

Public Abstract

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Title:HOW SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS BUILD TRUST IN KENYAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The most successful school leaders are those who have transformed their schools by managing relationships (Kaser & Halbert, 2009). Consequently, strong levels of trust are preconditions for successful school improvement initiative. Research confirms that cooperation strategy works in high schools with sufficient attention being paid to the quality of relationships and the level of trust in those schools (Kotter, 2002). Unfortunately, trust is never something already at hand; it is always a matter of human effort. This qualitative multi-case study sought understanding and describing how secondary school principals in south western Kenya build trust in their schools.

The purpose of this study was to elicit opinions and reflections of participants about challenges, individual efforts to develop trust as well as their efforts to adapt to unstable parental demands and expectations. Multiple interviews with six high school principals were conducted. The interview data was triangulated with extensive observation data collected in naturalistic settings in the schools. Observations were augmented with several days of shadowing each principal and the utilization of document analysis at the site.

Data gathered indicated an urgent need on the part of principals to build trust with parents. This was achieved by closing the gap between the community and the school; the community and the self in addition to sustaining high levels of competence, professionalism and morals. Through modeling, mediation, participation in community activities , good instructional leadership, balanced management practices, free and open communication were some of the methods the principal used to close these gaps,consequently building trust with the parents.