# Status of Strategic Planning in Public Secondary Schools in Kajiado County, Kenya

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the status of strategic planning in public secondary schools in Kajiado County. The main objective that guided the study was to analyze the status of strategic planning in public secondary schools in Kajiado County and identify the challenges encountered by education stakeholders during developing and implementing strategic plans. The survey design which was used in this study was descriptive. Kajiado County has 27 public secondary schools which formed the target population. Stratified proportionate, simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to identify schools, principals, BOM members, students and teachers for the study. The population of 27 public secondary schools in Kajiado County was studied with a total of 90 respondents forming the sample. In order to address the research objective data was collected by use of questionnaires. Three schools were stratified proportionately into sub counties of Kajiado North, Kajiado Central and Kajiado West for pilot study in order to help improve face validity and content validity. To ensure reliability, test re-test reliability was conducted and a correlation coefficient for the two tests calculated. Quantitative data was subjected to descriptive and inferential analysis by the aid of SPSS then presented in tables, graphs and pie charts. From the findings, it was clear that out of ten schools sampled, eight of them developed and were using strategic plans in management of the schools. It was evident from the study that involvement of all stakeholders in strategic planning process was very important for success to be realized. Lack of human and physical resources, leadership commitment, inadequate training and knowledge posed a challenge to formulation and implementation of strategic plans. Another finding also showed that there needed to be adequate training of most stakeholders in education so that there can be a sense of commitment and ownership by all. This would ensure that there is proper management of physical, financial and human resources. The study recommends that enhancing successful implementation of strategic plans requires availing resources, setting and prioritizing targets, leadership commitment, frequent consultations and training of key stakeholders. The findings of the study may be used to inform and formulate policies on the application of strategic planning in improving internal efficiencies of public secondary schools in Kenya.*

## 1. Introduction

The purpose and primary value of strategic planning is its power to involve people in a process leading to new understandings and insights about the challenges public schools might confront in the future and how it should plan for those possibilities. The education sector, just like other important sectors, also requires long-term planning in the use of human, physical and financial resources to overcome anticipated challenges and plan for future possibilities. For instance, education sector in Kenya has since independence worked on ways to reform education to see the significance. The changing circumstances lead to important questions such as where the schools are, where they want to go, and how they want to get there (Mutuku &Mutuku, 2009). If these questions can be answered by the education stakeholders, then education sector can move a notch higher than other economic sectors. These questions in reality force stakeholders to reflect and establish the conditions on the ground, examine competitive pressures, analyze and identify challenges and matters related to education with the target being public institutions of learning, hence the need for planning strategically in order to uplift the schools to their desired target. It is therefore important to state that, strategic planning is usually concerned with making informed choices or decisions that are relevant to the future aspects of an institution (Atieno, 2013). Planning in this context focuses majorly on the schools' goals, assesses its capabilities to achieve those predetermined goals, identify societal factors that may affect the institution and come up with strategies designed to move it forward. Schools in Kenya can use a strategic plan as a means to discover its worth and place within the ever rapidly changing environment (Bakhit, 2017).

Strategic planning concept got into the education sector in the late 1980s to 1990s at a UNESCO Conference where traditional approaches were discredited (UNESCO, 1996). This was because education was seen to be involving more complicated and multidimensional problems that could not be tackled easily. The Government of Kenya (GoK) put in strategies and procedures on strategic planning schools but it seems that not all have adopted it (Ouma, 2017). Due to the government's order on the issue, some schools in Kenya have given it a try and through this they are able to identify challenges they face today. Thus, it is important to note that strategic plans enable institutions identify challenges they face and how to address them to enable them come up with ways of improving quality of their programmes in the provision of education. According to Sababu 2007, the fact that some schools have strategic plans that are not operating shows lack of dedication on the planning team's part of which may interfere with the provision of quality education, thereby resulting in management problems. By having strategic plans, there is assurance that any institution is prepared for the current and future challenges. The best way to follow the desired direction is to take part in critical thinking and planning strategically on a continuous basis and updating strategies so as to achieve the desired goals.

This study was taken in Kajiado County of Kenya. The researcher preferred this county because of overall setting since it comprises both low and high potential areas in terms of classification

171

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by the government. Moreover, the county comprises schools of all categories, that is, national, county, district and private schools. This area of study is also suitable since the researcher had some knowledge of the county which made it easier for her to undertake the research because the fieldwork is self-sponsored. This region is classified under an ASAL and marginalized, hence, the challenges they face were generalized in any other area with similar characteristics. These characteristics made this county most suitable for the research as indicated in Kajiado County (2013). Kajiado County is primarily semi-arid, receiving an annual rainfall of about 500mm, most of it falling in April while August is usually extremely dry. It is this kind of climate that determines the economic activities of the region.

Public schools in Kajiado County are not in any way different, they can also employ creativity that can transform them become consumer-focused bodies and in this case the consumer is the learner. According to Chukwumah (2015) creative and proactive managers should enlighten employees and impart a sense of dedication. Such leaders like and would do everything possible to ensure that strategies are put in place for successful implementation. Despite the government's effort to ensure strategic plans are developed and implemented, there are still a number of challenges that the county faces in terms of implementation. All these factors affect schools negatively, despite the directive. More often government policy guidelines are flouted when developing school strategic plans. From the above analysis it is clear that Kajiado county public schools have not achieved significant positive changes. Researches conducted in Kenya on the status and challenges of strategic planning in public secondary schools are also still minimal. This research study therefore, was aimed at filling these gaps by finding out the status and challenges facing development of strategic plans in public secondary schools.

Strategic plan implementations lead schools in achieving their set objectives and realize success in their operations. Secondary schools in Kenya are charged with provision of education to its residents. In Kenya, education has seen reforms that offer alignment to the needs of the society. Therefore, making strategic planning has been inevitable since year 2003. Some schools have developed and adopted strategic plans while others have not embarked on plans to institute reforms, (Mutuku & Mutuku, 2009). This creates a gap between what the managers and implementation agents do on one hand and what they are expected to do on the other hand, so that they can realize their set targets and goals. It is upon this backdrop that this study sought to investigate the status of strategic planning in public secondary schools in Kenya. It is postulated that successful implementation of strategic plans leads to high performance in the institutions and making education system become internally and externally efficient. Therefore, this study attempted to fill this gap by trying to examine the status of strategic planning in public secondary schools in Kajiado County of Kenya.

## 2. Methodology

Descriptive survey design was relevant for this study because it was intended to find out the status of strategic planning in schools. This design enabled the researcher to describe and portray characteristics of the population of the study. The researcher collected data from secondary head teachers, teachers, BoMs and students of the schools sampled. The design helped the researcher to collect data, put together, present and make inference for easy understanding.

172

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The population of 27 public secondary schools in Kajiado County was targeted, out of which a total of 90 respondents formed the sample. Stratified, simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to identify schools, principals, BOMs, students and teachers for the study. Stratified, simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to identify schools, principals, BOMs, students and teachers for the study. The main advantage with stratified sampling is how it captures key population characteristics in the sample. Similar to this method of sampling produces characteristics in the sample that are proportional to the overall population. In a simple random sample, each unit in the population has an equal chance of being selected and is free from sampling bias. Purposive sampling has the advantage of being time-and cost-effective to perform whilst resulting in a range of responses particularly useful in qualitative research.

In order to address the research objectives and research questions data was collected by use of questionnaires. Questionnaire is the most appropriate instrument due to its ability to collect a large amount of information in a short span of time and in an economic manner.

Data analysis is the organization, interpretation, and presentation of data that has been collected to a usable size and bring out a meaning (Onen & Oso, 2005). The study adopted descriptive survey design. The data from questionnaire data were first checked for validation, coded, edited and tabulated in readiness for analysis with the help of the SPSS computer package. The missing scores were checked for completion, and where missing, the average of the completed scores was taken as representative of the entire score on the considered items. After analysis, data were presented in tabular form using frequencies, tables, pie charts and percentages. Precisely, quantitative data were then be subjected to descriptive and inferential analysis then presented in tables and pie charts to analyze data on the availability and level of implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents
The study established the proportion of respondents by gender in Kajiado County. Majority of the respondents were female (53%) compared to male (47%). Therefore, it can be presumed that females were easily and readily available to participate in the study. This could possibly indicate that females have started dominating leading to under representation of males in future studies.

With reference to the status of the school, most schools that participated in the study were boarding schools (50%), followed by day schools (40%) while 10% were mixed day and boarding schools as indicated in Figure 1. There is an indication that boarding schools were more accessible in relation to the provision of information or data that were needed for the study.

### 3.2 Existence of Strategic Plans in the Schools
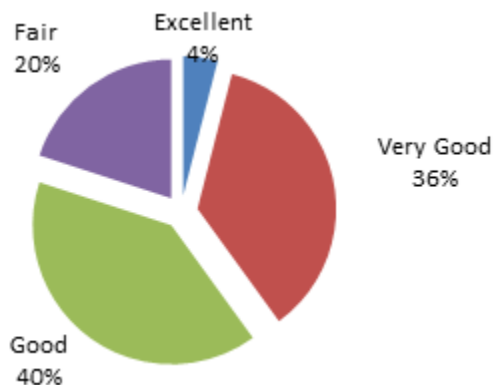Figure 1 illustrates the existence of strategic plans in the schools in Kajiado County that were studied.

*Figure 1* Existence of Strategic Plans in the Schools

According to the study findings, most schools (70%) were the principals of schools. This indicated that they had strategic plans in place in their schools. They also indicated that it was a government policy requiring schools to develop strategic plans and there was need for planning strategically. On the other hand, only 30% did not have strategic plans. The schools that had strategic plans formulated their strategic goals for a 5-year period. It is possible to presume that majority of the schools considered strategic plan as an important driver for bringing cohesion between performance and management. It also helps bringing together curriculum and other plans into a more relevant and effective actions therefore, they had them in place.

### 3.3 Utilization of Strategic Plans in Core-curriculum

In the context of this study, core curriculum refers to clearly laid down educational content taught in schools, focused on ensuring that all students involved learn certain material tied to a specific age or level. Performance in core-curriculum in schools was rated by the respondents as Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair or Poor in relation to the implementation of strategic plans. Figure 2 presents the findings of the study on performance of core-curriculum in relation to implementation of strategic plans in the schools.
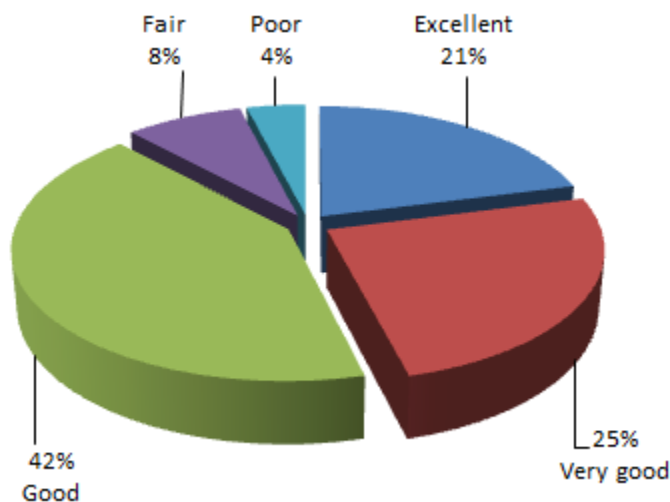


*Figure 2* Utilization of strategic plans in core-curriculum

174

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According to the study findings, majority of principals and teachers rated the utilization of strategic plans in curriculum as Good (40%), 36% indicated that it was very good and 20% felt it was Fair and 4% indicated that utilization in curriculum was Excellent. Based on the findings from the study, it may be deduced that implementation of strategic plans in the schools improve performance in the curriculum.

## 3.4 Utilization of Strategic Plans in Financial Management

Financial management involves the use and accountability of fees paid and revenues generated to support teaching and related functions. Prudent management of school financial resources is critical in determining delivery of curriculum and related functions of the schools. Therefore, the study sought to establish rating of financial performance as Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair and Poor in relation to implementation of school strategic plans. Figure 3 shows rating of financial performance in relation to development and implementation of strategic plans in schools.



*Figure 3* Utilization of Strategic Plans in Financial Management as Reported by Principals

Figure 3 showed that majority of the principals and teachers interviewed rated financial management and performance of their schools as Good (42%), another 25% indicated that it was Very Good, 21% felt it was excellent, 8% indicated that it was Fair and 4% felt that financial performance of the schools was poor. The findings on financial performance have also been corroborated by other researchers on availability of finances or lack of it as having great influence on the planning and scheduling of strategic activities.

**3.5 Teachers' Performance when Strategic Plans are utilized**

Teachers' performance in this study is considered in terms of delivery of curriculum content to realize strategic goals contained in the school strategic plans. The school principals were asked to rate performance of teachers as Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair or Poor in relation to the implementation of the school strategic plans. Figure 4illustrates the rating of performance of the teaching staff.
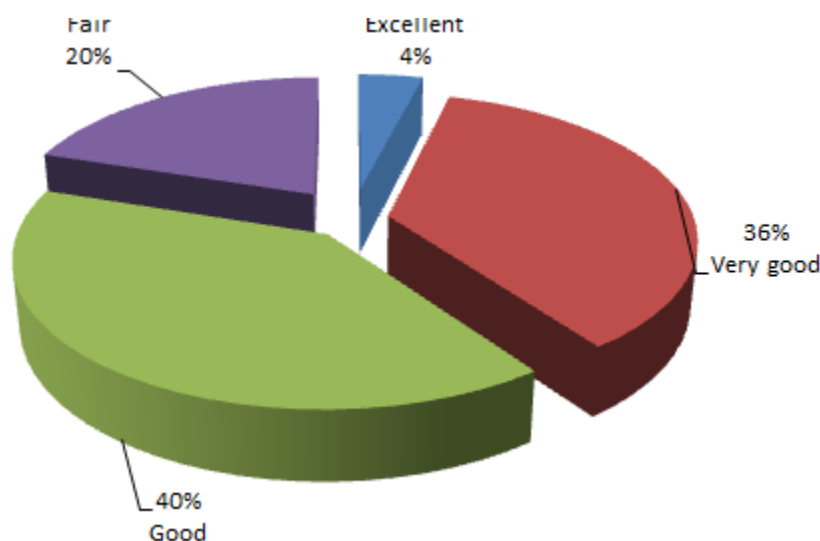


*Figure 4* Utilization of Strategic Plans by Teachers as Rated by the Principals

Regarding teacher's utilization of strategic plans, majority of the principals indicated that (56%) were rated as good, 28% felt it was very good, and 16% rated teachers' utilization as excellent. Therefore, it can be presumed that implementation of strategic plans in the schools can lead to improved performance by the teachers.

**3.6 Level of Participation of Students in Development of Strategic Plans**

This is the involvement of students in development and implementation of strategic plans. The students just as any other key stakeholder, their participation is very important. The school students were asked to define, and say if they had participated in development of strategic plans. Figure 5 illustrates findings on students' participation in the development of the schools' strategic plans.
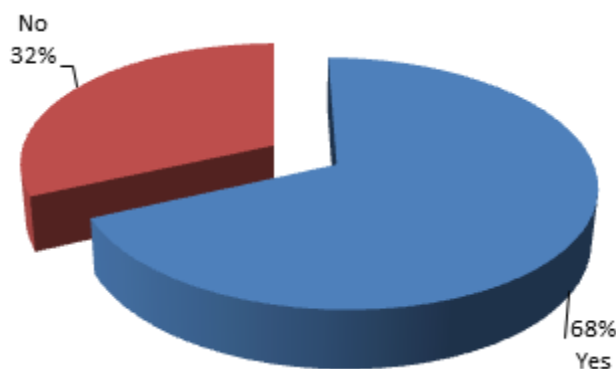
*Figure 5* participation of students in development of strategic plans

Figure 5 shows that majority of the students (68%) indicated that they participated in the development of their school strategic plans, 32% indicated that they were not involved at all. This implies that students were not left out of strategic plan development and their contribution was seen to have a positive impact.

## 4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to establish the status of strategic planning in public secondary schools in Kajiado County. Most of the public schools under study in Kajiado County (70%) developed and utilized strategic plans in management of their schools while only 30% did not have strategic plans in place. In reference to Odongo and Datche (2015), strategic plans once developed and implemented will lead to improved overall performance of institutions and reduced wastages. Involvement of all stakeholders in the schools strategic planning process was very important for successful development and implementation of strategic plans. This is shown from the study where all the 10 respondents felt that there should be involvement of all key stakeholders as corroborated by Chukwumah (2015), that involvement of stakeholders is paramount. The schools faced challenges in the development and implementation of strategic plans including inadequate physical and human resources (12%), lack of involvement of key stakeholders (12%) and commitment by those stakeholders posed a great challenge. On the other hand, external dynamics in education sector such as changes in technology at (1%) also posed some challenge to the schools. Enhancing successful implementation of strategic plans requires availing resources. For instance, Kabeyi (2017) noted that finances are a bundle of assets since they are the institutions' competitive advantage. He observed that availing finances to procure physical and learning materials leads to effective implementation and improved achievement in planned activities.  setting and prioritizing targets, leadership commitment, frequent consultations and training of many stakeholders are also some of the strategies that should be put in place to ensure successful implementation of strategic plans (Kolil 2019). It is, therefore, important to conclude from the study findings that most public schools have complied with the government guidelines on strategic plans since 70% studied had strategic plans in place.

177

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Based on the findings and objectives of the study, it can be presumed that most schools used strategic plans as management tools to improve their performance. The study concludes that most school teachers lacked training, knowledge and commitment to strategic planning which is presumably of great impact when it comes to development and implementation of strategic plans. The implementation of strategic planning in schools is greatly hindered by inadequate resources in terms of physical facilities, finances and human resources and ignorance of the existing education policies, unclear priorities, resistance to change, top-down management, inadequate skills and training and lack of commitment. The study concludes that the process of strategic planning is an essential element in school development. Thus, it focuses on improving quality and performance by strategizing, setting priorities, targets and resource allocation. With the involvement and commitment of all stakeholders in school improvement through application of best planning practices, this can go a long way in improving the quality of education in public secondary schools in Kenya.

## 5. Conclusion

From the research findings, the following recommendations were to Government Agencies and stakeholders in the education sector: Strategic planning is an expensive exercise that requires financial, physical and human capital. Therefore, officers concerned with educations should ensure that adequate physical, human and financial resources are availed to the schools for the purposes of strategic planning and implementation; There is need by the heads of institutions to actively involve all education stakeholders in strategic planning from the initial stage for its success in implementation and adoption in public schools. The principals should create a higher level of involvement of stakeholders such as teachers, parents, students support staff and education officers in any further strategy development and review to avoid lack of commitment and ownership on their part; School management should seek partnerships with other stakeholders such as NGOs, civil society, government and other development agencies that are good at resource mobilization as suggested by the principals as a way of cushioning inadequate finances; Management of public schools should adhere to and implement strategic plans as required by the education stakeholders. Education stakeholders should also ensure a high level of sensitization among stakeholders and where possible practical programmes should be instituted for capacity building.

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