

FACTORS AFFECTING STRATEGIC PLANS IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA A CASE OF URIRI DISTRICT, MIGORI COUNTY

Richard Ochieng Owino 

MBA Student, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya

Ochiengrichard51@yahoo.com

Margaret Oloko

Faculty, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya

Abstract

The majority of public secondary schools have a number of factors that affect strategic management practice. This study seeks to find out the factors affecting strategic management implementation practice in public secondary schools in Uriri district, Migori County, Kenya, viz. leadership styles, level of training, resource availability. This study also intends to analyze moderating effect of government policy and school location on implementation of strategic management practice in public secondary schools. The study employs a descriptive study design, targeting 17 secondary schools in Uriri District comprising of 68 school managers. The respondents comprised of 17 secondary school Principals, 17 Deputy Principals and 34 heads of departments from the secondary schools. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 68 respondents. The study established that when school managers are effectively trained on strategic planning they will facilitate a proper strategic plans implementation practice in public secondary schools in Kenya since they are normally given the duties to monitor the whole exercise by the school heads. The study also found out that future school principals need to get hands-on experience by working with school leadership teams as they investigate achievement gaps and work to solve them. The study also recommended that it is very crucial that the public secondary schools conduct an evaluation on the strategic plans this will help the institutions to gather valuable information that will provide valuable insights in the strategy implementation in public secondary schools in Kenya.

Keywords: Training, Leadership Qualities, Resources, Strategic planning, Public schools

INTRODUCTION

Strategic management analyzes the major initiatives taken by an organization's top management on behalf of owner's involving resources and performance in external environments. It entails specifying the organization's mission, vision and objectives, developing policies and plans, often in terms of projects and programs, which are designed to achieve these objectives. Strategic management's main focus is the achievement of organizational goals taking into consideration the internal and external environmental factor. The discipline of strategic management originated in the 1950s. Until 1940, strategy was seen as primarily as a matter for the military. Among the numerous early contributors, the most influential were Alfred Chandler, Philip Selznick, Igor Ansoff, and Peter Drucker. The discipline draws from earlier thinking and texts on 'strategy' dating back thousands of years (Wikipedia 2013). Igor Ansoff built on Chandler's work by developing a grid that compared strategies for market penetration, product development, market development and horizontal and vertical integration and diversification. Strategic management permits the systematic management of change. It enables organization to purposefully mobilize resources towards a desired future. Chandler (1962) also posited that any effective successful strategy is dependent on structure, thus to achieve any effective economic performance the organization needs to alter its structure. There are a number of advantages associated with strategic management; an organization acquires a competitive advantage, financial advantage and organization advantage. Strategies can be formulated in three levels that is; corporate, business and functional level. At corporate level strategies are formulated by the top level management or the board of directors (Yabs, 2010). At business level strategies are formulated by middle level managers for example; human resource manager, marketing manager, production manager among others. In a school situation, at corporate level the long term decisions and strategies are made by the Board of Management in consultation with the school Principal. Heads of departments make decisions on business level strategies, offer leadership and play a key role in formulation of strategic plans in their institutions. Parents and teachers being key stakeholders present their interests through the Parents Teachers Association. In addition they are very critical in strategic implementation.

At the school level, Singapore created a new educational vision, "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation". This major milestone in Singapore's education journey recognized Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's belief that "A nation's wealth in the 21st century will depend on the capacity of its people to learn" (Goh, 1979). Thinking Schools, Learning Nation encompassed a wide range of initiatives over a number of years that were designed to tailor education to the abilities and interests of students, to provide more flexibility and choice for students and to transform the structures of education. Career paths and incentives for teachers were revamped

and teacher education upgraded. Curricula and assessment changes put greater emphasis on project work and creative thinking. A major resource commitment, involving three successive master plans, was made to information and communication technology (ICT) as an enabler of new kinds of self-directed and collaborative learning schools. "We need a mountain range of excellence, not just one peak, to inspire all our young to find their passions and climb as far as they can," explained Tharman Shanmugaratnam, then minister for Education (Lee *et al.*, 2008). Major changes were also made in the management of schools. In South Africa a strategy has been developed by the Executive Management Committee of St Benedict's to provide a disciplined approach to the management and development of St Benedict's over the five year period stretching from 2013 to 2017. The plan is reviewed annually at the Executive Committee's annual Executive Indaba St Benedict's, situated in Bedfordview, Gauteng, is one of South Africa's largest and most successful Catholic Schools. Today the school operates as a Catholic school for boys of all faiths and is owned by the St Benedict's Trust and is administered by a Board of Governors. The school has developed a strategic plan which includes its organizational vision that encompasses the school motto and school slogan, school vision and a school mission statement. The school also has developed strategic imperatives to be achieved within the period 2013 to 2017 and this include education for citizenship, capacity enhancement, transformation and diversity, marketing, the "greening" of the campus, financial sustainability and establishment of an old boys association.

Statement of the problem

Most blue chip companies and organizations have embraced strategic management after the realization that the world is getting very competitive and only those firms that strategize well can compete effectively. Most organizations have adopted strategic management in their policies and strategic management practice has imparted a number of advantages to organizations practicing it (Fred, 2011). A survey by Ngware et al. (2006) showed that over 60% of schools in the country do not have strategic plans, though currently some schools have developed the plans they are slow in implementation of the same. This is a reality that could be contributing to stagnation of most schools in terms of infrastructural and academic development. The Kenya government regularly formulates and implements strategic plans with the most recent one covering year 2010-2015. In a study in Rarieda District, the key findings of the study were: most schools (74%) practice formal strategic planning and strategic planning is positively correlated to performance. Besides this, it was established that management do not carry out thorough environmental analysis and does not involve stakeholders to a large extent as required and more still, the strategic plans developed are not fully implemented. The main recommendation

of the study is for policy developers through MoE to enhance strategic planning in public secondary schools and top management to invest resources, time and energy in implementation of strategies. Finally, future researchers should endeavor to establish the challenges of strategic implementation and how strategic planning can be implemented to enhance its contribution particularly academic performance (Okwako, 2013).

This study seeks to discover the factors affecting strategic management implementation practice in public secondary schools in Uriri District. This was necessitated after having discussions with peers in the teaching profession who noted that the schools in Uriri district did not implement their strategic plans even though some had well formulated strategic plans and others did not even have the plans at all. The purpose of the study is to understand this problem of why there is no strategy implementation in public schools in Uriri district.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- 1) To ascertain how the quality of training affects implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Uriri District.
- 2) To examine how leadership qualities of school managers affect implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Uriri District.
- 3) To examine how availability of resources affects implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Uriri district.
- 4) To examine how government policy has a moderating effect on the implementation of strategic management practice in public secondary schools in Uriri district.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The following theories provided the basic theoretical foundation of our research; Henry Mintzberg Theory and Michael Porter Generic Strategies Theory.

Henry Mintzberg Theory

Mintzberg (1991) sees strategy as 5 P's – plans, ploys, patterns, position and perspective. He describes a plan as 'some sort of consciously intended course of action'. In this situation organizations are expected to decide what they want to do and how they intend to achieve it. Failure of many organizations in recent time has been attributed to poor plan. A ploy is a sub-set of a plan, and is a strategy in the sense of strategies (i.e. a ruse or trick designed to put a rival company off the scent by disguising the real intention of the company). Mintzberg (1991) describes pattern as the consistent behaviour and processes that emerge from strategic thinking, due to intended or unintended actions. He sees plans and ploys as deliberate strategy use by an organization, but considers pattern as emergent strategies. According to Mintzberg position is acceptable location for the organization in an environment. In business organization

position boils down to its product market position in its chosen market. Perspective is looking inside the organization. Any of business organization with high degree of perspective approach will have management that have shared view and vision and make a positive impact on the environment where it operates. Strategy as plan, ploy, pattern, position and perspectives defines the organization by providing proper understanding of the organization to the people and a way of differentiating it from others. One needs to understand that a clearly defined strategy is one that will lead to enthusiasm among various stakeholders.

Michael Porter Generic Strategies Theory

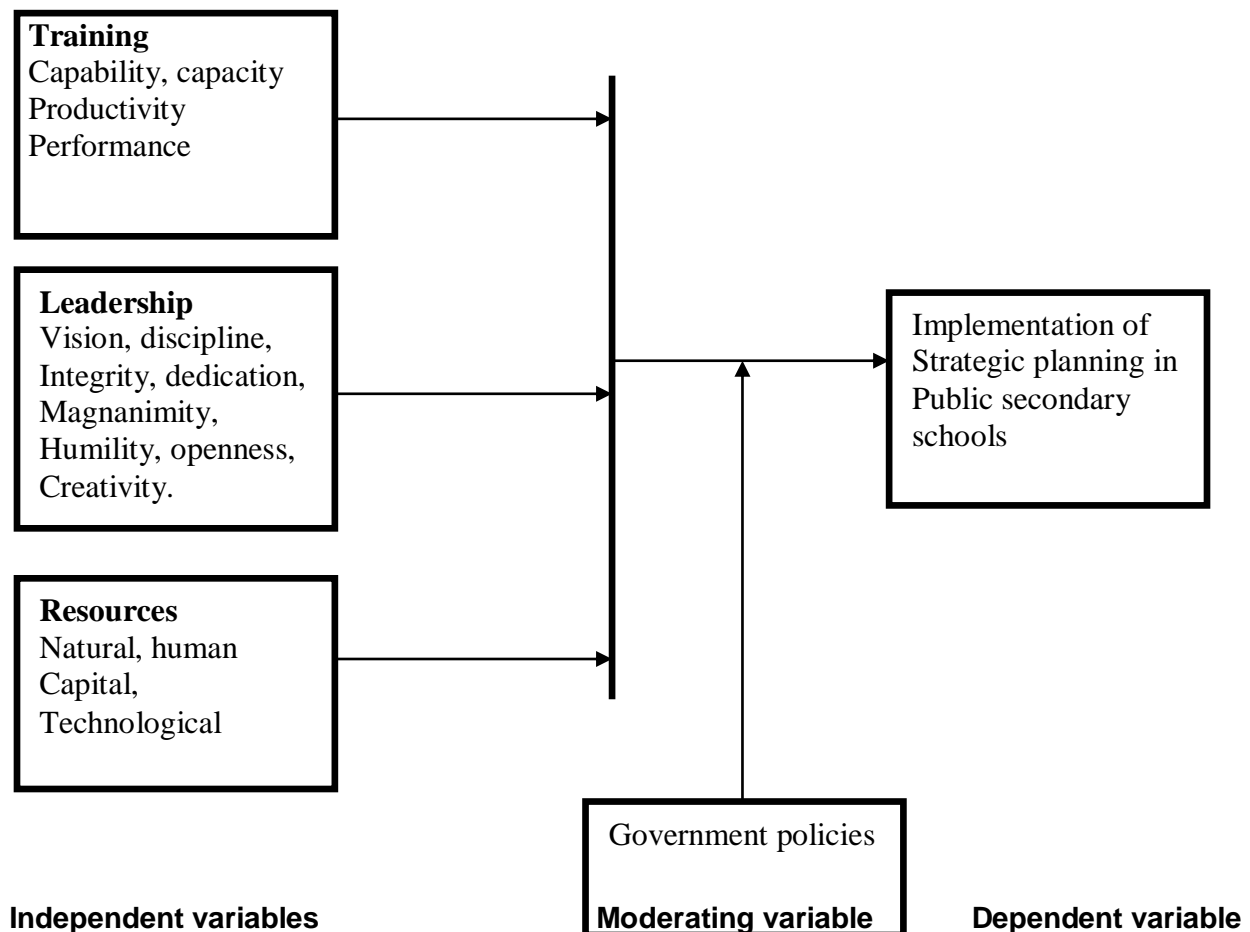
Probably the most influential strategist of the decade was Michael Porter. He introduced many new concepts including; 5 forces analysis, generic strategies, the value chain, strategic groups, and cluster .Porter's generic strategies can be applied to products or services in all industries to organizations of all sizes(Porter ,1985).The strategies were the following; differentiation (creating uniquely desirable products and services),cost leadership(non-frills),and focus (offering a specialized service in a niche market).He then divided the focus into two parts; “cost focus” and “differentiation focus”. Cost focus means emphasizing cost minimization and differentiation focus means pursuing strategic differentiation. Porter’s generic strategies are ways of gaining competitive advantage that is gaining an “edge” that gets you away from your competitors. The cost leadership is exactly that, it involves being the leader in terms of cost. It is important to continuously find ways of reducing every cost ,one successful way of doing this is by adopting the Japanese Kaizen philosophy of “continuous improvement” .Differentiation strategy involves making your products or services different from and more attractive than those of your competitors. Generic strategies apply to not-for –profit organizations too. A not-for-profit can use the cost leadership strategy to minimize the cost of getting donations and grants and achieving more for their income, while one with a differentiation strategy will be committed to the very best outcomes even if the volume of work they do as a result is lower. When choosing which of the three generic strategies is good for you, it’s vital that you take your organization’s competencies and strengths into consideration.

Knowledge Gap

In a study titled challenges that face head teachers in school strategy implementation in secondary schools in Meru South District in Kenya, the study aimed at identifying the major challenges faced by Head Teachers in strategy implementation in Meru South District and at the National level. The study also highlighted the existing strategy implementation practices by Head Teachers. The information from this study was to be useful to the education sector both at

the national and district levels. This study was carried out on the basis that the sampled Head Teachers had been involved in strategic planning for the time they had been in their schools. The study was limited to Meru south district in eastern province (Mate2010). In another study titled analysis of factors influencing formulation of strategic plans in, Embu north district, Embu County, Kenya. This study explores the link between formulation of school strategic plans with employee motivation, availability of funds, support by top school leadership, government policy and employee knowhow. The paper specifically analyses the factors that influence the formulation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Embu north district, Embu County, Kenya (Njagi et al,2013). The above studies are just but a few examples of studies done on strategic planning on public secondary schools in Kenya but so far the focus has been on formulation and whenever it was done on implementation the interest has been limited to Principals and the Board of governors .A knowledge gap has been identified on the practice of strategic planning in Uriri district and the research has been expanded to include respective school principals, deputies and heads of department.

Table 1. Conceptual Framework



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher made use of descriptive research design. The economic advantage of the descriptive research design was that it allowed generalizations to be made by studying a section of the population about effect of training, leadership qualities together with resources on the practice of strategic planning in public secondary schools.

The target population of this study comprised 153 teachers of whom 34 were principals and deputy principals and 119 heads of department secondary schools in Uriri district, Kenya. Stratified sampling technique was used thus a sample size of 68 teachers was selected, which included 30% of heads of departments, all the school principals and their deputies. The researcher used a self developed questionnaire to collect data. To ensure the reliability of the research instrument the researcher undertook a pilot study with cronbach alpha value of 0.7.

Multiple Regression analysis was used which is a method of data analysis of the relationship between one factor (dependent variable) to any other factors (expressed as independent variables). The results of the study were presented using tables, charts and graphs with the aid of SPSS.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study targeted a sample size of 68 respondents from which 64 filled in and returned the questionnaires making a response rate of 94.1%, this response rate was satisfactory to make conclusions for the study as Cooper and Schindler (2003), states that a response rate of between 30 to 80% of the total sample size can be used to represent the opinion of the entire population.

Training

Table 1: Effect of training on strategic planning aspects in schools

Extent	Frequency	Percentage
Very high extent	41	64.1
High extent	10	15.6
Neither high nor low	7	10.9
Low extent	4	6.3
Very low extent	2	3.1
Total	64	100

The study sought to determine the effect of training on strategic planning aspects in schools during strategic plans implementation practice in public secondary schools in Kenya, from the study findings 64.1% of the respondents indicated to a very high extent, 15.6 % of the

respondents indicated to a high extent, 10.9 % of the respondents indicated to a neither high nor low extent, 6.3 % of the respondents indicated to a low extent whereas 3.1% of the respondents indicated to a very low extent. This implies that of training on strategic planning aspects in schools during strategic plans implementation practice in public secondary schools in Kenya affects strategic plans implementation to a very high extent.

Leadership Qualities

Table 2: Impact of leadership qualities on strategic planning of schools

Statement	Very high	High	Neither high nor low	low	Very low	mean	standard deviation
Principal	36	18	5	3	2	1.85	0.29
Deputy principal	21	39	3	1	0	1.76	0.25
HOD's	16	47	0	1	0	1.72	0.30

The study sought to determine the extent to which respondents agreed with the above statements relating to the Impact of leadership qualities on strategic planning of schools, from the finding majority of the respondents agreed that leadership qualities of leaders has an effective impact on strategic planning of schools thus continuous monitoring of HODs' leadership skills in the schools will ensure effective strategy implementation in the institutions, as shown by a mean of 1.72 and a standard deviation of 0.30, aspiring leaders should practice in planning and initiating changes in curricula, teaching practices, student support services and school organization initiated by the deputy principals so as to ensure effective strategic plans implementation practice in public secondary schools in Kenya as shown by mean of 1.76 and a standard deviation of 0.25, school principals need to get hands-on experience by working with school leadership teams as they investigate achievement gaps and work to solve them as shown by mean of 1.85 and a standard deviation of 0.29. The above findings concurs with study findings by Kamunge (2007) he argues that leadership involves setting the school's vision and aims, establishing and maintaining the school's ethos; setting the school's plans and policies, monitoring and evaluating school performance and promoting self evaluation to sustain

school improvement. The principal has for a long time been expected to offer leadership on matters of quality improvement in schools He further argues that successful planning must include the three levels of management in the school

Resources

Table 3: Effect of resource variation on strategic planning implementation

Extent	Frequency	Percentage
Very high extent	29	45.4
High extent	21	32.8
Neither high nor low	5	7.8
Low extent	7	10.9
Very low extent	2	3.1
Total	64	100

The study sought to determine the effect of resource variation on strategic planning implementation during strategic plans implementation practice in public secondary schools in Kenya, from the study findings 45.4% of the respondents indicated to a very high extent, 32.8 % of the respondents indicated to a high extent, 10.9 % of the respondents indicated to a low extent, 7.8 % of the respondents indicated to a neither high nor low extent whereas 3.1% of the respondents indicated to a very low extent. This implies that resource variation on strategic planning implementation during strategic plans implementation practice in public secondary schools in Kenya affects strategic plans implementation to a very high extent this was achieved since school managers had the skills from the training on use of finances and other resources for effective strategic planning of schools.

Strategic Planning

Table 4: School's rate of strategic planning practices embracement

Extent	Frequency	Percentage
Very high extent	34	53.1
High extent	14	21.9
Neither high nor low	5	7.8
Low extent	8	12.5
Very low extent	3	4.7
Total	64	100

The study sought to determine the extent to which School's rate of strategic planning practices embracement during strategic plans implementation practice in public secondary schools in

Kenya, from the study findings 53.1% of the respondents indicated to a very high extent, 21.9 % of the respondents indicated to a high extent, 12.5 % of the respondents indicated to a low extent, 7.8 % of the respondents indicated to a neither high nor low whereas 4.7% of the respondents indicated to a very low extent. This implies that School's rate of strategic planning practices embracement during strategic plans implementation practice in public secondary schools in Kenya.

The researcher conducted a multiple regression analysis and from the above regression model, holding training, leadership qualities and resources constant, strategic planning implementation would be 1.584. It was found out that a unit increase in training would cause an increase in strategic plan implementation by 0.0495, a unit increase in leadership qualities would cause an increase in strategic plan implementation by 0.2050, also a unit increase resources, would cause an increase in strategic plan implementation by 0.3660. This shows that there is a positive relationship between strategic planning implementation and training, leadership qualities and resources. The significance value is 0.006 which is less than 0.05 thus the model is statistically significance in predicting how training, leadership qualities and resources affect strategic plans implementation in secondary schools in Kenya. The F critical at 5% level of significance was 2.109. Since F calculated is greater than the F critical (value = 3.195), this shows that the overall model was significant.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings the study established that when effectively trained on strategic planning they will facilitate a proper strategic plans implementation practice in public secondary schools in Kenya since they are normally given the duties to monitor the whole exercise by the school heads thus the study concludes that training should be vital so as to ensure effective strategic plans implementation

The study established it is useful for future school principals need to get hands-on experience by working with school leadership teams as they investigate achievement gaps and work to solve them thus the study concludes that leadership qualities had a positive effect on strategic implementation practice in public secondary schools in Kenya

The study ascertained that resource variation on strategic planning implementation during strategic plans implementation practice in public secondary schools in Kenya affects strategic plans implementation to a very high extent this was achieved since school managers had the skills from the training on use of finances and other resources for effective strategic planning of schools thus the study concludes that school managers ought to get the skills from the training on use of finances and other resources for effective strategic planning of schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends that the management on public secondary schools should consider adopting training during strategic plans implementation. This will allow the management to create a comprehensive understanding that can be leveraged to influence stakeholders and create better decisions.

The study also recommends that it is very crucial that the public secondary schools conduct an evaluation on the strategic plans this will help the institutions to gather valuable information that will provide valuable insights in the strategy implementation.

The study recommends that the management keeps on monitoring as well as re-assessing the effect of the strategic plan adopted. This will help to identify whether the adopted counteractive measures are making any acceptable difference.

It is essential that resource variation on strategic planning implementation during strategic plans implementation practice in public secondary schools in Kenya are well monitored so that school managers get the skills from the training on use of finances and other resources ensuring effective strategic planning of schools.

FURTHER STUDIES

This research had intended to establish the factors affecting strategic plans implementation practice in public secondary schools in Kenya, a case of Uriri district in Migori County. Other researcher may focus on the relationship between strategic plans implementation and school performance in public secondary schools in Kenya.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

SECTION A: TRAINING	
Rate the effect of training on the strategic planning aspect of a school?	1 2 3 4 5
SECTION B : LEADERSHIP QUALITIES	
Rate the impact of leadership qualities of the following on strategic planning of a school;	
Principal	1 2 3 4 5
Deputy principal	1 2 3 4 5
HOD'S	1 2 3 4 5
SECTION C: RESOURCES	
To what extent does resource variation affect effective implementation of strategic planning?	1 2 3 4 5
SECTION D: STRATEGIC PLANNING	
Rate your school's embracing of the practice of strategic planning?	1 2 3 4 5