

## Factors Affecting the Implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools in Nyeri County, Kenya

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### *Abstract*

*Strategic plans are considered to be very important in the management and success of organizations. School strategic planning is key to success of a school with regard to achievement of its mission, goals and objectives. Though the Ministry of Education directed that Public Secondary schools must formulate and implement Strategic Plans; some Schools have been faced with the challenges in the implementation of their strategies. This study carried out an analysis of factors influencing the implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools in Mukurweini & Othaya Sub-counties of Nyeri County, Kenya. The study was guided by four objectives and data was collected to answer the following four questions: - How Managerial skills, Institutional policies, Resources allocation and Rewards & Incentives influence the implementation of Strategic Plans. The population for the study was the institutions' Principals or their Deputies in the 2 Sub-counties. The accessible population was made up of 66 schools' Principals/ Deputies (32 in Mukurweini and 34 in Othaya) and an interviewer administered questionnaire was used. Both descriptive and quantitative was collected and analyzed in order to answer the four questions of the study. The study had 20 school's responding from each sub-county representing 65% in Mukurweini and 60% in Othaya. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that public secondary schools in Mukurweini & Othaya Sub-counties had strategic plans and their implementations are influenced by among other factors, Managerial skills, Institutional policies, Resources allocation and Rewards/Incentives. It's recommended that Principals/Deputies be equipped with the necessary Managerial Skills; schools should enforce institutional policies; should have resources allocation policies/budgets and should have reward/incentive schemes which help in the successful implementation of the school's strategic plans.*

**Key Words:** Strategy, Implementation, Public Schools, Kenya.

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### **Introduction**

#### **Background of the Study**

It is a ministerial requirement that public organizations including educational institution develop strategic plans as a means of enhancing results based management and efficiency in their operations. The plans provide direction in regard to resource targeting and program implementation (MOE, 2005). One factor that stands out as a key determinant to school success is school planning effectiveness. According to School Management Guide (1991), strategic planning is a line of action designed by the school to achieve desired targets with a scale using available resources. Planning is a process of identifying a purpose and then deciding upon the approaches, techniques, methods, procedures, time horizons, resources and all that must be done to accomplish a purpose. The central role of planning is the projection of targets looking and

thinking forward in time. Plans contain practical guidelines, precise goals and targets and a timetable for attainment. Targets can be articulated without ambiguity and measurements of attainment against them set out.

### **Public Secondary Schools**

According to the Ministry of Education, Kenya, Secondary schools in Kenya fall into two categories – Public or Government funded and Private. Public schools are divided into National, Extra County, County and Sub-County levels. Private schools do not receive funding from the government and they are run by private organisations or individuals. After taking the Primary school leaving exam and successfully passing, Public Secondary schools select students in order of scores. Students with the highest scores gain admission into National schools while those with average scores are selected into Extra County, County and Sub-County schools. Students who fail examinations either repeat the final school year or pursue technical training opportunities. A number of students also drop out of school by choice due to poor scores (Saunders, 2009).

Under the current system, students attend Secondary school for four years before sitting for the school leaving examination at the end of the fourth year. The first class or year of secondary school is known as form 1 and the final year is form 4. At the end of the fourth year, from October to November students sit for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination (KCSE). The Students who excel in the KCSE are admitted to the Public Universities (Eshiwani, 1993).

Secondary Schools have many stakeholders who must be involved in the Strategic Planning process. Apart from administrators, Board of Management (BOM), Parents Teachers Association (PTA), Teachers, staff, and students, the institutions also need to account for the interests of students' parents, government agencies, benefactors, alumni, the community and accreditation agencies. Each of these stakeholders makes demands upon the School and the strategic management must bring these stakeholders into the strategic management process to maximize "client satisfaction."

### **Strategic Plans**

According to McDonel (1990), Finlay (2000) and Katsioloude (2002), strategic planning provides significantly better performance than unplanned, opportunistic adaptive approach. It provides an integrative framework for other forms of planning. The planners have to match the activities of the organization to its environment and also the organizations resource capabilities. Strategic planning has been used in schools in developed countries leading to school improvement.

In Kenya school planning involves determining school needs, prioritizing school needs, preparing action plans, implementing and monitoring the plans (School Management Guide, 1999). In order to justify their existence schools need to develop strategies that embrace changes by anticipating challenges sufficiently in advance and by planning timely response, increasing speed of implementing of response, being flexible and respond on time to surprises which could not be anticipated in advance. Schools guided by the national goals of education must set up specific objectives designed at helping every individual student achieve varied aspirations and hence develop society. According to the Kenya Education Master Plan for Education and Training (1997 – 2010) an education plan should contain all important information about the school. This information includes the school aims which should be related to the national goals, school mission statement, description of school and the community it serves, school priorities, action plan for the next 3 years, and information about the school. Government of Kenya (1998) and Saitoti (2003) outlined the major determinant of quality education as curriculum content, relevant instructional material and equipment, physical facilities, conducive learning environment, the quality of teaching force and assessment and monitoring of learning achievement.

## Implementation of Strategic Plans

The choice of method for strategic management implementation depends upon situational factors such as size of the School, complexity of programs, institutional culture, and the style of the management. In view of the complex characteristics of Secondary Schools, the implementation approach should be based upon high participation.

Kenyan Secondary Schools, especially public ones, have always planned but there was never anything strategic about it because the “planning has always been the traditional one that followed the government’s five year planning cycle”. It is common knowledge that government’s five year planning cycles mostly involved adjusting plans for inflation and political changes especially to accommodate the whims of the ruling regime. The planning never seriously focused on the long term. This was the case until the advent of performance contracting that demanded that planning be strategic levels (Lewa, Mutuku and Mutuku, 2009).

### The Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, it’s a ministerial requirement that public organizations including educational institution develop strategic plans as a means of enhancing results based management and efficiency in their operations. Ideally these plans should provide direction in regard to resource targeting and program implementation (MOE, 2005). However, there have been concerns expressed by government bureaucrats, politicians and a big proportion of the public over what they perceive as lack of and/or inadequate planning practices in schools (Githua, 2004).

Even the schools with strategic plans rarely implement them and the result has been haphazard planning techniques, poor prioritization and failure to use the meager resources for the right projects. Most schools fail to achieve their goals and objectives, and this is reflected through poor academic performance (Ngware, 2006).

According to Sub-county Quality Assurance for Schools Officer (DQASO) of Mukurweini Sub-county; it has been established that some Public Secondary Schools in the sub-county have not formulated strategic plans while others have not implemented them hence lowering the academic standards and poor school environment. These relationships between performance and strategic planning created the need basis for this study.

A report tabled during an Education stakeholders workshop, Mukurweini had 32 Public Secondary Schools as compared to Othaya 34, Tetu 31, Mathira (East & West) 40, Kieni (East & West) 52 and Municipality 19; totaling 208 for the Nyeri County. As per KCSE 2013 analysis (Appendix III) Mukurweini had 200 students with A or B, while Othaya had 851 (DQASO, 2013). The disparity in KCSE performance between the two sub-counties has not been accounted for and therefore this study sought determines if the implementation of Strategic Plans in the Public Secondary Schools in Othaya and Mukurweini Sub-counties could have been a significant factor for the performance disparity.

## Objectives of the Study

### General Objective of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to investigate factors that affect implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools in Mukurweini & Othaya Sub-Counties of Nyeri County in Kenya.

### Specific Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:-

- i. To assess the influence of Managerial Skills in the implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools
- ii. To examine how Institutional Policies influence implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools
- iii. To establish how Resource Allocation influence implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools
- iv. To determine how Reward management affects the implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools

### The Scope of the Study

This study was limited to an analysis of factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans in Public Secondary Schools in the selected 20 Public Secondary Schools in Mukurweini sub-county and another 20 Public Secondary Schools in Othaya Sub-county. Though they are all located in Nyeri County of Central Kenya, they are representative of the all Public Secondary Schools under the Ministry of Education. The study took two months due to the proximity and nature of the study population.

### Limitations of the Study

The study might have been faced with the problem of concealment of material information by the respondents. This could be as a result of the fact that the study's key respondents were the Principals who are members of their respectful School boards. To mitigate this, the study made every effort to clearly explain the research's manifest intention was only academic.

### Research Methodology

#### Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study chose this research design because the study aimed at collecting information from respondents on their attitudes and opinions in relation to influences on strategic plans implementations in their schools. This method had a clear advantage of being effective way of collecting data from a large sample cheaply and faster; Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) notes that survey research is probably the best method available to researchers who are interested in collecting original data for the purpose of describing a population. This is a snap short review of the current situation, with an aim to build more analytical studies in future. Kothari (1990) describes descriptive research studies as those studies, which are concerned with describing characteristics to particular individuals or a group. Descriptive research is a process of collecting data in order to test hypothesis or to answer questions concerning the current status of the object of the study. It is in light of this observation that the study settled on this research design.

#### Study Population

The study was done in Nyeri County and the study population consists of 208 public secondary schools in the county. The study sampled all 32 Public Secondary Schools in Mukurweini sub-county and all 34 Public Secondary Schools in Othaya sub-county both of Nyeri County.

### **Target Population**

The focus of the study was the Principals or Deputies in all the 66 Secondary Schools in the 2 sub-counties. The accessible population was made up of 40 Principals /Deputies in the selected 40 Secondary Schools which responded.

### **Sampling Technique**

Simple probability was used and out of 32 public secondary schools in Mukurweini, 20 (or 65%) were randomly selected. Similarly out of 34 public secondary schools in Othaya, 20 (or 60%) were also randomly selected. In each of the selected schools, Principal or Deputy had an equal probability of being selected.

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2009), in stratified random sampling the subjects are selected in such a way that the existing sub-groups in the population are more or less reproduced in the sample. The study chose to use probabilistic sampling design. This choice is made for various reasons. First, the research chose a qualitative study requiring in-depth information from the respondents. This research design enabled the study to get the information required to answer the study objectives. Secondly, this research design will allow the study to select Teachers and Principals randomly without bias.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Interviewer administered questionnaires were used as a data collection tool. The questionnaires are defined by Glen (2003) as any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers. Questionnaires were used because as explained by Lyon (2007); they are used to collect data about phenomena that is not directly observable such as inner experiences, opinions, values, interests, they are more convenient to use than direct observation when used for collecting data therefore the advantages of using questionnaires are as follows: can be given to large groups, respondents can complete the questionnaire at their own convenience, answer questions out of order, skip questions, take several sessions to answer the questions, and write in comments. The cost and time involved in using questionnaires is less than with interviews.

It is a useful method, particularly when the questions are straightforward enough to be comprehended without verbal explanation. However, the study may not be able to probe for further information, may not be able to control who fills the questionnaire and the response rates may be low, Kothari (2003).

### **Data Collection Procedure**

This study adhered to appropriate research procedures and all sources of information were to be acknowledged as far as possible. Before the questionnaire was administered, consent was sought from both the university's management and the respondents. The respondents were informed of their right not to take part in the survey.

Full confidentiality was maintained on the feedback that was provided and the identity of the respondents kept secret. Personal information was only used for the purpose of the study and the respondents are not be revealed to any other source. Participants were informed of any potential limitations to the confidentiality of any information supplied. Procedures were put in place to protect the confidentiality of information and the anonymity of the participants in all research materials. Finally the participants were also offered access to the results of the study.

### **Pilot Study**

Validity is the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on the research results (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999). In order to ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaires was composed of carefully constructed questions to avoid ambiguity and in order to facilitate answers to all the research questions. The questionnaires was pre-tested in a pilot study through a sample of two randomly selected Principals to avoid respondent contamination (Kothari, 2007), after which corrections and adjustments were done; this was to ensure reliability. Further to enhance validity of the questionnaire and interview schedule, the study received advice from the supervisor on validity, relevance of the questions to the topic under study and on legibility of the questions for data collection. Comments and suggestions were considered in formulating the final copies.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

According to Glen (2003), analysis of data is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of highlighting useful information, suggesting conclusions, supporting decision making, data analysis has multiple facets and approaches, encompassing diverse techniques under a given subject of study. The study analyzed information in a systematic way in order to come up with conclusions as well as recommendations. The feedbacks obtained from the questionnaires were used to gather the data needed for this study. During data analysis, qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted. The weighted Likert scale was the tool on whose out-put summaries provided the inferences on which the conclusions were made after comparison with the mean distributions. The analyzed data was presented by use tables and charts for easy understanding.

### **Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **Summary of the Study**

The general objective of the study was to determine the factors affecting implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Mukurweini & Othaya Sub-counties of Nyeri County. Data for the study was collected from 40 respondents, who included 35 principals and 5 deputies. Data was analyzed according to research objectives. Given below is a summary of the key study findings.

#### **Extent of strategic planning in schools**

The study established that, out of the 40 respondents, 35 schools (17 in Mukurweini and 18 in Othaya) had a strategic plan and only 5 (3 in Mukurweini and 2 in Othaya) were in the process of formulating one. All the schools with a plan had vision statements and mission statements. The strategic plans had been formulated within the last 5 years and there was wide consultation involving all the key stake-holders or the main players. The plans were either for 3 to 5 years or 5 to 10 years. Despite challenges the plans were under implementation in most schools.

#### **Influence of Managerial Skills on the implementation of strategic plans**

The study found out that, out of the total 35 schools with strategic plans, on Academic skills' impact on the plan's implementation, 19 said they were very significant for a mean score of 9.5 and standard deviation of 0.71, while 16 said the skills were significant for a mean score of 8 and standard deviation 1.41. On Technical skills' impact on the plan's implementation, 17 said they were very significant for a mean score of 8.5 and standard deviation of 0.71, while 18 said the skills were significant for a mean score of 9 and standard deviation 1.41. On Conceptual skills' impact on the plan's implementation, 18 said they were very

significant for a mean score of 9 and standard deviation of 1.41, while 17 said the skills were significant for a mean score of 8.5 and standard deviation 2.12. This meant that Managerial does influence implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools.

#### **Effect of Institutional Policies on the implementation of strategic plans**

The study established that on Institutional Policies' impact on the plan's implementation, 21 said they were very significant for a mean score of 10.5 and standard deviation of 0.71, while 14 said the skills were significant for a mean score of 7 and standard deviation 0. This meant that Institutional Policies does influence implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools.

#### **Influence of Resource Allocations / Budgets on implementation of strategic plans**

The study established that on Resource Allocation / budgets' impact on the plan's implementation, 30 said they were very significant for a mean score of 15 and standard deviation of 1.41, while 5 said they were significant for a mean score of 2.5 and standard deviation 0.71.

This meant that Resource Allocation / budgets do influence implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools.

#### **Effect of Rewards / Incentive Schemes on Implementation of Strategic Plans**

The study established that out of the 35 schools with strategic plans, 26 had Reward / Incentives Schemes while 9 didn't have. On the Reward / Incentives schemes impact on the plan's implementation, 20 said they were very significant for a mean score of 10 and standard deviation of 1.41, while 6 said they were significant for a mean score of 3 and standard deviation 0.

This meant that Reward / Incentives schemes do influence implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools.

#### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that public secondary schools in Mukurweini & Othaya Sub-counties of Nyeri County had appropriate strategic plans, with a mission and vision statement; which if properly implemented, would benefit all the stakeholders in schools. The implementation of the strategic plans is influenced by many factors including Managerial Skills, Institutional Policies, Resources Allocation and Rewards / Incentives. From the 2 sub-counties studied, Othayas' ratings are higher than Mukurweini in all factors.

#### **Recommendations**

Principals / Deputies should be equipped with the necessary Managerial Skills (Academic and Technical) plus conceptual skills to help them successfully implement strategic plans in their respective schools. Schools should embrace institutional policies which they should enforce strictly to ensure they help in the successful implementation of the school's strategic plans.

Schools should have resources allocation policies / budgets which they should enforce strictly to ensure they help in the successful implementation of the school's strategic plans. Schools should have reward / incentive schemes which can help in the successful implementation of the school's strategic plans.

### Suggestions for Further Research

A research can be undertaken on the factors affecting implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools from other sub-counties, in Kenya, touching on the same questions:

How does Managerial Skills influence the implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools? What is the effect of Institutional Policies in the implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools? How does Resource Allocation influence the implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools? What is the effect of Reward management in the implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools?

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