

**IMPLICATIONS OF CHALLENGES THREATENING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
THE RESTRUCTURING OF TEACHER PLACEMENT IN  
NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA**

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**Abstract**

This study sought to find out challenges threatening the implementation of TSC policy of the restructuring of teacher placement in public secondary schools in Nakuru County of the Republic of Kenya. This study was informed and guided by the Discrepancy Evaluation Model. This study used qualitative research design. This study employed a combination of Inclusive Criterion, purposive, and simple random sampling techniques to select seven districts and thirty seven schools under study. The findings showed that the TSC Score Guide and Selection Criteria are very restrictive and lack flexibility; the process is marred by corruption and nepotism; and that some selection panelists have lower level of education than candidates whom they interviewed. The study concluded that the TSC Score Guide is very restrictive; some panelists display conflict of interest in the selection process; and that some panelists have a low level of education. The study recommended that the TSC Score Guide be reviewed and revised; machinery checks be developed against corruption and nepotism; and only professionals be engaged on the selection panels.

**Keywords:** Implications, challenges, restructuring, teacher placement, Kenya.

**1. Introduction**

Decentralization, which had begun in the 1980s, continued into the early twenty-first century with many developing countries beginning to decentralize education. This phenomenon proceeded fastest in Latin America and Eastern Europe, but several countries in Asia and Africa also began initiating decentralized policies (Board, n.d.). The objective of educational decentralization has mainly been to achieve a more efficient system (IIEP Research Brief, 2014). The Republic of Kenya has not been left behind in an attempt to take governance closer to the people.

The Teachers Service Commission (TSC), the major employer of teachers in Kenya, has undertaken a number of reform initiatives since 2001 in order to improve the quality of service

delivery. One such outstanding reform initiative is the decentralization of teacher placement to the district and school levels, which aims at efficiency by bringing services closer to the users (TSC Policy, 2006). However, decentralization has come up with new challenges (Kayabwe, Asimwe and Nkaada, 2014).

### **1.1 Research Problem**

Since its establishment in 1967, Teachers' Service Commission (TSC), the main employing body for teachers in Kenya, practiced a direct and automatic employment of all trained teachers, hence utilizing the supply-driven method of recruiting teachers. This method of teacher recruitment ceased in 1998 following a government directive (TSC Policy, 2006). In 2001, the TSC adopted a new policy of recruiting teachers on the basis of demand and availability of vacancies, hence the demand-driven method of teacher recruitment. However, it was not until 2006 when a documented comprehensive policy to guide the exercise was launched with teacher recruitment and selection being delegated to the Provincial Directors of Education and District/Municipal Education Officers.

The TSC Policy (2006) on decentralization of teacher placement is being implemented by schools' Board of Management (BOM) using the provided guidelines which are revised and documented every year before every recruitment exercise. The policy aims at improving efficiency in teacher recruitment and a more effective administration. However, new challenges have come up which threaten the TSC Policy of the restructuring of teacher placement in Kenya.

In view of the provided guidelines and the expected outcomes by TSC, this study sought to answer the question: *What are the challenges of the restructuring of teacher placement in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya?*

### **1.2 Theoretical Framework**

This study was informed and guided by the Discrepancy Evaluation Model (DEM) which looks for gaps between what the developers of a program intended and what has actually happened. DEM offered a pragmatic and systematic approach in conducting this study which sought to find out the challenges threatening the implementation of TSC policy of the restructuring of teacher placement in public secondary schools in Nakuru County of the Republic of Kenya during the period 2001-2014.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Challenges of the Restructuring of Teacher Placement in Public Secondary Schools**

According to Bayaga and Wadesango (2013), it is critical to identify challenges in the achievement of programs in any evaluation. Without regular evaluation of teacher placement practices, the government of the Republic of Kenya may be forced to follow the same path as Zimbabwe, which returned to centralization after it was clear that there was inefficiency in handling teacher management at the devolution levels (Wadesango, Machingambo, Mutekwe, Ndofirepi, and Maphosa, 2012). ACDP Indonesia (2014) calls for an evaluation of teacher decentralization concept because of challenges which pose a threat to it.

Kipsoi and Sang (2008) found out that Board of Management (BOM) members lacked quality management capabilities and their knowledge base on educational matters was wanting. Onyango, et al. (2011) also found out that teacher placement panels took a long time to understand the teacher selection process because the board members were not selected on merit, were not qualified, and had no proven track record.

Thida and Joy (2012) posit that there is questionable knowledge and understanding of the stakeholders on matters of school management. They further report principals' acknowledgement of difficulty in dealing with the new dynamics of school-based management in Cambodia hence, needing orientation. This challenge hampers efficiency in service delivery in the restructuring of teacher placement.

Board of Governors' active participation in schools depended on principals' skills in drawing its support and co-operation and yet these skills were lacking as was found in a study in Hong Kong because principals had been inadequately prepared to cope with the changes required (Yau and Cheng, 2011). The education department did not sufficiently promote school management effectiveness in schools. According to IIEP Research Brief (2014), capacity development is very important to successful decentralization yet actors at school level have decried a lack of training and their subsequent weak efficiency. They must be trained and re-trained as it is necessary to build the capacity of different administrative levels to which teacher management functions are to be devolved (Thida & Joy, 2012). Wanjala (2010) is categorical that the capacity of the recruitment panel members should be enhanced to enable them carry out the management tasks bestowed upon them effectively and efficiently.

Yet another significant challenge faced by the restructuring of teacher placement is political interference and influence by the local leaders (IIEP Research Brief, 2014). Makori and Onderi (2013) also found out that the process was prone to negative influence, corruption, ethnicity, nepotism, and favoritism.

### **3. Research Design**

This study used Qualitative research design so as to investigate, through the use of Interview Schedule, the experiences as felt and undergone by the TSC County Director, TSC Staffing officers and all principals in their roles and responsibilities in relation to the restructuring of teacher placement in public secondary schools in Kenya. The experiences and suggestions of teachers, through the use of an open-ended question in the Questionnaire Schedule, were also sought for in-depth information. According to Krathwohl (2009), qualitative research helps to understand a phenomenon in real-life context through the gathering of detailed, in-depth information.

#### **3.1 Population and Sampling Techniques**

Purposive sampling technique was used to sample Nakuru to represent the 47 counties of Kenya because Nakuru is a cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic county. The diversity in ethnic backgrounds in Nakuru would provide rich and diverse experiences from respondents, which could lead to substantial amount of information related to the restructuring of teacher placement in public secondary schools. Cohen, et al. (2009) observes that researchers may handpick a sample for a specific purpose. Secondly, minimal related studies had been conducted at the county.

Exclusion Criterion was used to exclude the two Districts in Nakuru County who had District schools only. According to Eduardo (2010), exclusion criterion makes the selection or eligibility criteria used to rule out the target population for a research study. The other seven districts were all sampled. Out of 256 public secondary schools in Nakuru County, only 219 were well established and had Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) Code numbers. However, the other thirty seven schools which were not coded and were labeled 'New' were excluded from the population. There were a total of thirty seven sampled public secondary schools in Nakuru County for this study (4 National, 12 Extra-County and 21 Sub-County schools or 13 girls', 10 boys', and 14 mixed schools).

Purposive sampling was used to select: (a) All principals for the 37 sampled

public secondary schools; (b) All 154 secondary school teachers hired by TSC from 2001 up to 2014 in the 37 sampled schools; (c) All the seven Teachers Service Commission (TSC) Staffing officers; (d) The County Director of Education; and (e) The TSC County Director.

### 3.2 Research Instruments and Statistical Treatment of Data

Self-constructed Interview Schedules comprising semi-structured, open-ended questions for the County Director of Education, TSC County Director, and TSC District Staffing Officers were used. The researcher's self-constructed questionnaire for collecting data of all sampled teachers who were hired after the 2001 TSC policy of the restructuring teacher placement was also used. Section C of the questionnaire had one open-ended question on what procedures should be implemented in the restructuring of teacher placement process to improve it. Both face and content validity was done. Content analysis was used to analyze the transcribed qualitative data.

### 3.3 Ethical Considerations

The author of this article conducted the research with respect and concern for the dignity and welfare of the respondents by thoroughly explaining the purpose of the study to them. Individuals' right to decline to participate was respected. The author kept the promise of safeguarding the participants' identities.

### 3.4 Demographic Data of Respondents

Demographic data was considered as very important as the views of respondents were directly related to their experiences and positions at the workplace. The author of this article collected data from three distinct groups of respondents as shown on Table 1 below.

*Table 1*

*Groups of Respondents*

	Population	Sample	Respondents	M	F
(i) Teachers	154	154	146	74	72
(ii) Principals	37	37	33	18	15
(iii) TSC District Staffing Officers	7	7	4	3	1
Total =	200	200	183	95	88

The 146 teachers who participated in this study were more or less balanced with respect to gender: males- 74 (50.7%) and females- 72 (49.3%), suggesting that the findings of this study were largely reflective of the teachers' experiences, both male and female. The difference between the number of male and female principals in this study was negligible.

*Table 2*  
*Teachers' Highest Academic Qualification*

	Frequency	Percent
Diploma in Education	7	4.8
Bachelor of Education	119	81.5
PGDE	4	2.7
Master of Education	12	8.2
Other	4	2.7
Total	146	100.0

Most of the teachers' highest academic qualifications were as follows: Bachelor of Education- 119 (81.5%), Master of Education-12 (8.2%), and Diploma in Education-7 (4.8%), which suggests that public secondary school teachers in Kenya are trained and qualified professionals.

*Figure 1*  
*Principals' Highest Academic Qualification*

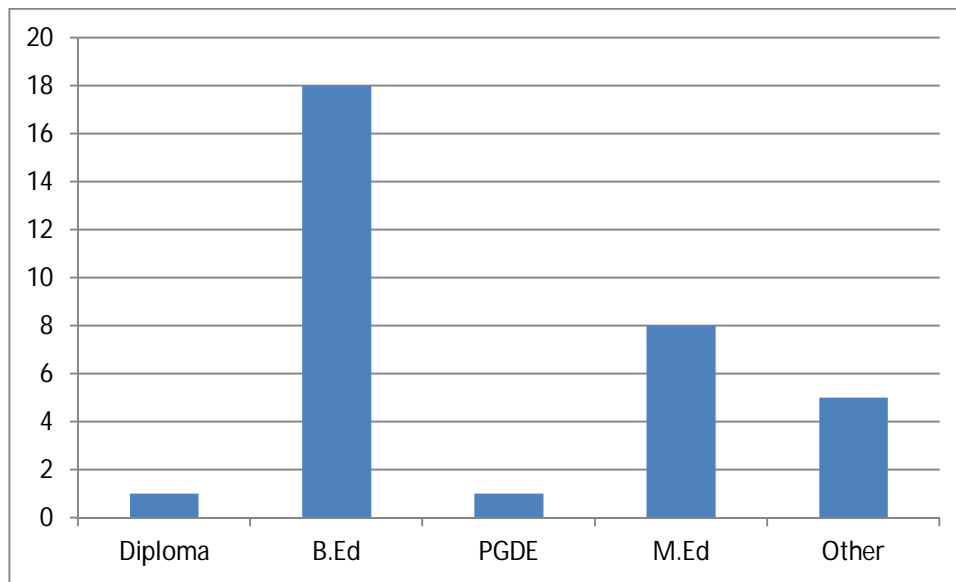
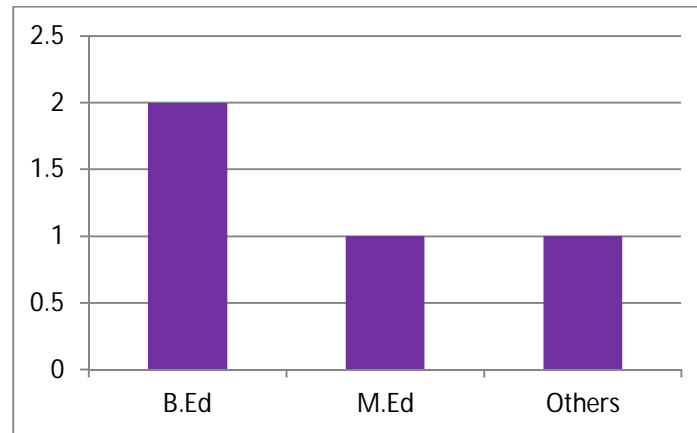


Figure 1 shows that eighteen (54.5%) principals held a Bachelor of Education degree while eight (24.2%) held a Master of Education degree. These findings indicate that public secondary school principals in Kenya were trained and qualified for the office they held.

*Figure 2*  
*TSC Staffing Officers' Academic Qualification*



Majority of principals (54.5%) and TSC Staffing officers (50%) were holders of a Bachelor of Education degree. This indicates that the respondents were trained and qualified for the positions they held.

*Figure 3*  
*Principals' Trained on Interviewing Skills*

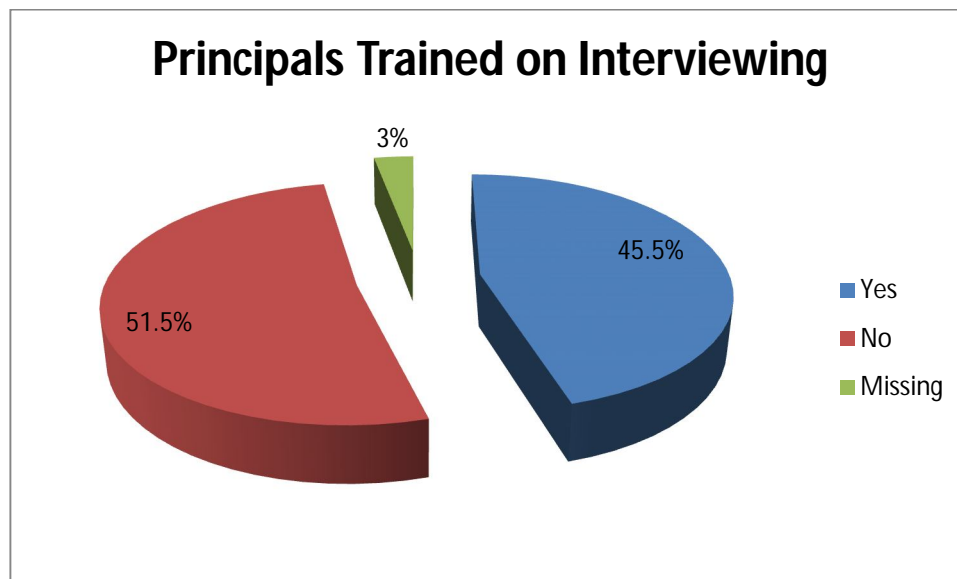


Figure 3 shows that seventeen (51.5%) principals had not undergone training in interviewing skills to empower them to conduct interviews on selection panels. Only fifteen (45.5%) had undergone interview-training. It was also found that no TSC District Staffing Officer had undergone training in interviewing skills in Nakuru County, Kenya.

Figure 4  
Principals' Year of Interview Training

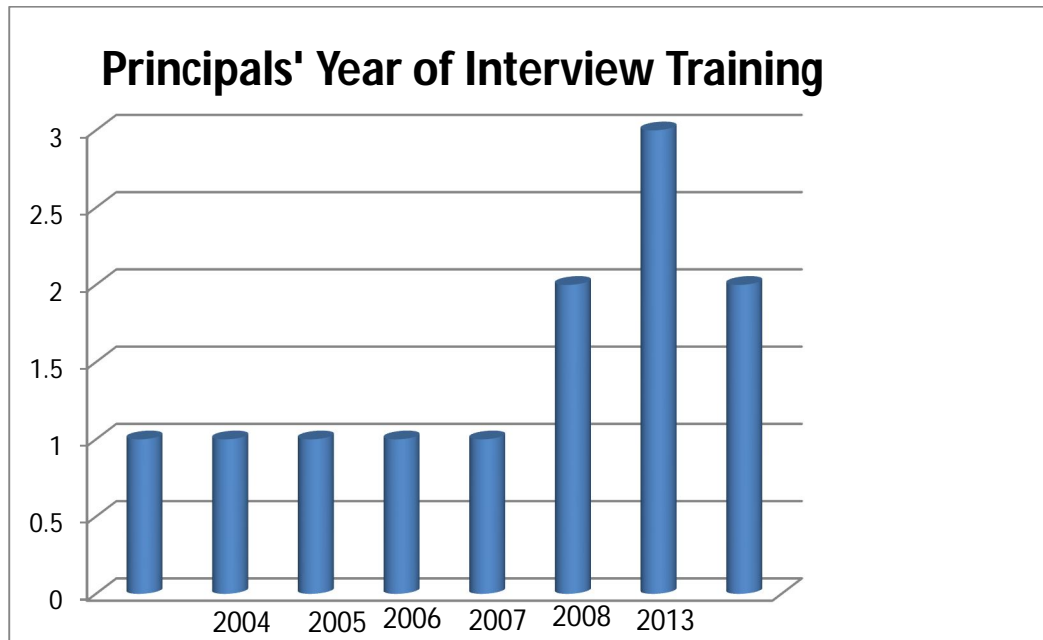


Figure 4 shows that of the fifteen principals, who were trained on interviewing skills; seven underwent training between 2008 and 2014 while the rest were trained between 1996 and 2007.

#### 4. Findings of the Study

Seven emerging themes were established by reading through the answers of all respondents and the tallies of the major themes were noted. The responses were far more than the number of respondents in the sample (37) because most principals mentioned more than one challenge. The TSC personnel hardly mentioned any disadvantages. The study found out that the challenges and disadvantages identified by the respondents could be grouped into seven emerging broad themes which gave out seven challenges.

##### 4.1 TSC Score Guide is Very Restrictive

Some principals and TSC personnel said:

P7: "I personally don't like it. We are tied to the TSC guidelines; *(there is)* no leeway or room for making any other decision. You may not necessarily get the best. You may have a BOG (*Board of Governors*) teacher who is very effective but loose him or her."

P28: "My view is that it is a very restricted system because most marks is awarded to length of stay since graduation."

P3: "Length of stay after graduation is not necessarily experience. Applicants may have been working in banks, Safaricom, etc. May not get what you know is good."

P7: "Length of stay after graduation does not mean effectiveness in a teacher."

P14: "Sometimes you find that, based on the years after graduation, you compromise quality. It is the biggest undoing about this method."

P31: "You go by the TSC guidelines which are very strict. You may lose a very effective BOM teacher."



P15: “We felt like there was a very good candidate but the guidelines did not give a leeway. Therefore, we did not feel fully satisfied. We selected a lady. We needed a male but ended up with a female teacher.”

TSC 3: “None.”

Author: How about teaching experience?

TSC 3: “We don’t look for teaching experience. We do not consider teaching experience after graduation. No marks (*for it*). It is a weakness of the Score Guide. Sometimes we have a good teacher in the interviews but can’t take him/her because of short length of stay since graduation. He will score less marks.”

#### **4.2 Recruitment of Teachers Are Conducted Centrally in One Day**

Some principals and a TSC personnel said:

P32: “The whole of sub-county recruiting on the same day in a central point. It is stressful and frustrating.”

P30: “Other times applicants are too many for interviewing in just a day.”

P28: “(*It is*) Time consuming, it can take a whole day. There are large group of applicants.”

P6: “Large numbers applying yet you are given just one day to conduct the process.”

P25: “It is time consuming. They were too many, 100, and yet we needed only one. This is the problem of being a town school.”

TSC2: “None because it is done in a central place with all the sub-county TSC Staffing officers coming to assist/oversee.”

#### **4.3 Very Short Selection Date Notice**

Some principals said:

P12: “Sometimes the time taken to advertise and select is too short.”

P14: “Time frame too short and yet short listing has to be done by an expert. TSC gives very short notice.”

#### **4.4 Compromised and Unprofessional Boards of Management (BOM)**

Some principals said:

P17: “Sometimes the BOG (*Board of Governors*) may want to pick a particular teacher based on ethnicity. They may want to increase the marks of the one they prefer. Want to give all the 5 marks and reduce for other ethnic people.”

P28: “When you want to shortlist, the people doing may be compromised. The process can be abused and may be manipulated.”

P30: “There is localization and manipulation of the process: Some may want ‘son of the soil’.

This unprofessional practice discourages others. (*There is also*) Failing to invite others who qualify for interviews, hiding documents of some interviewees and many other forms of vices.”

P32: “It is not one of the best because initially when it begun, it was discriminative along tribal lines.”

P4: “Vested interests among the BOM which brings bad blood. Some of the BOM bring in their own interests, they ask, “Huyu ni mtoto wa nani”? (*Whose child is this?*) It does not make sense.”

P22: “Some have vested interest and want to influence. Want son/daughter of so and so.”

P15: “Sometime there are personal interests coming out. Bribery may have occurred so they will really show that they are compromised. But guidelines carry the day.”



P29: “A feeling of wanting one of our own at the expense of competence.”

#### 4.5 Political Interference

Some principals said:

P5: “Politicians want to have their own people. Education officials sometimes want to push for their own people outside the panel.”

P26: “Sometimes there is political influence. Unichukulie huyu (*please take my candidate*). When you decline, it does not augur well.”

#### 4.6 Low Level Education Board of Management

Some principals said:

P22: “Some don’t have that grasp. The questions they ask are not relevant to the exercise. One of them is a Form 4 leaver. He has a low level of education and wants to dominate.”

P6: “Some of them don’t understand such things as subject combinations and C+ in the two teaching subjects at Form 4 level.”

P8: “Some are not professionals. If there is a question asked by that member, you take time to tactfully correct them.”

P14: “Sometimes you don’t even see why these people are brought on board. Some of their questions are very irrelevant. Their questions don’t add value. Panels are very prolonged due to that. You are interviewing someone of higher educational level than you.”

P32: “Local, not well-informed members will criticize the process. They will go by physical appearance. They don’t appreciate the guidelines because of their low level of education. They don’t add value.”

#### 4.7 Complaints from Dissatisfied Community Members

Some principals said:

P5: “The community usually complains that vacancies are being taken by ‘outsiders’ when they may not qualify with papers.”

P16: “When you do not give priority to community members they bring uprisings.”

P14: “Those who don’t know the criteria will complain.”

P18: “Generally, it has a negative impact because they want their own. There is friction when ‘their own’ is not selected.”

P33: “Ethnicity where the community would want their own.

P27: “Elsewhere you hear “Tuna taka mtu wetu” (*We want our person*).

### 5. Discussion

There was unanimity among the respondents that the TSC Score Guide was very restrictive and lacked flexibility with the requirement of length of stay since graduation earning most (60) marks yet it does not guarantee competence/effectiveness of the teacher. It neither gave a leeway to schools to pick whom they wanted nor considered the candidate’s teaching experience. These findings imply that the TSC Score Guide should be reviewed appropriately for more effectiveness. Lussier (2006) posits that decentralization should promote flexibility. In response to the question on how to improve the restructuring of teacher placement, there was unanimity among principals that TSC should revise the Score Guide by (a) reducing marks on length of stay since graduation and (b) considering and awarding marks for teaching experience after graduation. The teachers also echoed the suggestion that TSC should consider the applicants’ teaching experience more than length of stay since graduation. The principals further suggested that the five marks in

the Score Guide, which is usually awarded for communication skills is subjective and may easily be abused; therefore, it should be adjusted upwards to cater for a demonstrated class lesson. This would enhance efficiency in service delivery, which is a core aim of the restructuring of teacher placement. There was unanimity among the principals that applicants turn up in large numbers with only one day to handle in a central point. This is not only time consuming but a very stressful and frustrating experience for all stakeholders involved. One TSC personnel confirmed this happening. This finding implies that there is too much work to be handled in one day which could be spread over two or three days. In response to the question on how to improve the restructuring of teacher placement, the principals suggested that the selection of teachers should not be done on a single day across the sub-county as is the current practice because it limits the candidates who want to try several panels. TSC gives a very short interview date notice. A majority of principals are caught unawares when interview dates are quickly posted to the public without their knowledge. This finding implies that there is no good working relationship between TSC and principals of public secondary schools. TSC personnel may not have mentioned this challenge because it implicates them seeing that they are the agents on the ground. This challenge threatens efficiency in service delivery because it seems to be a planned scheme to technically knock out qualified candidates in favor of those preferred. Aloo, Simatwa, and Nyangori (2011) found out that interview dates would be concealed in order to fill the vacancies with preferred candidates who may not necessarily meet the required qualifications. Kayabwe, et al. (2014) also report poor relationship between District Education Department and Ministry of Education on matters of teacher management practices due to decentralization. In response to the question on how to improve the restructuring of teacher placement, there was unanimity among teachers that notification about interview dates should be done by TSC so as to avoid manipulation and clashing of dates. There was unanimity that some panelists and education officials display vested interest in the selection process. They practice nepotism, bribery, ethnicity, and biasness wanting to influence the process. Some panelists attempt to manipulate the process by hiding or even destroying the unwanted applicants' documents. These findings imply that corruption is a major challenge in the restructuring of teacher placement in public secondary schools, which undermines efficiency in service delivery because those who end up being appointed may not be the most qualified. This is confirmed by Sang and Sang (2011) who found out that the implementation of the restructuring of teacher placement resulted in the abuse of power by BOMs who practiced nepotism, favoritism, and bribery. Wadesango, Machingambo, Mutekwe, Ndofirepi, and Maphosa (2012) also found out that nepotism, favoritism, bribery and corruption in decentralized teacher placement are common practices. Makori and Onderi (2013) also confirm the existence of these vices in their study when they found out that some selection panelists came in with vested interest thereby practicing clanism, nepotism and corruption in an attempt to influence the process negatively.

There was majority response by principals that there is political interference in the restructuring of teacher placement in public secondary schools. No TSC personnel mentioned this challenge apparently because their lot seems to be implicated. Wadesango, et al. (2012) found out that there was interference from stakeholders and politicians during the teacher placement process. This finding implies that political interference is a challenge in the process of the restructuring of teacher placement, which slackens efficiency in service delivery and mars teacher placement in public secondary schools. In response to the question on how to improve the restructuring of teacher placement, teachers suggested in large numbers that nepotism, corruption, and political interference should be eliminated, which indicates that teachers would want to see a corruption-free school staffing with a national image as evidence of efficiency in service delivery.

There was a large response from the principals that there are some Board of

Management (BOM) panelists who have low level education. When they are not well-schooled, they do not understand the whole process of teacher placement, will ask irrelevant questions which drag the exercise, and may even criticize the way the other members are conducting the process. Sang and Sang (2011) also found out that some BOM members took very long to understand the process of teacher recruitment. The findings imply that majority of selection panelists are not qualified and experienced professionals, which is a threat to efficiency in service delivery in the restructuring of teacher placement in public secondary schools in Kenya because they do not add value to the process. In response to the question on how to improve the restructuring of teacher placement, teachers suggested in large numbers that TSC should appoint professionals only to conduct the teacher selection process. The principals gave an alternative suggestion that all selection panelists, including principals, should be trained on interview procedures so that professionalism and transparency is upheld.

Wanjala (2010) asserts that the capacity of the recruitment panel members should be enhanced to enable them carry out the tasks bestowed upon them more efficiently. Therefore, decentralization of teacher placement should not take place when institutional capacity is weak. According to Thida and Joy (2012), those responsible for teacher management must be trained and re-trained regularly as it is necessary to build the capacity of the different administrative levels to which teacher management functions are devolved. There was a large response that the local community would complain when their member was not selected for employment. These findings seem to indicate that ethnicity and nepotism displayed by some BOM panelists is an extension of the larger community feeling about employment of persons, i.e. their 'own' should be appointed regardless of qualifications. This finding implies that TSC does not advertise recruitment of teachers in communities where schools are located, leaving qualified personnel in local communities out, which tends to threaten the success of the restructuring of teacher placement in public secondary schools in Kenya. This study revealed seven major challenges which threaten the restructuring of teacher placement in public secondary schools in Kenya. The revealed challenges have implications, which have been used to draw conclusions and recommendations on how to improve the restructuring of teacher placement in public secondary schools in Kenya.

## **6. Conclusions**

1. The TSC Score Guide is very restrictive and lacks flexibility thereby allowing the selection panelists no leeway to make independent decisions.
2. Recruitment of large numbers of teacher applicants is done on one day across the sub-county in a central point thereby limiting candidates who want to try several panels.
3. There is a very short interview date notice which catches the principals unawares.
4. Some panelists and education officials display conflict of interest in the teacher placement process in such practices as bribery, ethnicity, display of vested interests, and wanting to influence the process.
5. There is political interference by some legislators who demand that their supporters be employed.
6. Some BOM members serve as selection panelists yet they have low level of education compared to those being interviewed.
7. There is fear that the local community will complain when their member is not selected for employment.

## 7. Recommendations

1. Review and revise the TSC Score Guide appropriately.
2. Plan for and organize zonal/divisional teacher selection on different dates.
3. Develop effective leadership with collaborative and collegial relationship between TSC and school principals.
4. Develop machinery checks against corruption and nepotism in the restructuring of teacher placement.
5. Engage professionals only on the selection panels.
6. Publicize the Score Guide and Selection Criteria whenever teacher vacancies are advertised in local communities as well as the rest of the country.

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