

## SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN NYAMIRA COUNTY IN KENYA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to establish the challenges that confront principals of secondary schools in Nyamira County in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey and questionnaires were employed to collect data. The study sample consisted of 87 principals purposively selected from schools in the County. The quantitative data from questionnaires was analysed with the aid of SPSS (statistical package for social science). The study established that principals faced serious challenges which included interference from sponsors, inadequate funds, inadequate resources and lack of qualified teachers among others. The study also identified the following as serious issues: teenage pregnancy, bullying, alcohol and drugs, violence and truancy among others. Such challenges and issues negatively impacted on the schools' entire life including examination performances.*

**Keywords:** Secondary school, Principals, County, Nyamira, Kenya, Issues, Challenges.

### INTRODUCTION

Review of literature indicates that secondary school principals experience multiple of challenges as they execute their role and responsibilities. The challenges include among others, sponsors interference and intimidation, widespread insecurity issues linked to students' unrest, lack of adequate resources, lack of adequate and qualified teachers and drug abuse. Some of these challenges have grown in intensity and frequency over the years; for instance, in Kenya in 2007, 300 secondary schools were closed following student rampage destroying property and lives (Kirui, et al., 2011). Kiumi et al., (2009) underscores the importance of student discipline, arguing that it is critical to the attainment of positive school outcomes. They also report that the condition of students' discipline in secondary schools in Kenya is disheartening. According to World Bank (2008) school heads are recognised as accounting officers by the government. They are accountable to District Education Officers (DEO), Board of Governors (BOG) and are supposed to report to Parent Teacher Association (PTA) in relation to the use of resources. According to Kiprop (2012), head teachers have a very important role to play in maintaining discipline in schools, they achieve this by setting the tone and morale of the school and through their remarkable influence over the teachers and students. And therefore the role of head teachers remains critical in the successful implementation of various government reforms (Kamunde, 2010). Lethoko et al., (2001) identifies lack of professionalism among teachers and principals, poor management of the school by the principals and lack of preparation of lessons by under-qualified teachers as factors that have negative influence on the learning in South Africa. Also students' indiscipline has been linked to the use of alcohol, drugs and other substance misuse (Oteyo and Kariuki, 2009).

This article reports on the multiple challenges facing secondary principals as they execute their roles and responsibilities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Study Background and General Overview of Challenges Facing Principals

Ohba (2011) defines secondary education generally as stage between primary and tertiary. He further attempts to make a distinction between different phases practised in developing countries as follows:

For most countries this means a single phase in the education stages following primary level. For most countries, however, secondary education consists of a combination of lower (junior) and upper (senior) levels. Its duration also differs between and within regions with the average of five to seven years of secondary education. In some countries 'basic education' also includes the lower secondary levels. Yet in other countries basic education is defined in terms of a combination of primary and lower secondary education. ( Ohba, 2011, p.403)

He also comments that in developing countries the term 'basic education' is increasingly used to include lower secondary education. Kenya operates a single phase of secondary education. Kenya also operates an education system that consists of eight years in primary, four years of secondary and four years of higher education (Makori, 2005).

Further review of literature indicate that the number of public secondary schools in Kenya rose from 3,684 in 2002 to 4,245 in 2007 as a result of Constituency Development Fund (CDF), Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) increased infrastructure investment into the sector. Enrolment at secondary schools grew by 38.6% from 851,836 in 2002 to 1,180,268 in 2007 resulting from increased enrolment in primary school due to the introduction of free primary education (FPE) in 2003. The review also indicate that over half (57%) of those who complete primary school education progress to secondary level. The total number of public and private secondary schools in Kenya are almost one third (6,484) of all primary schools in Kenya (18,000) (Republic of Kenya, 2008), which is a serious challenge. Similar trend is also reflected in Africa as a whole. UNESCO (2005; 2010) in Ohba (2011) indicate that the general Secondary education average net enrolment rate (NER) only increased from 18% in 1999 to 27% in 2007. Some Kenya's strategies to deal with the shortfall in secondary schools access and participation include expansion of existing secondary schools to a minimum of three streams; establish new mixed day secondary schools especially in deficit areas and improvement of facilities in existing secondary schools (Republic of Kenya, 2008). It is not clear whether the strategies have been implemented yet.

However, inadequate learning facilities have been identified as a common feature in many schools and can be impinge on effective access and participation in secondary education. It is further noted that schools with adequate facilities perform better in national examinations especially in core subjects such as mathematics. Performance in national examination is not only a yard stick for measuring a success in schools but also for evaluating curriculum both at local and national levels. Other factors which contribute to success include the teachers' experience and competence, and syllabus coverage or completion. For instance, a principal of a leading secondary school in Kenya noted that students fail in mathematics because they do not cover their syllabus and are therefore unprepared for examination (Yara and Wanjohi, 2011). They further report that students in boarding schools cover syllabus in time and are exposed to remedial exercise because they are always in school compared to day schools which are characterised by absenteeism of both teachers and students which contributes to con-completion of the syllabus in a given year (Philius and Wanjohi, 2011). Therefore suggestive those boarding schools students do better in national examination compared to their peers in day schools.

Dincer and Uysal (2010) indicate that a weak relationship between school resources and students achievement do exist. Another study identified teacher quality and student- teacher ratio as having positive and significant effects on student achievement once family background characteristics are controlled. Kamunde (2010) identifies challenges that continue to impinge on the quality of education provision; they include pedagogical and logistical challenges such as high pupil –teacher ratios, shortage of qualified teachers, poor and inadequate infrastructure, and other resource constraints. Consequently head teachers' role is characterised by the messy fragmented and untidy realities in which Kenya schools operate. Kamunde further asserts that “many primary head teachers are therefore ‘balancing at the top of the grease pole’ and feel as if they are left to swim or sink.”

No doubt head teachers or principals are critical to the success of a school as a centre for learning. They are also critical to the successful implementation of reforms at the school level (Kamunde, 2010). However their success is underpinned by their relationship with teachers, sound relationships and effective communication in schools (Lethoko et al., 2001). Lack of dialogue between the administration and students has been identified as a factor in indiscipline in secondary schools in Kenya (Kiprop, 2012). Therefore principals also have to pay special attention to relationship among teachers and among students because disharmonious relationships can negatively impact on the process of education and routines of teachers and students (Sungton, 2007). Mnyaka (2006) underscores the importance of effective leadership and governance, arguing that they are “vital in turning schools from a centre of violence and disruption to a place of safety and learning.” Such leadership is based on firmness, fairness and consistent discipline (Kiprop, 2012). Teachers and learners want to feel safe for any effective learning to take place and therefore a safe environment is critical to successful teaching and learning. It is also important for schools to have positive relationships with their communities. Parents can also make a significant contribution towards reducing school violence. Hernandez (1999) in Mnyaka (2006) observes that:

Although the schools can be loci of the school crime and violence the origins of the problems driving such behaviour are not in schools but in the communities and families from which schools draw their learners.

So it is important for principals or head teachers to enhance community relationships and create new opportunities that encourage community and parental involvement beyond the traditional parent-teacher conferences or associations. Beemark and Keys (2000) in Mnyaka (2006) suggest that:

The principals should spend time to know the broader community surrounding the school and the people who are respected in the community. The principals must look for community strengths that might be contributing to problems.

Kiprop (2012) underscores the importance of a broader cooperation between the principal, staff, students and parents for effective management of discipline, thereby highlighting the importance of community involvement in the affairs of the school.

Principals are faced with multiple, complex and wide ranging challenges as they execute various roles and responsibilities in secondary schools. The challenges include dealing with low motivation, managing class sizes, dealing with inadequate resources and managing with fewer funds (Oduro, 2009). In Liberia, for instance, education is engulfed with bribery, sex for grade, lack of infrastructural facilities and equipment coupled with unqualified instructors. Qualified and competent teachers are insufficient (Lavalah, 2012). In Southern Thailand, principals work under intensified and vulnerable situation, insufficient funding and also dealing with the effect of the intensity of cultural unrest and safety of students and staff

(Sungtong, 2007). Inadequate finance has also been noted by Kamunde (2010). In Pakistan head teachers have to deal with issues affecting teachers and student, the curriculum, parents, school visitors and central office. Other challenges include role ambiguity, the conflicting expectations of various stakeholders, the tension between inadequate financial resources and the lack of incentives and authority to deal with relevant issues. There are also issues linked to socio-political and sectarian conflicts and disruptions. As a result head teachers pay more attention to maintaining order and discipline than addressing the issues of staff development and support, and students' academic achievements (Shafa, 2011). Other challenges that affect head teachers or principals including issues with sponsors, security and quality of education have been reviewed and discussed in greater details in the next sections of this article.

It is important however to mention that the challenges principals face are compounded by the fact that they are not trained and/supported in their roles and responsibilities.

### **School Sponsors' Role and Its Implications**

The Education Act (1968, Revised 1980) empowers sponsors to take part in the management of their schools and colleges. Some of these religious sponsors include the Quaker church, Catholic Church, Africa Inland church, Salvation Amy church, Church of God, Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Methodist church, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist church, Anglican Church of Kenya and the Pentecostal Assemblies of God church. The involvement of religious sponsors in the management of educational institutions in Kenya dates back to the colonial days (Masika and Simatwa, 2010). Historically the sponsor's role has been to develop facilities and provide essential learning resources for the educational institutions they owned (Mabeya et al, 2010).

However, their involvement in the management of educational institutions has posed certain challenges to the head teachers, for instance, the nomination of ineffective board of governors (BOG) chairman, seeking favours and use of school facilities on non-academic activities. Sponsors have also been accused of interfering with the schools business, for instance, closing school down indefinitely, rejecting principals who have been posted to the school by the Ministry of Education and meddling and destabilizing instructional activities of the school system (Mabeya et al., 2010).

Mabeya et al (2010) also report a specific situation in Nyanza province where sponsor withheld a secondary school donation for purchasing laboratory and carpentry equipment until the head teacher was transferred. This happened because the head teacher had refused to give some of the donation to a church camp in the school. Consequently the head teacher was transferred on defying church order. There have also been some incidences whereby the sponsors create some falsehood against the head teachers they don't like, thus creating a poor working relationship with the school community. Conflicts between the sponsor and the school heads have been reported. Also Incidences of blame culture have been reported, for instance, the sponsor blames the school head regarding management issues, while the school head blames the sponsor for interference in school management. Studies have also cited situations whereby the public blames the sponsor of indiscipline and interference in the day today management of the school (Masika and Simatwa, 2010). Simutwa (2007) in Masika and Simutwa (2010) also reports that in some schools the principals run the school single-handedly, in such a case the principal becomes the final word and/or absolute monarch of the school. The issues or conflicts between sponsors and principals are attributable to lack of awareness of the roles and rights of the sponsor and their representation in educational matters (Mabeya et al., 2010).

## School Security Issues and Their Implications

Review of literature reveals serious and widespread security management issues in educational institutions across the globe. For instance, Kirui et al. (2011) and Voice of America (2001), report on the growing concern of security management in secondary schools in Kenya. They further note that students' unrest has been on the rise in the last decade and it is violent and destructive in nature. In March 2001, for instance, 67 boys died when their dormitory was set on fire by fellow students (Voice of America, 2001). There is also the St. Kizito School Incident in Kenya where 70 girls were raped while 19 others lost their lives when male students descended on them during a school strike (Ruto, 2009). In South Africa, Mnyaka (2006), reports that violence is an issue of the decade. Aluede et al (2005) report that in Nigeria protests and unrests are regular features in tertiary institutions. Matsoga (2003) also reports that violence is prevalent in Botswana schools. In the USA, Marshall (2000) in Dunne et al., (2010) reports on the 1999 Columbine high school massacre of 19 people and 23 others injured. The two senior high school assailant also committed suicide shortly afterwards. The reasons given for the massacre are that the two felt isolated and teased by their fellow students. Furlong and Morrisons (2000) in Dunnes et al. (2010) also reports about the Arkansas (in the USA) incident where the eleven and thirteen years old fired at their classmates at the playground and killed four girls as a result of rejection from female classmates.

The forgoing examples demonstrate that schools are not safe anymore and also that the culture of learning has deteriorated (Matsoga, 2003). The examples also highlight the scale or magnitude and impact of violence in educational institutions. It is also in line with Medlen's (2012) view that 'times have changed inside schools; there is no doubt about that.' The issues that confront schools or educational institutions are different, sophisticated, frequent and complex. For instance, Kiumi et al., (2012) describes the condition of student discipline in secondary in Kenya as disheartening because violent behaviour incidences are widespread and frequent. Violent behaviour manifests in a wide range of aggressive acts from name calling to physical assault to sexual abuse (Dunne et al., 2010). Some of these aggressive acts have grown in sophistry due to technological advancement, for instance, bullying now include cyber-bullying, texting, through social media, through emails and through silent treatment. Dunne et al., (2010) describes it as interpersonal violence or social exclusion. This also reflects a certain degree of sophistry in the way students intimidate their peers and teachers (Medlen, 2012). Dunne et al. (2012) observe that 'bullying aggression and other forms of violence in schools can blight student experiences of formal education and their abilities to make the best of the opportunities they have.' Similar views are also expressed by Medlen (2012) who reflecting on the impact of cyber-bullying observes that "a lot of students will go home distressed from school which is a shame because school should be a positive component of a child's life." However, The West Australia School Teachers Union has raised concerns regarding how much bullying via social media is a school-based problem and how it should be dealt with in the home. Dunne et al., (2010) observe that physical and psychological bullying are prevalent in many schools and students experience them on daily basis. Bullying is one among other forms of violence in school. Others include sexual violence, rioting and fighting. Verbal bullying characterised by negative comments about victim's appearance, targets of rumours and sexual comments and these have been reported as prominent for both males and females (Poipoi et al., 2010). Poipoi et al., also cites more males than females reported being victims of physical bullying which involved hitting, slapping and pushing.

According to Morrell (2002) in Matsoga(2003) violence is acknowledged as a worldwide phenomenon and is viewed as a gender issue because ‘women bear the highest cost of violence , particularly in the categories of sexual assault and rape’. Similar view is expressed by Ohsako (1997) in Matsoga (2003) who also observes that “it is the female students who are recipients of the most violence.” Also a study conducted in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia involving eight schools found a much higher rate of victimisation on the part of girls (Matsoga, 2003). Also alarming higher rate of attempted rape has been reported in the same study (Matsoga, 2003). In South Africa, Wood and Jewkes (1997) in Dunne et al., (2010) indicate that “girls experienced acts of aggression such as beating and slapping by male friends demanding sex and a startling 30% of girls stated that they were forced to have sex the first time.” Other studies conducted in South Africa also reveal that girls were raped in school toilets, empty classrooms, dormitories and hostels (Dunne et al., 2010). Ruto (2009) argues that sexual safety in learning institutions in Kenya is threatened because of increase in incidents of reported crimes of sexual nature and the periodic mass sexual violence directed at girls within schools. The writer notes that perpetrators can be teachers, fellow classmates or outsiders. In the case of outsiders the writer further cites a police officer and a college boy. The impacts of sexual violence include unexpected teenage pregnancies, transmission of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDs and Hepatitis, and serious depression leading to suicide, dropout from school and deaths (Ruto, 2009; Hunt, 2008). Were (2007) notes, for instance, that teenage pregnancy is both a reproductive health issue and a socio-economic well-being issue of the female teenage victim.

Studies have identified factors attributable to various forms of violence in school including poor academic performance, high absenteeism, leaving school early and unstructured free time (UN 2005 in Dunne et al., 2010). The factors identified are more likely to make a child either a victim or a perpetrator. Other factors include family violence, low social economic status, low self-esteem and other problems may contribute to violence or delinquent behaviour and perpetrate the cycle of youth violence (Matsoga, 2003; Oteyo and Kariuki, 2009). Thompson (2000) reports that experts have identified the family and communities as the primary source of ‘protective’ factors which include solid family relationships, strong community ties, positive peer environment, conflict skills and a healthy self-esteem. These factors according to Thompson, prevents or reduces violent behaviours.

Several studies have strongly associated violence in schools with consumption of alcohol, substance abuse and drug abuse (Ngesu et al., 2008). Kenya Times, July 4<sup>th</sup> 2003 in Ngesu et al. (2008) reports that:

The issue of drug abuse is a major headache to the societies and authorities from the cities of the North Africa, Latin America and Asia. The menace of drugs has strangled the youthful population reducing them to dummies, zombies and drooling figures only to waste out the prime of their lives when they are most needed to invest their energy in worthy nation building ventures.

Ngesu et al., (2008) report on the acts of indiscipline among students in the Nigerian educational institutions which were blamed on the use and abuse of drugs. These acts of indiscipline have been reported on two institutions namely, Kily's college in Lagos and that of Methodist boys high school in Oron. Similar associations were also reported by the 1998 presidential commission of inquiry into education and training in Zimbabwe. The findings of the commission showed that lack of morals and deteriorating learning standards and strikes in school were caused by drug abuse by students (Ngesu et al., 2008). In Kenya it has also been reported that drug consumption and dependence among secondary schools and college students led to unrest that resulted in wide ranging destruction of life and property. Student

drug abuse is attributable to peer pressure, curiosity, parental influence, availability of cash, easy availability of drugs, corporal punishment, harsh treatment of students by the school administration, lack of freedom on the side of students and students failure to have their grievances addressed create stress which lead to the abuse of drugs (Ngesu et al., 2008). Aluede et al., (2005) report that drugs use bring into the school environment illegal practices, connected to drugs use, namely prostitution, theft and selling of drugs to others. Kirui et al. (2011) report that drug abuse is usually associated with aggressive behaviour, irritability and overexcitement among other antisocial behaviours thus leads to violence and destruction of school property. Besides drugs use undermines the students' academic ability and performance. In the USA for instance, students who use Marijuana regularly are twice as likely to obtain below average marks or failing grades and school dropouts are twice as likely to be frequent drug users (Aluede et al., 2005).

Nak Pocha (2010) states that:

Where order is lacking the school system crumbles. The upright will be squeezed into the mould of the wicked, the school environment will be unsafe, for the good and right hearted because of the activities of the bullies.

The effects or impact of alcohol and drug use are widespread and have been widely reported (Kyalo and Mbugua, 2011; Dube, 2007; Matsonga, 2003; Mnyaka, 2006; Maithya, 2009). They include conditions such as insomnia, prolonged loss of appetite, greater risk of hepatitis and HIV/ AIDS infections, cancer, ulcers and brain damage, among others. Physiological effects include alteration of blood pressure, decline of normal body functions, arthritis and gout due to the formation of uric acid and accelerated heart beat, among others. Students who get any of these conditions will find it difficult to continue with normal learning due to frequent absenteeism from school.

### **Issues in Achieving Quality Education**

It can be argued that investments in education are based on the assumption that quality would improve. Studies have indicated a positive association between school inputs and achievement (Dincer and Uysal, 2010). Gyekye (2002) as cited in Oduro (2008; 2009) argues that:

The desire or enthusiasm to access school education in order to acquire knowledge, skills, and new tools of analysis is one thing; to actually succeed in acquiring them and showing evidence in having acquired them in concrete terms is quite another. ...The quality of the products of an institution or a programme is often evidenced in the quality of performance of the product.

Gyekye (2002) as cited in Oduro (2008; 2009) asserts that "any education investment is worthless if the provision and process lack quality." Oduro (2009) adds that investment in access must go hand in hand with investment in quality improvement. Major initiatives introduced in many countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa towards achieving the 2015 education for all (EFA) targets including implementation of free primary and secondary education resulted in increased enrolment at the expense of quality (Republic of Kenya, 2008; Ohba, 2011). Therefore it can be argued that quality is not measured in increased access and participation in both primary and secondary education, for instance, Ghana's gross enrolment rate (GER) increased from 87.5 percent in 2004/2005 to 92.1 percent 2005/2006 (Oduro, 2009). However, Oduro (2009) argues that achieving quality education goes beyond quantitative expansion in the number school, increase in the number of school buildings, changes in the structure of our school system and increase in pupil/students enrolment. Lethoko et al., (2001) have identified factors that contribute negatively towards learning in

South Africa. They include lack of professionalism among teachers and principals, poor management by the principals, lack of preparation for lessons by under-qualified teachers, inefficiency and lack of funding in the department of education to rebuild schools, renovate buildings, supplying books in time and supply teaching aids and materials. Another problem identified in the study is that principals find it difficult to implement certain policies outlined by the department or the policies are implemented but they are not monitored to determine their success (Lethoko et al., 2001). The study also notes that principals have to pay special attention to relationships among teachers and students, because disharmonious relationship can have a negative impact in the school community with the result that dedication, discipline and motivation in both teachers and students is lost as also mentioned elsewhere in this article. One of the major challenges that impinge the government's efforts in the provision of quality education is lack of adequate finance (Ohba, 2011). In the light of that, Lewin (2008) in Ohba (2011) makes the following observation:

Considering the budget austerity in many African countries ... cost sharing and household with welfare contingency for the poor is more financially sustainable than providing free secondary education.

Other factors that are likely to contribute to quality education provision have been identified by Aturupane et al (2007):

Principals and teachers years of experience, collaboration with other schools in a 'school family' and meetings between parents and teachers all have positive impact on students' test score.

In 2001 the Kenya government introduced school based teacher recruitment policy in all public secondary schools aimed at enhancing teacher retention, equity in teacher distribution, and efficiency in teacher recruitment practices in such schools. In doing so the government decentralised this function from Teacher Service Commission (TSC) which has been responsible for teacher recruitment since its inception in 1967 (Aloo et al., 2011). In effect TSC delegated its authority and role to the respective schools BOG to recruit on their behalf. This is noted as a major shift from supply driven to demand driven system. In a study conducted in Nyando district indicate positive comments made by the head teachers who claimed that school based policy to some extent has led to an even distribution of teachers in the district (Aloo et al., 2011). The former supply recruitment policy encouraged overstaffing certain schools at the expense of others. However a number of negative comments have been expressed about the policy, they include (Aloo et al., 2011):

- a. Teacher recruitment has remained an issue in most of rural public schools in Kenya;
- b. Some concerns have been raised to the effect that some schools refuse to shortlist qualified applicants who pose threat to their identified candidates;
- c. Other schools keep their interview dates sealed so as to recruit teachers of their choice;
- d. The policy has been marred by irregularities;
- e. In a study 35.7% of the head teachers felt that teacher distribution is still an issue in public secondary schools in Nyando district;
- f. Also the study found that distribution in subjects such as Kiswahili, Computer science, Physics and Christian religious education was poor;



- g. In Nyando district certain schools had their selection exercise cancelled due to complains about biasness from selecting board of governors and failure to adhere to guidelines;
- h. Allegation of frequent manipulation of the recruitment process to suit the interest of certain sectors of the country by not offering equal opportunity to all applicants.

### **The Role of Guidance and Counselling In the Management of Student Behaviours**

Review of literature recognises the importance of using guidance and counselling in the running of schools and especially in dealing with drugs abuse issues and other problems that face students (Maithya, 2009). Nyaegah (2011) reports that there is sufficient evidence that counselling produce positive result even with difficult students. Positive results have also been reported by Kirui et al., (2011). Wachura and Adhulas (2002) in Nyaegah (2011) also indicate that counselling had become something of a remedy for disruptive behaviour in British schools. Guidance and counselling in Kenya has a long history and yet not well developed in school. It was introduced in 1967 and it has been of great concerns of some of the education commissions, for instance, the 1976 Gathachi report recommended that Ministry of Education expand its services to include guidance and counselling services. The report also recommended that University should offer a course to provide training for professional workers in guidance and counselling ( Kiprop, 2012). Further recommendation on guidance and counselling were made by the Kamunge report (1988). The recommendations are that schools should establish guidance and counselling services and senior teachers should be responsible for them (Republic of Kenya, 1988) in Kiprop (2012):

It is the responsibility of the head teacher to ensure that guidance and counselling services are offered to pupils. Each school should establish guidance and counselling committee headed by a teacher appointed by the head teacher.

However the presidential committee on student unrest and indiscipline in Kenyan secondary schools (2001) indicated that the Kamunge recommendation on guidance and counselling has not been implemented in most schools. That also raises some questions concerning the government's level of commitment regarding guidance and counselling services in schools. The committee attributed the problem of indiscipline in schools to a culture of violence in institution partly due to poor guidance and counselling. The committee found out that (Republic of Kenya, 2001b) in (Kiprop, 2012):

- i. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST) lacked a strong guidance and counselling division;
- ii. The guidance and counselling services were found in more senior and urban schools but many rural schools have never established the services nor acknowledged the programme;
- iii. Teacher training at all levels does not provide the teacher with adequate knowledge and skills, in guidance and counselling;
- iv. The parents had prayed a great part in the maladjustment of the children because of ignorance of child rearing practices and the fact that they were not involved in counselling services in schools.

While the Kenya government through the Ministry of Education (MOE) has also recognised and appreciated the importance of guidance and counselling and has emphasised the provision of the service in schools, the government has not put in place qualified and

competent personnel to offer the services in learning institutions (Kiprop, 2012). In other words the government's emphasis has not been matched with the provision of adequate training for teachers and principals who serve in the guidance and counselling services in schools. A study by Nyaegah (2011) reveals that 84% of the principals were not trained in guidance and counselling. The study also reveals that a majority of the principals were not clearly informed what guidance and counselling was all about. Wahome (2005) in Nyaegah (2011) also reports that "principals and teachers counsellors have no training for the job except probably for the courses they took during undergraduate or diploma training". Nyaegah (2011) observes that lack of training made them feel inadequate and incompetent in guiding and counselling students. This is also reinforced by Kirui et al. (2011) who report that in a study, 88.9 per cent of the schools confirmed that they have a guidance and counselling department but just over 40 per cent of their departments are run by teachers who are not qualified in guidance and counselling. Ruto (2009) feels that guidance and counselling in schools lacks responsiveness which could be attributed to lack of relevant skills, techniques and knowledge on the part of those charged with the responsibility of providing the service. In other words the principals and teachers lack the appropriate capacity to provide adequate guidance and counselling services. Nyaegah (2011) argues that the success of the guidance and counselling services in schools require the support of the principal who is a key player in the initiation and organisation of good guidance and counselling. This further requires the principal to have a positive attitude towards the service. In that connection Nyaegah (2011) states that:

school administrators attitude towards any service in the school whether new or old needs the acceptance and leadership of the school administration, without his/her approval and continued support any service will wither on the vine because teachers and students sense the frequency adopted the administration attitude towards the service in the school.

Also Nyaegah (2011) underscores the fact that counselling is a profession and as such it requires competence, knowledge and skills which cannot be acquired unless one undergoes a relevant training. Wachura and Adhulas (2005) in Nyaegah (2011), underscores the strength and ability of counselling in dealing with disruptive behaviour, first by recognising the situation in which the individual is likely to be disruptive, second by identifying the first signs of disruptive behaviour and third by acting quickly to prevent or stop the bad behaviour affecting others in the group. A majority participants in a study felt that guidance and counselling should replace corporal punishment and other undesired forms of punishment.

## STUDY CONTEXT

Based on the new constitution (2010), the provincial administration that comprised of the province, district, division, location and sub-location have been restructured such that the eight provinces (Central, Coast, Eastern, Nairobi, North Eastern, Nyanza, Rift valley and Western) have been replaced by 47 counties. The county constitutes the second level governance after the national. The numbers of counties are based on the number of districts created under the Provinces and Districts Act of 1992. Therefore according to Wikipedia (2012), counties of Kenya are geographical units for devolved government based on the 2010 constitution of Kenya. Nyamira County therefore is located in Nyanza and constitute 3 constituents (Kitutu Masaba, West Mugirango and North Mugirango Borabu). The county is also made up of three districts namely, Manga, Nyamira and Borabu (Kenya Open Data project, 2011). After 2013 general election a county government will replace the provincial and local government administration system which has been in existence since independence (Omari, 2011). Nyamira district, part of Nyamira County has been noted for its poor

performance in mathematics (Yara and Wanjohi, 2011). They observe that a student's performance in mathematics is underpinned by the type of school he or she attends, because some schools have qualified and experienced mathematics teachers and good learning environment than others. And this is true for other subjects as well.

## METHODOLOGY

The study reported in this article was conducted to increase knowledge and understanding about the complex nature of the challenges that confront school heads as they execute their roles and responsibilities. The data will contribute to building a knowledge base for understanding the nature of the challenges as perceived by the school heads. The study involved eighty one secondary schools which were purposively sampled from which eighty one principals were obtained for the study. Initially one hundred schools were contacted but in the end only eighty one responded representing a response rate of 81%.

Data was collected from eighty one principals. Prior to data collection, the researchers contacted the sample schools heads and invited them through a letter to take part in the study. In the letter the researchers introduced themselves, described the purpose of the study, explained what the participants were expected to do, indicated that they had a choice to opt out of the study at any time without any negative consequences on their part, assured them of confidentiality and therefore undertook to keep their personal details strictly confidential and use them only for the purpose of research. At the end of the letter, participants were requested to sign a declaration of informed consent form in which they confirmed their understanding of the content of the letter, the purpose and nature of study and their voluntary participation in the same, explaining what was expected of them. Questionnaires were delivered to one hundred principals but only eighty one completed questionnaires were returned. The questionnaire format consisted of closed, open-ended and rating scale items. This was necessary to diversify responses as well as reduce what Watson and Coombes (2009) in Onderi and Makori (2012) call 'question fatigue'. The open-ended section offered the respondents an opportunity to make a comment, expand or clarify some information on their responses and thus help the researchers gain some insight in their perspectives on challenges affecting their roles and responsibilities in educational institutions. The resulting data was analysed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for obtaining descriptive data.

## RESULTS

### Participants' Characteristics

The participants were mainly secondary school principals and were 81 in number. Seventy percent (70%, n=81) of them were males while thirty percent (30%, n=81) were females. This perhaps suggests something about females' representation in the educational leadership. Just fewer than forty percent (37%, n=81) had been in principal ship position for less than five years, a third between five and ten years and another third over ten years. Combining those that had between five and ten years and those that had experience of over ten years gives a percentage of sixty three percent. This means that a significant number of principals had substantial experience to deal with issues arising among students. Just over forty percent (42%, n=81) were in their first headship, just fewer than forty percent (38%, n=81) in their second headship and just over ten percent (12%, n=81) in their third headship. So combining those who were in their second headship, those in their third headship and those beyond third headship gives a percentage of fifty eight, suggesting over half of them had significant experience of working in more than one school.

**Table 1: Showing students population in relationship to principalship**

| <i>Student population</i> | <i>Principalship (%) n=81</i> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Less than 200             | 35                            |
| 201-400                   | 28                            |
| 401-600                   | 20                            |
| 601-800                   | 14                            |
| 801-1000                  | 4                             |

Table 1 indicates that about one third of the principals worked in small secondary schools. When asked if they were satisfied with school size, just fewer than half (48%, n=81) indicates that they were not satisfied. When prompted to explain they offered the following comments, which are grouped into four categories: those that relates to funding and free secondary education, those that relate to denominational tensions and conflicts, those that relate to the view or perception on either single or mixed sex schools and those that relate to student attendance behaviour.

*Those that relate to funding and free secondary education*

- “Free secondary education funds are begged to student enrolment. When they’re that little the little money sent cannot meet all budgetary obligations of the school adequately. The small number does not motivate the teachers who feel underworked” (*sic*).
- “The number is too small in comparison with the services being rendered. Given that funding by free secondary education is based on the number of students.”
- “This small number doesn’t attract sufficient government funding for infrastructure development.”
- “When the number is small, then what the government supplement becomes insignificant compared to schools with big number.”
- Some of the school facilities are underutilized. The small number or size of the school denies the school more funds.”
- “Because there is underutilisation of some facilities. Because the government funds schools in relation to their numbers. Underutilisation of teachers.”
- The number does not attract enough funding from the MOE to allow for putting up infrastructure like laboratories, libraries...”
- “More students mean more income which will enable the school infrastructure, especially with free secondary education.”
- “I have less than the maximum (160) according to the GBE. I therefore need more students for maximum FDSE funds for infrastructural development and improvement/purchase of other school essentials.”
- “School rated/registered as a double stream but now is having less its capacity.”
- “The population is not adequate to make the school viable. This leads to a lot of constraints financially, programmes that ought to be implemented lag behind.”
- “The school has a higher capacity but lacks essential facilities to accommodate a bigger number.”
- “The number is too small hence running the school becomes quite uneconomical. Since he number of students is too small the government does not supply you with

enough teaching staff and teaching-learning equipment, even money from PTA is quite insufficient to run the institution.”

- “As a growing school, I need to increase enrolment and make a population of above 1000. The funds for development and academic improvements are easily given by MOE and parents with large population. The economies of scale are better realised with higher population.”

*Those that relate to denominational tensions and conflicts, and competition from other institutions*

- “There is under enrolment in all classes partly due to: denominational squabbles (SDA and Catholics) and competition from well established schools.”

*Those that relates to views or perception on either single sex or mixed sex schools*

- “To economically manage the school a fairly good student enrolment is required. As a mixed school there are a number of challenges- single sex schools better off.”(sic)

*Those that relate to student attendance behaviour*

- “There is a lot of nomadism and truancy. The entry behaviour is wanting.”
- “Nomadism is a major challenge due to what parents/guardians perceive.”
- “So students are sometimes report to the school and disappear to the village and there is no follow-up from the provincial administration, because a teacher cannot follow the students to their homes.”

The above comments have been selected from a total of thirty five respondents. Twenty three were made by principals with a student population of less than 200, eight by those with student population 201 – 400 and four with a population of 401- 600.

Just over forty per cent (42%, n=81) worked in small secondary schools, just over forty percent (43%, n=81) in medium school, just over ten percent (11%, n=81) in large school and just fewer than five per cent (4%, n=81) in mega secondary school. Just over eighty percent (83%, n=81) worked in secondary schools which were located in rural settings. Just fewer than ninety percent (89%, n=89) worked in public schools. Just fewer than seventy percent (68%, n=81) worked in faith or church related schools. Just over sixty percent (64%, n=81) of the schools were district schools, just fewer than thirty percent (27%, n=81) were provincial and just fewer than ten percent (9%, n=81) were national schools. Just under half (46%, n=81) were mixed schools, just over twenty percent (21%, n=81) were mixed day, just fewer than twenty percent (15%, n=81) girls boarding and just fewer than ten (7%, n=81) were boys boarding. A majority (90%, n=81) of the principals rate their relationship with PTA as good or excellent. Also A majority of them (85%, n=81) rated their relation with BOG as good or excellent.

## **Challenges That Confront Principals As They Execute Their Roles and Responsibilities**

### ***Financial challenges***

Based on the foregone section it is evident that a number of secondary schools are constrained financially because of the low student enrolment. Student numbers are directly tied to free secondary funding system. Therefore inadequate funding is a major challenge as just over forty percent of the schools are small schools. Inadequate finance implies inadequate learning resources including teachers. Schools that have adequate finances are able not only to attract qualified and experienced teachers but to sustain them.

### ***Sponsorship challenges***

The other challenge is linked to relationship with sponsors. Just over eighty percent (83%, n=81) of the schools are sponsored by church organisations. For instance, one third of the schools are sponsored by the catholic church, just over one third by the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) church and just fewer than forty percent (37%, n=81) by other churches. (Lutheran, Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG), Church of God (COG) and African Inland Church (AIC)). Just fewer than seventy percent (68%, n=81) described their relation with sponsor as good or excellent. However those who described their relation with sponsors as poor, average or good indicate that they had serious problems in the following areas:

- Undue interference with the day today running of the school;
- Harassment and intimidation;
- The sponsor promoted unnecessary transfer of school principals

Further analysis revealed only one comment was made by those who described their relationship with the sponsor as poor, and the comment was – interference with the day today running of the school. Five comments were made by those who described the relationship as excellent. Three of those were positive while two were negative. The comments include:

- Undue interference with the day today running of the school;
- Promotes unnecessary transfer of schools principals
- There is mutual understanding between the sponsor and the school;
- No interference/ the environment is conducive to learning;
- No problem

Those who described their relationship with the sponsor as average made eleven comments and all of them were negative. They include:

- Three of the comments relate to the undue interference with the day today running of the school;
- Two of them relates to harassment and intimidation ;
- Five of them relate to promotion of unnecessary transfer of school principals
- One made the following comment ‘is erratic depending on which priest is in charge of the parish. Some pressurise because of lack of affiliation to the same faith’

While those who described their relationship with the sponsor as good made twenty one comments, twenty negative and one positive. They include:

- Good/conducive atmosphere with both teaching and non-teaching staff;
- Nine of them relate to promotion of unnecessary transfer of school principals;
- Six of them relates to undue interference with the day today running of the school;
- One relates to harassment;
- One commented that ‘do not provide any financial support for physical development of the school.’
- Another one said ‘limited sponsorship in provision of physical facilities.’
- One perhaps making reference to the sponsor’s influence said that ‘some members nominated to BOG are not well experienced, skilled and knowledgeable.’
- And yet another principal said ‘not always available.’

### ***Challenges related to teenage pregnancy, bullying, alcohol, absenteeism, drugs and truancy.***

The study participants were given a list of nine issues and asked to rate them as not serious, serious and very serious. The nine issues include teenage pregnancy, bullying, alcohol, absenteeism, drugs, devil worship, violence, homosexuality and arsonist.

**Table 2: Showing principals scores on issues they considered as challenges**

| <i>Issues</i>     | <i>Principals scores (%) n=81</i> |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Teenage pregnancy | 40                                |
| Absenteeism       | 35                                |
| Alcohol           | 22                                |
| Drugs             | 21                                |
| Truancy           | 19                                |
| Bullying          | 11                                |

So from the list homosexuality, devil worship, violence and arsonist were considered not serious. However, the six issues identified in table 2 though their percentages are small require attention, because there is evidence that they are taking place in some schools. They therefore constitute a challenge to the school principals. When asked how the issues identified in table 2 affected their examination performance just under forty percent (38%, n=81) indicated negatively. These issues identified here, in one way or the other affected students' effective engagement and participation in the teaching learning process.

#### ***Handling or dealing with challenges identified in table 2***

The principals were asked how they were tackling or responding to the challenges identified in table 2 above. Just fewer than sixty percent (59%, n=81) of the principals made wide ranging comments. The comments result in ten sub-themes as presented below:

##### *Guidance and counselling*

This was cited by forty one out of forty eight principals who made comments translating to eight five per cent (85% n=48). Guidance and counselling involved teachers and students. Some of their comments include:

- "Intensification of guidance and counselling"
- "Created/introduced guidance and counselling"
- "The school has strengthened the guidance and counselling department"
- "Through the use of guidance and counselling"
- "Teenage pregnancy we are using guidance and counselling department" (*sic*)
- "Trying to encourage to counsel them especially girls students because they are the most affected ones" (*sic*)
- "The school chaplain is also involved in counselling girls"
- "Through peer teaching/counselling"
- "Through peer guidance and counselling"
- "The school has set up a counselling section to handle the unruly students"

##### *Involvement of students in school governance*

Three of the principals gave the following which underscores the importance of involving students in school governance. By involving them engenders a sense of ownership.

- "The school administration has involved students in the making of school rules"
- "Involve students council"
- "The school administration has involved students in creating new rules of the school"

##### *A regulated and strict school visitation and food programmes in place.*

Four principals (8%, n=48) made the following comments perhaps aimed at controlling drugs trafficking and unwanted guests in the school environment.

- “Do away with unnecessary visitors to school compound or near the gates of the school”
- “Only known parents/guardians allowed to visit students”
- “Avoid foods from outside the school”
- “Ensuring that there is adequate food for the girls so that they don’t keep going home for lunch”
- “No food from outside other than during visitation only”
- “No visitation in between other than the set date”

#### *Parent/guardian- school partnership*

Ten principals (20%, n=48) gave their comments on parental involvement in the education of their children and especially in relation to discipline.

- “Involving parents in monitoring any suspected students”
- “Develop teachers-parent (guardian- student friendly atmosphere”
- “Encourage parents/guardians to visit the school regularly for updates on the child/student’s progress”
- “Regular meeting with parents/guardians”
- “Sensitisation of parents through class conferences and parents education days”
- “Involve parents in student discipline”
- “Parents are given a chance to come up with ways of handling indiscipline of their students”
- “Through sensitization of parents and the school community”
- “The school administration and parents have implemented new policy on how to pay school fees in time to avoid students being sent home”
- “Fixing fees payments schedules with individual parents that are friendly”

#### *Involving provincial administration*

This refers to provincial commissioners, district commissioners, district officers, chiefs and assistant chiefs. Any of them can be involved in the life of the school depending on the magnitude of the problem or situation. Four principals made the following comments.

- “Involve provincial administration in cases of consumption of illegal drugs/ alcohol “
- “Involving local administration”
- “Involve provincial administration (chiefs and assistant chiefs) to have barazas (forums), to talk over the issue of chang’aa (illicit liquor) taking and brewing in the community” (translation done by the authors).
- “The school administration is working in conjunction with provincial administration to eradicate selling of alcohol to students”

#### *Involving the church and guest speakers (outsiders)*

Eleven principals (23%, n=48) made the following comments emphasising the use of the church and professional to support students and discipline in schools. The following statements reflect the views of a majority of principals of faith or church sponsored schools.

- “Motivational speakers on specific areas are invited”
- “Present Jesus to students”
- “Use of resourceful people to give talks on emerging issues”
- “The school chaplain also invites religious leaders to come and talk to students”



- “Use of guest speakers monthly”
- “Use of guest speakers during week of spiritual emphasis”
- “Spiritual encouragement”
- “Inviting pastors to give spiritual guidance and prayer”
- “Introduction of pastoral programmes”
- “Involve professional speakers who speak against the challenges like drugs and alcohol, and premarital sex.
- “We are involving the church so much to control the vice”
- “Started involving church”
- “Church sermons and preaching”

Other ways of dealing with the challenges identified in table 2 include sticking to school rules and regulations; encouraging teamwork among various stakeholders; suspension of students; request the sponsor to allow/give the school breathing space; allowing young mothers back to school and encourage students to express their views on various issues affecting their life in school achieved through the provision of suggestion boxes.

### ***Inadequate resources***

This subsection presents the perceptions of principals on the state of the resources they currently use in the various schools. Twenty per cent (20%, n=81) and eleven per cent (11%, n=81) of the principals indicted that they did not have a library or a laboratory respectively. Also just fewer than half (47%, n=81), four per cent (4%, n=81) and 1% (1%, n=81) indicated that they did not have workshop, playground and sports facilities respectively. The rest of their views on resources are illustrated in table3. The percentage shown is a combination of poor and average per cent values.

**Table 3: Showing principals perceptions of various resources at their schools**

| <i>Resources</i>  | <i>Principals (%) n=81</i> |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Library           | 48                         |
| Text books        | 60                         |
| Laboratory        | 53                         |
| Classroom         | 50                         |
| Furniture         | 58                         |
| Staff             | 61                         |
| Workshop          | 46                         |
| Playground        | 71                         |
| Sports Facilities | 73                         |

Based on table 3, it is evident that between fewer than half and just fewer than three quarters of the principals felt their school resources/facilities were either poor or average.

Fifty two per cent (52%, n=81) of the principals felt that the teacher- student ratio was either poor or average. Seventy five per cent (75%, n=81) were satisfied with the teachers qualifications, while twenty five weren't. Those who were not satisfied gave the following comments which highlight some of the issues affecting teaching and learning in secondary

schools in area of study. The comments also say something about their levels of pedagogical skills as well as staffing levels in schools. The comments were made by nine principals:

- “There is only one qualified Teacher service commissioner (TSC) teacher and one qualified underpaid board of governor (BOG) teacher. The rest are ‘O’ level graduates with A-C grades, yet to join tertiary institutions”
- “Most of the teachers are Forth form leavers”
- “Because of understaffing we have been forced to employ undergraduates and form four leavers”
- “Some staff are not well qualified to teach in their subjects”
- “We are only four TSC teachers against 120 students”
- “The BOG is sometimes compelled to employ untrained teachers for they’ll take home low salary. The TSC has not been able to staff all schools appropriately”(sic)
- “There are more BOG teachers than TSC teachers who do not have the required qualifications”
- “Because most of teaching staff are not qualified”
- “Many of them are not professionally trained”

Just over sixty percent (62%, n=81) of the principals rated their schools performance in national examination as either poor or average.

The study was also interested to establish whether the free secondary education has made any difference in terms of resources/ facilities. Their perceptions are illustrated on table4. The figures are based on the sum of poor and average per cent values.

**Table 4: Showing principals’ perceptions of resources in relation to free secondary education system.**

| <i>Resources</i>  | <i>Principals (%) n=81</i> |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Library           | 36                         |
| Text books        | 34                         |
| Laboratory        | 42                         |
| Classroom         | 53                         |
| Furniture         | 59                         |
| Staff             | 62                         |
| Workshop          | 61                         |
| Playground        | 75                         |
| Sports Facilities | 32                         |

Table 4 is based on a combination of poor and averages percentages. For instance, based on table 4 three quarters of the principals rated set books as either poor or average. Other areas affected include classrooms, furniture, staffing levels, and availability of funds. According to these principals free secondary education has not improved the conditions and/or levels of resources.

The participants were asked to rate LAFT, CDF, PTA and Free education as sources of financial support. Just fewer than ninety percent (86%, n=81) rated LAFT as poor or average; just fewer than sixty percent (56%, n=81) rated CDF as poor or average; Just over forty

percent (41%, n=81) rated PTA as poor or average and just over thirty percent (31%, n=81) rated free secondary education as poor or average. Of the four sources LAFT appears as the least source of income, followed by CDF, then PTA and finally free secondary education. Therefore listed in order of importance they appear as follows: Free secondary education, PTA, CDF and LAFT.

## DISCUSSION

The study set out to investigate challenges principals or head teachers face as they execute their roles and responsibilities and this article presents the findings. The challenges principals face has been widely reported in the literature reviewed. The findings indicate that principals operate in a very complex and challenging environment. Some of the challenges that have been highlighted in the literature review include security issues, issues with sponsors and issues with resources and yet they are expected to improve their students' performance.

On the issues of sponsors it emerged that 83% of the secondary schools that participated in the study were sponsored by various churches. And when asked to rate their relationship with the sponsors, 68% rated their relationship as either good or excellent. However those who rated the relationship as poor, average or good identified a number of issues with their sponsors. They include undue interference with the day today running of the school; harassment and intimidation; unnecessary promotion of transfer of school principals and limited support. Some of these findings agree with the findings in the literature review, for instance, interference with day today running, unnecessary promotion of transfers of school principals and limited support. Poor relationship was highlighted in the review and this affected the schools' stability. In the review conflicts and tensions were also reported. All these affected the health of school programmes.

Inadequate resources have been identified as one of the serious challenges that affected a majority of the schools. The level of resources in schools is linked to the availability of funds. Table 1 shows that 35% of schools are small with enrolment level less than 200 students. It is also evident from the survey that in the free secondary education in Kenya, funding is linked to the number of students enrolled at a school. Therefore small schools are at a disadvantage. Lack of adequate funds is linked to availability of resources. Based on table 3, resources in schools are inadequate. Table 4 shows no significant difference in terms of availability in relationship to the free secondary school regime. Also on the four sources of funding available to secondary schools in Kenya namely LAFT, CDF, PTA and free secondary education, LAFT was rated least, 86% felt that it was poor or average. Inadequate resources in general were also heightened as one of the challenges that affected a majority of principals. Also lack of adequate resources hindered the school from achieving quality education.

The other challenge that confronts principals relates to bullying, use of alcohol, absenteeism, drugs, truancy and teenage pregnancy as demonstrated on table2. These challenges disrupt the teaching- learning process of the school. For instance, in the review use of drugs and alcohol has been linked to student violent behaviour as well as unrest which posed serious threat to the school security. Some of the student unrest resulted in loss of life and serious damage to the property. Use of drugs and alcohol also affected students' ability to attend lesson regularly and therefore may result in absenteeism and truancy. Such activities affected students' performance because of poor attendance. Uses of alcohol and drugs have been linked to violent behaviour of male students towards female peers at times resulting in unintended pregnancies. It was also heightened in the review that youths who use drugs and/or alcohol are more likely to have several partners and therefore risking sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDs. All these pose a serious challenge to the principals such that

he/she spends more time on the school security management instead of the actual teaching-learning process.

Then the principals were asked how they responded to the challenges. The study has identified how various principals dealt with such challenges, namely, through guidance and counselling, involvement of students in school governance, a regulated and strict school visitation policy, involving provincial administration, parent/guardian- school partnership and involving the church and use of guest speakers. On the use of guidance and counselling a number of concerns have been in the review regarding its effectiveness since the principals and teachers who were involved in its delivery lacked the necessary capacity since they were not professionally trained. Perhaps a further investigation on the effectiveness of guidance and counselling schools was necessary to identify areas that needed improvement. Also the review noted that the government of Kenya's commitment to the provision of guidance and counselling was weak despite its notable rhetoric through various educational commissions such as the Kamunge and Gathachi . On the involvement of students in school governance the study identified student council and involving them in creating new rules as positive ways by which students could be involved in school governance. Students' involvement was also highlighted in the review of literature. In terms of a regulated and strict school visitation policy, the study found that the policy limited unwanted visitors into the school compound. The policy also limited the food brought into the school from outside other than during visitation day. In that way it is assumed that drug trafficking would be minimised. Involving provincial administration such as the provincial commissioners, district commissioners, district officers, chiefs and assistant chiefs is necessary in situation where the community was involved in brewing liquor and therefore encouraging students to use it. The role of the provincial administration in this case is to eradicate such illicit activities and practices in the community. Just over seventy percent (74%, n=81) described the relation between the school and the immediate community as good or positive, perhaps suggesting such illicit activities such brewing liquor did not exist. On the parent/guardian- parents' partnership the study noted that parental involvement in education of their children as something positive. In this case, parents/guardians were involved in monitoring any student who was suspected in any way. Parents were also encouraged to visit the school regularly for updates on their children/students performance and/or progress. Some schools involved the church in dealing with student indiscipline behaviour. They at times invited guest speakers to address students on various aspects of discipline.

## CONCLUSION

A compelling body of evidence based on the review of literature and the survey conducted suggests that principals work in very complex and challenging environment characterised by tensions; conflicts; poor security; alcohol, drug and substance abuse among students and related issues, among others; lack of adequate finance and meagre resources, pressure from various stakeholders and the impact of socio-political issues. Also there is evidence of lack of qualified and competent teachers. Also it emerged that principals or head teachers were not well trained and supported in their roles and responsibilities. These factors not only undermined the quality of education but the schools' performance in national examinations.

Poor security was reflected in serious violence of various kinds leading to students' unrest which resulted in loss of life and destruction of property. Such a situation undermines the school or institution's safety and thus affects the teaching and learning process. Guidance and counselling has been identified as a remedy for dealing with indiscipline in schools unfortunately principals and teachers who are involved in its delivery lack professional

training hence lack professional skills, techniques and knowledge required to make the service effective.

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