

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A CASE OF KATHIANI SUB-COUNTY, MACHAKOS COUNTY

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of strategic management practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County of Machakos County. The study was guided by the following objectives; to determine the influence of objective setting on students' academic performance, to examine the influence of strategic resource allocation on students' academic performance, the study adopted descriptive survey design. The instruments of research used in this study were questionnaire and interview schedules. Target population comprised of 1,240 students, 224 teachers, and 31 principals. Stratified and simple random sampling technique were used to select 11 Principals, 76 teachers and 422 students. Quantitative data was collected using the questionnaires and interview guides. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents. Validity was established through expert judgment. Reliability was established using test retest technique and reliability coefficient = 0.79 was obtained using Pearson's product moment correlation test analysis which indicate high internal reliability. The data was descriptively analyzed using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's product moment of correlation test analysis with the help of SPSS 24 and presented using tables and charts. Qualitative data from open ended questions was analyzed using thematic analysis while qualitative data from interview guides was presented in form of narratives. The findings were presented in form of tables and graphs. The findings of this study established an insignificant relationship between objective setting and students' academic performance (p -value=0.190), a significant relationship between strategic resource allocation and students' academic performance (p -value=0.000), insignificant relationship between strategic leadership management and students' academic performance (p -value=0.080).



INTRODUCTION

According Rigstray (2017), performance management (PM) is all activities aimed at ensuring that goals are consistently being met in an effective and efficient manner. Cokins (2009) pointed out that PM is a framework that identifies opportunities for performance improvement through use of performance measures such as standards and indicators. It is the integration of performance measures, benchmarks, and goals in order to achieve optimal results. Performance management can focus on the performance of an organization, a department, employee or even the processes to build a product or service as well as many other areas. In examining secondary school performance, the main cornerstone is based upon key challenges which face this sub sector namely; access, quality, completion, retention and relevance (KESSP, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

Public secondary schools in Kathiani sub-county are expected to be performing well in the national examinations to the expectation of the parents and other educational stakeholders. However, this not the case currently. The performance has been dwindling since the year 2013. The following table shows the poor academic performance in Kathiani Sub County since 2013-2017.

Table: 1.1 Academic Performance in Kathiani Sub County since 2013-2017

Year	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Mean score	2.438	2.476	2.245	2.378	2.890	2.395	2.256

Sources: The Sub-County Director of Education, Kathiani sub-county.

It is clearly evidenced that despite the current strategic management practices, the performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) is still poor in Kathiani Sub-County. There exist various studies on influence of strategic management practices on performance. Mayse (2016) established that goal setting does have a positive impact on student achievement, Hussain (2011) established that lack of physical facilities is one of the major reasons of students' poor performance in India, Malinga (2016) established that effective curriculum implementation, monitoring, negotiation, and resource allocation, provide the basis for curriculum management, However, there exists no similar study in public secondary schools

in Kathiani Sub-County hence the need to investigate whether strategic management practices influence students' performance in Kathiani Sub-County of Machakos County.

Purpose of the study.

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of strategic management practices on students' academic performance of public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-county of Machakos County.

Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following Objectives:

- i. To determine the influence of objective setting on students' academic performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kathiani sub-County.
- ii. To examine the influence of strategic resource allocation on students' academic performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kathiani sub-County.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Game Theory BY Von and Morgenstern, (2007), Theory of Dynamic Capabilities by Teece *et al.* (1997), and Resource Based Theory (RBV) Wernerfelt (2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic Objective Setting and Organizational Performance

Objective setting is one of the most prominent and basic tools used by both individuals and organizations to assist in setting their direction and in accomplishing it. Objective setting always goes hand in hand with goal (Henry, 2004). Strategy objective setting is the process by which an organization chooses the most appropriate courses of action to achieve its defined goals (Byars, 2001). Vision describes the firm's aspirations of what it really wants to be. Vision statements are designed to capture the imagination of the public and as well galvanize the efforts of employees at all levels such that its emotional appeal challenges them to commit their full energies and minds to believe it is the best.

Strategic objective setting became very popular and widespread between 1960s to mid-1970s, when people thought it was the answer for all problems, and corporate America was obsessed with strategic planning. In 1973 there was an oil crisis in the world and there was need to come up with strategic plans so as to remain competitive during the deficiency of the crucial commodity (Akinyele&Fasogbon, 2007).

Strategic Resource Allocation and Organizational Performance

According to Milano (2017) the highest corporate priority is to create long-term value, which requires resources be allocated to businesses, products and customers that can deliver profitable growth. According to Potters (2017), corporate success often falters due to suboptimal Strategic Resource Allocation (SRA), which includes the allocation of capital, marketing and R&D across existing businesses, which will be covered herein, but also acquisitions, debt repayment, dividends and buybacks. Three primary reasons why strategic resource allocation is often sub-optimal are: Erroneous Objectives: Most management teams chase too many different and often conflicting goals, and all-to-often end up achieving few of them. All strategies should be aligned with the primary corporate objective of creating long-term value.

Research Gaps

Strategic management is expected to positively influence performance because it aids in selection of strategies that enable organizations to best allocate and exploit their resources and strengths relative to opportunities in their external environment (Akinyi, 2010). This makes strategic planning in Public Secondary Schools in Kathiani Sub-county inevitable because they can only attract quality students and receive support from their stakeholders if they meet acceptable standards of performance. Strategic planning enable organizations to perceive issues related to their performance. Some empirical studies conducted on strategic plans implementation and organization performance include. The studies reviewed have showed that strategic planning practices influence students' academic performance.

Adan (2016) study on institutional factors influencing performance at Kenya certificate of primary education in public schools in Mandera East Sub-county established that pupils' performance is highly determined by the availability of teaching and learning resources. This study was conducted in public primary schools but the current study was conducted in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-county.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Target Population refers to all observations of interest in a total collection like people or events as recounted by a researcher (Burns, 2008). A target population refers to all people under consideration in any field of inquiry. The target population of this study included 31 principals, 224 teachers and 1,240 form three and four students of public secondary schools in Kathiani sub-county. School principals were involved in the study since they are directly involved in the management of schools. The teachers and students are chosen for the study since are key stakeholders in school.

The data collection tools used included the Questionnaire and Interview Schedules. This is because a questionnaire is appropriate to gather data from respondents who do not have enough time for interview sessions.

The researcher obtained an introduction letter from the office of the dean postgraduate studies in Machakos University in order to enable him get a research permit from National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI).

A pilot study was carried out with the principals, teachers and students in other two schools other than the ones where the research was conducted in Kathiani sub-county. The reason for this preliminary survey was to ascertain the reliability and validity of the research instruments in order to ensure that the instruments responds to the research questions.

The data was descriptively analyzed using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's product moment of correlation test analysis with the help of the SPSS software version 24.

Research findings

Table 1.2 Teachers Opinion on how Objective Setting Influence Performance

Opinions	Frequency	Percentage
Help the school administration to make informed decisions	48	87.3
Guides board members on management	44	80.0
Objectives help teachers to cover syllabus on time and students have adequate time for revision	46	83.6
Objectives give direction of what should be done in school	38	69.1
Ensures BoM employ competent teachers	36	65.4
Objectives helps students to work hard to meet their targets	34	61.8
N=55		

Teachers were also asked to tick on their agreement level on influence of objective setting on students' academic performance. The data were analyzed in form of percentages and frequencies. Findings are presented in Table 1.2.

Table: 1.3 Teacher’ Agreement Level of Influence of Objective Setting

Statements	Strongly disagree%	disagree%	Neutral%	Agree%	Strongly Agree%	Mean
We set time to complete syllabus on time	0	1.8	7.3	38.2	52.7	4.42
The objectives set by the school are time bound	1.8	9.1	14.5	27.3	47.3	3.93
Students are involved in setting school objectives	20.0	50.9	10.9	14.5	3.6	2.67
There is periodic review to evaluate the extent a particular objective has been attained	3.6	5.5	9.1	63.6	18.2	3.69
We set achievable objectives	3.6	12.7	7.3	54.5	21.8	3.67

N=55

Findings in Table 1.3. indicate that:52.7%(29) of the teachers strongly agreed that they set time to complete syllabus on time; 47.3%(26) strongly agreed that the objectives set by the school are time bound; 50.9%(28) disagreed with the statement that students are involved in setting school objectives; 63.6%(35) agreed that there is periodic review to evaluate the extent a particular objective has been attained and 54.5%(30) of the teachers agreed that they set achievable objectives. The finding was supported by a principal who said that, “Having a school plan ensures every activity is effectively executed. Checking of teachers’ scheme of work ensures they cover syllabus on time and students have adequate time for revision and preparing for national exams.” This implies that majority of secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-county set objectives with an aim of improving students’ academic performance. However, the school administration does not involve the students in setting the school objectives even though they are key stakeholders in learning institutions. The finding concurs with Okode (2013) that target setting enables early completion of syllabus allowing the students to revise, gain confidence hence influencing their academic performance.

Strategic Resource Allocation and Students’ Academic Performance

The second research question was to determine the influence of strategic resource allocation on students’ academic performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kathiani sub-County. Teachers were asked to tick on their agreement level on influence of strategic resource allocation on students’ academic performance. The data were analyzed in form of percentages and frequencies. Findings are presented in Table 1.3.

Table 1.4. Teacher’ Agreement Level of Influence of Strategic Resource Allocation

Statements	Strongly disagree%	disagree%	Neutral%	Agree%	Strongly Agree%	Mean
The schools allocates more resources to acquiring learning materials like books	0	7.3	14.5	52.7	25.5	3.96
The library is well equipped	18.2	54.5	9.1	12.7	5.4	2.93
The school invites sponsors to help in construction of dormitories	9.1	16.4	5.4	50.9	18.2	3.35
The school funds from MoE are decided jointly on how to use by BoM, principals , teachers and parent representatives	10.9	7.3	9.1	60.0	12.7	3.31
School funds are allocated cautiously to all school tasks	23.6	50.9	7.3	12.7	5.4	3.53

N=55

Findings in Table 1.4 indicate that:52.7% (29)of the teachers agreed that the schools allocates more resources to acquiring learning materials like books; 54.5%(30)disagreed with the statement that the library is well equipped; 50.9%(28)agreed that the school invites sponsors to help in construction of dormitories; 60%(33)agreed that the school funds from MoE are decided jointly on how to use by BoM, principals , teachers and parent representatives and 50.9%(28)of the teachers disagreed with the statement that school funds are allocated prudently to all school tasks with keen interest on performance. All the principals said that, “The school administration work hand in hand with the MOE to ensure school gets enough resources and source from parents to acquire more resources. Resources are also allocated termly where needed in order to ensure facilities are enough.” This shows that the schools strategically allocated available resources in the school to enhance students’ academic performance although the resources are limited. The finding is in agreement with Lockheed and Verspoor (2011) that no meaningful teaching and learning takes place without adequate resource materials and adequate teaching and learning resources.

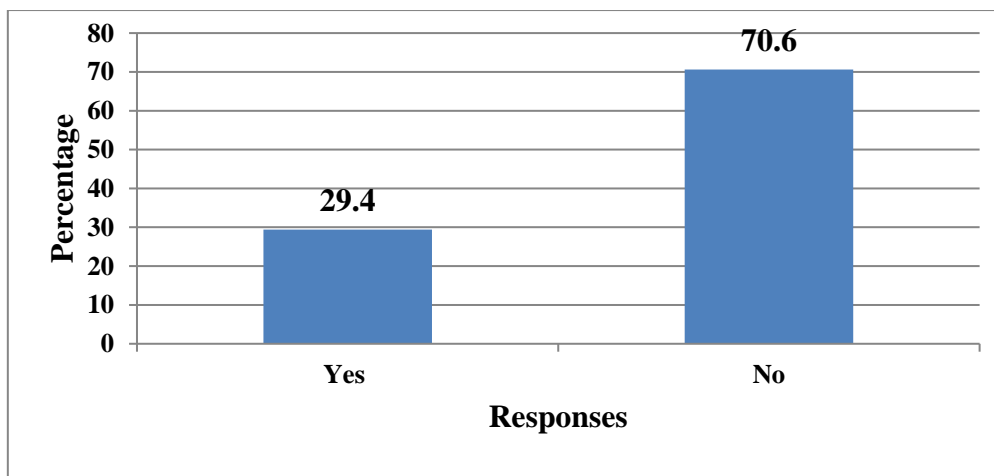
Teachers were further asked to give an opinion on how strategic resource allocation influence students’ academic performance of public secondary schools. Findings were summarized and are presented in Table 1.4.

1.5. Teachers’ Opinion on how Strategic Resource Allocation Influence Students’ Academic Performance

Opinions	Frequenc y	Percentage
Allows for equal allocation of resources in school	50	90.9
Equipping laboratories help students to learn sciences better	48	87.3
Facilitates provision of adequate teaching and learning resources	40	72.7
N=55		

Findings in Table 4.7 show that 90.9% of the teachers opined that strategic resource allocation allows for equal allocation of resources in school, 87.3% opined that equipping laboratories help students to learn sciences better and 72.7% opined that strategic resource allocation facilitates provision of adequate teaching and learning resources. This implies that strategic resource allocation helps to improve performance since enough text books enables students to read ahead of planned lesson and revise in readiness for the national exams. The finding is in agreement with Jekanyifa (2014) that teaching materials like chalkboards, textbooks, apparatus, and handbooks enable the teaching and learning process to go smoothly hence improving performance.

The researcher also sought students’ opinion on adequacy of teaching and learning resources in their school. Findings are presented in Figure 1.1.



Summary of the Findings

In line with research question one; findings established an insignificant relationship between objective setting and students' academic performance (p-value=0.037). Findings also established that the teachers set time to complete syllabus on time; the objectives set by the school are time bound; there is periodic review to evaluate the extent a particular objective has been attained and teachers set achievable objectives. Objective setting could help teachers to cover syllabus on time, help students to work hard to meet their targets, help the school administration to make informed decisions, guide board members on management and ensure that the BoM employ competent teachers. Objective setting does not have much influence on students' academic performance in the study area since the objectives are not fully implemented. The finding differs with Mayse (2016) that goal setting does have a positive impact on student achievement and positive change in schools requires clear goals.

In line with research question two: the study showed a significant relationship between strategic resource allocation and students' academic performance (p-value=0.000). The schools' administrators try to source funds from the government to enable allocation of teaching and learning resources although they have not yet achieved the 1:1 ratio. Majority of libraries and laboratories in public secondary schools in the study area are not fully equipped and have small space leading to congestion and only a few students can access them at one given time. Findings further established that equipping laboratories help students to learn sciences better and strategic resource allocation facilitates provision of adequate teaching and learning resources. However, the school funds are sometimes allocated to irrelevant projects like tiles and repainting classes which do not help in improving students' performance. The finding is in agreement with Mwamba (2013) that quality education is influenced by educational resources and physical facilities.

Conclusions

This study has established that set objectives influence students' academic performance if well implemented. The principal must also work with the teachers and other stakeholders to maintain that the syllabus is addressed in a timely manner so that the students are not disadvantaged. Schools that are able to cover the syllabus in a timely manner and administer standardized exams prepare their students for better results in KCSE exams unlike those that at the last minute just brush through the syllabus.

Teaching and learning materials are critical ingredients in learning and the intended programme cannot be easily implemented without them; no meaningful teaching and learning takes place without adequate resource materials and adequate teaching and learning resources have an impact on academic performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that;

The study recommends that principals should motivate teachers who perform well in their subjects through commending them for their good work. Likewise, they should reprimand those who don't perform well in their subjects. This will enhance students' performance since motivation of teachers has a positive impact on students' academic performance.

The principals, school committees and parents should be organized to raise funds for building and equipping libraries in order to improve K.C.S.E. performance. The principals should be encouraged and supported by the local education stakeholders to mobilize resources to supplement the government provision of teaching/learning materials. This may help to solve the challenges of inadequate teaching/learning materials currently facing public secondary schools as found out by the study. The ministry of education should reinforce the implementation of strategic plans in all public secondary schools with intensive monitoring and supervision. The board members should consider seeking professional services from competent strategic managers to guide the school administration on how to effectively manage strategic practices.

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