

# Preparedness of the Children's Government in the Management of Discipline in the Public Primary Schools in Baringo Central Sub-county, Kenya

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## Abstract

The role of the student's leadership in school administration in Kenya and other parts of the world is increasingly becoming more complex because of the changes in the technology, society, culture, encroachment of democracy and emerging issues such as child rights, human rights, HIV/AIDS and drugs and ban of corporal punishment. This has brought about the participatory role among the School Board of Management (BOM), the teachers, pupils and parents. This study sought to investigate the level of implementation of Children's Government and the level of preparedness of the Children's Government in the management of discipline in public primary schools in Baringo Central Sub-county. This study adopted a descriptive survey research design and was guided by Participative leadership theory. The target population of the study was 119 public primary schools with a population of 2499 members of the children's government, 119 headteachers and 952 class teachers. Simple random sampling was used to select 36 public primary schools. All the headteachers and 30% of class teachers of the selected schools participated in the study. Purposive sampling was used to select 10 Executive members of the Children's Government. The researcher utilized questionnaires and interview schedule to collect the data and the collected data was analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. The findings indicated that majority of the schools where the study was carried had children's governments with free and fair election process of the members of children's government. The members of the children government were usually involved in the management of pupils' discipline.

**Keywords:** Children's Government, discipline, management, preparedness, implementation.

## 1.1 Introduction the Study

It is generally believed that the basis for any true development must commence with the development of human resources. Much then is said that formal education remains the vehicle for social-economic development and social mobilization in any society (Lucas, 1988). One of the ways to improve the school performance is to improve the level of discipline within the school. The pupils therefore should be involved in the management of the discipline in the school level through their elected leaders. The students' council leadership system has been operational for many years in other countries of world. The few pupils who get the opportunity to serve as prefects or club leaders in schools acquire basic leadership skills, build their self esteem, gain more confidence and become more assertive (Bancy 2009). In Kenya, students' councils were mostly found in higher institutions like Teacher Training colleges and universities where students democratically elect their leaders. In 2009, the secondary schools established the student council in their administration. Reports from some institutions that have adopted the students' council system reveal that there is a decrease in indiscipline cases, peaceful co-existence and improved academic and co-curriculum activities. Student leaders have also been in forefront in promoting positive relationships between the schools and the community. Unlike in secondary schools, primary schools in Kenya have been using prefecture system and they have not reaped the benefits of children participation and as a result, issues of indiscipline, poor relationships, and poor performance among others are evident. The indiscipline challenges faced by schools after the banning of corporal punishment and the subsequently inability of schools to effectively use guidance and counseling mechanisms justifies the formation of children Government which can help in addressing the challenges and give an alternative way of addressing discipline issues in primary schools in Kenya and especially in Baringo Central Sub-County, Baringo County.

In primary schools, the establishment of the children government will be expected to marshal a participatory approach to school management by directly involving the learners. The children's Government were to be elected by pupils unlike the prefect system where teachers pick children leaders (Mizunoya, 2014). Kaimenyi (2014) concurred with this move, by stating that, schools should shift from the traditional way of appointing a few prefects in schools and instead replace them with Children's Government that draws its mandate from the pupils themselves. The study was therefore to investigate into the level of implementation and preparedness of Children's Government to manage discipline in the public primary schools in Baringo Central Sub-county.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Ministry for Education Science and Technology (MOEST) has cited many causes of school unrests as poor

leadership and lack of effective communication in Schools. According to records from Baringo central sub-county Educational office, the common reported cases of indiscipline in public primary schools include; theft, fighting, drug abuse, absenteeism, lateness, abusive language and truancy among others. The indiscipline challenges faced by public primary schools after the banning of corporal punishment and the subsequent inability of schools to effectively use guidance and counseling mechanism justifies the formation of children's government which will help in addressing the challenges and give an alternative way of addressing discipline issues. The study was carried in primary schools because the children's government leadership system is practiced in primary schools only.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study were:

- i. To establish the level of implementation of Children's Government and its influence in the management of pupil's discipline in public primary schools in Baringo central sub-county, Baringo County.
- ii. To determine the level of preparedness of the Children's Government and its influence in the management of pupil's discipline in public primary schools in Baringo central sub-county, Baringo County.

### **2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The concept of the Children's Government began on 4th September 2013 during the 9th Annual Kenyan Primary Schools Head Teachers Association (KEPSHA) Delegates' Conference, sponsored by UNICEF and the Canadian High Commission. The concept has now spread to more than 20,000 schools with school-based, child-centred elections taking place across the country. It was introduced in public primary schools in Kenya as a result of the emerging issues such as the child's right as spelt out in the Children's Right Convention, the Kenya constitution and the Children's Act 2010 which put the best interest of the child as a priority. It also stresses on the children involvement in decision making process. It emphasizes that when working with children, it is important to respect their views and opinions. The prefecture system could not meet the threshold of the Children's Act and the new constitution, hence the formation of Children's Government in all public primary schools in Kenya to enable them elect their leaders democratically. Nsubuga (2000) avers that education at learning institutions may require new leadership approaches in order to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Improved efficiency is needed in public primary schools and can be achieved through leadership reforms. Therefore some of the roles of children's government in public primary schools will be to maintain discipline and order, participate in the formulation and implementation of school policies and enhance communication between pupils and the school administration.

Pupils in public primary schools should carry out elections before the children's government leadership is operational. The election process can be riddled by a number of challenges as pointed out by Cawood (1989): lack of key conflict resolution skills amongst the children's Government members, more so, this being a relatively new concept; the leaders' powers can easily be abused, breeding corruption amongst the pupils, in some cases justice can be bought by as little as a loaf of bread; serious issues that needed serious disciplinary measures before getting out of hand can be 'resolved' by the Children's Government, only to explode later; the government can easily create powerful blocks within themselves; understanding the weight of issues. The functions of the children Government therefore include: to promote and protect children's rights, responsibilities, needs and interests; take an active role in all school activities; cooperate with the professional and management bodies of the school, as well as with the Parent Council; present children's' views to the professional and management bodies of the school, and to take on an active role in the decision-making process; promote the interests of the school in the local community; promote primary school pupils' activism through organization of educational, volunteer, humanitarian, recreational, cultural and entertainment activities.

### **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This study was based on the participative leadership theory by Kurt Lewin (1939) and adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study targeted class teachers, head teachers and members of the Children's Government in public primary schools in the sub-county. For the purpose of this study, 30%(36) of the public primary schools in the sub-county was selected using simple random sampling. All(36) the head teachers of the selected schools participated in this study. Simple random sampling was used to select 30%(86) of the class teachers from each of the selected schools. Purposive sampling was used to select 10 executive members of Children's Government from each school. Data was collected using questionnaire and interview schedule. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics that include frequencies and percentages.

## 4.1 FINDINGS

### 4.1.1 Level of Implementation of Children's Government

The study sought to establish the level of implementation of Children's Government and its influence in the management of pupils discipline in public primary schools. The responses are presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

**Table 1 Level of Implementation of Children's Government (pupils)**

Statement	SA		A		U		D		T	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
There is children's government in my school	74	24.3	76	25.0	92	30.3	62	20.4	304	100
The elections of members of children's government in my school is free and fair	166	54.6	16	5.3	122	40.1	0	0.0	304	100
Members of children government are usually involved in the management of pupils discipline in my school	104	34.2	30	9.9	122	40.1	48	15.5	304	100
The composition of the children government are as per the MOE guideline of the formation and implementation of primary school children government	60	19.7	16	5.3	16	5.3	212	69.7	304	100

As shown in Table 1, 49.3 % (150) of the pupils stated that there were children's governments in their school while 20.4(62) disagreed. However, 30.3%(92) were undecided. These are the category of the pupils who are not sure whether the children government existed in their respective schools. It is also shown that 59.9 % (182) of the respondents stated that election of the members of children's government in their school was free and fair while 40.1 % (122) were undecided. Another 44.1% (134) asserted that members of the government were usually involved in the management of pupils discipline while 15.8 % (48) disagreed. Further, 25 % (75) of the respondents stated that the composition of members of children's government was as per the MOE guidelines on the formation and implementation of primary school children's government while 69.7%(212) disagreed.

The class teachers' responses are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2 Level of Implementation of Children's Government (teachers)**

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD		T	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
There is children's government in my school	56	66.7	20	23.8	4	4.8	0.0	0.0	4	4.8	84	100.0
The elections of members of children's government in my school is free and fair	48	57.1	20	23.8	9	10.7	3	3.6	4	4.8	84	100.0
Members of children government are usually involved in the management of pupils discipline in my school	53	63.1	12	14.3	11	13.1	4	4.8	4	4.8	84	100.0
The composition of the children government are as per the most guideline of the formation and implementation of primary school children government	52	61.9	17	20.2	7	8.3	4	4.8	4	4.8	84	100.0

As shown in Table 2, 90.5 % (76) of the class teachers stated that there were children's governments in their school while 4.8%(4) disagreed. It is further shown that 81 % (68) of the class teachers stated that election of the members of children's government in their school was free and fair while 8.4%(7) disagreed.

There were 77.4% (65) of the class teachers asserted that members of the government were usually involved in the management of pupils discipline while 9.6 % (8) disagreed. Further, 82.1%(69) of the class teachers stated that the composition of members of children's government was as per the MOE guidelines on the formation and implementation of primary school children's government while 9.6%(8) disagreed. The responses are similar to the findings obtained through interview that was conducted with the headteachers. Fielder (1978) contends that, without a proper Leadership style, effective performance cannot be realized in schools. If the school has all the required instructional materials and financial resources, it will not be able to use them effectively as long as the learners are not directed on their use, or if the teachers who guide in their usage are not properly trained to

implement them effectively.

#### 4.1.2 Level of Preparedness

The other concern for this study was to establish the level of preparedness of children's government and its influence in the management of pupil's discipline. The results are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

**Table 3 Level of Preparedness (Pupils' Responses)**

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD		T	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
members of children's government are elected democratically	134	44.1	76	25.0	94	30.9	0	0	0	0	304	100.0
no pupils for the discipline cases are allowed to vie	138	45.4	76	25.0	44	14.5	16	5.3	30	9.9	304	100.0
members of children's government are inducted on their roles after being elected	198	65.1	92	30.3	14	4.6	0	0	0	0	304	100.0
after every elections handing and taking over sessions are organizes for smooth transition	120	39.5	78	25.7	62	20.4	28	9.2	16	5.3	304	100.0
members of the children government understand their roles well	146	48.0	64	21.1	94	30.9	0	0	0	0	304	100.0

Table 3 shows that majority (69.1%) of the pupils stated that members of the children's government are elected democratically, while 30.9%(94) were undecided. The findings also shows that 70.4 % ( 214) of the pupils agreed that no pupil with discipline cases are allowed to vie for position in children's government while 15.4 % ( 46) disagreed. Further, it shows that 95.4 % ( 290) of the pupils stated that members of children's government were inducted on their role after being elected however, 4.6 % (14) disagreed. As stated by Byatta (2007), a headteacher should call the first meeting with the Children's Government and conduct the swearing in ceremony. The head teacher should also mentor children leaders and provide opportunities for capacity building to empower children leadership. Table 3 also shows that 65.1 % ( 198) of the respondents stated that after every election, handing and taking over session are organized for smooth transition. Only 14.5 % ( 44) disagreed. There were 69.1%(210) of the pupils who sated that members of children's government understated their role well, while 30.9 % ( 94) were undecided.

The teachers' responses are presented in Table 4

**Table 4 Level of Preparedness (class teachers)**

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD		T	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Members of children's government are elected democratically	63	75.0	13	15.5	4	4.8	0.0	0.0	4	4.8	84	100.0
No pupils for the discipline cases are allowed to vie	12	14.3	37	44.0	24	28.6	4	4.8	7	8.3	84	100.0
Members of children's government are inducted on their roles after being elected	25	29.8	12	14.3	35	41.7	0.0	0.0	12	14.3	84	100.0
After every elections handing and taking over sessions are organizes for smooth transition	17	20.2	9	10.7	35	41.7	8	9.5	15	17.9	84	100.0
Members of the children government understand their roles well	12	14.3	28	33.3	25	29.8	8	9.5	11	13.1	84	100.0

As shown in Table 4, majority (90.5%) of the class teachers stated that members of the children's government are elected democratically, while 4.8%(4) disagreed. The findings also shows that 58.3 % ( 49) of the class teachers agreed that no pupil with discipline cases are allowed to vie for position in children's government while 13.1 % ( 11) disagreed. Further, the findings shows that 44 % (37) of the class teachers stated that members of children's government were inducted on their roles after being elected however, 14.3%(12) disagreed. Children's government who have been well inducted and have a good understanding of their role are more loyal to the administration, and can dedicate more of their time to the running of the school, while still striking a balance with their academics. They are the eyes and ears of the administration (Van de, 2003).

Table 4 also shows that 31 % ( 26) of the class teachers stated that after every election, handing and taking over sessions are organized for smooth transition while 27.4%( 23) disagreed. There were 47.6%(40) of the class teachers who stated that members of children's government understand their roles well, while 22.6 % (19) were disagreed. The headteachers who were interviewed stated that members of children's government are elected

democratically and that pupils who were elected to the children's government were disciplined. Further, the headteachers asserted that after every elections, handing and taking over sessions were organized for smooth transition.

## 5.1 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1.1 Conclusions

Majority of the schools where the study was carried had children's governments with free and fair election process of the members of children's government. The members of the children government were usually involved in the management of pupils' discipline. However, the composition of members of children's government was not as per the MOST guidelines on the formation and implementation of primary school children's government. Members of children's government were inducted on their role after being elected and after every election, handing and taking over sessions are organized for smooth transition. It was established that members of children's government were key contributors to decision making regarding pupils discipline in school and that they were co-opted to school lower management meetings. This involvement had reduced cases of truancy, improved pupils' punctuality to classes and reduced the number of pupils who fail to do assignment and reduced fighting cases.

### 5.1.2 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made;

- i. The school headteachers should ensure that the composition of members of children's government was as per the MOST guidelines on the formation and implementation of primary school children's government.
- ii. There is also need for proper communication and involvement of children government in decision-making process, especially in areas touching the discipline of the learners.

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