
The influence of Strategic Planning on Safe and Positive Climates and Culture in Public Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract: This study sought to evaluate the impact of implementation of strategic plan on school effectiveness in secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The target population was 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, in descriptive studies, ten percent of the population is adequate but where time and resources allow, the study can use a big sample size for this increases the researchers confidence and reduces sampling error. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data. The validity and reliability of the research was determined through the help of the supervisors and vetting by five experts. The validity and reliability of the instruments was measured through piloting in the selected schools, peer evaluation and consultation. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data. The results were presented in percentages, graphs and bar charts, frequency tables and pie Charts. The study indicated that strategic planning has a positive impact in creating a positive school culture and environment. 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 Planning, Safe and Positive, School Climates and Culture.

INTRODUCTION

The study by Ramler [1], states that, at the dawn of the 21st century, education management continues to be a challenge to managers. These challenges are brought about by the changing nature of the society, development in technology, social and economic changes, political and cultural development and globalization. In order to match with the above changes in the society and in order for the schools to remain relevant, the schools must be effective. This demands that the schools focus on the development of goals, curriculum, personnel, organizational structures, school processes and technology in the management of teaching and learning. Therefore to achieve school effectiveness, the global focus is on strategic planning.

In the study by Kamarulzaman [2] in 1995-2004, the Malaysian Ministry of Education drew a 10 year strategic planning. It targeted all schools in Malaysia to be Smarts Schools by the year 2010. It was therefore the responsibility of the Malaysian Ministry of Education to ensure that all regular schools become effective. Malaysian Ministry of Education evaluated its school effectiveness based on the eight key factors of school effectiveness as advocated by Ruth Colman a research consultant. These include, among others, Safe

and Positive School Climate and Culture, which is the focus of this article.

In Kenya's 2008 Ministry of Education Science and Technology's introduction to Strategic plan [3] 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 [4].

The Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 of the Government of Kenya records that the 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. 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...” The assumption being that, improvement in the quality of education will give Kenyan 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.

The Ministry of Education 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 [5]. A report from the Nakuru County Education office [6] 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 in school on safe and positive school climate and culture in Nakuru County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2007, the study on the eleven Principles by the National School Climate Council (NSCC) [7] defines a positive school climate as one that demands and support ethical virtues and citizenship, provides an instructional environment that demand and support best academic effort through challenging work and high expectation .It adds that safe and positive school climate is all about “norms, values, and expectation that support peoples feeling, socially, emotionally and physically” [8]. Therefore, a positive school climate is an environment where an individual feels safe emotionally, socially and physically. In the study by the Character Education Partnership [9] the indicators of a positive school climate were, the presence of school wide ethos, individual classroom culture, high expectation for learning and achievement, having a safe and a caring environment, shared values and patterns of behavior

that defines who we are, how we treat each other and how we do our work, relational trust, a powerful pedagogy and curriculum, high students motivations and engagement, a professional faculty culture, and presence of school partnership with the families and the community. It goes on to say that, positive schools culture ‘is the cornerstone of all good schools. It is the foundation for school improvement’. In the study by Kappa [10] states that, positive school culture exists “when all students feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted, and secure in an environment where they can interact with caring people they trust” [11]. Positive school culture is the belief system or culture that guides day to day activities.

In the study by Coleman [12] a positive school climate is characterized by shared goals, safety and positive student culture, reinforcement that is specific, timely and consistently applied. She goes ahead to say that reinforcement plays a vital role in creating a positive school culture. Beth Doll of the National Association of school Principals states that, “ a school climate contributes to the academic success of its students and predicts the degree to which they actively participate in learning...such students feel connected to their school and are more likely to graduate and move to successful post-secondary educational and career activities” [13]. In another study by Cowan and colleagues [14] states that, positive school climate involves, engagement; which means a strong relationship between parent, teachers, students and community.

In 2009, Mendel [15] stated that, the key elements of a school climate are, “a sense of students and staff safety, respect for all members of the school community without regard to the professional status or position, an upbeat, welcoming, solution oriented, no-blame, professional environment: an effort to invite and involve staff in various school wide functions; and a parallel outreach to students that engaged and involved them in variety of activities. It is also characterized by high expectation for students and supports students’ academic achievement and behavior” [16].

From the study therefore, the indicators of a safe and positive school climate includes; high expectation for student and support for students’ academic achievement and behavior, sense of students and staff, safety, respect for all members of the school community, an upbeat, welcoming, solution oriented, no-blame, professional environment, safe and caring school environment, involves staff in various school wide functions, rules and policy to promote safety, outreach to students by engaging them in various activities, strong relationship between parents, teachers and students, shared goals, safe and positive student culture, reinforcement and free bullying zone. Therefore, positive school climate is important in that it

provides conducive learning environment for both staff and students which is an essential ingredient to school effectiveness. The study focused on five indicators of a safe and positive school climate, namely: sense of staff and student safety, a safe and caring school environment, schools rules and policy that promote safety, a school which is free of bullying, and a school that involves parent in the character and academic growth of the students.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. It was carried out in Nakuru County, Kenya. It is 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 [17].

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 [18]. 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 presence of school rules that promote safety for all, school free from bullying, parents’ participation in the student’s academic and character formation, and holding dialogue with students. The following are the respondents’ views:

Table 1: Respondents’ views on School Environment

School Environment	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
School rules promoting safety for all	141	89.8%	6	3.8%	10	6.4%
Safe and Positive school climate and culture.	134	85.4%	12	7.6%	11	7.0%
Schools free from bullying	137	87.3%	12	7.6%	8	5.1%
Parents participation in students academics and character formation	137	87.3%	9	5.7%	11	7.0%
Holding dialogue with students	136	86.6%	11	7%	10	6.4%

SAFE AND POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

Findings on table above revealed that school rules contributed to a safe and positive school climate and culture with 89.9% agreeing and only 6.4 % disagreeing. This proves beyond doubt that due to the implementation of strategic plan the school has laid a lot of emphasis on the safety of all as far as creating positive and safe school culture and culture, 85.2% agreed that the implementation of strategic plan has achieved this. According to Mendel [19], a safe and positive school culture and climate, supports students’ academic achievement and behavior. This is a very important element in school effectiveness for as Coleman [20] asserts that, “school climate contributes to the academic success of its students and predicts the degree to which they actively participate in learning”.

She goes on to say that the students are likely to be successful in their careers which are the wish and joy of all the stake holders. Positive school climate is a foundation for school improvement, the cornerstone of all good schools.

From the study therefore, public secondary school in Nakuru County are on the path to school effectiveness since they have already laid a strong foundation by developing a positive school climate and culture. The students are then likely to perform well academically for they have what it takes. This in return will assist in the achievement of vision 2030 of building a just and cohesive society that enjoys social development in a clean environment.

As far as having schools free from bullying, 87.3% were in agreement that their schools were free from bullying with only 1.6 disagreeing. This is a clear indication that the implementation of strategic plan has very positively impacted on school safety by ensuring that there is no bullying in school as the effect of bullying can be long lasting. Carol [21] contends that bullying causes long-term emotional damage. Victoria State Government Education and training [22] states that bullying has negative effects on the target, bully, the bystander and the entire school. It damages one's self-esteem, identity, and ability. From the study therefore, Nakuru County Public secondary schools have a safe and positive school climate and culture which may go a long way to instill equity among students and to build a cohesive society leading to school effectiveness.

According to the study 87.3% agreed that as a result of the implementation of strategic plan, parents participated in students' academics and character formation with only 12.8% disagreeing or being undecided. According to the principal interviewed, parents' participation in students' academic and character formation was done through open door policy, parent participation in annual academic clinic and Annual General Meeting (AGM). This may make the parents feel appreciated and therefore get involved in the implementation of strategic plan. Their assistance in the academic performance of their students may help the students to remain focused. This involvement might be the reason why there is a high level of sustained focus in instruction and learning and a safe and positive school climate and culture.

As far as engaging students in dialogue are concerned, 86.5% agreed that the school does dialogue with students with only 13.4% of a contrary opinion. The entire principal interviewed claimed that, when making crucial decisions meant to impact on the life of the students, students' views are sought for; they are also free to present their views to the school counselor, deputy teacher or the head teachers' office through open door policy. They went on to say that teachers hold regular class meetings with the students. This gives students time to air their views openly. Further they revealed that students' council also collects students' views and presents them to the management. The management also holds occasional meetings with the student council and the entire school.

Therefore the school has set strategies through their strategic plan and this has created a safe and positive school climate and culture. As per literature review a safe and positive school climate is important in school effectiveness for it provides an instructional environment that demands and supports best academic effort through challenging work and high expectations. It goes on to say that a positive school climate is the cornerstone of all good schools [23]. As a result the

student may find it easy to co-operate with the management and get involved in the implementation of strategic plan. This is significant as students are the major stakeholders and the strategic plan is meant to benefit them. This in return may have led to school effectiveness in the area of learning and in creating a safe and positive school climate and culture as indicated in the study.

SUMMARY

Most respondents agreed that the implementation of strategic plan has led to the introduction of school rules that promote safety for all. A great percentage of the respondents also agreed that the school has developed a positive and safe school culture. As far as parents being involved in character and academic formation of the student is concerned an overwhelming majority of the teachers were in agreement that this does happen. On the issue of holding dialogue with students the study indicated that a great number of respondents confirmed that this does happen. To sum up a majority of the respondents agreed that the implementation of strategic plan has created a safe and positive school climate and culture. Therefore, as per the outcome of the study, the implementation of strategic plan has created a safe and positive school climate and culture in the Public Secondary Schools in Nakuru Sub-County, Nakuru County.

CONCLUSIONS

An overwhelming majority agreed that the implementation of strategic plan has created a safe and positive school climate and culture by introducing school rules that promote safety for all, by developing a positive school culture, by ensuring that there is no bullying, involving parents in the character and academic performance of the students, and finally by holding dialogue with students. This may have led to the study's high sustained focus on instruction and learning. It can be concluded that the implementation of strategic plan has created a positive school culture and climate in public Secondary Schools in Nakuru County.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study observed that in many of the schools visited, the security guards were not armed. Therefore to ensure the safety of all the customers, the study recommends that the schools recruit trained and armed security guards and install screening machines at the gates.

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