
The Impact of Strategic Plan Implementation in Sustained Focus on Instruction and Learning in Public Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract: This study examined the impact of strategic plan implementation in sustained focus on instruction and learning in secondary schools in Kenya. The study was informed by Total Quality Management theory is described as 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. The location of the study was public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. The target population was all the 25 public secondary schools, 25 head teachers and 606 teachers. By use of simple random sampling techniques, a sample of 15 schools was sampled, 15 head teacher and 171 teachers, for the study. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data. The researcher personally visited the sampled schools to collect data. The validity and reliability of the research was determined through the help of the supervisors and vetting by five experts. 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. 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: Strategic Plan, Sustained Focus, Instruction and Learning.

INTRODUCTION

After the Second World War, business borrowed most of the successful management applications. Ogunniyi [1] enlightens that strategic planning originated from the army and the soldiers used it as a weapon to defeat their enemies. Schools on seeing the positive effect of strategic planning in business, also adopted it for “with the changing patterns of education delivery from face to face to online, course content, nature of learners and organizational structures, the concept of quality has become an inherent component of educational process for its success” [2]. Strategic Planning has therefore been adopted in learning institution as a means of achieving school effectiveness.

In 2013, 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

Nakuru District (now Nakuru County), Dan [3] notes that, in Nakuru District, 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 [4]. Without evaluation it will also not be easy to achieve vision 2030 of offering global competitive education. On the same note, Luneburg [5] on the Total Quality management theory states that, “management... need to establish performance measurement instruments that would reveal the level of customer satisfaction and having known that should be in a position to respond appropriately to customers' needs” [6] and therefore without evaluation the schools in Nakuru county will not be able to respond to the customers need. This could mean the government of Kenya may fail to achieve Vision 2030 whose aim is to make Kenya “Middle income country providing quality life for all its citizens

by the year 2030” [7]. The study set to evaluate the impact of the implementation of strategic plan and sustained focus on instruction and learning in public secondary school in Nakuru County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the study by Jaspardo [8] sustained focus on teaching and learning has been rated as one of the most important contributor of school effectiveness as quality of instruction determines the rate of learning for each individual and this consequently decreases the learning difference in students. He also states that according to Brett [9], a student cannot take the next step until the previous learned material has been fully mastered. Therefore, the teacher should ensure that all the students have mastered the previous material before introducing another. This can only be achieved by the teacher making sure that the syllabus is fully covered and remedial classes offered to slow learners.

In the study the United Nations Educational Scientific and cultural Organization [10], Module Six on better schools, states that “the quality of teaching and learning takes precedence over other factors of school effectiveness because effective learning and teaching determines the perceptions of everyone who is interested in the quality. For this to happen, the teacher must teach effectively” [11]. Coleman [12] also argues that sustained focus on instruction and learning involves ensuring high curriculum coverage that offers rich learning opportunities for students, maximizing learning time at both the school and classroom level and focusing on the mastery of learning skill. In another study by Cooker [13], asserts that having high standard, clear expectation for all, are significant to closing the gap between the low achievers and high achievers and this will consequently raise the overall achievement of all students and therefore lead to school effectiveness. According to the study it is very clear that, sustained focus on instructions and learning is the most important factor in promoting school effectiveness. This is so because the mission of any learning institution is all about teaching and learning and all other factors revolve around it.

As per the literature review, the indicators of sustained focus on instruction and learning are: High curriculum coverage, maximizing teaching time at both school and classroom level, focusing on the mastery of learning skills and, having high standard clear expectation for both students and teachers. The study focused on five of the above indicators, namely; high curriculum coverage, remedial classes or personalized instructions, head teachers involvement in teaching and having high and clear students and teachers expectation for the following reasons: In the study by Maryland State Department of Education [14], states maximizing teaching time is a critical tool which is needed to improve student achievement and requires multiple

policies and programs to support great teaching and learning. This may not require change in the length of school day but rather changes in the instructions and the allocation of time within the school day, providing teachers with resources, implementation of positive behavior and ensuring teachers have sufficient planning time. In 2014 on maximizing teaching time argues that this demands that teachers minimize lost instructional time, having high students' engagement rate and students experiencing high level of success [15].

As far as high expectation is concerned, a study by Education Partnerships Inc. [16] asserts that, high expectation builds up student self-esteem, increases confidence and improve students' academic performance and student confidence make them willing to tackle challenging learning activities. Further still the study by McCarthy [17] argues that personalized learning is about developing social practices that enable all students to become self-actualized. This involves giving students opportunities to decide their own learning objectives providing guidance, giving feedback, providing opportunities for self-assessment and peer assessment. In May (2010) eNewline asserts that an effective head teacher schedules time to teach and McCarthy [18] adds that, teachers admire head teachers who personally interact with students.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. It was carried out in Nakuru County, Kenya; a cosmopolitan town with a population of approximately 700,000. Nakuru County has a total of 25 Public Secondary schools, approximately 13,341 students and 606 teachers. School effectiveness is highly sought for in this county 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 Nakuru County. The study targeted the 25 secondary school in Nakuru County. County has 25 Head teachers, 606 teachers. Record from the County education office indicated that all these schools have developed and implemented strategic plans [19].

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 [20]. 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

As far as sustained focus on instruction and learning is concerned, the study focused on, quality syllabus coverage, offering of remedial classes to the weak students, teachers focus on the mastery of skills, punctuality and setting high and clear expectation for students and staffs. The results of the study are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Sustained Focus in Instruction and Learning

Instruction and Learning	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	Freq.	Perc (%)	Freq.	Perc (%)	Freq.	Perc (%)
Quality syllabus coverage	142	90.5%	7	4.5%	8	5.2%
Remedial classes offered for weak students	118	75.2%	5	3.2%	34	21.6%
Focus on mastery of skills	143	91.1%	7	4.5%	6	3.8%
Punctuality	130	82.8%	14	8.9%	13	8.3%
Setting high expectations for teachers and students	147	93.8%	3	1.6%	7	4.7%

Findings in the table above indicate that quality syllabus coverage was vastly achieved in majority of school by 90.5% agreeing and a small percentage of 5.2% disagreeing. This shows that the strategy of syllabus coverage has been wonderfully implemented and this is a big step towards achieving school effectiveness as syllabus coverage is the main determiner as far as academic performance is concerned. This can be contributed to the high and clear expectation set by the school. Many of the head teachers interviewed revealed that the student covered the syllabus by 1st or 2nd Term in four. The students then had enough time to revise focusing more on the area of their interest. This is a positive step towards school effectiveness for Coleman [21] asserted that sustained focus on instruction and learning involves ensuring high curriculum coverage that offers rich learning opportunities for students.

Remedial classes were also found to be offered to the weak students to improve the general performance of the schools with 75% s agreeing and 21.8 disagreeing. According to the head teachers this was done by appointing peer educators in each and every subject, holding remedial instructions, and use of co-operative learning strategy (mixed ability grouping). Most principals indicated that the performance of their schools improved fairly and on a positive trend after implementing school strategic plan. Remedial classes lead to school effectiveness as it decreases the learning difference in students. Therefore, since according to the study remedial classes do take place, it is likely that in public secondary school in Nakuru County the learning difference between learners is within acceptable levels and this is a step towards school effectiveness.

As far as Focus on mastery of skills is concerned, 91.4% were in agreement that the schools focused on mastery of skills with only 2.4% disagreeing. This strongly portrays that the schools focus on the mastery of skills and this is a very important aspect of learning as a student cannot take the next step until the previous learned material has been mastered. The researcher also observed that art of mastery of skills was clearly entrenched in the school strategic plan. According to the head teachers, to achieve this, teachers were given seminars from time to time. According to the researcher focus on the mastery of skills may be a step forward in instilling globally competitive quality education and training for sustainable development.

As regard punctuality 87.4%, agreed that punctuality in and out of class was adhered to. This means that teaching time was fully maximized during the class and school time. According to the principals interviewed, to achieve these teachers used tools like lesson plans and of schemes of work. A monitoring tool in form of teacher attendance register was also used by prefects whereby they noted down the arrival and departure time of teachers during the lessons schedule. The teachers then signed the attendance register at the end of class and were then forwarded to the deputy head teacher on a daily basis. After going through them the deputy Principal forwarded to the head teacher for perusal and action, some head teachers also used Closed Circuit Television to monitor learning in the classroom and ensure punctuality. This proved that the schools due to implementation of strategic plan are on the path to school effectiveness for as [22] asserts sustained focus on instruction and learning involves maximizing learning time at both the school and classroom level.

Setting high and clear expectations for both the teachers and students emerged to be among the highest set priorities by majority of schools 92.4% in agreement and with only 4.7% in disagreement. The Head teachers interviewed confirmed that there was a lot of emphasis on value added progress. The students were also helped to set goals for themselves in consultation with the subject teachers and the parent. The three also monitored the progress and discussed it during the academic clinic. This strategy is sure to impact on school effectiveness for states, having high and clear expectation for all is a key to closing the gap between the low and higher achievers. According to Katsioloudes [23], strategic plan provides significantly better performance than unplanned opportunistic adaptive approach. From the study therefore strategic planning has highly impacted on sustained focus in instruction and learning by closing the gap between the low and high achievers.

SUMMARY

The study indicated that quality syllabus coverage was vastly achieved in most schools, for offering ongoing remedial classes for weak students. Majority were also in agreement that this does happen. Majority agreed to it that the teachers focused on the mastery of skills. Punctuality in and out of class was rated very highly. Finally, as regard Overwhelming majority agreed that the school has set high and clear expectation for both students and staff. In summary there is an overwhelming agreement that the implementation of strategic plan has led to school effectiveness in area of sustained focus on instruction and learning. Therefore, strategic plan implementation has led to school in effectiveness as far as sustained focus in instruction and learning in public Secondary Schools in Nakuru County.

CONCLUSION

Most respondents agreed that the implementation of strategic plan has achieved school effectiveness in areas of quality syllabus coverage, providing on-going remedial classes for weak students, teachers focusing on the mastery of skills, punctuality in and out of the class and finally the schools setting high and clear expectation for both teachers and students. This is a positive impact in that the quality of teaching and learning takes precedence over other factors of school effectiveness. Teaching and learning is also the core business of any learning institution and all the other factors supports this. Therefore the implementation of strategic plan in the public Secondary School in Nakuru County has led to sustained focus on instruction and learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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 recommended that the government should provide funds to schools for training teachers in strategic plan. This should be included in the vote head of free secondary Education financing. For a long term solution on the training on how to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate school strategic plan, the study recommended that a unit on school Strategic Plan should be introduced in the Teachers' Education curriculum. According to the study, in Nakuru County no evaluation has been done on the impact of the implementation of strategic Plan on School effectiveness. The study therefore recommended that the Kenya Ministry of Education should conduct an evaluation on the Impact of strategic plan in all the Public Secondary School.

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