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Organizational structure and implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Kenya

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Abstract

In spite of the ministerial requirement that public secondary schools in Kenya to develop and implement strategic plans to improve and efficiency in their operations, the implementation of the strategic plan has not been successful in many schools. Therefore, this study sought to evaluate the influence of organizational structure on the implementation of strategic plans in public schools. The research adopted a descriptive survey design and targeted 9 public secondary schools in Rongai Sub-County, Kenya from which a sample size of 112 respondents comprising school principals, heads of departments and teachers was drawn using both purposive and simple random sampling. Data was collected using questionnaires and was analysed using descriptive statistics and bivariate regression. The findings revealed that Organization Structure was significant in the implementation of the strategic plans. The study recommends more training for key stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the strategic plans in the schools.

Keywords: strategic plans, implementation, organizational structure

1. Introduction

Organizations exist to achieve set goals. All these goals are divided into tasks. Jobs are grouped to departments. Within each department, differences could be located on the list of functions people carry out. Departments are associated with the structure in the organizational shape ^[1]. The shape defines how the different parts of a company fit together, as differentiated from an organizational chart. Therefore, it is important to treat the structural elements as a whole during configuration. According to Wolf and Floyd ^[2], it is important to understand that there is no specific organizational structure for a particular strategy. Therefore, once the strategy has been formulated it is the work of the administrators to modify the structure to fit the chosen strategy. Different strategic plans have different requirements depending on the programs that the company is determined to complete by the end of a specified period. Matching of the organization structure to the chosen strategy requires making the strategic plans the main building blocks or the critical activities in the institution.

The relationship between the organization structure and the strategic plans is important for utilization in order to achieve strategic implementations of the plans since the structure is clearly a means to an end. During the organization of a school structure, useful components of the school have been used consistently to organize strategic planning processes and organization development¹. Once a strategy is decided, it is the job of their overall manager to make sure that the system is embodied in what the company does. The most important job of implementing procedure is to develop a list of business goals and its alternative tasks. On average, varieties of shape should be generated: suit on the list of the procedure and operational rules; Suit involving your procedure and the organizational shape, systems and methods ^[3]. Enforcing an organization's enterprise model

and methods efficaciously rely upon an organizational structure, the way of selecting the ideal aggregate of organizational shape, manage arrangements, and culture.

Organization structure is composed of four different elements: the undertaking of duties and responsibilities that summarize the occupation of gadgets and people; the clustering of person outputs in to sections and of course components to sections and larger devices to shape a company's hierarchy; the several mechanisms necessary to ease vertical coordination, which contains the range of individuals reporting to necessary managerial position and also the level of delegation of jurisdiction; the several mechanics required to boost level coordination, including mission forces along with interdepartmental teams sustainability ^[4]. The organization structure is the division of labour as well as the pattern of coordination, communication, workflow and formal power that directs a school's activities. The correct design of the structure is the most significant in determining the school's performance. The structure determines the modes in which a school operates, it provides the foundation on which standard operating procedures and routines rest and determines which individuals get to participate in which decision making processes and thus to what extent their views shape school actions.

The organizational structure is one variable which management can adopt to lead the organization to its desired goals and objectives. Mcshane and Glinow ^[5], who spells out that organizations whose structures are characterized by a high degree of standardization, formalization, centralization, rigid rules and tight procedures are reluctant to change, discourage creativity and innovation and therefore undermine the atmosphere within which strategic plans can be implemented. However, organizations whose structures are characterized by a full span of control,

decentralized decision making and little formalization, tasks are more fluid; adjust to new situations and organization needs more efficiently. These organizations are more dynamic and allow team members to share information more readily across boundaries, increases flexibility and improve communication efficiency and the efficient use of resources [5]. However, this structure can lead to increased conflicts among managers who equally share power and can dilute accountability and thus constrain strategy implementation.

Amukowa [6] study on the Influence of School-Based Factors on Implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools in Khwisero Sub-County, Kenya showed that; organizational structural factors that greatly affected implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Khwisero sub-county conflicting roles among school leadership were the implementation procedures, communication of school's strategic decisions, vision and mission, organization support and coordination of implementation activities and involvement of implementers' in the strategic process are. Based on the findings and supporting evidence from the literature reviewed it was concluded that school organizational factors affect the implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Khwisero sub-county.

A study by Abdikadir [7] found that secondary schools in Mandera County, Kenya had strategic plans which if properly implemented, would benefit the stakeholders in schools. The findings of the study revealed that the schools had long term plans for their schools, which would enable them to have ample time to make and see the changes of their strategic plans before deciding whether to make any more adjustments or to continue with the same strategic plans. Lastly, the study established that the management of schools at Mandera County was working closely with the locals in matters of insecurity; management was adopting a top-down and horizontal communication with the staff; management was avoiding political influence in running of the school matters and that they were improving top management commitment to strategy implementation as measures to deal with the challenges in strategy implementation.

Nyandeje [8] examined factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Homa Bay County. The study found out that 30% of the schools have all departments working together and they have meetings to review set structures while a whole 70% do not have meetings to review the set structures. If the structures are not restricted to fit the strategic plan, then the implementation is minimal. From the findings most surveyed schools do not have departments working together. These departments do not have regular meetings in order to review set structures. All the stakeholders should be involved in restructuring the organizations to fit strategic implementation. The schools should restructure their organizations and departments in order to achieve the set objectives

In spite of the ministerial requirement that public secondary schools come up with strategic plans as a method of improving effects-based direction and efficiency in their operations [9]. Most public secondary schools do not achieve their goals and objectives, and this is reflected through poor academic performance attributed to challenges hindering the implementation of strategic plans [10]. The implementation

of the strategic plan has not been successful. However, despite the introduction of the policy requiring public secondary schools to develop and implement strategic plans and the government allocation of substantial resources towards its implementation in secondary schools, there has been no significant improvement in school performance suggesting the strategic plans are not being well implemented. Therefore, it is evident that there are many obstacles to the effective implementation of the strategic plans in secondary schools. It means that the on-going efforts to improve the education standards in Kenya are not being properly implemented.

The performance of public secondary schools in Rongai Sub County in Nakuru county in several aspects has not been excellent in the last five years despite most of the developing and adopting strategic plans. While several studies have underscored the fact that there are challenges regarding strategic plan implementation in secondary schools in Kenya [7,11, 12,13], it is vital to observe that the implementation matrix varies from context to context. However, the effect of organization structure as possible factors affecting strategic plan implementation in these schools is still not well understood. This, therefore, leads to the implementation question regarding their strategic plans and, hence, motivated the present study to establish factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Rongai sub-county, Nakuru County. The aim of this study was, therefore;

To evaluate the influence of organisational structure on the implementation of strategic plans in public schools.

2. Mintzberg's Model Theory

Mintzberg's Cognitive School was proposed by Mintzberg, Lampel and Ahlstrand [12]. The cognitive school sees strategy as a cognitive process in the mind of the strategist. According to this school, a strategy is intended to cope with the environment (mapping of reality and adapting to it) or create an environment (creative interpretations of external environmental changes and influencing them in favor of the organization). Consequently, strategies emerge as concepts, maps, schemas and frames of reality. This school holds that as familiarity increases, the use of internal cognitive maps replaces the reliance on external sources of information. Therefore, the leader/manager with in-depth knowledge of the company uses the power of cognition to make strategy and does not need data or consultants [12].

Traditionally, there is a connection between strategy planning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and organizational operation. Companies begin strategy formulation by carefully defining their mission, aims, and intentions, and they then take part in SWOT analysis to select suitable strategic plans. Henry Mintzberg implies that the conventional method of considering plan implementation targets solely on willful strategies [13]. Mintzberg asserts that some companies begin implementing strategies before they articulate mission, goals, or intentions. He emphasizes that a company should analyze its formal and informal structures, its cultures, come up with the right ways of implementing its strategies, then finally implement the strategies and evaluate the results.

Strategic planning is a term that includes a variety of formal or informal efforts companies practice in order to improve their chances to survive and prosper in the corporate world. Mintzberg acknowledges that strategic planning is still

relatively new as a management practice. The authors identify the period between 1950 and 1970 being the time when strategic planning emerged and noted that the last several decades had been a boom period for strategic planning. A significant component of a strategic plan is the vision. Vision is an orientation that guides a company's movement in a specific direction [14]. Sometimes, the ideal vision allows the people at the top of the hierarchy of a company to state on what direction to steer the company. It gives the employees a sense of satisfaction since they can note how their daily efforts contribute to creating a desired future. Therefore, it is wise to say that strategic planning and strategy implementation simplifies strategy formulation. Mintzberg calls plans that unfold like these emerging plans. Implementation of emerging strategies entails the allocation of funds even though an organization has not explicitly chosen its strategies. According to Mintzberg, the coordination of activities in a company is controlled by five generic components, namely: strategic apex, middle line operating core, techno structure and support staff. This theory is vital to the study as it provides a basis through which the conceptualization of the strategic plan can be observed through the school actors.

3. Materials and Methods

The study design for this research was a descriptive survey which employs a preplanned design for evaluation [15]. This research adopted a descriptive research design which is a research process that involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or questions concerning the current status of the subject in the study. The study targeted 20% of the 46 public secondary schools in Rongai sub-county. According to Mugenda and Mugenda [16], a sample that is representative of the entire population is one that is at least 10% - 30% of the total population. The accessible population, therefore, comprised the principals, deputy principals, heads of departments (HODs) and teachers in the schools who are usually involved in the development, adoption and implementation of the strategic plans. A total of nine schools were selected for the study from three zones of Rongai Sub-County, that is; Ngata, Kampi Ya Moto and Solai Zones. From the nine schools, the accessible population is 9 principals, 9 deputy principals, 94 heads of departments and teachers. To obtain the required sample size, all principals and deputy principals were purposively sampled while the HODs and teachers were randomly sampled. Therefore, the sample size for the HODs and teachers was computed using the formula proposed by Nassiuma [17] as under;

$$n = \frac{Nc^2}{c^2 + (N - 1)e^2} \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

Where n = sample size, N = population size, c = coefficient of variation (≤ 30%), and e = error margin (≤ 5%). In this study c is taken as 50% as recommended by Nassiuma, e to be 4% and N = 232, therefore, fitting this into the formula:

$$n = \frac{232 * (0.5)^2}{(0.5)^2 + (232 - 1) * (0.04)^2} = 93.61 \approx 94 \dots\dots\dots(ii)$$

A sample size of 94 HODs and teachers obtained from the above formula and to this was added 18 principals and deputy principals bringing the total sample size to 112 respondents

Questionnaires were used in as the data collection instruments in the study. The questionnaires contain a list of structured questions developed to address the study's specific objectives were given to the respondents to answer. For this particular research, the researcher conducted a pilot study from two selected secondary schools in Bahati Sub-County. In order to ensure that all the items used in the questionnaires are consistent and valid, the instruments were subjected to scrutiny and review by the student's supervisors in the University. The items were rephrased and modified to avoid ambiguity before being used for data collection. Internal consistency was employed by the study to check the reliability of the research instruments in the present study. This was done by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all the sections of the questionnaire from the results of the pilot study. A value of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86 was obtained which was above 0.7 showed high internal consistency and was deemed acceptable for study [18]. Due to the high Cronbach Alpha coefficient, there was no need to revise the instrument substantially; hence, it was administered after being scrutinized for any omission or punctuation errors. Data was then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics involved frequencies and percentages to give the basic features of the data while inferential statistics involved bivariate regression model to determine the nature of the relationship between the variables [18].

4. Results & Discussion

4.1 Organizational structure on the implementation of strategic plans in public schools

The first objective of the study was to evaluate the influence of organizational structure on the implementation of strategic plans in public schools. This variable was described in terms of Duties and responsibilities, Vertical coordination and Delegation of jurisdiction. A five-point Likert scale was used to rate responses of this variable and it ranged from; 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Organizational structure on the implementation of strategic plans in public schools

Statement	SA Freq(%)	A Freq(%)	N Freq(%)	D Freq(%)	SD Freq(%)	χ ²	P- value
The members assigned to implement the strategic plan know their duties and responsibilities	12(15)	30(38)	12(15)	15(19)	10(13)	108.54	0.000
The roles of the implementers of our school's strategic plans do not conflict during implementation	14(18)	19(24)	2(3)	42(53)	2(3)	35.38	0.000
The management team has skills that ensure successful strategic plans implementation	5(6)	12(15)	44(56)	16(20)	2(3)	95.38	0.000
There is an efficient upward flow of information from the staff to the top managers which enhances implementation of the strategic plan in the school.	12(14)	39(49)	22(28)	3(4)	3(4)	86.36	0.000
The organization structure of our school supports good communication necessary for coordinating the strategic plan	9(11)	37(47)	9(11)	17(22)	7(9)	42.15	0.000

The organization supports the implementation activities outlined in the strategic plan.	7(9)	40(51)	1(1)	18(23)	13(16)	89.29	0.000
The organization coordinates the implementation activities in the strategic plan.	9(11)	32(41)	20(24)	14(18)	5(6)	78.33	0.000
There is clear communication of the school's strategic decisions, missions and vision at all the levels of the school's organizational structure.	7(9)	17(22)	31(39)	16(20)	8(10)	89.16	0.000
The scope of implementation of the strategic plan is communicated to all	9(12)	20(25)	8(10)	31(39)	11(14)	49.52	0.001
Members of the organization responsible for implementation of the strategic plan are allowed to delegate their responsibilities	4(5)	41(52)	13(16)	16(21)	5(6)	81.1	0.001

The findings in Table 4.3, indicate that majority of the respondents (15% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing) were inclined to concur with the statement that the school members assigned to implement the strategic plan know their duties and responsibilities. However, there most of the respondents (53% disagreeing and 3% strongly disagreeing) were of the view that the roles of the implementers of their school's strategic plans conflicted during the implementation of the strategic plans. There was considerable doubt among the majority of the respondents (46% neutral) on whether the management team has skills that ensure successful strategic plans implementation in the schools. The findings, however, suggested that there was an efficient upward flow of information from the staff to the top managers which enhances implementation of the strategic plan in the school as indicated by the majority of the respondents (14% strongly agreeing and 49% agreeing). The results also indicate that majority of the respondents (11% strongly agreeing and 47%) agreeing that the organization structure of their school supported good communication necessary for coordinating the strategic plan.

Further, the organization supports the implementation activities outlined in the strategic plan as indicated by the majority of the respondents (9% strongly agreeing and 51% agreeing). Also, majority of the respondents (11% strongly agreeing and 41% agreeing) believed that the organization coordinates the implementation activities in the strategic plan.

The findings, however, suggested that there was uncertainty over clear communication of the school's strategic decisions, missions and vision at all the levels of the school's organizational structure as indicated by the majority of the respondents (39% neutral). Most of the

respondents also disagreed (39% disagreeing and 14% strongly disagreeing) that the scope of implementation of the strategic plan was communicated to all in the school. However, members of the organization responsible for the implementation of the strategic plan were allowed to delegate their responsibilities as indicated by most of the respondents (5% strongly agreeing and 52% agreeing).

The general implications of these findings were that the organization structure of the schools was not adequately serving its purpose in creating a facilitating matrix for the implementation of the strategic plans. This was particularly evident in terms of Duties and responsibilities and Delegation of jurisdiction. Vertical coordination was, however, on the whole positively rated. According to [5], organizations whose structures are characterized by high degree of standardization, formalization, centralization, rigid rules and tight procedures are reluctant to change, discourage creativity and innovation and hence undermine the atmosphere within which strategic plans can be implemented. However, organizations whose structures are characterized by a wider span of control, decentralized decision making and little formalization, tasks are fluid; adjust to new situations and organization needs easily.

4.2 Implementation of strategic plans in public schools

The study also sought to determine the status of implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Rongai sub-county, Kenya. This was the dependent variable, and the status of this variable was described in terms of Objectives Achieved, Academic Performance, Timeliness completion of projects and Physical infrastructure. The status of this variable was rated on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from; 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. These results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Rongai Sub-County

Statement	SA Freq(%)	A Freq(%)	N Freq(%)	D Freq(%)	SD Freq(%)	χ^2	P-Value
The school has been able to successfully adapt to changes in the environment	20(25)	23(29)	13(17)	14(18)	9(11)	38.45	0.001
The school has been able to do timely implementation of its projects	10(13)	11(14)	16(20)	25(32)	17(21)	48.71	0.001
The school has built and completed more buildings in the last five years	11(14)	15(19)	14(18)	23(29)	16(20)	48.12	0.001
The school has been able to run well on its budget in the last five years	6(8)	13(17)	17(21)	27(34)	16(20)	64.67	0.001
There is timely completion of syllabus in the school.	20(25)	26(33)	13(17)	14(18)	6(7)	84.15	0.001
The school has been able to be very competitive in the area compared to other public schools in the area	13(17)	28(36)	12(16)	18(21)	8(10)	56.24	0.001
The school is able to allocate teaching time equally for effective teaching	8(10)	24(30)	19(24)	20(25)	8(10)	111.75	0.001
Adverse politics has reduced considerably in our schools in the last five years	14(18)	26(33)	6(7)	20(25)	13(17)	78.77	0.001
The performance of the school has improved considerably in the last five years	13(17)	18(21)	12(16)	28(36)	8(10)	85.21	0.001
There has been a considerable improvement in management approach in the school in the last few years	20(25)	24(30)	8(10)	19(24)	8(10)	86.36	0.001

The findings in Table 2 suggest that most of the schools have been able to successfully adapt to changes in the environment as indicated by most respondents (25% who strongly agreed and 29% who agreed). However, most respondents (32% who strongly disagreed and 21% who

disagreed) indicated that their schools had not been able to do a timely implementation of their projects. Majority of the respondents also indicated that their schools had not been able to build and complete more buildings in the last five years (29% who disagreed and 20% who strongly

disagreed). Further, most of the schools have not been able to run well on their budgets in the last five years as suggested by most of the respondents (34% who disagreed and 20% who strongly disagreed).

However, in a majority of the schools, there was timely completion of the syllabus in (25% who strongly disagreed and 33% who disagreed). Most schools had been able to be very competitive in the area compared to other public schools (17% who strongly agreed and 36% who agreed). The findings also indicate that most schools were able to allocate teaching time equally for effective teaching (10% who strongly agreed and 30% who agreed). Other findings indicate that adverse politics has reduced considerably in most schools in the last five years (18% who strongly agreed and 33% who agreed). Majority of the respondents, however, indicated that the performance of their schools had not improved considerably in the last five years (36% who disagreed and 10% who agreed). However, most respondents said that there had been a considerable improvement in management approach in the school in the last few years (25% who strongly agreed and 30% who agreed).

These findings imply that in general, the schools had not been able to implement the strategic plans as expected. Findings, such as, “most schools had not been able to do a timely implementation of their projects” and that, “Majority of the respondents also indicated that their schools had not been able to build and complete more buildings in the last five years.” support this view. The findings agree with [7] [11], who observed that despite the introduction of the policy requiring public secondary schools to develop and implement strategic plans and the government allocation of substantial resources towards its implementation in secondary schools, there has been no significant improvement in school performance suggesting the strategic plans are not being well implemented. According to Miller [21], that organizations have failed in implementing over 70% of their strategic initiatives within the US.

4.3 Bivariate Regression

Bivariate regression was performed to establish whether Organizational structure significantly influenced the implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Rongai Sub County, Kenya are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Regression of Organizational structure on the implementation of strategic plans in public schools

Model Summary	Rw	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
	.561a	0.315	0.280	1.0904		
ANOVA		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	15.707	1	15.707	7.0101	.000
	Residual	172.528	77	2.2406		
	Total	88.234	63			
Model Coefficients		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	20.508	1.783		11.503	0.000
	Organizational structure	0.502	0.1521	0.561	3.301	0.000
a Dependent Variable: Strategic Plans Implementation						
b Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Structure						

5. Discussions

From the beta values in Table 3, it was evident that there was a significant relationship between the variables ($\beta = 0.561, p = 0.000 \leq p = 0.05$). This means that the current configuration of the schools’ organizational structure had meaningful impact on the implementation of strategic plans. This could be attributed to the discordance of the implementing departments within the school organization. The findings agree with Amukowa [6] whose study on the Influence of School Based Factors on Implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools in Khwisero Sub-County, Kenya revealed that; conflicting roles among school leadership, implementation procedures, communication of school’s strategic decisions, vision and mission, organization support and coordination of implementation activities and involvement of implementers’ in the strategic process are organizational structural factors that greatly affected implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Khwisero sub-county. The results agree with Nyandeje [8] whose study on implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Homa Bay County found out that the schools’ organizational structures were restricted to fit the strategic plan therefore, making the implementation of the plans minimal. The study also found that 30% of the schools have all departments working together and they have meetings to review set structures while a whole 70% do not have

meetings to review the set structures. Mcshane and Glinow [5] found that organizations whose structures are characterized by high degree of standardization, formalization, centralization, rigid rules and tight procedures are reluctant to change, discourage creativity and innovation and hence undermine the atmosphere within which strategic plans can be implemented.

6. Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, it was therefore concluded that the current organizational structures of the schools did not have a significant influence on the implementation of strategic plans in the secondary schools in the area. The organization structures of the schools were not adequately serving their purpose in creating a facilitating matrix for the implementation of the strategic plans. The roles of the implementers of their school’s strategic plans conflicted during the implementation of the strategic plans and the scope of implementation of the strategic plan was not well communicated to all in the school. All these were likely to impede the implementation of the strategic plans. The study, therefore, recommends that the training for key stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the strategic plans in the schools be carried out and in addition, the schools should consult with ex-officio members on how to restructure their organizations configuration to support the implementation of the strategic plans.

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