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Original Article

## Influence of Communication to the Implementation of Strategic Plans in Kisii County Government

Sankei Ntoika Wilson<sup>1\*</sup> & Dr. Simon Nyakwara, PhD<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mount Kenya University, P. O. Box 4441-40200, Kisii, Kenya.

\* Correspondence ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3019-3865>; email: [wilson.sankei@ntsa.go.ke](mailto:wilson.sankei@ntsa.go.ke)

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#### Keywords:

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In Kenya, it is a ministerial requirement that public organizations including educational institution develop strategic plans as a means of enhancing results-based management and efficiency in their operations. Even the schools with strategic plans rarely implement them and the result has been haphazard planning techniques, poor prioritization, and failure to use the meagre resources for the right projects. Descriptive design was used in this study. The study targeted 592 professional graduate teachers from 37 Kisii County Government where a sample size of 172 respondents was drawn. The study considered 11(30%) of total school schools which are fully established schools with documented strategic plans. Descriptive and inferential were used to analyse the qualitative data obtained to enable critiques to conceptualize the results. The study revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between communication and the implementation of the strategic plan in County Governments at  $r=.445^{**}$ ,  $P<.01$  significant level contributing 19.8% variability to the implementation of strategic plan when other factors are held constant. The study established that there was a positive and significant relationship between leadership activities and the implementation of the strategic plan in County Governments at  $r=.667^{**}$ ,  $P<.01$  significant level contributing 44.5% variability to the implementation of strategic plan when other factors are held constant. Lastly; the study found out that there was a positive and significant relationship between Resources and the implementation of the strategic plan in County Governments at  $r=.767^{**}$ ,  $P<.01$  significant level contributing 58.8% variability to the implementation of strategic plan when other factors are held constant.

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## INTRODUCTION

A common criticism of strategic planning worldwide among institutions and organizations is that it is overly involved with extrapolation of the past and present and can create the illusion of certainty regarding the future (Heracleous 2000). A good strategic planning process does more than produce a tangible output (a documented plan); it supports ongoing strategic thinking, discussion, and behaviour. In a good strategic process, the strategic plan provides a dynamic map for an organization's considered movement through time and sets the stage for organizational improvement efforts. *Strategic thinking* focuses on finding and developing organizational opportunities and creating dialogue about the organization's direction. Strategic thinking is creative, divergent, and synthetic while strategic planning is conventional, convergent, and analytical (Liedtka, 1998). When strategic thinking is employed, the planning process itself provides critical value but strategic planning is still required for effective strategic work. If nothing else, the divergent results of strategic thinking must be made operational through convergent strategic planning (Corway, 2004). Vander Heijden identifies the ultimate purpose of scenario planning as helping an organization find a good and unique fit with its ever-changing environment (Van der Heijden & Eden, 1996).

The strategy paradox is a consequence of the conflict between operational commitment and

strategic uncertainty. In *The Strategy Paradox*, Michael E. Raynor provides this definition of the strategy paradox: "The strategy paradox arises from the need to commit in the face of unavoidable uncertainty. The solution to the paradox is to separate the management of commitments from the management of uncertainty. Since uncertainty increases with the time horizon under consideration, the basis for the allocation of decision making is the time horizon for which different levels of the hierarchy are responsible: the corporate office, responsible for the longest item horizon, must focus on managing uncertainty, while operating managers must focus on delivering on commitments" (Raynor, 2007). High quality implementation of strategic plans is one of the greatest determinants of success with school reforms around the world (Cooper et al., 1998). Thus, understanding the factors that affect the process of strategy implementation has become increasingly important in the United States given the rates of truancy, delinquent behaviours among student among others. According to Miller, during strategic management process in private and public school institutions, one should note that merely a good plan or strategic decision cannot generate value for an organization and its stakeholders; rather, strategies should be implemented effectively. The author notes that organizations have failed in implementing over 70% of their strategic initiatives in the US (Miller, 2002). This show how difficult is even for secondary schools to successfully implement their strategies. It

is clear that a poor or vague strategy can limit implementation efforts dramatically. Good execution cannot overcome the shortcomings of a bad strategy or a poor strategic planning effort (Hambrick, 2007).

In Kenya, the situation is similar as relevant authorities responsible for the implementation of several strategies have continued to fail. Amongst the factors affecting the implementation of strategic plans in Kenyan secondary schools, according to Omboi (2011), revealed that influence of reward management on implementation of strategic plans, resource allocation, managerial behaviour also affects implementation of strategic plans, managerial decision making, managerial philosophy all affect implementation of strategic management plans within schools. Given the fact that strategic plan implementation is a phenomenon that is new to many developing countries, there is limited or no research done on factors affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools and the same can be said for international studies which is also greatly lacking in this area.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the Ministry of Education, Kenya, Secondary schools in Kenya fall into two categories – Public or Government funded and Private. Public schools are divided into National, Extra County, County and Sub-County levels. Private schools do not receive funding from the government and they are run by private organisations or individuals. After taking the Primary school leaving exam and successfully passing, County Governments select students in order of scores. Students with the highest scores gain admission into National schools while those with average scores are selected into Extra County, County and Sub-County schools. Students who fail examinations either repeat the final school year or pursue technical training opportunities. A number of students also drop out of school by choice due to poor scores (Saunders, 2009).

Under the current system, students attend Secondary school for four years before sitting for the school leaving examination at the end of the fourth year. The first class or year of secondary school is known as form 1 and the final year is form 4. At the end of the fourth year, from October to

November students sit for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination (KCSE). The students who excel in the KCSE are admitted to the Public Universities (Eshiwani, 1993).

Secondary Schools have many stakeholders who must be involved in the Strategic Planning process. Apart from administrators, Board of Management (BOM), Parents Teachers Association (PTA), Teachers, staff, and students, the institutions also need to account for the interests of students' parents, government agencies, benefactors, alumni, the community, and accreditation agencies. Each of these stake holders makes demands upon the school and the strategic management must bring these stakeholders into the strategic management process to maximize "client satisfaction."

According to McDonel (1990), Finlay (2000), and Katsiolouides (2002), strategic planning provides significantly better performance than unplanned, opportunistic adaptive approach. It provides an integrative framework for other forms of planning. The planners have to match the activities of the organization to its' environment and also the organizations resource capabilities. Strategic planning has been used in schools in developed countries leading to school improvement.

In Kenya, school planning involves determining school needs, prioritizing school needs, preparing action plans, implementing, and monitoring the plans (School Management Guide, 1999). In order to justify their existence, schools need to develop strategies that embrace changes by anticipating challenges sufficiently in advance and by planning timely response, increasing speed of implementing of response, being flexible and respond on time to surprises which could not be anticipated in advance. Schools guided by the national goals of education must set up specific objectives designed at helping every individual student achieve varied aspirations and hence develop society. According to the Kenya Education Master Plan for Education and Training (1997 – 2010), an education plan should contain all important information about the school. This information includes the school aims which should be related to the national goals, school mission statement, description of school and the community it serves, school priorities, action plan for the next 3 years, and information about the school.

Government of Kenya (1998) and Saitoti (2003) outlined the major determinant of quality education as curriculum content, relevant instructional material and equipment, physical facilities, conducive learning environment, the quality of teaching force, and assessment and monitoring of learning achievement. The choice of method for strategic management implementation depends upon situational factors such as size of the school, complexity of programs, institutional culture, and the style of the management. In view of the complex characteristics of Secondary Schools, the implementation approach should be based upon high participation.

Kenyan Secondary Schools, especially public ones, have always planned but there was never anything strategic about it because the “planning has always been the traditional one that followed the government’s five-year planning cycle”. It is common knowledge that government’s five-year planning cycles mostly involved adjusting plans for inflation and political changes, specially to accommodate the whims of the ruling regime. The planning never seriously focused on the long term. This was the case until the advent of performance contracting that demanded that planning be strategic levels (Lewa et al., 2009).

Failure of the strategies is a major problem and challenge for many organisations. The detailed literature review shows most of the strategies fails at implementation stage, furthermore literature review and interviews with expert demonstrates that many factors are usually been ignored during the strategy implementation which are the major reason for strategy to be ineffective or failure. The body of knowledge in this area is rich, but mostly with quantitative research especially in west countries. However, analysis shows the factors that affect strategy implementation as following: poor or vague strategy, clear objectives, communication, engagement, sufficient resources, benefits realisation management, accountability, talent management, involvement, buy-in, prioritisation, selection, alignment, project management, risk management, monitoring, performance, leadership, sponsorship, commitment, effective competitor responses to strategy, authority, governance,

motivation, and rewarding. Although most authors decide that, all factors of strategy implementation have different impact and carry a different force individually.

Communication process in implementation involves clearly explanation of what new responsibilities, tasks, and duties need to be performed by the implementer. It also includes the why behind, changed activities, and more fundamentally the reasons why the new strategic decision was made firstly (Forman & Argenti, 2005).

Rapert et al. (1986) found that organizations where employees have easy access to management through open and supportive communication climates tend to outperform those with more restrictive communication environments (Rapert et al., 2002).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive design was used in this study. The study targeted 592 professional graduate teachers from 37 Kisii County Government. The study considered 11(30%) of total schools which are fully established schools with documented strategic plans (County director of Education, 2019). The schools were first stratified in five categories, day girls, day boys, mixed day, boarding girls, and boarding boys. To identify the schools to participate in the study, random sampling was done to identify 2-day girls, 2-day boys, 3 mixed days, 2 boarding girls, and 2 boarding boys from the list of the school categories. The number of teachers that participated in the study was 33-day girls, 33-day boys, 47 mixed day, 33 boarding girls, and 33 boarding boys, which was randomly sampled from a list teachers prepared by the school deputy principal. Questionnaires were used as a data collection tool. Descriptive and inferential statistics (involves formulation of regression models; analysis of the coefficient of determination of the models and standard errors of the models’ parameters) was used to analyse the qualitative data obtained to enable critiques to conceptualize the results. This includes mode, mean, percentages, and totals. The data was analysed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) Version 21 computer software.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Response Rate**

**Table 1: Questionnaire response rate**

Category of sample	Sampled schools	Sample teachers	Returned
Day girls	2	33	33
Day boys	2	33	33
Mixed day	3	47	42
Boarding girls	2	33	31
Boarding boys	2	33	30
Total sample size		179+11(principals) = 190	169 +11 principals

**Effect of Communication on Implementation of SP**

consensus affected the implementation of the SP and their responses are shown in *Table 2*.

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the following effective communication and

**Table 2: Effect of communication on implementation of SP**

Statement	Mean	Std
Effective Communication influence strategic plan implementation	4.322	0.032
Consensus influence strategic plan implementation	4.241	0.101
Employees understand what new responsibilities, tasks, and duties need to be performed by them in order to implement strategy	2.231	0.083
Employees understand strategic plan	2.000	0.005

*Key: Strongly agree (SA)-5, Agree (A)-4, Neutral (N)-3, Disagree (D)-2, Strongly Disagree (SD)-1*

The results of analysis in *Table 2* show that the respondents agree (mean 4.00) that effective communication, consensus between the top, middle, and lower-level managers on strategy intent influence strategic plan implementation. However,

they disagree (mean 2.00) that employees understand what new responsibilities, tasks, and duties need to be performed by them in order to implement strategy and that employees in public secondary schools understand strategic plan.

**Table 3: Correlation between communication levels and implementation of Strategic plan levels**

Communication		Implementation of Strategic plan			
		Quality education	Development of talent	Good environment	Stages and process
Effective communication	Pearson Correlation	.453**	.467**	.373**	.432**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.001
	N	168	168	168	168
Consensus	Pearson Correlation	.367**	.337**	.334**	.345**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.001
	N	168	168	168	168

\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The results in the *Table 3* show that effective communication positively and significantly influence Implementation of strategic plan at the levels of quality education, development of talent, good learning environment, and stages and process of strategic implementation at ( $r=.453^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ), ( $r=.467^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ) ( $r=.373^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and ( $r=.432^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The results also show that Consensus building positively and significantly influence Implementation of strategic plan at the levels of

quality education, development of talent, good learning environment and stages and process of strategic implementation at ( $r=.367^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ), ( $r=.337^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ) ( $r=.334^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and ( $r=.345^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

The levels under communication factor were merged together and correlated with merged levels of Implementation of Strategic plan. The results of their correlation are shown in *Table 4*.

**Table 4: Correlation between Communication and implementation of Strategic plan**

Communication	Implementation of Strategic plan
Pearson Correlation	.445 <sup>**</sup>
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
N	168

*\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results in the *Table 4* reveals that there was a positive and significant relationship between communication and the implementation of the strategic plan in County Governments at  $r=.445^{**}$ ,  $P<.01$  significant level. Calculating the coefficient of determinant  $r^2$ , Communication contributes 19.8% variability to the implementation of strategic plan when other factors are held constant.

( $r=.337^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ) ( $r=.334^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and ( $r=.345^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ). In summary, the study revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between communication and the implementation of the strategic plan in County Governments at  $r=.445^{**}$ ,  $P<.01$  significant level contributing 19.8% variability to the implementation of strategic plan when other factors are held constant.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of analysis established that effective Communication, consensus between the top, middle, and lower-level managers on strategy intent influence strategic plan implementation. However, on the contrary it also established that employees did not understand the new responsibilities, tasks, and duties needed to be performed by them in order to implement strategic plan. The study also established that effective communication positively and significantly influence Implementation of strategic plan at the levels of quality education, development of talent, good learning environment, and stages and process of strategic implementation at ( $r=.453^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ), ( $r=.467^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ) ( $r=.373^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and ( $r=.432^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

The findings of the study are in line with the arguments of many scholars. According to McDonel (1990), Finlay (2000), and Katsioloude (2002), strategic planning provides significantly better performance than unplanned, opportunistic adaptive approach. It provides an integrative framework for other forms of planning. Communication process in implementation involves clearly explanation of what new responsibilities, tasks, and duties need to be performed by the implementer. It also includes the why behind: changed activities and more fundamentally the reasons why the new strategic decision was made firstly (Forman & Argenti, 2005).

Lastly, the study established that Consensus building positively and significantly influence Implementation of strategic plan at the levels of quality education, development of talent, good learning environment and stages and process of strategic implementation at ( $r=.367^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ),

Rapert et al. (1986) found that organizations where employees have easy access to management through open and supportive communication climates tend to outperform those with more restrictive communication environments (Rapert et al., 2002).

### Summary of the Study Findings

The results of analysis established that effective Communication, consensus between the top, middle, and lower-level managers on strategy intent influence strategic plan implementation. However, on the contrary it also established that employees did not understand the new responsibilities, tasks, and duties needed to be performed by them to implement strategic plan.

The study also established that effective communication positively and significantly influence Implementation of strategic plan at the levels of quality education, development of talent, good learning environment and stages and process of strategic implementation at ( $r=.453^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ), ( $r=.467^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ) ( $r=.373^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and ( $r=.432^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Lastly, the study established that Consensus building positively and significantly influence Implementation of strategic plan at the levels of quality education, development of talent, good learning environment and stages and process of strategic implementation at ( $r=.367^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ), ( $r=.337^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ) ( $r=.334^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and ( $r=.345^{**}$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

In summary, the study revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between communication and the implementation of the strategic plan in County Governments at  $r=.445^{**}$ ,  $P<.01$  significant level contributing 19.8% variability to the implementation of strategic plan when other factors are held constant.

### CONCLUSION

In summary, the study revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between communication and the implementation of the strategic plan in County Governments at  $r=.445^{**}$ ,  $P<.01$  significant level contributing 19.8% variability to the implementation of strategic plan when other factors are held constant. The study established that there was a positive and significant relationship between leadership activities and the implementation of the strategic plan in County Governments at  $r=.667^{**}$ ,  $P<.01$  significant level contributing 44.5% variability to the implementation of strategic plan when other factors are held constant. Lastly; the study found out that

there was a positive and significant relationship between Resources and the implementation of the strategic plan in County Governments at  $r=.767^{**}$ ,  $P<.01$  significant level contributing 58.8% variability to the implementation of strategic plan when other factors are held constant.

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