

Sub-County Secondary Schools Dynamics: Implementation of Strategic Plans

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Abstract: Evaluation of strategies in Kenya may be done either quantitatively or qualitatively. This is to ascertain whether the process of implementations will succeed in attaining the objectives or not. This study sought to investigate the implementation dynamics of strategic plans in secondary schools in Masaba north-sub county, Nyamira County, Kenya. The study used descriptive research design to get the information under investigation. The target population consisted of: 1 Sub county Education Officer (SCEO) and 31 Principals. The study used purposive sampling and simple random sampling. The research instruments used to collect data was questionnaires and Interview schedules. The findings of the study show that during the implementation of strategic plans school environment affect implementation of strategic plans through effective Institutional policies which reflect the picture of school needs, The Education policy makers would find this study useful in spearheading a campaign to foster a positive attitude among stakeholders who have the implementation dynamics of strategic plans in secondary schools, also to bring forth a practice where major players in schools adopt a willingness to work and bring changes in performance in all the departments in an institution to improve on strategic planning process.

Keywords: Sub-County, dynamics, Implications, strategic plans.

INTRODUCTION

Lehner [1] takes implementation tactics as genuine organizational behavior based on the assumption that implementation in general is dependent on the environment, and various strategic and organizational variables. Lehner, proposes five implementation tactics: command, change/politics, culture, collaboration and coercive/market. Command and politics/change are both somewhat autocratic. They can be subsumed under the label "tell/sell". In contrast, both collaboration and the market as implementation tactics utilize participation to a high degree and in a way which gives subordinate groups a strong voice. It also gives them the possibility to influence the selected courses of action. Only culture as an implementation tactic remains as a single category, which forms an independent dimension by being close to transformational leadership. These are thus approaches where strategy implementation tactics are not viewed as generic recipes for implementation success, but rather as practices that are dependent on the kind of strategy that is implemented.

The change model emphasizes how the organizational incentive compensation, control systems and so forth can be used to facilitate the implementation of a strategy. The collaborative model concentrates on group decision-making at a senior level and involves top management in the formulation process to ensure

commitment. The fourth approach tries to implement strategy through the use of a corporate culture. The final approach draws on managers' inclinations to want to develop new opportunities as see them in the course of their day-to-day management. The first three models assume implementation as after-the-fact. This implies that the number of strategy developers is few and that the rest of the organization is somehow manipulated or cajoled into implementation. For the latter two models, most of the energy is used for strategy formulation and the strategy requires relatively little effort in its implementation.

Noble [2] contends that firms must achieve consensus both within and outside their organizations in order to successfully implement strategic plans. The consensus about a company's strategy may differ across levels, if members of the organization are not aware of the same information, or if information passes through different layers in an organization, a lower level of consensus may result. This can be achieved through when considering how best to consult with its community; a school might consider what form of consultation has worked well before, the resources available to the school for consultation, and the geographic spread and diversity of the community. Opportunities for face-to-face consultations include: inviting the community to participate in forums to discuss the school's performance and its directions,

making interpreters available if necessary; holding small group discussions with parents/ guardians, where performance data is presented and responses sought and forming working groups to undertake a particular evaluation task.

This lack of shared understanding may create obstacles to successful strategy implementation [3] label the gulf between strategies conceived by top management and awareness at lower levels as “implementation gap”. They define strategic consensus as the agreement among top, middle, and operating-level managers on the fundamental priorities of the organization. Consensus, in their approach, has four levels: strong consensus, blind devotion, informed skepticism and weak consensus. Dooley, Fryxell & Judge [3] argues that strong consensus exist when managers have both, a common understanding of, and a common commitment to their strategy. If, however, managers are committed to something, but do not share an understanding what that “something” is (they are well intentioned but ill informed) blind devotion is the likely result. If, by contrast, managers share an understanding of their strategy, but are not really committed to it, they are well informed yet unwilling to act. Floyd and Wooldridge call this realistic condition, “informed skepticism”. Of course when neither shared understanding nor commitment is high, weak consensus is the likely result. Improving understanding and commitment can close this dangerous “implementation gap”.

Noble [2] define consensus as the level of agreement among the dominant coalition on factors such as goals, competitive methods, and perceptions of the environment. He views consensus as an outcome of the strategy-making process, and see consensus as critical in resolving differences, promoting a unified direction for the firm, increasing strategic commitment, and enhancing the successful implementation of a given strategy. In public and private schools, management, students and parents should be committed to each and every student finding success. When they find that schools are in need of extra support, as a community of schools and educators, should work together to build a network where innovative practices can be implemented and student learning can thrive Shared understanding without commitment may result in “counter effort” and negatively affect performance [4].

Some scholars take shared understanding as a commitment. Omutoko [5] think that the shared understanding of middle management and those at the operational level to the top management team’s strategic goals is of critical importance to effective implementation of strategic plans. Strategy implementation efforts may fail if the strategy does not enjoy support and commitment by the majority of stakeholders and school management. This may be the case if they were not consulted during the development

phase. Heracleous [6] thinks obtaining employee commitment and involvement can promote successful strategy implementation. Noble & Mokwa [7] suggest that there are three fundamentally different sources of low to negative individual manager commitment to implementing a particular strategy: low perceived ability to perform successfully in implementing that strategy; low perceived probability that the proposed outcomes will result, even if individual performance is successful; low capacity of the outcome to satisfy individual goals/needs. Middle managers with low or negative commitment to the strategies formulated by senior management create significant obstacles to effective implementation.

Noble & Mokwa [7] put forward three dimensions of commitment that emerged as central factors which directly influence strategic outcomes: organizational commitment, strategy commitment and role commitment. Organizational commitment is defined as the extent to which a person identifies with and works toward organization-related goals and values.

Strategy commitment is defined as the extent to which a manager comprehends and supports the goals and objectives of a marketing strategy. Role commitment is defined as the extent to which a manager is determined to perform his individual implementation responsibilities well, regardless of his beliefs about the overall strategy. The primary dependent variable in Noble and Mokwa’s [7] study is implementation success, which they define as the extent to which an implementation effort is considered successful by the organization.

At the individual level, role performance is a critical outcome which they define as the degree to which a manager achieves the goals and objectives of a particular role and facilitates the overall success of the implementation effort. Noble and Mokwa’s findings suggest that an individual manager’s implementation role performance will influence the overall success of the implementation effort. Both, strategy commitment and role commitment, were shown to influence role performance. However, the most commonly studied dimension, organizational commitment, showed no relationship to role performance in either of their samples. Their results highlight the complexity of the commitment construct and stress that the study of commitment to an organization alone does not explain this complicated variable fully.

As a school administrator, one would be responsible for providing administrative support. Duties and responsibilities will obviously vary from school to school. They can be very specific for particular admin roles such as an attendance administrator or be much broader for roles such as a general administrator or administrative assistant. School administrators play

integral roles in ensuring schools function smoothly. They are involved in nearly all aspects of their school's operation. The article that follows describes the job duties of school administrators in detail. School administrators at the elementary, middle, and high school levels include principals, assistant principals, and other professionals who help operate schools, either on the school's campus or at the school district's central office.

Govindarajan [8] suggests that few researchers have focused on the design of differentiated administrative systems that can facilitate the implementation of a variety of SBU strategies pursued by diversified corporations. There are three key administrative mechanisms that firms can use to cope with uncertainty in this context: design of organizational structure (decentralization), design of control systems (budget evaluative style) and selection of managers (locus of control).

Olson [9] has different explanations regarding the content of administrative systems. Their study suggests that school units utilize three administrative mechanisms formalization, integrating mechanisms, and centralization to create operational capabilities of configuration, coordination, and managerial philosophy to support the international strategy choice. Nilsson and Rapp [10] study a related question: how are control systems designed and used at the management and operational levels with respect to implementing a given strategic plan. They have found that control systems at management and operational levels are based on different logics and should have a different design, in addition, it is important to create a meaningful dialogue to facilitate the choice for a strategic orientation and its implementation.

Statement of the Problem

The Ministry of Education circular MOE/plan Policy No12/04/2001 instructed that all secondary schools should develop strategic plans and submit copies to the Permanent Secretary. Leading by example the Ministry of Education developed a five year strategic plan (2006-2011). In the Strategic plans, Schools are expected to define what they want to be, whom they will serve and how, with a focus in the future. However, according to the Sub-County Education Officer in Masaba North Sub-County, even those schools that have this documents in place have left them to gather dust on the shelves due to various challenges they encounter in an attempt to implement them [7]. In most research studies, strategic plans are only made available to Quality Assurance and Standard officers when they visit schools [5] this study therefore seeks to find out how institutional factors contribute to the implementation dynamics of strategic plans in Secondary schools in Sub County in Kenya.

Objective of the Study

To determine school utility influencing the implementation of strategic plans in Sub-County Secondary Schools

Research Question

What is the effect of school utility on implementation of strategic plans in Sub-county secondary schools?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The study adopted a mixed approach in collecting and analyzing data. In mixed methods studies, researchers purposely integrate quantitative and qualitative data rather than keeping them separate so as to maximize the strengths and minimize the weakness of each type of data [11]. This data collection instrument was used mainly to review the school utility influencing the implementation of strategic plans in Sub-County Secondary Schools

The design was selected because of the nature of investigation that was to be carried out on the implementation of strategic plans in Kenyan secondary schools. A mixed methods designs involves the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given priority, and involve integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research [12]. This study adopted a concurrent approach where both quantitative and qualitative data was collected at the same time and using the same respondents. It mixed both quantitative and qualitative research instruments by use of triangulation. Creswell, Plano, Gutmann and Hanson [13] noted that in concurrently collecting both forms of data at the same time, the researcher gets to contrast.

Ethical Considerations

The information gathered from participants was kept in confidence and was only used for the purposes of the study. This information was not revealed to anybody without the participants' consent. The participants were informed on the purpose of the research. The researcher preserved the anonymity of the informant by not writing the names of all those involved in the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings revealed that school utility influence the implementation of strategic plans in Sub-County Secondary Schools. An interview with sub-county education officer revealed that;

"Believe that one way to accomplish this is to involve educational stakeholders and managers right from the start in the strategy formulation process. Involvement and commitment should also be developed and maintained throughout the implementation process. If middle and lower level managers and key subordinates

are permitted to be involved with the detailed implementation planning, their commitment was likely to increase”

This finding agrees with Noble and Mokwa [7] that suggest an individual manager’s implementation role performance will influence the overall success of the implementation effort. Both, strategy commitment

and role commitment, were shown to influence role performance.

The study sought to determine school utility influencing the implementation of strategic plans in Sub-County Secondary Schools. The findings from school principle Questionnaire are presented in table-1.

Table-1: The Institution Dynamics on the implementation of strategic plans

Institution dynamics		SA	A	UD	D	SD	TOT	MEAN
Leadership style affect implementation of strategic plans	f	7	13	7	3	1	31	2.3
	%	22.6	41.9	22.6	9.7	3.2	100	46.0
Lack of professional managerial skills affect implementation of strategic plans	f	16	9	4	1	1	31	1.8
	%	51.6	29.0	12.9	3.2	3.2	100	36.0
Educational policies affect implementation of strategic plans	f	6	13	7	5	0	31	2.4
	%	19.4	41.9	22.6	16.1	0.0	100	48.0
Institutional policies affect implementation of strategic plans	f	15	11	4	1	00	31	1.7
	%	48.4	35.5	12.9	3.2	00	100	34.0
Community interference affect implementation of strategic plans	f	7	13	7	3	1	31	2.3
	%	22.6	41.9	22.6	9.7	3.2	100	46.0
Religious organizations affect implementation of strategic plans	f	16	9	4	1	1	31	1.8
	%	51.6	29.0	12.9	3.2	3.2	100	36.0
Time factor affect implementation of strategic plans	f	4	13	7	4	3	31	2.6
	%	12.9	41.9	22.6	12.9	9.7	100	44.0
School environment affect implementation of strategic plans	f	8	5	7	7	4	31	2.8
	%	25.8	16.1	22.6	22.6	12.9	100	56.0
Poor succession management affect implementation of strategic plans	f	12	11	6	1	1	31	2
	%	38.7	35.5	19.4	3.2	3.2	100	40.0

The study results revealed that 46% of the respondents was of the opinion that leadership style affect implementation of strategic plans in schools, 36% was of the opinion that lack of professional managerial skills affect implementation of strategic plans effectively, 48% supported that educational policies affect implementation of strategic plans, 34% was of the opinion that institutional policies affect implementation of strategic plans, 46% was of the opinion that community interference affect implementation of strategic plans. 36% supported the opinion that Religious organizations affect implementation of strategic plans, 44% was of the opinion that Time factor affect implementation of strategic plans, 56% was of the opinion that School environment affect implementation of strategic plans, 40% was of the opinion that Poor succession management affect implementation of strategic plans and 44% supported the opinion that Parents/guardians economic status affect implementation of strategic plans. The findings indicated that the majority of the respondents supported that school environment affect implementation of strategic plans while the least supported the opinion that Institutional policies affect implementation of strategic plans. This shows that the school environment comprising of its policies, management, climate and community at large do affect implementation of strategic plan in schools. But

management plays a great role in the implementation of the school strategic plans.

The study agrees that a plan is essentially today’s design for tomorrow’s action, an outline of the steps to be taken during some future period. However, the plan might be well thought of, well planned but its execution may face a number of challenges caused by various factors. Pearce and Robinson [14] states that once the strategy has been designed, the managers in this case the principals of the schools should focus on the following five components to ensure effective execution; leadership styles, structure, culture, manpower skills, socio-economic political and resources. The authors recognize that the strategy implementation is more effective when conducted through subsystem within an organization hence the structure should be compatible with the chosen strategy. In order to implement the strategy, it is necessary to create processes and units within the implementation process that are sensitive to change, and that strategies are bound to succeed even if under unexpected circumstances.

CONCLUSION

The findings on institutional dynamics indicated that the majority of the respondents supported that school environment affect implementation of strategic plans while the least supported the opinion that

Institutional policies affect implementation of strategic plans. This shows that the school environment comprising of its policies, management, climate and community at large do affect implementation of strategic plan in schools. But management plays a great role in the implementation of the school strategic plans. The study agrees that a strategic plan is essentially today's design for tomorrow's action, an outline of the steps to be taken during some future period. However, the plan might be well thought of, well planned but its execution may face a number of challenges caused by various factors. Principals of the schools should focus on the following five components to ensure effective execution; good leadership styles, structure, culture, manpower skills, socio-economic political and resources. For effective strategy implementation the subsystem within an organization structure should be compatible with the chosen strategy. In order to implement the strategy, it is necessary to create processes and units within the implementation process that are sensitive to change, and that strategies are bound to succeed even if under unexpected circumstances.

Policy Implication

For effective implementing strategic plans in sub-county secondary schools, the ministry of education should ensure that during the implementation of strategic plans all members or educational stakeholders should be involved so that institutional planning reflects the picture of school and community needs. Also the ministry of education should invest in Bottom up Communication by the top management and all school stakeholders so that there is mutual agreement in decision making in public secondary Schools. Through regular communication in school newsletters, magazine and other media

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