

Research Article

Impact of Un-ethical Decision Making in Managing Teacher Disciplinary Matters in Public Secondary Schools in Malawi

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Abstract

Public administration inclusive the education sector, is catalyst for national development, it hinges citizen's intellectual and professional development. Malawi vision 2063, for self and reliant nation incorporates New public management that calls for competent public administrators to influence delivery of quality service to Malawians. The study examines the impact of Heads unethical decisions in managing teacher disciplinary matters in public secondary schools in Malawi a case of Mzuzu City. Research implores mixed methods exploratory sequential under pragmatics paradigm. Quantitative survey uses quota sampling of estimated 9 respondents from each school within the 22 public secondary schools in Mzuzu City. Sample size of participants came to approximately 200 participants out of 514 total secondary school teachers' population. Within each school, random sampling was utilized to identify 9 to 10 teachers. Qualitative used purposive sampling to identify one respondent from each of twenty-two secondary schools. Quantitative used semi-structured questionnaire while qualitative used interview guide to collect data. Qualitative data was transcribed and coded, codes were grouped into sub-themes and sub-themes were grouped into themes which answered research questions aided by Nvivo application. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics which ended up producing tables and graphs through SPSS 20. Through bounded rationality theoretical framework, findings reveal that respondents agreed to have knowledge of disciplinary procedures. Implying that teachers expect total compliance from responsible authorities to handle teacher disciplinary matters professionally. However, Heads gave oral warnings, written warnings, suspensions and interdictions. Heads deliberately flouted the procedures. Heads unethical decisions affected teaching and learning industry; where teachers stopped teaching for a long period of time, half pay reduced victim's economic dignity, students suffered because they had no other teachers to teach them, some teachers left the school for better place, demoralized staff, litigations and government compensated victims of arbitrary decisions, victim teachers were sociologically affected because no other teachers wanted to associate with suspended/interdicted teacher, violation of Constitutional rights and school poor performances. The impact is negative thwarting the aspirations of Malawi Vision 2063 through derailing of quality human resources, compromised future generation and continuous breeding of mediocrity. Public service administrators deliberately bring disorder in the system for personal interests. They are committing crimes of abuse of office and neglect of official duties. Citizens be enlightened to call for accountability and transparency to those acting with mediocrity of negligence, corruption and compromised character. There must be personal liability to compensate for mediocrity.

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Keywords

Unethical Decisions, Flout Procedures, Teacher Disciplinary Procedure, Head Teachers, Cultural Change, Mediocrity, Disorder

1. Introduction

Malawi Vision 2063 aims for commitment to self-reliant nation by 2063. Enabler 2: calls for effective and well governed public secondary schools that will help promote the right to education for all under section 25 of Constitution. To attain quality education services, there is need for maintenance of competent personnel in the public schools strengthen their skills and expertise by equipping them with the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively drive the implementation and realization of the Vision. The vision aspires to ensure that teacher's actions serve the interests of the citizenry.

Enabler 3: calls for enhanced public sector performance. Whereby it ensures that public resources are put to their intended use and upholds the principles of accountability, openness and transparency in its undertakings. The public sector in Malawi has faced a number of challenges over the past few decades ranging from corruption; capture and sabotage based on partisan politics; un-procedural, improper and unmerited appointments and promotions; unsatisfactory service delivery; poor remuneration for civil servants, to a demoralizing career progression structure, amongst other challenges. This study will focus on impact of Heads unethical decision in handling teacher disciplinary matters in public secondary schools in Malawi.

Background Information

Gino laments that cheating, deception, organizational misconduct, and many other forms of unethical behavior are among the greatest challenges in today's society. Concludes that unethical behaviors are committed by same public managers who know about integrity values because of opportunistic situations to cheat. Author points out that individual citizens are influenced to cheat because of personal antecedents of unethical behavior ranging from individual differences to situational forces that are so strong that they make individual choice all but irrelevant [7].

Boma in Nigeria, conducted a descriptive survey with random sampling technique of 456 respondents, investigated unethical practices and management options in state mission schools. Found out that un-ethical practices included teachers rewarding unmerited scores to students, sexual harassment, students' truancy, teachers do not cover schemes of work and students cheating during exams. Effects were many including denting the credibility of education, damaging the image of mission schools and provoked honest teachers to leave the school [2].

In Zimbabwe, Samkange conducted a study that looked at perceptions towards primary school heads on administration

and management of schools [16]. Qualitative research with purposive sampling on twenty schools identified 20 heads for interviews. Study revealed that Heads did not know their professional roles. They took every decision for themselves, no consultations nor delegation. Similarly, Tshabalala *et al.*, in Zimbabwe, investigated challenges school Heads faced when handling teacher disciplinary issues in primary schools. Descriptive survey of 120 respondents, revealed that most of the Heads lacked necessary expertise of handling disciplinary procedures. There were delays in the processing of misconduct cases that militated against the promotion of discipline amongst staff [18].

Furthermore, Zhou in Zimbabwe, argues that political interference compromises quality of public administration and services to citizens. He examines the dynamics of public administration under the inclusive government of Zimbabwe, particularly interrogating the ecological contexts, the structure of government bureaucracy, the distribution of executive powers, cabinet decision making, working relations within co-shared ministries as well as institutional capacity for policy implementation and monitoring. Findings show that while the macro environmental contexts have substantially stabilized, the major frontiers of public administration are in a frail state, choked by a top-heavy government bureaucracy, inter-party bureaucratic politics and patronage, weak fiscal resource base and lack of collective will at the levels of decision making and policy implementation. Observed scenarios underline the need to institutionalize a culture of complying with the fundamentals of public administration. Formal structures of authority need to be empowered against informal structures. Best practices of inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, merit, national focus and political neutrality should inform and guide the practice of public administration within the three arms of government [19].

Essien in Nigeria, contemporary studies on public service administration have revealed politico-administrative challenges which disturb socio-economic growth. Using descriptive research and content analysis results show that, unethical practices that lead to poor performances and absence of excellence in the public service, has the tendency to undermine development and good governance in Nigeria. Mainly due to lack of public accountability in governance politicians, leaders and public servants who should demonstrate high ethical standards by being transparent, accountable and trustworthy, consistent in character, courageous and dedicated and committed to duty could not live up to its billing. This paper calls

public administrators to aim for purposeful society [6].

Ikechi and Akanwa in Nigeria, adds that un-ethical practices have seriously undermined the provision of quality education in Nigeria. Goals of the education sector as laid down in education policy cannot be achieved by stakeholders without following set down rules and regulations. The unethical practices are always caused by greed, indiscipline, moral laxity at the home front, inadequate parental control and supervision, school, teacher and societal factions as well as technological and government influences. The paper argues for meritocracy and not mediocrity. Education is the fulcrum upon which other developmental facets are hinged upon in any given nation. We need captains who are competent [10].

Ibietan and Joshua in Nigeria, conducted a study that aimed to highlight the indispensability of ethics or sound ethical conduct as a basis for effective delivery in the Nigerian public sector. Through analytical methods. The paper concluded that the march towards an ethical based public service must continue and be regarded as series of “work in progress”. The paper recommended among other things that there is an urgent and continuous need to remold the thoughts and conduct of civil/public servants and officials of government through the development of ethics and value reorientation that is anchored on accountability and transparency in public service. Further recommends strong commitment to implementation of laws, enforcement of sanctions and strengthening of institutions of governance on a continuous basis. Administrative ethics must ensure that skilled, motivated and well-behaved staffs are attracted into civil/public service in order to halt the tide of unethical conduct in public organizations [9].

Ani Casimir *et al.*, in Nigeria, the paper examines the imperatives of good ethical conduct in the conduct of government business in Nigeria. As government business grows in complexity with the adoption of technological innovations in government, governance in Nigeria’s public sector becomes more problematic and ethically tasking as a result of endemic corruption. An evaluation of the collapse of institutional measures and codes of conduct puts in place to ensure high standard of behavior, using institutional theory suggests that moral contradictions in institutional behavior expectation from the public deepen daily. The perceived lack of an effective ethical organizational framework to coordinate the activities of various institutions has astronomically worsened unethical practices such as corruption in the Nigerian public service. The paper recommends a more realistic African traditional approach to ethical restraint of public servants from indulging in corrupt behavior by subjecting them to customary oath taking based upon the theistic values of fear of sin against mother earth. These core African values that emanate from theistic humanism should also permeate the various anti-corruption organizational frameworks in Nigeria to coordinate the national fight against corruption in the public sector. The behavioral and errant departure of civil servants and Nigeria’s public service from the core human values that ensure transparent private and public conduct of individuals

have resulted in underperformance and underdevelopment. It is perceived furthermore that this lack of public service commitment to human values which would have enabled them to consider others above selfish interests, fear divine retribution, dishonor of a good family name, distaste for greed and stealing of public good has weakened the fight against corruption and turned it into a pedantic and cosmetic exercise without results. Therefore, unethical practices and the systemic abandonment of core African human values by the Nigerian public servants’ oil the wheel of public sector corruption in Nigeria [1].

Nkondola and van Deuren in Tanzania, emphasize that human resources management is considered an essential contributing to quality education. Therefore, the prevailing concerns of poor quality of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in developing countries like Tanzania raises doubt on human resources management capacity of TVET institutions. This research has revealed challenges affecting human resources management in TVET institution such as lack of relevant human resources policies, in adequate human resources budget, incompetent human resources staff and poor organization of human resources department. The paper recommends increasing human resource budget, establishing HR policies that suit TVET purpose, empower HR departments and ensure availability of competent HR managers in TVET institutions, HR must operate on autonomous institutional level to asses’ right people in right positions [14].

In the context of Africa public institutions, both scholars from Malawi and Nigeria, L. Dzimbiri and Inyang and Akaegbu respectively. L. Dzimbiri reports that public institutions are challenged with administrators who have problems to manage putting into practice what is laid down with putting into practice what they think is in their opinions. This creates a discrepancy between what was taught and what was happening because they do not adapt to culture of change. Possibly that is the reason that we fail to take the pace of developed countries who have same policies that we have copied. The central argument of the article is that positive outcomes in public sector reforms in Africa will be achieved through public sector culture transformation. Reforms are not simply structural change but involve a great deal of human/behavior change in the way people do things, their values and beliefs. The author argues that unless specific structural reforms are accompanied by parallel change/reform in values, attitudes and beliefs of the major actors in the reform agenda, a great deal of discrepancy will continue to exist between reform intentions and practice or out comes on the ground [3, 11].

In addition, Inyang and Akaegbu explore the gamut of human resources management practices that must be entrenched in and to reposition the public service for higher performance. Adopts documentary analysis method of current relevant literature review. Results reveal that the reforms of the public service were often structural in nature and paid little attention to the people-factor and people management issues. HR professionals were not engaged to handle people as stra-

tegic resources, rather personnel administrators who lack professional expertise and competence were appointed to provide transactional and administrative support in public service. This does not enhance strategic goal attainment and the competitive support in public enterprises. We need mindset/cultural change to have effective public administrators who may facilitate order and progress not retrogressive socio-economic growth [11].

In Malawi, the character of the public service is laid down on section 3 and 4 of Public Service Act (Ch0103) in laws of Malawi. 3. "The public service shall— (a) be the instrument for generating and maintaining public confidence in the Government; (b) be impartial, independent and permanent so as to enable the public to continue to receive Government services and in order that the executive functions of the Government continue uninterrupted irrespective of which political party is in power; (c) be guided only by concerns of the public interest and of the welfare of the public in the delivery of services and the formulation and implementation of development projects; (d) aim to achieve and maintain the highest degree of integrity and proper conduct amongst the personnel at all grades. 4. Entry and advancement within the public service, shall be based and determined solely on the basis of merit, namely, relative ability, knowledge, skill and aptitude after fair and open competition which assures that all citizens receive equal opportunity."

George Dzimbiri in Malawi, conducted a study by analyzing the effectiveness, fairness and consistency of disciplinary action procedures in the civil service of Malawi. Qualitative with purposive sampling and content analysis of both primary and secondary data revealed that learning is the main aim of disciplinary procedures/ action, where employees learn desirable behaviors through reinforcement. But those taking decisions have lack of expediency, inconsistencies in handling disciplinary issues, failure to keep disciplinary records properly and favoritism. Procedures not consistently applied, not all employees receive the same treatment for similar actions. Employees are deprived of organizational justice due to weaknesses associated with the disciplinary procedures/ actions in civil service. Recommends to follow the law as guided by section 43 of the Constitution on Administrative justice [4].

Lewis Dzimbiri in Malawi, reports that public service is the main tool government use to implement various national development policies and deliver services in education, maintenance and law enforcement, transport, community development etc. [5]. An efficient public service requires good interface of mindset change as echoed by L. Dzimbiri and Inyang and Akaegbu [3, 11]. There are people who think they can navigate the ship by the noise of realm of opinions rather than realm of knowledge. They bring disorders of derailing public service delivery. Mediocrity is at its best. Mediocrity comes because of arbitrary opinions to appoint, promote, demote, transfer employees against established laws.

New public administration aims to have public admin-

istrators who are competent and effective to provide quality public services to the people. In Malawi, the government through public service act section 4 stipulates that entry and advancement to be based on merit on performance and professionalism to avoid discrimination as stipulated under section 20 of constitution of Malawi. With aspirations of Malawi Vision 2063 Enabler 2: calls for effective and well governed public secondary schools that will help promote the right to education for all under section 25 of Constitution. To attain quality education services there is need for maintenance of competent personnel in the public schools strengthen their skills and expertise by equipping them with the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively drive the implementation and realization of the Vision. The vision aspires to ensure that teacher's actions serve the interests of the citizenry. Enabler 3: calls for enhanced public sector performance. Whereby it ensures that public resources are put to their intended use and upholds the principles of accountability, openness and transparency in its undertakings. Nkondola and van Deuren assert human resources management is considered an essential contributing to quality education [14]. Ikechi and Akanwa emphasizes that education is the fulcrum upon which other developmental facets are hinged upon in any given nation [10]. However, the gaps in reviewed studies from various contexts with variations in research methodologies, sampled participants this study would like to improve the phenomena of public service administration by examining the impact of un-ethical decision making in managing teacher disciplinary matters in public secondary Schools in Malawi. The paper will specifically answer the questions; (1) Are public secondary school Heads aware of teacher disciplinary procedures? (2) What decisions do Heads take when managing teacher disciplinary matters? And (3) What are effects of Heads un-ethical decisions in managing teacher disciplinary matters?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Site

The study was done in the Northern Education Division, particularly Mzuzu City in Malawi. Mzuzu is the capital of Malawi's Northern Region and is the third largest city by population in Malawi (See figures 1, 5 below). Mzuzu City is located -11°27'56.02" S 34°01'14.56" E DMS coordinates (See figure 2 below). The site was selected because for researcher's convenience, it is within city boundaries where the assumption is that the Northern Education Division (NED) is able to conduct administrative workshops and the Mzuzu city has a national library which can be utilized for knowledge management by study participants. Furthermore, the schools are closer and do not operate in isolation to give alibi of possible neglect.



Figure 1. Showing map of Malawi (Source google map on internet).

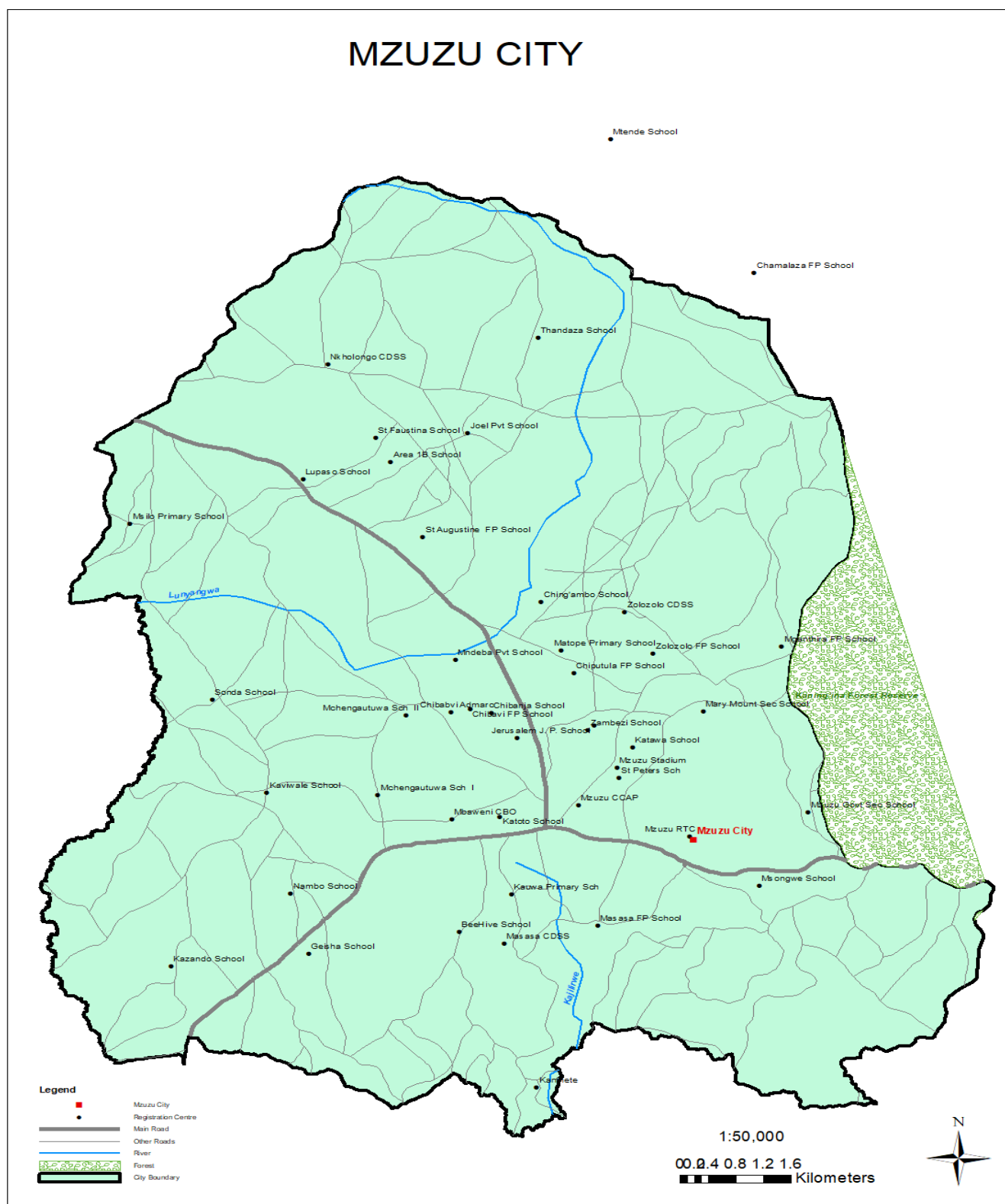


Figure 2. Showing map of Mzuzu City (Source Google internet map).

2.2. Design

The study used mixed methods, exploratory sequential approach under pragmatic paradigm, aimed to off-set disad-

vantages of both qualitative and quantitative weaknesses as well as collecting data from multiple angles to come up with generalizable and trustworthy results. The study used bounded rationality theoretical framework believing that Heads may have been influenced by subjective, intelligence

trapped ideas, despair and ignorance when making decisions in managing teacher disciplinary matters.

2.3. Population Sample

During quantitative survey, the study used quota sampling of estimated 9 respondents from each school within the Mzuzu City. The sample size of participants came to approximately 200 participants out of 514 secondary school teacher total population [12]. Within each school, random sampling was utilized to identify the 9 to 10 teachers. During qualitative phase purposive sampling was used to identify one respondent from twenty-two secondary school within the research area. The quantitative survey used semi-structured questionnaire while qualitative used interview guide.

Qualitative data was transcribed and coded, codes were grouped into sub-themes and sub-themes were grouped into themes which answered research questions and Nvivo application aided the process. Quantitative data was analyzed question by question using descriptive statistics which ended up producing tables and graphs through SPSS 20.

Limitations included costs of transport, time to manage study.

3. Research Results

3.1. Socio-demographic Characteristics

Out of 200 respondents study reveals that there are 38% female and 62% male respondents, with 2.5% University Certificate of Education, 19.5% Diploma, 71% Bachelors, 6% Masters and 1% untrained teachers, with 6.5% between 1-5 years, 30% 6-11 years, 27% 11-15 years and 36.5% 16 years above teaching experience and aged between, 7.5% 20-30 years, 29.5% 31-40 years, 29.5% 41-50 years and 28.5% 51-60 years.

The socio-demographic characteristics may have influenced in the way Heads acted within the phenomena of decisions when managing teacher disciplinary matters in public secondary schools [8].

3.2. Knowledge of Disciplinary Procedures

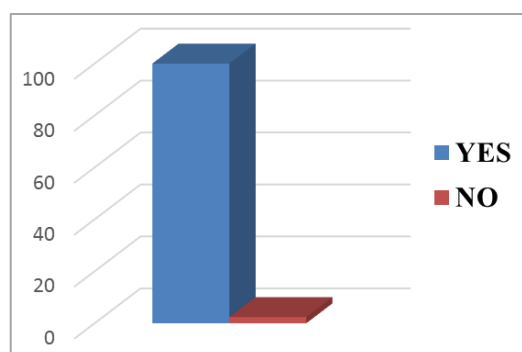


Figure 3. Heads knowledge of disciplinary procedures.

In summary, figure 3 above results show that 100% of respondents agree that Heads have knowledge of disciplinary procedures.

Qualitative analyzed data from interviews revealed that the theme that came out persistently is the theme of Heads have knowledge of teacher disciplinary procedures. To triangulate the qualitative results, survey results in figure 3 above, show that 100% of respondents agreed that Heads have knowledge of disciplinary procedures.

Implication is that teachers expect total compliance from controlling and responsible authorities to handle teacher disciplinary matters professionally.

Results of this study are similar to revelations by Tshabalala *et al.*, in Zimbabwe, where the study found out that Heads and teachers are aware of the disciplinary procedures that govern the behavior of teachers as Civil Servants [18].

3.3. Heads Decisions When Handling Teachers Disciplinary Matter

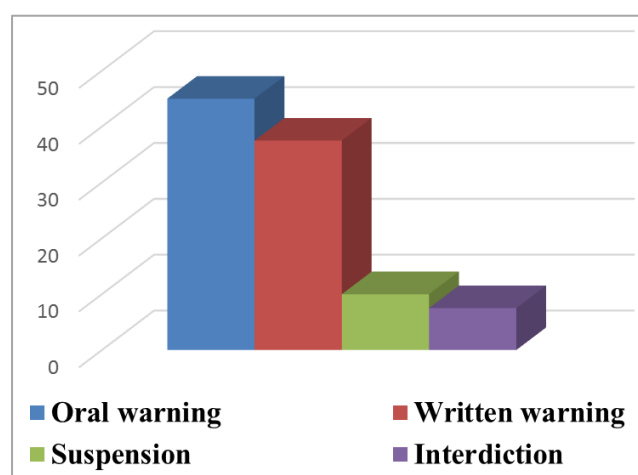


Figure 4. Decisions heads make when managing disciplinary matters.

In summary, figure 4 above findings reveal that out of 200 respondents pointed out that Heads; 45% gave oral warnings, 37.5% gave written warnings, 10% gave suspensions and 7.5% gave interdictions.

Qualitative data analysis revealed that throughout the interviews with respondents, the themes that came out consistent were themes of oral warnings, written warnings, suspensions and interdictions. To confirm and generalize the qualitative results, quantitative survey results in figure 4 above, reveal that 45% gave oral warnings, 37.5% gave written warnings, 10% gave suspensions and 7.5% gave interdictions.

This implies that despite Heads and teachers having knowledge of handling teacher disciplinary matters, Heads arbitrarily flouted the procedures.

Study result is similar to revelations by Tshabalala *et al.*, in

Zimbabwe where Heads continue flouting teacher disciplinary regulations. Heads were resorting to verbal warnings, transferring teachers and ceasing their salaries as a way of avoiding following the long channel of effecting charges. Some Heads abused their powers and charged teachers for minor offences to settle unprofessional issues [18].

3.4. Effects of the Heads Decisions

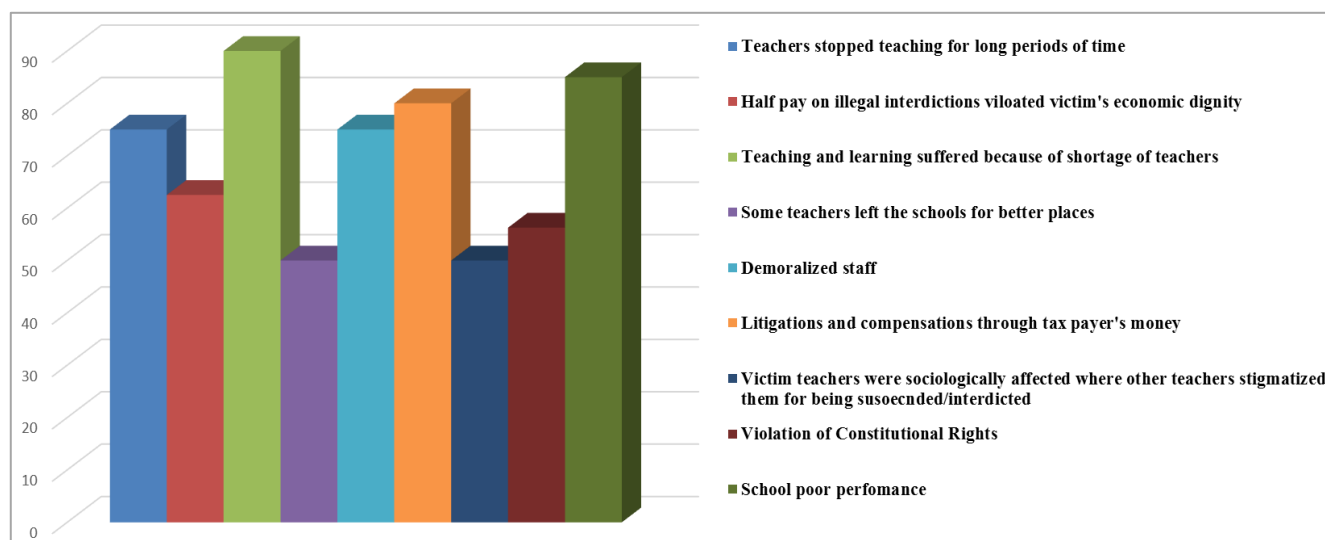


Figure 5. Effects of Heads un-ethical decisions.

In summary, figure 5 above shows respondents' multiple responses to effects of heads un-ethical decisions, results show that 75% teachers stopped teaching for a long period of time, 62.5% half pay reduced victim's economic dignity, 90% students suffered because they had no other teacher to teach them, 50% some teachers left the school for better place, 75% demoralized staff, 80% litigations and government compensated victims of arbitrary decisions, 50% victim teachers were sociologically affected because no other teachers wanted to associate with suspended/interdicted teacher, over 50% violation of Constitutional rights and 85% school poor performance.

Qualitative analyzed data from the interviews show that respondents mentioned themes of teachers were stopped to teach for long time, illegal suspensions reduced their economic dignity, teaching and learning derailed, teachers became demoralized, some teachers sued for litigations through courts, victims felt sociologically stigmatized, arbitrary decisions violated their rights to be heard and unethical decisions contributed to poor school performance.

To confirm and generalize the qualitative results figure 5 above, survey results show that 75% teachers stopped teaching for a long period of time, 62.5% half pay reduced victim's economic dignity, 90% students suffered because they had no other teachers to teach them, 50% some teachers left the school for better place, 75% demoralized staff, 80% litiga-

Similarly, results match revelations from other study by Ng'oma & Simatwa in Kenya, where Heads feel that there is no use in following disciplinary procedures because some teachers are habitual offenders. Heads feel that teachers look down upon them [13].

tions and government compensated victims of arbitrary decisions, 50% victim teachers were sociologically affected because no other teachers wanted to associate with suspended/interdicted teacher and 85% school poor performance.

The implication is that Heads unethical decisions tampered with teaching and learning activity in public secondary schools. There is no order, Heads may decide and do as they like. Their actions triple to various stakeholders, and authorities are breeding mediocrity. There is disorder in teaching and learning sector. This may compromise on quality of education hence compromising on quality of Malawi human resource and the quest for self and reliant nation as aspired in Malawi vision 2063 may never materialize. The litigations and compensations will waste tax payers' resources which may have been directed to other socio-economic investments. There is no strenuous deterring mechanism to put mediocre type of public administration to accountability.

Study result is echoing the sentiments by Stumpf and Fieser who warned that it is not the noisiest person who may take management positions. Competent qualified Head teachers would be the only solution to remove disorder of derailing teaching and learning by differentiating the realm of opinion from the realm of knowledge. The knowledge of applying professionalism and not mediocrity applying unethical decisions when managing teacher disciplinary matters [17].

Similarly, concurs with Promislo *et al.*, that unethical de-

cisions create ripple effects in the pond of teaching and learning and diminishes well-being of students, teachers and the progress of the Malawi nation. Brings socio-economic injustice [15].

Study result match with conclusions by Boma in Nigeria, that un-ethical decisions have dented the credibility of education, damaged the image of mission schools and provoked honest teachers to leave the school [2].

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study reveals that respondents agreed to have knowledge of disciplinary procedures. Implying that teachers expect total compliance from responsible authorities to handle teacher disciplinary matters professionally. However, Heads gave oral warnings, written warnings, suspensions and interdictions. This implies that Head deliberately flouted the procedures. Results of arbitrary decisions by Heads affected teaching and learning industry; where teachers stopped teaching for a long period of time, half pay reduced victim's economic dignity, students suffered because they had no other teachers to teach them, some teachers left the school for better place, demoralized staff, litigations and government compensated victims of arbitrary decisions, victim teachers were sociologically affected because no other teachers wanted to associate with suspended/interdicted teacher and school poor performance.

This implication is that Heads unethical decisions tampered with teaching and learning systems theory. There is no order, Heads may decide and do as they like. Their actions triple to various stakeholders, and authorities are breeding mediocrity. There is disorder in teaching and learning sector. This may compromise on quality of education hence compromising on quality of Malawi human resource and the quest for attaining self and reliant nation as aspired in Malawi vision 2063.

The litigations and compensations will waste tax payers' resources which may have been directed to other socio-economic investments. There is no strenuous deterring mechanism to put mediocre type of public administration to accountability.

The flouting of procedures came about because of individual antecedents influenced by bounded rationality, ranging from subjective thinking, intelligence trapped ideas, despair and ignorance [7]. There is great need for public administrators to speed up on adapting to cultural change to maintain law and order as enshrined in laws of Malawi, rules and regulations in Malawi Public Service Regulations [3]. Also contributed by lack of citizens taking bad apples into task [7].

While other studies have mentioned that unethical decisions by public administrators derail delivery of quality public services, have failed national socio-economic development and have failed to allow developing nations to save and invest in programmes that would have helped

graduate into middle income economies. This study reveals that the impact of unethical arbitrary decisions by some mediocre in the public service may thwart the aspirations of Malawi Vision 2063 a self and reliant nation through derauling of quality human resources, compromised future generation and continuous breeding of mediocrity. The unethical public service administrators are deliberately bringing disorder in the system of public service for their personal interests. They are committing crimes of abuse of office and neglect of official duties sections 95 and 121 of Malawi penal code respectively.

Recommendation is that citizens must be enlightened to always call for accountability and transparency to those that act with mediocrity of negligence, corruption and compromised character of public service. There must be deliberate strategies to make those responsible be personally liable and compensate for their mediocrity.

Abbreviations

NED Northern Education Division

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Author Contributions

David Kumwenda: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

Dorah Kaunda: Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing

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Chrispin Mphande: Supervision, Writing – review & editing

Thokozani Andrew Chazema: Conceptualization, Methodology, Resources, Writing – review & editing

Allan Kumwenda: Resources, Supervision, Writing – review & editing

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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