CHALLENGES FACING DAY SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN FOSTERING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN GATANGA DISTRICT, MURANG'A COUNTY

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Abstract

The importance of education cannot be over emphasized as it is the key to development of any nation. The government of Kenya appreciates this fact and has led the way in bring up an educated population through the introduction of free primary education. Through the introduction of free primary education, this has seen a big rise in the number of students moving from primary school to the secondary schools. To cater for the increase in the number of secondary school students, local community initiatives have led to growth of what is referred to as day secondary schools to absorb some of the students who cannot be accommodated in the boarding schools. The day secondary schools have a number of challenges that they experience some ranging from insufficient funding and understaffing among others. As the chief administrators of these institutions, the principals end up bearing the most weight from these challenges and this is what has informed the conduct of this research.

The main purpose of this study was to identify the challenges facing school administrators in managing day secondary schools. This research used day secondary schools in Gatanga District, Murang'a County as case study in a bid to gain an understanding and document the day to day challenges faced by the school administrators in these schools. The research was conducted under three main objectives namely to investigate what challenges the admission of students with low K.C.P.E grades pose to principals of the day secondary schools in Gatanga district, to determine the challenges that the local community presents to the administrators of the day secondary schools as well as to determine whether students indiscipline is one of the major challenges that the secondary school principals face in the management of the schools.

Secondary school administration has played a key role in most secondary institutions throughout Kenya. Despite this, most secondary school head teachers face challenges that affect the smooth running of their respective institutions. The study endeavoured to determine challenges and problems facing head teachers in managing day secondary schools and determine possible solutions. The study identified the causes of these challenges and outlined the effort taken by

head teachers in order to overcome them. The research employed a descriptive survey study design as a better option to conduct the study. Twenty day secondary schools in Gatanga district were sampled. The researcher used questionnaires and interview schedules to collect data. An interview session was held with the district education officer with the aim of getting an in-depth understanding from the officer on the government's perspective on the challenges facing the school administrators in the management of day secondary schools and whether there were any measures that have been instituted to deal with these challenges. The interview session with the district education officer was recorded in an mp3 recorder so as to ensure that all the discussions were captured as well as for safe custody of the data.

Due to time constraint, the other respondents were issued with questionnaires which they filled in confidence and submitted back to the researcher. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents that were involved in the study and these respondents comprised of10 Principals, 10 Deputy Principals, 10 parents, 100 Students and the District Education Officer totalling to 141 respondents. The researcher visited at least four schools each day dropping the questionnaires and giving the respondents time to fill in as he visited the neighbouring school. After giving each school adequate time to fill the questionnaires, the researcher passed by each school collecting the documents ready for analysis. The data in the questionnaires, the interview guide and the Mp3 recorder was cleaned and then key punched in a computer ready for analysis and presentation.

After cleaning, the data was then analyzed by use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer package to determine the challenges facing head teachers in managing day secondary schools in Gatanga District, Murang'a County. After analysis, the qualitative data was presented in the form of themes whereas the quantitative data was presented graphically in a bid to address fully the research problem. After carrying out the analysis, the researcher has made a number of recommendations that were based on the findings of the study. Some of the findings from the research were that student's indiscipline in the day secondary schools in Gatanga district remains a major challenge to the principals and actually occupy a substantial part of their

time in trying to sort out the indiscipline issues. The research also found out that admission of students with low K.C.P.E grades continuous to pose a major challenge to the principals. Despite putting a lot of efforts to uplift their performance, most of these students end up recording poor results in K.C.S.E which is a big demoralization to the principals and the teachers who have invested a lot of their time to see the students excel.

The value of this research will be immense in that in addition to highlighting the challenges that the school administrators are faced with in the management of the day secondary schools in our country, it will also facilitate the collection of important data into possible solutions of these challenges. This research work will also facilitate the beginning of an important debate by the education stake holders on the pertinent issues that the study raises which is a big step in addressing these challenges.