

# Succession of Principals and its Influence on Students' Discipline in Trans Nzoia County, Kenya

Jane Barasa<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Lydia Wamocha<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Moses Poipoi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kibabii University, Department of Education Planning and Management. P.O. Box 1699-50200 Bungoma

<sup>2</sup>MasindeMuliro University of Science and Technology, Department of Education Planning and Management

<sup>3</sup>MasindeMuliro University of Science and Technology, Department of Education Psychology

**Abstract:** *Effective institutional management is critical for the realization of quality education which is necessary for the attainment of national socio-economic development. In Kenya there are secondary schools that have consistently performed well due to good management. It is however noted that during administrative succession, there are likely to be disruptions that may adversely affect the stability in these schools. Successful administrative succession enhances continuity in the service delivery in the affected schools. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of succession of principals on students' discipline in secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County in Kenya. The objective of the study was to establish the effect of succession of principals on students' discipline. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population for the study was 132 principals, 780 teachers, 300 non-teaching staff, 132 members of the boards of management, 7 representatives from sponsor churches and three quality and assurance officers from the county. Purposive sampling was used to select the 44 principals, 44 members of the boards of management, 7 representatives of the sponsor churches and 3 quality assurance and standards officers. Simple random sampling was used to select 260 teachers and 100 members of the non-teaching staff. A total of four hundred and fifty eight (458) respondents formed the sample for the study. Primary data was collected from the respondents using a questionnaire and interviews while secondary data was obtained from document analysis. The reliability of the research instruments was determined through the Pearson's product moment method using the data obtained during the pilot study. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics used were percentages and frequencies while linear regression analysis was used as an inferential statistics for testing the hypothesis on the effects of succession of principals on students' discipline. The findings of the study were that succession of principals in Trans Nzoia County was necessitated by students' indiscipline. The findings of the study further indicated that internal succession of principals led to increased students' discipline. The study recommended that proper succession management strategies should be put in place to enable enhancement of these positive outcomes. Succession management policies should be properly put in place and supported to avoid any incidences of resistance to succession.*

**Keywords:** Succession of principals; Students' discipline

## 1. Introduction

Effective institutional management is globally, regionally and locally critical for the realization of quality education. In Canada and USA, there are concerns about the capability of educational institutions to continue effectively to sustain the delivery of their services during succession (Gowans, 2000). It is within this context that school managers need to put in place succession planning so as to enhance the quality of leadership that will sustain quality standards of education and enhance staff morale in the schools. School principals hold a strategic position in any school. The principal functions as the professional leader of the teachers, students and parents of the school. This position puts demands on the principal to act in ways that will ensure attainment of the set institutional objectives. Given the limitations of educational careers and even human life, inevitably the person holding the position will pass over the position to someone else.

Managing succession is necessary for achieving institutional strategic viability. It unlocks the potential for institutional direction, retention of high value talent, institutional knowledge and builds a formidable culture that outpaces competition. For any institution, good performance depends on the effectiveness of its succession management efforts. Succession management secures future leadership capability which is critical for driving institutional performance in the challenging world of work. During succession, there are

likely shifts in school culture, teacher morale and efficacy, students' discipline and performance (Begley, 2003).

Leithwood (1999) and Greenfield (2004) acknowledge that during succession school leaders are challenged both personally and professionally. They argue that this is due to each leader's need to negotiate their role and to develop their understanding of new contexts. The new principals may experience conflict in attempts to bridge personal leadership styles with their profession while teachers attempt to adjust to the new principal's values and perceptions of leadership. These changes and adjustments have potential impact on performance of students and other stakeholders in the schools.

According to Gordon and Rosen (1981), they established that chief executive succession in corporations have a strong effect on performance areas. The effect may however be positive or negative according to Gowans (2000). Either way this affects the students' discipline of the particular schools concerned.

To individual principals, leadership succession challenges them to think about whom they have succeeded, their achievements, what business they left unfinished or they have fallen short of? It is a challenge of deciding what to continue and what to change, or recognizing legacies that have to be honoured and the work that is yet to be done.

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Succession also challenges individual leaders to consider how the improvements they have met or those they are yet to initiate will live on after their promotion, transfer, or retirement (Moore, S.; Fink, D.; Brayman, C.; Hargreaves, A. and White, R., 2003).

New principals to a school may experience a variety of school cultures that may be welcoming, indifferent or closed. The principals will always try to influence their teachers either by design or default. Teachers have the power to sabotage a new principal's effort to make deep changes to the school culture. Among the many ways that teachers evaluate the effects of succession in their school, the most significant is how succession affects their capacity to maintain control over their work environment. In South Africa, school principals play a key role in the quality of education in schools (Bush & Moorosi, 2011). Further studies reveal that succession can be complex and varied.

A study done in Uganda on the effect of forms of transfer on administrative performance of head teachers revealed that promotional transfer has a significant influence on the administrative performance of head teachers (Muyingo, 2010).

Procedurally, in Kenya, succession comes after promotion from a job on a lower level to a higher level within the organization. This entrusts the teacher with more difficult and demanding responsibilities than before. It calls for one to make certain decisions regarding work and other operations which were previously made by someone else higher in rank. To enhance succession, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) has developed a policy on identification, selection, appointment, deployment and training of heads of post primary institutions in Kenya (RoK, 2007). The policy guideline outlines the minimum requirements for a teacher seeking to be considered for promotion to administrative grades including headship. The requirements include academic and professional qualifications, special merit on work performance and performance of students in national examinations and special achievement in co-curricular activities. More so, the teacher's professional conduct, moral standing and initiative are also considered (RoK, 2002 and RoK, 2005).

The policy stipulates the stages of appointment and promotion of head teachers and deputy head teachers. The process begins with each school establishing a professional subcommittee of the Board of Management (BOM) tasked to identify following the set criteria, the teachers who are suitable for promotion. Secondly, the subcommittee's recommendation is forwarded to the full board for ratification and forwarding to the District Education Board (DEB) which shortlists and invites qualified persons for interview and subsequently conducts the interview and then deploys the successful candidates to professional and administrative positions with vacancies as per the authorized establishment. The DEB also mounts courses for newly appointed heads, deputies and senior teachers in their respective duties and follows up their performance through appraisal reports.

Despite the existence of these policy procedures, succession of principals has been faced with different reactions from the community, school staff and students. There are those who resent receiving the deployed heads because of the fear of changing the established school culture. The school community is keen to find out what input the incoming administrator will put in to improve the school environment and general performance. In Trans-Nzoia County, in the last ten years there have been several changes in school administrators and these changes have either positively or negatively affected the students discipline of the schools concerned (Trans Nzoia County Education Office, 2015). It is in regard of this eclectic occurrence that this study investigated the succession of principals in secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County and its influence on students' discipline.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Succession of school principals should aim at enhancing the quality of performance of the affected schools. However, succession as a change process may face some resistance that can be disruptive and divisive to a school and may end up failing to achieve the intended purpose. The ability of stakeholders to understand and accommodate the stress and challenges of succession may have a great effect on the effectiveness of schools in enhancing performance and attainment of strategic goals and objectives. In Trans-Nzoia County, a report by the County education office indicates that there are schools that have experienced succession over the last ten years. The turnover of principals in some of the schools has been faced with succession related disruptions that included students striking that they did not want the new principal, the community locking out the new administrators, principals of schools being locked out from accessing their schools and teachers not supporting the new administration (QASO Office, Trans Nzoia County, 2013). More so, five schools were affected in the recent arson cases experienced during the second term of the year 2016 (Oduor, 2017). This notwithstanding, there are those schools where the incoming principal is positively received by all the stakeholders. More so the discipline of the secondary schools in Trans Nzoia experienced unrests last year third term.

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of succession of principals on students' discipline in secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County in Kenya.

## **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this study was to establish the effect of succession of principals on students' discipline.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

The study sought to answer the research question whether succession of principals had any influence on students' discipline.

## 1.6 Research Hypothesis

The study sought to test the following null hypothesis at  $\alpha=0.05$  level of significance using regression analysis.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no statistically significant effect of succession of principals on students' discipline.

## 2. Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design in an attempt to gather large scale data in order to make generalizations on the effect of succession on performance in secondary schools. The study was conducted in Trans-Nzoia County. The area was chosen for the study because a number of secondary schools have had succession and some instances the succession process was faced with succession battles. The population for this study was one hundred and thirty two (132) school principals, eight hundred and sixty seven (867) members of the teaching staff, three hundred and thirty four (334) members of and the non-teaching staff, one hundred and thirty two (132) representatives of boards of management, seven (7) School Sponsors and three (3) County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers in Trans-Nzoia County. The sample for the study was realized from forty four (44) schools that had succession which were categorized as two (2) National schools, six (6) extra county schools, six (6) County schools and thirty (30) sub county schools. The one hundred and thirty two schools that had sat KCSE for more than five years were stratified into those that had had succession and those that had not had succession. The schools that had had succession were forty four (44) while those that had not had succession were eighty eight (88). Purposive sampling was used to sample all the forty four (44) principals from the forty four schools that had had succession. From each of the forty four schools that had had succession, one member of the Board of Management who had served in the two regimes during the succession was used and this resulted in forty four (44) members of the Board of Management being used in the sample. Seven (7) education secretaries one from each of the seven different sponsor churches and three (3) County Quality Assurance Officers from the three sub counties were sampled using saturated sampling. Simple random sampling was used to select two hundred and sixty (260) assistant teachers and one hundred (100) members of the non-teaching staff. This is 30 % of the total population of teachers and non-teaching staff which according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) can be considered as an appropriate sample for studies in social sciences. The total sample size was therefore four hundred and fifty eight (458) respondents. The main instruments for data collection in this study were the questionnaires for Principals, Heads of departments, non-teaching staff. Structured (closed-ended) and unstructured (open-ended) questions were used in collecting data. Interview schedules were administered to the school sponsors' representative and the County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer.

Structured interviews were used so that the researcher had face to face verbal communication with the respondents. The purpose of these interviews was to capture information that could not be fully captured by the questionnaire. Another approach used by the researcher to collect data was document analysis. A document analysis guide was used to obtain available records on students' academic performance from the Education office. To ascertain the validity of the research instruments, the researcher sought to ensure both content and face validity of the research instruments. The experienced experts were involved in critical analysis of both test items and assess the relevance and appropriateness of the items in each instrument. Content validity aimed at ensuring that the test items adequately and sufficiently covered the content of interest for the study. The researcher conducted a pilot study in two secondary schools in Bungoma County and used the results of the pilot study to determine the reliability of the research instruments. This was determined through the use of the test-retest method and the coefficient of correlation was determined using the Pearson Product Moment method to show the correlation between the respondent's responses to the questionnaire items during the first testing in comparison to the responses in the re test. The computation yielded a coefficient of 0.847 for the questionnaires and a coefficient of 0.763 was obtained for the interview schedules after comparing the responses on corresponding items by the respondents on the test and the re test. These coefficients were considered adequate measures of reliability because according to Frenkel and Wallen (1998) a reliability coefficient of not less than 0.7 is recommended for consistency levels of the instruments of data collection. The data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The quantitative data was analyzed with the support of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) using chi-square analysis. The chi-square analysis was used to establish the influence of succession of principals on students' discipline.

## 3. Findings of the Study

The objective of the study was to determine the effects of succession of principals on students' discipline. All the principals 44 (100%) principals and all the teachers 242 (100%) responded to the following statements.

From the response on effect of succession on students' discipline 40(90.9%) principals agreed that students response to bells had improved while only 4(9.1%) of them disagreed. This implies that majority of the principals were of the view that with the new administration, there were positive changes in students' discipline.

In regard to cases of students sneaking 42(95.5%) principals agreed that there are minimal cases of students sneaking, and only 2(4.5%) of them disagreed. This suggested that cases of students sneaking were minimal.



**Table 1: Principals' Responses on the Effect of Succession on Students' Discipline**

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total (%)
Students' response to bells has improved	16 (36.4)	24 (54.5)	0 (0)	4 (9.1)	0 (0)	44(100)
There are minimal cases of students sneaking from school	10 (22.7)	32 (72.7)	0 (0)	2 (4.5)	0 (0)	44(100)
Theft cases have reduced in school	8 (18.2)	20 (45.5)	4 (9.1)	10 (22.7)	2 (4.5)	44(100)
Number of students with discipline cases in school have reduced	16 (36.4)	24 (54.5)	2 (4.5)	2 (4.5)	0 (0)	44(100)
Cases of students rudeness towards teachers are minimal	22 (50)	20 (45.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (4.5)	44(100)
The number of students who are suspended has increased	2 (4.5)	4 (9.1)	0 (0)	28 (63.6)	10 (22.7)	44(100)
Students' response to school rules and regulations has improved	12 (27.2)	20 (45.5)	0 (0)	2 (4.5)	10 (22.7)	44(100)
The general students discipline has improved	10 (22.7)	22 (50)	0 (0)	8 (18.2)	4 (9.1)	44(100)

When asked whether theft cases had reduced in the schools, 28(63.7%) principals agreed, 12(27.2%) of them disagreed and only 4(9.1%) were undecided. This suggests that most of the principals were of the view that theft cases reduced during the succession.

Concerning the number of students with discipline cases 40(91%) principals agreed that the cases had reduced, 2(4.5%) principals and 2(4.5%) of them were undecided.

In regard to cases of students' rudeness to teachers, 42(95.5%) principals agreed that the cases were minimal, while only 2(4.5%) principals disagreed. This suggests that cases of student rudeness towards teachers had become minimal after succession.

In response to increase in the number of students who are suspended, 6(13.6%) principals agreed while 38(86.4%) of them disagreed.

When asked whether students' response to school rules and regulations had improved 32(72.7%) principals agreed while 12(27.3%) principals disagreed. This therefore suggests students improved their responses to school rules and regulations during succession.

In regard to general students' discipline, 32(72.7%) principals agreed that students' discipline had improved while 12(27.3%) of them disagreed. This suggests that generally students' discipline improved as a result of succession.

**Table 2: Teachers' Responses on the Effect of Succession on Students' Discipline**

Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total (%)
Students' response to bells has improved	33(13.6)	105(43.4)	15(6.2)	75(31.0)	14(5.8)	242(100)
There are minimal cases of students sneaking from school	28 (11.6)	118(48.8)	10(4.1)	76(31.4)	110(4.1)	242(100)
Theft cases have reduced in school	20 (8.2)	104(43.0)	44(18.2)	55(22.7)	19(7.9)	242(100)
Number of students with discipline cases in school have reduced	20 (8.2)	113(46.7)	24(10)	56(23.1)	29(12.0)	242(100)
Cases of students rudeness towards teachers are minimal	33 (13.6)	105(43.4)	25(10.3)	51(21.1)	28(11.6)	242(100)
The number of students who are suspended has increased	24 (9.9)	76(31.4)	24(9.9)	99(40.9)	19(7.9)	242(100)
Students' response to school rules and regulations has improved	32 (13.2)	101(41.7)	34(14.1)	61(25.2)	14(5.8)	242(100)
The general students discipline has improved	56 (23.2)	78(32.2)	47(19.4)	52(21.5)	9(3.7)	242(100)

From the response on effect of succession on students' discipline 138(57%) teachers agreed that students' response to bells had improve, 89(36.8%) teachers disagreed while only 15(6.2%) of the teachers were undecided. This implies that majority of the teachers were of the view that with new administration, there were positive changes in students' discipline. In regard to cases of students sneaking 146(60.3%) teachers agreed that there are minimal cases of students sneaking, 86(35.6%) teachers disagreed and only 10(4.1%) of teachers were undecided.

When asked whether theft cases had reduced in schools 124(51.2%) teachers agreed, 74(30.6%) teachers disagreed and 44(18.2%) teachers were undecided. This suggests that majority of the teachers were of the view that theft cases reduced during the new regime.

Concerning the number of students with discipline cases, 133(55%) teachers agreed that the disciplinary cases had reduced, while 24(9.9%) teachers were undecided on the level of disciplinary cases in the new regime in comparison to the previous one.

In regard to cases of students' rudeness to teachers, 138(57%) teachers agreed that the cases were minimal, 79(32.7%) teachers disagreed, and only 25 (10.3%) teachers

were undecided. This suggests that majority of the teachers were of the view that cases of student rudeness towards teachers had become minimal after succession.

In response to increase in the number of students who are suspended 100(41.3%) teachers agreed while 118(48.8%) of them disagreed and only 24(9.9%) teachers were undecided.

When asked whether students response to school rules and regulations had improved 133(55%) teachers agreed while 75(31%) of them disagreed and only 34(14.1%) of the teachers were undecided. This therefore suggests that majority of the teachers were of the view that students improved in their responses to school rules and regulations.

In regard to general students' discipline, 134(55.4%) teachers agreed that students' discipline had improved, while 61(25.2%) teachers disagreed and only 47(19.4%) of them were undecided. This suggests that majority of the teachers were of the view that generally students' discipline improved as a result of succession.

The responses on the effects of succession of principal on students discipline indicated that students' response to bells improved; there were minimal cases of students' sneaking, theft cases among students reduced as a result of succession.

The result equally showed that the number of students with discipline cases reduced, there were minimal cases of students' rudeness towards teachers and the number of students who were suspended was minimal and similarly students' response to school rules and regulations improved.

From the responses of the principals and the teachers, it is observed that the respondents are of the view that succession of principals has contributed to an improvement in the students' discipline. The schools sponsor and education office noted that succession had improved students discipline especially for the schools whose discipline had gone down; change in management had a positive impact. The school sponsors observed that in most of the schools student discipline had improved except for one school that had persistently had strikes even in the new regime. This was attributed to the local school community's influence which wanted their own.

The responses from the non-teaching staff, members of the Boards of Management and the education office indicated that succession had led to improvement in students' discipline. The non-teaching staff indicated that discipline had gone up compared to the time before succession. This was collaborated by the responses of the members of the boards of management who indicated that there was positive effect of the succession on students' discipline. The findings of this study indicate that all the stakeholders concurred that succession had had a positive effect on students' discipline.

The data from the respondents was subjected to linear regression analysis to establish if there was any significant influence of the type of succession on students' discipline. The type of succession was categorized as internal succession and external succession. The analysis yielded the results as presented in the subsequent tables.

**Table 4.27: A Summary of the R, R Square and Adjusted R Square in the Multiple Regression Analysis**

Model Summary					
Type of succession	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Internal Succession	1	.514 <sup>a</sup>	.264	.223	5.20485
External Succession	1	.006 <sup>a</sup>	.000	-.045	3.45720

a. Predictors: (Constant), Succession of Principals

**Table 4.28: Significance Level in Linear Regression Analysis**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>							
Type of Succession		Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Internal Succession	1	Regression	174.922	1	174.922	6.457	.020 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	487.628	18	27.090		
		Total	662.550	19			
External Succession	1	Regression	.009	1	.009	.001	.979 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	262.950	22	11.952		
		Total	262.958	23			
a. Dependent Variable: students' discipline totals							
b. Predictors: (Constant), succession of principals							

a. Dependent Variable: students' discipline totals

b. Predictors: (Constant), succession of principals

**Table 4.29: The Beta Coefficients in Linear Regression Analysis**

Table 4.29: The Beta Coefficients in Linear Regression Analysis							
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>							
Type of Succession	Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
			B	Std. Error	Beta		
Internal Succession	1	(Constant)	5.155	4.367		1.180	.253
		success	7.844	3.087	.514	2.541	.020
External Succession	1	(Constant)	14.645	2.484		5.896	.000
		success	.043	1.627	.006	.027	.979
a. Dependent Variable: students' discipline totals							

a. Dependent Variable: students' discipline totals

The results indicate that the p value for the regression analysis at 0.05 alpha level of significance was 0.020 for internal succession and 0.979 for external succession. This analysis indicates that whereas there was a significant effect of the internal succession of principals on the general discipline of students in the schools, the opposite was the case in the schools that experienced external succession. The  $\beta$  coefficient for internal succession was 0.514 while the  $\beta$  coefficient external succession was 0.006. These coefficients indicate that internal succession has a more significant effect on students discipline than external succession. The findings indicate that the type of succession has an effect on the students' discipline. These findings have a bearing on the findings that succession of principals is likely to lead to shifts in school culture, students' discipline and academic

performance (Begley, 2003). From the findings of this present study it can be implied that the shift in the school discipline in the schools varies depending on whether the school had internal succession or external succession. This is likely to be as a result of the incoming principal being able to continue with the existing and already established norm of discipline if the succession is internal. For external succession, the incoming principal may wish to want to establish a new culture that is likely to face some resistance from the learners. The findings seem to agree with that by Iyaya (2015) who established that principals' leadership styles did not have a direct positive correlation to students' discipline.

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings indicated that whereas there was a significant effect of the internal succession of principals on the general discipline of students in the schools, the opposite was the case in the schools that experienced external succession. The findings indicated that internal succession has a more significant effect on students discipline than external succession. The findings indicate that the type of succession has an effect on the students' discipline. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no statistically significant effect of succession of principals on students' discipline was rejected for internal succession but accepted for external succession.

From the findings it was concluded that students' indiscipline was among the factors that contributed to the need for succession in the schools that experienced succession. The study established that internal succession of principals led to improvement of students' discipline. It was reported that cases of students serving suspension or expulsion on disciplinary grounds reduced drastically. The students' response to bells and general time management improved appreciably as a result of the succession. From the findings it was recommended that in the event of persistent unrests in schools and spades of students' indiscipline, succession policies should be put in place to facilitate harmonious transitions that allow for smooth running of learning institution.

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