Factors that Impede the Implementation of Strategic Plans in Secondary Schools in Baringo District, Kenya

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Abstract

Despite the evidence of the existence of strategic plans in learning institutions in Kenya, the greatest impediment to successful use of these strategies in education has been failure by institutions to implement them. Indeed, previous studies have shown that crafting strategic plans is a lot easier than to make them happen. Public secondary schools in Kenya are facing the problem of successfully implementing their strategic plans amidst the ministry of education's demand for written strategies as well as stiff competition from private schools. The objective of this study was to unearth the factors that impede the implementation of strategic plans in selected secondary schools in Baringo district. The focus of the study was on variables such as human resources, leadership style, organizational structure and culture of schools. The research employed the descriptive research design. The target population of the study was the 21 secondary schools and 329 teachers in the district. A sample of 84 teachers was utilized. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The data collected were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Data was analyzed according to the objectives of the study. The results are presented in frequency distribution tables and percentages. Schools may find the findings of this study useful because they can use them to reorganize their strategy implementation process and at the same time intensify the existing training programs for the understanding of the strategy implementation process. Furthermore, the findings may guide schools in checking and controlling external influence on the running of schools.

i. Introduction

One management tool that has been acclaimed internationally as effective in improving the performance of state owned enterprises as well as government departments is the use of strategic planning. Strategic planning is important to any organizational work performance because it determines the organisation's success or failure (Bryson, 1998). A strategy is a plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose. It is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organisation is, what it does and how it does it with a focus on the future.

Wernham (2004) observes that in a strategic planning process, resources such as people, skills, facilities and money to implement the strategy must be adequate. Many organizations today are focusing on becoming more competitive by launching competitive strategies that give them an edge over others. To do this, they need to craft workable strategies.

In Kenya, the demand for high quality government services continues to grow as citizens' expectations about the quality and value of those services rise. For instance, policy makers and stakeholders in the education sector are increasingly under pressure to provide more and better quality services.

Since the year 2003, the Kenyan Education Sector has embarked on plans to institute reforms at all levels. This is because strategic planning identifies where an organisation wants to be at some point in the future and how it is going to get there. It is the process of defining the direction of the institution and allocating resources to pursue this strategy (Lewa, Mutuku and Mutuku, 2009). Institutions ought to evaluate the conditions in their operating environments, examine competitive pressures, carry out Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis and identify strategic issues. This requires development of a strategic orientation and execution of strategies capable of moving the institutions to their desired future states. This also implies that the institutions of learning need to engage in practical strategic planning. Strategic planning and thinking involves making choices and decisions about the long–term future of an organization (Pearce and Robinson, 2007). The process results in strategic plans that require execution or implementation under the stewardship of strategic behaviour norms.

The guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, seem to suggest that by pursuing a greater mission differentiation and reallocation of resources they will be better positioned to respond to the changing needs of their constituencies (Ministry of Education, 2005). But it has been noted that the implementation of strategic plans in institutions of learning seems to be slow than many have expected it to be, giving rise to the notion that there are barriers at work blocking implementation. Johnson (2004) also believes that 66 per cent of organisational strategies are not executed at all. In many cases this is not because of poor strategy and the idea behind them. Many valuable strategies are faced with problems and failure in the implementation stage. Basically, the main challenges in the strategic management lie in the implementing of the strategies rather than in developing stage. Mashhadi, Mohajeri, and Nayeri,(2008) believe impeders affecting the successful implementation of the strategy are as: organization structure, organization culture, information and communication technology and reporting systems, motivation and reward systems, providing adequate resources, decision-making processes, effective communication, education, capabilities and skills.

ii. *Statement of the Problem*

The success of every institution depends on the quality and commitment of its human resources to implement laid strategies (Bitange, Kipchumba, & Magutu, 2010). However, recent reports indicate that the performance of the Kenyan secondary schools in national examinations has been deteriorating (Yara & Wanjohi, 2011). This state of affairs resulted largely from systems of management in schools which put emphasis on compliance with processes rather than results. At the moment, public secondary schools in Kenya are faced with many challenges especially increasing competition from private schools. Research has shown that strategic planning is one of the major steps that schools can take to address the challenges they face in enhancing the quality of their programmes in provision of Education (Bell, 2002). It is for this reason that the ministry of education through the Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 mandated all managers of educational institutions in Kenya to develop strategic plans for managing their institutions.

This was aimed at providing efficient education and training services. Indeed many secondary schools started to get serious about strategic planning because they recognize the challenges they face today and also because they are now required by the government to carry out strategic planning (Ministry of Education, science & Technology, 2005). But despite the rationale for the introduction of strategic planning in institutions of learning in Kenya, the recent escalation of public protests concerning poor performance in secondary schools was a reflection of schools' inability to provide services that meet learners and stakeholders' expectations. This cast some doubts on the extent of implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools, especially in Baringo district. It therefore follows that the main problem for school managers is implementation of strategies. This is supported by recent research studies indicating that most big organisations have had problems in implementing their strategies and in many occasions have failed in service delivery (Lewa, Mutuku and Mutuku, 2009). While a number research studies on strategy implementation have been carried in various organisations (Wambui, 2010), none has been undertaken to determine the factors which impede implementation of strategic management plans in secondary schools. This study was set to fill this gap by trying to examine the factors that impede the strategy implementation in public secondary schools in Baringo.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of organizational structure on successful implementation of school strategic plans?
2. What is the effect of school leadership on successful implementation of strategic plans?
3. What is the effect of human resource on successful implementation of Strategic Plans?
4. What is the effect of schools organizational culture on successful implementation of the strategic plans?

iii. Research Methodology

Research design
The research design used in this study was descriptive design. The researcher chose this research design because the study aimed at collecting information from respondents on their attitudes and opinions in relation to factors impeding implementation of strategic plans in schools.

Location of the study
The study was done in Baringo district and the sample was from three public secondary schools. Two boys' schools and one girls' school. The location was close to the researcher, making it cost and time effective.

Target population
The study targeted all professional graduate teachers in secondary schools in Baringo District. It considered fully established schools with documented strategic plans. At the time of the study, Baringo district had 21 public secondary schools with 329 government employed teachers (District Education Office (DEO), 2011).

Sample design
Using purposive sampling design, the researcher selected 87 respondents on whom to conduct the survey. This research design enabled the researcher to get the information required to answer the study objectives. The researcher used only the 3 public secondary schools that have documented strategic plans.

Table1: Distribution of the Respondents in the Study

School	Teachers	Principals	Total
Kapkawa Boys	17	1	18
Pemwai Girls	21	1	22
Kabarnet Boys	46	1	47
Total	84	3	87

Data collection instruments
The research instruments used were a questionnaire and an interview schedule. The questionnaire targeted the teachers while interviews were conducted on the three principals. The questionnaire consisted of both structured and unstructured questions which allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Data collection procedures
It took a period of three weeks to collect the data required from the respondents. The respondents were required to complete questionnaire as honestly and as completely as possible; which they did as they did not raise objections to any items on the instruments.

Data analysis procedures
After data collection using the questionnaire, the obtained information was arranged and grouped according to the relevant research questions. Qualitative data collected from the interviews was then analysed using content analysis while quantitative data from the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics that was the frequencies and percentages.

iv. Findings

The study on analysis of factors impeding the implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools were guided by four objectives that included effect of organizational structure, school leadership, human resources and schools' organizational culture.

The findings of the study indicated that a majority of the respondents who were involved in the study were male. Out of a total of 84 respondents, 48 (57%) were male while 36 (43%) were female respondents. This implies that most of the teaching staff in secondary schools are male. Their perceptions therefore affected the results of the study to a large extent.

Organizational structure and resources as constraints of success of school strategies

The respondents were required to indicate their degree of agreement on how organizational structural factors constrained the success of their school's strategy implementation. Research findings on the specific information regarding organizational structure and resources in relation to the school's strategy implementation shows that the key constraint to the successful implementation of the schools' strategy was inadequacy of human resources. The respondents felt that any plan to implement the strategy should be supported with an adequate workforce which was not there in the schools involved in the study.

Table 1. Organizational structure and resources as constraints of success of school strategies

Organizational structural factors affecting schools' strategy implementation	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
Organizational structure does not fit strategy implementation	15	36	9	13	11	84
	18%	43%	11%	15%	13%	100%
There is Limited budgetary allocation	17	32	18	9	8	84
	20%	38%	21%	11%	10%	100%
Inadequate human resources	15	40	8	10	11	84
	18%	47%	10%	12%	13%	100%
Inadequate skills and training	4	12	18	35	15	84
	5%	14%	21%	42%	18%	100%
Political interference in strategy implementation	11	30	15	14	14	84
	13%	35%	18%	17%	17%	100
Technology sufficiency	11	15	21	20	17	84
	13%	18%	25%	24%	20%	100%
Skills of training	9	20	13	32	10	84
	11%	24%	15%	38%	12%	100%
Total	82	185	102	133	86	

Table 1 above shows that majority of the respondents agreed on almost all the factors affecting the schools' strategy implementation. Inadequacy of human resources was cited by most of the respondents as the key constraint impeding on the implementation of strategy in the schools. Out of the total respondents, 65 % agreed that inadequate human resources stood in the way of the schools in implementing their strategies effectively. Only 25 % disagreed while only 10% were undecided.

On the aspect of skills of training as a constraint to strategy implementation, 50% of the respondents disagreed. 35% agreed, while 15% were undecided. The fact that organizational structure does not fit strategy implementation attracted 61% respondents who agreed, 28 % who disagreed and another 11% were undecided about this issue. At the same time, inadequate skills and training attracted the lowest number of respondents who agreed. This comprised 19 % of the total respondents involved in the study. 60 % disagreed, whereas 21% were undecided, that indeed strategy implementation in schools was affected by inadequate skills and training of the staff therein.

On the other hand, limited budgetary allocation as a constraint attracted a response rate of 38% of those who agreed, 21% were undecided as to whether limited budgetary allocation was a constraint to strategy implementation, 20% strongly agreed, 11% disagreed while 10% strongly disagreed. The influence of political interference on strategy implementation attracted a response rate of 35% of those who agreed, 18% undecided, 17% disagreed with a similar response but 17% strongly disagreed that politics played a role in constraining the process of strategy implementation in the schools. Technological sufficiency attracted a balanced response to all the respondents with 44% disagreeing, 31% agreed while 25% were uncertain.

Cultural factors that impede school's strategy implementation

Table 2 below shows respondents' views on how the various aspects of the organizational culture constrained the success of the schools' strategy implementation.

Table 2. Ways in which organizational cultural factors constraint the success of school's strategy

Organizational cultural factors	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
Unclear school vision to implementers	15	40	12	9	8	84
	18%	47%	14%	11%	10%	100%
Lack of ownership by implementers	18	32	14	10	10	84
	21%	38%	17%	12%	12%	100%
Lack of ownership by management	17	28	15	11	13	84
	21%	33%	18%	13%	15%	100%

The study findings shown on table 2 clearly shows that most of the respondents agreed that cultural factors are constraints to the success of the schools' strategy implementation. 65% of the respondents agreed that the schools' vision was unclear to the implementers, 14% were uncertain as to whether the school's vision was unclear or not, while 21% disagreed.

On the aspect of ownership by the implementers, 38% of the respondents agreed that lack of ownership by the implementers constrained the implementation of the schools' strategy, 21% strongly agreed, 17% were uncertain, 12% disagreed and another 12% strongly disagreeing that lack of ownership by the strategy implementers constrained the success of the schools' strategy.

Lack of ownership by the management of those schools attracted a response rate of 54% of the respondents who agreed, 18% were uncertain while 28% disagreed that lack of ownership by the management was a constraint to the success of strategy implementation in the school.

Leadership activities as barriers to the success of the school's strategy implementation

With regard to the respondents' level of agreement on how leadership activities practiced in the school were barriers to the success of the school's strategy implementation, the responses were captured in table 3 below:

Table 3. Leadership activities as barriers to the success of the school's strategy implementation

Leadership activity	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL
Management and coordination	18	31	15	11	9	84
	21%	37%	18%	13%	11%	100%
Conflicting roles	15	34	12	10	13	84
	18%	41%	14%	12%	15%	100%
Implementation procedures	12	33	23	9	7	84
	14%	39%	27%	11%	9%	100%
Competing activities	17	30	14	11	12	84
	19%	37%	17%	13%	14%	100%
Communication of organisation vision	25	38	8	9	4	84
	30%	45%	10%	11%	5%	100%
Involvement of end users	21	29	10	14	10	84
	25%	34%	12%	17%	12%	100%
Procedures	16	31	19	7	11	84
	19%	37%	23%	8%	13%	100%
Total	107	226	101	71	66	

Data from table 3 above shows that a cumulative total of 226 respondents agreed to all the leadership factors as barriers to strategy implementation and success in the schools. 45% of the respondents agreed that lack of communication of the organisation's vision was a key barrier to strategy implementation and success in the schools, 30% strongly agreed, 11% disagreed, 10% were uncertain and only 5% strongly disagreed.

Furthermore, conflicting roles among the leadership attracted a response rate of 34 respondents agreeing comprising 41% of the total respondents who took part in the study. Those who strongly agreed that conflicting roles was a barrier were 18% of the total respondents, 14% were uncertain, 12% disagreed while 15% strongly disagreed.

A total of 29 (34%) of the respondents agreed that involvement of the end users of the strategy was an ingredient to the success of the school's strategy. However this was lacking in most of the schools because 25% strongly agreed to this aspect while 17% disagreed. 12% were uncertain and another 12% strongly disagreed that lack of involvement of the end users was a barrier to the success of the school's strategy.

Implementation procedures was a bit confusing to the respondents and most of them 27% were uncertain on whether it was a real barrier to strategy implementation or not, 39% agreed that it was indeed a barrier, 14% strongly agreed, 11% disagreed with only 9% strongly disagreeing. The success of the school's strategy was also affected by the fact that there are many competing activities on the side of the staff and the implementers such that at the end of the day, implementation of the strategic plan is shelved. A total of 37% agreed to this aspect, 19% strongly agreed, 17% were uncertain on this issue, 13% disagreed and 14% disagreed. The procedures adopted in implementing the strategy were complex and hence became a barrier to the success of the school's strategic plan implementation.

v. Conclusions

The findings from the study established that there are many secondary school related factors which affect the success of strategic plans implementation. From the summary of research findings on the factors constraining the success of school strategies, it can be concluded that inadequate human resources to implement the strategy was a major constraint since without the people to work towards an organisation's vision and mission, it is not possible by all means to succeed in strategy implementation even if the budgetary allocation is sufficient. It is also safe to conclude that for schools' strategies to succeed, the vision should be very clear to the implementers. Without this aspect, it will be almost impossible to take the institution towards the attainment of its goals and objectives. The implementers should however own the whole process and not take it as if they are just working for the government. A Lack of ownership by the management can also constrain the whole process since they are the key decision makers and leaders of their institutions.

At the same time, for the schools' strategies to succeed, the vision must be clearly communicated to all the stakeholders. Budgetary allocation should also be sufficient to cover the costs of implementation. Furthermore, to curb the challenges posed by technology, the technological knowhow of all the stakeholders should be emphasized in order to minimize the chances of resistance from employees and any interested party in the schools' development.

vi. Recommendations

The study makes specific recommendations guided by the objectives of the study and which are workable and tentative in nature if implemented by the stakeholders as identified in the study. The following recommendations are therefore crucial. First, before trying to implement any strategy, the schools' management and educational stakeholders should carry out a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis and identify strategic issues affecting the schools. This will make them understand where they are, challenges facing them, opportunities available to them and hence minimize on their weaknesses and capitalize on their strengths thus contributing to strategy implementation success. Secondly, schools should put a lot of emphasis on the training and development of its human resources. This will enhance the adoption of any planned change in the institution. Thirdly, the ministry of education in Kenya should increase its allocation to schools to curb the problem of budgetary constraints impeding strategy implementation in the schools.

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