

Utilizing Strategy in “On- Site Staff Professional Development” in Public Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract: In 2008, the Ministry of Education in Kenya 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 to evaluate the impact of implementing strategic planning in on- site staff professional development in secondary schools in Kenya. The study was informed by Total Quality Management theory which is a quest for excellence, creating the right attitudes and controls to make prevention of defects possible and optimize customer satisfaction by increased efficiency and effectiveness. 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 public secondary schools in Kenya. 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, as well as on Staff on-site professional development. 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. The implementations of the recommendations may facilitate the schools in producing students with globally competitive skills that will provide Kenya with the required man power to drive the country to a middle income status as per vision 2030.

Keywords: Impact, Strategic planning, On-site staff professional development.

INTRODUCTION

In 2005, the Ministry of Education in Kenya in an effort to achieve its goals as envisioned in the social pillar of Vision 2030 of ensuring the provision of relevant and quality education to every Kenyan introduced strategic management in all the public learning institutions. In 2008, The Kenya Government through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology provided a blue print five years strategic plan, 2008- 2012. The vision was “to have a globally competitive quality education and training for Kenya’s sustainable development” and the mission is to provide, promote, coordinate quality education and training for empowerment of individuals to become caring, competent and responsible citizens who value education as a long life process” [1]. The core values which constitute the desired organizational culture are integrity, professionalism, team work, efficiency, continual improvement, courtesy, confidentiality, fidelity to law, respect of individual differences and upholding cultural diversity.

For the monitoring and evaluation at the national level, the Ministry of Education identified eleven indicators , namely: Early Childhood Education and development Net Enrollment (NER), Early childhood Education and Development Net enrollment in North Eastern Province, Primary School Net Enrollment , Primary school Net enrollment for North Eastern Province, Primary school Completion rate, Primary to secondary schools Transition Rate, Secondary School Net Enrollment Rate, Secondary School Survival Rate, Adult literacy Rate, Book , and pupil Teacher Ratio [2]. The Goal is “To improve Access to Quality Education for all to mitigate the Post-Election Crisis Impact on the Sector” [3]. It also identified the outcome indicators which are as follows; An Effective Institutional Framework, an Enhanced Participation in Early childhood Development Education, sustained Free Primary Education, Enhanced Access and Equity in Primary Education, Enhanced Access, Equity and Retention in Secondary Education, Access Equity and Quality in Secondary Education Enhanced, An effective and all inclusive Education system that provides a conducive learning environment

for children with Special Needs, An enhanced Adult Literacy, A robust National Assessment System, An improved School Based Quality Assurance Program, Improved Leadership Skills for all Head Teachers, institutionalizes In- Servicing of Teachers (INSET) in secondary and primary schools, improved Quality Education through Optimal Utilization of Teachers, Integrate ICT In Education and Training Systems, an Effectively Running Education Management Information System (EMIS) from Headquarters to the Districts(now Counties) , Effectiveness of Human Resource, An Enhanced Access To Education for the Hard- To- Reach Children, Enhanced Retention through Promotion of School Health, Nutrition and Feeding Programme, Cross- Cutting Issues Mainstreamed in Education [4].

The assumption is that, improvement in the quality of education will produce Kenyans with global competitive skills. This will then produce the manpower required to turn the country into a middle income status by the year 2030. In keeping with vision 2030 which has three pillars namely; economic, social and political. The social pillar is to be achieved through education and its mission is to create a just, cohesive and equitable social development in a clean and secure environment.

In 2013, Dan noted that the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology mandated all public institutions to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate its internal strategic plan as a means of enhancing result based management and efficiency in their operations. In 2008, the Ministry of Education Strategic plan 2008- 2012 stated that the strategic plan was also to serve as a monitoring tool. In a study on the implementation of strategic Plan in most counties within the nation like Nakuru County, Dan [5] noted that, in Nakuru County the implementation has three challenges, namely: the implementation procedures were unclear, lack of sufficient financial resources and lack of pre- requisite skills for teachers in public Secondary School to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate of strategic plan.

This fails 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 [6]. Without evaluation it will also not be easy to achieve vision 2030 of offering global competitive education. Kim [7] on the Total Quality management theory states that, “management... need to establish performance measurement instruments that reveal the level of customer satisfaction and should be in be able to respond appropriately to customers’ needs”. Therefore, without evaluation, most schools in Kenya may not respond to the customers need; the government

of Kenya will not be able to achieve Vision 2030 whose aim is to make Kenya “Middle income country providing quality life for all its citizens by the year 2030”[8]. The study therefore seeks to bridge this gap by conducting an evaluation on the impact of the implementation of strategic plan in school effectiveness in public Secondary school Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study by State Government of Victoria publication [9] states that, since teaching is a complex work, one requires highly specialized skills in order to influence significantly on the student learning. On the other hand teachers need to update their skills continuously in order to keep abreast with the world and in response to new research and emerging knowledge about learning and teaching. Effective professional development enables educators to develop the knowledge and the skills needed to tackle students’ learning challenges.

In 2005 State Government of Victoria stated that, since teaching is a dynamic profession educator’s need new expertise as new knowledge about teaching and learning emerges. Blandford [10] adds that “effective professional has profound implications for what is taught, and how learning is assessed” [11] and for leaders to be effective they should provide learning opportunities for their teachers in order for them to develop the knowledge, practices and attitudes that are needed to achieve agreed goals and expectations. The head teacher should therefore create a formal structure to support effective teaching practices and improved students’ achievement. Effective professional learning activities should be focused on students and embedded in teacher practice, is informed by best available research on effective teaching and learning, collaborative, evidence based and data driven, ongoing support and fully integrated in the culture, has to be both individual and collective responsibility. Wallace foundation [12], asserted that effective principals should encourage continuous professional development to self and others. It involves keeping track of teacher’s professional development and monitoring teacher’s work in the classroom. The visits enables the principal’s to make formative observation and gives the teacher immediate feedback. Coleman [13] adds that, school effectiveness is strongly correlated with provision of high quality on- site development and practical professional development opportunities should be closely synchronized with school- development priorities, and shared responsibility for students’ outcome.

In the study by Caena [14], not all learning of teachers promotes professional development. The key activities that enables teacher to cope with rapid changes and remain updated are; Experimentation,

reflective practice knowledge sharing and innovation and “ to help young people learn more complex and analytical skills they need for 21st century, teachers must learn in ways that develop higher- order thinking and performance” [15].

Therefore, the role of professional development on school effectiveness is that it provides teachers with skills to enable them to keep abreast with the changes in the world of education and therefore transferring the same knowledge to the students. It is only then that the school can achieve effectiveness by offering globally competitive education and therefore making the graduates relevant and globally competitive. According to the study, the indicators of staff professional development are: Experimentation, reflective practice, knowledge sharing and innovation, on site continuous professional development, head teacher keeping track of teacher’s professional development and monitoring teacher’s work in the classroom. The study focused on site professional development in areas of: developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of school strategic plan.

In conclusion, the gap identified is that, six year down the line there is no documented literature on the evaluation of the impact of the strategic plan implementation on school effectiveness. . The literature on school strategic planning is also very scarce. The researcher therefore intends to bridge this knowledge gap carrying out an evaluation on the impact of the implementation of strategic planning on school effectiveness in secondary schools in Nakuru Sub-County. The investigation was based on four indicators of school effectiveness, namely; sustained focus on instruction and learning, strong and effective principal’s leadership, safe and positive school climate culture and professional staff development.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. It was carried out in Kenya. 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 the country. 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 and Mugenda [16]. 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 sought to establish the impact of strategic plan implementation on staff on site professional development. This section was based on training on how to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate a strategic plan. In addition, it sought to establish the staff members understanding of the school’s mission vision, values, goals and key improvement strategies. The findings are represented in the table-1.

Table 1: Results

Professional development on strategic plan	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Trained to develop strategic plan	88	56	12	7.6	57	36.2
Strategic plan Implementation skills	73	46.4	28	17.8	56	35.7
Strategic plan monitoring skills	89	56.7	31	19.7	37	23.6
Strategic plan evaluation skills	66	42	34	21.7	57	36.3
Understanding of school mission, vision ,values, goals, targets and key improvement strategies	97	68.8	32	20.4	28	17.9

The impact of Strategic Plan on on-site Staff Professional Development

Findings in table above indicates that as far as training to implement strategic plan is concerned 56%

agreed that they had been trained with 36% disagreeing. According to principal who were interviewed, the only training given on strategic plan was in the year 2012 by Decentralized Education Management Activity

(DEMA). Ongoing training of the new staff members joining has not been possible due to lack of finance.

Many of the principals interviewed also revealed that in free secondary school Financing (FSEF), there is no vote head set for developing and training in strategic plan. The schools have been using funds from Parents Teachers Association (PTA) which are not reliable. They went on to say that the problem has become more complex with the current Education Policy where the schools are not allowed to raise any funds through PTA. This is then bound to put this good strategy in jeopardy and Kenya may not be able to build a just and cohesive society that enjoys equitable social development in a clean environment as envisaged in Vision 2030 and which is the aim of introducing strategic plan in secondary schools [17].

Cooker [18] asserts that training on strategic planning is very important to the management and development of strategic planning in the secondary schools. Davies [19] asserts that the actual strategic planning phase is technical and demands training in skills and know-how to successfully carry out the process. Eacott [20] takes a swipe at the retrospective approach to building leadership capacity, pointing out that it is only in the field of education that practice precedes theory. Instead, he advocates country-wide capacity-building for all those involved in the process before any initiative is rolled out to schools. In agreement, Cooker [21] maintains that training on strategic planning is very important to the management and development of strategic plan.

As regard skills in strategic plan implementation, 46.4% agreed to have attained the skills to implement strategic plan with 35.7% disagreeing and, 17.8% were undecided. Therefore 50.8% teachers have not been trained on how to implement strategic plan. This may be those teachers who joined the school after 2012 after the training had been done. The principal confirmed that they have not been able to train new teachers due to lack of funds. Since they have to be involved in implementation they are forced to learn from their colleagues as they implement.

This approach resonates with what Xaba [22] describes as a 'cascading model' that was employed in implementing strategic planning in schools in South Africa. Xaba criticizes this type of training, where senior education managers and educators were equipped with skills, and were then subsequently expected to pass the same information on to the rest of the school community members. He argues that such an approach is prescriptive and mechanical because it describes how to make strategic plans instead of bringing about structural and cultural adjustments that are imperative

for meaningful change to occur in schools. Further, this model of training is ineffective because, in most cases, the subsequent training at the school level is never realized. Blandford [23] asserts that effective professional development impacts profoundly on what is taught, and how learning is assessed as it enables educators to develop knowledge and skills needed to tackle students.

Therefore, on site professional development on how to develop, implements, to Monitor and evaluate strategic planning is very essentials for the teachers. The head teachers are very much concerned and therefore the researcher appeals to the government to provide finances to train the teachers on how to develop implement and, monitor the strategic plan. As regard to monitoring of the strategic plan, 56.7% in agreement that they do monitor the impact of the implementation of the strategic plan on school effectiveness, while 23.6% were of contrary opinion. According to the head teachers that were interviewed, all confirmed monitoring on the effectiveness of strategic plan is carried out termly and yearly. The 20.3% who disagreed may be the ones who have not been trained and though they are involved in monitoring, they may not understand what they are doing, hence the need for training all teachers.

For evaluation on the effectiveness of the strategic plan 42% agreed that it has been done with 36.3% disagreeing, 21.7% undecided. Therefore for 57%, strategic plan has not been evaluated. The study found that formal evaluation on the impact of strategic plan has not been done but every term teachers met to monitor on the extent of the implementation of strategic plan.. According to Center for Disease Control and Prevention [24], evaluation data is used to monitor how the strategic plan is progressing and it describes changes to the program based on finding. KIM Management Training series [25] on Total Quality Management adds that all those seeking any sort of improvement need to assess their progress in order to know whether they are improving.

Therefore, since the objective of the implementation of strategic plan is to meet the customers' needs by offering quality education the school need to get feedback from the customers. This will help the school to know whether they have achieved the mission and the changes needed. Implementation of strategic plan is not complete without evaluation for Strategic Plan it is just the means to an end. It is only through the evaluation that the school will be able to ascertain whether it is building a just and cohesive society that enjoys equitable social development in a clean environment as envisioned in Kenya Vision 2030.

As far as understanding the mission, values, goals, target and key improvement strategies as enshrined in the school strategic plan 68.8%, of the of the respondents agreed with only 17.90% disagreeing. This is promising as strategic plan is based on this. This can be confirmed with the big mean percentage of 81.1% who agreed that there is sustained focus on instruction and learning which cannot be if the implementers are not clear about the school's, mission, goal and mostly the key improvement strategies.

SUMMARY

Slightly above half of the respondents agreed to have been trained on how to develop a school strategic plan. Almost half of the respondents indicated that they not acquired skills on implementation of strategic plan As far as monitoring of the strategic plan is concerned slightly more than half have acquired skill on how to monitor the strategic Plan. As regard the evaluation of strategic plan, more than half indicated that this has not been done. Overwhelming majority indicated that they do understand the school mission, values, goals, targets and key improvement strategies with a sizeable number also undecided on this. On staff professional development therefore, the area doing well is the understanding of the mission values, goals, and target and key improvement strategies. Of great concerns is on the area of evaluation which scored the lowest. Therefore, as far as staff on-site professional development is concerned, the study indicates that the implementation of strategic plan has little impacted in public Secondary Schools in Kenya.

CONCLUSION

The study indicated that, a good number of teacher in public Secondary schools in Kenya are not trained on how to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the strategic plan. It can then be concluded that the implementation of strategic plan has low impact on staff on-site professional development. The study indicated that a good number of teachers are not trained on how to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the strategic plan. The study therefore recommends that the government provide money to schools for training teachers in strategic plan. This should be included in the vote head of free secondary Education financing.

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