals and vision of the school.

Conceptual Framework

Indeed, a conceptual framework is a vital component in research, as it involves integrating various related concepts to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being studied (Imenda, 2014).

Independent Variables



Dependent Variable

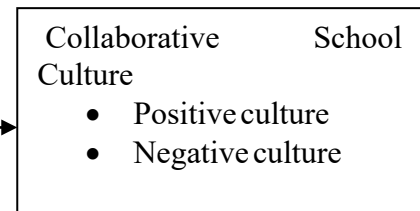


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research methodology was adopted, employing a cross-cultural research design with four cases and multiple units of analysis within each case. The study locale was Tiaty East and Tiaty West Sub-counties. The population of this study consisted of 770 individuals, comprising ten school principals, 156 teachers, 276 subordinate staff, and 328 student leaders. A sample is a subset of a larger population that has been selected with the intention of drawing conclusions about the larger population. According to Yin (2017), a sample size of 30% or above is sufficiently representative when properly collected and can be used to generalize findings. Consequently, 20% of the students in each school were selected. As shown in Table 3.2, a total of 64 students were chosen to represent the student population, while 20% of teachers and support staff were selected, bringing the total to 31 and 56, respectively. Students were selected using the purposeful sampling technique. The survey involved all 10 principals, using the census sample approach. The interview schedules were administered to principals, teachers, and support staff. Focus group discussions were used to collect data from the students. The researcher identified patterns, standard responses, and themes that addressed the research questions. The data was analyzed using thematic content analysis for responses from interview schedules and narrative analysis for focus group discussions, using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDA); ATLAS.ti 9 or ATLAS.ti scientific software development GmbH. Thematic content analysis allowed common patterns to emerge for each school studied.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Return Rate

While 97 interviews were intended, only 71 interviewees were present which yielded a response rate of 73.3%. This was over the 50% threshold set by Marshall and Rossman (2011) for statistical significance. The 71 interviewees comprised of 8 secondary school principals, 24 teachers and 39 members of the support staff. The focused group guides for student leaders had a 96.9 % response rate.

Principal's Mentorship Practices and Collaborative School Culture

The research aimed to determine how mentorship practices affects collaborative secondary school culture in Tiaty East and Tiaty West Sub-Counties. The researcher required the interviewee to indicate the mentorship practices that have had a major impact in promoting a collaborative secondary school culture. A common theme in this question was inviting mentors. Principal 19 mentioned,

“Mentorship programme like allowing teachers to go for the trainings when the chances are there. Teachers of languages can go for the NES trainings. We also have the roles between the school and the communities so they come together and try as much as possible to assist each other.”

Principal 1 noted that,

“... Mentoring is another way to encourage new principals, teachers as well as support staff as it helps accustom their profession. For incoming principals, it provides a greater knowledge of what is necessary to succeed in their position and how it is different in the role you are leaving. It offers opportunities to become familiar with their new school cultures and information that the new administrator did not previously have.”

As per teacher 21,

“The mentorship my principle uses is organizing seminars to equip us with some skills and more information.”

Support staff 34,

“When it comes to mentorship, we have these church organizations, which come to school, identify needy students, and bring them together.”

According to the support staff 33,

“Mentoring supports professional development in that it develops their skills; also it helps determine what would be of importance to their school and the success of their schools. It significantly aids them in setting priorities for professional growth that will have a favorable impact to their school culture. Through mentoring the mentor can support the mentees critical thinking.”

These results implied that principals who invite mentors to promote a collaborative secondary school culture play a vital role in fostering a supportive and growth-oriented environment. By carefully structuring and supporting mentorship programs, schools teacher and support staff development, improve collaboration, and ultimately positively impact outcomes.

In addition, some of the principals added the hurdles they faced in mentoring teachers. Principal 4 stated,

“...The biggest challenge for me is time. The mentors’ contracts call for a period of time lasting up to a year. We occasionally accomplish nothing because we are short on time.”

Another Principal 7 said,

“... You have obligations in addition to the time you devote to mentoring. It could be difficult to fill such time during the day. I have a ton of things to do in the school. Sometimes principalship is overwhelming and you may lack time to allocate to your mentor/mentee.”

The student leaders from the focus groups were asked to describe the kind of feedback that the principal gave. They indicated that they got assessment feedbacks through oral communication at the assemblies. Moreover, the students were required to indicate the how the principal supports them when they do not do well. They indicated that the principal supports teachers fully because students can receive the same energy from their teachers hence improving their performance.

A senior teacher explained this.

“... These people have been a huge help to our new principal. The procedure always starts with a preliminary scheduled school visit. By doing this, teachers have an opportunity to observe the way that the new principal works, interacts with others, learns about the schools demographics; there is a kind of a pre-phone call interview to find out more about a schools culture. We as teachers benefit as we try to find out what they would want about the mentoring process.”

School principals for schools A and F admitted to not having a defined mentor process but equally acknowledged the significance of starting the programs in their institutions.

“... I do not have clear pre-survey, but it’s important. To find out where my mentee teachers are struggling and what areas she/ he needs some work on. They should learn how they should build relation trust or culture by being mentored in their early career.”

“... Mentors just visit and talk to us about what happened, Talk about his career, future and make recommendations for professional development. They tell us what to do when we meet staff, how to communicate with them. We do not follow an agenda; it looks like an open conversation.”

A teacher in school F also admitted nothing much was accomplished as a mentorship procedure in his school.

“There is no any agenda we adhere to. If there are certain issues or we feel that something is vital for managing the school, generally we brain storm together about conversations, effective communication with parents, we mostly talk about discipline and maybe professional development, nothing fresh.”

Principal’s Communication Practices and Collaborative School Culture

The research sought to establish how communication practices influence collaborative secondary school culture in Tiaty East and Tiaty West Sub-Counties. The interviewees were required to state how the principal engages the school community in courageous communication practices about school culture reform. A recurring theme in this question was school meetings and social media especially Whatsapp groups. Principal 7 said,

“Our community is part of the school because within the community, they try as much as possible to know what is happening and how best they can help us in the occasion where we have issues, they come in and assist us. They are the watchdog of our school. They are part of us.”

Teacher 24 mentioned,

“Through communication, we make sure that you update us with any information daily. We normally have WhatsApp groups where the principal communicates with us regarding the school activities and maybe changes made and activities coming up so that the communication is smooth.”

Teacher 10 said,

“Everything is positive and open. Everything is discussed and posed in an open-ended or a non-confidential manner. Although everyone has different opinions, they are always treated with respect. Although we don’t always agree, it has never become physical. It never happens in the secret the secret. It’s constantly accessible and everyone participates. Everyone is appreciated and given attention.”

Support staff 33 highlighted,

“He holds meetings, through WhatsApp groups and giving messages to stakeholders, two, through online meetings like Microsoft teams.”

Support staff 6 said,

“The principal gives us information via active social media accounts i.e., WhatsApp groups and during the school days memo does most of the communication.”

The support staff 17 said,

“I believe that having a vision of what he wants to happen is the most crucial thing he does. He creates a framework for the vision to manifest. He delegates it as well so that the experts can assist advancing it. He presents his initiatives to the school committee who work to maintain the balance and carry them out.”

The responses implied that the principal's proactive engagement with the school community through courageous communication practices like school meetings and social media, especially WhatsApp groups, can have a transformative effect on promoting a collaborative secondary school culture. It creates a sense of unity, transparency, and shared purpose that benefits students, teachers, parents, and all stakeholders in the educational process.

Some interviewees however had contrasting opinions on the matter. For instance, teacher22 stated,

“I think there is minimal collaboration in this school. There are no interactions since nobody cares and everyone keeps their doors closed for others. I believe that we should have a collaborative open door atmosphere. There is perception that everyone is too preoccupied to collaborate. We are missing some of it because we are not seeing the forest of the trees.”

Teacher 15 mentioned,

“I would say that our communication culture is collaborative but not collaborative enough. There is a feeling that everyone is too busy to work together. I think that's missing the forest for the trees, we are missing part of it.”

In other schools a culture of communication was seen as a place where everyone was on their own.

Teacher 9 mentioned,

“Since there is no preparation period, time is our biggest adversary. It's highly individualized. Everyone teaches independently. There are no shared agreements; this frustrates others like parents and students.”

Teacher 16 highlighted,

“With our principal she did absolute zero as far as communication was concerned. In terms of directions, she is not part of what is happening. She didn't even lead a single meeting this semester; she never took the initiative to inform the staff on any agenda, the culture of collaboration needs to be improved through better communication; everyone needs to be informed.”

Support staff 37 noted that,

“I think one of the frustrating part is that there is no decision making process. We would never convene as a group to come to a choice. We hold meetings without a strategy of how they will end.” “Are we going to achieve a consensus? Who will make the decisions? There was never a conclusion. Everybody would meet on again and again and still no decision made. Everybody grows irritated.”

The responses indicated that how the principal effectively conveys instructions was the overarching element that appeared in all the schools. If they could not effectively communicate, then there was no positive collaborative culture in the schools. This factor seemed to influence some of the schools. The principals who excelled at communication created the most collaborative and positive school cultures.

During the focus group discussions, student leaders were asked how they informed their school about their challenges. They indicated that they used the designated communication channels

within the school, from students to student leaders, and then to the deputy principal, who is in turn expected to convey the information to the principal. A student leader 59 said,

“... When our teachers have something to teach and they disagree they simply go to the principal to discuss about it. It's the openness and we credit our principal who is quite open to discussions. When I didn't agree with something I didn't hesitate to voice my disagreements and she listened, Very open environment.”

Student leader 42 stated,

“The principal believes in student progress hence provides timely feedbacks which fosters a culture where all students can succeed. I think she values teamwork and she works hard to ensure that teams are collaborating for the benefits of the students successful outcomes and shared instructional experience.”

Collaborative School Culture

The interviewees were asked to state the practice of leadership which they thought best supported a positive school culture. The recurring themes from the interviewees were communication and motivation practices. On the mentorship theme, Principal 2 said,

“Conducting internal workshops and seminars and informing teachers on what is needed.”

Teacher 11 noted,

“I think it the principal mentorship practice because it helps in achieving our goals and our professional improvement.”

Support staff 1 mentioned,

“Mentorship programs e.g. interaction and doing things differently.”

On the motivation theme, principal 5 said,

“I think the best is well-motivated staff and teachers. Motivated staff and teachers will perform more. In addition, decision making that is more involving.”

Teacher 6 stated,

“The main one is the motivational speakers and collaborating with the well-established schools, so that our school can also come up.”

Support staff 11 noted,

“From the information given, I would choose motivation. Motivating the teachers/staff or maybe the students when they perform. You can give them a token of motivation to give them morale.”

These findings imply that communication and motivation practices play a pivotal role in fostering a positive school culture. When effectively implemented, they can create an environment in which students, teachers, and staff feel valued, engaged, and empowered. It requires a commitment from school leaders to invest in professional development, provide resources, and create an inclusive and empowering environment where everyone feels motivated to contribute to a positive school culture.

In the focus groups, student leaders were asked to describe how other stakeholders are engaged in shared goals. The students indicated that they are not actively involved when stakeholders are present. They also noted that teachers are encouraged to collaborate, such as when they work together to create exams. Student leaders mentioned that their motivation to come to school is mainly driven by their school's vision and dreams. However, they added that issues such as school fees, insecurity caused by bandit cattle rustlers, lack of supportive parents, peer pressure, and road closures can sometimes prevent them from attending school every day.

Discussions of the Findings

Principal's Mentorship Practices and Collaborative School Culture

The study found that principals invited mentors for staff development, aiming to improve collaboration and, ultimately, have a positive impact on student outcomes to promote a collaborative secondary school culture. Principals believe that mentoring considerably enhances their professional values as school leaders and fosters an information-sharing culture that boosts self-confidence and practical knowledge of school leadership (Khan et al., 2016). The implementation of mentoring processes and the creation of a learning culture at school are expected from school principals (Ozdeimer & Sahin, 2020). In addition to meetings, scheduled official phone conversations and WhatsApp groups provide opportunities for professional development. This study confirmed that rigorous mentoring with ongoing job-embedded coaching in schools is an important practice for school leaders who aim to make a difference in their schools (Stewart, 2013).

Mentoring is valuable for creating a long-term sustainable learning culture (Morgan & Rochford, 2017). However, studies examining the mentoring that school principals provide in developing a collaborative learning culture are quite limited. Thus, this study will also investigate the mentoring roles and behaviors of school administrators in the context of developing a collaborative learning culture in schools. School-based education mentoring is essential for creating a school culture that focuses on teacher development (Bakioğlu, Hacifazlıoğlu, & Özcan, 2013). Similarly, Bolam, McMahon, Pocklington, and Weindling (1995) reported four benefits of mentoring for mentors: interacting with colleagues and adapting new knowledge, learning about good and bad leadership practices, networking with colleagues, and gaining opportunities for ongoing professional development. One of the benefits that mentorship provides to the mentor is personal satisfaction and job satisfaction, seeing prospective teachers/students achieve something, increased enthusiasm, motivation, and energy to teach (Botha, 2012). This result is consistent with the findings of Jones and Larwin (2015), as they concluded that being actively involved in mentorship provides great support.

Principal's Communication Practices and Collaborative School Culture

The study found that school meetings and social media, especially WhatsApp groups, are used to engage the school community in meaningful communication practices regarding school culture reform. Collaborative leadership is built through effective leadership in educational institutions that connect their institutional systems to the people with whom they work, one individual at a time. Leaders learn enough about individuals and groups to lead systemic change by influencing people collectively and individually, according to Rubin (2002). Collaborative headteachers seek opinions from both teachers and learners to establish clear goals that everyone aims to achieve, thus succeeding in their performance by taking collective responsibility. Certain qualities in the principal, such as how they listen, convey information, make decisions, and lead dialogues, affect leadership and communication processes and, ultimately, school outcomes (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2007). The principal's communication style influences how she is perceived and her ability to drive necessary changes. Different communication techniques and how individual skills are used in conversations can reveal the communicator's pre-understanding, values, knowledge, and preparation.

Successful principals communicate 100% of their time through listening, speaking, writing, and reading (McEwen, 2003). Effective communication by headteachers creates a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning (Achieng, 2005). Leithwood and Rishi (2005) established the duties of principals in building productive relationships with parents and districts and making decisions that promote the smooth running of the school. The principal should possess good listening skills, be open-minded, and encourage dialogue and open communication to prevent

issues (Ubben et al., 2001). Effective communication by supportive and inclusive leadership helps in changing school organizational climates. Austin and Harkins (2008) caution that collaboration takes time and may add to workload stress, and conflicts arising from diverse perspectives can threaten interpersonal relationships. In accordance with this, Jurasite-Harbison and Rex (2010) stated that schools foster a culture of collaboration when teachers engage in continuous school improvement activities, build an organizational culture that supports mutual assistance, engage in detailed discussions about educational issues, and work as a team.

The study also found that some principals could not effectively communicate, resulting in a negative collaborative culture in schools. Principals who excelled in communication created the most collaborative and positive school cultures. In contrast to these findings, Yavuz (2010) argued that, while school leaders possess essential listening abilities, they do not always listen equally to teachers. As indicated in other studies (Ada et al., 2015), teachers noted that while principals' communication skills are generally high, they still need further development.

Conclusions

The study deduced that the relationship between a principal's mentorship practices and the collaborative school culture is positive and significant. Effective mentorship practices, when implemented by a principal, can significantly contribute to the development and sustenance of a collaborative school culture. The research concluded that when principals invest in mentorship programs that provide guidance, support, and opportunities for professional growth, they foster an environment where educators are more inclined to collaborate, communicate, and work together effectively toward common goals. This, in turn, contributes to a more harmonious and successful school community.

The study also concluded that the relationship between a principal's communication practices and a collaborative school culture is integral and symbiotic. Effective communication by principals can significantly influence and shape the collaborative culture within a school. The research found that effective communication practices set the tone for collaboration, trust, and shared objectives within the school community. Conversely, a collaborative culture can be nurtured and sustained through consistent, transparent, and inclusive communication from school leaders.

Recommendations

The study recommends that educational management courses offered by education and career providers should incorporate units on building positive collaborative school cultures. These units should include topics like the motivation of education providers, the mentoring process in schools, the process of building a collaborative culture for principals, and educational innovation. These concepts should be taught as courses so that education professionals are equipped to develop new and unique ways to solve common educational problems they encounter every day.

Principals should establish a regular practice and introduce mentorship programs. The presence of such programs, as indicated in the study, is a positive sign that the discipline can turn around and become achievable. Induction processes should be enhanced by inviting guest speakers and alumni to address students on the current challenges they are likely to face. This will foster competitiveness and provide students with valuable insights into the real-world challenges they may encounter.

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