

MANAGEMENT OF STUDENT DISCIPLINE IN TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES IN KENYA

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Abstract

In the past few years, concern has been growing over the rising incidents of students' unrest in teacher training colleges and other tertiary institutions in Kenya, which have resulted to loss of instruction time and property, worth colossal amounts of money. This study therefore intends to explore infractions and methods used by principals in the maintaining student discipline in teacher training colleges in the Country. The study employed qualitative research methodology with a descriptive survey design. The study population attracted 21 principals, 21 deputy principals, 1470 teachers, 756 student leaders from the public teacher training colleges. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used in data collection. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the collected data. The study findings revealed that teacher training colleges experienced many discipline infractions and principals used a variety of methods in maintaining the students' discipline. Among the many methods used are; guidance and counseling, expulsion, suspension, fines, rewards, students commitment themselves in writing to maintain good conduct, assigning responsibilities to errand students, involving parents/guardians, supplementary exams. It was evident that methods of establishing and managing student discipline in colleges could not be applied wholesale, but they were contingent upon the college and home background, individual students and the type of infraction. The effectiveness of each method depended on the environment, ethos and traditions of each college. The study recommended that college administrators should embrace a collective approach in managing student discipline. The study is significant because it contributes to an understanding of the methods used in managing student discipline in teacher training colleges. It is also an eye opener on legal implications of student discipline management used by college administrators in the Country. Additionally, the results of the study will help education policy makers, college principals, teachers and other stakeholders in providing them with intricacies of college student discipline management in the Country.

Keywords: Management, student discipline, teacher training colleges, infraction, Kenya

1.0. Introduction

Kenya, like any other country of the world has a code of discipline for students in basic education and training institutions (Basic Education Act, 2013). This code has been further elaborated in a manual for Heads of Secondary Schools in Kenya (Ministry of Education, 1979). School administrators are directed to exercise the prescribed methods to the benefit of the student, teacher, parent, government and the whole country at large. This is imperative because discipline is the foundation of education. In fact educators and government authorities recognize discipline as

aprecursor of success in all college curricular and co-curricular activities. For instance Mbiti, (1974) as cited in Simatwa (2012) expressly stated that: “The main goal of discipline both in the school and in the home should be to produce young people who will be responsible when they become adults. Such people should be able to make their own decisions and accept the consequences of these decisions like adults. Every educational institution and every household aims to see its products grow into interesting, effective people, good and responsible citizens (Simatwa, 2012). No learning can be successful without discipline” (Mbiti, 1974). Unfortunately some principals and teachers have been reported to be acting as if they did not understand the code of discipline for students in learning institutions or had taken the law in their hands. The methods of managing student discipline in colleges that are alleged to be highly breached are suspension and expulsion (Muya, 1989). The Ministry of Education states that a student may be suspended from attendance at a school by the head of the institution, if the student's behavior is habitually or continually such as to endanger the maintenance of a proper standard of moral and social conduct in the college, or if any single act or series of acts subversive of discipline is committed (Revised Education Act, 2013). The Basic Education Act (2013) mandates the cabinet secretary to prescribe expulsion as discipline for a delinquent learner but this should be exercised when all other alternative measures of correction have been exhausted and only after such a learner and parents /guardian have been afforded an opportunity of being heard. The act further states that it is only the Director of Education who is authorized to expel students from colleges after taking into consideration the report of the Board of Management in detail.

2.0. Background of the Problem

Many college students exhibit discipline problems such as indecency, moral decadency, drug and substance abuse (ADA) and social related problems. Students' discipline is the core factor in the achievement of educational objectives at any level. The emerging issues in our society like drug and substance abuse, moral degeneration, and the breaking down of many family fabrics is posing a very big challenge in Kenyan educational institutions. Compliance to rules and regulations in the learning institutions is losing hold. This state of affairs is posing an uphill task to educators in enforcing discipline. ‘It is difficult for teachers to enforce discipline on students who occasionally causes disruption (Murithi 2010).

According to the Kenya's National Agency for Campaign against Drug Abuse (NACADA) survey of 2012 the drug abuse age has gone down to 10 years (Standard 26th June 2012). The survey further indicated that 30% of Kenyans aged between 15-65 years have over consumed alcohol. Overall hard drugs abused are bhang, cocaine, heroin and miraa in that order. This has become a national concern. ‘Statistics showing high rates of Alcohol and Drug Abuse (ADA) among the youths have forced the government to take drastic action on the peddlers’ (Standard digital 16th June 2013).

Research presentations at the 2nd National Conference on alcohol and drug abuse in Moi International conference Centre Kasarani, Nairobi in `2013 (Standard digital 16th June 2013) showed high rates of drug abuse among the youths; cigarettes- 77%, bhang -68%, Khat (Miraa) -61% and alcohol -58%. Studies on alcohol and drug abuse victims show that the habit has largely contributed to poor academic performance, high dropout rate in schools and colleges (NACADA 2012). This habit results to behavior change (moral decadency, deliquescence) and drop in academic performance. Alcohol and drug abuse is a big challenge to educational institutions' discipline. Principals in teacher training colleges in particular are faced with myriad problems in enforcing and maintaining discipline which would help produce teachers who are role models to pupils in primary schools.

3.0.Statement of the Problem

Academic achievement in any educational learning institution depends largely on how discipline is managed. Use of punishment, rules and regulations don't seem effective in teacher training colleges. Preventive and punitive methods of enhancing student discipline are inadequate to deal with the unique discipline cases in colleges. Therefore an exploration of the management of discipline in teachers' training is worth it.

4.0. Purpose of the Study

The purpose this study to explore the infractions experienced in teacher training colleges and the methods used by principals in teacher training colleges to manage student discipline in these educational institutions.

5.0. Research Objectives

1. To explore the discipline infractions experienced in teacher training colleges
2. To investigate the methods used in the management of student discipline in teacher training colleges

6.0. Research Questions

1. What discipline infractions are experienced in teacher training colleges in Kenya?
2. How is student discipline management of in teacher training colleges in Kenya?

7.0 Literature Review

7.1 College Student Discipline

Central to Kenyan teacher training college student's discipline, 'is to provide an educational environment that demonstrates professionalism and academic currency, that values diversity' (George Brown college, June 2009), and respects and upholds the nobility of the teaching profession. It is assumed that all students will exhibit maturity, integrity and personal conduct that benefit the profession. An important part of fulfilling the College's mission is providing a student discipline process that promotes student accountability and social responsibility, as well as maintaining a college environment that is respectful, inclusive, and collegial that is free from intimidation, threats, coercion, or violence (Citrus College, 2009).

To help uphold the expected discipline standard every college is mandated by law to establish a code of conduct and guidelines which are designed to provide an explicit definition of the minimal standards of personal conduct that the College expects of all its students (George Brown College, June 2009). This code of conduct represents a point of reference or benchmarks for expectations concerning College students; and defines the confines within which a worthwhile and equally encouraging learning atmosphere can be established. It should be based on the understanding that most students in the College already maintain these requirements of conduct and can, hesitations without, adhere to them. The purpose of this procedure is to provide a prompt and equitable means to address violations of the Standards of Student Conduct (Palomar college, 2014), which guarantees to the students allegedly involved, the due process rights guaranteed to them by Kenyan constitution and the basic education act.

7.2 College Student Discipline Infractions

According to Luiselli, Putman, Handler and Feinberg, (2010) many students attending public schools exhibit discipline problems such as disruptive classroom behavior, vandalism, bullying, and

violence. Luiselli et al further says that establishing effective discipline practices is critical to ensure academic success and to provide a safe learning environment. The following have been cited as the common discipline infractions experienced in teacher training colleges in Kenya. They include cheating in exams, stealing, alcohol and drug abuse, abortions, fights, sneaking out of college, impersonation especially during teaching practice when student copy tutors signatures into their professional documents instead of getting the work authentically approved, truancy. Amada (1999) adds to the list of common misconduct issues; 'undermining teacher authority, spacing-out or sleeping in class, frequent absences/tardiness, food and cell phone disruptions, plagiarism or lying, disrespectful behavior, refusal to participate, too much chit-chat'.

7.3 College Student Discipline Management

The college's management approach to student discipline management should be an educative one aimed at helping students develop emotional intelligence; understand their behaviour and its impact on their lives and others. Management of students discipline is "a multifaceted endeavor that is far more complex than establishing rules, rewards, and penalties to control students' behavior" (Amada, 1999). Also Gretty (2009) adds that 'effective discipline management is much more than simply administering corrective measures when a student misbehaves; it's about developing proactive ways to prevent problems from occurring in the first place while creating a positive learning environment'. Establishing a favorable learning climate in a teacher training college is one of the most challenging aspects of teaching, and one of the most difficult skills to master (Gretty 2009), even at this tertiary level as most of the students are experiencing freedom away from their parents control for the first time.

7.4 Methods/Strategies for Discipline Management

In Kenya, each teacher training college has its individual distinctive mode of managing student discipline within the college. However, there are common methods of discipline that most institutions use like school rules, punishment, and guidance and counseling (Oyaro, 2005 as cited in Kiprop 2012). Educational institutions have benefited to from the above methods to a large extent in managing discipline problems. If discipline management is going to be effective, the need for teamwork between the principal, staff and students cannot be over emphasized. Okumbe (2007) indicates that in order to be successful in achieving the discipline objectives of a college all stakeholders in the college are required to strictly adhere to the different behavior patterns crucial for maximum performance. As cited in Kiprop (2012) Okumbe adds that despite the acquisition and application of theoretical skills required of a leader, educational managers are still faced with challenges of non-adherence to the set discipline standards of their educational institutions from students, support staff and teachers.

This implies that college principals should use appropriated disciplinary actions to maintain institutional standards necessary for optimal goal achievement. The principal's discipline management skills in the college are very important. The general college and classroom discipline is dependent upon the principal's administrative, supervisory and leadership styles since he/she is in-charge of all the college matters (Okumbe, 1998). This implies that the principal as a leader of a college must have a clear picture of the kind of college what he/she wishes to have.

According to Chaplain (2003), components of the principals' leadership functions include being proactive in the development of an effective, feasible behavior guidelines which clearly describes the consequences of both compliance and non-compliance. Ensuring that the teaching staff has suitable training strategies, and resources to support the policy at all levels goes a long way in managing student discipline. It is important to note that positive consequences have a greater effect

on students than punitive consequences. Chaplain as cited by Kiprop (2012) adds that monitoring and maintaining the behavior policy and classroom activity, being felt around the institution; in curricular and co-curricular activities, being sensitive to the concerns and difficulties of staff, are all part of the management functions. This means the principal has a very essential role to play in managing discipline in the institution. The principal sets the tempo and the moral environment of the college and has significant influence over the teachers and students. 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, as cited in Kiprop 2012). Students should participate in the formulation of rules and regulations so that they can own the enforcement of the agreed code of conduct. This is very essential in the management of discipline in the colleges.

8.0 Research Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research methodology to collect and present data. This methodology was thought suitable since it was examining lived experiences. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The study population attracted 21 principals, 21 Deputy Principals, 1470 teachers, 756 student leaders from public teacher training colleges. A representative sample of 10 principals, 10 deputy principals, 210 teachers and 210 student leaders in the 21 public primary teacher training colleges was used. Purposive sampling method was used in the study. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaires, and interview schedules. Descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the collected data.

9.0 Results Findings

Research Question 1: Which infractions are experienced in teacher training colleges?

Principals were asked to list infractions experienced in their colleges. Their responses were as shown in Table 1. From the table, it is clear that primary teacher training colleges experience a wide range of disciplinary problems often. Most of the major infractions experienced included; indecency, abortions, alcohol and drug abuse, unrest, cheating in exams, theft, sneaking out of college, whose effects resulted in loss of valuable instruction time. For instance in the recent past students in a number of colleges demonstrated over student leadership elections, staying out of class for up to three days. Administrators of colleges must put in place effective preventive disciplinary systems to revert them to the lost glory of being havens of peace (Simatwa 2012),

Table 1 Infractions experienced in teacher training colleges as indicated by Principals(n=10)

Infractions	NO of colleges	Percentage (%)	Frequency(f)
Drug abuse	10	100	Termly
Alcoholism	10	100	Termly
Theft of items	10	100	Monthly
Absenteeism	05	50	Termly
Sneaking	07	70	Monthly
Disobedience	10	100	Termly
Indecency	04	40	Termly
Bullying	05	50	Termly
Sexual harassment	10	100	Monthly
Drug Sale	10	100	Termly
Unrest	05	50	Annually
Exam cheating	10	100	termly
Abortions	06	60	Termly

Source-Researcher

Research Question 2: what methods are used in the management of Student Discipline in teacher training colleges?

Principals were asked to state disciplinary methods they used in establishing and maintaining student discipline in teacher training colleges. Their responses were as shown in Table 2.

From these results it is clear that principals used a variety of disciplinary methods in managing student discipline in colleges. These methods were also implied in the general college rules and regulations of all the institutions investigated. In essence all colleges had adopted zero tolerance policies for all delinquent behavior. By "zero tolerance policies" it meant college policies that mandated predetermined consequence(s) or punishment(s) for specific offences. Colleges were using both legal and illegal disciplinary methods to control students' behavior.

A hundred percent were using verbal reprimand which included scolding and telling the students off which is illegal according to Basic Education Act (2013) article 36(1) 'no pupil shall be subjected to torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, in any manner' as it gives psychological torture; and the constitution of Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2010) which also

prohibit torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of a person unlawfully. A hundred percent of the schools were using the legal methods, namely, expulsion, suspension, fining, guidance and counseling, rewarding good behavior. Sixty five percent, on average, of the colleges were using manual labor and self-commitment to maintain good conduct.

Table 2 Disciplinary methods used by principals in establishing and maintaining student discipline in Public teacher training colleges as indicated by principals (n=10)

Disciplinary method using the method	Number of schools using the method	Percentage of schools using the method
Expulsion	10	100
Suspension lasting at least 2 weeks	10	100
Verbal reprimand	10	100
Guidance and Counseling	10	100
Fining	10	100
Rewarding good conduct	10	100
Written warning	10	100
Commitment in writing to maintain good conduct	7	70
Manual labor, i.e. cleaning rooms, slashing grass,	6	60
Supplementary exams	3	30

Source-veronica

10.0 Results Discussion

10.1 Suspension and Expulsion

Principals indicated that they had powers to suspend students for two weeks but no powers to suspend students for a period exceeding fourteen days without consulting boards of management. They said that they had no absolute powers to use expulsion as a sanction in colleges without consulting the Boards of Management, County Director of Education, Director of Basic

Education and the Director General (Basic Education Act 2013). They indicated that suspensions and expulsions as sanctions in colleges should be used sparingly. This was important because most students and the society in general are against the use of these measures. It also impacts negatively on the concerned student's academic performance. In view of this fact all the ten principals involved in this study were of the view that the way forward in using these sanctions included prompt resolutions on suspensions and expulsions, and students should be kept out of schools as little as possible. Since the use of these sanctions had drastic consequences, they were only used as the last resort. In which case school administrators first considered use of alternative sanctions, second interviewed the concerned students and parents, third identified special educational needs, fourth negotiated agreements with the students and parents, fifth issued formal warning and sixth withdrew them from classes and excluded them from schools only as an inevitable action (Simatwa 2012).

Further, students who showed signs of criminal tendencies were recommended for summary expulsions immediately and in some instances students were taken to the police directly depending on the intensity of the criminal act. This also was done to save them from mob justice from their fellow students. When determining the appropriateness of suspension and expulsion as sanctions, the punishment was to be commensurate with offence. Each incident of indiscipline was considered individually on its own merits and in the context of the established college rules and regulations which teachers and students were familiar with and also in the light of the existing legal provisions in education.

The study revealed that, where it became necessary for a principal to suspend a student, the following procedures were followed; The principal, in the letter of suspension would inform the student's parents/guardian of the suspension, the length of the suspension and the specific reasons for it. This formal notification provided sufficient details to ensure that the reason for suspension was fully understood and that all other relevant corrective measures had been exhausted. The Basic Education Act, (Republic of Kenya 2013) required that the notification was to be in writing. The notification requested parents and guardians to assist deal with the problem. Upon expiry of the two weeks' suspension, the student accompanied by his/her official guardian (one indicated in the student's file) faces the disciplinary committee for a chance to be heard. Depending on the deliberations of the committee after listening to the student in the presence of the parent/guardian, one of the following steps was taken; reinstated back with a warning letter, recommended for guidance and counseling, a student writes a commitment letter endorsed by the parent/guardian or the case is recommended for one year suspension or expulsion.

Upon recommendation for a year's suspension or expulsion the principal at once informs the Board of Management and convenes a special meeting to deliberate on the case. By convening a Board of Management meeting, the managers are always given the opportunity to intervene if appropriate. The board will then either uphold the disciplinary committees' decision or recommend a milder punishment. There would be of course no need to intervene if they were contented with the principal's actions. In all the cases objectivity was practiced in disposing the case.

The Board of Management usually had an option to direct the principal to reinstate a student, where a student could lose an opportunity to take an external examination. Before the Board of Management the student was always given the opportunity to make written and oral representation in an environment, which avoided intimidation and excessive formality. The decision of the meeting and the reason for the decision were usually clearly communicated to the parents/guardians by the end of the meeting. If the Board of Management felt the student were to be expelled, the parent and student would be informed accordingly. The principal as the secretary to the board would then immediately inform the County Director of Education, the Director Basic Education and the Director General in writing.

Fundamentally expulsion was only used in consideration of the following parameters. That is when; all reasonable steps had been taken in vain, it was a last resort, allowing the student to remain in college would be seriously detrimental to the education of the student and to that of others.

All the ten principals involved in the study agreed that the bureaucracies involved in applying suspension and expulsion discouraged the school administrators from using them. Principals therefore wished that they were legally given powers to be applying these methods in consultation with the Board of Managements and county Directors of Education only, because the requirement that college administrators consult the Basic Education Director and Director General before sanctioning discipline on errant students by suspension and expulsion was a waste of time and undermines the authority of the principal. All the ten principals were of the opinion that use of suspension and expulsion as sanctions was only effective when used sparingly, consistently and objectively; and where these three conditions were not met, these sanctions were not effective at all.

10.2 Guidance and Counseling

This study found out that seventy percent of the student leaders and fifty five percent of teachers in ten colleges involved in the study perceived guidance and counseling services negatively as a waste of time and ineffective. One challenge is that although the ministry of education highly recommends guidance and counseling as an alternative discipline intervention, the colleges lack adequate qualified personnel, the few who give this service are overworked with the normal workload. It was argued that guidance and counseling usually evoked images of individuals with mental problems who needed professional guidance and counseling to help them lead normal life. Fifty percent of the student leaders' perceived guidance and counseling as an option taken by those who could not solve their own problems or were overwhelmed by the environment around them. Most students hardly considered counseling to help them solve problems as an option. This was particularly for those who showed signs of emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Counseling, contrary to the commonly held belief, is meant to help all persons adjust and live normally acceptable lives. Eighty percent of the principals involved in the study stated that in most cases only a small number of the students seek for individualized counseling even when in problems like, Poor examination results, social break ups, abortions, bereavement, rape, violent robbery experienced by students and other tragedies that would call for counseling.

Finally it is interesting to note that clear concrete policy guidelines on teacher training college students' discipline are scanty. Although guidance and counseling as an alternative discipline intervention is recommended there lacks policies and strategies for deliberately training and equipping teachers in teacher training college with the expended skills. Teachers in these colleges are dealing with a group of the society (late adolescents) loaded with social, emotional and spiritual issues which are not discipline per se but which more often than not precipitate to discipline issues. It therefore becomes necessary to have certified trained guidance and counseling teachers in these institutions to help the administrators contain discipline. Monitoring and evaluation on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling in these institutions is also long overdue.

11.0. Conclusions

Discipline infractions experienced in teacher training colleges include; drug and alcohol abuse, sale of drugs, theft, absenteeism, cheating in exams, sneaking, disobedience, indecency, sexual harassment, unrest and abortions. Disciplinary methods that were used in establishing and managing student discipline in these colleges were; guidance and counseling, verbal reprimands, menial work, rewarding, suspensions expulsions, self-commitment to maintain good conduct and peer counseling.

When minor discipline infractions are committed the students can be warned or punished by student leaders. When this corrective measure is not effective the case can now be reported to the tutor on duty or the office of the dean of students. The student should be warned and depending on the seriousness of the offence he/she is punished or referred to the peer counselors or the guidance and counseling department.

Major violations should be referred to the deputy principal who then convenes a discipline committee meeting to listen to the case and deliberate on the next course of action. Punishment, reprimand in writing may be prescribed. If the students do not hit to this corrective measure or the offence is grave, then the case is recommended to the principal for suspension and more serious measures. This automatically leads to a two weeks' suspension after which the student reports back in the company of the parent/ official guardian to face the disciplinary committee. The student should be punished and counseled. Where there is no change the action is to treat the student as intolerable and drastic measures are taken.

Intolerable offences are grave and the measures against the offenders is to exclude them from the college indefinitely and this call for the convening of the board of management meeting within fourteen days to deal with the matter. The recommended punishments of such intolerable behavior are a one year suspension or expulsion. If the student is readmitted back guidance and counseling is prescribed and administered.

Student discipline can be enhanced by instilling in them self-control, self-respect and self-discipline. Deviant behavior should be corrected immediately it is noticed and good behavior encouraged through motivation and rewards. Due process enhances discipline by guaranteeing the accused student a fair hearing to determine the extent of guilt. To ensure that students receive justice in form of due process the following conditions should be met; existence of rules and regulations that are simple and clear with fixed penalties for violation. The penalties should be imposed only after a hearing has been done for the accused to determine the extent of guilt. In all cases student discipline management call for student friendly measures.

12.0. Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusions of this study the several recommendations were made to help improve the management of student discipline in teacher training colleges. Manual labour and harsh verbal reprimands are demeaning and degrading; it further subjects the students to psychological torture and therefore should be outlawed. The requirements of the Kenya constitution 2010 and the Basic education act 2013 should be enforced. Legal education included in teacher education curriculum should be practiced by the trainers.

This study found that suspension and expulsion were traumatizing to students and parents, and cumbersome to administer on delinquent students. In view of this, it was recommended that Boards of Management and county education authorities should be given authority to deal with cases of suspension and expulsion conclusively. Suspension and expulsion should be used to deal with major and intolerable infractions like drug abuse, drug sale, rape, abortions, robbery, indecency and cases of gay and lesbianism.

The disciplinary methods imposed should be administered by teachers and not student leaders in all circumstances for the improvement on their effectiveness. Guidance and counselling in teacher training colleges should be strengthened by having training qualifications that are recognised by the employer. The office bearers should also be substantively appointed.

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