

**CHRIST THE TEACHER INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION**

**ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA**

**The Role of Prefects in Kenyan Secondary Schools in the 21st  
Century. A Case Study of Loreto Valley Road.**

**A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfilment  
of the Requirement of Bachelor of  
Education Degree**

**By**

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## STUDENT DECLARATION

I, the undersigned declare that this project is my work and that it has not been submitted in any other Educational Institution for academic credit. Information from other sources has been duly acknowledged.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my parents, Joseph Macharia and Phylis Wairimu my first educators and source of encouragement. Their love and commitment for the education of their children has shaped me to what I am today. Mum and dad you are great teachers.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge the assistance and support received from Sr. Margaret Wanyama my supervisor. She has played a great role in helping me fulfil a life-time dream of producing a piece of work that I can claim to be the work of my hands. Thank you sister for tirelessly reading through this work and offering valuable suggestions.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The researcher undertook this study to look into the whole issue of prefects in the Kenyan Secondary Schools with a view of giving recommendations for a prefect system that is workable in the 21st Century.

The research was undertaken in Loreto Valley Road, a girls' day school situated along Valley Road, Nairobi. The data were collected from the students, teachers, parents, prefects and the administration. 60 questionnaires were given to students, teachers, prefects and parents while the administration represented by the Headmistress and her Deputy were interviewed in person.

The research findings showed that the prefects in Loreto Valley Road are selected and elected by students and later on endorsed by the teachers. Although the prefect system would still do with some improvement it has been working well in the school so far.

The respondents appreciated in many ways the role of the prefects in the school especially that of linking the administration/teachers with the students. It is no wonder many of them asserted that prefects are still needed in Loreto Valley Road and indeed, in the Kenyan Secondary Schools.

The research concluded by giving a few recommendations among them - redefining the role of the prefects in the secondary schools so that the prefects and the whole school know the boundaries within which the prefects are to operate and to ensure support from all the concerned parties.

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## 1.0 CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Griffins (1996), asserts that a sound prefect system is a splendid thing and that time invested in producing it pays rich dividends. This is the target towards which Kenyan Secondary Schools should strive to achieve in the 21st Century. In this country, many schools have a very traditional model of a prefect system. In many cases the prefects do not know their role resulting in the assuming of the teachers role either by their own making or by having too much power vested in these prefects.

The role of the prefect must be clearly redefined, if the Kenyan schools are to succeed in achieving their private and collective goals. A prefect plays a significant role in the smooth running of the school. To facilitate this, a lot has to be done to train the prefects and to empower them. Otherwise, the euphoria of the traditional prefect still hangs on to the detriment of a sound school system.

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other students grow into what they can, and should if he/she has not achieved it first. It should never be taken for granted that the prefects learn on the job, it is not enough. The role or the task to be carried out by an individual prefect and by the collective body of prefects must be well stipulated.

In May 1999, the Daily Nation carried out a variety of incidences of arsonist, attacks on prefects and their dormitories/cubicles. On Monday, the 24th May 1999, exactly one year since another attack on the Students' Study Block, angry students set ablaze the prefects' cubicle in Nyeri High School causing death, pain and untold psychological suffering. Three days later, 27th May, students threw a petrol bomb into the cubicle of the deputy Headboy and burned his feet. These barbaric acts leave a lot to be desired. One of the most obvious points that come out very clearly is the fact that prefects have too much power vested in them provoking the other students to protest.

Such incidences, to name but a few have made the researcher wish to explore further the issue of the role of a prefect in our Kenyan Secondary Schools.

This in actual fact means a complete change - a shift from the traditional model that gave the picture of a police officer ready to pounce on the wrong doers to one that is more friendly and willing to dialogue. This will only happen if it is recognised that the prefects play a significant role in making school a better place where, According to Combs (1999), the purpose is to free people to seek their highest dream of being.

Parents would indeed, appreciate the fact that their children are elected prefects if they know what is expected of them. They would be in a position to encourage and support them in many ways instead of being worried when their children are to function as student leaders. Since the Nyeri High incidence, many parents have been more than unwilling to let their sons and daughters take up student leadership in the schools.

The Daily Nation (Thursday), Jan 5th 2000 carried a letter addressed to 'Dear Amani' by one parent who was feeling very devastated because she did not know what the son's job description as a prefect entailed. This meant to her that her son was going to waste all his precious time following up other students to keep quiet, attend games, be punctual

and so on. As a result, he may perform very poorly academically, not to mention the saddest angle to it - he might meet his death in the hands of angry students. This parent is, but a representative of many others. The concern of such parents further testifies to the fact that if the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is to make a difference, the role of the prefect must be redefined.

The role of a prefect has been lost in a whole world of negativity, so much: some people have even wondered if the prefects are still needed (Combs, 1999). As a result, there are a lot of bitter memories and wounds in many people when this issue is revisited. Nevertheless, this can be changed, the attitude can be unlearned if the role of the prefect is understood and highlighted by the schools and the mass media for example, by carrying articles that show some positive contributions of the prefect in the schools. It is possible, no matter the difficulties involved in creating a system of prefects that can work for the good of all.

A lot of Strikes, a state of unrest and massive destructions in the schools can be avoided if the schools have a good prefect system with well-defined role. Some

Strikes, for example, that of Nakuru Blankets Secondary School (The Daily Nation, (Saturday) 29th May 1999) seems to suggest a sour relationship between the prefect and the rest of the students, resulting to violence. This provides a good example of too much power given to the Discipline Prefect who sustained head and arm injuries in the skirmishes for telling fellow students to put on the school uniform. If the relationship is good, then some of these problems can be detected earlier and a lot of harm prevented.

The understanding of the role of a prefect in secondary schools is vital, we cannot afford to overlook it further if the prefects are to be effective and play their role. We cannot afford, as educators, parents and students to pretend that all is well when we know that a lot needs to be done and done soon for the good of our children and so, the society.

If we are to learn from the mistakes of the past - of the traditional prefect we have to focus on the other side of the prefect i.e.; the positive side. This is the role he/she can and should play in the 21st Century to make school a place of peace, harmony, service and learning.

This is the role and the task that has been neglected and yet, very vital for the success of the Kenyan Secondary Schools.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The researcher intends to undertake this research to identify a model of prefect system whose role is acceptable and compatible with the 21st Century. The researcher recognises that times have changed and the students of twenty years ago are far-gone. The schools have to move with the signs of the time; otherwise, the traditional prefect is neither effective nor desirable today. Days are gone when a prefect's word was final, today students are more expressive and are aware of their rights unlike the good old days of the conforming students.

The research will, to a great extent investigate what can be done to regain the lost glory of the secondary school prefect which has left people wondering if a prefect is still an essential component of the school system. Combs (1999), has questioned the need and role of the prefect and she is only a representative of a million others. A prefect

remains a major link in the school relationships and therefore, a key figure in the success of the school.

Giving a talk to the prefects of Loreto Limuru and Msongari on Saturday, Jan 20th, 2001, Dr. Mbae emphasised the need for a sound prefect body in the secondary schools. In his words, "the prefect is a leader, not for/of herself but a leader who renders services to others." The role of the prefect cannot be over-emphasised when such words are taken seriously.

This research will try to investigate ways in which the leadership of a prefect can be defined and achieved: in so doing, address the role of a prefect in the 21st Century.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The following are the main objectives of the study:

- i) To find out what the students see as the role of a prefect.
- ii) To find out the head teacher's/teacher's perception of the role of a prefect.
- iii) To investigate how a prefect is selected/elected.

- iv) To find out how the prefects are trained for leadership.
- v) To find out how the prefects see their role of leadership in the school.
- vi) To investigate the obstacles experienced by the prefects in discharging their duties.
- vii) To seek suggestions from parents, students, teachers on what the role of the prefect should entail.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

- i) What do the students see as the role of a prefect?
- ii) What do the head teacher/teachers perceive as the role of a prefect?
- iii) How is a prefect selected/elected?
- iv) How are the prefects trained for leadership?
- v) What do the prefects see as their role in school leadership?
- vi) What obstacles do the prefects experience in discharging their duties?
- vii) What role would the parents, students and teachers like the prefects to play in the school?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

It is absolutely helpful for all people involved in the schools to understand the role of a prefect in the 21st Century. Given that there has been a lot of misunderstandings and mistakes in the past, this research hopes to give idea(s) to the students, prefects, teachers and even parents on the role that the prefect can play for the good of the school.

This study will also suggest possible ways of achieving a viable prefect system. This fact should go a long way in helping other schools on how they can plan, achieve and maintain a prefect body that knows its work. The suggestions will help the whole process of selection and training of the prefects. Despite the fact that this exercise can be expensive in terms of time and money, the rich dividends justify the investments.

The research will no doubt, serve as a major breakthrough in this whole area that has not only been ignored, but misunderstood.

## 1.6 Delimitations and Limitations

The study will be limited to Loreto Valley Road, a Girls' Day Secondary School in Valley Road, Nairobi. Parents, teachers, students and the administration will be interviewed to establish the way forward for the role of a prefect.

One major limitation of the study is time. The time allocated for this research is short. Alongside the already limited time, there is very little literature independently available for this topic, thus prompting wide reading of literature on Leadership and trying to apply to the issue in question.

## 1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

**Prefect** - A prefect is a student leader with a variety of responsibilities.

According to the Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Oxford), a prefect is an older student who is given authority over younger students and certain responsibilities.

**Leadership** - Leadership here refers to the designated prefects or leaders. Leadership involves the dynamic process in which a person influences a specific group towards the group objectives and goals.

**School** - School here refers to the actual buildings that make up the physical structure and the people who make it. In other words, the school is the institution for educating students including the people themselves i.e. the students, teachers and other workers.

**Role** - The role is the function expected of someone, in this case, the role of the prefect refers to the functions/duties that he/she must perform to make school a better place.

## 2.0 CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review literature related to the role of a prefect with a view to identifying a model of prefect system compatible with the 21st Century. The researcher will review most literature from materials written on leadership since there is little written on prefects.

D'Souza, (1997), in his book Leadership asserts that the traditional model perceived a leader as one who has the initiative and power to direct, instruct and control those who follow. This has been, for many years the foundation of the role of a prefect in the Kenyan Schools. The leader, in this case, the school prefect is the mover of things and his/her words are final. Such a model of a prefect system assumes that the prefects' focus is on the tasks to be done and totally ignores the personal feelings especially of students and the significance of inter-personal relationships.

As such, the prefect is totally in-charge, in other words he/she is in control of the group discussions and can use every means possible to stop disruptive acts and irrelevant

discussions. According to Dr. Mbae, (2001), this is an autocratic type of leadership: a prefect who has no room for dialogue. Everything in this case has to be seen and understood from his/her point of view. He goes on to say that this approach, if used exclusively can impact heavily on the relationship between the prefects and fellow students. It would also lead to a lot of friction and wrangling, hence affecting the quality of work and studies.

A lot of studies have pointed to the direction of making leadership every person's responsibility and in so doing, change the traditional model of leadership. Keller, (1997) believes strongly that leadership is for everyone because every person is a potential leader. The leader promotes peace and harmony and the school prefect is no exception. He/she is called to take his/her responsibility by promoting peace and making school a better place for learning. Kapena, (1997) supports the fact that leadership is for everyone, saying that if one is not doing the actual designated leadership, he/she is being led and should therefore, understand the concept of leadership. Everyone in the school needs to understand the role of a prefect so that there are mutual goals and objectives being pursued.

Griffins, (1996) in his book: School Mastery emphasises the role of a prefect citing the example of Starehe Boys' Centre. He stresses the fact that a prefect, though a student like any other student is a leader and must be obeyed. This calls for a lot of maturity and responsibility of the prefect and also the other students so that there is a balance between companionship and leadership. A prefect needs friendship like any other student but must always remember that he/she is a leader who should take precaution not to jeopardise the expectations on him/her by the school community. A prefect, according to Prime (1964), has to maintain an objective stance. This means that although he/she has to relate, familiarity must be checked if a prefect is to maintain some moral authority.

A prefect like any other leader should inspire, motivate and guide others. Combs et al (1999), asserts that if a prefect believes in controlling and manipulating others he/she eventually loses the grasp of the essence of leadership. Instead, a prefect should endeavour to move along with others by making them not only feel important and valued but also showing the way sometimes; after all, "a leader is not the one who says go, but the one who says let us go"(D'Souza, 1997). A prefect then has to do a lot

by his/her own attitude towards leadership because, the attitude impacts heavily on the style of leadership he/she may choose to adopt.

In order to be an effective leader a prefect must know what is expected of him/her. Prime (1964), believes that a leader must know where to go, what to do, the actions to be taken and so on. It is the duty of the prefect to plan, motivate and control to some extent the whole student body if the school is to achieve its goal and objectives. To do this, he/she has to communicate very clearly so that the goals and objectives are clearly understood by all who are to work with him/her. D'Souza (1997) asserts that this is only possible if the prefect understands that communication is a primary responsibility and so work at it in improving its skills constantly.

A leader has to bear in mind that the chief aim of every group is to encourage each person to bring to the group the best of who they are, and who they hope to become. According to Keller, (1997), this then provides an opportunity for all members of even a small unit like the school to practice serving each other as they hope to do later on to the large world of human affairs. A prefect

finds him/herself caught in the web of doing things not for any pay but as a service to fellow students and to the whole school community (Mbae, 2001). D'Souza (1997) seems to agree with philosopher John Mott who believes that the leadership whereby the prefect renders maximum service is to emulate the best example of Jesus Christ, a servant of all despite his divinity.

A good prefect delegates power. It is common knowledge that a prefect can never be everywhere at the same time. He/she does not even possess the giftedness and the talentedness for everything. Many a prefect will want to do everything because either they have no confidence in others or simply they have no ability for teamwork. In his book, *A Christian Guide to Leadership*, Prime (1964) cites many evils that come with lack of delegation. For example, the rest of the group does not take any responsibility: they are just there, leading to other problems like, the leader burning out and consequently not becoming as effective as should be.

Delegation will only come when the prefect has come to the understanding that he/she needs to move with the whole group. This means; enquiring and generating of ideas

together, making sense of work in the light of shared beliefs and new information. This is the core of leadership, Lampert (1998). With this view in mind the prefect realises that the job belong to the whole group: he/she cannot succeed without the efforts of every other person. After all, everyone is a member who should be committed to the success of the whole, thus, should share in some responsibility through delegation. A prefect can delegate power to a student who is not a leader but has the ability to do a certain job. For example, the prefect can delegate power to a student who is a good dancer/singer to organise for a piece of entertainment.

Griffins, (1996), believes that for the prefects to be effective their role must be well stipulated and they must be well trained. Many schools do not train their prefects; they do not equip them with the necessary skills. Leadership skills may be inherent but they can also be acquired. However, either way prefects need training and formation either through seminars or workshops so that alongside their experience they have something to draw on. It is unfair, unjust and even unrealistic to select prefects, install them and look upon them to deliver services from nowhere. It is only after they are

trained/prepared that a lot should be expected out of them. Otherwise, give little and expect the same measure back, no more!

A leader influences people a lot by who or what they are. Griffins, (1996), says that a school prefect is an example, a model who should especially observe the school rules and regulations if other students are to do the same. A prefect would not break the rules and expect the students to be different. To present a good picture, the prefect should spend a fair proportion of his/her life working at good/healthy self image. Keller, (1997) asserts that it is important for the leader to build up an inner strength within him/herself upon which the outer effectiveness is based. The prefect has to understand the meaning of leadership and integrate this into his/her life recognising that it all starts with the self. He/she should discipline the self to recognise and assume personal responsibilities before attempting to instil discipline in others.

A prefect, like any other leader can practice and exercise different styles of leadership. Although one style may be predominant, he/she can adopt different styles at different times. D'Souza (1997) believes that leadership is

situational, meaning that at different times/situations, a different style should be used. A prefect can choose to use democratic, autocratic or laissez-faire styles. According to Griffins (1997), a prefect has authority to ensure that students adhere to the rules and also should teach them what is expected of every student. This allows for their use of whatever leadership style is appropriate to the situation provided it does not dehumanise the other students.

A prefect is a significant component of the school administration. This is especially so, in matters regarding organisation and discipline. By so doing, according to Griffins, the prefect sets the teachers free for more academic work. Teachers too are human beings with needs. Sometimes their own personal space and the amount of work expected in a day is more than they can humanly handle. A good prefect system relieves them of some of the duties so that their energy is concentrated in the preparation of work and assessment of their students.

Despite the challenge posed by some educationists e.g. Combs, on the necessity of the school prefects there have been proof that prefects are very much needed in the

schools. Prime (1964), is of the opinion that without leadership nothing gets done. In fact, without leadership in whatever area of life there is the presence of chaos. A lot of duplication is a common factor in such a state of chaos. This results in turn in time wasting and also energy. Leadership is seen as a necessary part of human life and the school is not exempted. It needs leadership, and prefects are a major part of this leadership. The prefects represent the student body to the administration, thus establishing a very essential rapport on behalf of the students they serve.

The prefect like any other leader has to be helped to grow more deeply in self-knowledge every day. Addressing Youth Ministers in July 2000, Deacon Augustine of the Don Bosco emphasised this fact. The person working with young people must realise that they have to know self and, thus, work effectively at self-transformation, which is the most important ingredient for effective leadership. A prefect must be helped by the school and the society to become very integrated in their lives if they are to reach out to the whole school effectively.

Many a prefect fall into trouble when they punish other students because in the first place they themselves do not know exactly why they punish. Experience has proved that many prefects punish to inflict pain and suffering, out of prejudices etc. According to Kapena (2000), punishment should aim at helping the individual who has committed the offence to correct the fault concerned and not to hurt the person. This is one skill that the prefects must be helped to acquire so that a lot of chaos can be avoided in the schools. In fact, there has to be proper stipulations as to what extent the prefect should punish fellow students. There must be clear guidance as far as this is concerned so that the prefects treat the students justly. In the early days a prefect could give any punishment he/she felt was appropriate, but anyone who has been to school knows that these punishments were/are sometimes not justified. Griffins, (1996), has suggested a model that would allow for the students a chance to appeal if they feel unjustly treated. This is something missing in our schools but which we have to keep working at for the good of our schools and our children. Every school has to look for ways to avail of such an avenue so that the students understand the magnitude of the punishment they would expect from their

prefects and that if they have a problem, there is always someone available to listen to him/her.

Tecklemariam, (1999) asserts strongly that schools are set up for students and all the school components are there to make learning possible. As such, students are the very reason why anything/any activity in school is done. The prefects are elected for example, to meet a lot of needs on behalf of other students. This role of the prefect should never be overlooked; instead it should become everybody's business to make him or her more effective every day if their effort is to be genuinely appreciated.

According to Wanyama, (2001) prefects are the very reason for academic excellence in schools. A school which has a good prefect system will realise that the prefect do a lot of work which enables the teacher to concentrate more on his/her class work and so, all benefit. A good prefect system knows what is good for all and therefore, will work hard at making school a better place for every one. It is no wonder that schools that are more organised and governed perform very well academically as compared to schools that are always on strikes, "free" in terms of what to do or not to do etc.

Kearney, (2001) argues that a prefect in school is a leader whose role is too significant to be ignored and the best the school should do is to help the particular prefects and indeed the whole student body is to help them understand that without prefects the school will be in chaos which amounts in turn to a waste of time and resources. The prefects are leaders who not only know what the students are going through by virtue of being students but also know how to deal with some of their problems if not bring the problems to the attention of the concerned parties. The prefect is therefore, a very important part of the school system that all people involved in the education sector should understand and empower by all means.

The prefect, apart from seeing that things get done in school will also promote an atmosphere conducive for learning by helping to ease friction between different parties. According to Prime (1964), friction in a group is inevitable to a certain degree but a leader with basic interest and ability for harmonious personal relationships can help improve the situation. A prefect can do much more than just sit there as a law enforcer to see that rules are respected and followed. He/she can inspire, motivate and get things going.

### **3.0 CHAPTER THREE**

#### **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter, the researcher will describe the methodology used in data collection, sampling and sampling techniques, research instruments and administration of research instruments and data analysis.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The researcher used the case study approach, which was aimed at helping her identify the role played by the prefects in Loreto Valley Road with the aim of giving recommendations for a good prefect system in the Kenyan Secondary Schools for the 21st Century.

#### **3.3 Description of the Sample and Sampling Procedures**

The target population for this study included: some parents, students, prefects, teachers and the school administration.

Ten parents (10) i.e. parents of ten prefects were selected at random and a questionnaire was administered to them through their daughters.

Every class in Loreto Valley Road has about 40 students. The school has two streams. Ten (10) students were randomly selected from each class from two to four. This came to about 30 students. The form one students were deliberately left out, as they have not settled down, given that this is their first term in the school. They may not know the prefects very well and so, the contribution may not be valid.

The school has twenty (20) prefects who serve in different capacities. Of these, ten were randomly selected and a questionnaire administered to them.

The teaching staff is comprised of twenty-four teachers. Ten were again randomly selected and the questionnaire for teachers administered.

The school headmistress and her deputy were both interviewed in person by the researcher.

### **3.4 Description of Instruments**

The researcher utilised four instruments:

#### **a) Questionnaires**

Four different kinds of questionnaires were formulated:

Questionnaire 1 for students with 9 items

Questionnaire 2 for prefects with 11 items

Questionnaire 3 for parents/guardians with 8 items

Questionnaire 4 for teachers with 13 items

Since the questions should help the researcher achieve the objectives of the study, the questions are related to relationships, discipline, duties/roles, selection/training and the expectations the school has on the prefects.

#### **b) Document Analysis**

Relevant documents were used for assessing the objectives of the study. For example, the black book for disciplinary cases and the prefects' handbook were used.

#### **c) Observation Guide**

The researcher formulated an observation guide with some items based on the objectives of the study. The aim of the observation guide was to investigate the role of a prefect

in the school, the relationship of the prefects with fellow students and the entire school community.

The researcher investigated the following:

1. The interaction of the prefects and other school - related personnel.
2. The functions of the prefect in the school.
3. The accessibility of the administration by the prefects.

**d) Interview Guide**

The researcher designed an interview guide for the Principal and her deputy. Each respondent was given 15-20 minutes to respond to the interview.

The purpose of the interview was to find out the role of the prefects in the school and also to establish whether the administration find the prefects effective in the school. To investigate this, the following questions were formulated:

1. How do you select/elect prefects in your school?
2. What kind of duties are the prefects expected to perform in the school?

3. Do the prefects in your school function effectively and responsibly?
4. Do you think the prefects play a role in enhancing the good discipline in the school?
5. How do you relate with your prefects?
6. What is your vision for school prefects in the future? Do you envisage the continued presence of prefects in the school?

### **3.5 Administration of Tools and Data Collection**

The questionnaires were distributed to the school in person and with the help of a research assistant administered to the students, prefects and teachers sampled. Some prefects were selected and asked to administer the questionnaire '3' to their parents and return the filled questionnaires back to the field assistant after 14 days. To complete the questionnaires the respondents were asked to read the questions and tick appropriately from the closed-ended questions and also answer clearly the open-ended questions.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Data analysis was done by both descriptive statistics and qualitative method. The qualitative method included the use of tables, frequency and percentage. Each response was tallied against its corresponding alternative chosen by the respondent to obtain frequencies from which percentages were calculated, interpreted and discussed (in chapter four).

The researcher used the following formula for analysing the data and computing the percentage:

$$\frac{X \times 100\%}{N} = \%$$

Where X = Number of respondents

N = Total number of questionnaires analysed

## 4.0 CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.1 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

This chapter will consist of data analysis and presentation of data gathered from the field through the use of questionnaires, interviews, observation and document analysis. Of the 60 questionnaires give out, 55, (91.8%) were filled and returned.

**Table 1: Number of questionnaires filled and returned**

Respondents	Number sent	Frequency	Percentage
Students	30	72	90
Prefects	10	10	100
Teachers	10	10	100
Parents	10	8	80

### 4.2 Demographic Information

The researcher had the following findings about the general background of the students, parents, teachers and prefects.

Table 2: Response of students and prefects on their age

Table 2 (a) Students' response

Age (in years) of respondent	Frequency
18	5
17	4
16	10
14	6
14	2
Total	27

Table 2(b) Prefects' response

Age (in years) of respondent	Frequency
18	5
17	4
16	1
Total	10

Table 2 shows that the student population of Loreto Valley Road is comprised of young people in their teenage years. The majority of the students are at the age of 16. Therefore, they are at a stage in their lives where they need guidance and support if they are to grow mature and responsible members of the society.

**Table 3: The response of the teachers on their age and sex.**

Table 3(a) Age of teacher respondents

Age (in years) of respondent	Frequency
25-30	1
30-35	1
35-40	4
40-45	3
45-50	1
Total	10

Table 3(b) Sex of teacher respondents

Sex of respondent	Frequency
Male	3
Female	7
Total	10

The teaching staff of Loreto Valley Road, according to Table 3 is at the prime of its life given that the majority are between ages 35-45. These are highly productive members of the society and being leaders themselves, they stand at an advantaged position to support the prefects and ensuring that other students support the efforts being made by the prefects for the good of all in the school.

The frequency of female teachers is also higher than that of the males, which probably gives the prefects some role models as future female leaders.

**Table 4: The response of the parents on their age and sex**

Table 4(a) Age of parent respondents

Age (in years) of respondent	Frequency
35-40	4
40-45	4
Total	8

Table 4(b) Sex of parent respondents

Sex of respondent	Frequency
Male	2
Female	6
Total	8

Like the teachers (table 3), Table 4 shows that the parents are mainly in their prime age where they are not only able to support their children materially but are energetic enough to keep themselves interested in what is happening in and around the lives of their daughters.

**Table 5: Parents' response on their occupation**

Occupation of respondent	Frequency
Lawyers	3
Teachers	3
Accountants	1
Pharmacists	1
Total	8

Table 5 shows that the parents of the prefects are professionals in different fields. Lawyers and teachers who form the majority of the parents are leaders in a way and so, the prefects are at an advantaged position because they not only have role models back home but also people with whom they can consult.

#### **4.3 Prefects in Loreto Valley Road**

This section of the research will deal with the life of the prefects in the school in terms of discipline, relationships, selection, qualities of leadership, and the need for prefects in the future, among others.

**Table 6: Students' response on the qualities of leadership needed in a prefect**

Quality	Frequency	Percentage
Role models	27	100
Understanding	27	100
Friendly	24	88.8
Determination	26	96.2
Honest	26	96.2
Responsibility	24	88.8
Total	27	

According to Table 6, the students have a variety of qualities they look for in a prefect. Therefore, when it comes to electing new prefects, the students look out for girls with these qualities although they are aware that none of the prefects could have them all. They therefore, look out for girls who possess most of these qualities.

However, according to this research, two qualities seem to carry more weight: role models and understanding. Young people are always in need of being understood and being given good examples. These teenagers in Loreto Valley Road are no exception, they have asserted that their prefects

must be understanding and set good examples as seen in the frequencies 27, (100%) for each.

**Table 7: Selection of prefects in Loreto Valley Road**

Method of selection/election	Frequency	Percentage
Students select/elect	47	100
Teachers endorse their results	47	100

Table 7 shows the response of the teachers, students and prefects on the selection of prefects. The students themselves elect the prefects. However, the teachers have to sit after the students have elected to discuss the names and endorse them - they either accept or reject the names. This style of electing prefects shows that the prefects in this school are not imposed on the students and therefore, the girls are more likely to co-operate with the prefects.

**Table 8: Role of a prefect in Loreto Valley Road**

Table 8(a) Students' response

Role	Frequency	Percentage
Maintain discipline	25	92.5
Link with administration	27	100
Correct students	21	77.7
Advise students	26	96.2
Assist teachers	27	100
Total	27	

Table 8(b) Teachers' response

Role	Frequency	Percentage
Maintain discipline	10	100
Link with administration	10	100
Correct students	10	100
Advise students	10	100
Assist teachers	10	100

Table 8(c) prefects' response

Role	Frequency	Percentage
Maintain discipline	10	100
Link with administration	10	100
Correct students	10	100
Advise students	10	100
Assist teachers	10	100

Table 8 indicates that the prefects in the school have a major role to play. The teachers and prefects are in consensus about the roles to be played. The teachers and prefects hold with a lot of weight all the five roles to be played by the prefects, but the students seem to; differ in three of the roles. The students marked two roles: 'linking with the administration and assisting teachers' as the most significant roles while correcting students ranked the lowest with a frequency of 21 (77.7%).

**Table 9: Types of punishments given to students in the school**

Table 9 (a) Prefects' suggestions

Suggestion	Frequency	Percentage
Standing outside H/mistress' office	10	100
Picking litter after lunch	10	100
Cleaning windows, corridors	9	90
Writing sentences repeatedly/shaping graph papers	10	100

Table 9 (b) Teachers' suggestions

Suggestion	Frequency	Percentage
Standing outside H/mistress' office	10	100
Picking litter after lunch	10	100
Cleaning windows, corridors	9	90
Writing sentences repeatedly/shaping graph papers	10	100

The information on Table 9 shows that the students are given some light punishment in the school to correct some of the errors that students commit without having to report to the teachers. The teachers are also in agreement that light punishment by the prefects to correct an error is within the power of the prefects as long as the punishment

given is not meant to harm the student or too heavy and time consuming.

The prefects noted very specially that there are errors they would not punish for because the specific errors are too high for them so that they need the attention of the teacher or the administration as stated in the prefects' handbook. Further analysis of the handbook reveals that some of the errors the prefects can punish for include: unkempt hair, uniforms, polished fingernails, noise making and failure to respond to the bells.

**Table 10: Prefects' response on the help/support they receive to enable them function effectively.**

Help/support	Frequency	Percentage
Seminars/workshops	10	100
Principal	10	100
Fellow prefects	10	100
Students	7	70
Parents	8	80

Table 10 shows that the prefects feel supported in their role of leadership and this makes their work easier.

The seminars/workshops made available for the prefects annually are very supportive (frequency 10: 100%) just like the support received from the principal and fellow prefects. However, the prefects noted that they do not receive total support from the students and parents from whom they receive 70% and 80% support respectively.

Some prefects said that some students do not always support them as they should and instead choose to 'try the prefect out'. This means that the students sometimes deliberately choose to do the wrong things to see what the prefect would do to them.

**Table 11: The effectiveness of the prefects in the school: teachers' response.**

Effectiveness	Frequency	Percentage
Effective/good/responsible	6	60
Sometimes effective	2	20
Not effective	2	20
Total	10	100

The response of the teachers on whether or not the prefects are effective was varied. Table 11 shows that 60% of the teachers were happy with the role played by the prefects.

They noted that although there is always room for improvement, the prefects play their role well. 20% of the teachers were of the opinion that the prefects are sometimes not consistent because they start off very well in the beginning but later on they relax. In such a case, the teachers have to keep reminding the prefects of their duties which they ought to know very clearly.

Another 20% of the teachers asserted that the prefects simply do not know their work and so do not play their role effectively. This category of teachers cited the fact that some prefects practice favouritism and are especially very biased against the junior students (forms one and two) when dealing with issues related to both a junior and a senior (Forms 3 and 4), thus, protecting their own status and interest because the prefects are in senior cohort.

**Table 12 below shows whether or not the parents and teachers feel that being a prefect impacts negatively on the prefect's academic performance.**

Table 12 (a) Parents' response

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	2	20
No	8	80
Total	10	100

Table 12 (b) Teachers' response

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	2	20
No	8	80
Total	10	100

As is evidently shown in Table 12, most parents and teachers appreciate the fact that being a prefect does not always impact negatively on the academic performance of a student. Only 20% of the teachers and parents thought that being a prefect does affect the otherwise good performance of a student. This category of teachers and parents argue that being a prefect can make a student too involved with school matters at the expense of the prefect's academic work not to mention the time wasted in meetings and doing the actual job(s) thus, neglecting the prefect's primary responsibility of being in school.

However, 80% of the parents and teachers felt that the prefects take their work seriously so that their academic work comes first as a priority while duty comes second. They noted that their experience of prefects in Loreto Valley Road shows that the prefect's academic performance improve tremendously when they are elected prefects: maybe they would not want to let down those who elected them.

**Table 13 What more responsibilities should the prefects undertake in the school? (Response of teachers, students and parents).**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
They are doing enough	10	22.2
Be more keen to be role models	45	100
Not needed at all	4	8.8
Liase with administration more	45	100
Call meetings more frequently	38	84.4
Fight for students' rights	36	80

Most of the respondents from Loreto Valley Road are of the opinion that the prefects can still do other things in the school to make the school a better place for everyone to live in. However, a smaller group of parents/teachers/students suggested that either the

prefects are doing enough or are not needed at all (22.2% and 8.8% respectively).

Those who think that the prefects are doing enough argue that if the prefects take on more responsibilities, they will waste a lot of their precious time and thus, affect their performance. At the same time, if the prefects take on more duties, they may become over-involved in school matters and that students may resent the move and result to chaos.

**Table 14: Need for prefects in secondary schools now and in the future**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	53	96.4
No	2	3.6
Total	55	100

From the research findings, Table 14 above 96.4% of the respondents are in favour of school prefects giving reasons like: any kind of groups needs leaders and also without prefects the school would be in chaos for lack of direction. The rest of 3.6% did not see the need for school prefects, arguing that the students are at the age

of reason and should therefore know right and wrong. Students who felt that students are not prisoners to be guarded all the time made this contribution.

#### **4.4 How else can the prefects be helped to become more effective in their role of leadership in Loreto Valley Road?**

The teachers had several suggestions of things that could assist prefects in becoming better leaders in the school.

There is a need for the school administration to believe in the prefects. The prefects are elected because some qualities identified in them make them stand out above the other students. Therefore, they have to be given responsibilities and allowed to practice their leadership skills without too much interference.

The teachers felt also that a room should be set aside (a prefects' room) where the prefects could meet to discuss issues concerning their work and form better avenues for supporting each other.

More meetings with the teachers would also allow for a forum through which prefects would receive guidance and

counselling on how to carry out their duties. This would also enhance the relationship between the prefects and the teachers.

Although the teachers acknowledged the fact that the prefects do attend workshops on leadership they still need more on-going courses to help them become informed and so, deal with problems appropriately.

**Table 15: Obstacles/problems encountered by prefects in Loreto Valley Road.**

Obstacle/problem	Frequency	Percentage
Indiscipline & rudeness from some students	5	50
Hatred from some students	6	60
Too high expectation from some teachers/students	10	100
Rejection by some students	7	70
Losing friends	9	90

The prefects in Loreto Valley Road, like any other leaders experience some problems/obstacles in the discharging of their duties. Table 15 shows a breakdown of some of the problems they encounter. 100% of the prefects noted that

too high expectations from teachers and students make their work difficult and they are not sure any more of what they are supposed to be doing. The fact that the prefects too are students, too much expectation will result to a feeling of disappointment and eventual dissatisfaction on the part of the 'electorate'.

Although they are part of school leadership, prefects still need their friends but this is normally affected because other students keep off the prefects thinking that prefects are out to 'catch' them. In fact, some students go out of their way to break the school rules and regulations and being rude to see what the prefects can do to them.

#### **4.5 Interview Report of the Headmistress and Deputy of Loreto Valley Road.**

The headmistress and her deputy were interviewed as representatives of the administration. Both of them informed the researcher that they play a significant role in 'educating' the girls before election in terms of the role of a prefect in the school leadership and also after they are elected to work with them so that they can offer advice and support to elected prefects.

The two admitted that the prefect system in the school was not perfect, therefore, could still be improved further but the prefects still play a tangible role. They felt that without the prefects the school would be chaotic. They appreciate the efforts made by some of the prefects who do not take it for granted that they are leaders but instead go ahead to make a difference in the school by being role-models and linking the school very closely together within and between the different components.

The prefects have an easy access to both the headmistress and the deputy. This makes it easier for the prefects to share freely with the administration on what is happening in the school. The two acknowledged that this is not for reporting on other students but for asking for guidance on some issues that could be difficult or tricky. This has been a very significant role of the prefects in the school.

According to the headmistress, Mrs. Kiboro, the school makes an effort to train the prefects by giving them an annual workshop on leadership. The school has in the past organised for joint workshop with other Loreto schools for example Loreto Limuru and Loreto Msongari. This gives the

prefects a chance of meeting other prefects with whom they share and encourage each other.

A lot can still be done to help the prefects be more effective in the school but the administration believes strongly that a lot has to do with the attitude people have towards prefects. When too much is expected of the prefects, they cease to be students leaders and assume the role of the teacher and the parent at times. The prefect has to be perceived as being in an assisting role in the school to which all people involved in the school are called upon to enable the prefect deliver the services by all means.

Further observation of the prefect system in the school shows that the prefects in Loreto Valley Road have the potential to carry out their duties well and indeed, when given an opportunity they do it well. However, the school has to believe in the prefects otherwise, when the prefects get to know that those who have elected them have no confidence in them, they no longer will see the need to do any more than they have to.

The researcher spent a few hours in the school day to establish the kind of work that the prefects do in an ordinary school day. The prefects started by making their usual announcements on a Wednesday morning during the assembly. This included reminding the other girls on the need for all to observe the school regulations and especially in respecting the school uniform and keeping time.

The researcher found out however, that during tea and lunch breaks, the prefects sat back like any other students to wait upon the teacher to remind them all about time and queuing to await being served by the caterers. This, as the teachers had already indicated is an opportunity for the prefects to rise to occasion and do what is required.

## **5.0 CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5.1 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This last chapter of the research work will highlight some general conclusions drawn from the research findings and also offer some recommendations towards what can improve the prefect system in Loreto Valley Road and in other Kenyan Secondary Schools. This is an effort to make a difference in the role of the school prefects in the 21st century.

### **5.2 CONCLUSIONS**

The research has shown that prefects are an important component of leadership in Loreto Valley Road. As such, just like in any other schools the prefects are charged with a responsibility to play a positive role in school for the good of all people involved in the school. Without the prefects' contribution, Loreto Valley Road would not provide a healthy environment for learning and teaching. This is evidenced by the 96.4% positive response of the teachers, parents and prefects, which indicates that prefects are still needed in the school. The administration also confirmed this in their interview by making it clear that prefects are still very much needed in the school.

Loreto Valley Road has a relatively well-disciplined student population. The school has not experienced any major problems e.g. strikes and animosity between the prefects and the students. The prefects have played a major part in dealing with problems by alerting the office so that the problems are arrested before they go out of hand.

The fact that the students are involved in the selection and election of prefects also play a major part in enhancing a good relationship between the prefects and the students and, thus, the co-operation, which the prefects seem to enjoy from the students (70%).

However, although to a lesser extent (3.6%), some students suggested that the prefects should go ahead doing their academic work like any other students and not just concentrate on observing the students, ready to pounce on them when they are do something wrong. The reason given by the students is that they are mature and at the age of reason, so, they know what they are doing.

### 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The prefect system in the Kenyan Secondary Schools has to make a difference in the 21st Century. Days are gone when prefects could afford to be dictators; it is time for dialogue and collaboration.

Loreto Valley Road has a fairly effective prefect system that, if improved just a little bit more could be an exemplary model for other schools. To achieve this end, the research had the following recommendations:

i. **There has to be a redefinition of the role of the prefects in the Kenyan Secondary Schools.**

This will cater for all odds ranging from: the prefects taking over the role of the teachers, to prefects feeling that the teachers and students expect too much from them. In Loreto Valley Road 100% of the prefects expressed the concern that too much is expected of them in the school.

ii. **The training of the prefects should not be seen as a privilege but rather as an essential requirement of empowering the prefects if they are to be any more effective in the 21st Century than they have been before.**

Research findings show a 100% positive response that prefects in Loreto Valley Road are given some annual seminars/workshops to prepare and equip them for leadership. The training of prefects has to be given a priority in the schools despite the expenses incurred because it is only after equipping them that we can and expect a lot from them. The training has to be more on-going because the prefects will always find themselves dealing with different problems all the time given that the society is changing very rapidly and hence presenting any kind of a leader with diverse problems all the time.

**iii. The entire student body has to be fully involved in the selection/election of the prefects.**

As seen in the case of Loreto Valley Road, the prefects experience 70% co-operation from the students because they were/are involved in the exercise. The students are able to accept them and work with them because after all, the prefects are their choices and not just appointees of the teachers/administration who are imposed on them.

iv. Once the prefects are elected and empowered further by the training, the next task of the school is to trust and believe in them.

When the prefects know that the school has confidence in them, more likely than not they will deliver - they will play their role more effectively. However, once they feel not trusted and experience a lot of interference (especially from the teachers and administration) they will not have the morale to keep trying to work hard.

This research recommends further research in the following areas in the future:

1.What is the actual role of prefects in Secondary Schools?

2.How do schools without prefects run their affairs?

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# APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

CHRIST THE TEACHER INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

TANGAZA COLLEGE

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Dear Respondent,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help the researcher identify the role of a prefect with a view to establish a model of prefect system that is effective in the Kenyan Secondary Schools.

There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will be highly appreciated and treated with absolute confidentiality. Feel free to indicate your name or not.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Name (optional)

-----  
-----

Age

-----  
-----

Please indicate your class here below:

Form 1                      2                      3                      4

1. How many prefects do you have in your school?

-----  
-----

2.a) Are there any school prefects in your class?

Yes ----- No -----

b) If yes, how many?

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-----

c) Are these prefects friendly or not? Explain you answer.

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-----  
3.a) Who selects prefects in your school?  
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b) What in your opinion are the qualities one must have  
to be selected as a  
    prefect?  
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4. What do the prefects do in your school generally?  
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5. Do you think that prefects in your school know their  
duties well and perform them appropriately? (Tick one)

- a) Strongly agree -----
- c) Disagree -----
- b) Agree -----
- d) Highly disagree -----

6. Generally, are prefects in your school friendly?  
(explain your answer).  
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7. Are prefects in your school treated differently from  
the rest of the students                      e.g. special uniform?  
(Explain your answer.)  
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8.a) Do you think that prefects in your school are doing their best?

Yes ----- No -----

b) What more would you like to see them doing in your school?

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9. In your own opinion, are prefects still needed in our secondary schools today and in the future? (explain your answer)

Yes ----- No -----

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Thank you and God bless.

**APPENDIX 2**  
**CHRIST THE TEACHER INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION**  
**TANGAZA COLLEGE**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PREFECTS**

Dear Respondent,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to assist the researcher to identify the role of a prefect with a view to establish a model of prefect system that is effective in the Kenyan Secondary school.

There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will be highly appreciated and treated with absolute confidentiality. Feel free to indicate to your name or not.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Name (optional)

-----  
-----

Age

-----  
-----

Please indicate your class here below:

Form 1----- 2----- 3----- 4-----

1 For how long have you been a prefect?  
----- Year(s)

2. What are you responsible for in the school?

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3. What duties does your responsibility entail?

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4. How were you selected/elected as a prefect?

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5. How do the following people support you in discharging your duties?

a) Principal  
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b) Teachers  
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c) Parents  
-----  
-----  
-----

d) fellow prefects  
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-----  
-----

e) other students  
-----  
-----  
-----

6 a) Have you received any training for your role as prefect?

Yes----- No-----

b) If yes, how?  
-----  
-----  
-----

7.a) Are you satisfied with the role you are playing in the school?

Yes ----- No -----

b) Do you think you could do a little more work in the school?  
yes ----- no -----

c) If yes, what?  
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**APPENDIX 3**  
**CHRIST THE TEACHER INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION**  
**TANGAZA COLLEGE**

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Dear Respondent,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help the researcher identify the role of a prefect with a view to establish a model of prefect system that is effective in the Kenyan Secondary Schools.

There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will be highly appreciated and treated with absolute confidentiality. Feel free to indicate your name or not.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Name (optional)

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Age -----  
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Sex

Female -----

Male -----

Occupation

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1. What class is your daughter in? (Tick one)

Form 1----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 -----

2. For how long has she been a prefect? -----Years.

3. What is your daughter responsible for?

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4. Does the role of a prefect affect your daughter's academic performance?

-----Yes; No -----

Explain your answer (4 above)

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5. a) Has your daughter been trained/prepared for leadership?

Yes ----- No -----

b) If yes, how?

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6. In what ways are you able to support your daughter to function effectively?

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7. On the whole how do you see the prefect system in the school?

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8. What are your suggestions for the future of the role of the prefects in the school e.g; would you like to see them do more than they are doing now?

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Thank you and God bless you.  
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**APPENDIX4**  
**CHRIST THE TEACHER INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION**  
**TANGAZA COLLEGE**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS**

Dear Respondent,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help the researcher identify the role of a prefect with a view to establish a model of a prefect system that is effective in the Kenyan Secondary Schools.

There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will be highly appreciated and treated with absolute confidentiality. Feel free to indicate your name or not.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Name (optional)

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Age

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Sex

Female ----- Male -----

1. How long have you been in the school? -----  
year(s).

2a) Have you any special responsibility in the school?

b) Yes ----- No -----

c) If yes, which one?

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3. Are you involved in the selection of the prefects?  
(Explain your answer)

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4. Do prefects function effectively in your school? yes -  
-----; no -----

Explain your answer.

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5. How do you perceive the relationship of the prefects  
with the following: (explain your answer)

a) Fellow students

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b) Teachers

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c) Administration

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6. Do you think the prefects in the school know their  
work well?

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7. Do the prefects administer any punishment to fellow  
students?

Yes ----- ; No ----- . (If yes to what extent)?

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8. In your opinion does the role/function of a prefect affect the prefect's academic performance? (explain your answer).

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9. Are prefects essential in schools? (explain your answer).

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10. Do the prefects play a role in any way that frees the teacher for more academic work? Yes ----- No -----  
(give examples)

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11. What more would you like to see the prefects doing in your school?

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12.a) What kind of training do your prefects go through in preparation for the job?

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b) What more help do you think would be necessary  
for the prefect to carry out their jobs well?

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13. Do you see the prefects as a good example to the other  
girls? Yes ----; No --

Explain your answer.

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Thank you and God bless you.

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