

Effect of Leadership on strategy execution in private secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya

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Abstract: Most private schools execute diverse strategies in an adhoc manner without a centralized strategic plan document. This leads to diverse challenges that results to low success levels in strategy execution. The challenges normally emanate from the complexity of strategy execution owing to the leadership and the stakeholders' management involved in the execution. Therefore the study sought to examine the effect of leadership on strategy execution in private secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya. The study was informed by dynamic capabilities theory. The study targeted eighteen private schools in Murang'a County. Using questionnaires, and applying random sampling, primary data was collected from a sample of 69 teachers out of a population of 216 teachers. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS that generated both descriptive and inferential statistics. Bivariate linear regression analysis indicated that resource availability had a significant effect on strategy execution in private secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya, with Beta coefficients (β 0.591, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, based on the findings, the study recommended that in private secondary schools the leader's problem solving skills should be a critical aspect when a private secondary school is recruiting strategy execution team. The proprietors and management should also come up with programs that boost problem solving among the senior staff in the private schools. In addition, leadership communication skills should be thoroughly enhanced in the private secondary schools with a very clear line of communication and probably a communication policy established to enhance strategy execution.

Key words: Leadership, Strategy Execution, Private Schools.

Date of Submission: 28-10-2020

Date of Acceptance: 22-11-2020

I. Introduction

The term strategy traces its origin from the Greek military terminology 'Strategia' which means "generalship" or the art of the general or commander of the armies (Zakaria & Omar, 2013). Kavale (2012) in a study on strategy and structure noted that strategy is about the marshaling of resources of an organization to match the needs of the market place and achieve the business objective. On the other hand, Azhar & Ikrum (2012) in a study on role of leadership in strategy formulation and implementation noted that strategy is the basic long- term goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of the courses of action and allocation of resources necessary for carrying out the goals

Similar to the concept of strategy, strategy execution has been severally conceptualized by different scholars. Asutay, Dixon, & Al-Kandi (2013) examined strategy execution as a dynamic, interactive and complex process of decisions and activities by managers and employees. The strategy execution is affected by a number of interrelated internal and external factors and is aimed at strategic plans in order to achieve strategic objectives. Strategy execution has been conceptualized as the activity that entails the turning of plans (strategies) into action assignments and ensuring that the assignments are applied successfully in line with the set objectives (Lihalo, 2013).

Kumotia (2015) in a study on strategy execution in Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in Kisumu Town West Constituency examined strategy execution in a different way. The study indicated that strategy execution is the iterative process of implementing strategies, policies, programs and action plans that allow a firm to utilize its resources and to take advantage of opportunities in the competitive environment (Kumotia, 2015). Adem (2012) in a study on challenges facing strategy execution at Municipal Council of Kisumu noted

that the aspects involved in strategy execution include strategy development, environmental uncertainty, organizational structure, culture, leadership, operational planning, resource allocation, people, communication and control.

On the other hand, Chege (2015) notes that the changing customer needs, business environment, and technology amongst other aspects continue to be the greatest challenge to the strategy execution in organizations. Further, Ogunmokun, Hopper, & McClymont (2005) indicated that the challenges facing strategy execution can be divided into four major aspects; content (strategic decision, multiple project implementation), context (internal context: organizational structure, organizational structure, and leadership; external context including environmental uncertainty in the general and task environment), process (operational planning, resources allocation, people, communication and control) and outcome (tangible and intangible outcomes of the project).

In Kenya, despite the important role that privates schools play in the education sector, Most private school execute diverse strategies in an adhoc manner without a centralized strategic plan document. In this context, the strategies are often executed through directives issued staff rooms during meetings or through a raft of memos that are placed within the staff rooms and school offices (Ndegwah, 2014). Additionally, the schools may form randomly composed committees to address given arising issues with the identified stakeholders in the committee investigating and actioning diverse aspects of the school strategies. The schools also have designated staff dealing with specific aspects of the school strategies such as participation in extra curriculum activities.

Problem Statement

The education sector is being faced with diverse challenges, changes in education sector and reforms requiring strategy formulation and implementation to address these dynamics. Amongst the education changes and reforms that affect private secondary schools is the release of Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) earlier than has been the norm, early reporting of students to form one classes, and new mode of admission of students into the schools. Additionally, amongst the emergent reforms is the education sector within secondary schools is the mass failure at the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) levels. Secondary schools have historically developed and implemented strategies that address the issues of the day.

However, challenges in strategy execution have been noted. Key among these challenges is leadership in the private school organizations. Therefore, this study sought to examine leadership focusing on private secondary schools in Murang'a. This is as a result of emergent research gap in the literature. Ndegwah (2014) examined implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools in Nyeri County. This study didn't examine the private sector schools which is the focus of this study. Anyieni & Areri (2016) examined factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Kenya. This study examined the schools in general without distinguishing the private and public schools. The current study addressed those research gaps. Specifically the study examined the effect of leadership in strategy execution in private schools in Murang'a County, Kenya

II. Literature Review

Theoretical Review

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

The dynamic capabilities have been characterized as the capacity to incorporate, form, and reconfigure inward and outer abilities to address quickly evolving situations (Stanley, 2015). The dynamic capabilities have likewise been characterized as the ability to re-establish skills in order to accomplish consistency with the changing business condition by adjusting, coordinating, and reconfiguring inside and outer hierarchical aptitudes, assets, and useful skills (Tesot, 2012). The ability needs to change the asset base and additionally be installed in the firm, and at last be repeatable.

The dynamic capabilities are worked after some time as they are authoritative procedures which may have turned out to be implanted in the firm after some time and are utilized to reconfigure the company's asset base by erasing rotting assets or recombining old assets in new ways (Reneta, 2012). This infers that dynamic capabilities are formed by the choices the firm has made since its commencement and the supply of benefits that it holds.

Dynamic capabilities are contended to contain four fundamental procedures: reconfiguration, utilizing, learning and reconciliation. Reconfiguration alludes to the change and recombination of benefits and assets, for example, the solidification of assembling assets that regularly happens because of procurement. Utilizing alludes to the replication of a procedure or framework that is working in one region of a firm into another region, or broadening an asset by conveying it into another area, for example applying a current brand to another arrangement of items (Nyariki, 2013). Learning enables errands to be performed all the more adequately and productively, frequently as a result of experimentation, and grants reflection on disappointment and achievement. At long last, mix alludes to the capacity of the firm to incorporate and arrange its benefits and assets, bringing about the development of another asset base. The dynamic capabilities consider the company's capacity to accomplish new and creative types of upper hand given way conditions and market positions. The dynamic capabilities empower the firm to constantly restore its operational capabilities and thus managing its execution in the long haul (Tesot, 2012).

Dynamic capabilities theory is preferred since it informs this study on the need to renew competencies in order to achieve the desired objectives. This brings about the aspect of focusing on resources available and maximizing them. The study uses leadership as one the success factors of strategy execution. Dynamic capabilities theory informs on organisational structure-reconfiguration, integration and coordination that organizational leadership should steer through action plans that are considered when structuring the organisation to help implement strategies. The feedback will provide information on how a private school set up should keep adjusting strategies to perform better. It therefore informed the study of the importance of leadership during strategy execution.

III. Empirical Review

Leadership and Strategy Execution

Leadership plays an important role in strategy execution in any given institution. Leadership has been conceptualized as the ability of an individual to influence, motivate and enable other members of an organization to contribute towards effectiveness and success of the organization (Nekesa, 2016). Ndunda (2013) undertook a study on implementation of One Stop Border Strategy at the Busia Border, Kenya. The study noted that leadership is a vital component of strategy execution as it requires a hands-on operation and action oriented human behavioural activity. This calls for executive leadership and key managerial skills. This is because the leaders often originate the company policies that need to be implemented and embedded into the organization (Kamau, 2013). Ndunda's study was able to show leadership as an important factor of strategy execution, but his study focuses on a small scale transport industry whose dynamics are different from those of private secondary schools.

Kamau (2013) examined effects of organizational structure on strategy execution in commercial banks in Kenya. The study indicated that leadership aspects play a key role in strategy execution through process of value formation, culture development and empowering implementation. In strategy execution, the leadership must be strategic in their communication on the strategy execution key developmental milestones. In this context, the leadership gives clear sense of direction in strategy execution as well as encouraging individual decision making aspects within organization.

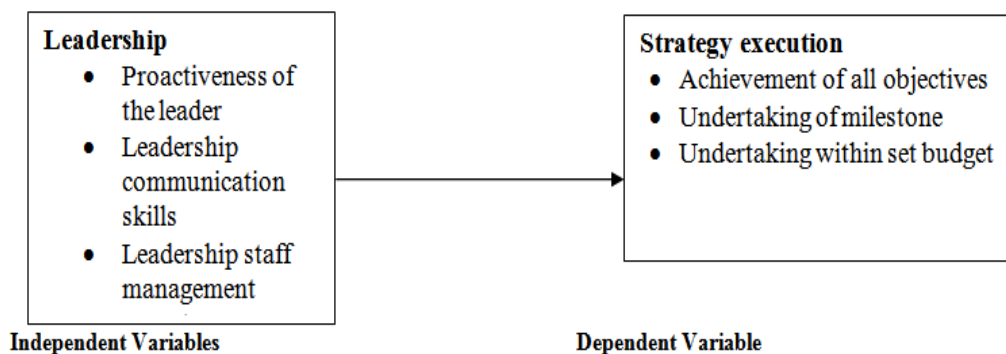
Mativo (2011) in a study on challenges of strategy execution at the Machakos branch of Equity Bank indicated the importance of leadership on Strategy Execution. The study noted that that a major challenge facing strategy execution is leadership and thus strategic leadership enables the implementation of strategy. Strategic leadership within an organization enables strategy execution through motivation of employees through making them more aware of task that need to be undertaken, ensuring key developmental milestones in strategy execution are met, and influencing the employees to act in a given manner. The leadership is also key in provision of resources required for the purposes of Strategy Execution. The research studies by Kamau and Mativo focus on the commercial banks as opposed to the private schools. Commercial banks are likely to be more professional in their operations and strategy execution due to the high level of centralized regulation by Central Bank of Kenya. Commercial banks operate on a larger scale than private secondary schools.

Nacheri & Ogollah (2015) in a study on the influence of turnaround strategy adoption on revenue performance of Kenya Revenue Authority noted diverse ways in which leadership impacts on Strategy

Execution. In this context, the study notes that for effective Strategy Execution, the leaders must be in a position to influence the team members to direct their efforts in a given direction as well as build a coherent team. The ability to articulate clear action plans is important in Strategy Execution. The leaders involved in Strategy Execution must also possess sensitivity, creativity, patience and communication skills that curb cultural and workforce conflicts during Strategy Execution. This study focuses on a government body with a monopolistic market share as opposed to private secondary schools in a competitive market environment.

Mwangi (2013) in examination of factors affecting strategy execution in public universities in Kenya argued that leadership is one of the major components in Strategy Execution. In this context, the study noted that strong leadership is required for successful Strategy Execution. The strong leadership facilitates optimal resources allocation, direction of businesses processes and support that lead to Strategy Execution. The strong leadership is needed to solve human resource issues that hinder strategy execution such as vested interests, office politics, and negative attitudes as well as change management challenges. The study was on public universities as opposed to private secondary schools of which there are different operational dynamics.

Conceptual Framework



IV. Research Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research design. Research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and review of data in a manner which is aimed at integrating relevance to the research drive. The descriptive study describes the phenomenon as it is on the ground without any manipulation of variables. This method is considered appropriate because the researcher collected the data of the phenomenon under study in its natural environment and without any manipulation of the variables. The descriptive research design was utilized by the researcher was keen on the examination of variables influencing system execution in private secondary schools in Murang'a.

The study targeted eighteen private schools in Murang'a County. The target population was 214 teachers teaching in the eighteen private schools in Murang'a County. Using random sampling a sample size 69 teachers was used to provide data for study. This pilot study was undertaken with a view of establishing the validity and reliability as well as elimination of any challenges that may hinder the full scale study. The pilot study stimulated the procedures and protocols that were used in the final data collection to ensure that challenges that occurred were addressed before the full data collection stage. Questionnaires were used to collect primary data desirable for the study. The questionnaire contained both closed and open-ended items. The researcher also sought permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The questionnaires were then administered directly by the researcher using a drop and pick up later technique.

Data obtained from the questionnaires was first cleaned and edited before being coded and subjected to further analysis. The Likert scales in closed ended questions in the questionnaires was converted to numerical codes and be scored on a 1-5 point scale in order of magnitude of the construct being measured, then entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive analysis was done using frequency, percentage, means and standard deviations to describe the basic characteristics of the population. Inferential statistics involved regression analysis to determine the relationship between leadership and strategy execution.

$$y = b_0 + b_1 x_1 + e$$

Where;

y = Strategy execution in private schools in Murang'a County, Kenya

b₀= Constant

x₁ = Leadership

and e = Error terms

V. Data Analysis, Presentation, And Interpretation

Descriptive Statistics

The respondents were asked to indicate their gender by placing a distinct mark besides male or female. All the sixty respondents reacted to this question representing 100% response rate. As per Table 4.1 below, the research results on gender of respondents show that out of the sixty respondents, twenty six respondents (43.3%) were male while thirty four respondents (56.7%) were female. This could be attributed to the teaching career being preferred by females which makes their numbers to be higher (Ojwang', 2016).

Table 4.1: Gender of Respondents

Sex	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Male	26	43.3%
Female	34	56.7%
Total	60	100.0%

Source: survey data (2018)

Position Held by Respondents in Private Secondary School

The study was interested in finding out the position held by the respondent in the school. In this context, the respondents were asked to indicate their position in the school among principal, deputy principal, and teacher.

Table 4.1: Position Held by Respondents in Private Secondary School

Position of respondent	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Principal	9	15.0%
Deputy Principal	13	21.7%
Teacher	38	63.3%
Total	60	100.0%

Source: survey data (2018)

As per table 4.3 above on the positions held by respondents it was found out that 15.0% of the respondents were principals; 21.7% were deputy principals; and 63.3% of the respondents were other levels of teachers irrespective of whether they were head of departments or even irrespective of the specific subjects they were teaching. There were only one principal and one deputy principal in the private secondary schools surveyed in Murang'a County. On the other hand, the other levels of respondent teachers per one private school average ten teachers hence they formed the largest percentage of the respondents. Further, the deputy principals being the operational leaders of the school were more available in the school to respond to questionnaires than the school principals.

Leadership and Strategy Execution

The study measured the influence of leadership on strategy execution in private secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya using various metrics like proactiveness of the leader, leadership communication skills, leadership staff management aspects, leaders' problem solving skills, and leadership creativity. The

responses were collected in the form of Likert scale where respondents ticked any of the following responses; S.A=Strongly Agree, A=Agree,U=Uncertain,D=Disagree,S.D=Strongly Disagree. The findings are presented in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for Leadership and Strategy Execution

Aspect of Leadership.	S.A	A	U	D	S.D	mean	Std. dev
Proactiveness of the leader	13 (21.7%)	29 (48.3%)	7 (11.7%)	11 (18.3%)	0 (0.0%)	3.73	1.01
Leadership communication skills	15 (25.0%)	30 (50.0%)	9 (15.0%)	6 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3.90	0.90
Leadership staff management aspects	11 (18.3%)	19 (31.7%)	18 (30.0%)	12 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3.48	1.01
Leader's problem-solving skills	22 (36.7%)	22 (36.7%)	13 (21.7%)	3 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4.05	0.89
Leadership creativity	27 (45.0%)	15 (25.0%)	12 (20.0%)	6 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4.05	1.03

Source: Survey data (2018)

As per the research results in Table 4.5 above, 48.3% of the respondents agreed while 21.7% strongly agreed that proactiveness of the leader influences strategy execution. Further, the table reveals that 50.0% of the respondents agreed while 25.0% strongly agreed that leadership communication skills influences strategy execution in Murang'a County private secondary schools.31.7% of the respondents agreed that leadership staff management aspects affects strategy execution in private secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya. On this metric of leadership staff management, there is a significant number of respondents who were either uncertain at 30% or disagreed at 20.0%. This could be an indicator of apathy, fear of divulging information about the leadership as well as fear of reprisals if the respondents were found to have disclosed sensitive information about the leaders The table also presents that a cumulative majority of respondents (73.4%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the leaders' problem solving skills significantly affects strategy execution in the private secondary schools in Murang'a. On the management attribute of leadership creativity 45.0% of the respondents strongly agreed while an additional 25.0% agreed that leadership creativity is key to strategy execution in private secondary schools in Murang'a County.

The findings presented in Table 4.5 above show that individual mean scores were 3.73 for proactiveness of the leader, 3.90 for leadership communication skills, 3.48 for leadership staff management aspects, 4.05 for leaders' problem solving skills, and 4.05 for leadership creativity. On average for all the leadership aspects the respondents tended to agree that they affect strategy execution in private secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya. This is because the mean score of each metric was between 3.50 and 4.49.

According to the results presented in Table 4.5 leadership staff management aspects with a standard deviation of 1.01, proactiveness of the leader with standard deviation of 1.01 and leadership creativity with a standard deviation of 1.03 did not have effect on the strategy execution as there was no consensus among respondents. However, leadership communication skills with a standard deviation of 0.9 and leader's problem solving skills with a standard deviation of 0.89 had a moderate consensus among respondents hence influence strategy execution. This agrees with Nacheri & Ogollah (2015) in a study on the influence of turnaround strategy adoption on revenue performance of Kenya Revenue Authority noted that for effective Strategy Execution, the leaders must be in a position to influence the team members to direct their efforts in a given direction as well as build a coherent team. The ability to articulate clear action plans of the strategy execution action plans is important in Strategy Execution.

Inferential Statistics

Testing the model fitness

Bivariate linear regression analysis was conducted to establish the effect of leadership on the dependent variable; strategy execution. Table 5 shows Coefficient of determination (R2) and adjusted (R2).

Table 4.6: Coefficients of Determination (R²) and Adjusted (R²) for Leadership

Model	R	R. Square	Adjusted R. Square	Std Error of the Estimate
1	0.838 ^a	0.702	0.680	0.34258

a. Predictor: (Constant), Leadership

The R- square and adjusted R- square was (R²) = 0.838 and adj. (R²) =0.702 respectively as highlighted in Table 4.6. This implies that the leadership was able to explain at least 0.838% variation in the dependent variable; strategy execution. R² ranges from zero to one and the closer the value to one the better “fit” the model is.

Analysis of Variance

Analysis of Variance was used to determine the significance of the regression model and also in testing the null hypothesis. From the findings, the F- statistics value of 86.317(1, 58), p<0.05 was found to be significant at (0.000) which shows that the model was fit in predicting the effect of leadership strategy execution in private in Murang'a County in Kenya.

Table 4.7: ANOVA^a of Leadership

Model	Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of freedom (df)	Mean Square	F	Significance
1	Regression	12.941	1	12.941	86.317	0.000 ^b
	Residual	8.696	58	0.150		
	Total	21.636	59			

Coefficients for Leadership

Table 4.7 shows the coefficients of the regression output for access to networks and technology based new venture creation. The Coefficients values were used to generate the model for access to networks and technology based new venture creation $Y=0.849+0.384X_1 + \epsilon$

Where;

Y= technology based new venture creation

X₁ = Access to network support

ϵ = Error term

Table 4.8: Coefficient for Leadership

Model	Source of variation	Unstandardized Coefficients		standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
1		Beta	Std. Error	Beta		
	(constant)	.104	.403		.259	.796
	Leadership	.591	.091	.574	6.517	.000

From Table 4.8 the beta coefficient for market share was β 0.591, p<0.05. This implies that a unit change in market share would result to 0.5961 increase in strategy execution in Private schools in Murang'a, Kenya. The t-value for this beta was 6.517, p<0.05. Since the p-value was less than 0.05, it means the beta coefficient for market share is greater than zero and thus leadership has a statistically significant effect strategy execution in private schools in Murang'a County. This finding led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the subsequent conclusion that leadership has a statistically significant and positive effect on strategy execution in Private schools in Murang'a, Kenya.

VI. Conclusion

From the results, leadership had a significant effect on strategy execution in Private schools in Murang'a, Kenya. This implies that leadership has a great impact on execution of strategies in private secondary schools of Murang'a County. This conclusion was arrived at because all aspects of leadership that were studied show that most respondents agreed that leadership was key in execution of strategy. There were aspects of leadership that were considered and agreed upon by respondents as key in strategy execution. The two top aspects of leadership were: Leadership communication skills and leadership problem solving skills.

VII. Recommendation

The study recommends that the leader's problem solving skills should be a critical aspect when a private secondary school is recruiting strategy execution team. The proprietors and management should also come up with programs that boost problem solving among the senior staff in the private schools. In addition, leadership communication skills should be thoroughly enhanced in the private secondary schools with a very clear line of communication and probably a communication policy established to enhance strategy execution.

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Jane Njeri Kamau, et. al. “Effect of Leadership on strategy execution in private secondary schools in Murang’a County, Kenya.” *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)*, 22(10), 2020, pp. 42-50.