

Strategic Planning and Performance of Public Secondary Schools in Rarieda District, Kenya

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ABSTRACT:- Many scholars and authors argue that the correlation of strategic planning and performance has not been clearly established and that although strategic planning is not the sole contributor to high firm performance, firms with excellently executed strategic plans perform better than their counterparts. Issues of contingency and dynamic, complex environment have necessitated strategic planning and thus the Government being concerned to provide quality education has made strategic planning a policy through the MoE to all public secondary schools in Kenya. The objectives of this study were to establish strategic planning practices in public secondary schools in Rarieda district and to determine the influence of strategic planning on performance. Using cross-sectional descriptive survey design and structured (closed – ended) questionnaires the researcher collected primary data from 27 public secondary schools in Rarieda district. The data was analyzed using both inferential and descriptive statistics to determine the strength of linear relationship. The key findings of the study were: most schools (74%) practice formal strategic planning and strategic planning is positively correlated to performance. Besides this, it was also established that management do not carry out thorough environmental analysis and does not involve stakeholders to a large extent as required and more still, the strategic plans developed are not fully implemented. It's therefore a surmise to say that strategic planning is an important practice and all public secondary schools should engage in formal strategic planning. The main recommendation in this study is for the policy developers through MoE to enhance strategic planning in public secondary schools and the top school management to invest resources, time and energy in implementation of the strategies. Finally, future researchers should endeavor to establish the challenges of strategic implementation and how strategic planning can be implemented to enhance its contribution particularly to academic performance.

Key Words:- Strategic Planning, Firm Performance, Ministry of Education (MoE), Public Secondary Schools, Stakeholders

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Every organization has an internal and an external environment that are interdependent (Albanese and Van Fleet, 1983). The continuous evolution and interaction of internal environment components and the turbulent and dynamic nature of the external environment occasioned by constant changes in competition, economy, technology, political-legal aspects and social-cultural-demographic factors, has made strategic management popular in comprehending an organization's strategic position and strategic choices in pursuit of excellent performance (Pearce II and Robinson 2011). The contingency theory postulates that organizations are open systems and there is no one best way of managing an organization (Burnes, 2000). This is because rapid environmental changes present them with various opportunities, threats and constraints (Barney, 2007).

Various organizational and economics theories have addressed firm performance, cementing the fact that performance is the main goal of every organization. In the 1960s, a firm's resource-based stood out as the most popular explanation as to why one firm could perform better than another. However, during 1970-80s, economists analyzed problems of the firm and the industry under the Industrial Organization Economics theory whose key framework is Structure-Conduct-Performance paradigm. The paradigm sought to identify the correlation between an industry's performance, conduct of its firms and industry structure, (Barney, 2007). The equivalent of the Structure-Conduct-Performance paradigm of the Industrial Organization Economics theory is the Environment Strategy Performance framework in which performance is shaped by strategic choices based on environmental dynamics. After 1980, the input of behavioral scientists focusing on optimization and role of organizational behavior became profound, (Albanese and Van Fleet, 1983). Therefore, the essential question is whether or not strategic planning improves performance levels of firms.

The controversy on whether the strategic planning improves performance in schools has been ongoing. For instance, Bell (2002) focusing on English schools in the UK examined whether strategic planning and school management was just full of sound and fury signifying nothing. In Kenya education helps push further the government's economic and social agenda by providing a skilled workforce, generating a civilized society

and promoting active citizenship, (Basic Education Act, 2013, Constitution of Kenya, 2010). The purpose of public secondary schools in Kenya is to equip learners with knowledge, skills and values to compete in obtaining quality courses and colleges, (Birgen, 2007). Ranking of schools and individual student performance at national, county and sub-county levels has heightened competition among public secondary schools. Stakeholders in education have consequently embraced strategic planning as a management tool to diagnose the competitive environment, allocate resources appropriately and secure a competitive advantage sustainable over a long period. Hence, the question under debate is whether or not strategic planning improves performance in schools.

Strategic Planning

There are several definitions of strategic planning but there is no commonly accepted or universal definition of concept of strategic planning because different writers define it from several points of view. Strategic planning encompasses making of strategic choices to position a firm at an advantage against competitors in the long-term, (Johnson, Scholes and Whittington, 2008). Strategic planning can also be defined as a top management function concerned with making decisions with regard to the determination of the organization mission, vision, philosophy, objectives, strategies and functional policies, (Sababu, 2007). In a nutshell, strategic planning is a rational and long-term process, futuristic in nature and action-oriented as it transforms strategic thoughts into strategic actions and involves selecting from among possible courses of action to make strategic decisions that bring the firm closer to its overall aim, (Bruce and Longdon, 2000, Drucker, 1989).

Strategic management process entails four stages namely; environmental analysis, strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation and control, (Johnson et al, 2008). Strategic planning on the other hand entails defining the purpose of the organization, determining advantage, setting boundaries, choosing areas of emphasis and estimating a budget, (Bruce and Longdon, 2000). Environmental analysis is a critical ingredient in the strategic planning process because it ensures formulation of correct strategies made from an informed view-point of the prevailing organizational conditions and the firm's competitive external environment, (Ansoff 1990, Barney 2007, Bruce and Longdon, 2000). Strategy formulation entails making strategic decisions or strategic choices based on the firm's strategic issues and also the strategic options at hand, (Lynch, 2009).

Strategic planning aims at making strategic decisions or strategic choices through formulation of mission and vision, setting of policies, goals and objectives and identifying means of achieving those objectives. Organizations engage in strategic planning in order to achieve clarity of future direction, design internal action approaches, make proper choices and priorities, deal effectively with organizational changes and uncertainties in external environment, build team work and expertise based on resources, processes and people and develop effective strategies to improve organizational performance, (Cole, 2004). Performance is the goal of every organization. It refers to the end result of activities while strategic planning aims to improve these results. Ansoff (1990) and Yabs (2007) records that strategic planning has gained popularity since the 1960s. This is because of its perceived relevance in diagnosing the prevailing competitive and turbulent business environment and enabling appropriate resource allocation to gear the firm towards achievement of its short-term objectives and long-term goals which determine a firm's performance level in the markets and industries it operates, (Barney, 2007).

Organizational Performance

An organization is a social unit within which people strive to achieve a given mission (Sababu 2007). Generally, organizations are commonly instruments of purpose coordinated by intentions and goals. Drucker (1984), defines organizational performance in terms of effectiveness and efficiency with which the organization's objectives are achieved, while Barney (2007), defines it as comparison of the economic value of firms and rating them to have competitive advantage, competitive parity or competitive disadvantage. March and Sutton (1997), notes that most organizational studies define performance as a dependent variable and seek to identify variables that produce variations in performance but also further acknowledges that causal complexity surrounding performance and difficulty in explaining variation in performance or effectiveness still poses a challenge to obtain a more aggregate assessment of organizational performance.

The concept of performance is vital in all organizations whether commercial, profit-making or Not-for-profit organizations, private or public sector, (Johnson et al, 2008). Organizational performance is a measure of the extent to which the organization's goals and objectives have been achieved. Such measure of achievement informs all the stakeholders of the extent to which we are succeeding in the business we are in. Based on their context, different organizations use different modes of performance. Bolo, Muturia and Oeba,(2010),says that

firm performance refers to how well or badly a firm is performing both financially and non-financially thus exclusive use of financial achievements or indicators as the sole yardstick to determine organizational performance would be lopsided because organizations desire to achieve broad objectives. As such, Thompson et al (2007), suggests that, use of a balanced scorecard for measuring company performance that tracks the achievement of both financial objectives and strategic objectives is optimal.

Measurement of performance in a school set-up will therefore include academic excellence, land infrastructure development, discipline and school culture, stakeholder satisfaction, financial stability and excellence in non-academic activities. Firm performance is therefore a very essential aspect of a firm because as March and Sutton (1997), puts it, performance comparisons become a basis for evaluating executives, making decisions about resource allocation of human and other resources, for writing history and for stimulating arrogance and shame.

Public Secondary Schools in Kenya

The Kenyan education system runs from early childhood to the primary or elementary education level, to secondary education and finally tertiary education at the college or university levels. The Kenya government endeavors to provide quality education to every Kenyan child irrespective of their social-economic status through initiatives such as Free Primary Education (FPE), Universal Primary Education (UPE), and Education for All (EFA), Free Secondary Education (FSE) and Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE). Basic education embraces ECDE to Secondary school level, (basic education act No.14 of 2013). These initiatives have set time limits, for instance, UPE by 2005, EFA by 2015, (Sessional paper No. 1 2005).

The government developed Education Sector Strategic Plan [2003] and set targets outlined in the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005. It then launched KESSP in 2005 which is part of a multi-donor sector wide approach supporting Kenya in its effort to reach its Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by 2015, (Walekhwa, 2009). Up to 2012, KESSP dovetails with other MoE key programs to assist the government of Kenya in its implementation of the National Education Sector Strategic Plan of 2008-2012. However, with changes in the political and legal arena propelled by the inauguration of new constitution in 2010, there have been numerous changes in policy, for instance, the Implementation agent has changed to National Education Sector Support Program (NESSP) and Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 updated to Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012 with reference to a new Basic Education Act 2013 and the new MoE's strategic plan 2012-2017.

The ministry's strategic plan is cascaded down to individual public secondary schools that are expected to enact a strategic plan in tandem with the Ministry of Education's Strategic Plan. Evidently, strategic planning in public secondary schools is largely determined by external pressures such as policy. Pressure on existing resources, desire for quality, challenge of rapidly changing policy and the highly competitive environment in the industry makes strategic planning relevant. As Les Bell (2002) notes, strategic planning is a key management process that draws together institutional values and goals and provides a framework for the quality of provision and the deployment of resources. The question of concern is therefore, whether strategic planning in public secondary schools leads to improved performance.

Public Secondary Schools in Rarieda District

Rarieda District is a relatively new district bordering Bondoc district in Siaya County. It is one of the rural constituencies in Luo-Nyanza, one of the six districts in Siaya County and 208 districts in Kenya. Most of the Rarieda constituents live below the poverty line with direly low income levels due to minimal economic activities within the constituency. The high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the district accounts for the large number of orphans who drop out of school due to financial constraints. School drop-out rates and absenteeism are graver in schools near beaches as boys drop-out to join the fisher folk since fishing underpins the local economy while girls are prone to teenage pregnancies and early marriages. Most schools are also understaffed with inadequate learning facilities. These socio-economic challenges explain the low enrollment rates, low retention rates, low completion rates and the generally low education quality. These challenges make Rarieda a unique set-up for study.

The district has 34 public secondary schools as at January 2013 with some offering boarding facilities while others are day schools. According to the Rarieda District Strategic Plan, (2010-2015), the enrollment stands at approximately 5322 boys and 3954 girls, that is, 57% boys and 43% girls respectively, with 68 female teachers and 205 male teachers, There are no schools in the National category but only provincial level (currently county schools) and district schools (currently sub-county schools). The schools are expected to adopt and domesticate their own strategic plans from the districts strategic plan as a requirement by the MoE. Besides

strategic planning being a government's policy, the dwindling resources coupled by the ever changing and highly competitive environment has made strategic planning a necessary practice in the endeavor to improve academic performance and all the other aspects of performance such as stakeholder satisfaction, staff motivation and co-curricular activities.

Statement of the Problem

Strategic planning practices in Kenya commenced slowly and gradually back in the 1960s but are presently gaining currency and popularity (Yabs, 2007). The public sector finds the concept of strategy and strategic planning just as important as in commercial firms and hence public secondary schools in Rarieda District are required to formulate strategic plans in tandem with the MoE's strategic plan in order to foster the government's agenda to provide every Kenyan child with the right to quality education and training (Birgen, 2007). Besides adoption of strategic planning as a government's policy, the dwindling resources coupled by the ever changing and highly competitive environment have made strategic planning a necessary practice (Goode, 2009). Strategic planning is expected to positively influence performance (academic and non-academic) 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 Rarieda District inevitable because they can only attract quality students and receive support from their stakeholders if they meet acceptable standards of performance.

There have been studies on influence of strategic planning on performance and related areas in other parts of the country. For instance, Goode (2009), studied influence of 9 strategic planning on the performance of public secondary schools in Kisumu East, Akinyi (2008), studied challenges facing private secondary schools in implementation of strategic plans in Kisumu West district but did not single out effect of strategic plans on performance. Akinyi (2010), studied influence of tangible and intangible resources on performance in public secondary schools in Bondoc district but did not address strategic planning. There is no study, to the knowledge of the researcher, that focused on influence of strategic planning on performance in Rarieda district and this clearly illustrates presence of a knowledge gap to be addressed in this study. Does strategic planning influence performance in public secondary schools in Rarieda District?

Study Objectives

- i). To establish strategic planning practices adopted by public secondary schools in Rarieda District, Kenya.
- ii). To determine the influence of strategic planning on performance of public Secondary Schools in Rarieda, Kenya.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Concept of Strategic Planning

Generally, a plan is an intentional prior arrangement to achieve a particular purpose. Strategic planning is defined as a tool to determine the mission, vision, values, goals, objectives, roles and responsibilities, timelines and personnel responsible for moving an organization or institution from the current to the desired state in future (Chiuri and Kiumi, 2005). Strategic planning consists of competitive moves and business approaches managers employ to grow the business, attract and please customers, compete successfully, conduct operations and achieve the targeted level of performance. Strategic planning is fundamental in aligning organization's internal activities to the ever changing external environment. Organizations engage in strategic planning in order to achieve clarity of future direction, design internal action approaches, make proper choices and priorities, deal effectively with organizational changes and uncertainties in external environment, build team work and expertise based on resources, processes and people and develop effective strategies to improve organizational performance (Cole, 2004).

The concept of strategic planning has notably gained popularity in modern organizations due to scarcity of resources, increased competition, increased need to meet customer and stakeholder expectations and need to resolve issues effectively and efficiently. It is therefore evident that strategic planning is a vital tool to the present-day managers to navigate through the current complex, dynamic, competitive and uncertain business environment because as Goode (2009) correctly notes, strategic planners must adapt to a world where growth isn't steady; it can slow down, increase or be interrupted in an unpredictable manner. This because a well-developed, logically complete strategy, can be tested by the market and adjusted by managers to improve its ability to generate competitive advantage (Barney, 2009). This also implies that practitioners that uphold the design school of thought (deliberate, deterministic or prescriptive strategic plans), should also appreciate the arguments brought forth by the process school (emergent, intuitive, contingency or descriptive strategic plans). It is therefore, a surmise to say that strategic decisions should be sustainable, should offer competitive

advantage, should develop processes to deliver the strategy, should exploit the linkages between the organization and its environment and should move the organization forward to a significant position (Lynch, 2009).

Strategic Planning Process

The strategic management process entails four core stages including environmental analysis, strategy formulation, implementation and the evaluation and control stage, (Johnson et al, 2008). However, practitioners emphasize various stages based on their context, content or the strategic process itself. First and foremost, the management should establish mission, vision and objectives from which it can derive meaningful strategies (Sababu, 2007). Next, environmental analysis is a critical stage as it ensures formulation of strategies from an informed view-point of the external and internal environment (Bruce and Longdon, 2000). The second and crucial stage in strategic planning is strategy formulation. It builds on the first stage where strategic issues are identified, opportunities, threats or constraint and strategic alternatives weighed to decide on best strategic action to be taken. Although strategic planning ends in making of strategic choices, the strategic management process emphasizes on the implementation stage because brilliantly formulated strategies that are not implemented do not add any value to the firm. Finally, evaluation and control process seeks to ensure that a firm is achieving what is set out to achieve by comparing performance with desired results, revealing the performance gap and providing feedback necessary for the management to take correct action (Yabs 2007).

Strategic planning takes various approaches in different organizations depending on their size. Some firms undertake formal, semi-formal or informal strategic planning. Carter et al (2006) notes that small firms do not largely engage in formal strategic planning because the entrepreneur engages in creative ways of generating resources and sales in an unplanned and purely guesswork manner. Formality defines the extent in which a strategy is deliberate, documented, communicated and the time spent on planning as well as degree and involvement of participants and specifications of the process, resources and responsibilities (Goode, 2009). According to Ansoff (1990), deliberate and systematic strategic planning was introduced in 1960s. However, Johnson et al (2007), reports that formal system of strategic planning can lead to misunderstanding of the purpose of planning, problem in design and the strategic planning system may fail to gain ownership of strategic plan leading to loss of innovativeness and authenticity.

Organizational Performance

Performance can be defined as a collection of work activities, operational efficiency, and effectiveness, their measurement and subsequent outcomes attained (Dessler, 2008). Every organization has well defined mechanisms of measuring performance which enable it to evaluate current and past achievements relative to expected standards but the methods used to measure performance are relative to context in which the organization operates and the strategic objectives pursued (Akinyi, 2010). Carton and Hoffer (2010), reports the observation of Venkatraman and Ramanujam (1986) that there is little dispute that one of the core purposes of both entrepreneurship and strategic management theory and research is the improvement of organizational performance but there is no consensus regarding the best or even sufficient measures of organizational performance. They consent that different measures of organizational effectiveness and performance have been used with little attention to the limitations these measures may impose on the interpretation or generalizability of the results of the research.

However, in spite of the above stand-off, performance can be measured by quantitative methods such as net and gross profit, Return on Investment, Return on Equity Employed, equity or capital and so on or by qualitative methods such as absenteeism levels, job satisfaction, industrial relations, teamwork, best management practices, new product development, operational sufficiency, efficiency in terms of cost reduction, employee and stakeholder satisfaction among others (Johnson et al, 2008). The need to measure both financial and non-financial aspects of performance has led to use of the balanced scorecard proposed by Kaplan and Norton, (1992). However, selection of appropriate performance measures to ensure consistency of measurement is a challenge due to context of operation and variety in strategic objectives pursued by firms. In spite of this challenge, researchers and scholars tend to agree that strategic planning is positively correlated to organizational performance (Ansoff, 1990).

III. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Strategic Planning and Organizational Performance

Strategic planning is a step by step process with objectives and end-products that can be evaluated. Performance is the heart of every organization. Researchers and analysts have over the past decades investigated the influence of strategic planning on organizational performance but up to date the correlation between strategy and firm performance is an on ongoing debate (Bolo, Muturia and Oeba, 2000). Whereas some authors argue

that there is quite minimal (if any) correlation between strategic planning and high firm performance, others argue that firms with well-conceived and excellently executed strategic plans have high probability of high performance (Ansoff, 1990).

Researchers suggest that strategic planning positively influences firm performance and that measurement methods and contingency factors are primarily responsible for the inconsistencies reported in literature. Strategic planning is viewed as systematized, step by step, chronological procedures to develop or coordinate an organizational strategy leads to the concept of formality in strategic planning (Johnson et al, 2008). Formality is the extent to which a strategy is deliberate, documented, communicated and the time spend on planning as well as the degree of involvement of participants and specification of the process, resources and responsibilities (Goode, 2009). Generally, greater formality in strategic planning positively correlates to high firm performance. Ansoff (1990) notes that deliberate and systematic pre-planning of acquisition of strategy produces significantly better financial performance than unplanned opportunistic, adaptive approach. Sababu (2007), echoes the same views that, formal strategic management systems significantly influences organizational performance.

Similarly, other authors argue that it would be naïve to conclude that formal planning is the sole cause of success in firms because firms may be using other management practices such as organization design, good human resource practice, or corporate culture to steer high performance (Nzuve, 2007, Robin and Coulter, 2012 and Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). In the same vein, others such as Robinson and Pearce (2011), have argued for and against the concept that formal strategic planning is suited solely for large firms and that it improves performance in both large and small firms (Goode, 2009). Small firms do not focus on market positioning and competitive advantage but the entrepreneur engages in creative ways of generating resources and sales in an unplanned and purely guesswork manner. Indeed, s/he is the executer of the process and due to lack of formal structures to undertake the corrective adjustments formally; strategy changes assume an experimental approach, (Carter et al 2006).

As such general recommendation is that strategic planning should be practiced in all firms regardless of size since it reduces focus on operational details and promotes strategic thinking, (Bruce and Longdon, 2000). Ideally strategy must be conceived informally (strategic thinking) before it's programmed formally (strategic analysis). However there are dangers in formality of a strategy. Johnson et al (2007), asserts Henry Mintzberg's concern that formal systems of strategic planning can lead to misunderstanding the purposes of planning, problems in the design and put into effect of strategic planning systems and the strategic planning system may fail to gain ownership of the strategy. Elaborate formality in strategy planning could lead to loss of innovativeness and authenticity as well as inflexible and time consuming plans being equated to strategy. Of essence therefore, is the fact that there is an inherent knowledge gap in the relationship between strategic planning and firm performance. This is the basis on which this study is designed; to establish whether practice of strategic planning in public secondary schools influences performance – a case study of Rarieda district, Kenya.

Conceptual Model

The model thus illustrates that strategic planning (independent variable) influences performance (dependent variable).

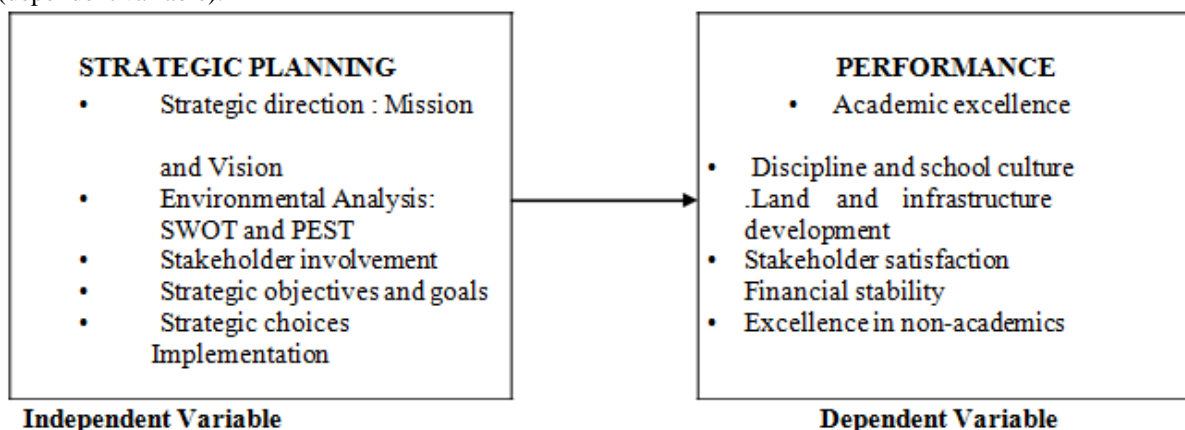


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed cross-sectional descriptive survey design. Sounders, Lewis and Cooper (2007), asserts that this method presents facts concerning variables investigated as they exist at the time of study as well as trends that are emerging. Descriptive survey design was the most appropriate design because the research question was structured and specific and required primary data. The cross-sectional census approach was employed because the population of the study was large and observation was not to be made over a long stretch of time. Wangila (2011) states that a survey study is conducted to collect detailed descriptions of the existing phenomena with the intent of employing data to justify the current conditions and practices or to make more intelligent plans for improving them. Most studies in social science such as Goode (2009), Akinyi (2010), Wangila, (2011) and many more, targeting to collect quantitative data from a variety of respondents have employed this research design.

The population of the study were Public Secondary Schools in Rarieda District (34 Schools) (Rarieda District KCSE Analysis, 2012). Since the population was relatively small a census survey was employed. All the 34 schools were county and sub-county schools since there are no schools in the national category. However, only 28 schools were studied because six schools are newly established and had not undertaken KCSE. Primary data was collected by use of a structured questionnaire containing closed-ended items that aimed to measure objective responses of the respondents without consideration of their subjective opinions. The questionnaires were administered to principals or deputy principals in each school through a drop and pick system since they are directly in-charge of developing and implementing a school's strategic plan. Data on strategic planning and performance for the past five years was thus collected from 27 schools (respondents) with only one questionnaire uncollected. The researcher obtained data that was largely quantitative in nature. Therefore, both inferential and descriptive statistics were used in analysis of the data. Since the data sought to establish the relationship between the independent variable (Strategic planning) and the dependent variable (performance), the measures of relations and associations, that is, correlation and regression were used. The regression equation is as shown below:-

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + b_6X_6 + \epsilon$$

Where: a is the constant term, b₁, b₂, b₃, b₄, b₅ and b₆ are co-efficient of X₁, X₂, X₃, X₄, X₅, X₆, which are the indicators of strategic planning. X₁ is the strategic direction, X₂ is environmental analysis, X₃ is stakeholder involvement, X₄ is strategic choice, X₅ is strategic objectives and goals and X₆ is implementation. Y- Is the dependent variable. The dependent variable has a number of indicators namely; Y₁- academic excellence, Y₂- discipline and school culture, Y₃ - land and infrastructure development, Y₄ -stakeholder satisfaction, Y₅ – financial stability and Y₆- non-academic activities.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Type of School, Number of Students and School Category.

The table below shows a summary of the background information on the type of school, number of students and school category.

Table 1: Type of School, number of students and school category

		Frequency	Percentage %
Type of school	Mixed Day	20	74.1
	Mixed and Boarding	3	11.1
	Girls boarding	3	11.1
	Boys boarding	1	3.7
	Total	27	100
Number of students	Below 100	2	7.4
	101-300	16	59.3
	301-500	6	22.2
	Over 500	3	11.1
	Total	27	100
School category	County	9	33.3
	Sub-county	18	66.7
	Total	27	100

The study set out to establish the strategic planning practices and their influence on performance in public secondary schools. The researcher collected data from 27 out of 34 public secondary schools in Rarieda district because the other 7 schools are up coming and lack data on KCSE performance and strategic planning. It was established that majority of the schools are mixed day schools with a population of less than 300 students and most of them are sub-county schools as shown in the table above.

Strategic Planning Practices

Strategic planning practices are majorly formal and informal. The extent of informal or formal strategic planning was determined by the extent to which the schools engage in establishing strategic direction, carrying out environmental analysis, setting strategic objectives and goals, documenting a strategic plan and implementing the same.

Strategic Direction

Presence of vision, mission and core values, defines a strategic direction for a given firm but various schools engage in this exercise to various extents as indicated in table 2.

Table 2: Presence of Vision, Mission statement and Presence of Core values

	Presence of Vision		Presence of mission statement		Presence of core values	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Yes	27	100	25	92.6	21	77.8
No	0	0	2	7.4	6	23.2
Total	27	100	27	100	27	100

100% of the public secondary schools in Rarieda district have a vision, 93% have a mission statement and 78% have core values as shown in table 4.2. It is thus evident that a great proportion of the schools have set their strategic direction. However, from the table below only 82% of the schools have documented their vision, 74% have documented their mission statement and only 63% have documented core values.

Table 3 Presence and Documentation of Vision, Mission and Core Values

	Presence		Documentation	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Vision	27	100	22	82
Mission	25	93	20	74
Core values	21	78	17	63

Evidently, some schools have vision, mission and core values set and displayed on notice board or open walls but not documented. Similarly, the extent of presence of a documented strategic plan is shown in the table 4.

Table 4: Presence of documented Strategic Plan

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	74.1
No	7	25.9
Total	27	100

Schools having documented vision, mission, core values and a strategic plan can be said to practice formal strategic planning while those that lack the above are said to practice informal strategic planning. However, formality of a strategic plan is further defined by the extent to which the school carries out environmental analysis and involves stakeholders in the development of the strategic plan.

Stakeholder Involvement

From table 5, only 22.2% of the schools involve all stakeholders to a large extent, 37% involve them to a moderate extent, and 18.5% to a less extent and 11% do not involve them at all. A mean of 2.8 implies that on average, stakeholders are involved to a moderate extent and a standard deviation of 1.0 implies that some schools may involve them to a less extent while others may involve them to a large extent. It is therefore clear that in spite of a high number of schools (74%) practicing strategic planning, the extent of stakeholder

involvement is only moderate and not to a large extent as advocated for in strategic management discipline, as shown in table 5.

Table 5: Stakeholder Involvement in Development of Strategic Plan

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
Not at all	3	11.1		
Less Extent	5	18.5		
Moderate	10	37		
Large Extent	5	18.5		
Very large Extent	1	3.7		
Missing	3	11.1		
Total	27	100		

Environmental Analysis

Table 6 shows that, most schools (63%) carry out environmental analysis to a large extent. A mean of 3.79 indicates that on average the schools engage in environmental analysis to a moderate extent with a standard deviation of 1.179 which means that some schools may carry out the same to a large extent or to a large extent.

Table 6: Environmental analysis

	Frequency	Percentage	mean	Standard deviation
Not at all	2	7.4		
Less Extent	1	3.7		
Moderate	4	14.8		
Large Extent	10	37.0	3.79	1.179
Very Large Extent	7	25.9		
Missing	3	11.1		
Total	27	100		

Implementation

Table 7 shows the frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation of implementation of strategic plans in the public secondary schools in Rarieda district. . About 63% of the schools implement their strategic plans to a moderate extent while 11% implement to a less extent and 15% do not implement at all. A mean of 2.96 implies that implementation is carried out to a moderate extent in most of the schools while a standard deviation of 1.197 implies that some schools may implement their strategic plans to a less extent while others may implement to a large extent. However, the key observation is that none of the schools implement it to a very large extent as the case should be.

Table 7: Implementation of Strategic Plans

	Frequency	Percentage	mean	Standard deviation
Not at all	4	14.8		
Less Extent	3	11.1		
Moderate	9	33.3		
Large Extent	6	22.2		
Very Large Extent	2	7.4		
Missing	3	11.1		
Total	27	100		

Influence of Strategic Planning on Performance

The performance variable (dependent variable) was measured using 6 indicators namely: academic performance, discipline and school culture, land and infrastructural development, stakeholder satisfaction, financial stability and excellence in non-academics. Similarly, the independent variable (strategic planning) was measured using a number of indicators namely: presence of vision, mission and core values, environmental analysis, stakeholder involvement, presence of objectives and goals, presence of strategic plan and implementation of strategic plan. The relationship between independent and dependent variables was then established using regression model analysis. Regression analysis yields the terms R, R-square, F, B and Sig. R is the correlation between the observed and the predicted value of the dependent variable, R-square gives the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variable s entered in the model while a high F-ratio and a low sig- value indicates the significance of the independent variable in the model.

Academic Performance

The academic performance as a dependent variable (Y1) was determined by obtaining the average for the KCSE mean scores achieved during the strategic planning period up to a maximum of 5 years ago. Its regression against the independent variable indicators outlined above yielded the results in the table 8.

Table 8: Academic performance and strategic planning (Multiple effects)

R	R-Square	Frequency	B	Sig
0.54	0.254	0.794	7.288	0.590

An R-Square of 0.514 is the correlation between the observed value (the highest mean score achieved during strategic planning period) and the predicated value. The R-Square 0.254 implies that 25.4% of variance in the dependent variable (academic performance) can be predicted from the independent variables entered into the model. And F-Ratio of 0.794 and a sig value of 0.590 show the significance of the independent variable in the model and thus since the sig value is larger than the typical or conventional value of 0.05, then the independent variables used do not predict the dependent variable to a large extent. When all the independent variables are held constant then academic performance would be equivalent to the constant value of 7.288, (B Value). The table below illustrates the independent effects of each of the strategic planning indicators on academic performance.

Table 9: Academic performance and strategic planning (Independent effects)

	R	R-Square	B	Sig
Strategic direction	0.95	0.09	6.082	0.681
Environmental analysis	0.64	0.04	5.631	0.781
Stakeholder involvement	0.058	0.03	5.440	0.803
Strategic objectives	0.109	0.012	5.926	0.638
Strategic plan	0.087	0.008	5.774	0.708
Implementation	0.259	0.067	4.088	0.258

From table 9, setting strategic direction contributes 9% to the variance in academic performance while environmental analysis contributes 4%, stakeholder involvement 3%, setting strategic objectives 1.2%, having a strategic plan 0.8% and implementation 6.7%. The table also shows the variance (R-value) caused by each indicator in the observed and predicted values of the dependent variable (academic performance), the B-value which is performance when the independent variable is kept constant and the significance of each variable (sig-value).

Discipline and School Culture**Table 10: Discipline, school culture and strategic planning**

R	R-Square	B	F	Sig
0.703	0.494	4.861	1.831	0.149

The correlation between the observed and predicted value of discipline is 0.703. 49.4% of this variance can be explained by strategic planning while 50.6% cannot be explained by the strategic planning indicators used in this regression model. When the predictors are 34 kept constant then the level of discipline would be

equal to the B-value (4.861). However a low F-value (1.831) and a high Sig-value of 0.149 implies that the predictor variables used in this regression are not statistically significant.

Table 11: Discipline, school culture and Strategic Planning (independent effect)

	R	R-Square	B	Sig
Strategic direction	0.267	0.071	3.596	0.412
Environmental analysis	0.321	0.103	2.390	0.126
Stakeholder involvement	0.364	0.133	2.418	0.080
Strategic objectives	0.177	0.031	3.100	0.683
Strategic plan	0.311	0.096	3.486	0.115
Implementation	0.526	0.276	2.244	0.008

Table 11 shows the independent effect of each of the strategic planning indicators on discipline and school culture. It can be observed that implementation is the most significant variable (has lowest sig-value), such that when it is held constant the results in the dependent variable (B-value) is lowest (2.244) and it also yields the highest variance (R=0.526) in the dependent variable.

Land and Infrastructural Development

Table 12: Land and Infrastructure Development and Strategic Planning (multiple effect)

R	R-Square	B	F	Sig
0.550	0.302	2.602	0.812	0.603

The strategic planning indicators used in this regression model contribute 30.2% to the dependent variable (land and infrastructural development). Therefore, of the 0.55 variance between the observed and the predicted values of the dependent variable, the predictors used can only explain 30.2% while the rest cannot be explained by strategic planning. The sig-value 0.603 and the F-value 0.812 imply that the independent variables used are not statistically significant.

Table 13: Land and Infrastructure Development and Strategic Planning (Independent effect)

	R	R-Square	B	Sig
Strategic direction	0.220	0.048	3.446	0.553
Environmental analysis	0.442	0.178	1.559	0.04
Stakeholder involvement	0.440	0.193	1.697	0.032
Strategic objectives	0.384	0.148	3.200	0.843
Strategic plan	0.262	0.069	3.314	0.863
Implementation	0.430	0.185	1.799	0.036

The results in the table 14 indicate that the most significant variables to determine land and infrastructure development are stakeholder involvement, implementation of strategic plan and environmental analysis respectively with sig-values 0.032, 0.036 and 0.04 respectively.

Stakeholder Satisfaction

Table 14: Strategic Planning and Stakeholder Satisfaction.

R	R-Square	B	F	Sig
0.788	0.621	3.922	3.076	0.029

The correlation between the observed and the predicated stakeholder satisfaction is 0.788. The independent variables used in this model can explain 62.1% of this variance but when there is no change in the independent variables, and then the level of stakeholder satisfaction would be observed to be 3.922. A high F-value of 3.076 and a low Sig-value of 0.029 indicates that the independent variables used in this regression model are statistically significant. However, the sig-values of each independent variable indicate that environmental analysis (0.04) and implementation (0.002) are the most statistically significant independent

variable indicators in determining stakeholder satisfaction. Independent effects of strategic planning practices on stakeholder satisfaction are shown in table 15.

Table 15: Strategic Planning and Stakeholder Satisfaction (Independent effect)

	R	R-Square	B	Sig
Strategic direction	0.319	0.101	4.368	0.277
Environmental analysis	0.173	0.03	2.915	0.418
Stakeholder involvement	0.327	0.107	2.648	0.119
Strategic objectives	0.282	0.08	4.000	0.370
Strategic plan	0.282	0.08	4.000	0.154
Implementation	0.633	0.401	2.085	0.001

The most significant variables in achieving stakeholder satisfaction are implementation of the strategic plan and stakeholder involvement in the development of the strategic plan.

Financial Stability

Table 16: Financial Stability and Strategic Planning (multiple effect)

R	R-Square	B	F	Sig
0.655	0.43	0.636	1.412	0.269

The variance between the observed and predicated level of the dependent variable (financial stability) is 0.655. R-Square value of 0.43 indicates that the independent variables explain 43% of the variance. The B-value (0.636) is the constant level of performance in financial status when all the independent variables remain constant. The sig-value 0.269 indicates that the independent variable used in the regression is not the most statistically significant in determining the financial stability in a school.

Table 17: Financial Stability and Strategic Planning (independent effect)

	R	R-Square	B	Sig
Strategic direction	0.129	0.017	2.808	0.816
Environmental analysis	0.381	0.145	2.390	0.067
Stakeholder involvement	0.520	0.271	2.306	0.009
Strategic objectives	0.524	0.274	2.500	0.021
Strategic plan	0.232	0.054	3.286	0.244
Implementation	0.466	0.217	2.424	0.022

Table 17 shows the independent effects of the strategic planning practices on financial stability of a school. It is evident that stakeholder involvement, setting strategic objectives informed by environmental analysis and implementation are the most significant independent variables in determining the financial stance of a school. The highest variance in the observed and predicted values of financial performance is caused by strategic objectives based on environmental analysis.

Non – Academics

Table 18: Non-Academics and Strategic Planning (Multiple effect)

R	R-Square	B	F	Sig
0.921	0.647	2.670	10.415	0.000

R-value 0.921 is the variance between the observed and the predicted performance in non- academics implying that the variables used are the most statistically significant in determining non-academics. The independent variables employed in this regression model can explain 64.7% of the variance but when they are held constant then the performance would be observed to be equivalent to the B-value, 2.670. A high F-Value of 10.415 and a very low sig-value of 0.000 imply that the independent performance in non-academics. Setting goals, having a strategic plan, involving stakeholders and implementing the strategic plan have sig-value 0.000

indicating that they are the most statistically significant independent variable indicators in determining performance in non-academics. The table below indicates that implementation is the most significant aspect of strategic planning practice in ensuring good performance in non-academic activities.

Table 19: Non-Academics and Strategic Planning (Independent effect)

	R	R-Square	B	Sig
Strategic direction	0.360	0.13	4.409	0.189
Environmental analysis	0.215	0.046	2.441	0.313
Stakeholder involvement	0.015	0.021	3.046	0.945
Strategic objectives	0.216	0.047	3.900	0.563
Strategic plan	0.365	0.133	4.029	0.061
Implementation	0.434	0.188	2.088	0.034

The data analysis above has established that the majority of the public secondary schools in Rarieda district are mixed day schools with a population of less than 300 students and are mainly sub-county schools. In addition, the study established 4 key findings. First, most of the schools (74%) practice formal strategic planning while 26% practice informal strategic planning. Secondly, the extent of stakeholder involvement and environmental analysis during strategic planning is only moderate. Thirdly, the extent of implementation of the strategic plans is only moderate. The fourth finding is that strategic planning is positively correlated with performance although the extent of contribution to each of the performance indicators (academic, discipline, non-academics, infrastructure, stakeholder satisfaction, financial stability) is different. Similarly, each indicator of strategic planning (strategic direction, stakeholder involvement, environmental analysis, strategic objectives, strategic choices and implementation), contribute to various extents to each of the performance indicators above.

These findings are largely in agreement with the theories of strategic management discipline including open systems theory, contingency theory, resource- based theory, IOE theory among others. For instance, it's evident that schools like other organizations are open systems in continuous evolution and interaction and also operate in a dynamic, complex and turbulent environment that is highly competitive (Albanese and Van Fleet, 1983) This has necessitated the embrace of strategic planning in order to set strategic direction, define competitive moves, satisfy stakeholders, compete successfully and achieve targeted levels of performance. This is evident from the high number of schools striving to conform to the MoE's requirement that each school should draft a strategic plan in tandem with its current 2012–2017 strategic plan. This is based on the argument that schools like any other organization in Kenya struggle with environmental challenges thus need to develop competitive advantage against their competitors in order to survive.

The findings of this study are also in agreement with findings from other studies. For instance similar to the study by Goode (2009) in Kisumu East District, it established that strategic planning is positively correlated with performance. Similarly, the extent of strategy implementation which is a challenge to the impact it has on performance was also reported by Akinyi (2008) studying the challenges facing private secondary schools in implementation of strategic plans in Kisumu West District.

This study has therefore contributed to the body of knowledge and to theory building. For example, it affirms that organizations indeed need to engage in strategic planning because it is positively correlated to performance and it's a tool to combat the ever changing internal environment and the turbulent external environment and also partly because a 41 strategic plan can be made contingent to an organization's resources and other organizational factors like size, structure and leadership. The findings have helped to narrow the gap on controversy concerning influence of strategic planning on performance.

The findings of this study have also provided significant information to policy developers. For instance, the MoE is hereby informed of the extent of strategic planning in public secondary schools in Rarieda District and also the extent of implementation of the same. It can therefore put the appropriate policies and remedies in place to enhance the practice through its implementers such as NESSP and Quality Assurance Officers. Similarly, the school management has been furnished with information on the limitations in the development and implementation of strategic plans leading to dismal contribution to performance. They can henceforth purpose to improve on the processes of strategy development (especially stakeholder involvement and environmental analysis) and also step up implementation efforts to realize the full potential of strategic plan

V. CONCLUSION

One of the key findings established by the researcher is that most of the public secondary schools in Rarieda District practice formal strategic planning and that strategic planning is positively correlated to performance. It is thus a surmise to say that strategic planning is an inevitable practice in today's businesses (Schools) and must be enhanced. This is because it is positively correlated to each performance indicator in the school set up making it a significant tool in creating competitive advantage since schools struggle with many challenges such as attracting and retaining the best students, competing with other public and private secondary schools, improving performance to earn stakeholder satisfaction among others.

Recommendations

The study recommends that all public secondary schools should engage in formal strategic planning because not only is it a policy but also its ability to help establish strategic direction and align resources to meaningful strategies to develop competitive advantage and compete successfully cannot not be overemphasized.

Areas for Further Research

Future research should endeavor to focus on other concepts of strategic management that affect organizational performance. For instance, a research on governance or organizational behavior and performance of public secondary schools would shed more light on performance in public secondary schools.

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