#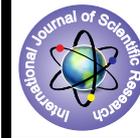 Challenges In The Adoption of Strategic Planning in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya: A Case of Kirinyaga Central District

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges in to the adoption of strategic planning in public secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central district. The objectives of the study were: to establish leadership, policy, resource and institutional factors influencing the adoption of strategic planning in public secondary school in Kirinyaga Central District. The research adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population was public secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central District. Sampling was done through stratified, purposive and simple random sampling methods. The sample size was twelve (12) secondary schools, 12 principals, 96 teachers and one DQASO. Structured and semi structured questionnaires were used as data collection tools. Interview and observation schedules were used. The responses to the items were tabulated and data organized through frequency tables and percentages based on the research questions and were used to generate conclusions and recommendations. The study revealed that the adoption of strategic planning in schools was greatly hindered by leadership, resource, and policy challenges. The findings hence indicate a need for training on strategic planning and proper resource and financial management in schools to allow for continuous improvement.

Introduction

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 Strategic Plan, 2006 – 2011). 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.

According to McDonel (1990), Finlay (2000) and Katsioloudes (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 it environment and also the organizations resource capabilities. Strategic planning has been used in schools in developed countries leading to school improvement.

In USA for instance, Strategic planning follows a four step process for planning a school wide program, conducting a comprehensive needs assessment, managing the inquiry process, designing the school wide program, and evaluating the program (Cook, 2006). In Europe, there have been some major strides made in school development planning although the sector is still faced with major challenges such as learning skills and attitudes in planning education and practice, role of new technologies in planning education (e-learning, e-tools and e-networking) and place of ethics in planning education (Deal and Peterson, 2008).

In developing countries, promotion of school development involves assessing the current state of the school development plan and providing information about it, by increasing the overall rate of development by carrying out special programs and trying to improve co-ordination between different stages of planning process. The main problem is in the implementation of these strategic plans (Lawrence, 2001).

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. Saitoti (2003) concurs with the master plans view that quality education should shift form mere passing exams to encompass the discovery of talent, development of analytical cognitive and creative potential which is enhanced by efficient , effective management and prudent utilization of resources.

In Kirinyaga central district few schools operate under school development plans and very few schools have developed strategic plans. The fact that schools are operating without strategic plans is an indication of lack of commitment of quality management, which may jeopardize the provision of quality education services, leading to low student achievement. This study aims at investigating the challenges into the adoption of strategic planning in public secondary schools in Kirinyaga central district.

Statement of the Problem

Strategic planning is key to school success. The school should meet the expectations of the stakeholders. Strategic planning helps school managers to acknowledge the future, spot significant trends and tendencies, and the need to respond to them skillfully, adapt, modify systems and structures so as to tackle new challenges and circumstances. Available data show that many schools in Kirinyaga central district are operating without strategic plans. This has led to some schools being characterized with inverted priorities and incomplete and dilapidated structures. Consequently, parents are subjected to pay inflated development funds and hence a high dropout rate of students due to high fees. Lack of strategic planning has led some school administration to be implicated with misappropriation of funds since budgets are not adhered to. There is also

lack of consultations and participation of communities and top-down approaches are used in school planning and innovations of climate or culture fit and cost effectiveness are lacking. In addition the few schools that operate under development plans are found to be ineffective and programmes are not completed on time. As a result there has been concern expressed by government bureaucrats, politicians professional and a big proportion of the public over what they perceive as lack of or inadequate planning practices in secondary schools, leading to haphazard planning techniques.

It is a ministerial requirement that all schools formulate strategic plans with a time frame of 3-5 years and action plans for each year. According to DQASO, Kirinyaga central district it has been established that some schools rarely develop strategic plans leading to poor school management hence lowering the academic standards and poor school environment. The study therefore is relevant as it established the challenges faced by public secondary schools in developing and implementing strategic planning. Thus this study was guided by the following research questions:

i.   What are the leadership challenges that influence the adoption of strategic planning in public secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central District?
ii. What are the resource challenges that influence the adoption of strategic planning in public secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central District?
iii. What are the policy challenges that influence the adoption of strategic planning in public secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central District?

Methodology
The study was carried out in Kirinyaga county which borders Embu County to the East, Nyeri county to the West and Muranga County to the South and lies in the former Central province. Descriptive survey design was used. The descriptive survey was the most appropriate for this study, as the researcher collected information on the state of affairs in the schools without manipulating the variables.

The target population comprised 31 public secondary schools all headteacher, all teachers, and DQASO. Gay (1992) asserts that for a survey design a sample of at least 20% is justifiable for the study. On this strength the researcher took a sample of twelve (12) schools which comprise 38% of the total schools. Stratified random sampling was employed to select the sample by status of the school. Simple random sampling was used to select three from six provincial secondary schools one from three district boarding secondary schools and eight from 22 mixed day secondary schools. The Headteacher, eight teachers per school, and 1 DQASO constituted the study sample. The total sample size yielded 109 respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews guide and observation schedule. Data analysis involved both qualitative and quantitative procedures as both qualitative and quantitative. Data was analyzed and reported using frequency distribution and percentages. Data presentation was made by use of tables and bar graphs to enhance clarity.

Results and Discussions
The results and discussions of the findings are presented according to the research questions of the study as follows:

Leadership Challenges
The first research question sought to investigate the leadership challenges that influence the adoption of strategic planning in public secondary schools. The result are presented on the table 1.0.

Table 1.0 Leadership Challenges in the Adoption of Strategic Planning

Leadership challenge	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
	frequency	percent	frequency	percent	frequency	percent
Poor management and lack of relevant skills.	94	93.1	2	2	5	5
Lack of leadership qualities and commitment	90	89.1	3	3	8	8
Rigidity to change and misappropriation.	87	86.2	3	3	11	8.9

With regard to poor management and lack of relevant skills 93.1% of the respondents agreed that this is a major challenge in the adoption of strategic planning. However 5 % of the respondents disagreed. The lack of relevant skills made head teachers ineffective and inefficient in carrying out their duties. The Koech Report (1999) pointed out that the school head requires to be well versed with administrative skills for a school to be successful. The report says that most head teachers had not been trained in administration and this made them inefficient, ineffective and lacked accountability. Eshiwani (1993) and Maundu (1986) in their separate studies recommended that it is necessary to determine the minimum level of experience for a teacher to be promoted to headship. Most of the respondents indicated that they have attended a management course at KESI but the courses were shot hence did not instill the necessary administrative and managerial skills necessary to carry out strategic planning

The study revealed that 89.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that lack of leadership qualities and commitment poses a challenge into the adoption of strategic planning while 6.0% disagreed. This is largely due to the criteria used in appointment of head teachers. The Education Master Plan, 1997-2010 noted that the secondary school system is marred by nepotism and corruption allegations on the promotion of teachers. Such malpractices affect the teacher's morale, performance and commitment to strategic planning as non performers are rewarded. According to Graham and Bennett (1998) the official leader motivates and controls subordinates to work towards goals that are regarded desirable and possible to the organization. The leader must be able to control and initiate or set patterns of behavior for others to ensure attainment of schools objectives.

With regard to rigidity to change and misappropriation as a leadership challenge in the adoption of strategic plans, 86.2% of the respondents strongly agreed, while 11.9% of the respondents disagreed. This indicated that a majority of the leaders are not flexible hence resist change regardless of the social, economic, political and technological changes taking place in the environment. Due to an ever changing environment and policies, strategic planning should be a continuous activity. Effective leaders should therefore embrace change, initiate action and influence the organization environment (Steiner, 1969). They should be flexible in the way they interact with subordinates to be able to adjust to the people they lead and also achieve the mission they are assigned.

Resource Challenges
The second research question sought to investigate the resource challenges that influence the adoption of strategic planning in schools. The results are presented in table 2.0

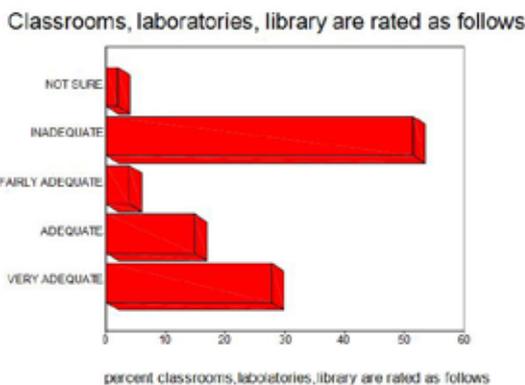**Table 2.0 Resource challenges in the Adoption of Strategic Planning**

Resource challenge	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
	Frequency	percent	frequency	percent	frequency	percent
Poor time management and inadequate funds	91	90.1	3	3	7	7
Inadequate teaching staff and teaching resources	81	80.2	3	3	17	16.8
Inadequate physical facilities	56	55.5	2	2	43	42.6

The study revealed that 91% of the respondents strongly agreed that poor time management and inadequate funds are resource

challenges into the adoption of strategic planning in schools while 7 % of the respondents disagreed. Inadequate funds and financial constrains prevented the execution of set priorities such as building physical facilities and stalling of projects. The resources available in a school determine the quality of the school. These resources are reported by many studies as teaching learning materials, physical facilities and human resources. Many studies have shown that provision of adequate and quality resources facilitates effective implementation of the curriculum in schools and results in improved achievement of students (Psacharopoulos and Woodhall, 1985). The availability and use of such materials have a positive effect on school effectiveness.

From the study it emerged that 81% of the respondents agreed that inadequate teaching staff and teaching resources posed a challenge into the adoption of strategic planning in school while 6.0% disagreed. Education is labour intensive and requires human resource who are directly or indirectly involved in carrying out all related activities of teaching and learning. In the Kenyan context school quality is heavily dependent on the quality of staff in terms of their academic qualifications, professional training, their commitment, dedication, conducive working environment and appropriate terms of service (Republic of Kenya,1999).

Fig 1.0

Classrooms, laboratories, library are rated as follows

percent classrooms,laboratories,library are rated as follows

With regard to adequacy of physical facilities in the schools, the study revealed that only 28% of the schools studied had adequate classrooms, libraries, laboratories, hall and sanitation while 52% of the schools had inadequate classrooms laboratories and libraries. Of these schools, 14.9% had adequate physical facilities. Library facilities were most inadequate followed by laboratories, special rooms and land. It is generally agreed that physical facilities such classrooms, laboratories and libraries have a direct bearing on good performance among students in developing countries. A study by Eshiwani (1983) in western province on the factors affecting performance pointed out that schools that had the best facilities like libraries, laboratories, play fields and electricity were among the high achieving schools and those with inadequate facilities performed poorly in Kenya Certificate of Education (KCE). The study concluded that the presence or absence of school facilities distinguished high and low achieving schools.

Policy Challenges

The third research question sought to investigate the policy challenges that influence the adoption of strategic planning in public secondary school. The results are presented in the table 3.0.

Table 3.0 Policy Challenges in the Adoption of Strategic Planning

Policy challenges	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
	Frequency	percent	frequency	percent	frequency	percent
Ignorance on existing policies.	88	87.1	3	3	10	10
Old policies not reviewed	90	89.1	3	3	7	7
Lack of trained man power	88	87.1	3	3	10	10
High headship turnover	89	88.1	3	3	9	9
Lack of regular school inspection	8.9	8.9	3	3	88.1	87.2

The study revealed that 88% of respondents strongly agreed that ignorance to existing policy influenced the adoption of strategic planning in public secondary school however while 10.0% of respondents disagreed. This implies that school stakeholders do not keep pace with the changes taking place in the education system and other issues happening in the environment related to education. School administrators must continually update themselves on the new policies and be able to translate the policy into action.

It emerged that 90% of the respondents agreed that old policies were not reviewed and influenced the adoption of strategic planning in schools while 7.0% disagreed. Old policies are no longer responsive to the current emerging trends in education and training hence a need to review and harmonize the policies. Once formulated and implemented, policies need constant evaluation to identify and measure outcomes and impacts of the policy. This helps judge how well its objectives were met hence help design better policies and methods in future in line with changes in the environment.

The study revealed that 88% of respondents agreed that lack of trained manpower poses a challenge in adoption of strategic planning. However, 10% of respondents disagreed. This indicates that majority of respondents lacked the necessary skills in strategic planning. Proper implementation of policy depends on several basic requirements which include sufficient resources to accomplish goals, participation of all stakeholders, political and legal backing, supportive socioeconomic environment and necessary skills. KESI was established by legal notice No. 565 of 1981 and is responsible for training school administrators in managerial skills. Most of the respondents agreed that the training offered by KESI is not sufficient to equip the school administration with the necessary skills for strategic planning. Konchari (1988) pointed out that the principal is the major component of school administration whose ability and skills, personality and professional competence will largely depend on the efficiency of the school

Regarding effect of high headship turnover 89% of the respondents strongly agreed that it influences the adoption of strategic planning in schools while 9.0% disagreed. Frequent transfer of head teachers means that they do not stay long enough in a school to develop the urge for strategic planning. The school head teacher more than any other individual is responsible for the school climate for outcomes of productivity and satisfaction attained by students and staff. The head teachers thus, need to stay in a school for a period that allows them to study and understand the school and its environment so as to participate fully in strategic planning.

The study revealed that 87.2% of respondents strongly disagreed that lack of regular school inspection hinders strategic planning. However 8.9% strongly agreed that lack of regular school inspection influenced strategic planning in schools. The respondents indicated that school stakeholders were motivated and committed to strategic planning and only required the professional guidance of the directorate in preparation of strategic plans. The role of the directorate of quality assurance and standards is to offer support and advice schools in relation to best practices and thereby influence planning for quality enhancement and support services through career development of teachers (Jackson, 2005). The respondents indicated that school stakeholders were motivated and committed to strategic planning and only required the professional guidance of the directorate in preparation of strategic plans.

Conclusions

The study concludes that most school leaders lacked rel evant skills, leadership qualities and commitment to strategic planning; that strategic planning in schools is greatly hindered by inadequate resources in terms of physical facilities, finances and human resources; that ignorance of existing policies, high headship turn over and lack of training hinders strategic planning in schools. From the findings it can be concluded that the process of strategic planning is an essential element in school development and focuses on improving the quality of learning by strategizing, setting priorities, targets and resource allocation. With the commitment of all stakeholders to school improvement through application of best planning practices this can go a long way in improving the quality of education in schools.

Recommendations

i.   The findings indicate the need for a comprehensive in-service training for all head teachers adjusting it to new challenges so as to understand and implement strategic plans with limited teaching and learning resources.

ii.   There is need to review and harmonize existing policies on strategic planning in schools. Policies should work towards strengthening of local participation in education service delivery.

iii. There is need to actively involve all stakeholders in strategic planning as successful school level change will only occur if supported by all stakeholders.

iv.   School management should seek collaboration with other stakeholders such as NGO, civil society, government and other development agencies that are good at resource mobilization.

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