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## **Determinants of Successful Implementation of Strategic Plans in Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

Past research has shown that excellent strategies have been written, but few have been successfully implemented. Crafting the best strategy is not the end in itself as ultimate results will only be realised once the plan is successfully implemented. A strategic plan is a management tool used to transform organisational objectives into actions. This study carried out an analysis of factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans in selected secondary schools in Kisii County. The focus of was on institutional policies and resources allocation, and the views of teaching staff. There have recently been challenges like increased student enrolment and declining performance in national examinations.

A descriptive survey design using stratified sampling was used. The study population comprised of school managers including teachers, principals and deputy principals serving in selected schools. Primary data was collected through questionnaires.

**Key words:** Strategic Plans, Implementation, Schools

## Introduction

### Secondary Education in Kisii County

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. There are two national schools, funded by the government, local communities, and non-governmental organisations and managed through boards of governors, and parent-teacher associations). Harambee schools do not receive full funding from the government. Private schools are run by private organisations or individuals.

At secondary level, students are selected for government funded schools according to their scores in the primary school leaving exam. Public primary schools are given preference in selection to government funded schools.

The Kenya Ministry of Education, through the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards, with extensive consultation with various stakeholders, facilitated by the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO, has developed guidelines aimed at ensuring quality and relevant education (Economic Survey, 2003). The Kenya Education Sector Support Programme was set up based on the rationale of the overall policy goal of achieving Education for All and the Government's commitment to the Millennium Development goals.

The broad objective is to give every Kenyan the right to quality education and training for all Kenyans, regardless of socio-economic status (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2006). This will contribute significantly to economic growth and expansion of employment opportunities. The vision, which is in tandem with the Government's plan, as articulated in the Economic Recovery Strategy, provides the rationale for major reforms in current education system.

The government is supposed to ensure equitable distribution of learning materials in pre-university education to support curriculum implementation. Formulating a consistent strategy is a difficult enough task, but making that strategy work and implementing it throughout the organisation is even more difficult (Hrebiniak, 2006). Effective strategy execution rarely gets as much attention as formulation, yet well-crafted visions and strategic plans are useless if they cannot be effectively executed.

### Implementation of strategic plan in public sector

Strategic planning consistency of actions and ensures that organisational units are functioning towards the same objectives and purpose. This enhances organisational performance. Public service reforms in Kenya started immediately after independence with the sessional paper No. 10 of 1965 on African socialism and its application to planning in Kenya. This outlined the first framework for reforms to address the challenges of disease, poverty and illiteracy. The main focus was on Africanisation of the public service, land reforms among others, with the objective of improving service delivery and performance. Other reforms were later introduced focusing on performance improvement and remuneration for better service delivery. In the public sector, strategic planning has been developing gradually. Strategic planning process has an important role in every organisational setting.

The issue of firm performance is central in strategy research and encompasses most other questions in the field, for instance, why firms differ, how they behave, how they choose strategies and how they are managed (Porter, 1991). The last decade has witnessed the proliferation of scholarly debates, business interest and studies on the role of strategic planning in organisational performance and sustainable competitive advantage (SCA), both in the public and private sector. There has been downsizing, rightsizing, re-engineering, and reinventing of organisations. Strategic plans help small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to create competitive advantage thus achieving their vision and mission (Anyieni, 2013). The act of setting formal performance objectives translates the organisations mission and direction into definite targets and protects against drift confusion over what must be accomplished and what will be tolerated. There can be short-range objectives for immediate goals, with long-range objectives to bring the organisation into a position to produce results later. The institution then evaluates the difference between their current position and the desired future through gap analysis. To close the gap and achieve its desired state the institution must develop specific strategies.

### **Secondary education in Kisii County**

Under the current system, students attend secondary school for four years before sitting for the school leaving exam. 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.

### **Statement of the Problem**

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? 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, and what they are supposed to know and do in order to achieve the desired performance. Upon this backdrop this study sought to investigate how far resource allocation and organisation structures have influenced the implementation of strategic plans in the case of Kisii County.

### **Objectives**

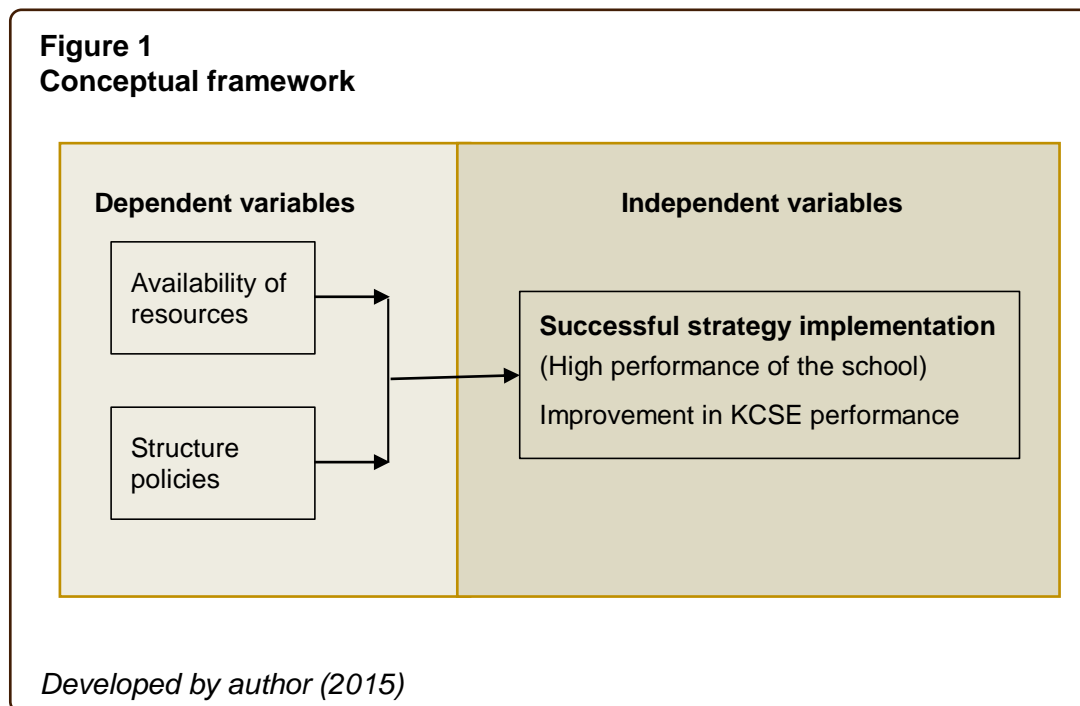
Specific objectives were to assess the influence of two factors on the implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Kissii County:

- i) Organisational structure
- ii) Resource allocation

### **Significance of the study**

It is hoped that the study has yielded useful information for future proper strategic plan implementation in order to achieve high performance in public secondary schools in Kenya, as well as being useful to the management and principals of schools. This may lead to new ideas for better and more efficient management of public sector and other organisations in Kenya and globally. It is hoped that the study will be useful for policy makers, politicians, academicians and practitioners.

## Conceptual framework



### Resource dependency theory

Resource dependency theory, consistent with the resource-based view of firms as bundles of distinctive resources that lead to competitive advantage, focuses on the firm's capacity to establish relationships to access resources (Van Witteloostuijn & Boone 2006). The organisation makes dynamic choices to accomplish the set objectives, in this case good performance in schools. The major tenet is resource scarcity, resulting in multiple organisations competing for the same or similar sets of scarce resources. Barney & Arikan (2001) define resources as the *"tangible and intangible assets firms use to conceive of and implement their strategies."* According to resource dependency theory, firms are dependent upon other actors in the immediate "task environment" to obtain resources. To survive, firms need to obtain resources from (actors in) the external environment. Therefore schools need enough teachers, books, classrooms and other intangible resources for better performance.

The theory underscores how external resources of organisations affect the behaviour of an organisation. It is founded on the view that environments are the source of rare resources, and organisations are dependent on these limited resources for survival. Therefore to create a superior performance an organisation needs to develop means to exploit these resources, which are likewise being pursued by competing organisations in the same environment.

It also postulates that resources are a source of power for the organisations:

Organisation X's power over organisation Y is equal to organisation Y's dependence on organisation X's resources.

## Organisational structure

Organisational structure is a system used to define a hierarchy, allocate tasks, coordinate, decision making within an organisation. According to Diamond (2006), organisational structure refers to the way that an organisation arranges people and jobs so that its work can be performed and its goals can be met. In the current study, organisation structure refers to formal allocation of work roles and administrative mechanisms to control and integrate work activities, including those that cross formal organisational boundaries at public secondary schools.

Kidombo (2007) established that knowledge resources, material wealth and coordination ability are central to successful implementation of strategy. If the organisation's resources are not exploited to advantage, this may encumber effective strategy implementation. Good leadership and well trained managers are necessary to coordinate the usage of scarce and expensive resources.

Thompson et al (2012) say that strategic management and leadership are key drivers to strategic implementation.

Robust and decisive leadership is essential to gain employee commitment and enthusiastic involvement in converting strategic plans into implementable activities with measurable results. Strategic leaders manage radical change and can communicate within and externally with an open management style, shaping a fresh culture in which employees can feel involved.

## Research design and methodology

The study employed descriptive research design to provide information on characteristics of the population. The target staff includes teachers, principals and deputy principals in Kenyan schools. The respondents were selected by stratified sampling.

The sample size was 10 schools, with 70 respondents out of a target population of 30 schools with a population of 300. These were selected to ensure that the sampling size were representative of the population, using formulae developed by (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). In order to ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaires were carefully constructed to avoid ambiguity. The questionnaires were pre-tested in a pilot study through a sample of three principals, three deputy principals and three teachers in Nakuru county to avoid respondent contamination (Kothari,2007), after which corrections and adjustments were made to improve reliability.

<b>Table 1 Sampling table</b>		
<b>Target population</b>	<b>Total number</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
<b>TSC teachers</b>	240	80
<b>Deputy principals</b>	30	10
<b>Principals</b>	30	10
<b>Total</b>	300	100

*Source: Author (2015)*

## Research instruments

The study utilised both primary and secondary data.

The main instrument for primary data collection was the questionnaires. The questionnaire targeted school principals, their deputies and Teachers' Services' Commission teachers who are important stakeholders dealing with strategy implementation and school performance. Items were designed in such a way as to elicit employees' views concerning the determinants for successful implementation of school strategic plans. 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).

Secondary data was gathered from records at the relevant county Ministry of Education, Teachers Service Commission and Government of Kenya publications, and books, journals and periodicals.

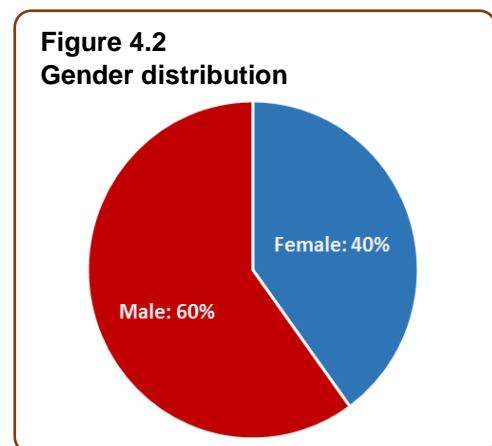
## Data analysis

The completed questionnaires were edited for completeness and consistency, followed by data clean-up editing, coding and tabulation in order to detect any anomaly in the responses and assign numerical values for further analysis. The study employed descriptive statistical tools such as percentages, mean, standard deviation, and frequencies to summarise data and make patterns visible.

## Research findings

Table 2 Response rate	Have put in same order	In the different	tables
Target population	Expected sample	Observed frequency	Percentage of field total
TSC teachers	80	70	58.3%
Deputy principals	20	15	12.5%
Principals	20	15	12.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>83.3%</b>
<i>Source: Author (2015)</i>			

Table 3 Age distribution		
Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
21-25	7	7%
26-30	17	17%
31-35	11	11%
36-40	17	17%
41-50	36	36%
Over 50	12	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Source: Author (2015)</i>		



**Table 4  
Work duration**

Work duration	Frequency	Percentage
Under 5 years	55	55%
5-10 years	26	26%
Over 10 years	19	19%
<b>Total</b>	100	100%

Source: Author (2015)

### Respondents' occupation

100% of the respondents were of a teaching profession.

### Effect of school structure

The respondents were asked to indicate how well they can agree or disagree the importance of five items, as in Table 5.

**Table 5  
School structure**

Statement about importance of:		SD	D	N	A	SA
<b>Division of work</b>	f	9	10	3	46	32
School effectively balances division of tasks and responsibilities among employees in the school	%	9	10	3	46	32
<b>Coordination</b>	f	3	9	11	46	31
School coordinates individual efforts and roles effectively	%	3	9	11	46	31
<b>Layers of reporting</b>	f	7	8	14	37	34
School has a simple layer of reporting which enhances efficiency	%	7	8	14	37	34
<b>Decision making</b>	f	8	24	16	36	34
School has many hierarchical levels involved in decision-making	%	8	24	16	36	34
<b>Flexibility of the school structure</b>	f	11	16	11	44	18
School structure in your organisation is flexible	%	11	16	11	44	18

SD=Strongly disagree    D=Disagree    N=Not Sure    A=Agree    SA= Strongly Agree  
f = frequency

Organisation structure plays an important role in the strategy implementation. Proper strategy – structure alignment – is a necessary precursor to the successful implementation of new business strategies. The structure should be changed to allow room for implementation strategy. A transformational strategy may require a transformational structure. An important question is “Does the structure of the organisation allow strategy to cascade across and down the organisation in way that meaningfully and efficiently delivers the strategy?”

## Effect of resource allocation

Resource allocation is the process of determining the best way to utilise the available assets to accomplish organisational goals. It refers to how resources, including human resources, finances, capital and informational resources are divided amongst the various departments of the organisation to help with strategy implementation.

The availability of resources like employee skills, physical resources and financial savings ability would be vital to the implementation of strategic plans. The study tested teachers views the influence of organisational resource allocation on this. The respondents were asked to what extent they considered the factors in Table 6 to be important in working to achieve strategic objectives.

On a descriptive perspective, the majority of respondents felt that resource allocation was important in implementation of strategic plans, as shown in Table 6.

<b>Table 6 Resource allocation</b>						
<b>Statement about importance of:</b>		<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
<b>Financial resources</b>	F	13	9	19	49	10
School allocates sufficient financial resources for strategic implementation	%	13	9	19	49	10
<b>Set goals</b>	F	6	17	20	42	15
Resources allocated are utilised as per set goals	%	6	17	20	42	15
<b>Physical resources</b>	F	1	16	13	47	23
School provides for proper utilisation of physical resources that are available	%	1	16	13	47	23
<b>Organisation audits</b>	F	12	9	23	38	18
Organisation audits all the resources allocated	%	12	9	23	38	18
<b>Human resources</b>	F	9	11	13	44	23
School has well-trained human resources that supports strategic implementation	%	9	11	13	44	23
SD=Strongly disagree    D=Disagree    N=Not Sure    A=Agree    SA= Strongly Agree f = frequency						

## **Summary of the major findings**

### **Does resource allocation affect the effective implementation of strategic plans?**

The results were statistically significant and support Pfeffer & Salancik (1978) resource dependency theory that an organisation is dependent on the environment for its resources, and that those resources control the organisation's planning. The resources in public secondary schools included skilled staff ownership and good support staff. If managers are empowered to lead they are likely to be involved in resource allocation and therefore more performance emanates from the roles of leading and resource allocation. The relationship between resource allocation policies and strategic implementation plans show a significant correlation between resource allocation policies and implementation of strategic plans when student's performance is the focus.

The above is in of tandem with practice as resources allocation is among the factors that affect and ultimately comprise a company's strategy stream continuously from the intended and emergent sources. Financial resources can be a constraint on implementation of strategic plans. Management often finds it necessary to prioritise its strategies to make a judgment about which ones are most critical to implement given the finite financial resources available.

### **How does organisational structure influence on the implementation of strategic plans?**

The study found out that there is positive interaction between school structure and school performance. School structure accounts for much of its strategic performance, therefore to gain the best performance it is better to give its managers an opportunity to assert leadership roles, in order to modify school structure to fit the implementation of the strategic plans.

## **Conclusions**

The study sought to understand the effects of strategic plan implementation on performance of public secondary schools. Two factors, resource allocation, and school structure, were considered in relation to strategic implementation. Concerning performance, various strategic objectives of strategy implementation were included and were found to have a positive effect on performance. The study concluded that a school structure that provides for division of tasks, coordination and flexibility were successful through embracing of a culture that supported team spirit, togetherness and willingness to share and implement goals. This supported successful implementation of strategic plans. The study thus concluded that organisational resources are key to growth and should be nurtured and protected

## **Recommendations**

- School stakeholders should be motivated in fulfilling their responsibilities in order to bring about the intended results of the strategic plan.
- Schools should simplify their structures.
- School structure should be flexible to minimise resistance and encourage best performance.
- Special skills in resource development and fundraising need to be put in place.

This would provide schools with professionalism in implementation of strategic plans working towards self-sustainability, to avoid incomplete implementation of strategies due to inadequate resources.

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