

INFLUENCE OF PREFECTS INDUCTION ON MAINTENANCE OF STUDENTS DISCIPLINE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN GATUNDU NORTH DISTRICT, KENYA

Nixon Kagutha Njue

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology, Main Campus, Juja, Kenya

njuenixon@gmail.com

Abstract

The prefects play a critical role in the learning of a school given that they are charged with students' welfare, coordination of co-curriculum activities, supervision of learning activities during morning and evening preps and when situation arises that they should do so. They also check for students' attendance to classes and other activities. Further, they are charged with dealing with minor cases of indiscipline. This implies that prefects act as a link between the students and the school administration. It also implies that they are in a position to detect indiscipline cases and report them to the administration as they have direct contact with the students unlike the administration. The objective of the study was to find out the extent to which prefects are inducted in order to influence maintenance of students discipline in public secondary schools in Gatundu North District, Kenya. The findings revealed that majority of prefects were being inducted by the school administration. However some reported the induction process to have been carried out by all stakeholders who included outgoing prefects, school administration, teachers and resource persons. From the study findings, majority of schools were using face to face discussions as their induction method as opposed to training materials and seminars/workshops. It was recommended for the schools to set aside enough time and resources to effectively and efficiently induct the prefects for them to be able to carry out their roles well. Resource persons who are well informed should be invited and the school should give enough support to the process. It is very important for prefects to be given all the necessary guidance and practical lessons which is intended to prepare them to their tough role.

Keywords: *Prefects Induction, Students' Discipline, Public Secondary Schools, Influence*

INTRODUCTION

Discipline clearly incorporates a wide range of behaviours which can change depending on both the context within which the behaviours are enacted and for whom they are directed towards (Wright and Keetley, 2003). Initiatives developed to address students' behaviour have for long time lacked appropriateness in terms of their impact upon improving the situation. Teachers and school administrators agree that discipline is a serious problem and that students' behaviour is difficult to deal with. Although the teachers attest to the fact that the repetitive nature of student discipline cases caused them stress, they are all not in agreement on how to deal with discipline cases (Munn and Johnstone, 1992).

Developing countries have similarly been affected by the same problem. In countries such as the Trinidad and Tobago, for instance, the Ministry of Education (2005) considers the issue of student discipline a deteriorating big problem. In Tanzania, teachers are meant to have absolute powers over students, visible in methods of reward or punishment used by the teacher because of student indiscipline. Schools in Kenya have prefects assisting in maintaining discipline. The prefects are supposed to be efficient and effective in their roles of maintaining students' discipline. Such astonishing level of responsibility is as a result of careful selections, thorough training, proper guidance, proper hierarchy, steady mobility and deliberate selling of the school motto and mission to the prefects (Griffin 1996).

In this sense, there is a great need to select, train and equip prefects with skills to manage themselves, fellow students, time, school duties and their studies. When responsibilities are delegated to them without proper guidance they get confused, stressed and more often than not destroyed. Expecting them to tame hostile adolescent students when they are going through the same internal turmoils is asking a bit too much from them. Special attention should be dedicated to guidance on how to harmonize their roles as students as well as student leaders (Otieno and Ambwere 2000).

Statement of the problem

According to Denton (2003) the prefects play a critical role in the learning of a school given that they are charged with students' welfare, coordination of co-curriculum activities, supervision of learning activities during morning and evening preps and when situation arises that they should do so. They also check for students' attendance to classes and other activities. Further, they are charged with dealing with minor cases of indiscipline. This implies that prefects act as a link between the students and the school administration. It also implies that they are in a position to detect indiscipline cases and report them to the administration as they have direct contact with the students unlike the administration. Despite the presence and vital role of prefects in public

schools, there has been an increasing discipline problem in public secondary schools (Angeng'a and Simwata, 2011). This has led to poor performance, arson, loss of property and even life. For example, Gatundu North District which is of great interest to this research has been experiencing occasional riots and strikes and high rate of students suspension, school dropout and poor performance in the final secondary school examinations (KCSE) (Gatundu North DEO Office 2010). The rampant indiscipline cases in public schools questions the influence of prefects in maintenance of discipline in public schools. This study has been prompted by these observations and seeks to fill in the gap by investigating the influence of prefects in maintenance of discipline in public schools in Kenya by finding out the motivation level of students.

Objective of the study

To find out the extent to which prefects are inducted in order to influence maintenance of students discipline in public secondary schools in Gatundu North District.

Research Question

To what extent are prefects inducted in order to have an influence on maintenance of students' discipline in public secondary schools?

Delimitations of the Study

The study covered public secondary schools in Gatundu North district. The respondents were principals, teachers, prefects and students. Due to the fact that the characteristics of public secondary schools are somewhat similar all over the country, the findings of this study were therefore generalized but of course with caution.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The challenge of social control and of democratic socialization are two key issues facing education at present (Effrat and Schimmel, 2003). The Kenyan democracy is firmly entrenched in the Constitution; however, this is of little consequence if the citizens do not live and practise these values. As Effrat and Schimmel (2003) put it: "our [American] schools and educational systems talk the talk of democracy, but, at best, they limp the walk". There would seem to be a direct parallel with Kenyan schools. The 'traditional approach' in many schools has been of an autocratic nature (McLennan & Thurlow, 2003). This means that the rules were decided on by the principal, or a few senior people, and were not open to discussion. Depending on the age of the school, many of these rules could be long-standing and in some cases 'dated'. Pupils

entering the system are expected to take note of the rules and if they break them, they can expect to be reprimanded and punished. There is little empathy in this approach and pupils are expected to comply.

Codes of conduct that share the above characteristics will have detrimental consequences through undermining the concept and promotion of citizenship, the very rules they are meant to support, pupil self-discipline and teacher/pupil relationships, (Denscombe,1985). Yiamouyiannis (1996) presents an argument that education is currently trying to inculcate in the pupils - those characteristics required of the industrial society worker - obedience and passiveness. He maintains that the skills of "collaboration, participation, initiative, expression, listening to and understanding many voices and many cultures, inherent to the emerging democratic, post-industrial society" are neglected.

Research has indicated that pupils prefer participative decision-making and want to contribute meaningfully to school codes of conduct and structures, Mabebe & PrinSloo (2000), Schimmel (2003), Effrat & Schimmel (2003). Having input into the rules promotes commitment to those rules (Denton, 2003). The criticisms of this approach were that it was time-consuming, that communication from the committee to the whole student body was not easy and that a turnover of the school administration resulted in new leaders who had to learn about the process afresh each time. Collaborative rule-making can do more than just promote co-operation in the classroom; it can be a very powerful introduction to the workings of democracy. The 'democratic socialization challenge' is for schools to produce citizens who are equipped to contribute to, participate in, and appreciate the democracy within which their society functions (Effrat and Schimmel, 2003).

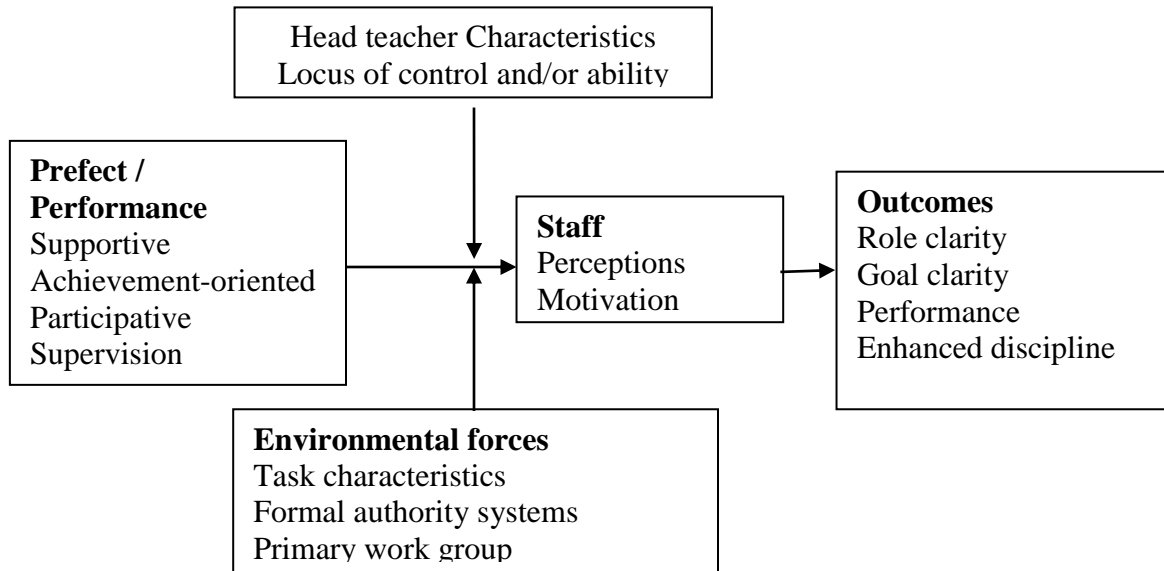
Dugmore (2006), points out that school Codes of Conduct need to be revisited and revised so that parents, pupils and teachers show commitment to them. The Code of Conduct should promote respect, tolerance, discipline, non-violence, 'nonracialism' and respect for human rights, democratic practice and community participation (Fitzpatrick, 2006). According to Wambulwa (2004) the involvement of learners in school governing body and co-operation in decision making can result into school improvement. However the limitations on role of prefects make it very difficult to have learners participating fully in the school governing body. Wambulwa (2004) raised a number of advantages of learner representation in school governing body. The first one is that there is a link between learners and school governing body therefore contribution by learners can influence decisions. Secondly it contributes to the improvement and maintenance of discipline. Learners can offer their opinions regarding students' discipline as a result adults are made aware of learner thinking regarding school governance. This suggests

that if given the opportunity to serve on committees and exercise their right to vote consequently learners and educators get a chance to solve problems together.

Theoretical framework

This study is based on the Path - Goal leadership theory. Figure 1 shows the model as described by Martin G. Evans (1970).

Figure 1. Theoretical model for the Influence of Prefects in Maintenance of Students' Discipline



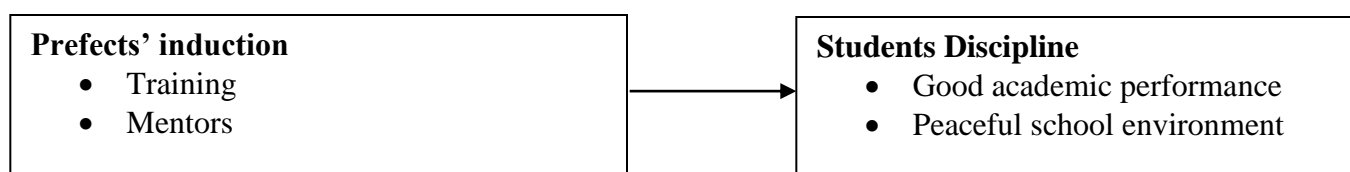
Source: Adopted and modified from Evans M. (1970) in Okumbe (1998)

The path-goal leadership theory emphasizes on how leaders can facilitate task performance by showing subordinates how performance can be instrumental in achieving desired rewards. In the case of prefects, the school leadership expects the prefects' body to help in the improvement of students' discipline in their capacity as the 'eyes' and 'ears' of the administration in as far as students' discipline is concerned. The path - goal theory of leadership rests on two propositions that the leader behaviors will be acceptable and satisfying when subordinates perceive it to be an immediate source of satisfaction or as being instrumental in obtaining future satisfaction. It also says that the leader behavior will be motivating to the extent that it makes subordinate satisfaction contingent upon effective performance and to the extent that it complements the subordinates' work environment by providing necessary guidance, clarity of direction, and rewards for effective performance.

The theory of leadership discussed here recognizes at least four distinct types of leader behavior. Directive leadership whereby the prefects are not active participants since the

administrators provides them with specific guidance, standards and work plans, including rules and regulations. Also it recognizes supportive leadership where the administrator shows concern for wellbeing and personal needs of the prefects. He or she is approachable and friendly. The achievement - oriented leadership; where the leader sets challenging goals and exhibits the confidence that the subordinates' will achieve high standards since they are endowed with the requisite potentials and finally participative leadership where the leader consults with the subordinates and embodies their suggestions in decision making. In this respect, this theory is an appropriate protocol to inform this research.

Figure 2. Conceptual framework



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. Creswell (2002) observes that a descriptive survey design is used when data are collected to describe persons, organizations, settings, or phenomena. The study aimed at observing and describing the behaviour of the subjects under study without influencing it in any way and therefore considers the descriptive research design to be the most appropriate for this study. The target population included prefects, students and administrators (principals and deputy principals) in public secondary schools. The study targeted 28 public secondary schools, 368 teachers and 8471 students (Gatundu North DEO's Office).

Due to the small number of public secondary schools in the district, the study used 50% of the schools. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), for a small population a sample of 50% may be used. The study used 14 out of the 28 secondary schools. Purposive sampling was used to select the only two (2) provincial schools in the district. There are three district single sex boarding schools that is, three for girls and one for boys. Simple random sampling was done for the three girl's schools and only one was picked while the only boys' school was purposefully selected. There are three mixed day and boarding secondary schools and only one was randomly picked. The study also purposed to pick the only pure girls day school. The remaining are mixed day schools (18) where the study used simple random sampling procedure where

names of the 18 schools were written in pieces of paper and someone else picked 6 without replacement.

Purposive sampling technique was used where each school has a principal who was used in the study. Fourteen principals were therefore be used. Purposive sampling was also used to sample only four key heads of departments, that is, departments of curriculum, boarding or student's welfare, games and discipline. These are key departments in every public secondary school. A total of 56 heads of departments was used in the study. They represented all the teachers. Purposive sampling technique was equally used in selecting prefects for the study. Prefects in charge of key areas include the school captain, games captain, dining hall captain, compound captain and the entertainment captain. According to Mulusa (1988), for a population of about 8000, a sample of 367 may be used. In this study the students are 8471 so a sample of 378 is appropriate. To obtain the 27 students from each school for the study, 9 students were simple randomly sampled from each of the classes. In school with more than one stream, the researcher used simple random sampling and where the school is mixed, the researcher used simple random sampling giving equal chance to gender. In this study questionnaires were used. The researcher used descriptive analysis such as frequencies and percentages and presented as tables and graphs. On the other hand, the qualitative data generated from open-ended questions were analyzed and categorized in themes in accordance with research questions and presented in a narrative form. The data collected was analyzed using SPSS (version 22 for windows).

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

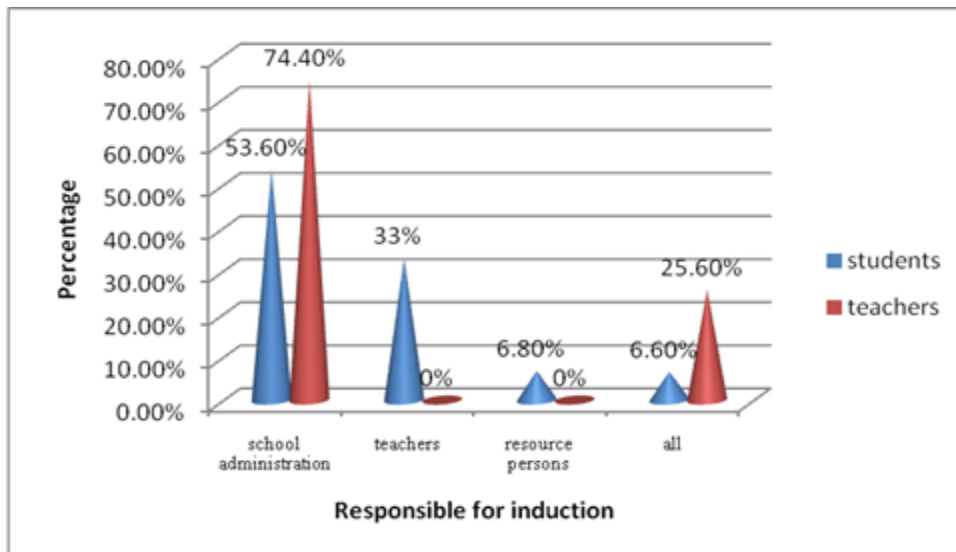
Table 1 Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	No of items
Prefects induction	.7141	16

Prefect's induction

For the prefects to assume their roles, they have to be taken through a process of induction. This always prepares them to be ready physically and emotionally to handle the challenging task of maintaining student's discipline. The researcher first sought to investigate the people/ institution responsible for inducting prefects.

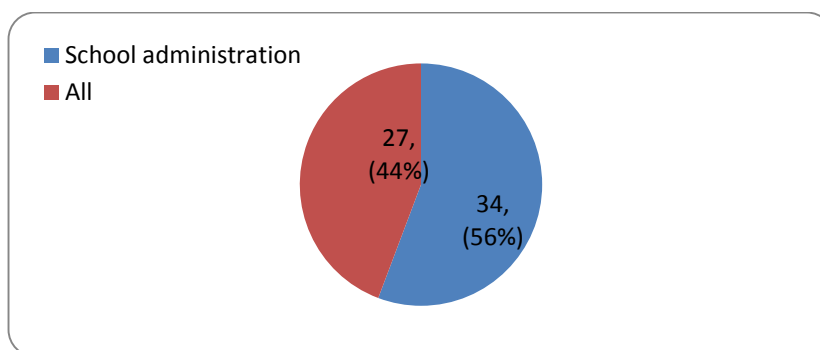
Figure 3: The one whom inducts prefects



From the figure 3, majority of teachers 29 (74.4%) reported the school administration to have been the one responsible for inducting prefects, they were followed by 10 (25.6%) of them who reported prefects to have been inducted by outgoing prefects, school administration and resource persons. Majority of the students 118 (53.6%) reported the school administration to have been the one responsible for inducting prefects while 116 (33%) reported teachers to have been the ones responsible for induction. From this it can be deduced that prefects were being inducted by the school administration.

Having established the people responsible for inducting prefects, the researcher went ahead to investigate who inducted the current prefects.

Figure 4: Current prefects' induction

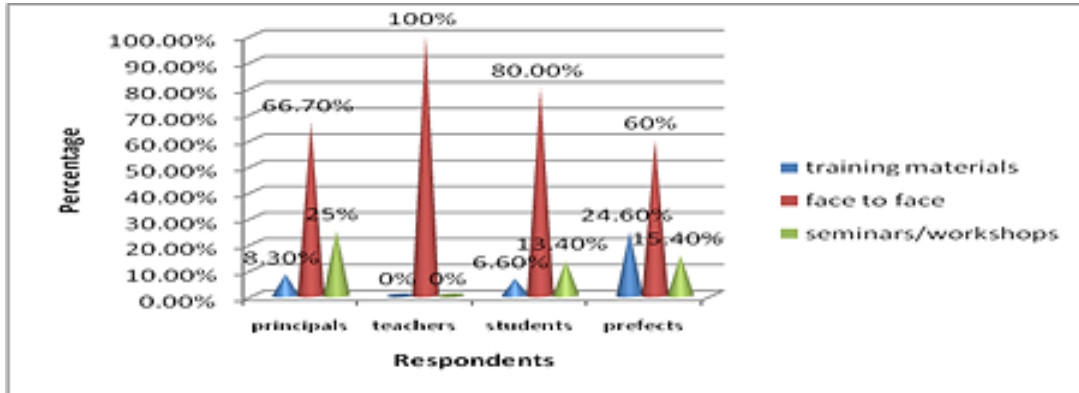


From the figure 4, majority of the prefects 34 (56%) reported the school administration to have been the one which inducted them while 27 (44%) reported to have been inducted by all the stakeholders. From this it can be deduced that majority of prefects are inducted by all

stakeholders however the school administration seems to take the leading role in the induction process.

Having established who inducted the current prefects, the researcher went further to investigate the methods used for induction.

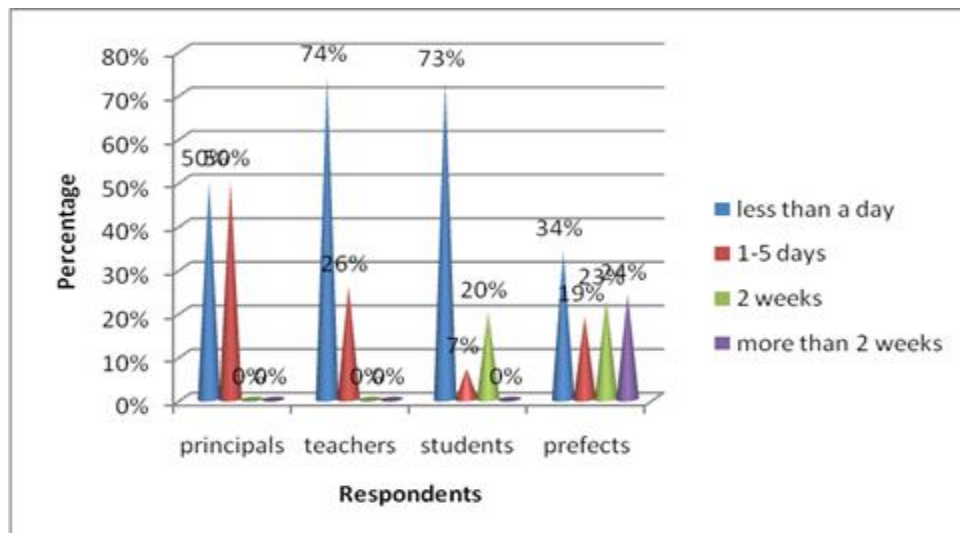
Figure 5: Induction method



From the figure 5, all the teachers reported to have used face to face method when inducting prefects, 281 (80%) reported of the students and 8 (66.7%) of all the principals also reported to have used face to face method. Those who reported to have used training materials and seminars/ workshops were very minimal. From this it can be deduced that majority of schools were using face to face method when inducting prefects.

Having established the method of induction used, the researcher went to investigate the duration of time which the induction was taking.

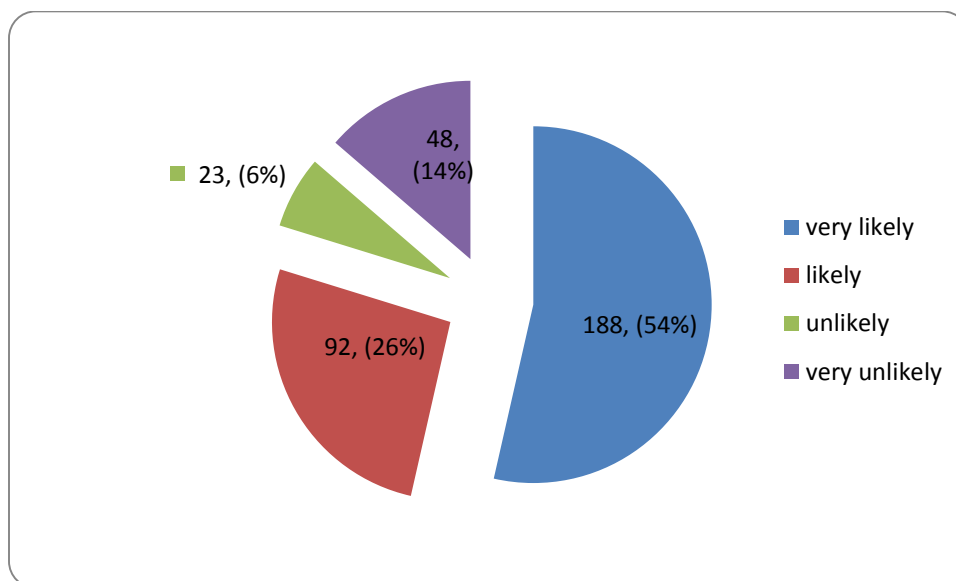
Figure 6: Duration of induction



From the figure 6, majority of teachers 29 (74.4%) reported to have used a duration period of less than a day, 258 (73%) and 6 (50%) of teachers and principals respectively also reported to have used less than a day. Out of all the principals 6 (50%) reported to have used 1-5 days while 10(26%) of the teachers also reported 1-5 days. From this it can be deduced that majority of the schools were using from 1-5 days in inducting prefects.

Having found out the duration of prefects induction, the researcher went further to investigate whether the induction process was adequate to prepare prefects for their role.

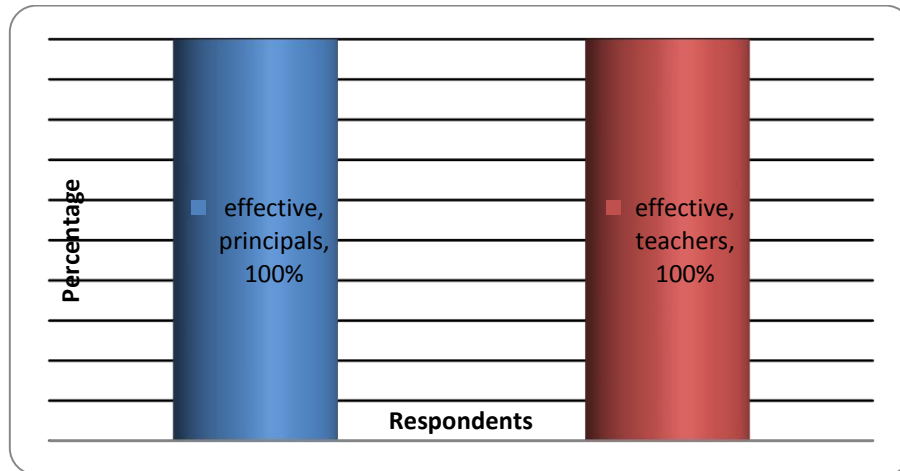
Figure 7: Efficiency of induction process



From the figure 7, majority of the respondents 118 (54%) reported that it was very likely for the induction process to have prepared prefects to their various roles, 92 (26%) reported likely while 48 (14%) reported very unlikely. From this it can be deduced that the induction process was likely preparing prefects to their various roles.

Having established how the induction process prepares prefects for their role, the researcher went further to establish the rating of the induction process basing on the prefects performance.

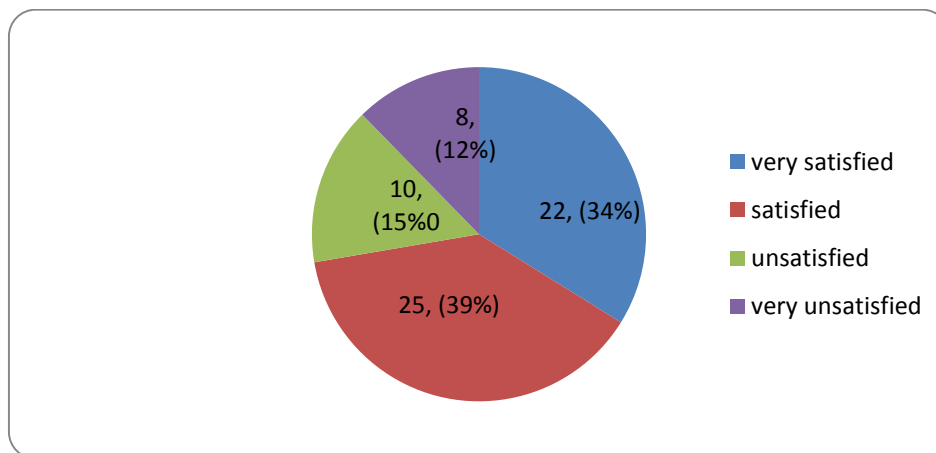
Figure 8: Rating of prefects induction



From the figure 8, all the principals and teachers rated the process of prefect's induction as very successful. From this it can be deduced that the process of inducing prefects to their various roles was very successful

Having found out that the induction of prefects is 100% effective, the researcher went further to establish whether the prefects were satisfied with the method of induction in their school.

Figure 9: Satisfaction of induction process



From the figure 9, majority of the prefects 25 (39%) reported to have been satisfied with the induction process, 22 (34%) were very satisfied, 10 (15%) unsatisfied while 8 (12%) were very unsatisfied. From this it can be deduced that majority of the prefects were satisfied with the induction process. Having found out that majority of respondents were satisfied with induction process, the researcher went further to analyze prefect's motivation.

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study findings it has been revealed that majority of prefects were being inducted by the school administration. However some reported the induction process to have been carried out by all stakeholders who included outgoing prefects, school administration, teachers and resource persons. From the study findings, majority of schools were using face to face discussions as their induction method as opposed to training materials and seminars/workshops. However the induction duration has been revealed to be very short as majority reported the induction period to have been of less than a day. Contrary to the duration of training being short, majority reported the induction process to have been very likely in preparing prefects to their roles. The induction process was rated effective by most of the respondents. It is further revealed from the study that majority were satisfied with the induction process.

From the conclusions of this study it has been noted that prefects are inducted in public secondary schools. However the induction process is wanting. Majority revealed to have been inducted for duration of less than a day. This involved mostly the school administrators. It is therefore recommended for the schools to set aside enough time and resources to effectively and efficiently induct the prefects for them to be able to carry out their roles well. Resource persons who are well informed should be invited and the school should give enough support to the process. It is very important for prefects to be given all the necessary guidance and practical lessons which is intended to prepare them to their tough role.

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