

The Implications of Strategic Planning on Effective Leadership in Public Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract: In 2005, the Government of Kenya through, the Ministry of Education (MOE), in an effort to achieve the goals envisioned in the social pillar of Vision 2030, of building a just and cohesive society that enjoys equitable social development in a clean environment introduced strategic management in all its learning institutions. In 2008, the Ministry of Education rolled out a five years strategic plan 2008-2012 with the aim of providing Kenyans with globally competitive quality education and training for sustainable development. Every district was then mandated to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate its internal strategic plan. The purpose of this study therefore was to evaluate the impact of implementing strategic planning in effective principal's leadership in public secondary school in Kenya. The study adopted descriptive survey design since the study investigated possible cause and effect relationship between strategic plan and school effectiveness. The location of the study was carried in public secondary schools in Kenya. The target population was all the 25 public secondary schools, 25 head teachers and 606 teachers. The results were presented in percentages, graphs and bar charts, frequency tables and pie Charts. The study indicated that strategic planning has positive and significant impacts on instruction and learning, on strong and effective principal's leadership. The research outlined conclusions and recommendations to head teachers and all the stakeholders to embark on evaluation of the impact of strategic plan on their school effectiveness.

Keywords: Impact, Strategic planning, effective principal's leadership.

INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian Ministry of Education discovered that as far as professional leadership and governance was concerned, the head teachers did not possess proper leadership skills. They therefore developed an intensive training program for head teachers. On evaluating the aspect of shared mission and goals, they discovered that the principals enshrined them in the handbook and expected the staff to know them and consequently implement them as opposed to giving them orientation on the school mission and vision. They also discovered that they had many untrained teachers which affected teaching and learning. To correct this, all graduates and all those who wished to be teachers were mandated to attend teacher's professional training. Bullying was also going on in schools creating non-conducive learning environment. The Malaysian Ministry of Education therefore appointed school counselors and discipline teachers in every school. Students who committed serious offences were placed in the rehabilitation centers. The Malaysian Ministry of Education also discovered that, learning was examination oriented. To correct this, they developed an assessment program that assisted in improving instructions and assessment. They also had

large class sizes which led to ineffective learning. They proposed a class size of 20 students as ideal for effective learning. Student did not play an active role in the life of the school and had no responsibility planning their learning. This led to students' low self-esteem and as a result they performed poorly. Home-school partnership was also strengthened as they discovered that supportive relations and cooperation between home and school have positive effect in school effectiveness.

In 2010, Kamarulzaman [1] asserted that in 2004, Malaysia Ministry of Education evaluated its strategic plan and there was evidence of improvement and it therefore rolled out another five year strategic plan. This set Malaysia on the road map to achieving school effectiveness and in offering education for the global market. Today, Malaysia is one of the leading countries as far as school effectiveness is concerned all owing to the implementation, and evaluation of their strategic plan.

Kenya's 2008 Ministry of Education Science and Technology's introduction to Strategic plan [2] explains that, in 2003 - 07, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, implemented Economic

Strategy Recovery of Wealth and Employment Creation (ERSWEC). As a result, the economy grew from 2.9 per cent in 2003 to 7 per cent in 2007. In education, the Economic Recovery Strategy Priority focus was on Free Primary Education. At the introduction of Free Primary Education, an additional one million pupil enrolled in primary school. "To ensure sustainability of this massive enrollment, the education and training sector, developed the Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 and its first operationalizing plan, the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) in 2005" [3]. The Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 of the Government of Kenya argues that, rationale of the Sessional Paper was to address some of the challenges that were facing the educational sector such as access, equity, quality, relevance, efficiency in the management of educational resources, cost and financing of education, gender and regional disparities, and teacher quality and teacher utilization. Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 explains that, in addition to addressing the above challenges, it was also to "provide for a policy framework for the education and training sector in order to meet the challenges of the 21st Century" [4]. Consequently, enrollment at all levels increased with highest at the primary level.

Strategic Plan 2008-2012, asserts that, "despite the achievement made in reviving economic growth and meeting many of the ESR targets, the country is still confronted with major developmental challenges. These include global, regional and national challenges "of transforming education and training to a globally competitive one without compromising quality..." [5]. The Ministry of Education in Kenya provided a five years blue print strategic plan ranging from 2008- 2012. Based on this blue print strategic plan, each public learning institution was mandated to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate its internal strategic plan [6].

A report from most County Education offices in Kenya [7] confirmed that all public Secondary Schools have developed and implemented their internal strategic plans. The problem is that seven years since the introduction of Strategic plan by the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology there is no documented literature on the evaluation of the impact of the implementation of strategic plans on school effectiveness in Kenya. Hence this has failed to fulfill the mandate of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology whereby each learning institution was mandated to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate its internal strategic plan within the stipulated time [8]. Without evaluation it will also not be easy to achieve vision 2030 of offering global competitive education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the study by National Association of Secondary School Principals [9], ten years ago school leadership was not considered as a factor that can contribute to school effectiveness but today it ranks high on the list of priorities of school reforms. This is because an effective Principals leadership boosts teaching and learning which the core business of a school is. It also states that, there is very high expectation in the current world on principals to improving teaching and learning. On the other hand, when the U.S. Department of Education and State Agency [10] embarked on the transformation of 5,000 most troubled nation schools, they discovered that transformation of such school depended on the skills and abilities of the head teachers. A research conducted at the University of Minnesota and University of Toronto in 2002 also, revealed that there is a close link between the school leadership and improved teachers achievement.

In 1990, Leithwood, Days, Sammons, Adams and David, study on seven strong claims about successful school leaders asserted that leadership is crucial because leaders have the potential to unleash the latent capacities in organizations. Therefore, skills and abilities of the head teacher play an important role in school effectiveness as they have the potential to unleash the energies in the staff and students setting the school on the road to effectiveness.

Coleman [11] asserts that, strong and effective principal's leadership means that the head teacher communicates the school's vision, mission and values to all stakeholders, there is low teacher absentee rate, involves teachers in decision making, Inspiring teachers to follow, visits classroom to monitor daily activities, is visible and accessible, schedules time to teach, takes special interest in the wellbeing of the students and staff, plans regular social activities for staff, takes time to show appreciation and socializes with both staff and students.

Moreover, in the study by National Association of Secondary School Principals[12] on school leadership, it identified ten skills of a successful head teacher namely; setting instructional leadership, embracing teamwork, being sensitive to the widening range of student's needs, practicing good judgment, is result oriented, has good organizational ability, is good in oral and written communication, organizes self-development courses for the staff and is at home with ones weaknesses and strengths. It adds that an effective Principal performs five functions namely, "Shaping the vision of the academic success for all students, creating a climate hospitable to education, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction, and managing people data and processes to foster school improvement" [13]. It adds that without effective leadership, it will be

Everard and Wilson [14], communication of school vision, mission and goals contribute to school effectiveness for a good strategy is meaningless if it is not acted upon. Therefore employees cannot know the vision, mission and goals of the institution unless communicated to by the principal and it is only then that they can act on them. It adds that an effective head teacher also schedules time to teach. In the study by Caena [15], teachers admire administrators that take time to interact personally with students and students love it too. On the other hand showing appreciation to student and staff leads to school effectiveness for appreciation is a good motivator, which helps one to unleash the energies.

In the study by Caena [16], argues that, teachers are the best resources that an administrator has and therefore involving them in decision-making leads to school effectiveness, for “a central part of being great leader is cultivating leadership in others.” [17]. From the study therefore, the indicators of effective principal’s leadership are; Communication of the school vision, mission and values to all stakeholder, low teacher absentee rate, involving teachers in decision making, inspiring teachers to follow, visits classroom to monitor daily activities, visibility and accessibility, being involved in teaching, takes special interest in the wellbeing of the students and staff, organizes regular social activities for staffs, reinforcement, shows appreciation, socializes with both staff and students, involving teachers in decision making, sets high academic standards for all students, creates safe and positive school climate and culture, cultivates leadership in others, improves instruction and is able to manage peoples data and processes to foster school improvement.

The study focused on the following five of the above indicators of school effectiveness: communication of the vision, mission and values to the staff members, involving teachers, and staffs in major decision making, presence of structures of staff professional development, visibility and accessibility and involvement in classroom teaching due to the following: From literature review it is very clear that strong and effective principal leadership is a very important component as far as school effectiveness is concerned as it is the second most important factor after sustained focus on instructions’ and learning in promoting school effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. It was carried out in Kenya. The study selected 25 Public Secondary schools randomly to get the sample from. Approximately 13,341 students and 606 teachers were the sample. School effectiveness is highly sought for in this country but since the launching of

Strategic Plan 2008- 2012 by the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, no documented literature that evaluation has been done to establish the impact of the implementation of strategic planning on school effectiveness in Public Secondary school in Kenya. The study targeted the 25 secondary school in Kenya. County has 25 Head teachers, 606 teachers. Record from the various County education offices indicated that all these schools have developed and implemented strategic plans [18].

The research used a sample size of 60 % by use of simple random technique. Therefore a total of 15 schools were sampled and 13 head teachers of the sampled secondary schools and 171 teachers participated in the study. The study used questionnaire for the teachers, interview schedules for the head teachers as research instruments. The researcher booked an appointment with the Head teachers of the sampled schools to conduct the research. The respondents were given enough time to fill the questionnaires which were collected later on the agreed day. Meanwhile the researcher interviewed the Head teachers. The data collected yielded both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies, percentages and means Mugenda & Mugenda [19]. The information was analyzed in a systematic way in order to come up with some useful conclusions and recommendation. The information gathered from the questionnaires and the interviews were coded according to the objective of the study. Analysis was done and data presented in pie charts, tables, graphs, bar charts, percentages and frequencies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study focused on teacher’s induction on the implementation of strategic plan, setting high and clear expectation for staff and students, staff and student motivation, consultative decision making and dialoguing with students. The outcome of the study is as follows in the table-1.

Effectiveness of Principal’s Leadership

The findings in table-1 reveal that induction was carried out in most schools by the management with 61.9% agreeing that they had been inducted by the school management on the implementation of strategic plan. On the other hand 28.7% of the respondent said that they had not being inducted. The study shows that, the same percentage of people not trained is almost the same with those not inducted. This may mean that induction to new members is not done. According De Montfort University Work Place Induction Guidance [20], “effective induction is an important and valuable part of ensuring real benefit to the new members of staff...” This assists new members to perform their task

effectively as soon as possible. They will be able to understand the school the direction the school is going and therefore join the team. This in return will lead to school effectiveness.

As far as setting of high expectations for both students and staff 83.5% agreed that the head teachers had set high and clear achievement goals for both students and staff, while 9.5% disagreed. To achieve the high expectation, many of the head teacher interviewed revealed that the schools had set a mean grade for each class and also focusing on value added progress for

each individual student. Academic day is organized every term by majority of schools and also meetings of PTA and students to discuss the areas of concern. The principal delegate leadership to the dean of studies heads of departments and class teachers. In one school, they have what they call small principals who are fully in charge during the assigned. This leads to motivation and ownership of the set expectations. Students also have a share of leadership as peer educators and students council. All these explain why such a big percentage agreed that principals had set high and clear expectations.

Table 1: Results

| Strong and effective principal leadership | Agree | | Undecided | | Disagree | |
|---|-------|-------|-----------|-------|----------|-------|
| | Freq. | Perc. | Freq. | Perc. | Freq. | Perc. |
| Strategic plan induction | 97 | 61.9% | 15 | 9.6% | 45 | 28.7% |
| Setting High expectations for teachers and students | 131 | 83.5% | 11 | 7% | 15 | 9.5% |
| Student and staff motivation | 115 | 73.3% | 24 | 15.3% | 18 | 11.4% |
| Consultative decision making | 98 | 62.4% | 23 | 14.6% | 36 | 23% |
| Dialoguing with students | 134 | 85.3% | 11 | 7% | 12 | 7.7% |

This is positive step toward school effectiveness for it builds up student self –esteem and make them confident, that will make them willing to tackle challenging learning activities [21]. Students and staff motivation was found to be of great impact by 73.3% of respondents agreeing while 15.3 % were undecided, 11.4. % disagreed. From the interview with the principals, it was noted that. The motivation was in the form of providing morning tea and meals for teachers delegating leadership, encouraging them to further their studies and involving them in decision making. The students were found to be motivated by awarding of certificates to the best performers. Provision of ten o'clock porridge and lunch for students was also found to be catalyst of motivation. In one school, they have provided boarding at the request of students for ample revision time. This extrinsic motivation assists in the achievement of school mission for a teacher who is intrinsically motivated can undertake a task for its own sake for the satisfaction it provides or the feeling of accomplishment and self-actualization [22].

On the consultation on major decision-making, the study found that 62.4% of the teachers agreed that the principal consulted whereas 23% disagreed. This was confirmed in the head teachers interview that they delegated authority to head of department and are empowered to make independent decisions and inform the head teacher on the decision reached for more guidance. This participatory decision making according to Wadesango [23], leads to organizational effectiveness and high staff morale. This

is so because it creates a sense of responsibility, achievement and recognition for the teachers. It is the researchers' opinion therefore that the teachers in public secondary school in Kenya own their school strategic plan since they have been part of the decision making. This will definitely unleash the energies in the teachers setting the school on road to school effectiveness.

As regard dialoguing with students, 85.3% agreed while 7.7% disagreed class meeting. Majority of the principals interviewed confirmed that they held dialogue, open forum with all students, meetings with student leaders, and had also embraced open door policy where any student is free to go in and air their views without being victimized. Therefore the study shows that strategic planning in secondary schools in Kenya dialogue with students who are major stakeholders. This can also be termed as participatory decision making create a sense of recognition, responsibility and achievement among students, [24]. To add on to Leithwood, [25] asserted that dialoguing with students is very crucial because leaders have the potential to unleash the energies in staff and students setting the school on the road to effectiveness. The study therefore presumes that the students have owned up their school strategic plan and are working hand in hand with the management to achieve the school effectiveness.

SUMMARY

More than half of the respondents indicated that they had been inducted. Overwhelming majority agreed that the school has set high and clear expectation

for all the teachers and students. Majority of the respondent also agreed that the school always motivate teachers and students. A good number also were in agreement that the principal always consult the staff members in major decision making. Overwhelming majority agreed that the school always hold dialogue with students. Generally, the study indicated that as a result of implementation of strategic plan in schools, the principals have portrayed effective principal's leadership.

CONCLUSION

Majority of the respondents agreed that the principals had demonstrated effective leadership by setting high and clear expectation for both teachers and students, motivated students and staff, and finally by holding constant dialogue with students. It was only in the area of inducting the new staff members and involving them in major decision making that was found wanting. Overall, this is very encouraging for effective principals' leadership is very crucial for it unleashes the energies in staff and students. This may have also led to sustained focus on instruction and learning. It can therefore be concluded that strategic plan implementation in Kenya has led to effective principals leadership.

RECOMMENDATION

According to the study, consultative decision making is wanting. The study therefore recommended that the head teachers/principals improve on participatory leadership because this has power to unleash the energies of the staff members towards making school effectiveness.

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