



DELOCALIZATION POLICY ON THE PRINCIPAL MANAGEMENT OF STUDENT DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LOITOKITOK SUB-COUNTY

Joseph Mutia Musyoka¹, Prof. Kimiti Richard Peter² & Dr. Leah Munyao³

¹*Machakos University, School of Education, Educational Management and Curriculum Studies,
P. O. Box 136-90100, Machakos, Kenya*

²*Machakos University, School of Education, Educational Management and Curriculum Studies,
P. O. Box 136-90100, Machakos, Kenya*

³*Machakos University, School of Education, Educational Management and Curriculum Studies,
P. O. Box 136-90100, Machakos, Kenya*

ABSTRACT

The concept of delocalization encompasses the transfer of teachers by their employers either voluntarily or involuntarily to another location which is not necessarily the county of the teacher's origin. The transfer of principals in some schools faced succession related disruptions. More so, the academic performance of the secondary schools has been on a downward trend where the examination malpractices were observed nationally. This study sought to establish to examine the influence of delocalization policy on principal curriculum supervision in secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub County. The study was guided by Collegial Leadership Theory and Agency Theory. The research design for the study was descriptive design with case study approach. There are 22 secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County therefore, the target population comprised of all the 22 principals and 286 teachers in Secondary Schools in Loitokitok Sub County in Kajiado County. The target population was stratified into three categories namely; Boys, Girls and Mixed Secondary Schools whereby 11 schools representing 50% were sampled with a total of 204 teachers. All the 11 Principals of the sampled schools were selected purposively while 30% of the 204 teachers of the sampled schools were sampled using simple random method. This resulted to an overall sample size of 72 respondents. Primary data was utilized which was collected using a questionnaire. Data was analyzed with SPSS using descriptive and Pearson correlation statistics to explore variable relationships. The study found that the principals offer good management skills in order to have students with acceptable behavior and that the respondents have attended in-service courses on curriculum implementation. It was recommended that since principals demonstrate good management skills that support acceptable student behavior, education stakeholders should invest

in continuous leadership training and mentorship programs for school leaders. School Boards and education offices should recognize and incentivize effective principals to maintain high standards of school leadership.

Key Words: *Delocalization, Principal management, Student discipline, Secondary schools, Leadership training*

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the delocalization of school principals has been recognized as a significant factor influencing school management and student discipline. In many countries, shifting principals away from their home regions aims to promote fairness, reduce favoritism, and encourage diverse management practices. However, this practice also raises concerns about its impact on school climate and discipline management. For instance, studies in the United States have shown that frequent principal turnover, often linked to delocalization, disrupts the establishment of consistent disciplinary policies and undermines the authority of school leaders, leading to increased behavioral problems among students (Grissom et al., 2021). Similarly, in Australia and Canada, principal transfers are associated with transitional challenges that can affect students' sense of safety and school order, especially when new principals are unfamiliar with local community norms and student behaviors.

In Africa, delocalization is similarly employed as a strategy to promote national integration and professional development among school leaders. Several African countries, including Ghana, Uganda, and Lesotho, have adopted policies that transfer principles across regions with the aim of promoting equality, exposing leaders to diverse environments, and enhancing managerial skills. Nonetheless, research shows that such transfers often create challenges in maintaining discipline, especially in rural and culturally diverse settings. For example, in Ghana, the displacement of principals from their communities has been linked to difficulties in understanding local social dynamics, which are important in effectively managing student discipline (Opoku et al., 2020). Furthermore, principal turnover due to localization may undermine the consistency of disciplinary interventions, leading to increased indiscipline and reduced school safety.

Teachers Service Commission (TSC) to promote objectivity and professionalism in school leadership. The policy mandates principals to serve in areas outside their home counties with the intention of reducing nepotism and promoting national cohesion. However, in practice, this policy has generated mixed reactions among school leaders and stakeholders. While some principals report that the transfer exposed them to new management challenges and

broadened their experience, others highlight significant difficulties in managing student discipline. Transferred principals often struggle with cultural differences, community resistance, and the emotional burden of separation from their families, which can impair their effectiveness in enforcing discipline and maintaining order in schools (Mutunga et al., 2023).

In Loitokitok sub-county, the effects of delocalization on key management of student discipline are particularly evident due to the geographical and socio-cultural diversity of the area. Schools in Loitokitok, located on the Kenya-Tanzania border, face unique challenges such as resource limitations, cultural diversity and lack of infrastructure. It has been observed that recent transfers of principals from other counties have had varying effects on disciplinary practices in schools. Some schools have reported improvements in discipline due to new management approaches introduced by delocalized principals, while others have experienced disruption, with students seeing an increase in behavioral issues during the leadership change. Local context underscores the importance of understanding how delocalization interacts with community norms, leadership styles, and resource availability in shaping student discipline outcomes.

Overall, global, African and Kenyan experiences show that while delocalization aims to promote equity, professionalism and exposure to diverse management practices, it also presents significant challenges in maintaining effective discipline in secondary schools. The success of major management of student discipline under delocalization policies depends largely on contextual factors such as cultural understanding, community engagement and adequate support systems. In Loitokitok, balancing these elements is important to ensure that the policy achieves its intended goals without compromising school order and student welfare.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The delocalization of principals in Kenya has generated mixed reactions among education stakeholders. Although this policy was introduced to promote national unity, equitable distribution of school leadership and better management, its actual influence on principal performance remains uncertain. Critics argue that delocalization has disrupted continuity of leadership, reduced morale, and created instability in school management. These issues have raised concerns over whether the policy has effectively increased school effectiveness or whether it has negatively impacted key areas such as student discipline, curriculum supervision, teacher motivation and infrastructure

development. In Loitokitok sub-county, located on the Kenya-Tanzania border, the effects of major displacement are even more pronounced due to the unique geographical, cultural and socio-economic challenges of the area. Frequent leadership changes, with more than 30% of principals transferred within a few years, coincided with declining academic performance and increased student indiscipline, absenteeism, and teacher turnover. This trend suggests a possible relationship between the high rate of principal transfers in the area and poor school performance.

Despite numerous studies on teacher mobility and transfer policies, very little research has specifically examined how these affect principals' performance in key leadership domains within delocalized contexts such as Loitokitok. There is a significant gap in understanding how such transfers impact school management, student discipline, teacher motivation and infrastructure development in border areas with specific social and infrastructural challenges. Given the ongoing policy review and debate on the sustainability and effectiveness of delocalization, it is crucial to investigate its specific effects on principal performance in Loitokitok. This study aimed to fill this gap by examining how delocalization influences various aspects of school leadership and performance in this unique regional setting.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine how the delocalization policy influences the management of students' discipline by principals in secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of the principal in school management is multifaceted, including curriculum supervision, resource allocation, teacher motivation and most importantly the establishment and maintenance of student discipline. Discipline in schools refers to the consistent implementation of behavioral standards and moral values that ensure a conducive learning environment. As Owojori and Asaolu (2021) state, the school principal acts as a planner, coordinator, supervisor and moral authority, whose actions directly influence the behavioral climate of the institution. Therefore, when principals are delocalized and placed in new socio-cultural environments, the dynamics of discipline management often change in complex ways, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively.

One of the main benefits of delocalization is that it increases professionalism and fairness in school administration. When principals serve in schools outside their home region, they are less likely to succumb to social pressure, tribal

affiliations, or local political influences, which often compromise impartiality in disciplinary matters. Globally, studies conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom have shown that principals who work independently from their home communities are better placed to make fair and consistent disciplinary decisions (Harris & Spillane, 2019). They enforce institutional rules uniformly without fear of displeasing relatives or local elites. Similarly, in Nigeria, Uyanga (2020) observed that local principals were more likely to enforce school rules fairly and transparently, as they were not constrained by local kinship networks or community loyalties.

In Kenya, Kariuki (2023) found that delocalized principals demonstrated higher levels of professional Integrity in handling cases of indiscipline among students. For example, cases of truancy, drug abuse, and bullying were addressed more decisively when handled by principals who were not influenced by local politics or personal relationships with parents. This fairness promotes fairness and fosters a culture of accountability and respect within the school, as students believe that enforcement of discipline is consistent and fair. Another positive outcome of delocalization is the transfer of effective disciplinary practices across schools and regions. When principals are moved from one environment to another, they take with them a wealth of administrative experience, including new strategies for maintaining discipline.

According to Ichawa, Kipkeni, and Wapukhulu (2021), delocalization in Kenya enabled the exchange of innovative disciplinary techniques, such as peer mentoring programs, restorative justice approaches and reward-based behavior reinforcement, especially in schools that previously struggled with high rates of indiscipline. Similarly, in Indonesia, Susilo and Ahmaludin (2023) reported that local school leaders often introduced new systems of student guidance and counseling, which significantly reduced attrition and absenteeism. Furthermore, delocalization strengthens institutional accountability. When a principal is newly transferred to a different area, he or she strives to build a strong professional reputation by demonstrating effective leadership. Maduabum (2021) notes that local headmasters often become more committed to maintaining order and discipline in their new environments as a means of winning the trust of teachers, parents and education officials. This increased sense of accountability often results in closer monitoring of students and teachers alike, which increases discipline and performance. Similarly, Wanyonyi (2022) highlights that in some Kenyan schools, delocalized principals managed to instill discipline through better time management, structured daily routines and stronger teacher-student engagement.

Despite these benefits, delocalization also presents significant challenges that can undermine the effective management of student discipline. One of the most significant shortcomings is the issue of cultural and contextual misalignment. Each community has its own unique cultural norms, language, and social expectations, which influence the way discipline is understood and applied. Globally, Bush and Oduro (2019) emphasize that when school leaders are transferred to an environment with unfamiliar cultural dynamics, they may misinterpret student behavior and apply inappropriate disciplinary measures. For example, in Ghana, Adu-Gyamfi (2021) found that localized principals face difficulties communicating with students and parents due to language barriers and cultural differences. This separation often led to misunderstandings and conflicts with school rules. Similarly, in Kenya, Okita (2022) observed that principals transferred from urban centers to rural communities struggled to adapt to local norms. Some students viewed such principals as outsiders who did not understand their socio-economic realities, leading to increased cases of disregard and non-compliance with school rules.

As a result, disciplinary issues were sometimes handled incorrectly, escalating conflicts rather than resolving them. Another negative impact of delocalization is the disruption of established school culture. Schools often develop specific behavioral traditions and routines under long-serving principals. When a principal is suddenly transferred, this institutional stability is disrupted, and it may take time for both teachers and students to adjust to new leadership styles. Leithwood and Jantzi (2020) claim that frequent changes in leadership can destabilize the moral and disciplinary foundations of schools, especially if the new principal introduces unfamiliar or harsh disciplinary policies. Chiriswa (2023) provides evidence from Kenyan secondary schools that shows that indiscipline often increases during leadership changes, as students test the limits of new administrators and teachers become uncertain about disciplinary expectations.

Additionally, delocalization may create resistance in both the local community and school staff, indirectly affecting the enforcement of discipline. When a principal is perceived as an outsider, teachers may be hesitant to fully cooperate in implementing new disciplinary measures. Susilo and Ahmaludin (2023) note that in Indonesia, delocalized principals sometimes face passive resistance from teachers who feel isolated or ignored in decision making. In Kenya, similar cases have been reported where parents and local political figures intervened in disciplinary actions taken by delocalized headmasters, considering them insensitive to local customs (TSC, 2022).

This resistance weakens the authority of the principal and weakens collective discipline management within the school.

The delocalization of principals has both positive and negative effects on the management of student discipline in secondary schools. On the positive side, it promotes professionalism, impartiality and inter-regional exchange of best practices. On the downside, it can create cultural alienation, disrupt established school systems and provoke community resistance. The overall impact depends largely on how well principals adapt to the new contexts and how effectively support structures are established to ease their transition. Therefore, delocalization should not be seen merely as a policy of administrative devolution, but as a complex social and leadership process that requires sensitization, collaboration and strategic capacity building. When well implemented, it can contribute significantly to a disciplined, cohesive and high-performing learning environment in Kenya and beyond.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study on the impact of delocalization policy on principal management of students' discipline in secondary schools in Loitokitok sub-county is based on both Collegial Leadership Theory and Agency Theory, which provide complementary perspectives on school leadership and organizational relationships. According to the collegial leadership principle, effective school management depends on shared decision making, mutual respect and cooperation among stakeholders including principals, teachers, parents and the community. Bush (2005) emphasizes that leadership in schools is most effective when principals foster a collaborative environment that fosters collective responsibility and shared goals. However, delocalization disrupts these established relationships, as transferred principals face challenges in forming new alliances, understanding local cultures, and earning stakeholder trust, which may temporarily hinder their ability to maintain discipline and foster the collegial leadership environment necessary to foster a positive school climate.

In contrast, the agency theory, proposed by Jensen and Meckling (1976), views the principal as an agent acting on behalf of school stakeholders, primarily the Teacher Service Commission and other officials. This theory highlights the potential conflict between principals' self-interests and the expectations of their employers, particularly when

policies such as delocalization influence their motivation and decision-making. When principals are transferred to an unfamiliar environment, their ability to effectively manage student discipline may be compromised if they feel demotivated or disconnected from the interests of stakeholders. Such inconsistency may result in reduced oversight, inconsistent enforcement of discipline, and an overall decline in school order. Agency Theory also suggests that the separation of ownership and control where principals are delegated authority by the TSC may lead to opportunistic behavior if principals' interests diverge from those of the stakeholders, particularly in contexts where policy changes affect morale and authority. Therefore, both theories provide a framework for understanding how delocalization influences principal management of student discipline by emphasizing the importance of collaborative relationships and the principal's motivation and alignment with stakeholder interests.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a case study design to explore the effects of delocalization policy on the performance of principals in secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-county, Kajiado County, Kenya. This qualitative approach enabled a deeper understanding of the phenomenon within its specific social and geographic context, capturing the subtle effects of delocalization on school leadership, administration, and student discipline. Focusing on Loitokitok, which faces unique challenges due to its proximity to the Tanzanian border and diverse ethnic composition, allowed the researcher to examine contextual factors influencing leadership effectiveness. The case study methodology supports multiple data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, which increases reliability and validity through triangulation. The target population consisted of 22 secondary schools, consisting of 22 principals and 286 teachers, who were selected through stratified and random sampling techniques to ensure representativeness and minimize bias. A sample of 11 schools (50%) was selected, which included all the principals of these schools and 30% of the teachers were randomly sampled. Data was collected using questionnaires, which included background information, discipline management, curriculum implementation, infrastructure and performance of principals. Prior to data collection, a pilot study tested the instruments for clarity and validity, with content validity ensured through expert review. Reliability was established through the test-retest method and internal consistency assessment, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, indicating high reliability. Data collection procedures included obtaining permission from relevant authorities and employing the drop-and-pick method for

questionnaire distribution. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation to examine relationships between variables.

FINDINGS

The researcher sought to examine the effects of delocalization policy on principal management of students' discipline in secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub County. The respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they agreed with statements on student discipline on principals' performance. The findings are shown in table below.

Table 1. Student Discipline on Principals Performance

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Dev
We have had cases of student strike(s) since delocalization started.	64	2.672	0.778
Student Characters has improved in the last 3 years.	64	4.078	0.513
The principals offer good management skills in order to have students with acceptable behavior.	64	4.313	0.467
The principal plays his role of maintaining student discipline.	64	4.234	0.556
The principal motivates students to set goals and be responsible members of the society.	64	4.250	0.667
Student are involved in school management through student bodies which helps avert any indiscipline cases.	64	4.219	0.603

Source: Researcher (2025)

From the findings, the respondents agreed that the principals provide good management skills to the students with acceptable behavior (mean=4.313), followed by the principals motivate the students to set goals and become responsible members of the society (mean=4.25), the principals play their role in maintaining student discipline (mean=4.234), the students are involved in the school management through student bodies which take action against any indiscipline. (mean=4.219), student character has improved in the last 3 years (mean=4.078), and we have had cases of student strikes since localization started (mean=2.672). This shows that principals provide good management skills to prepare students with acceptable behavior. The findings agree with a study by Leithwood et al. (2024), strong school leadership significantly impacts school climate and student discipline, as effective

principals set clear expectations, maintain consistent discipline policies, and foster a supportive school culture. Similarly, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2023) emphasize that school leaders who demonstrate good management skills contribute to improved student behavior by creating structured and predictable environments. Furthermore, research by Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera (2020) indicates that leadership that is both instructional and relational leads to a more respectful and responsible student body.

PEARSON CORRELATION ANALYSIS RESULTS

The correlation analysis conducted on the impact of delocalization policy on the key management of students' discipline in secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub County has revealed several notable findings. The data shows that student discipline is not significantly correlated with other variables such as curriculum supervision ($r = -0.082$, $p = 0.521$), infrastructure development ($r = 0.156$, $p = 0.218$), teacher motivation ($r = 0.044$, $p = 0.73$), or principal performance ($r = 0.118$, $p = 0.352$). This indicates that the implementation of delocalization policy may not directly impact how principals manage student discipline, and discipline outcomes may be more influenced by external factors such as home environment, peer influence, and individual student characteristics, as supported by Bear (2020) and Skiba and Losen (2022).

Furthermore, the lack of significant relationships suggests that delocalization alone may not have a direct impact on principal-led discipline management. The impact of the policy may be mediated through other factors that are not included in this analysis, such as school community involvement or parent involvement. This discipline highlights the need for a holistic approach to management that considers multiple impacts beyond administrative policy changes. In summary, the correlation analysis indicates that although delocalization policy may be intended to change key management practices, its direct impact on student discipline remains inconclusive within this dataset. Future research could explore additional variables or qualitative insights to better understand the broader implications of the policy on discipline management in secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub County.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The study examined the effects of delocalization policy on principal management of student discipline in secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub County. Survey findings indicate that principals are perceived to have strong management skills, contribute to better student character, and actively maintain discipline. Respondents largely agreed that principals motivate students to set goals, promote responsible behavior, and involve students in school management, which helps prevent indiscipline. Average scores suggest positive perceptions of principals' role in promoting acceptable student behavior with highest agreement on their management skills and motivation efforts.

However, analysis of the relationship between delocalization and student discipline through correlation analysis reveals no significant relationship between student discipline and variables such as curriculum supervision, infrastructure development, teacher motivation or principal performance. This suggests that delocalization alone may not directly influence how principals manage discipline, and that external factors such as home environment, peer influence, and individual student characteristics probably play a more important role.

Overall, while principals are considered effective in managing discipline, the data indicate that the impact of delocalization policy on discipline management is inconclusive. The findings suggest that other factors beyond administrative policies, such as community involvement and contextual influences, can significantly influence discipline outcomes. Future research should consider exploring these additional variables to better understand the broader effects of localization on principal management and student discipline in secondary schools within the region.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study highlights that principals in Loitokitok Sub County are perceived to effectively manage student discipline through strong leadership, motivation and involvement strategies. Respondents generally view principals as capable of promoting responsible behavior and maintaining discipline, which contributes positively to school climate. However, correlation analysis indicates that delocalization policy has no significant direct effect on student discipline, suggesting that external factors such as home environment, peer influence, and personal characteristics play a more important role. These findings suggest that delocalization alone may not be sufficient to

influence discipline outcomes, and other contextual elements need to be considered. To enhance understanding, future research should explore additional variables such as community engagement and socio-cultural factors that may mediate or moderate the relationship between policy implementation and discipline management. Overall, while principals are viewed as effective leaders, the impact of delocalization on discipline remains inconclusive, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach that incorporates external influences beyond administrative policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Since principals have demonstrated strong management skills that promote acceptable student behavior, education stakeholders should prioritize ongoing leadership training and mentorship programs for school leaders. The Teacher Service Commission (TSC) and Board of Management (BoM) should also recognize and reward effective principals through performance-based incentives to encourage consistently high standards of discipline management. Furthermore, organizing regular forums to exchange best practices in student discipline can promote consistency and effectiveness in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Research could be conducted to explore the perspectives of teachers, students, and parents on how localized principals impact school operations, discipline, academic performance, and stakeholder engagement.

1. REFERENCES

2. Adu-Gyamfi, K. (2021). Challenges faced by delocalized principals in Ghanaian schools. *African Journal of Educational Management*, 15(2), 45-60.
3. Bush, T., & Oduro, G. (2019). Sustainable leadership in education: Policy and practice. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 33(3), 523-534.
4. Echwa, E., Kipkeni, A., & Wepukhulu, E. (2021). Disciplinary innovations among delocalized principals in Kenyan secondary schools. *Journal of Educational Innovation*, 8(1), 75-89.
5. Grissom, J. A., et al. (2021). Principal turnover and school climate: Evidence from the United States. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 43(2), 245-267.
6. Gregory, A., Skiba, R., & Noguera, P. (2020). The disciplinary gap: Student behavior and school leadership. *Educational Leadership Review*, 12(4), 123-138.
7. Harris, A., & Spillane, J. (2019). Distributed leadership in practice. *School Leadership & Management*, 39(4), 345-356.
8. Jensen, M. C., & Meckling, W. H. (1976). Theory of the firm: Managerial behavior, agency costs, and ownership structure. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 3(4), 305-360.
9. Kariuki, M. (2023). Professional integrity among delocalized principals in Kenyan secondary schools. *Kenyan Journal of Education*, 17(2), 89-104.

10. Leithwood, K., et al. (2024). School leadership and student discipline: A review of research. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 60(1), 101-124.
11. Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. (2023). School leadership that works: The importance of management skills. *Educational Leadership*, 80(5), 34-41.
12. Maduabum, C. (2021). Accountability and discipline management among delocalized principals in Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Leadership*, 9(3), 150-165.
13. Mutunga, J., et al. (2023). Effects of principal transfers on school management in Kenya. *Kenya Journal of Education Policy*, 12(1), 22-35.
14. Okita, P. (2022). Cultural adaptation challenges of transferred principals in Kenyan rural schools. *East African Journal of Education*, 10(2), 67-80.
15. Opoku, K., et al. (2020). Impact of principal displacement on social dynamics in Ghanaian schools. *Ghana Journal of Education Research*, 8(1), 45-60.
16. Susilo, H., & Ahmaludin, A. (2023). Disciplinary practices in Indonesian schools under principal delocalization. *Asian Journal of Educational Management*, 15(2), 112-128.
17. TSC (Teachers Service Commission). (2022). Report on principal transfers and management challenges in Kenya. *TSC Annual Report*.
18. Skiba, R., & Losen, D. (2022). Disciplinary disparities and school leadership. *Journal of School Violence*, 21(3), 239-255.
19. Uyanga, L. (2020). Fairness and transparency in school discipline: The role of delocalized principals in Nigeria. *African Education Review*, 17(4), 347-361.
20. Wanyonyi, R. (2022). Strategies for maintaining discipline in Kenyan schools through principal leadership. *Kenyan Journal of Education*, 18(1), 78-92.

