

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND FORMULATION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS, KENYA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF SELECTED PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN HOMA-BAY COUNTY

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ABSTRACT: *The researchers carried out the study on the relationship that exists between effective strategic planning and its formulation in public secondary schools in Homa – Bay County, Kenya. The researchers used both primary and secondary data which were analyzed and results were gotten. The study established that there is strong relationship that exists between strategic planning and its formulation. The researchers recommended that academic qualification and training of the secondary school principals and BOG chairpersons need to be emphasized as the determinants of effective strategic planning and formulation.*

KEYWORDS: Strategy formulation, strategic planning, school category, and training.

INTRODUCTION

A strategy is a set of activities or processes that an organization intends to use in order to achieve its set goals and aims (Pearce, 2009). The roadmap to success has to be well defined for any organization to be successful. A strategic plan helps to provide direction and focus for all employees (www.onlinebusadv.com/?PAGE=171, date accessed 26/10/2013). Strategic planning setting out decisions and actions that result in the formulation and implementation of actions designed to achieve organizations objectives (Clive, 2005). A strategic plan also helps the various work units within an organization to align themselves with common goals (www.onlinebusadv.com/?PAGE=171, date accessed 26/10/2013). Management needs a well developed strategic plan in order to effectively establish expectations for their organization. Without a plan, expectations are developed in a void and there is little or no alignment with common goals (www.onlinebusadv.com/?PAGE=171, date accessed 26/10/2013). The development of the education sector has been a long standing objective of the Government of Kenya since independence in 1963 (www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_2_No_5_March_2012, date accessed 26/10/2013). This has therefore led to development of strategic plans to help them to develop strategic orientation and execution of strategies capable of moving the schools to their desired future states. Strategic planning and thinking involves making choices and decisions about the long-term future of an organization (Pearce, 2009). Despite the importance of a good strategic plan and the Kenyan government having put in policies and guidelines on strategic planning in public secondary schools, very few schools have adopted it (Achoka, 2007). In order to ensure it is adopted there is need to understand the relationship that exists between strategic planning and formulation. This will provide public secondary schools with a strategic road-map toward successful strategic planning, organizational development, and school effectiveness (Neville, 2002). According to Eldridge (2001), strategic plans implemented at 70% and above

level results in different products: improved performance, collaborative relationship and understanding between participants and all stakeholders.

The general objective of the study was to determine the relationship between strategic planning and formulation in public secondary schools in Homa –Bay County, Kenya. The researcher sought to divide this objective into the following questions; what is the extent of relationship between academic qualification of chairpersons of the BOG and formulation of strategic plan in public secondary schools; what is the extent of relationship between training of principals and formulation of strategic plan in public secondary schools; and what is the extent of relationship between school category and formulation of strategic plan in public secondary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

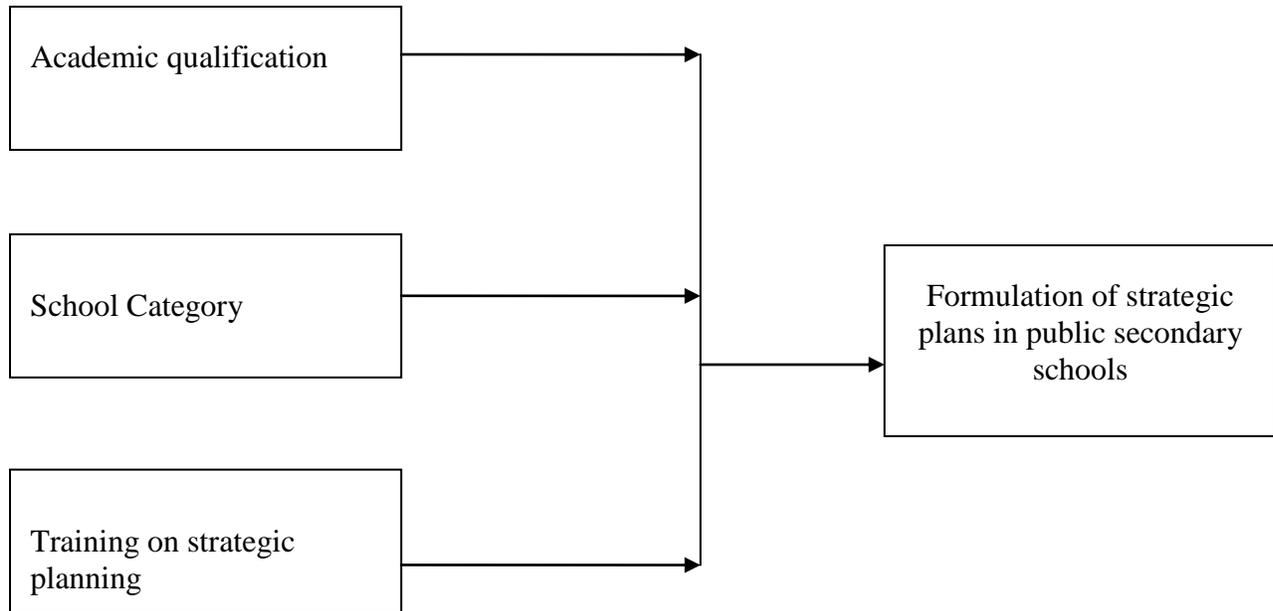
Andreas (2005), in his study on strategy implementation – an insurmountable obstacle, concluded that strategy implementation differs completely from the formulation process and requires much more discipline, planning, motivation and controlling processes. The case study demonstrates that these guidelines are well tried and reliable in practice. David (2006) in his study on getting engaged: an inclusive approach to strategy development and using multiple cross-functional and cross-organizational teams at all levels found out that fully engaging a cross section of the organization (rather than delegating it to internal heads of strategic planning or outside consultants) increases buy-in and support for the strategy as well as understanding of the strategy and the strategic context. Utilizing a variety of alternative scenarios in strategy development helps in creating winning strategies under conditions of uncertainty. And coupling the development of strategy with the launch of initiatives that begin building elements of a “winning culture” helps create a strategy tailored to an environment that itself becomes a source of sustainable competitive advantage. Marius and Rachel (2011) on the other hand in their study in strategy making: the approach matters used in-depth interviews with “strategy informants” (CEO's) in businesses and questionnaires to respondents (managers) in the same organizations, statistical techniques and factor analysis, found out that “Ends and means specificity” was associated more with the deliberate strategy approach while “ends and means flexibility” was associated more with the emerging strategy approach. “Performance consensus” was neutral and therefore relevant to both approaches. Approaches also show differences depending on the following characteristics: “degree of risk taking preferred”, “comfort with stability and predictability” as well as “primarily autonomous or individual behavior preferred”. Finally, strategy making approach is moderated by “firm size”, “CEO influence” and “environmental uncertainty”. According to John (2003) in his study on translating strategy into effective implementation: dispelling the myths and highlighting what works found out that good strategic management is a function of people actively considering the strategy as they make day-to-day decisions in an ever-changing world. Lack of focus – resources is wastefully dissipated if priorities are unclear. Put the strategy on one page: focus to execute. Poorly conceived business models – sometimes strategies are simply bad. According Martha, (2006) in her study using tactical intelligence to help inform strategy, *Strategy & Leadership*, found out that by analyzing it at a higher level, CI practitioners and strategists can use tactical intelligence to help support strategy development, not just day-to-day company operations. Martin (2012) conducted research in organizations and found that strategy is in a state of crisis and has hit on hard times,

mainly because executives do not have knowledge in strategic management and organizations make assumptions that when executives are employed, they are strategists. The assumption that when executives are employed they can think and act strategically has been refuted by this study since executives have shown lack of knowledge of strategic issues. Donley, (2007) in his study engaging the board of directors on strategy, *Strategy & Leadership*, offering a five-point process for effectively engaging a board of directors on strategy that he developed working together with corporate leaders and found out that when the CEO thinks through this process and engages the directors, the board and the CEO can enter into a dialogue that leads to collaboration and a greater chance of achieving the goals of the organization.

KNOWLEDGE GAP

Several studies have been conducted touching on strategy planning and formulation. For example, Howard, (2007) focusing on the balanced scorecard as a means of measuring performance and modifying business school strategies over time as his research design and on the study business school strategy and the metrics for success recommended a range of metrics for business schools from financial lenses to innovation and learning lenses, and adapts the scorecard framework to strategic processes from business planning to feedback and learning. Kit, (2004) on his study a conceptual synergy model of strategy formulation for manufacturing, the rate of change in both internal and external environments of manufacturing firms is increasing, which necessitates that increased attention be paid to strategic planning and strategy formulation. In this study, a conceptual synergy model for strategy formulation is proposed. Jitendra *et al*, (2013) on their study on the Government versus private primary schools in India: An assessment of physical infrastructure, schooling costs and performance, using India Human Development Survey (IHDS) data. Bivariate, trivariate,² and ANOVA test, factor analyses and Theil index were also used as methods of analyses. The results presented a distinct picture of government and private primary school education in India in terms of physical infrastructure standards, schooling cost and performance of students. In all the three selected indicators, private primary schools remained a forerunner or outperform the government primary schools in India. Besides this, the physical infrastructure and schooling cost found to have effect on performance of students both in private and public schools. Les, (2002) on the other hand conducted a study on strategic planning and school management: full of sound and fury, signifying nothing?, based on this analysis, an alternative approach to planning in schools and to school organization and a more flexible approach to school organization and leadership is proposed that is grounded in a shorter planning time scale and the development of structures that facilitate involvement, cooperation and collaboration. Kai, (2007) on business school rankings: content and context, critiques the methodologies of ranking systems, their statistical validity, the factors used, and the weightings given to them. Found out that rankings are significant drivers of a school's reputation. Good performance can double inquiries and applications and allow schools to charge prestige premiums. Financial Times top decile MBA programmes charge, on average, just below \$80,000 for an MBA. Bottom decile schools charge only \$37,000. Susan, (1998) in her study in the health-promoting school: reflections on school-parent links, concluded from the findings of recent surveys that, in England, schools are at the early stages of developing liaison with parents. Identifies a number of barriers to progress. Calls for clear, realistic policies at the national level, and for practical guidance that would enable schools to convert policy to practice. Andrew,

(2005) in his study on implementing performance management in England's primary schools, used a combination of documentary analysis, participant observation and audio-taped interviews with primary school head teachers, deputy headteachers, teachers and school governors. And provided information on the following aspects of performance management in primary schools: the meaning and purposes of performance management in primary schools; education and training for performance management; formulation and content of performance management objectives; measuring the performance of heads and teachers; the effects of performance management on teachers' professional development; and perceptions concerning the appropriateness and reality of performance related pay. David and Jason, (2008) on privatization and the rise of direct subsidy scheme schools and independent schools in Hong Kong and Singapore, examined the two school privatization schemes in Hong Kong and Singapore, by putting into perspective a discussion of their policy implications, thereby reflecting on their similarities and differences in their agenda, implementation and implications and indicated that the DSS and independent school schemes in both Hong Kong and Singapore are in line with the global trends of privatization. It is suggested that the governments of the two places have adopted different approaches in the implementations of their schemes. Rainer and Kazem, (1995) on their study on researching strategy formulation and implementation in dynamic environments, highlighted the current lack of common perspective, vocabulary and conceptual base in research approaches, many of which result in inapplicable or irrelevant strategy formulations. Aims to provide a framework for researching strategy formulation and implementation which avoids full predefinition of research objectives and methodology, but which rather allows them to emerge holistically through research processes. Jeanne, (2006) in his study is your strategy a duck?, reviewed the literature to examine what makes something feel "real." Feeling real is a subjective perception, a personal judgment that each individual makes. The article explored the concept of real – drawing on work in psychology and, again, in architecture to answer the question: what makes anything feel real? Identified four components : firstly, presence – attracting attention, secondly, significance – making it matter, thirdly, materiality – offering substance, and finally, emptiness – inviting us in. Each component offers managers a useful lens into strategy making that enhances understanding of organizations' knowing-doing gaps in a powerful way, and helps address the question "Is your strategy a duck?" Gary *et al*, (2009) on their study migration management: an approach for improving strategy implementation, employed two core perspectives to achieve better strategy implementation – a "future state" description considers identity and a "migration path" charts action." Found out that by creating and properly using clear statements of desired future identity and sequenced, interrelated paths of action programs within management processes oriented toward learning and adaptation, companies have been able to overcome the dilemmas and challenges associated with traditional approaches to strategy implementation. Looking at all these studies, none of them addressed the relationship that exists between effective strategic planning and its formulation in public secondary schools hence the researcher would like to address this issue basing his study in Homa – Bay County, Kenya.

Independent variables**Dependent variable****Figure 1: conceptual framework****RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. Descriptive survey research designs is used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification (Orodho, 2002). Mugenda & Mugenda (1999) on the other hand give the purpose of descriptive research as determining and reporting the way things are. Borg & Gall (1989) noted that descriptive survey research is intended to produce statistical information about aspects of education that interest policy makers and educators. The ideal setting for any study should be easily accessible to the researcher and should be that which permits instant rapport with the informants (Singleton, 1993). The target population for this study consisted of 52 school principals. The major tool of data collection for this study was questionnaires for primary data. Gay (1992) asserts that questionnaires give respondents freedom to express their views or opinion and also to make suggestions. Some secondary data was obtained from the county and district education offices. Mugenda & Mugenda (1999) define secondary data as any publication by an author who was not a direct observer or participant in the events described. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics. As mentioned by Gray (2004), qualitative data provides rich descriptions and explanations that demonstrate the chronological flow of events as well as often leading to chance findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**Table 1: Relationship between Academic Qualification of the Board Chair & Strategic Planning.**

Academic Qualification	Does your school have a strategic plan			
	Yes	%	No.	%
Diploma	10	50	8	60
Degree	30	70	9	16

70% of schools chaired by degree holder had formulated a strategic plan while 50% of schools chaired by diploma holders had formulated a strategic plan. Also 60% of the schools with a non graduate board chair had not formulated strategic plans while 16% of those headed by graduate chair had not formulated their plans. This is according to the table 1 above.

Table 2: Relationship between Principals' Training and Strategic Planning.

Strategic Training	Does your school have a strategic plan			
	Yes	%	No.	%
Trained	40	81	6	19
Untrained	3	13	4	77

81% of the principals trained on strategic planning had formulated strategic plans while 19% of those trained had not. Similarly, 13% of principals untrained in strategic planning had formulated strategic plans while 77% of the untrained had not formulated the plans. This is as shown in Table 2 above.

Table 3: Relationship between School Category and Strategic Planning

School Category	Does your school have a strategic plan			
	Yes	%	No.	%
County	5	85	3	30
District	31	67	2	17

67 % of the district schools that were interviewed agreed on having formulated strategic plans while 85% of county schools had formulated strategic plans.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE EXISTING STUDIES

Most of the researchers have done a lot of studies emphasizing on the failure of the executives and what this has impacted on the strategic planning and formulation and very few of them have gone to the extent of knowing why these failures are experienced. This prompted them to make blanket conclusions that the executives are lacking the strategic knowledge. But the researchers were left with the question of why are the executives are lacking this knowledge, is it their level of education? Or is it the inadequacy of their training on the strategic planning? These are the fundamental questions that the researchers would wish to answer in this study. The study also would be of great help to the Government and education administrators in the appointment of the BOG chairpersons and the Secondary School Principals. This is a great problem in Kenya where most of these executives do not have the minimum University education and hence the lack of this knowledge. Apart from the above aspects, the researchers seek to highlight the real issues to be handled in strategic management especially in the Kenya setup and in Africa as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The researcher's main objective was to find out the relationship that exists between effective strategic planning and its formulation in public secondary schools in Homa – Bay County, Kenya. Based on the findings, the study revealed that academic qualification of the board chairperson played a critical role in strategic planning. The researcher found out that the category of the school had not significant impact on formulation of strategic plans. On the objective of principals training on strategic planning, the study concluded that training principals enables them extenuate factors in strategic planning. Principals trained on strategic planning statistically more likely to formulate strategic plans for their schools compared to their untrained ones. The study revealed that principals' gender is significant in strategic planning.

RECOMMENDATION

With regard to the above findings, the researcher found out that there is a strong relationship that exists between strategic planning and its formulation. It is therefore recommended that academic qualification and training of the both the principals and the chairpersons of the board on strategic planning and formulation need to be emphasized when either being employed or appointed because these factors are the major pillars to effective strategic planning and its formulation.

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