

PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA IN THE POST-CANING ERA

Dr. Catherine Kiprop

Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Management & Policy Studies, Moi
University, Kenya.. P.O Box 12867-20100, Nakuru, Kenya.

Abstract

The principal plays a very important role in maintaining discipline in the school. He/she sets the tone and morale of the school by which he/she influences the teachers and pupils. Even at the classroom level, what the teacher does on matters of discipline is influenced by “the standards and expectations of the principal”. This study investigated the extent to which teachers, students and parents agreed or disagreed that the principal management and leadership skills played a key role in the management of discipline in schools. The research design adopted was survey and the study was conducted in Rongai Sub-county in Nakuru County. All the teachers, learners and parents of all the public secondary schools in Rongai Sub-county formed the population of the study. The study employed stratified random sampling, simple random sampling and convenient sampling techniques. Data was collected by use of questionnaires and were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Key words: Principal, Discipline, Management, Leadership skills, Post-caning era, Secondary school.

Introduction

Discipline in the school is the function of the administration. The general school and classroom discipline is dependent upon the principal's administrative, supervisory and leadership styles since they are in charge of all the school matters (Okumbe, 1998, p. 115). Chaplain (2003, p.104) states that the headteacher along with the senior management team are charged with strategic planning, including determining the direction of the school (leadership) as well as organising the

day-day running of the school (management). He adds that both dimensions make important contributions to creating and maintaining a well-behaved school. This implies that the headteacher is a leader of a school who must have a clear policy of what he wants for the school.

According to Chaplain (2003, p.104), what forms part of the headteachers leadership component includes being proactive in the development of an effective behaviour policy, ensuring staff have appropriate professional development support, and resources to support the policy at all levels. Chaplain adds that monitoring and maintaining the behaviour policy and classroom activity, being present around the school (in teaching and recreational areas), being sensitive to the concerns and difficulties of staff, and being able to set up “gear” when things are going too well or at critical points in the school’s development, are all part of the management function. Thus, the headteacher has a very important role to play in maintaining discipline in the school. The headteachers set the tone and the morale of the school and they have remarkable influence over the teachers and pupils. Even at the classroom level, what the teacher does on matters of discipline is influenced by “the standards and expectations” of the principal (Blandford, 1998, p. 5).

Kubai (2004, p. 4) observes that indiscipline in Kenyan schools is as a result of poor management skills by heads of institutions of learning. This is partly because of lack of experience or exposure and adequate knowledge in management. Koontz and Weihrich (1998, p. 347) identify five leadership styles commonly used in management of organizations. They include:

- **Autocratic style:** This is where power and authority is in the management. The head is dictatorial and makes all school decisions without consulting anyone. Teachers and students are like machines. They are there to be seen and not heard. The compound of the school is turned into small chiefdoms leading to conflicts between the headteacher, teachers and students culminating in rebellion, riots, violence and destruction.
- **Democratic/participative style:** This is an approach that recognizes democratic principles of governance and involves everyone in the process of decision-making. There is free flow of ideas from the administration to the teachers, administration to students

and teachers to students and vice versa. Rights of individuals and their freedom of expression are accepted and respected.

- **Laissez –faire:** The administrator establishes goals and objectives of the school. Everyone in the school strives to achieve the objectives by working on their own at their own pace.
- **Bureaucratic style:** This is where the administrator is concerned with rules and regulations. S/he formulates rules and the institution is run by these rules strictly and records and transactions are kept in great detail.
- **Contingency:** This is a leadership style where the administrator reacts to problems in the institution in different ways according to the situation. S/he addresses an issue as it comes.
- **Consultative:** this is where the head involves the stakeholders in identifying problems in the institution and even in finding solutions to problems. However, s/he makes the final decision.

Although the above styles are sometimes used con-currently, the most important leadership style in the maintenance of discipline is the democratic/participative approach. According to Fadhili (2005, p. 10), most students and teachers attribute indiscipline to lack of dialogue between the administrators and the students. Most headteachers adopt master/servant, superior/inferior attitude in dealing with students. They rarely listen to students' grievances because they believe that they have nothing to offer. This creates a lot of tension, stress and misunderstanding. It eventually leads to frustration and violence as manifested in strikes.

Opportunities should be provided where teachers, students, and administrators can sit down and discuss issues affecting their school freely without inhibition, intimidation or victimization. One of the issues identified as a cause of unrest is the lack of communication between the headteachers, teachers, and students. In view of this, headteachers are required to cultivate a democratic and participatory environment in the school and encourage regular fora (*barazas*) where teachers and students are encouraged to express their views (MOEST, 2001, p. 4). This can also be done through the use of suggestion boxes, school assemblies, house meetings, class meetings, guidance and counseling sessions and open days for public and students to encourage

collaborative management of the schools (MOEST, 2004, Ref: TN/ED/SCH/33/VOL.I /151, MOEST, 2000/2001, p. 6). Prompt action should be taken on students' grievances/problems. Any major institutional policy change affecting students such as school uniform, diet, school fees, etc. must be done in consultation with the BOG, PTA, and the students;

From the above discussion it is evident that participative leadership style creates a democratic environment necessary for effective management of schools. An autocratic approach to issues in a world where democratization, transparency and accountability have become synonymous with management is out of date and has no place in modern schools.

Statement of the Problem

The foregoing background exposition clearly shows that discipline is one of the most important factors that help all social systems to function effectively and achieve their purpose (Blandford, 1998, p. 1). The main goal of discipline, both in the school and in the home, is to produce young people who will be responsible people when they become adults. Such people should be able to make their own decisions and accept the consequences of those decisions (Mbiti, 2002, p. 29).

For a long time, caning has been used as a means of enforcing discipline among students perhaps the reason being that it is the only "language" that learners, especially those hailing from a background of dogmatic authority, understand (Wragg, 2001, p. 16). Its advantage is that it is quick and efficient, but often resulted in serious injuries on pupils and in a number of cases, death (Muthiani, 1996, p. 3). The result was the banning of corporal punishment, which was viewed as being against the rights of the child as stipulated in the Children Act No. 8, 2001. This radical move in the approach to maintain or manage discipline in Kenyan schools poses more questions than answers on the way forward among teachers.

According to Fadhili (2005, p. 10), most students and teachers attribute indiscipline to lack of dialogue between the administrators and the students. Most headteachers adopt master/servant, superior/inferior attitude in dealing with students. They rarely listen to students' grievances because they believe that they have nothing to offer. This creates a lot of tension, stress and

misunderstanding. It eventually leads to frustration and violence as manifested in strikes. Opportunities should be provided where teachers, students, and administrators can sit down and discuss issues affecting their school freely without inhibition, intimidation or victimization. One of the issues identified as a cause of unrest is the lack of communication between the headteachers, teachers, and students. It is against this background that this research aimed at investigating the extent to which teachers, students and parents agreed or disagreed that the principal management and leadership skills played a key role in the management of discipline in schools.

Principal's Effective Leadership Practices on Student Discipline

The principal plays an important leadership role in establishing school discipline by effective administration and by personal example (Blandford, 1998, p. 52). As instructional leaders, principals must promote teaching and assist with practices for effective discipline. Principals of well-disciplined students are usually highly visible models (Cotton, 2005). According to Koontz and Weirich (1998, p. 349) principals should engage in "management by walking around," greeting students and teachers and informally monitoring possible problem areas.

What makes an effective school leader? According to Day (2000, p. 57), a good principal is one who can balance a variety of pressures while never losing site of his or her values and who inspires and serves the community. In a 1998 study of 12 principals, Day (2000, p. 57) related that principals' leadership consisted of having a vision and articulation, ordering priorities, getting others to go with them, constantly reviewing what they are doing, and holding onto things they value. Among the duties of the principal, discipline of students is paramount. Day stated that school discipline component should include a climate of mutual respect, an environment conducive to learning, and steps to ensure the safety of students.

Among the roles of a school principal is the building of a positive culture and eliminating toxic culture (Kent & Deal, 1998, p. 30). According to Kinsler and Gamble (2001), culture is used to refer to the customs and rituals that societies develop over the course of their history. It is a system of shared orientations that hold the unit together and give it a distinctive identity (Hoy & Miskel, 2005, p. 171). Cowley (2001, p. 130) observes that if students arrive at the school and

find an ethos of hard work and good behaviour, it is likely (unless they have severe or specific problems of their own) that they too will work hard and behave well. According to Hoy and Miskel (2005, p. 171), effective schools have strong cultures with the following characteristics:

- Shared values and consensus on “how we get things done around here”;
- The principal as the hero or heroine who embodies core values;
- Distinctive rituals that embody the widely shared beliefs;
- Employees as situational heroes or heroines;
- Rituals of acculturation and cultural renewal;
- Significant rituals to celebrate and transform core values;
- Balance between innovation and tradition and between autonomy and control; and
- Widespread participation in cultural rituals.

Much of what occurs in schools must therefore, be interpreted in the context of school’s culture. Kent and Deal (1998, p. 30) observe that without the attention of the principal, school culture can become toxic and unproductive and once the ethos of a school becomes negative, it can take years to put things right.

Effective principals are respected and liked rather than feared by students. They can communicate steadfast consideration and respect for students; yet adhere firmly to the school’s discipline program. In a 1998 study, Blasé and Blasé interviewed more than 800 teachers from public elementary, middle level, and high schools in various regions of the United States to ask their perspective of effective instructional leadership and their views of discipline. They used open-ended questionnaires and asked the teachers to describe in detail principal’s characteristics or strategies, behaviours, attitudes, and goals that influence the school environment, both positively and negatively. According to Blasé and Blasé (1999, p. 370), principals who are power oriented, and who want to control teachers with bureaucratic “snooping” are not effective. The supportive, inquiry-oriented leader who encourages collegiality and reflective professional development, and assists staff in discipline matters is more successful. The study thus, concluded that stable and supportive administrative leadership is the “overriding factor” determining whether a discipline program is successful.

Blandford (1998, p. 53) also point out that the purpose of effective leadership is essentially to make schools more effective and successful in order to improve the quality of learning for pupils. He points out that a good headteacher will be democratic when deciding on which methods are required to promote discipline in school. An effective headteacher ensures that everyone in the school community feels responsible for ensuring that discipline in the school is good. Effective leadership is marked by non-confrontational style, where decisiveness is combined with the ability to delegate, listen, enthuse, support and unite the team of staff (Rogers, 1996, p. 31). Headteachers also need to be listeners, and teachers and pupils should feel able to talk to them in confidence (Blandford, 1998, p. 55). Blandford also points out that effective headteachers will aim to discuss discipline periodically with staff, pupils and the wider school community, emphasizing the need for every person to keep the school functioning smoothly and to keep morale at high level.

The continuous professional development of staff, teaching and non-teaching is also the responsibility of headteachers and their senior managers (Thurlow, 2003, p. 44). According to Blandford (1998, p. 55), discipline and the management of pupil behaviour are the key elements in the training and education of future school managers and leaders, and headteachers need to be aware of these initiatives. He points out that a newly qualified teacher is a major responsibility of the headteacher and that clear discipline policy and a supportive management is required to motivate and develop professional practice throughout a teacher's career.

Van Deventer and Kruger (2003, p. 70) outline some of the characteristics of effective leaders as follow:

- **Provides direction:** Finds a way forward, generates a clear sense of movement/direction, identifies new aims, services and structures;
- **Offers inspiration:** Has ideas and articulates thoughts that motivate others;
- **Builds teamwork:** Sees teams as the natural, most effective form of management and spends time building and encouraging the collaboration effort;
- **Sets an example:** Shows that "leadership is example." It is not only what leaders do that affects others in the organization, but also how they do it;

- **Gains acceptance:** While managers may be designated by title, they are no *de facto* leaders until their appointment is ratified by their followers consent;
 - **Servant leader:** Empowers others by working with people;
 - **Organisational architect:** Initiates and orchestrates change;
 - **Leading professional:** Shows awareness of work context;
 - **Moral educator:** Demonstrates transmissible values to guide relationships; and
 - **Social architect:** Shows awareness of social and development issues
- (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003, p. 70).

The principal is the ultimate student of education. He or she should incorporate research, data, curriculum, programs, time, and emotion into a melting pot of education. As every discipline plan does not work in every situation, the common threads among those are key factors to success.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and was based in Rongai Sub-County of Nakuru County. The target population of this study was the teachers, students and parents of secondary schools in the Sub-county. The sampling unit was the school rather than the individual or teacher. By means of stratified sampling method 8 schools were selected to include all types of schools. Teachers were selected from each type of school to give a total of 100 teachers who formed the major study sample using simple random sampling. A total of 40 students were randomly selected and 20 parents using convenient sampling were selected to participate in the study. Data was collected by means of questionnaires. Data analysis involved descriptive statistical technique.

Results and Discussions

The main objective of the study was to establish the extent to which teachers, students and parent agreed or disagreed that the principal's leadership practices played a key role in managing discipline in public secondary schools in Kenya. To establish this objective, respondents were required to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the suggestions provided regarding

the principal's leadership practices would enhance the discipline of the learners. The results are presented in the table below:

TABLE 1
RESPONSES TO PRACTICING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

PRACTICE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP	RESPONDENTS	No. & %	Strongly agree/ Agree	Uncertain	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	TOTAL
Promote positive school culture	Teachers	No. 89 % 100%	89 100%	0 .0%	- -	89 100%
	Parents	No. 15 % 93.8%	15 93.8%	1 6.3%	- -	16 100%
	Students	No. 40 % 100%	40 100%	0 .0%	- -	40 100%
Provide a climate of mutual respect	Teachers	No. 84 % 94.4%	84 94.4%	5 5.6%	0 .0%	89 100%
	Parents	No. 14 % 87.5%	14 87.5%	1 6.3%	1 6.3%	16 100%
	Students	No. 40 % 100%	40 100%	0 .0%	0 .0%	40 100%
Encourage participative decision-making	Teachers	No. 86 % 96.6	86 96.6	3 3.4%	0 .0%	89 100%
	Parents	No. 15 % 93.8%	15 93.8%	0 .0%	1 6.3%	16 100%
	Students	No. 38 % 95%	38 95%	1 2.5%	1 2.5%	40 100%
Motivate teachers	Teachers	No. 83 % 93.3%	83 93.3%	6 6.7	0 .0%	89 100%
	Parents	No. 15 % 93.8%	15 93.8%	1 6.3%	0 .0%	16 100%
	Students	No. 38 % 95%	38 95%	1 2.5%	1 2.5%	40 100%
Ensure safety of students	Teachers	No. 82 % 92.1%	82 92.1%	7 7.9%	- -	89 100%
	Parents	No. 15 % 93.8%	15 93.8%	1 6.3%	- -	16 100%
	Students	No. 38	38	2	-	40

		%	95%	5%	-	100%
Be visible and supportive	Teachers	No. %	83 93.2	4 4.5%	2 2.2%	89 100%
	Parents	No. %	14 87.6%	1 6.3%	1 6.3%	16 100%
	Students	No. %	36 90%	3 7.5%	1 2.5%	40 100%
Encourage collegiality and reflective professional development	Teachers	No. %	79 88.8%	10 11.2%	- -	89 100%
	Parents	No. %	12 75%	4 25%	- -	16 100%
	Students	No. %	38 95%	2 5%	- -	40 100%
Establish effective communication	Teachers	No. %	87 97.7%	2 2.2%	0 .0%	89 100%
	Parents	No. %	15 93.8%	0 .0%	1 6.3%	16 100%
	Students	No. %	37 92.5%	3 7.5%	0 .0%	40 100%
Create consensus among staff on rules and their enforcement	Teachers	No. %	85 85.5%	0 .0%	4 4.5%	89 100%
	Parents	No. %	14 87.6%	2 12.5%	0 .0%	16 100%
	Students	No. %	33 82.5%	2 5%	5 12.5%	40 100%
Maintain close ties with communities	Teachers	No. %	73 82.1%	12 13.5%	4 4.4%	89 100%
	Parents	No. %	11 68.8%	3 18.8%	2 12.6%	16 100%
	Students	No. %	33 82.5%	5 12.5%	2 5%	40 100%

Source: Survey Questionnaire.

The results in Table 6.2 shows that there was a high degree of agreement for all the strategies under the effective leadership category with most strategies endorsed at 75 percent and above. This shows that teachers, parents and students believed in effective leadership as a contributor to improved discipline in schools. McNergney and Herbert (2001, p. 188) observe that if any single individual is key to the everyday operation and tone of a school, it is the principal. They add that

principals typically administer discipline to students, deal with staff and faculty on simple to complex issues, locate substitute teachers, implement rules, conduct surveillance of halls, balance the school's budget, and maintain the building and equipment. According to Chaplain (2003, p. 104), effective leadership is one of the ingredients in creating and maintaining a well-behaved school. He adds that being proactive in the development of an effective behaviour policy and ensuring staff have appropriate professional development, support and resources to support the policy at all levels, forms part of the leadership component.

Promoting positive culture as a strategy for enhancing discipline received a high rate of acceptance. It received 100 percent acceptance from both teachers and students and 93.8 percent by parents. Koontz and Weihrich (1998, p. 205) indicate that culture is the general pattern of behaviour, shared beliefs, and values that members have in common. According to Kinsler and Gamble (2001, p. 59), a significant component of a school's culture is the status attributed to the school by the teachers, students, parents and the larger society. Kent and Deal (1998, p. 30) have described the job of the principal as one of shaping the culture by playing several important roles: symbol, potter, poet, actor, and healer. Like a potter, the principal shapes the shared values of the school. Like a poet and an actor, the principal expresses to everyone a shared vision of the school's philosophy and mission. Like a healer, the principal mediates among the groups that make up the school and responds to any criticism from the community about school and operations or administrative decision-making. They add that the principal's background, life-style, communication style, and management style strongly influence the culture of a school both practically and symbolically.

Providing a climate of mutual respect was also received a high degree of acceptance by all students (100 percent), 94.4 percent of the teachers and 87.5 percent of the parents. According to Nelson (2002, p. 40), effective principals are those who communicate steadfast consideration and respect for students; yet adhere firmly to school's discipline program. Such principals are respected and liked by the students. Encouraging participative decision-making also received a high rate of acceptance. Nearly all the teacher (96.6 percent), students (95 percent) and parents (93.8 percent) supported the fact that principals should consult the members of the school community for their suggestions before making decisions. Williams (2000, p.710) asserts that

leaders who encourage participative decision-making help followers understand which goals are most important and clarify the paths to accomplish them. He adds that when people participate in decision-making, they become more committed to making them work. In as far as motivation of teachers is concerned, a high acceptance rate was also received from 93.3 percent of the teachers, 93.8 percent of the parents, and 95 percent of the students. According to Koontz and Weihrich (1998, p.345), one of the ingredients of effective leadership is the ability to comprehend that human beings have different motivational forces at different times and in different situations. This means that such leaders are aware of the nature and strength of human needs and are more able to define and design ways of satisfying them and to administer so as to get the desired responses.

Ensuring the safety of the students was also supported by a good majority of respondents. Ninety five (95) percent of the students, 93.8 percent of the parents and 92.1 percent of the teachers agreed that principals who ensured the safety of their students realized better standards of discipline. McNergney and Herbert (2001, p. 281) note that the central issue for educators is how to ensure children's safety. Eliminating teasing and bullying and encouraging positive relationships and mutual respect among students can do this. The principal on the other hand has to be visible and supportive. Ninety five (95) percent of the students, 93.8 percent of the parents and 92.1 percent of the teachers supported this. According to Cotton (2005), many poorly disciplined schools have principals who are visible only for "official" duties such as assemblies or when enforcing school discipline. She adds that in contrast, principals of well-disciplined schools tend to be very visible in hallways and classrooms, talking informally with teachers and students, speaking to them by name, and expressing interest in their activities.

The principal should encourage collegiality and reflective professional development. This strategy was supported by 95 percent of the students, 88.8 percent of the teachers and 75 percent of the parents. According to Blasé and Blasé (1999, p. 40), the supportive, inquiry-oriented leader who encourages collegiality and reflective professional development, and assists staff in discipline matters is more successful. Mcnergney and Herbert (2001, p. 188) add that human relationships and collegiality have been particularly effective in promoting and sustaining school improvement. Establishing effective communication is also a function of effective leadership.

From the responses, 97.7 percent of the teachers, 93.8 percent of the parents, and 92.5 percent of the students supported this view. According to Williams (2000, p. 736), communication is the key to success. He adds that much of the management process- making things happen, meeting the competition, organizing people, projects and processes, and leading- cannot be done without effective communication. According to Blandford (1998, p. 55), effective principals discuss discipline periodically with staff, students and the wider school community and emphasizes the need for every person to keep the school functioning and to keep morale at high level.

The strategy on creating consensus among staff on rules and their enforcement also elicited a high acceptance rate among the teachers (85.5 percent), parents (87.6 percent), and the students (82.5 percent). According to Gaustad (2005), teacher's satisfaction with school discipline policy was related to their relationship with the principal. Gaustad points out that ideally, the principal should be able to create consensus among staff on rules and their enforcement. Shannon and McCall (2005) underscore the role of the teacher and other staff in managing discipline in schools. They point out that teachers and other staff must participate in the development of school discipline policies. By creating consensus among staff on rules and their enforcement, they will actively support and enforce the rules thus promoting a positive school climate. The respondents also supported the view that the principal should also strive to maintain close ties with the communities. Teachers (82.1 percent), parents (68.8 percent), and students (82.5 percent) supported the above view. According to McLaughlin (2003, p. 113), schools do not, and cannot, conduct their work in a vacuum, isolated from 'external' influences, forces and claims. They add that it is not only practically impossible for schools to do this, but also wrong for them to try to do so.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In view of the central role played by the headteacher in management of the school, the following suggestions and recommendations have also been made by various stakeholders in the quest for solutions to current discipline problems affecting secondary schools in Kenya. They are:

- The Ministry of Education should appoint qualified and competent personnel as administrators and managers of school. The process of identification, appointment, deployment and promotion of headteachers is important hence the

Ministry should set clear criteria for these. A criteria for the promotion of teachers from one job group to another should also be clearly spelt out, taking into account their experience and performance. This will take care of current disparities;

- Where a vacancy for headteacher/deputy headteacher occurs, the post should be advertised by the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) and interviews conducted. In addition, an effective evaluation system of headteachers should be put in place whereby non-performing heads will be identified and either retrained or deployed to perform non-administrative duties;
- In order to ensure that those appointed as headteachers have the required skills, newly appointed headteachers should be given an induction course on management before they assume office;
- The TSC should ensure that headteachers do not stay in one station for more than five years unless under special circumstances. Where a head has provided exemplary leadership, he/she should be promoted and deployed to a commensurate or a bigger school to replicate the good practices;
- Headteachers should ensure that they are available and accessible to facilitate decision making in schools and be away only when it is inevitable. The MOEST should take necessary measures to address the issue of localization of headship which, as it was pointed out, is the root cause of their frequent absence from schools;
- In order to ensure effective monitoring and supervision of all school activities, headteachers of boarding schools and their deputies should reside in the schools. They should be available and accessible to staff and students;
- Headteachers must uphold the Ministry's policies and interpret the same to the members of the BOGs, PTAs, sponsors and other stakeholders. They should also ensure that all Ministry's policies are implemented;
- Headteachers should develop the art and practices of accountability and transparency in the handling of school finances as this would minimize indiscipline arising from mismanagement of financial resources. They should also adhere to the Ministry of Education's fees guidelines and are expected to notify the parents of the approved fees for the year. They should devise ways and means of

spending the meager economic resources available to enable them to accomplish the set objectives;

- Headteachers should ensure proper delegation of duties and cultivate team spirit among all the stakeholders in the school;
- Headteachers should induct newly recruited teachers and students on the school traditions, ethos and what the school expects of them; and
- Head teachers should make schools better places in the way they treat staff and students. They should be tolerant and accommodating and be ready to lead by example and motivate students to work towards their set goals.

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