Determination of the Extent to Which Strategic Planning is Practiced in Secondary Schools in Kenya: A Case Study of Machakos County-Kenya

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ABSTRACT— *This study sought to investigate the extent to which strategic planning is practiced in secondary schools in Machakos district, Machakos County-Kenya. The research tried to answer the question "to what extent is strategic planning practiced in secondary school in Machakos district?"Data was collected from 63 secondary schools. The data collection instrument used was a structured and open ended questionnaire.*

The study used survey design methodology. A questionnaire to all secondary schools that are registered was used. The key respondents were the Head Teachers of secondary schools in Machakos district or their deputies. The questionnaire captured both open-ended and closed-ended questions so as to capture the undertones from the research.

Findings of the research revealed that more than half of the schools lacked strategic plans. Where there were strategic plans, some had not been officially launched. It further indicated that 55.56% of the schools had vision and mission statements which are majorly communicated by way of posters and through meetings and assemblies. Vision formulation was predominantly a preserve of the administrators and teachers with minimum use of consultants. Better facilities and high entry behavior dominated in the responses regarding competitor strength. Indiscipline and lack of value addition was cited as their major weaknesses. 90.48% of all the secondary schools gather information from the environment much of which is done by the administrators and teachers. 96.83% of the schools indicated that they had competitors in the district with high entry behavior and better facilities being cited as their major strengths. Teachers and the ministry of education were considered the most influential in setting of objectives. 94.24% of the schools carry out internal analysis whereby 47.62% do it in three levels namely the BOG, staff meeting and at the department. The respondents identified teamwork among teachers and adequate resources as their major strengths with low entry behavior being cited as the major weakness. 87.59% of the schools did not achieve their mean targets. On a 3 point scale, the respondents felt that strategic planning had the lowest mean of 2.3 with regard to its contribution to achievement of targets.

Keywords—Strategic planning, Vision, Mission, Objectives, Teamwork, Interval analysis

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education has been recognized as a basic human tool for national development. A policy document by the government of Kenya 1976, vividly emphasized that poverty, disease and ignorance can be eliminated by use of education as a strategy. According to Maikuri, (2008), provision of education is a fundamental development strategy of the government of Kenya engraved in its policy with an aim of ensuring equitable access, improvement of quality and efficiency at all levels of education, Government of Kenya, (1976). Strategic management planning in organizations serves in helping to build competitive advantage, Communicates the organizational strategy to staff, Prioritizing financial needs of the organization, Provides focus and direction to move from plan to action.

1.1 Strategic Planning

According to Hughes, (2003) the concept of strategy is very important in management of both commercial and public sector institutions. This is so, courtesy of the ever-changing environmental inputs whose management is paramount if success and achievement of objectives is to be guaranteed. Evidently, there is a good deal of both direct and indirect influence coming from the environment. Strategic planning is not a new terminology in Kenya today. It has been around for some decades though it has had its own fair share of both support and criticisms. According to Lorenzen (2006), businesses have been known to use business plans to execute their functions. It has been used as a planning tool for new businesses, projects, or entrepreneurs who are serious about starting businesses and therefore business plans have helped define the purpose of businesses, plan human resources and operational needs besides being critical when seeking funding and assessing business opportunities.

The first organizations to embrace strategic planning in our country belonged to the private sector. The public sector is slowly but surely catching up with this inevitable element of modern management. It is now a public policy to have all public institutions embrace strategic planning through crafting organizational missions and visions based on core values. A strategic planning process is thus required to prepare the management of these schools to mitigate the emerging strategic issues in schools, Kimemia, (2006).

Bryson (1988) describes strategic planning broadly as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that define what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it. From this definition, it can be concluded that strategic planning gives rise to deliberate strategies that are aimed to give an organization a competitive advantage towards attainment of its objectives and goals. It defines clearly the objectives of an organization by assessing both internal and external situations with a view of exploiting the inherent opportunities while dealing with any existing or imminent threats. Some of these threats include strikes, student unrests, poor or delayed fees payments and the negative effects of technological advancement.

Strategic planning can be looked at as a way of creating the future rather than waiting for the reality of changes to overtake the organization. The emerging educational challenges emanating from environmental drifts pose a challenge to the education sector. A secondary school must therefore formulate a strategic plan that can serve as its roadmap to coping with the changing environmental challenges. This will ensure that the challenges are anticipated and planned for.

1.2 Secondary Schools in Machakos District

Machakos district is part of the lower Eastern Province and boarders other districts such as Kajiado, Nzaui, Makueni, Mbooni, Yatta, Mwala, and Kangundo. The district in the recent past has experienced challenges like student strikes, declining performance in national examinations and increased student enrolments. Customers and stakeholders of secondary schools include students, surrounding communities, religious affiliates (sponsors), Teachers Service Commission, and development partners. The government and the private sector are also important stakeholders.

This research was a survey of all the secondary schools in Machakos district in Kenya. The district was currently home to seventy secondary schools. Eight of these schools are in the provincial category while sixty two are district schools. Nineteen are private while fifty one are public. With regard to sex, three are pure boys' schools; four are pure girls' schools, while sixty three are mixed schools. Ten schools have boarding facilities while the other sixty are day schools.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Secondary schools have in the recent past been the focus of the media in Kenya for a number of reasons with strikes and student unrest being just but some of them. Mwita, (2007) in his investigations into the causes of these unrests have indicated that drug abuse, exposure to information from the internet and mass media which is not censored, advancement of human rights agenda to schools and general juvenile delinquency among others, are to blame, Maikuri, (2008). This is a significant shift from the status quo triggered by technological advancement and the social desire for independence on the side of the teenagers. A study by Maikuri, (2008) on strategies adopted by provincial secondary schools in Nairobi province to respond to student unrest observed that students and schools' management response to environmental changes is not harmonized. It is therefore imperative that these institutions of learning come up with strategies that will counter the erratic environmental changes which in most cases affects performance negatively. It is for this reason that strategic planning in secondary schools has become necessary. Strategic planning is therefore an important component of modern management that has to permeate secondary schools. The extent to which this has taken place in secondary schools in Machakos district was the subject of this study.

Studies on strategic planning in secondary schools in Kenya have previously been carried out by some researchers (Kimemia, 2006 and Mwita, 2007). The study by Kimemia, (2006) showed that majority of the secondary schools in Nairobi practiced strategic planning. In another study by Mwita, (2007), it was found out that the heads of secondary schools in Nairobi province faced a number of challenges in the implementation of strategy. The above studies did not research on strategic planning in schools outside Nairobi. Nairobi province happens to be entirely metropolitan, and largely covered by the Kenya's capital; Nairobi. This is as opposed to Machakos district which is in a rural setting dotted with a few urban centres and the Machakos town itself. At the date of this proposal writing, there is therefore no

documented study regarding strategic planning in secondary schools in Machakos district known to the researcher. Another study by Karanja, (2008) concluded that by implementing strategic plans, firms are able to respond to the turbulent environment in an appropriate manner. He also observed that this will ensure the firms continued survival and profitability.

Where a significant change occurs in the context, variations in the strategic planning practices are triggered. This justifies a study in the same area. This study therefore sought to determine the extent to which strategic planning is practiced in secondary schools in Machakos district. It was guided by the following question.

What is the extent of strategic planning practices in the secondary schools of Machakos district?

1.4 Research objective

To investigate the extent to which strategic planning is practiced in secondary schools in Machakos district.

1.5 Value of the study

The research findings will be of great help to a number of stakeholders. First and foremost, it will help greatly towards building the body of knowledge in this relatively young discipline in management theory. Its findings will go a long way in shedding light on areas of agreements and conformity or disagreements and contradictions to existing theory.

Secondly, the study findings will be of use to policy makers in the education sector who can use it as a platform to continue agitating for reforms and embracing of strategic planning practices. These policy makers include the ministry of education and other Semi Autonomous Governmental Agencies (SAGAS) like the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE).

The school management will also invaluably benefit in that they will have a reference point as they try to push forward or sell their ideas about strategic planning practices in their respective schools.

2. LITERAURE REVIEW

2.1 The concept of strategy

The field of strategic management is relatively young compared to other areas like finance, accounting and commerce. Scholars are therefore still trying to define it in the best fitting way. Many at times, strategic planning has often been confused with strategic management. Before we delve into the definition proper, it is important to note that strategic management is broader in scope and actually includes strategic planning while the opposite is not true. But strategic management without strategic planning is void. Strategic management, though often used as a generic term to describe the process by which managers identify and implement their organization's strategy, it is originally applied only to quantitative, mathematical approaches to strategy, Hill and Jones (1995).

According to Guralnic (1986), Strategy is the science of planning and directing large scale military operations of maneuvering forces onto the most advantageous position prior to actual engagement with the enemy. Thomas, Strickland, and Gamble (2007) defined strategy as the management action plan for running the business and conducting operations. A winning strategy must therefore fit the enterprises' external and internal situation, build sustainable competitive advantage, and improve the company's performance.

Bryson (1988) describes strategic planning broadly as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that define what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it. This definition seems to lay some emphasis on the reason for existence of an organization. Eadie (2000) suggested that the purpose of strategic management is to maintain a favorable balance between the organization and its environment over a long period of time. It can also be looked at as thinking about the best alternative in getting solution to a certain problem under a given circumstance.

According to Lamp (1984), strategic management is an ongoing process that evaluates and controls the business and the industries in which the company is involved; assesses its competitors and sets goals and strategies to meet all existing and potential competitors, and then reassesses each strategy regularly to determine how it has succeeded or needs replacement by a new strategy. Such kind of strategy is meant to meet the changed circumstances, a new economic environment, or a new social, financial or even political environment.

According to Bryson and Alston, (2005) strategy is a managerial game plan used to achieve the set objectives which is mirrored in the pattern of moves and approaches devised by management to produce the desired performance. They also define a strategic plan as a comprehensive statement about the organization's mission and future direction, near term and long term performance targets, and how the management intends to produce the desired results and fulfill the mission given the organization's overall situation.

2.2 Historical background of strategic planning

The word strategy may have arisen from a Greek word 'stratego', meaning 'to plan the destruction of one's enemy through the effective use of resources' (Chandler, 1962). Historically, planning has roots in the military, the concept of

strategy, and the need for victory in war. It then found its way to the business circles.   The history of strategic planning is traced from the military; strategy is "the science of planning and directing large-scale military operations, of maneuvering forces into the most advantageous position prior to actual engagement with the enemy." Although our understanding of strategy as applied in management has been transformed, one element remains overriding concern is aimed at achieving competitive advantage, Bradford and Duncan (2000).

Taking its name and roots from the military model, early models of formal strategic planning mirrored the hierarchical values and linear systems of traditional organizations. Undertaken by elite planning function at the top of the organization, its structure was highly vertical and time-bound. A certain period would be set aside to analyze the situation and decide on a course of action. All these resulted in a formal document. Eventually the actual work of implementation which was considered a separate, discrete process would start off, Michael and Kaye (2005).

In the early 1920s, Harvard Business School developed the Harvard Policy Model, one of the first strategic planning methodologies for private businesses. This model defines "strategy" as a pattern of purposes and policies defining the company and its business. A strategy is the common thread or underlying logic that holds a business together. The firm weaves purposes and policies in a pattern that unites company resources, senior management, market information, and social obligations. Strategies determine organizational structure; appropriate strategies lead to improved economic performance, Haines (2004).

Through the late 1950's strategic planning's focus deviated away from firms' policies and structure toward the management of risk, industry growth, and market share. This approach to strategic planning resulted into the portfolio model that finally led to the emergence of industrial conglomerates. According to Lorenzen (2006), subsequent developments led to the industrial economics model, where strategic decisions draw strength for their application as a tool for analyzing competitiveness of the day today performance of their activities. Through the 1960s, strategic planning became a standard management tool in virtually every Fortune 500 company, and many smaller companies as well.

However, Sutton (1988) observed that the modern concept of strategy bears little resemblance to military strategy and that the origins of business strategy are largely untraceable. In the 1960s, companies found that it could be dangerous to plan their future based on extrapolation of the past trends. They therefore began to take into account threats and opportunities. Organizations adapted strategic planning after realizing that the environment was not stable any longer.

Strategic management theory was pioneered by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard Business School. They felt that there was need to have a course that integrates the functional specialization areas namely finance, production, accounting, marketing research and development, and so on. This saw the birth of business policy which has changed into strategic management as it is known today. Strategy was designed to set direction and realign the functional areas by looking at the organization holistically. It was as a result regarded as a common thread towards the future. Strategic management evolved to deal with how strategy development came about. This is what is referred to as "strategic planning." It is also concerned with how it helps organizations achieve their objectives. This is referred to as strategy implementation, Chandler, (1962).

Strategic planning begun in 1950's in the United States of America (USA). This was the period characterized by many business opportunities to rebuild Europe and Japan by Americans after the end of World War II. The period saw the emergence of strategic thinking, Drucker (1954) where he wondered aloud what was our business and what should it be. Soon after Drucker (1954), came Chandler (1962) who wanted to know what strategy is and what is the relationship between structure and strategy? From this efforts came the famous thinking that structure follows strategy. The period was characterized by relative environmental stability, abundant business opportunities and rapidly expanding companies with the challenge here being how to manage companies better in the face of growth opportunities. Planning was extrapolative with past orientation in planning and extended budgeting.

Then came the disenchantment period where there was widespread dissatisfaction with strategic planning. The widespread dissatisfaction was attributed to among other things, increased environmental turbulence, reduced business opportunities, and increased competition. It was noted that the environment was so turbulent such that by the time the plans were implemented, they had already outlived their usefulness. The verdict was that strategic planning as developed in the stable environment could not cope with the challenges of the new turbulent environment. It was felt that strategic planning lacked an action orientation with too much emphasis on planning at the expense of implementation. It was also noted that planning and implementation had been unrealistically separated and that it was inflexible and rigid. Additionally, strategic planning was highly rational and analytical thereby ignoring other aspects of strategy. There were also some criticisms that strategic planning was inhibiting strategic thinking. With all the above criticisms leveled against strategic planning there was a period of low activity up to mid 1980's, Karanja, (2008).

Later on, Porter (1987) observed that although strategic planning had gone out of fashion in the late 1970's, it needed to be rediscovered. He noted that it would have to be rethought and recast. He further argued that strategic planning will work for us if we continuously fine tune it. The 1990s saw the revival of strategic planning process with particular benefits in particular context (Minzberg,1994), where new models of rational perspectives on strategy, which are focused

on adaptability to change, flexibility, importance of strategic thinking, and organizational behavior. Minzberg (1987) observed that formal strategic planning only gave rise to deliberate strategies. He came to the realization that strategy was the outcome of both deliberate and emergent strategy. As a result he concluded that though rational consideration is important, political and behavioral considerations are equally important in the strategic process.

In conclusion, a recast strategic planning had to be characterized by; increased emphasis on implementation, flexibility and adaptability to increasing environmental turbulence, being more focused in terms of identification of key issues and concentrating action on them, allowing strategic planning to enhance strategic thinking and finally having strategic planning that leads to sustainable competitive advantage. In 1970s, many firms adopted a strategic planning model where strategic planning became a deliberate process. It was usually carried out using the top-bottom approach by top level managers or executives. Today's business environment is highly competitive. This calls for more than budget-oriented planning or forecast-based planning if large corporations are to survive and prosper. The answer lies in strategic planning which defines clearly the objectives by assessing both internal and external situations to formulate strategy. This is then followed by implementation of the strategy, evaluation of the progress, and making adjustments where necessary to stay on track, Haines, (2004).

According to Porter, (1985), Strategic planning widely uses several tools and approaches; among them is the SWOT analysis which means Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The tool is used to analyze internal strategic factors, strengths and weaknesses attributed to the organization, and external factors beyond control of the organization such as opportunities and threats. Balanced scorecards which creates a systematic framework for strategic planning is the second tool that is used. Thirdly, Scenario planning which was originally used in the military and recently used by large corporations to analyze future scenarios. PEST analysis which stands for, Political, Economic, Social, and Technological is the fourth. STEER analysis which means Socio-cultural, Technological, Economic, Ecological, and Regulatory factors, EPISTEL which is the Environment, Political, Informatics, Social, Technological, Economic and Legal and ATM Approach which is Antecedent Conditions, Target Strategies, Measure Progress and Impact are the other tools that are used to mention but a few.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The researcher used the survey design. All the schools in the study area were targeted. The descriptive survey design facilitated an all encompassing data from respondents. The census survey afforded a more comprehensive data because every subject was given an equal opportunity to participate. The purpose of employing research design is to reduce the ambiguity of much research evidence.

3.2 Population of the study

The study targeted all the secondary schools in Machakos district. There were seventy secondary schools as at the time of this research. Eight of these schools were in the provincial category while sixty two were district schools. Nineteen were private while fifty one were public. With regard to sex, three were pure boys' schools; four were pure girls' schools, while sixty three were mixed schools. A census study was done and so there was no sampling. A finite population (63 secondary schools) since it is a manageable size.

3.3 Data collection

A questionnaire to all secondary schools that are registered was used. The key respondents were the Head Teachers of secondary schools in Machakos district or their deputies. This was due to the fact that they were well versed with the overall organizational policies. The data was collected through a "drop and pick later" method which entailed visiting all the schools, dropping the questionnaires, and collecting them after they were filled. In some cases, the school head teachers preferred to fill the questionnaires on the spot instead of having to collect them later. The study therefore relied on primary data sources.

In order to ascertain that the data collection tool was valid and reliable, pilot testing was done. This enhanced the data collection and analysis processes.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The measure of central tendency used was the mean. Frequency distribution analysis was also done through the use of frequency tables.

4.1 Data Analysis and Presentation

This section presents the results of the study on the extent to which strategic planning is practiced in secondary schools in Machakos district. The findings are presented in four parts namely Respondents' information, Strategic

planning practices, Environmental analysis and performance. Microsoft Excel tools together with Statistical Packages for Social Scientists were used during the analysis and presentation of data.

4.2 Respondents' information results and findings

The respondents were asked to indicate whether the school was a public or a private school. Table 4.1 shows the number of schools that responded and their respective percentages.

Table 4.1 Response rate.

Category	Target schools	Schools that responded.	Response percentage
Public	51	45	88.20%
Private	19	18	94.70%
Total	70	63	90.00%

The table above shows that there was an overall response rate of 90%. Response was better in private schools compared to that of public schools.

When the respondents were asked to indicate the size of their schools in terms of enrollment, the following was their response.

Table 4.2 Schools enrollment.

School enrollment	Frequency	Percentage
≤ 200	30	47.62
200 – 399	24	38.1
400 – 599	5	7.93
≥ 600	4	6.35
TOTAL	63	100

Table 4.2 reveals that out of the 63 schools interviewed, 47.62% had less than 200 students while 38.10% had between 200 and 399 students. These two categories form the majority with less than 15% having more than 400 students.

The respondents were required to indicate for how long the school has been in existence. The following table reflects the findings.

Table 4.3 Ages of the schools

Age of the school in years	Frequency	Percentage
≤ 10	25	39.68
10 – 20	16	25.4
20 – 30	10	15.87
30 – 40	8	12.7
≥ 40	4	6.35
TOTAL	63	100

Table 4.3 shows that majority of the schools in the district are less than 10 years old with 25.4% ranging between 10 and 20 years old. Notably, those over 40 years old represent 6.35%. The observation could be in line with the recent government's commitment to increase access to secondary education.

4.3 Strategic planning practices

Data related to strategic planning practices was collected. The data considered strategic plans, vision statements and mission statements. Table 4.4 shows the findings concerning strategic plans.

Table 4.4 Schools with/without strategic plans

Schools	Frequency	Percentage
With Strategic plans	31	49.21

Without Strategic plans	32	50.79
TOTAL	63	100

As shown in table 4.4, 49.21% of the schools had strategic plans while 50.79% did not have. It was discovered that even among the ones who had, some were informal for they lacked well written plans.

45.16% of the schools with strategic plans had their strategic plans covering 5 years while 29.03% of the schools had it covering 3 years. The rest covered less than 3 years. The schools indicating to review their strategic plans represented 83.87% while the rest did not.

The respondents were asked to state whether they had vision and mission statements. Table 4.5 shows the percentage of schools with or without vision and mission statements.

Table 4.5 Schools with/without vision and mission statements

Schools	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
With vision and mission	35	55.56
Without vision and mission	28	44.44
TOTAL	63	100

The above table clearly points out that 55.56% of the schools had vision and mission statement while 44.44% did not have. This means that there is need to offer support to the schools without vision and mission statements so that they can develop some. It was also revealed that the most commonly used method of communicating the school vision and mission was through use of posters whereby 77.14% of the schools used it followed by word of mouth during assemblies and meetings followed by use of internal memos. It should however be noted that 60% of the schools used a combination of methods and not a single method.

When the respondents were asked to indicate those who were involved in the formulation of the vision and mission statements, the following were the findings;

Table 4.6 Vision and mission statement formulators

	Frequency	*Percentages*
Administrators	22	47.83
Teachers and Students	21	45.65
Consultants	3	6.52
Others	0	0
TOTALS	46	100

The results tabulated in table 4.6 indicate that 47.83% of the vision and mission statements were formulated by administrators while 45.65% was done by teachers and students. There is minimal consultancy going on in the formulation with 6.52% indicating that they involve consultants.

Respondents were asked to show the extent to which the vision and mission statements are communicated to various stakeholders. Table 4.7 tabulates the findings as shown below.

Table 4.7 Extend to which vision and mission are communicated to stakeholders

Stakeholder	*Extent*	*Points (x)*	*Frequency (n=36)*	*Total (fx)*	*Mean*
School Administration	Extreme	5	8	40	
	Great	4	15	60	
	Moderate	3	12	36	3.97
	Little	2	1	2	
	No extent	1	0	0	
			36	139	3.97
Teachers	Extreme	5	3	15	
	Great	4	18	72	
	Moderate	3	14	42	3.64

	Little	2	1	2	
	No extent	1	0	0	
			36	131	3.64
Students	Extreme	5	5	25	
	Great	4	15	60	
	Moderate	3	15	45	3.67
	Little	2	1	2	
	No extent	1	0	0	
			36	132	3.67
Other stakeholders	Extreme	5	1	5	
	Great	4	7	28	
	Moderate	3	17	51	2.92
	Little	2	10	20	
	No extend	1	1	1	
			36	105	2.92

As shown in table 4.7 regarding the extent to which vision and mission are communicated, school administrators, teachers and students get the communication to a great extent while communication to other stakeholders is to a moderate extend. It is important to communicate the schools vision and mission to all stakeholders so that they can all work towards attainment of a common goal.

4.4 Environmental Scanning

The respondents were asked to indicate whether the school gathers information from the external environment. The results are shown in table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Schools that gather/do not gather information from the environment.

Category	Number	Percentage
Schools that gather	57	91.4
Schools that do not gather	6	8.6
TOTAL	63	100

The results shown in table 4.8 indicate that 91.4% of the schools gather information from their external environment. The rest do not. Information gathered from the environment helps the schools to gauge how well they are doing comparatively. This provides them with an opportunity to improve on their strong points as they work on their weak points.

The respondents were asked to indicate who collects information from the external environment. The following table shows the result findings.

Table 4.9 Representation of who collects information from the environment.

Category of information collectors	Frequency	Percentage
BoG / Directors	17	17.71
Administrators	43	44.79
Teachers	31	32.29
Others	5	5.21
TOTAL	96	100

Table 4.9 shows that much of the information is collected by the administrators and teachers. The Board of Governors (BOG) also plays an important role in collecting the information with a percentage of 5.21%. (17.71%)

From the results findings 3.17% of the schools indicated not to have major competitors. This means that competition is rife in the district with 96.83% of the schools indicating that they have major competitors. Each respondent was asked to mention the perceived strengths of their competitors. The results were recorded in the table below.

Table 4.10 Perceived competitor strengths

Strength	Frequency	Percentage
Better/Superior facilities	33	34.38
High/Good entry behavior	30	31.25
Well staffed	12	12.5
Well established/stable	10	10.42
Funded by Government	3	3.13
Hardworking teachers and students	2	2.08
Others(location, sound administration, Good discipline, better study culture, charging affordable fees, good in co-curricular)	6	6.25
TOTAL	96	100

Better facilities and high entry behavior were indicated as the major competitor strengths representing 34.38% and 31.25 respectively as per table 4.10 above. The other two factors that featured prominently were adequate staffing and that the schools are well established and stable.

The respondents were also requested to indicate what they would consider to be their competitors' weaknesses. The table below gives a better picture of what the respondents indicated as the competitor weaknesses.

Table 4.11 Perceived competitor weaknesses

Weakness	Frequency	Percentage
Indiscipline	20	30.3
Lack of value addition	15	22.73
Superiority complex/Pride/ Not ready to share with others	11	16.67
Poor administration	9	13.64
Large population	6	9.09
Drug abuse	2	3.03
Emphasis on academics while ignoring other talents	2	3.03
Relaxed spiritual and moral formation	1	1.52
TOTAL	66	100

Table 4.11 revealed that Indiscipline, lack of value addition and superiority complex contributed immensely to competitor weaknesses among other factors. The superiority complex is exhibited through lack of sharing experiences with other schools they perceive to be of lower ranking.

When asked how influential the various stakeholders were, in setting the schools' present objectives, the response was as shown in table 4.12 below.

Table 4.12 Influence of stakeholders in setting present objectives

Stakeholder	Influence level	Points (x)	Frequency (n=63)	Fx	Mean
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION	No influence	1	0	0	
	Little	2	13	26	2.79
	Great	3	50	150	
			63	176	2.79
BOARD OF GOVERNORS	No influence	1	8	8	
	Little	2	9	18	2.6
	Great	3	46	138	
			63	164	2.6
PARENTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION	No influence	1	0	0	
	Little	2	15	30	2.76

	Great	3	48	144	
			63	174	2.76
Teachers	No influence	1	0	0	
	Little	2	3	6	2.95
	Great	3	60	180	
			63	186	
Non-teaching staff	No influence	1	10	10	
	Little	2	44	88	1.98
	Great	3	9	27	
			63	125	1.98
Students	No influence	1	0	0	
	Little	2	30	60	2.52
	Great	3	33	99	
			63	159	2.52

Table 4.12 shows that all stakeholders were influential but the influence by non-teaching staff is rather low and categorized as little while the others had great influence. With reference to the mean, teachers are the most influential followed closely by the ministry of education.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they carryout internal analysis. The results are shown by table 4.13 below.

Table 4.13 Schools that do/do not carry out internal analysis

	Number	*Percentage*
Schools that carryout internal analysis	60	95.24
Schools that do not carry out internal analysis	3	4.76
TOTAL	63	100

Table 4.13 shows that 60 schools representing 95.24% do carry out internal analysis. However, 3 schools representing 4.76% do not.

The respondents were asked to indicate the level at which they carry out their internal analysis. Table 4.14 shows their responses.

Table 4.14 Level at which internal analysis is carried out

Level	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
BOARD OF GOVERNORS	4	6.67
Staff meeting	20	33.33
Department	6	10
All	30	50
TOTAL	60	100

From table 4.14 above, it was also found out that 30 schools representing 50% carryout their internal analysis at three levels namely Board of Governors(BOG) meetings, Staff meetings and at the departmental meeting levels. 33.33% of the schools do their internal analysis at the staff meeting level while 10% do it at their departmental levels.

The schools were also requested to write down what they consider to be their impelling (strengths) and impeding (weaknesses) forces. The following tables show how the schools responded.

Table 4.15 Strengths among schools

School strength	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Teachers unity/Teamwork	28	28
Sufficient facilities/Resources	17	17
Supportive BOG/parents	16	16

Location/Site	13	13
Disciplined students	11	11
Spiritual orientation/Mission school	3	3
Bright students/high entry behavior	2	2
Good teacher-pupil ratio	2	2
Value addition	2	2
Good in co-curricular e.g. sports	2	2
Others(Ample staffing, government support, Setting goals, Good administration)	4	4
TOTAL	100	100

Table 4.15 reveals that teachers' unity or teamwork and sufficient resources were considered by the majority of the respondents to be their areas of strengths. They represented 28% and 17% respectively. The setting of goals which is at the core of strategic planning was only identified by one school and tabulated under others category which represented 4%

The respondents were asked to indicate what they considered to be their schools weaknesses. Table 4.16 shows the responses given by the respondents.

Table 4.16 Weaknesses among schools

School weakness	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Low entry behavior	25	22.73
Lack of enough facilities	23	20.91
Understaffing	14	12.73
Poor fees payment	13	11.82
Newness/ Little known	10	9.09
Poor attitude towards education by parents and community	8	7.27
Location/Site(Town influence, inaccessibility, Small catchment)	7	6.36
Indiscipline among students	2	1.82
Lack of teamwork	3	2.73
Lack of support from Government	2	1.82
Others(Drug abuse, day scholar factor, lack of value addition)	3	2.73
TOTAL	110	100

Table 4.16 shows that the greatest weakness of the secondary schools in Machakos district is low entry behavior at 22.73%. Other major weaknesses include lack of enough facilities at 20.91%, understaffing at 12.73% and poor fees payment at 11.82%.

4.5 Attribution of Performance to strategic planning

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they have objectives/targets. Table 4.17 shows the results from the research data.

Table 4.17 Schools with/without mean targets/objectives

Schools	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
With mean targets	58	92.06
Without mean targets	5	7.94
TOTAL	63	100

From table 4.17 above, it was realized that 92.06% of the secondary schools in the district had mean targets while 7.94% of the schools lacked the mean targets. 77.59% of the schools with mean targets did not achieve them with

22.41% of the schools achieving them.

The researcher requested the respondents to indicate the extent to which they regarded strategic planning as being a major contributor to achievement of objectives among other contributors. Table 4.18 shows the responses from the respondents.

Table 4.18 Perceived extent to which strategic planning, hard work and team work can be attributed to achievement of targets.

	Extent	Points(x)	Frequency (n=63)	Fx	Mean
Strategic planning	No extent	1	5	5	
	Some ext.	2	34	68	2.3
	Great ext.	3	24	72	
			63	145	2.3
Hard work	No extent	1	1	1	
	Some ext.	2	17	34	2.7
	Great ext.	3	45	135	
			63	170	2.7
Team work	No extent	1	2	2	
	Some ext.	2	11	22	2.76
	Great ext.	3	50	150	
			63	174	2.76

Table 4.18 revealed that strategic planning scored a mean of 2.30(contributes to some extend) as opposed to hard work and team work which scored 2.70 and 2.76 respectively (contributes to a great extent). This is a pointer to the fact that strategic planning is not being accorded as much weight as the other factors despite its potential contribution to achievement of objectives. These findings acquire a greater meaning against a backdrop of a high number of schools (77.59%) who did not achieve their mean targets.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Strategic planning practices in both public and private institutions are important tools as these institutions prepare to counteract their turbulent environments. Many of the secondary schools in Machakos district are practicing strategic planning while others are not. Those that are practicing it are not doing it to the extent required to yield remarkable returns which is an indication that strategic planning should be applied in the real management of the daily functioning of the schools. It is therefore important to encourage the schools without strategic plans to formulate them, while those that do have, to improve on the same for better results.

Strategic planning can be looked as a way of creating the future. This should be done instead of waiting for reality of changes to overtake our organizations. It calls for a proactive and not a reactive approach to management of the unavoidable environmental challenges.

Research findings from this research will help policy makers and the school management to articulate the emerging issues like strategic planning in their management agenda. Currently, it is mandatory for all the schools in the country to have a strategic plan in place. This report will also contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Recommendations with policy implications

It was established that most schools are less than 10 years old with the highest number (30) having less than 200 students. This is attributable to the government's policy of funding the establishment of some schools through Community Development Fund (CDF). This move is however triggering other changes and demands in the education sector, key among them are the problems of teacher shortages (understaffing) and other necessary educational facilities. These are areas the government and other stakeholders ought to address as they emerged to be major impeding forces to goal attainment.

Since majority of the schools lacked strategic plans, it is imperative of the concerned stakeholders to provide support and create an enabling environment in assisting the schools to develop their own strategic plans. This will go a long way in ensuring that the schools have a roadmap towards goal achievement and that there will always be a smooth and

uninterrupted transition in project implementation whenever transfers of the principals (CEO's) fall due.

Some schools lacked vision and mission statements. More sensitization on the 'how and why' of vision and mission statements needs to be carried out so that the district can be at pace with other areas in Kenya like schools in Nairobi (Kimemia, 2006).

The administrators need to engage the nonteaching staff more in formulation of objectives. All the stakeholders concerned should join hands in trying to address the pertinent issues identified as impeding forces.

It is worrying that 77.59% of the schools who had the mean target did not actually achieve them. It is an eye opener to the stakeholders to re-examine if the objectives were realistic and if so, plan a way forward.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Research on the same topic can be carried out in other districts. Studies on strategic planning in other educational and public institutions can also be undertaken to keep on building this area of knowledge.

It is also recommended that research be carried out to establish the impact of strategic planning to Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E) performance. This can establish whether there is a direct correlation between strategic planning and performance.

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