

Assessment of the Factors Influencing the Implementation of Strategic Plans in Secondary Schools in Kenya

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Abstract

Past research have pointed out that excellent strategies have been written but extremely small have been accomplished in their implementation. It has additionally been proposed that only 10% of formulated strategies are successfully implemented. However, crafting the best strategy is not the end in itself but the ultimate result will only be realized once the plan is successfully implemented. A strategic plan is a management tool that is used to transform organizational objectives into actions. The purpose of this study was to establish the effects of strategic plan implementation on organizational performance: a case study of public Secondary Schools in Kenya. The country in the recent past has experienced challenges like student declining performance in national examinations and increased student enrolments this implies that student cannot be able to join higher learning institutions which mean their future is blurred. The specific objectives were to analyze the effects of leadership style and communication in successful implementation of the strategic plans. A descriptive survey design using stratified sampling was used. The study population comprised of the school managers including teachers, principals and deputy principals serving in selected schools. Primary data was collected through questionnaires that were administered through 'drop and pick later' method while secondary data was gathered from relevant Ministry of Education, Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and Government of Kenya publications like the Strategic plan, TSC Act, Ministry of Education (MoE) records. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. Quantitative data was presented using bar graphs, pie charts and frequency distribution tables.

Keywords: Strategic Plans, Implementation, Secondary Schools.

1.1 introduction Background of the Study

The Kenyan Government did pledge on its social strategy in its vision for 2030, under education and training; Kenya will provide globally competitive quality education, training and research to her citizens for development and enhanced individual well-being. Education has been recognized as a basic human tool for national development. A policy document by the (government of Kenya, 1976), vividly emphasized that poverty, disease and ignorance can be eliminated by use of education as a strategy. According to Maikuri (2008), provision of education is a fundamental development strategy of the government of Kenya engraved in its policy with an aim of ensuring equitable access, improvement of quality and efficiency at all levels of education, (Government of Kenya, 1976). Strategic management planning in organizations serves in helping to build competitive advantage, communicates the organizational strategy to staff, prioritizing financial needs of the organization, provides focus and direction to move from plan to action.

Although formulating a consistent strategy is a difficult task for any management team, making that strategy work that is implementing it throughout the organization is even more difficult (Hrebiniak, 2006). Effective strategy execution rarely gets as much attention as formulation yet experienced managers appreciate that well-crafted visions and strategic plans are useless if they cannot be effectively executed.

1.2 Implementation of strategic plan in public sector

The overall goal is to reduce illiteracy by increasing access to education, improving the transition rate from primary to secondary schools, and raising the quality and relevance of education. (Government of Kenya, 2012). The issue of firm performance has been central in strategy research and encompasses most other questions that have been raised in the field. For instance, why firms differ, how they behave, how they choose strategies and how they are managed (Porter, 1991). The last three decades have witnessed the proliferation of scholarly debates, business interest and studies regarding the role of strategic planning in the achievement of sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) and organizational performance. Organizations are downsizing, rightsizing, re-engineering, and reinventing them.

1.3 Secondary Education in Kenya

Secondary schools in Kenya fall into three categories: government funded Harambee and private. Government funded schools are divided into national, county and sub county levels. They are funded by the government, local communities, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and managed through board of governors (BOG) and parent-teacher associations (PTA). Under the current system, students attend secondary school for four years before sitting for the school leaving exam 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 (KCSE) examination. In 2008, the government introduced plans to offer free Secondary education to all Kenyans. (Ministry of Education, 2013).

1.4. Statement of the Problem

Strategic plan implementation involves translation of chosen strategy into organizational action and its proper implementation leads to success in achieving set objectives. Secondary Schools in Kenya are charged with provision of education to its residents. The Kenya education sector has since year 2003 embarked on plans to institute reforms at all levels, the secondary school managers ask, where are we now? Where do we want to go? And how do we get there? (Mutuku & Mutuku, 2004). This requires development and implementation of strategic plans that are capable of moving the schools to their desired future states. This creates a gap between what the managers and implementation agents do on one hand and what they are supposed to know and do on the other hand, in order for them to achieve the desired performance. It is upon this backdrop that this study sought to investigate the factors which influence the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Kenya. The study therefore seeks to interrogate the extent to which leadership and communication have influenced the implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Kenya. It is postulated that successful implementation of strategic plans leads to high performance in the organization. Therefore this study attempts fill this lacuna by trying to examine the factors which influence strategy implementation in secondary schools in Kenya.

1.5. Objectives

The main objective of this study was to investigate the factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Kenya. Specific Objectives were:

- i. To assess the effects of leadership on the implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Kenya.
- ii. To establish the extent to which communication has influenced the implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Kenya.

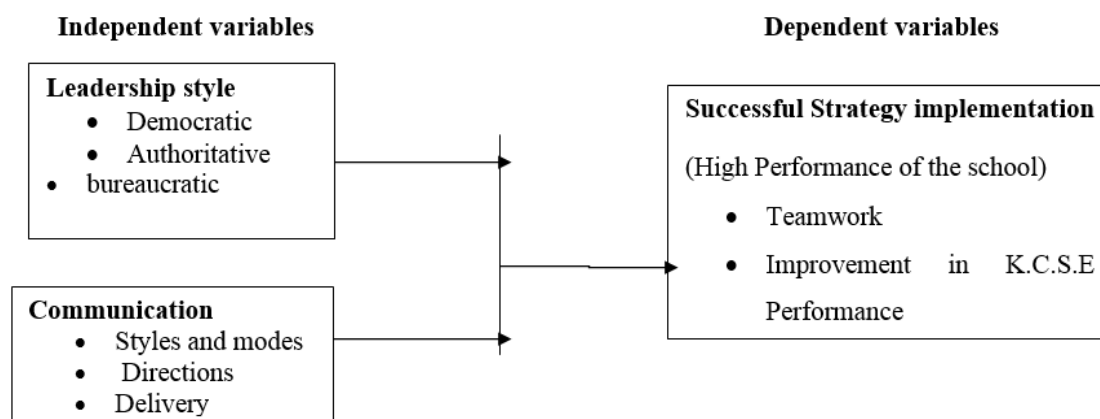
1.6 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the study has yielded information that is useful for future proper strategic plan implementation in order to achieve high performance in public secondary schools in Kenya. The findings and recommendations of the study may also be useful to the management and principals of schools. This may lead to the generation of new ideas for better and more efficient management of parastatals and other organizations in Kenya and globally.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

A research conceptualizes the connection between variables in the study and shows the relationship graphically or diagrammatically, this assists the research to advance awareness and understanding of the situation under inquiry and communicate it. The conceptual framework of this study included independent variables; leadership style, communication and the dependent variable is successful implementation of strategic plans.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework



Source: author 2015

3.0 A review of the theoretical literature

3.1 Communication theory

According to Aosa (1992), Communication should be a regular rather than a one-off exercise and should be

pursued through different channels that management consider fit to access the employees of an organization. People require being involved in the strategic plan implementation and hence a steady message effectively communicated will energize people into fully participating in the firm activities. Managers must select those to be involved in communication of organizational needs to avoid skeptics or spoilers who would otherwise bend the intended aim as stipulated in the strategic plan. This will involve drawing discussions and debates about the right timing plus the freedom to have open talk on how efficient a plan is being implemented.

Robinson and Pearce (2004) have observed that miscommunication occurs between the point where communication starts and the point where it is received. More so, the interpretation of that communication plays a vital role which requires managers to be enforcing a strong culture that embrace clear understanding of communications from all corners of the organization. This means that managers must be aware of people's beliefs, attitudes, behaviour, demands and arguments in order to communicate effectively the message of strategic plan implementation to the employees.

3.2 Leadership

The ability to anticipate, envision and maintains flexibility to empower others to create strategic change necessary (Avolio, 2005). Strategic leadership basically means using strategy in the management of workers by motivating, directing, innovating and communicating with employees in order to achieve certain organization goals. The study definition of leadership is that it involves inspiring employees of public secondary schools to a shared vision of the organization, thereby ensuring all employees contribute to strategy implementation and satisfactory performance.

2.3 Empirical Literature

Awino (2007) proposes that for a strategy to be effectively implemented, a committed leadership need champion it. Any corporate agenda will be a successful initiative if the analysis and commitment have originates from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and team members who have the full understanding of the organization and its environment. The CEO and the management team shape and have the ultimate responsibility for achieving the strategic ambition of the corporation.

According to Thomson and Strickland (2012), strategy implementation can fail due to lack of effective top management because strategic management and leadership are key drivers to strategic implementation. Cater and Pucko (2010) on the actions for and obstacles to strategy execution on a sample of 172 Slovenian Companies, the study established that managers generally depend on planning and organizing activities when implementing strategies, even though the biggest obstacle to strategy execution is poor leadership. The study concluded that greater obstacles to strategy execution in the forms of pathetic management skills and employee's unwillingness to share their knowledge have a negative effect on performance.

Taylor (1995) established that in order to have all workers achieving the necessary understanding of the company vision and goals, offer commitment and enthusiastically get involved in converting the strategic plans into implementable activities with measureable results, robust and decisive leadership is required to drive the course. Strategic leaders manage radical change to realize dramatic developments in organizational activities. Such leaders communicate within and externally with an open management style, trying to shape a fresh culture in which employees can feel involved.

3.1 Research design and methodology

The study employed descriptive research design. The major purpose of descriptive design was to provide information on characteristics of the population. The target staffs includes teachers, principals and deputy principals. The study was located in Kenya. The study adopted stratified sampling to select the respondents. The sample size was 15 schools, with 105 respondents out of a target population of 38 schools with a population of 326. These were selected to ensure that the sampling size had characteristic representation of the population using the formulae developed by (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Table 3.1 sampling table

Target population	Total number	Sample size
TSC Teachers	250	75
Deputy principals	38	15
Principals	38	15
Total	326	105

Source: author 2015

3.2 Research Instruments

The study utilized both primary and secondary data. Secondary information was gathered from relevant Ministry of Education, Teachers Service Commission and Government of Kenya publications like the Strategic plan, TSC

Act, MoE. The main instrument for primary data collection was the questionnaires. Questionnaire items were designed in such a way as to elicit employees' views concerning the determinants for successful implementation of school strategic plans. The questionnaire targeted school principals, their deputies and TSC teachers who are important stakeholders dealing with strategy implementation and school performance. The questionnaire consisted of both structured and unstructured questions which allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Structured questionnaires, where the study participants were asked to respond to identical questions was used to aid the study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Additionally, secondary data was obtained by the researcher from records and documents at county MoE, county TSC and public schools offices, books, journals and periodicals.

3.4 Data Analysis

After data collection, completed questionnaires were edited for completeness and consistency this was followed by data clean-up editing, coding and tabulation in order to detect any anomaly in the responses and assign numerical values to the responses for further analysis. The study employed descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistical tools such as percentages, mean, standard deviation, and frequencies helped the researcher to describe and summarize data so that patterns were made visible. Data was analyzed and reported using frequency distribution tables and percentages. Data presentation was made by using of tables and bar graphs to enhance clarity.

3.5 Research findings

Table 3.1: Response Rate

School Sample sector	Expected sample	Observed Frequency	Percentage of field total
principals	15	13	12.38%
Deputy principals	15	15	14.29%
TSC teachers	75	72	68.57%
Total	105	100	95.23%

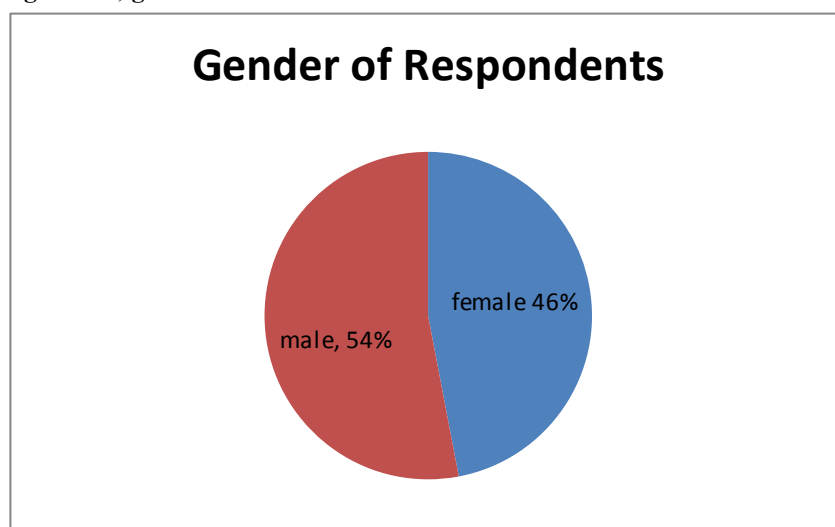
Source: author 2015

Table 3.2: Age distribution

Age range	Frequency	Percentage
21-25 years	9	9%
26-30 years	21	21%
31-35 years	11	11%
36-40 years	17	17%
41-50 years	36	36%
Above 51 years	6	6%
Total	100	100%

Source: author 2015

Figure 4.2; gender distribution



Source: author 2015

Table 4.4 work duration

Work duration	Frequency	percentage
Below 5 years	61	61%
5-10 years	20	20%
Above 10 years	19	19%
Total	100	100%

Source: author 2015

4.2.4 Respondents' occupation

The study sought to find out the job occupation .From the findings 100% of the respondents were of a teaching profession.

4.2.5 Job position

The study sought to find out the job category of the respondents. From the findings 13% were Principals, 15% were Deputy Principals 72% were teachers

Table 4.5; job position

JOB POSITION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Principals	13	13%
Deputy Principals	15	15%
Teachers	72	72%
Total	100	100%

Source: author 2015

4.3 Effect of leadership on implementation of strategic plans

4.3.1 Leadership style

This question sought to find out the leadership style which respondents thought was most effective in the implementation of strategic plans. From the responses in table 4.6, the most effective leadership style was democratic chosen by the majority (80%) of respondents, followed by Bureaucratic style chosen by 11% of respondents authoritarian style was chosen by 6% of respondents and laissez faire was chosen by 3% of the respondents.

Table4.6; Most appropriate leadership style

leadership style	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Authoritarian	6	6.0	6.0	6.0
Democratic	80	80.0	80.0	86.0
Laissez Faire	3	3.0	3.0	89.0
Bureaucratic	11	11.0	11.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: author 2015

The leadership styles included in the study was subjected to descriptive analysis as a test of effects on company performance where the respondents were asked in their opinion to indicate leadership style that would lead to the most effective implementation of the strategic plan in their school. The majority of the respondents selected democratic style to others as shown in figure 4.6 above. The findings have confirmed that various management styles are favored by organizations for their effective implementation of strategic plans and they are in line with findings of scholars such as Mulube (2009), Amukobole (2010) and Mintzberg (2004) who concluded that different leadership styles exist in organizations for effective implementation of strategic plans.

4.3.2; Effects of leadership in strategic plan implementation

The first objective of the study sought to establish the extent to which leadership affects strategic plan implementation, model summarized leadership under the following titles; motivation, inspiring, innovativeness, sharing common behavior, consultations and teamwork. The responses were generated on a five point Likert scale; 5= Strongly Disagree, 4= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 2= Agree and 1= Strongly Agree. The respondents were required to state their level of agreement. The study findings are as shown below.

Table 4.7 Leadership

Statement		SD	D	N	A	SA
The leaders at your school motivate employees towards the achievement of school set	F	0	19	8	57	16
	%	0	19	8	57	16
The leaders at your school support employees and inspire them towards achieving school strategic directions	F	5	12	11	58	14
	%	6	12	11	58	14
The leaders at your school are innovative and competent in helping the school come up with new strategies	F	9	8	12	52	19
	%	9	8	12	52	19
The leaders promote the school building up shared behavior, vision, mission, norms and values formation among the employees	F	1	13	15	53	18
	%	1	13	15	53	18
The leaders at your school constantly seek advice of experts	F	8	12	27	40	13
	%	8	12	27	40	13
The leaders at your school holds regular participatory staff meetings	F	6	7	16	42	29
	%	6	7	16	42	29

*SD=strongly disagree D=Disagree N=Not sure A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree f=Frequency

From the findings as shown in the above tables 4.7 majority of the respondents agreed that teamwork, (71%), consultations 53% promotion of shared behavior 71% innovation 73% and motivation 73% contribute to proper leadership in schools.

4.4 Effects of Communication on implementation of strategic plans

4.4.1 Flow of Communication in Organization

In this question, respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree on the usage of top down and multidirectional flow of communication used in their schools. Results indicated that 35% strongly agreed to the usage of top down flow, 43% agreed 12% were neutral% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed. With multidirectional flow the findings were as follows: 15% strongly agreed to the usage of multidirectional flow 42% agreed 12% were neutral, 22% disagreed and 9% strongly disagreed as shown in the tables below. This indicates that top-down communication flow is the most prevalent in organizations as opposed to multidirectional communication flow. This is a concern for study objective since many scholars including, Burnes (2004), Mulube (2009) and Letting (2009) have concluded that lack of clear multi-directional flow of communication was a hindering factor in implementing strategic plans. The study findings imply that most public secondary schools could be having problems with strategic plan Implementation due to lack of multidirectional communication flow. Further inferences can be made from the findings in the next chapter.

Table 4.9 The school uses the multidirectional flow of communication.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	15	15.0	15.0	15.0
Agree	42	42.0	42.0	57.0
Neutral	12	12.0	12.0	69.0
Disagree	22	22.0	22.0	91.0
Strongly Disagree	9	9.0	9.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

4.4.2 Channels of Communication for Receiving Strategic Objectives

This question sought to find out the channels of communication applied in the target schools to indicate how disseminating and receiving of information on strategic objectives took place. The results indicated that a simple majority of the respondents cited meetings as the main channel of communication. The findings indicate that meetings form the main channel of communication with a cumulative percentage of 69% which is the majority of the total respondents. The findings are in line with other scholars' findings including Kandie (2004), and Robinson and Pearce (2004), all concluded that effective strategic plan implementation require clear channels of communication inculcated into the culture of the organization.

Table 4.10 COMMUNICATION

Statement		SD	D	N	A	SA
The school uses the top-down flow of communication.	F	5	5	12	43	35
	%	5	5	12	43	35
The school uses the multidirectional flow of communication.	F	9	22	12	42	15
	%	9	22	12	42	15
Information on strategic objectives is received through meetings	F	6	6	19	54	15
	%	6	6	19	54	15
Information on strategic objectives is received through posters	F	20	33	20	18	9
	%	20	33	15	18	9
Information on strategic objectives is received informally	F	27	31	19	19	4
	%	27	31	19	19	4
strategic objectives are clearly communicated	F	6	13	17	42	22
	%	6	13	17	42	22
communication contributes to the achievement of organization's strategic objectives	F	3	11	8	44	34
	%	3	11	8	44	34

*SD=strongly disagree D=Disagree N=Not sure A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree f=Frequency

5.2 Summary of the Major Findings

5.2.1 Do leadership Styles Influence Effective Implementation Strategic Plans?

The major finding on management specifically management styles was that democratic style of management with multidirectional form of communication was the most preferred management style. Staff participation in decision making was key to such management having an influence on the implementation of strategic plans. The findings of this study produced tests that proved there is a high significance between implementation of strategic plans and management styles and it can be conclusively confirmed that leadership styles greatly affect implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Kenya. The various leadership variables that were studied included motivating, inspiring, communicating, innovation, competency promotion of shared behavior and consultation. These factors related positively with performance.

5.2.3 Does Communication Affect the Effective Implementation of Strategic Plans?

From the findings, it was clear that top-down communication was highly rated as being the most effective in implementation of strategic plans in public secondary school in Kenya.

The major finding of this variable was that even though communication is significant, it does not greatly affect the implementation of strategic plans. Although communication helps employees to understand the company's overall business strategy and how they contribute to achieving key objectives

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