

Factors Influencing Implementation of Safety Policies in Secondary Schools in Kenya

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Abstract: - Safety in learning institutions is increasingly becoming an issue of great concern in Kenya and globally. However, implementation of safety policies is being hampered by a variety of factors. This study looked into the factors that influence the implementation of safety policies in secondary schools in Kenya. A mixed design was used in this study. Eighteen National schools were purposively selected to participate in the study. Stratified random sampling was used to select 6 schools. The total sample was 436 respondents including 6 head teachers, 120 class teachers, 300 students, 6 watchmen, and 4 Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs). Questionnaires, Interview and observation schedules were used for data collection. Quantitative data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics while Qualitative as themes emerged. The findings indicated that implementation of safety measures in National Secondary Schools has affected by a variety of factors.

Key words: Safety, Implementation, schools, Factors, Awareness, Strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

School safety is a universal fundamental and indispensable component of the teaching and learning process. The Government of Kenya is therefore committed to the provision of quality education and training to its citizens at all levels. The Social Pillar in the Vision 2030 singles out education and training as the vehicle that will drive Kenya into becoming a middle-income economy according to [1]. In addition, the Kenyan Constitution, 2010 has provided Free and Compulsory Basic Education as a human right to every Kenyan child. The country is therefore obliged to align education and training to the demands of its citizens as in [2]. This requires the review of all aspects of the education system to make it responsive to the new realities including safety measures in the institutions. There has been persistent recurrence of safety problems in secondary schools in Kenya. This study seeks to find out the factors influencing the implementation of safety measures in secondary schools.

The study was based on Contextual Interaction Theory by [3]. The basic assumption of the Contextual Interaction Theory is that the course and outcome of the policy implementation process depend more crucially on the characteristics of the actors involved, particularly their motivation, communication, power, network settings in policy Implementation, consideration of factors influencing implementation and Human infrastructure for effective implementation. One of

CIT's key assumptions is that the factors influencing the implementation process are interactive. The influence of any factor, whether positive or negative, depends on the particular contextual circumstances. The barriers to implementation are as summarized by [4] under three headings: External environment, resistance to change and vested interests. External environment may hinder implementation if existing structures and processes are not in line with the implementation of the safety measures. This can make it difficult to maintain the impetus for implementation. Implementers may meet resistance from those not interested, which can impede implementation as in [5]. Such resistance can be caused by leaders making changes before stakeholders are ready, and before safety policies and school culture are fully aligned or fail to finance the implementation.

Supportive organizational structures and systems are crucial in helping staff implement safety measures. Organizational support means having systems and procedures in place within the organization which align themselves with the safety measures, and which inform assessment and decision-making as advised in [6]. For safety measures to be successfully implemented, they must become culturally embedded within the organization or system. If the organizational culture is at odds with safety policies, those implementing them must seek behavioral and attitudinal change within the organization to ensure effective implementation. This can be a long process and requires the unlearning of the existing culture, and the relearning of a new one.

Problem Statement: Safety in schools is increasingly becoming a critical issue which is of major concern to the government, parents, students and the society in Kenya and the world. Unsafe schools disrupt learning, destruction of resources and worst of all, lives are lost. Moreover, when school property is destroyed by students, parents often pay huge fines for the damages. The persistent recurrence of safety problems in public secondary schools even after the release of the Safety and Standards' Manual [1] poses serious questions that demand urgent answers if similar cases are to be avoided in future. It was therefore necessary to examine issues of school safety with a view of establishing the factors underlying the implementation of safety policies in national schools in order to provide viable solutions. In examining the above problem, the following research question was answered:

1. What factors influence the implementation of safety policies in secondary schools?

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a concurrent mixed methods research design which used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a more complete understanding of the research problem than either approach alone as in [7] and [8]. The target population for this study included eighteen (18) Public National secondary schools in Kenya which had sat for KCSE since 2010. Stratified random sampling was used to select 6 national schools to participate in the study. Non-probability (purposive) sampling was used to select head teachers and Quality Assurance Standards Officers. Teachers and form three students were chosen through simple random sampling. A total of 436 respondents were purposively selected including 6 head teacher, 120 class teachers, 300 form 3 students, 6 security personnel (watchmen) and 4 Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. The study was conducted from February to June 2014.

The research instruments used for data collection in this study were: questionnaires, interview and observation schedules. Questionnaires were administered to students and class teachers. The Head teacher, Quality Assurance and Standards Officer, and security personnel were interviewed. The researcher made observation documents like time-tables, school routine, memos, reports and staff minutes in relation to safety procedures. To test reliability, two schools that were not part of this study were used for the pilot since they had similar characteristics with the sampled schools. For the purpose of this study, the instruments were developed and presented to the statistician at the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton (UEAB) to be scrutinized and assessed for further guidance. To add validity, the experts' comments from the supervisors were also incorporated. Thereafter, amendments were made to ensure the simplicity and clarity of some questions. Questionnaires from the field were coded manually. Quantitative data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics in form of frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data collected from observations and interviews was transcribed and analyzed on an ongoing process as themes and sub-themes emerged.

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Factors Influencing Implementation of Safety Policies

Factors	Teachers (N=120)				Students (N=290)				
	Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
1	Inadequate funding	119	99	1	8	8	3	282	97
2	Inadequate technical capacity	103	86	17	14	60	21	230	79
3	Lack of supervision by MOEST	114	95	6	5	12	4	278	96
4	Inadequate time for implementation	109	91	11	9	9	3	281	97
5	Interference from surrounding community	89	74	31	26	92	32	198	68
6	Indiscipline among students	110	92	10	8	269	93	21	7
7	Insecurity challenges	109	91	11	9	180	62	110	38
8	Poor curriculum implementation	100	83	20	17	260	90	30	10
9	Ineffective/poor communication time	105	88	5	12	49	17	241	83
10	Lack of support from local community/unsupportive	83	69	37	31	69	24	221	76
11	Lack of uniform system of reporting safety threats	115	96	5	4	219	76	71	24

In regard to item number one, 282 (97%) students tended to disagree that inadequate funding was a factor influencing implementation of safety policies in schools. Out of 120 teachers 119 (99%) tended to agree that it was a factor influencing implementation indicating some variation in the responses. While teacher viewed finances as a factor affecting safety implementation students held a contrary opinion and this could be attributed to lack of awareness among the students on the factors influencing implementation of safety

policies. In the interviews conducted with head-teachers and QASOs, it was revealed that *inadequate funding was the most significant factor influencing the implementation of safety policies*. The implementation of safety policies involves extensive modification of existing buildings, the purchase of expensive safety equipment and fittings, installation of CCTV, hiring trained guards, fencing, capacity building at all levels and to create safety awareness in schools as noted in [9].

On item number two, 103 teachers (86 %) tended to agree and 230 (79.3 %) students tended to disagree that inadequate technical capacity was a factor influencing implementation of safety policies. This indicated a variation in the responses. To fully cooperate, teachers must have a voice in designing and implementing safety policies. They must be given resources and opportunity to collaborate and make decisions. When the policies are introduced, school administrators and teachers just tend to interpret them on their own without in-service training, or workshops, tools, guidance and counseling, to build their skills. Reference [10] recommends that school administrators and teachers need techniques to be competent in safety measures implementation, and be encouraged to keep them up by going for seminars and workshops.

Item number 3 in the questionnaires focused on the role of the ministry of education, science and technology in implementation of safety measures. Out of 290 students, 278 (96 %) tended to disagree while 114 (95 %) of teachers agreed showing a variation in the responses. The ministry of Education has a key role influencing implementation of safety policies in secondary schools. Teachers are required to implement safety policies but the Minister of Education, Science and Technology should be the first to initiate change and provide the ingredients and processes for constructive implementation as noted in [11]. Work in the school organization cannot proceed properly without some means of controlling, guiding, limiting and managing various units, as advised by [12]. Priority and support from the key stakeholders such as the ministry and school boards play a major role in the successful implementation of the safety program in school. Once the ministry and the school board make school safety program their priority, they will put effort to provide and organize the funding, staffing; training and professional development required for the implementation of school safety programs.

Lack of proper management in the implementation of safety policies amounts to negligence among school leaders and teachers. Unqualified school managers are some of the major causes of crisis in schools. Two (50 %) out of four QASOs cited *poor leadership skills as a factor undermining the implementation and management of safety policies in schools*. At the school level, the principal is the key person for matching individual needs and institutional expectations; he or she is crucial to creating school spirit and receptivity to change and implementation of safety policies by promoting trust and team work as noted by [13]. However, the principal can dampen the spirit of implementation of safety policies by promoting distrust and demoralization. The head teachers are required to have competent leadership skills to secure the school, develop a comprehensive school safety and crisis-response plan, address the peer culture and its problems and allocate resources in making the school safer.

Out of 290 students, 281 (97.8%) tended to disagree while 109 (91 %) of teachers tended to agree that timing was a factor in policy implementation. This showed a variation in responses a

fact attributed to lack of awareness. Reference [14] agrees that School community members may often resist change and implementation of safety policies if no support or additional time is given for the effort. A project for which time is not budgeted is rarely destined to be implemented. Schools often budget monies for materials but fail to allocate time for creation of awareness plan or necessary in-service training for teachers, students and support staff as also reported by [11].

On item number 5, 89 (74%) Of teachers tended to agree and 198 (68%) of students disagreed that interference from the surrounding community influence the implementation of safety policies in secondary school. The students may have tended to disagree because of their lack of awareness on the role played by the Community in the implementation of safety policies. A study done by [15] found out that neighborhood risk factors including poverty, crowding, and a high crime rate all influence school safety in one way or the other. If neighborhoods produce residents who engage in unsafe incidents or violent behaviors in their communities those same individuals are likely to attend school or interact with the schools in their communities in a similar manner and thus bring aggression, problem behaviors and crime to their schools. This was also reported by [16], who found out that, girls in Kisumu district copied bad behavior due to staying in a permissive environment.

On lack of support from local leaders and community, 83 (69%) of teachers agreed that it affects while 221 (76%) of students disagreed as a factor not influencing the implementation of safety policies in secondary schools in Kenya. Students tended to disagree because of their lack of awareness on the role played by local leaders and community in the implementation of safety policies. Any project must have the full and unconditional support of the local administrators in coordination and funding of the program as advised by [17]. The implementers of safety policies must furnish all affected parties, teachers, students, parents and community members, with information about the nature of the safety policies implementation program and its rationale. According to [18], unsupportive parents can negatively influence implementation of safety policies due to negative attitude, detachment from the core functions of the school, failure to pay school fees and other levies for repair and maintenance of school facilities. Reference [19] reported that due to threats from some influential parents, principals may suspend taking disciplinary measures like suspensions for the fear that the influential parents may have it terminated altogether and the student readmitted unconditionally.

About 269 (93 %) of students and 110 (92%) of teachers identified indiscipline as a factor that influences the implementation of safety policies in secondary schools in Kenya. From interviews, school principals, security personnel (Watchman) and Quality Assurance and Standards officers (QUASOs) *highlighted some of the indiscipline cases they deal with including fights among learners, theft, sneaking, malicious damage of school or other students'*

property among others. Some teachers show favoritism to some students who have engaged in indiscipline. Reference [19] argues that it is difficult to enforce discipline on students who occasionally and intentionally cause disruption, ridicule and humiliation of teachers. Such embarrassing situation has made it difficult for schools to implement safety policy. Teachers are supposed to create and promote a set of school-based positive values on how to treat others with civility, caring and respect the rights of others.

Concerning insecurity as a factor influencing the implementation of safety policy, 109 (91%) of teachers and 180 (62 %) of student cited it as a factor. Reference [20] concurs with the same findings. In their study of challenges facing head teachers in security management in public secondary schools in Kisii County, they said that factors that contribute to insecurity in schools are those mainly associated with indiscipline of students, where students, teachers, subordinate staff are at risk of being harmed or property destroyed. *Drug abuse was cited by all 6 (100 %) head teachers and two of the QASOs as a factor of insecurity which undermines the implementation of safety measures in secondary schools. It makes the students, teachers and subordinate staff to steal or fight in the school creating unsafe schools.* Studies done by [21] are in agreement with this finding as drug abuse is usually associated with aggressive behavior, irritability and over excitement among other antisocial behaviors. This leads to violence and destruction of property in schools hence affecting safety as well.

Poor curriculum implementation was cited by 100 (83 %) of the teachers and 260 (90 %) of the students as a factor hindering effective implementation of safety measures. Owing to the great competition in national examinations performance by schools, both parents and teachers have placed a lot of emphasis on academic studies. *From the interviews, it was established teaching both for normal school and outside school time go on concurrently, leading to over teaching. This means students are given less time to understand and assimilate the overwhelming content. Under this search for academic excellence, the need to inculcate positive character in students has been sidelined.* This concurs with [20] who reported that emphasis on material gains rather than morality and ethical standards has impacted negatively on the youth. This implies that students have not been seriously enlightened on the importance of safety in schools as noted by [22] due to acute shortage of teachers, which has also not made management of safety measures easier. He advised that schools should engage the services of professional security firms to man schools.

Out of 120 teachers, 105 (88 %) and 260 (90 %) of the students agreed that poor communication from administrators resulted into non-implementation of safety measures. Effective, on-going communication is critical in motivating staff, overcoming resistance to change and giving and receiving feedback on implementation of safety measures. It is also essential for building and maintaining trust among staff.

Having internal systems and processes which support effective communication is, therefore, vital as indicated in [12]. This will help in building staff capacity as a core component of implementation and is pivotal in ensuring that the desired outcomes are achieved as noted by [23]. Consulting with all relevant stakeholders is vital for successful implementation. It allows those implementing the safety policy to assess current needs, the fit and feasibility of safety measures, and levels of capacity and readiness.

Lack of uniform system of reporting threats to safety was cited by 115 (96%) teachers and 219 (76 %) students as a factor affecting implementation of safety measures in schools. Uniform system of reporting on current extent of criminal and other disciplinary incidents, helps pinpoint problem areas and enables administrators to evaluate the success of disciplinary action. According to [24] lack of a uniform system of reporting is a challenge to discipline and safety in secondary schools. Uniform system of reporting on current extent of criminal and other disciplinary incidents, helps pinpoint problem areas and enables administrators to evaluate the success of disciplinary action. In liaising with teachers on matters relating to safety, the students form a link between teachers and administration. However, they are often left out in the implementation of safety policies which is a hindrance. Schools should make every student to feel connected to it, to staff members and other students and the vision, mission and motto, core values and goals of the school [25]. Such work needs to be very intentionally focused to ensure that each and every student feels valued and connected to the school community, especially in reporting threats to safety.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

It was concluded that the unsatisfactory implementation of safety policies was attributable to a variety of factors which included inadequate funds, low technical capacity, inadequate time, lack of proper coordination and supervision from the Ministry of Education, and indiscipline among the students. However implementation gaps still existed in some schools. Planning, organization, monitoring, evaluation and proper reporting are essential for determining whether desired outcomes are being achieved or not. Such activities also help to identify risks to implementation and inform future actions on safety and security of educational institutions.

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