

An Exploration of How Peace Building Meetings as a Form of Stakeholders' Collaboration Affects Management of Conflict in Secondary Schools in Narok County, Kenya

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Abstract

Collaboration by all stakeholders in education could drastically reduce conflicts being continuously witnessed in the education sector in Kenya. These conflicts have led to undesirable results like teachers' strikes, sit-ins, go-slows, students' unrests among others. Thus the main purpose of this study was to explore how peace building meetings as a form of stakeholders' collaboration affect management of conflict in secondary schools in Narok County, Kenya. The objective of the study was to establish whether peace building meetings affect conflict management in secondary schools in Narok County. The study was guided by the Stakeholders' theory and Interest-based Relational Approach. The study adopted the mixed methodology and an exploratory design. A sample of 371 respondents were selected from the population from stakeholders who included: secondary school principals, teachers, BOM members, PTA officials, sponsors, ministry of Education officials, teachers unions' representatives and TSC officials in Narok County. Clustered random sampling was used to select the respondents in the study. Purposeful sampling was used to automatically select principals, BOM, PTA and sponsors from the schools sampled. Validity was established by requesting two supervisors and other experts to indicate whether each item in the research tools is relevant or not then the calculated content validity index indicated that the tools were valid. Reliability was established by use of test retest, the split half reliability method and trustworthiness through dependability and reliability. The research tools were piloted in two schools not included in the study but with similar characteristics with the target population. Data collection method involved use of questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. Data analysis was facilitated by use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Descriptive statistics in form of frequency distribution, percentages, means and standard deviations were used and data presented in form of graphs and tables. Inferential statistics was in form of Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient, ANOVA, Regression Analysis and Chi-square test. Thematic content analysis was used for qualitative data. This study revealed that peace building meetings do influence management of conflict and create stability and cohesion among stakeholders in secondary schools. It is therefore recommended that peace building be utilized in conflict management.

Keywords: Peace building, Stakeholders, Collaboration.

1.0. Introduction

Efforts to manage conflict have brought to the fore a number of strategies which include; Peace building, Negotiations, mediations, Military interventions, Moral re-armament, Peace keeping, Disarmament and Full-fledged war. Some of the strategies are meant to prevent conflict. That is, to pre-empt occurrence of conflict through peace-building and awareness campaigns. Other strategies involve conflict resolution through mediations, negotiations and the like whereas conflict management is another strategy employed to continuously manage the impact of conflict.

Schools are expected to teach children academic skills and help students interact with one another, their teachers, and educational administrators. A belief held by many educators is that conflicts affect student academic achievement; therefore, conflict management has always been a concern to educators (Boothe, Bradley, Flick, Keough & Kirk, 1993). In the recent past, negative student behaviour and conflict emanating from the same has escalated to great levels in the USA (Lagat, 2013). Negative unhealthy interactions is thought to lead to learning problems given that little time or energy is left for academic pursuits by students who spend time arguing and fighting.

The Kenyan situation does not paint a different picture given that conflicts in Kenya's public secondary schools have been on the rise in the recent past, (Walloga, 2013). According to Musembi and Siele (2004) as cited in Kumaka (2012), the government was concerned over the disturbances in learning institutions which have resulted in students burning down schools and even attacking teachers. This is a highly undesirable behaviour. This is mainly due to unresolved conflicts between the students and the school administrators or inappropriate disciplinary actions (MOE, 2009). Between 1980s and 2012, the number of recorded conflicts in public secondary schools increased from a mere 23 to over 300 (MOE, 2012).

1.1 Statement of the problem

Despite the policies that have been put in place by the government, an increased number of conflicts continue to be reported in Kenyan educational institutions most of which occur in secondary schools (Republic of Kenya 2012). Many of these conflicts usually lead to violence and destruction of institutional property. The obtaining situation in secondary schools in Narok, county is not different given that several disputes are frequently reported (PCIA, 2012). In ideal situations, schools and all the stakeholders in matters education work in harmony thus creating a serene and cohesive environment conducive for learning. The extent to which conflict in secondary schools can be achieved through peace building meetings is yet to be fully documented. Thus, the study sought to explore the extent to which peace building meetings can influence management of conflict in secondary schools in Narok County, Kenya.

1.2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which peace building meetings affect management of conflict in secondary schools in Narok County, Kenya. The study aimed at making a contribution on how best conflict could be managed through peace building meetings to ensure that learning institutions run smoothly.

1.3. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to establish how peace building meetings and their effect in conflict management in secondary schools in Narok County

1.4. Research Question

The study sought to answer the following question:

What is the frequency of peace building meetings and their effect in conflict management in secondary schools in Narok County?

1.5. Research Hypothesis

The study had the following null hypothesis:

Ho₁ There is no relationship between peace building meetings and conflict management in secondary schools in Narok County.

1.6. Significance of the study

It was hoped that the findings would make evidence available to academicians on how peace building forums could help create stability and cohesion which were the hallmark to improved academic performance in schools. It would also benefit policy makers in taking remedial measures to contain the unwarranted conflicts, some violent, in schools and enhance socio-economic development of the country.

Further, it was anticipated that the study would provide secondary school teachers and principals with information about peace building in conflict management. This would be used to improve their relationships and management approaches. It was also expected to equip public and private secondary schools with insights on correct management styles that would improve working relationships and student's performance.

2.0. Conceptual Framework

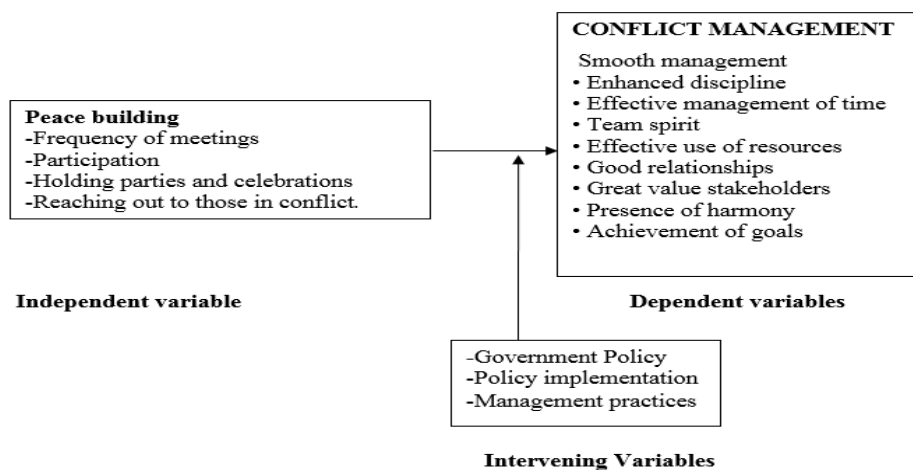


Figure 1: Peace building meetings and their effect in conflict management

3.0. Research Findings

3.1: Peace building meetings and their effect in conflict management

The study sought to establish whether peace building meeting was used as a conflict management strategy in secondary schools. The responses were sought from the stakeholders who included the principals, teachers, BOM representatives, PA representatives, sponsor and students.

3.2: Stakeholders Attendance of Collaborative Forums in their Institution

The study also sought to find out how often the stakeholders attend collaborative forums in the schools. This was important as an indication of the commitment of the stakeholders to the institutions. Their participation in meetings was therefore important for this study. The findings were presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Stakeholders Attendance of Collaborative Forums in their Institution

			Position					Total	
			Principal	Teacher	BOM Member	PA Official	Sponsor		Students
How Often Do Stakeholders Attend Collaborative Forums In Your Institution	Never	Count	1	15	4	0	1	7	28
		%	5.3%	7.4%	14.8%	0.0%	20%	7.3%	7.8%
	Rarely	Count	5	109	3	2	2	45	166
		%	26.3%	51.9%	11.1%	33.3%	40%	46.8%	46%
	Frequently	Count	12	42	7	2	0	22	85
		%	63.2%	20%	25.9%	33.3%	0.0%	22.9%	23.5%
	Always	Count	1	44	13	2	2	20	82
		%	5.3%	20.1%	48%	33.3%	40%	20.8%	22.7%
	Total	Count	19	210	27	6	5	96	361
		%	5.1%	58.9%	7.2%	1.6%	1.3%	25.2%	100.0%

The findings of the study presented on Table 9 indicated that most of the respondents indicated that they attended the collaborative meetings rarely in their institutions. 46% indicated that they rarely attended such meetings in their institutions. 23.5% respondents said that they attended the meetings frequently, while 22.7% indicated that they always attended the meetings. Only 7.8% respondents indicated that they never attended the meetings at all in their institutions. The findings indicated that majority of the stakeholders attended the collaborative forums in their respective institutions. Hence any positive results arising from the meeting relating to conflict management in schools in the study area can be attributed to this involvement.

3.3: Frequency of holding peace building meetings and their effect on conflict management in Secondary schools in Narok County.

The first objective of the study sought to establish the frequency of peace building meetings and their effect in conflict management in secondary schools. The study used questionnaire statements to establish the views of the respondents in respect to the objective. The interviews and focus group discussions were also used to authenticate the results of the questionnaires. The findings were presented using cross tabulation table to show the responses from each category of the stakeholders and the views of the interviews and the focus group discussion.

Table 10: Response on peace building according to Stakeholders

	SD	D	U	A	SA	MEAN	STD DEV
We often hold peace building meetings in our institution	59	70	23	102	119	3.40	1.488
Stakeholders play their role during peace building in peace building forums	15.8%	18.8%	6.2%	27.3%	31.9%		
Conflicts decline when stakeholders participate in peace building forums	22	64	47	166	74	3.55	1.159
Peace building is widely used in institutions by holding inter-departmental parties and celebrations	5.9%	17.2%	12.6%	44.5%	19.8%		
We the stakeholders participate in peace building by reaching out to those we are in conflict with.	28	13	29	130	168	4.07	1.169
Peace building meetings lead to win-win situation	7.5%	3.4%	7.8%	34.9%	45%		
Peace buildings forums lead to harmony in schools	22	74	67	100	107	3.53	1.264
AVERAGE	5.9%	19.8%	18%	26.8%	28.7%		
	20	67	13	99	172	3.90	1.305
	5.4%	18%	3.4%	26.5%	46.1%		
	21	37	30	150	131	3.90	1.164
	5.6%	9.9%	8%	40.2%	35.1%		
	21	18	10	103	218	4.28	1.123
	5.6%	4.8%	2.7%	27.6%	58.4%		
AVERAGE	27	49	31	121	141	3.8	1.239

The respondents were required to indicate how often they hold their peace meeting at the school and the effect it has on conflict management. This statement was important because the frequency of the meeting

helps to check on the progress of resolutions passed. The results on table 10 indicate that most of the respondents 59.2% respondents strongly agreed and agreed with the statement that the stakeholders often hold peace building meeting in the schools. 18.8% respondents disagreed with the statement while those who strongly disagreed were only 15.8%. 23 respondents out of the 373 were undecided on the statement. This was equivalent to 6.2%.

The findings of the study presented in table 10 show that majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the stakeholders genuinely play their role during peace building forums. Among the stakeholders, 44.5% agreed with the statement, 19.8% agreed while 12.6%. This shows that the stakeholders genuinely play their role during peace building forums, hence the relative peace that exists in the schools could be attributed to the fact that the stakeholders play their roles effectively. The study sought to establish whether conflicts decline when stakeholders participate in peace building forums. The cross tabulation table helped to establish among the respondents their views on this situation.

The results presented on table 10 show that majority of the stakeholders strongly agreed that stakeholder participation in peace meetings reduced conflict within the schools. This was also echoed by 24.9% of stakeholders who agreed. Only 7.5% of respondents strongly disagreed. This shows that stakeholder participation was very important to the schools as it helped to reduce conflict. On whether Peace building is widely used in institutions by holding inter-departmental parties and celebrations in the schools, the results were cross tabulated to establish the response based on the position of the respondents. 46.1% strongly agreed that peace building was used, 26.5% agreed with the statement, 3.4% were undecided while 5.4% strongly disagreed. On whether peace building is widely used in institutions by holding inter-departmental parties and celebrations, 55.5% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement. 18% disagreed while only 5.9% strongly disagreed. This indicates that conflict management in the schools could be attributed to the use of peace building through holding of inter-departmental parties and celebrations in the schools.

The study also sought find out whether stakeholders participate in peace building by reaching out to those they are in conflict with. The result indicates that most of the respondents agreed with the statement that stakeholders participated in peace building by reaching out to those they are in conflict with. 46.1% strongly agreed with the statement while 26.5% agreed that they reached out to those they were in conflict with. This could be a factor contributing to conflict reduction in the schools.

On whether peace building meetings do lead to win-win situation in a conflict, the results presented in table 10 gave the response according to the various categories. The results in table 10 shows that majority of the respondents, 35.1% strongly agreed with the statement that peace building meetings led to a win-win situation, 40.2% respondents agreed, 8% were undecided, 9.9% disagreed while 5.6% strongly disagreed with the statement. This indicates that schools that have managed to control conflicts have relied on peace building meetings which eventually lead to a win-win situation. Similar findings were noted from the interview and focus group discussions majority of the respondents who took the interview agreed that peace meetings are very effective in conflict management as they lead to a win-win situation.

The results in table 10 shows that 54.4% of the respondents, strongly agreed with the statement that peace building meetings led to harmony in schools, 27.6% respondents agreed, 2.7% were undecided, 4.8% disagreed while 5.6% strongly disagreed with the statement. This indicates that all the stakeholders believe that a sure way to bring harmony in the schools is to hold peace forums.

3.4. Correlation analysis on the relationship between holding Peace building meetings and conflict management according to the teachers

The study tested the relationship between holding peace building meetings and conflict management in Secondary schools. The results were presented in table 11.

Table 11. Correlation Analysis

	Peace	Litigation	Mediation	Negotiation	Arbitration	Conflict Management
Pearson Correlation	1	.394**	.522**	.572**	.612**	.629**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	275	275	275	273	274	273

The relationship between the variables was determined using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results in Table 11 show that holding peace meetings correlated positively and significantly with all the other factors and also with the dependent variable conflict management ($r=0.629$, $p<0.05$). This indicates that holding peace meeting by the stakeholders affects the way conflicts are managed among the schools. There is therefore need to put emphasis on the peace meetings held by the stakeholders in enhancing conflict management in secondary schools.

4.2.5. Regression analysis on holding Peace building meetings and conflict management

Regression analysis helps to establish the magnitude of change that the independent variable causes to the dependent variable. The results were presented in Table 12.

Table 12. Regression analysis between peace building meetings and conflict management

R	R Square		Change Statistics					
	Beta	t- value	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	P- value	
.690 ^a	.690	15.707	.475	.477	246.697	1	271	.000

From the table it is noted that there is a positive and significant relationship between holding peace meetings and conflict management among secondary schools in the study area. The results show that 47.5% of the effectiveness of conflict management in secondary schools could be explained by stakeholders holding peace meetings frequently. Based on the t – value (15.707) which is more than 2, the F- value (246.697) which is more than 5 and the P – value of 0.000 showing very high significance at 0.05, null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between holding peace meetings and conflict management” is not accepted, therefore the alternative hypothesis is accepted meaning that holding frequent peace meetings among the stakeholders affect conflict management.

3.6. Analysis of Variance on peace building meetings

This was used to test the degree of variation among the responses on the objective. Table 13 was used to present the data.

Table 13. Analysis of variance

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	112,763	1	112.763	246.697	.000 ^b
	Residual	123.871	271	.457		
	Total	236.634	272			

a. Dependent Variable: CONFLIC MANAGEMENT

b. Predictors: (Constant), PEACE

From the ANOVA table, the results show that there is very little variation in the responses given that the residual value is very small at 0.457. This indicates that the responses about the objective are normally distributed, and that the results are not just by chance.

3.7: Thematic Analysis on peace building meetings and conflict management

The interviews were conducted among the CDE/ DEOs/ Staffing Officers/ KUPPET official/KNUT official and their response was not different from what had already been observed. Majority of the respondents agreed that holding peace meeting regularly was very important in conflict management among the schools. As noted by one of the DEOs; *‘I am always invited to attend all the peace meetings that are held in the schools within my district, I can attribute the peace that is prevailing in most schools to the consistency in the stakeholders peace meetings which are held in most of the schools’.*

Another respondent indicated that schools in the county initially had a lot of conflicts arising both from the teachers and the students. The major contribution to this was lack of cohesion among the teachers and the students and also lack of appropriate framework through which the stake holders could work. It is therefore noted that stakeholder involvement in school activities had a big impact on conflict management in secondary schools.

Mr Obwocha a staff officer of kuppet was quick to add that when the stakeholders attend the peace meeting they are able to share their ideas on how to sole the conflicts among the students and the teachers. He noted that the reasons schools have a lot of unrest is because they do not have constant peace meetings to ensure that conflicts are controlled before they get out of hand. According to Obwocha peace meetings have a big impact on the conflict resolution process among the students and the teachers in secondary schools.

Ketere, a Knut official added that schools where constant meetings are held with stakeholders including the students have limited cases of conflict management. This shows that most of the schools that encourage peace meetings control the conflicts among the students and the teachers.

From the focus group with the stakeholders in the area, one of the BOM indicated that peace meeting are most appropriate in solving conflicts in the schools. Peace meeting are good as they play a role in dealing with the conflict before it manifests itself in the victims. *‘I have confidence that having constant peace meeting in the schools puts everyone at ease and hence the conflicts are reduced to a great extend within the schools’.* Most group members fully agreed with the argument and it is clear that peace meetings were regarded as the best strategy in handling conflicts.

Most of the officials who responded to the interviews, agreed that schools where the stakeholders attend these peace meetings are able to effectively manage their conflicts without seeking outside intervention. This achievement has helped to maintain harmony in the schools. It is therefore noted that secondary schools

where peace building meetings are held frequently are able to effectively manage their conflict effectively among the schools. the study therefore notes that the prevailing peace in secondary schools in Narok county could be attributed to the frequency of the peace meetings being held in the schools and are participated by all the stakeholders. Similar sentiments were heard among the members who participated in the focus group discussions.

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3.8. The Mixing of the Results, Interpretation of the Mixed Results and the implication

The results from quantitative data and those of qualitative data were the mixed and compared. The results were found to provide similar findings. The descriptive, inferential and thematic results point out that where the stakeholders attend these peace meetings are able to effectively manage their conflicts without seeking outside intervention. It therefore means that secondary schools where peace building meetings are held frequently are able to effectively manage their conflict effectively among the schools. The results imply that the frequency of the peace meetings being held in the schools and are participated by all the stakeholders result in prevailing peace in secondary schools in Narok county.

3.9. Discussion on Frequency of peace building meetings and their effect in conflict management

The first objective of the study sought to establish the frequency of peace building meetings and their effect in conflict management in secondary schools. The interviews and focus group discussions were also used to authenticate the results of the questionnaires. The respondents were required to indicate how often they hold their peace meetings at the school and the effect it has on conflict management. The findings of the study indicated that majority of the schools hold peace building meetings frequently and this explain how they have been able to manage conflicts in the schools. These results are in line with the findings of Langat (2013) who noted that the use of frequent stakeholders meeting and consultation in school management as a conflict management method was indicated by majority of the respondents. This implies that stakeholders frequently have peace meetings and consultations in their schools. Consultations always prevent conflicts in public secondary schools. Furthermore, the use of clear definition and description of roles and responsibility on school management between stakeholders by the schools' management was also a method of solving conflicts. This indicates that sometimes school administrators use this technique to avoid conflicts in their schools.

While on the other hand, in service of education managers, teachers and education stakeholders on management and conflict resolution was also another method of solving conflicts. This clearly indicates that there is need to have trainings on conflict management strategies in schools to assist in management of conflicts (Langat 2013). Gordon and Ernest (1996) that conflicts could be defused through frequent stakeholders meeting and consultation in school. It is important for the principal to know both educational expectations and attitudes of the people in the community. With this knowledge the principal is in a position to put in place educational programmes that meet the needs of the community to be taken into consideration. In regard to conflict resolution techniques, the findings concur with Robbins (2003) that resolution of conflicts could be done through smoothing. This entails playing down differences while emphasizing common interests between the conflicting parties. This is possible in school where the principal can emphasis common good between stakeholders schools.

4.1 Recommendations for Practice

Several aspects were noticed in the study which elicited recommendations which should be adopted by all stakeholders and the government in order to enhance the involvement of these stakeholders in managing conflicts.

Peace building ought to be frequently used in managing conflict in secondary schools. This is due to the fact that most of the officials who responded to the interviews, agreed that schools where the stakeholders attend these peace meetings are able to effectively manage their conflicts without seeking outside intervention. This achievement has helped to maintain harmony in the schools. It is therefore noted that secondary schools where peace building meetings are held frequently are able to effectively manage their conflict.

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