School Policy Commitments to Staff and Students' Welfare: A Case Study of Public Secondary Schools in Iganga District, Uganda

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Abstract

The study was carried out on school policy commitments to staff and students' welfare in public secondary schools in Iganga District, Uganda with focus on: the indicators of need for school policy commitment to teachers and students' welfare as well as establishing the effect in a qualitative approach using interviews. The findings indicate that effective school discipline procedures support kids' decision-making and academic attention. Teenagers that receive sex education are better able to grasp their biological makeup and become more mature. Thus, the sex education policy aids in informing and educating children about puberty and gives them confidence to speak up when boundaries are crossed. Breakfast and lunch are provided to every student in practically every public secondary school. An after-school snack and dinner are also offered to those taking part in extra-curricular activities. Therefore, students are better able to concentrate on studying when they feel comfortable. Students need to be disciplined to make significant academic progress, yet many institutions struggle in this area. Results show that teachers who emphasize timelines in finishing activities end up failing to finish syllabi.

Keywords: Iganga District, secondary schools, school policy, teacher commitment

1. Background of the Study

School policy commitments are regarded as one of the most important components of stakeholder relationship management because they serve as the most practical way of ensuring a secure and encouraging learning environment. According to students who participated in the 2019 Australian study by Helen & McConey about teachers' commitment to upholding a safe and supportive learning environment, the lack of effective classroom managers leaves students without caring connections, without order, and does little to make students feel like they are a part of the educational system.

The Sweden study by Anna et al. (2019) revealed that while teachers' self-efficacy beliefs were associated with higher instructional quality, a significant positive correlation between mathematics coursework and students' levels of mathematical achievement as well as between students' perceptions of instructional quality and achievement was only found after adjusting for socioeconomic status and immigration status of the students.

Barni et al., (2018)'s study raised concern over the relationship between teachers' adherence to personal principles and the ideals they want their students to embrace. It was found that teachers' classroom management practices were influenced by their personal morals and the ideals they wanted their students to embrace. This implies that without a positive moral push, students will remain uncomfortable and liable to condictions that affect their welfare.

In Uganda, not much has been documented concerning the school's policy commitment to teachers and students' welfare. However, at a peri-urban private secondary school, Ssebuliba & Bbuye (2017) examined the implications of teacher compliance with an ICT usage policy. The authors discovered that failure to implement ICT usage policy due to gaps in skills adversely affected interactive learning in the midst of increased students' enthusiasm and eagerness. John and McMullen (2018)'s investigation indicated that teacher-led, life skills-focused, and manualized intervention could enhance self-efficacy, lowering internalizing difficulties, and fostering a sense of community and self-understanding among secondary school students in Uganda. On the other hand, Anouschka et al.'s 2019 study looked at the relationship between teacher commitment to student follow-up and student cooperation activities and outcomes, with results showing that a variety of teacher supervision characteristics, such as paying close attention to students' problem-solving strategies, are positively related to student collaboration.

Shen et al. (2020) explored the correlation between teacher leadership and students' academic success. The results revealed a strong relationship (r =.19) between teacher leadership and academic attainment. The results of the subgroup analysis revealed parallels between research using various outcome measures and conceptualizing teacher leadership for students in elementary and secondary schools.

From the studies above, it is clear that the lack of effective classroom managers leaves students without caring connections, without order, and does little to make students feel like they are part of the educational system. This implies that without a positive moral push, students will remain uncomfortable and liable to conditions that affect their welfare. A focus on Uganda reveals that not much has been documented concerning the school's policy commitment to teachers and students' welfare. One study examined the implications of teacher compliance with an ICT usage policy and found no compliance due to a lack of skills. Another study looked at the relationship between teacher commitment to student follow-up and student cooperation activities and outcomes, and also unearthed no strong significant positive results. The study concerning school policy commitment to teachers was thus necessary, bearing in mind that adequate knowledge is required to ensure that teachers are in the right position to take care of students' needs from all angles.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine how school policy obligations to staff affect the welfare of students in public secondary schools in the Iganga District.

3. Specific Objectives

(a) Describe the indicators of need for school policy commitment to teachers in public secondary schools in Iganga District

(b) Determine the indicators of students' welfare in public secondary schools in Iganga District

(c) To establish the effect of school policy commitment to staff on students' welfare in public secondary schools in Iganga District

4. Theory of the Study

Azjen's 1985 Theory of Planned Activity (TPB), which asserts that a person's decision to engage in a certain behavior can be influenced by their desire to do so, served as the study's inspiration (Brookes, 2021). With the assumption that the greater the intention, the more probable it is that the behavior will be carried out, the theory focuses on the motivational variables that contribute to enhanced intent to execute a behavior. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), deliberate behavior is influenced by perceptions of control, subjective norms, and behaviors (Alghazo, 2013). This assumption serves as the basis for the study since the option to engage in a certain behavior can directly translate into a teacher's decision to do necessary tasks on a daily basis in the hopes of enhancing student results. To put it simply, a teacher chooses to follow the guidelines of school policy for the sake of their students' cooperation, safety, academic success, and general well-being.

5. Application of the Theory

Hagger et al. (2011) investigated the alcohol dependency of TPB. They found that a person's desire to overcome an addiction was impacted by their own beliefs, their own standards, and how much behavioral control they felt they had. After one and three months, an addict's consumption of units was affected by both intention and perceived behavioral control. The endeavor to quit engaging in addictive behavior was motivated by this desire.

6. Strengths of the TPB

Several studies have found that the TPB is more accurate at predicting health-related behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1988). The TPB has improved intention predictability in several health-related domains, including leisure, exercise, diet, and condom use. A person's social behavior may also be explained by the theories of planned conduct and reasoned action by placing a strong emphasis on "social norm" as a key factor.

7. Weakness of the TPB

Even though TPB discusses intention, action does not always match intention. For example, when Miller and Howell (2005) looked at underage adolescent gambling, they found a strong correlation between attitudes, norms, perceived control, and intention, but no link between this intention and action. Nowadays, many psychologists question whether TPB still functions as a paradigm for behavior change. It emphasizes intention heavily, therefore it might be challenging to create drug-related therapies that could connect intention and behavior.

8. Methodology

The Study employed a qualitative approach with interview interaction with learners and school authorities in line with the subject of study.

9. Results of the Study

According to CDC (2015), a policy refers to a law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, or voluntary practice of an institution. North Carolina State University (2011) defines a policy as any standard, statement, or procedure of general applicability adopted pursuant to authority delegated by law or board of governors. On the other hand, Writer (2020) defines a policy as a principle that guides decision-making. The most common aspect in all these definitions is that a policy contains the aspect of procuring. This implies that there are some considerations that policy makers ought to take note of.

10. Indicators of Need for School Policies

According to findings from teachers, many public secondary schools have obligations that go beyond merely dispensing information. It is possible to break down the total school approach to health promotion into six distinct but equally significant parts. The school's health policy is the first of these elements. Selected public secondary schools in Iganga District have roles and responsibilities which go beyond simply imparting knowledge. The whole school approach to health promotion can be described as six different but equally important components.

The first of these components is the school's health policy. As a students' violence control tool, indicating clearly intervention, prevention, and response measures in the prevention of crises at school. By anticipating possible crises and responding appropriately through prevention, school policies help to sustain a secure learning environment. While giving their views about the kinds of disciplinary cases in their secondary schools, one head teacher stated;

...the disciplinary cases are reflected right from the context of socialization whereby students are always moving in groups. One element identified is that these students are always sharing more about their social life and how to cope up with life in school. You will find one student eagerly desiring to share with another such that an environment appears for students who not only want to learn from each other, but where they fear to annoy each other...

From the above quotation still, school discipline continues to manifest in some secondary schools in Iganga District. However, manifestation differs with secondary school. Moreover, the statistical results reveal that operating in groups is an effective reflection of disciplinary action in secondary schools.

A school also includes rules of behavior for parents and school officials in addition to those for pupils. These regulations specify the roles that parents and school administrators should play in their children's education. Some school districts also have behavior rules for additional school-related activities, including athletic events, field excursions, and bus transportation.

Student disciplinary policies differ by school, much like student behavior rules do. When it comes to looking into misbehavior and enforcing penalties, some jurisdictions grant students additional rights and safeguards, whilst other states could simply offer them the bare minimum of protections mandated by the Constitution. In response, head teachers in most of the schools reported regular and prompt reporting to school. Another head teacher was quoted;

...in this school, I have tried to advocate for actions which call for discipline right form the administration to student' body...teachers always play their part to keep encouraging students to come to school not only regularly, but in time which defines good discipline case...

The above justifies some of the results indicating there is prompt coming to school and that students are always

regularly coming to school in most of the secondary schools. Though this was not mentioned in some of the secondary schools, about three quarters of the schools stated the same.

According to findings, when there is substance abuse at home, there is a high risk for substance abuse in minors and is one of the reasons for juvenile delinquency. When a teen is using drugs or alcohol, there is a significantly higher risk of criminal activity. This is for two reasons. First, the minor will commit crimes so that they can support their habit. The second reason is that the decision-making process in the minors is altered and they may do things that they have not actually thought through. Many students in public secondary schools in Iganga District suffer violence, bullying, and discrimination. They suffer gender-based violence in or around schools every year, and one in three students experiences bullying and physical violence. Half the world's adolescents report violence from peers at school.

11. Broder View of Indicators of Students Welfare

Findings show that breakfast and lunch are available to every student in practically every public secondary school in the Iganga District, which is in line with the feeding programs that have been pushed for. An after-school snack and dinner will be offered to those taking part in after-school activities, such as a sports or academic team.

Every child has the right to go to school free from fear. When schools provide quality, inclusive and safe education, children can learn, build friendships, and gain the critical skills they need to navigate social situations. In the best circumstances, school puts children on the path to a promising future. According to responses from head teachers, in all schools there is an environment put forth to encourage students' participation in leadership. This in all schools is through organizing elections where students undergo campaigning as stated by on teacher;

…Students can conduct campaigns just like the members of parliament. The purpose is to initiate them into a pool of knowledge which they can use for settling cases in their day to day social life. Besides, initiating students into leadership is necessary and it is done every after one year to encourage students respect each other and handle minor disciplinary cases…

Concisely, students' leadership is part of the considerations of the school administration to encourage leadership of students amongst themselves. It is through leadership that students respect each other, and it is through respecting each other that they will create a platform to start respecting their teachers. This is because cases which are not handled at the students' disciplinary body is referred to teacher disciplinary body.

According to findings from teachers, a safe school setting is essential for children' healthy academic and social development, and it has an impact on several variables, from staff retention to parent satisfaction. The impact of students' sense of safety on their academic performance is perhaps the most significant. Students are better able to concentrate on studying when they feel comfortable, and this improves their academic performance. However, some results differ among head teachers. One head teacher for instance indicated that instead of enabling students hold campaigns and elect their own leaders, they are just appointed;

…In this school, involvement of students in administration is to the discretion of the administrators such as teachers. We realized that campaigns that are conducted in many primary schools do not end up into selection or election of capable prefects. Therefore, at this school, we, as administrators sit and watch the characters of students individually then appoint them to positions of responsibility…one to disciplinary, another into the office of welfare, etc…

This information indicates that right choices of students who participate in leadership requires careful thoughts and studying of students' character.

According to research, a caring teacher has high standards, is friendly and trustworthy, works to avoid conflict in the classroom, and thinks that every child can learn, but differently and at various speeds. Additionally, he or she utilizes humor, freely admits mistakes, establishes limits, and is personable and open-minded. From the head teachers' results, it is clear that at least though not so seriously adhered to, adherence to school regulations has positive results. This is partly reflected in the ability of students to report to school not only regularly but on time. The possibility of total failure to adhere to school rules and regulations is not a characteristic of many schools. In terms of respect for teachers, head teachers had various views. One head teacher stated;

…except a few cases of indiscipline, which teachers are dealing with where one student had to fight with a teacher over a correction of behavior, we have not been doing badly when it comes to discipline cases…in fact this thing is two-way traffic; in some cases, it is rumored that teachers want to develop a habit of having secret love relationships at individual levels with students, however, no evidence has come out yet…

The above indicates a possibility that certain cases of indiscipline are not always brought to the head teachers' desks. In this case, rumors may either bear true or false information. Nonetheless, issues of discipline and undisciplined cases are common in secondary schools in Iganga District.

12. Relationship Between Commitment to Policy and Students' Welfare

Findings show how teachers approach the clarity and viability of lesson objectives. Therefore, it is accurate to say that teachers provide the completion of tasks in each session their undivided attention. This explains why some instructors can finish science topic syllabi, whilst those who do not emphasize timelines in finishing activities end up failing to finish syllabi. In response, head teachers in most of the schools reported regular and prompt reporting to school. One head teacher was quoted;

...in this school, I have tried to advocate for actions which call for good performance right form the administration to student' body...teachers always play their part to keep encouraging students to come to school not only regularly, but in time which defines good discipline case...

The above quotation justifies some of the results in Table 4.5 especially where findings indicated that there is prompt coming to school and that students are always regularly coming to school in most of the secondary schools. Though this was not mentioned in some of the secondary schools, about three quarters of the schools stated the same.

Findings from teachers indicated that commitment to school discipline procedures, support children's decision-making and academic attention. Students need to be disciplined to make significant academic progress, yet many institutions struggle in this area. One advantage of picking a boarding school is the discipline policies. Here's a closer look at why discipline in schools is so important. In head teachers' responses concerning how the schools ensure that students adhere to school rules and regulations, there is an assurance that school rules and regulations are clearly indicated and exhibited on the notice board;

...So interesting, now, before anything else is done, we try to our level best to see to it that school rules and regulations are not only put in place but are communicated to students so that they understand these rules and regulations...Putting rules and regulations in place is one thing and making students understand the rules and regulations is another...

The quotation points to an assurance that observation of school rules and regulations does not only entail putting the rules and regulations in place but communicating the same to students so that they adhere to what they already know. The tendency of not displaying rules and regulations on notice boards for students to read as it was mentioned in two schools is not enough to bring credit to observation of school rules and regulations.

Teenagers that receive sex education are better able to grasp their biological makeup and become more mature to avoid being sexually preyed upon. Additionally, it gives kids the confidence to speak out when their sexual boundaries are crossed. Puberty is a difficult time for adolescents. They frequently mistake some things for abnormality. You must recognize that your body is undergoing physical or biological changes. Sex education aids in informing and educating children. Sex education may help you understand what's normal and when you need to worry about seeing your doctor, yet ignorance can cause people to dislike their bodies or compare themselves to others their own age.

Punishment is most successful when it is given right away after a response, cannot be avoided, is as severe as required, and provides the learner with a choice between two acceptable responses. The use of physical punishment in schools persists despite significant advancements, and many teachers still employ it as a means of discipline and authority-building. Students are often punched, slapped, and humiliated at numerous schools. In both mainstream and special schools, instructors and aides do not physically harm, verbally abuse, or ignore pupils with disabilities, especially those with sensory and intellectual difficulties and children with autism. These results agree with some responses from head teachers which indicated that the disciplinary committee of the teachers' body is an attribute of the students' disciplinary body. In his words, the head teacher school E stated;

...I would say that the discipline body for students works hand in hand with that of the teachers to reinforce adherence to school rules and regulations. In fact, most of the serious and recognizable cases of lack of discipline are not always handled by prefects alone...sometimes, we do not even look for these students to facilitate them, rather, issues that arise come to our notice and students come on board to ask for our input...

This is enough to show that the teachers' body gives advisory facilitation to the students' body. It also means that observation of discipline is not a single party concern, rather, it is a concern for concerted efforts which must involve teachers and students. To the other extreme, one of the head teachers indicated that some issues do concern female students, in which case, the senior teacher comes in. In other cases, issues which concern boys in boarding section are normally handled by the school warden.

13. Conclusion

Effective school discipline procedures support kids' decision-making and academic attention. Students need to be disciplined to make significant academic progress, yet many institutions struggle in this area. Teenagers that receive sex education are better able to grasp their biological makeup and become more mature. Sex education

aids in informing and educating children about puberty and gives them confidence to speak up when boundaries are crossed. Breakfast and lunch are provided to every student in practically every public secondary school in the Iganga District. An after-school snack and dinner is also offered to those taking part in extra-curricular activities, such as sports or academic teams. Students are better able to concentrate on studying when they feel comfortable, and this improves their academic performance.

Results show that teachers who emphasize timelines in finishing activities end up failing to finish syllabi. Effective school discipline procedures support kids' decision-making and academic attention. Students need to be disciplined to make significant academic progress, yet many institutions struggle in this area. Teenagers that receive sex education are better able to grasp their biological makeup and become more mature.

14. Recommendations for Practice and Theory

Head teachers and teachers should create a policy in schools were by the students are given chance to elect their own student leaders in a way of exercising democracy in schools other than the school administrators appointing them. Relatedly, schools should involve Student leaders in administration, decision-making, and general management of the school. This will make them feel part of the administration hence ease the implementation and monitor of rules and regulation to curb indiscipline in students.

Schools are advised to make every effort to ensure students and parents are aware of the existence of a school safety plan and are familiar with the provisions of the school conduct code. To this end, schools might ask both students and parents to sign forms stating they have read the school conduct code as a part of school procedures related to student enrollment, participation in extracurricular activities, or notification of grades. There is need for effective implementation of institutional regulations and communication in secondary schools should be established by; ensuring that students' always follow school rules and regulations, communicating school regulations to students regularly, use of proper channels of communication, making sure students understand the rules properly, and avoiding poor channels of communication.

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