

Status of implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya

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Abstract

The study sought to establish the relationship between board of school management and implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Nyamira County. The study was based on McKinsey 7-s model. The study utilized correlational research design. Data was collected from 210 respondents who included 50 Board members and 160 teachers. The respondents were sampled using probability sampling procedures. Questionnaires and interview schedule were used to collect primary data. A pilot test was conducted to assess validity of the research instruments whereas Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to determine reliability of the research instruments. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found out that school leadership played a critical role in the implementation of strategic plans and their commitment is very vital. The study further found out that there is a significant positive relationship between teacher commitment and implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools. The study recommends that management should be more committed so as to provide a leadership role in ensuring that all the stakeholders are committed towards implementing the strategic plans. The study also recommends that school principals, deputies, teachers and management should be equipped with the necessary managerial skills.

Keywords: strategic planning, implementation, management commitment, availability of resources and strategies

1. Introduction

A strategic plan helps to provide direction and focus for all employees. Management needs a well-developed strategic plan in order to effectively establish expectations for their organization. Without a plan, expectations are developed in a void and there is little or no alignment with organizational goals. Bryson (2000) defined strategic planning as an organization process of defining strategy or direction and making decisions on allocating resources to pursue the strategy. The strength of the entire process of strategic planning is tested by the efficacy of the strategy finally forged by the organization. To deliver the best results, strategic planning requires broad yet effective information gathering, development and exploration of strategic alternatives, and an emphasis on future implications of present decisions. Cawelti (2007) defined strategic planning as a process deliberately designed to help leaders conceive of the kind of institution they would like to create to serve their followers.

According to Fehnel (2000), strategic planning is a systematic process in which an organization identifies basic reason for its being, its strengths and weaknesses and opportunities and threats it might face in future. Strategic planning is an ongoing process which involves reviewing the organization's mission and setting quantified targets in relation to the internal and external environment of the organization. Mintzberg (1994) noted that formal strategic planning only gives rise to deliberate strategies and those political and behavioral considerations are important in the strategic process besides rational consideration. Strategic planning has been characterized by its increased emphasis on implementation, its flexibility and adaptability to the ever changing environment, its ability to focus on identifying key issues and its ability to enhance strategic thinking. On his part Higgins (1993) defined strategic planning as a process through which external and internal factors of an organization are examined leading to a set of mission, purpose, objectives, policies, plans and programmes for implementation and strategies to achieve them. According to Tapinos, Dyson and Meadow (2005), strategic plan is a set of processes undertaken with an aim to develop strategies that will contribute to the achievement of the organizational direction.

There are so many benefits of strategic planning. According to Bryson (1995), strategic planning helps in providing a common purpose for future development of organization, stimulates forward thinking, improves performance in the organization, builds teamwork and promotes responsiveness to the changing needs of the community. In addition, the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2010-2015) identified the following as benefits of strategic planning; enables stakeholders to establish clear priorities, encourage innovation and creativity, helps in co-ordination and provides efficiency in operations of an organization. Due to its many benefits, strategic planning has been embraced in the education sector in very many countries.

In Kenya, the Education Master plan for Education Training 1997 to 2010 observed that quality education is not merely passing of examination or certification but the development of independent, analytical, creative potential of the individual, critical imagination, spiritual and ethical values. The Master plan's view states that quality education should shift from merely passing examinations to encompass the discovery of talents, development of analytical skills, cognitive and creative potential. This is enhanced by efficient and effective management and prudent utilization of resources which can only be realized through development and effective implementation of strategic plans (GOK, 2009).

Implementation is the system-wide action taken by institutional members aimed at accomplishing formulated strategies. Implementation is important to institutional performance because strategies do not add value unless properly implemented ([Raps, 2009](#)). In the United States, [Romney \(1996\)](#) analyzed implementation studies conducted on strategic plan implementation process. Among these studies, most variables are related to the strategic plan implementation process. They include consensus building, information flow, group cohesiveness, control systems, and risk undertaking. The highlight is on the critical role that employee capability plays in the implementation process, stressing that success in this area can become a core competency. As well, a study by [Porter and Harper \(2003\)](#) in the United States contended that managers, employees, and institutional infrastructure must be brought together in a way that culminates in a high level of implementation capability, which when accomplished will provide an institution with a core competence.

Okumbe (1998) asserts that the first and foremost function of educational management is the assurance that sound policies, goals and objectives are formulated in a given schools and that methods are determined for the achievement of these objectives. Hence planning helps managers to achieve goals and targets by using available time, workforce, materials, facilities and financial resources. In this regard the decision making is one of the prime functions of educational management. This implies that planning has a decision making function. Planning therefore helps to obtain larger and better aggregate results within the limits of available resources.

Implementation is the system-wide action taken by institution members aimed at accomplishing formulated strategies (Mwanza, 2011). Implementation is important to institutional performance because strategies do not add value unless properly implemented. An effective strategic plan implementation process involves devising of a well-crafted mission and objective statements, environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation plan and strategy evaluation and control (Ralph, 2008). The principal as a chief executive of a school plays a critical role in this engagement. The principal is required to come up with plans which are geared towards incorporating all stakeholders in the school. The principal then brings all stakeholders in ensuring that the planned strategies are achieved.

Chimhazi (2004) suggested that cross-unit working relationships have a key role to play in the successful implementation of strategic decisions. Effectiveness in implementation is affected negatively by conflict and positively by communication and interpersonal relationships. The relationships between different strategy levels also reflect the effect of relationships among different cross-organizational levels on strategy implementation (Slater&Olson.2001). In a school situation different stakeholders and players affect the implementation process. These could include the principal, deputy principal, departmental heads, teachers, parents, the school board of management (BOM) and the Parent Teachers Association (PTA). The relationship between these school entities affects the smooth running of all the school activities thus affecting strategy implementation.

Effective strategic plan implementation for any organization includes full and active executive support, effective communication, employee involvement, thorough organizational planning and competitive analysis, and widespread perceived need for strategic planning (Heathfield, 2002). The entire process of strategic planning is strategic change. Strategic change is like an iceberg covering, two thirds of it is beneath the surface. In an institution, everyone focuses on the content of the strategic change but the problem is not just to identify what needs to be done differently, you also need to think about how the strategic change will be managed.

In Kenya, a study by Kimemia (2006) found out that those schools using strategic plans used the plans of business organizations and concluded that schools should be encouraged to use suitable strategic plans. Strategic planning on the other hand is well advanced in developed countries. In the United States of America for instance, Knoff (2005) states that virtually every state and school district in the country has worked in the area of school improvement in order to improve the academic and social-behavioral outcomes of all students through planning. The United States Department of Education (2014) elaborates through a fiscal plan how the schools provide all students with a well-rounded and world-class education that prepares them to be competitive and be interconnected with the society. After 2010. Kenya has been experiencing educational reforms and change in management of schools through performance based approaches and therefore strategic plans are very important tools to achieve desired education and academic goals.

2. Statement of the problem

Different educational institutions have developed their own strategic plans depending on their status, needs and objectives. Kenya's Ministry of Education in 2003 made it mandatory for schools to develop their domesticated strategic plans to guide the school's development (GoK, 2003). This resulted to haphazard planning techniques leading to poor prioritization and failure in implementing the strategic plan. A study by Ngware (2006) found out that even the schools with strategic plans rarely implement them. When school management fail in implementing the strategic plan, this will not only affect the school negatively but also other stakeholders like the employees, suppliers, government and the civic community. This has raised concerns amongst

stakeholders like parents, the government and sponsors. A number of schools in Nyamira County are yet to embrace strategic planning as per a report from the County education office 2014. Therefore, this study examined the status of implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Nyimara County to establish the level of commitment by management on strategic planning implementation.

Research questions

1. What is the relationship between school management commitment and implementation of strategic plans in Nyamira County public secondary schools?
2. How does teachers' commitment relate to implementation of strategic plans in Nyamira public secondary schools?
3. How does availability of resources relate to implementation of strategic plans in Nyamira public secondary schools?

Research hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between management commitment and levels of implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools
2. There is no significant relationship between teachers' commitment and levels of implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools
3. There is no significant relationship between availability of resources and levels of implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools

3. Theoretical framework

The study was based on the McKinsey 7-S model developed by Tom Peters and Robert Waterman in 1980. The model comes up with seven key factors that are important for successful implementation of strategies and that if any of them is neglected then the effort to make change will be slow, painful and even become a doomed process. The first three elements strategy, structure and systems are considered the "hardware" of success and the next four elements of styles, staff, skills and shared values are the "software" factors to a successful implementation.

Strategy is the way in which the organization plans to outperform its competitor or how it intends to achieve its objectives. Hofer and Schendel (2008) identify three levels of strategy in an organization; the corporate, business and functional or operational strategies. The performance in each level is critical for building a sustained competitive advantage and therefore top level management should involve and empower employees in crafting and implementing the strategies.

Structure determines division of tasks in the organization and the hierarchy of authority from senior to junior members of the organization. A successful organization makes temporary

structural changes to cope with specific tasks without abandoning basic structural divisions throughout the organization.

System includes all formal and informal procedures used to run the organization on a day to day basis including the reward structure, budgeting and programmes, training among others. They are very crucial in achievement of planned strategies.

Styles refers to the pattern of substantive and symbolic actions undertaken by top managers. The question top managers should ask is, how participative is the management/ leadership style? The styles engaged by the manager greatly influences how priorities are communicated and received and may ultimately have profound influence on performance.

Skills means that employees have mastered those attributes required to effectively carry out the organization strategy. They include the organizational skills, capabilities and core competences.

Staffing determines whether the organization has hired able people, trained them well and assigned the right jobs to exercise their talents.

Shared values are also referred to as super ordinate goals. The employees of the organization should share the same guiding values and mission. This factor has an overall impact on the other factors.

Each factor in the 7-Smodel can have great impact on implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools. The level of achievement will be measured by how well the seven factors are put in practice. The schools should be in a position to identify their shared values and establish if they are consistent with their structure, strategy, and systems. If the values cannot match with the soft elements they should devise changes required. Then they should identify where changes need to be made. They should also look at the other soft elements and consider if they support the hard elements. If not they should consider what needs to be changed so as to adjust and align the elements.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational research design. Utilizing the convergent parallel design to collect quantitative data and use the results to understand a research problem. According to Oso and Onen (2005) a correlational design is used when the research is interested in determining the degree of relationship between two variables.

Data for this study was collected from 160 teachers who included principals, deputy principals, heads of department from 25 randomly selected public secondary schools, and 50 members of the BOM in the sampled schools. Making a total of 210 respondents. The selection of respondents was conducted through probability sampling procedures that is simple random sampling and stratified random sampling. A pilot test was conducted to assess validity of the research instruments in four public secondary which were not included in the study. Cronbach

alpha was used to determine a coefficient of reliability of research instrument results. Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics utilizing frequency distributions, percentages and, where applicable, means and standard deviations were computed. The regression model that was used is:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Where;

- Y = Dependent variable (Implementation)
- β_0 = Constant
- $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = Coefficients of determination
- X1 = Management commitment
- X2 = Teacher commitment
- X3 = Availability of resources
- ε = Error term

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Relationship between school management commitment and implementation of strategic plans

The BOM and teachers were asked rate the extent to which management play their role in facilitating implementation of strategic plans in their schools. The response were summarized and presented in Table 1

Table 1. Rating relationship between management commitment and implementation of strategic plans N=120

| Statement | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Mean | Std. Dev |
|--|----------------|-------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|------|----------|
| Strategic plan policy in our school is weak therefore hindering implementation of the strategic plan | 55% | 32% | 0.0% | 8% | 5% | 2.45 | 1.139 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|----|----|------|-------|
| There is management laxity which influences the implementation of strategic plans in schools | 36% | 46% | 18% | 0% | 0% | 1.71 | .793 |
| The managers have knowledge and skills necessary for school | 55% | 41% | 0% | 2% | 2% | 1.81 | 1.039 |

From the table 1, the mean scores for the responses suggest respondents’ agreement to the statements that strategic plan implementation in the school is affected by levels on management commitment. It appears that the views of both teachers and BOM correlated as demonstrated by standard deviation of 1.139, 0.793 and 1.039. The findings from teachers further revealed that most school management does not fully support the teachers in executing the strategic plans. Most teachers also felt that the schools’ strategic plan policy was weak and therefore hindering implementation of the strategic plan. Therefore, this indicates positive relationship between management commitment and implementation of strategic plans in Nyamira Public secondary schools. These findings concur with a study carried by Kamau (2012) on challenges facing managers in the development and implementation of strategic plan which showed that most school principals had the relevant knowledge required for strategic plan implementation and that 60% of BOM met school stakeholder to discuss school development and the strategic plan progress once a term, 16.7% of them held discussions twice a term while 6.7% held discussion when available.

Relationship between teachers’ commitment and implementation of strategic plans

Teachers and BOM were asked rate the extent to which they are committed in the implementation of strategic plan objectives, welcome management initiatives and involved formulation, implementation and evaluation of school strategic plans. The response were summarized and presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Rating relationship between teachers’ commitment and implementation of strategic plans N=160

| Statement | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Mean | Std. Dev |
|-----------|----------------|-------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|------|----------|
|-----------|----------------|-------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|------|----------|

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|
| Teachers in my school are committed to implement strategic objectives | 17% | 19% | 8% | 26% | 30% | 1.23 | 1.062 |
| Teachers in my schools freely welcome management initiatives in strategic plan implementation | 21% | 20% | 10% | 25% | 24% | 2.21 | .432 |
| Teachers in my school are actively involved formulation, implementation and evaluation of strategic plans | 14% | 16% | 0% | 34% | 26% | 1.95 | 1.233 |

The mean scores for the responses suggest respondents' agreement to the statements that teachers are committed to implement strategic objectives, that teachers welcome management initiatives in strategic plan implementation and that teachers are actively involved in formulation, implementation and evaluation of strategic plans. It appears that the views of both teachers and BOM correlated as demonstrated by standard deviation of 1.062, 0.432 and 1.233. The findings from BOM further revealed that the incentive programs in their schools were not sufficient to foster teacher commitment while on the part of teachers they indicated that teachers and learner's outcome was the main factor that teachers felt influence their commitment level followed by management support, monetary reward and demand by parents.

Relationship between availability of resources and implementation of strategic plans

The study sought to establish from the BOM whether availability of resources was a challenge to implementation of strategic plans. The BOM were asked to rate the resources that were lacking in their schools and therefore influencing implementation of strategic plans. The responses were summarized and presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Resource adequacy in schools N=50

| Resources | Inadequate | | Adequate | |
|------------------------|------------|----|----------|----|
| | F | % | F | % |
| 1. Financial resources | 34 | 68 | 16 | 32 |
| 2. Physical resources | 28 | 56 | 22 | 44 |
| 3. Human resources | 20 | 40 | 30 | 60 |

The data in Table 3 indicates that majority of the schools cannot effectively implement their strategic plans due inadequate financial and physical resources but a good number of schools have adequate human resource establishment to enable them implement their strategic plans. It was hard for the public secondary schools in Nyamira County to take strategic decisions. These findings concur with Koma (2013) who found that resources were not enough to fund strategic plans and that school managers could not allocate the resources properly if they were not enough.

Hypotheses testing

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between management commitment and levels of implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between teachers’ commitment and levels of implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between availability of resources and levels of implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools

Table 4: regression model status of strategic plans and levels of implementation

| Regression Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 1.231 | .423 | 0.01 | 2.053 | .017 |
| Management Commitment | .026 | .132 | .018 | .193 | .007 |
| Teachers Commitment | .368 | .138 | .278 | 2.668 | .009 |
| Availability of resources | .097 | .139 | .051 | .696 | .045 |

Model summary

| Model | R | R Square | adjusted squareR | Std Error of estimate |
|-------|-------|----------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | .261a | 0.68 | 0.39 | .55874 |

ANOVA

| Model | sum of squares | df | mean square F | Sig |
|-------|----------------|----|---------------|-----|
|-------|----------------|----|---------------|-----|

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Regression | 1.905 | 4 | .726 | .070 |
| Residual | 39.648 | 127 | .312 | |
| Total | 42.553 | 131 | | |

The statistical test in Table 4 indicates that Ho1; with a p value of 0.007 we reject the null hypothesis meaning that there is a significant relationship between management commitment and implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Nyamira County. the second hypothesis Ho2: with a p value of 0.009 we reject the null hypothesis meaning that there is a significant relationship between teachers' commitment and implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Nyamira County and hypothesis three Ho3; with a p value of 0.045 we reject the null hypothesis meaning that there is a significant relationship between availability of resources and implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Nyamira County. The fitted model from this analysis is shown below:

$$Y = 1.231 + 0.026X_1 + 0.368X_2 + 0.097X_3 + \epsilon$$

6. Conclusions and Recommendations of the Study

Conclusions

The study concluded that management commitment had a significant relationship with implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Nyamira County. School leadership therefore plays a critical role in the implementation of strategic plans and their commitment is very critical in the success of the entire process.

The study concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between teacher commitment and implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Nyamira County. There is need therefore to encourage teachers through intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to be totally committed in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of strategic plans in their schools.

The study further concluded that availability of resources affects the implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Nyamira County. Thus availability of organizational resources such as financial, physical and human resources will positively foster implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Nyamira County.

Recommendations of the Study

Management should provide a leadership role in ensuring that all the stakeholders are committed towards implementing the strategic plans. Their commitment is very paramount because employees will always rely on them since they are under their directives. The management

should put in clear measures that ensure monitoring and evaluation of strategic plans in their schools.

The management should design a reward structure to enable the teachers increase levels of commitment on the implementation of strategic plans in the schools. The BOM should initiate strategies of encouraging all stakeholders to the school strategic plans and to the process of implementation.

The study also recommends that school principals, deputy principals, heads of departments, teachers and management should be equipped with the necessary managerial skills. This can be academic, technical and conceptual skills to help them successfully implement strategic plans in their respective schools. This should be designed to be practical and inclusive to specific regional and geographical conditions of given areas.

Resources should be available on time and the BOM should allocate these resources based on the objectives of strategic plans. Schools should have resource allocation policies and budgets which they should enforce strictly to ensure they help in the successful implementation of the school's strategic plans.

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