

# Strategic Planning And Its Influence On Kenya Certificate Of Secondary Education Performance In Public Secondary Schools In Lamu County, Kenya.

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## **Abstract**

*Strategic planning gives competitive advantage in terms of performance. School principals are therefore expected to make use of strategic planning in order to improve KCSE performance. This study attempted to establish the influence of strategic planning on the KCSE performance among public secondary schools in Lamu County. The study endeavoured to find out why, in spite of the presence of strategic plan documents in the schools in Lamu County, performance had continued to deteriorate between 2019-2023. The study objectives included; to establish the influence of goal setting; to examine the influence of human capital development, to establish the influence of monitoring and evaluation, and to evaluate the influence of school culture on the performance of public secondary schools in Lamu County. The research used a descriptive research design. The study targeted all the public secondary schools. The research used stratified sampling to stratify schools into national, extra county, county and sub-county strata, while the boards of management executive and teachers were stratified into female and male. Teachers and BoM members were identified using simple random sampling. Census survey was also adopted for the principals. The study used a sample size of 217, which included 97 teachers, 97 members of boards of management and 28 principals. Questionnaires were used for teachers, an interview guide for the principals while the focused group discussion tool was used for the BoM members during data collection. The findings may help principals and the Boards of Management of the schools in Lamu County to enhance the critical strategic planning factors within their schools in order to enhance performance in KCSE. The study established that goal setting, training and development, monitoring and evaluation and school culture positively influenced KCSE performance. The study recommended that the government funds the training and development programs for the stakeholders in strategic management for proper upskilling in school management.*

**Keywords:** *monitoring and evaluation, resource-based view, performance, strategic planning*

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## **I. Introduction**

In a rapidly changing and highly demanding world, there is continual high stakes in the academic fraternity in that learning institutions are expected to produce top performing students (Christie & Lingard, 2020). The ever-increasing demands on the principals to produce quality grades have made it difficult for most of them to see beyond the academic performance at present (Muhambe, 2021). Most are concerned with the now, that is how the school can produce best grades. Nevertheless, the successful principals will be those who focus beyond the now. In fact, Arokodare and Asikhia, (2020) posit that strategic leaders are those who have the ability to focus ahead and anticipate what is needed, and make plans on how to make it available then. Owing to the foregoing, education institutions must make use of strategic planning to survive the current challenges and remain relevant in the future.

The concept of Strategic Planning (SP) has been given various definitions and this is a pointer to the degree of elusiveness in defining the concept (Ramirez & Wilkinson, 2020). As stated by Baumgartner and Rauter (2019) strategic planning takes into account the conditions which affect the organization's direction thereby generating specific plans for achieving the set goals, setting of policies, identifying means of achieving

those objectives, implementing the objectives, monitoring and evaluation and even taking corrective measures where the objectives have not been achieved.

Performance in schools is measured mainly by performance in examinations. Examinations are used, among other criteria, to assess the degree of accomplishment and also make clear the learner's level of schooling (Ballou & Springer, 2019). Curriculum is also evaluated using examinations, both locally and nationally (Glatthorn, Boschee, Whitehead & Boschee, 2019). The major function of the school leader is to make sure there is good performance in the examinations by availing a favourable atmosphere in the school; thus, through strategic planning, the leader can ensure that all these factors are integrated in the school environment in order to facilitate good performance. Owing to the consistently dismal performance in KCSE in Lamu County, this study argues that; either strategic planning is not being implemented, or there is a problem with the mode of implementation. This happens against the backdrop of the schools having their vision, mission statements and even core values, which are the symbols of SP implementation, documented. This forms the conceptualization of this study.

In the United States, SP was introduced in schools to promote performance and equity (Ainscow, 2019). In some states like the Rhodes Island school districts, it is secured by the state law. It is common since its proponents argued that it would encourage strategic thinking in outlining effective approaches, clarify desired future states, help with outlining priorities, improve performance, enhance teamwork and expertise in a continuously evolving environment. The process followed four major steps which included: needs assessment, managing inquiry process, designing a broad program and evaluating that program. The introduction of strategic planning registered tremendous improvement in the educational departments (Morrison, Ross, Morrison & Kalman, 2019). Again, Acton (2021) who authored a study titled; school leaders as change agents, studied the effects of strategic management on the performance of Federal senior schools in Minnesota. The scholar observes that a school's strategic plan rests on the school leader. The strategic planning principles are embodied in the vision and mission statements and promoted through the core values to ensure that great performance is sustained.

In Zimbabwe, Chimuka (2019) comments that most schools have a strategic plan in form of mission statements printed on walls and entrances, nevertheless, these mission statements are not always orally expressed and clarified to every stakeholder in the school; consequently, it only influences performance to a little extent.

In Kenya, the government issued an outline of a five-years' strategic plan that is 2008-2012. It aimed at establishing a 'globally competitive quality learning and teaching for Kenya's sustainable development' (Republic of Kenya, 2008). The schools were required to come up with the vision and mission statements, which are the embodiment of strategic planning. These documents are available in all the public secondary schools as a requirement by the Ministry of Education. It is important to find out whether these policies are being implemented in these institutions, and if so, how. In Lamu County, the introduction of this policy has not had a positive influence on KCSE performance in the public secondary schools, in the last five years as illustrated on Table 1

**Table 1 Lamu County average KCSE performance 2020-2024**

| Year | Mean score | Mean Grade |
|------|------------|------------|
| 2020 | 3.31       | D          |
| 2021 | 3.27       | D          |
| 2022 | 3.13       | D          |
| 2023 | 3.04       | D          |
| 2024 | 2.79       | D          |

**Source: Lamu County Director of Education Office (2024)**

The government policy is that students must attain a mean score of 7 (C+ plus) and above to transition to university or even diploma colleges. Again, in relation to other counties, this performance is still poor.

The study sought to establish the influence of monitoring and evaluation on KCSE performance in selected public secondary schools in Lamu County, Kenya.

### **Theoretical Framework and conceptual framework**

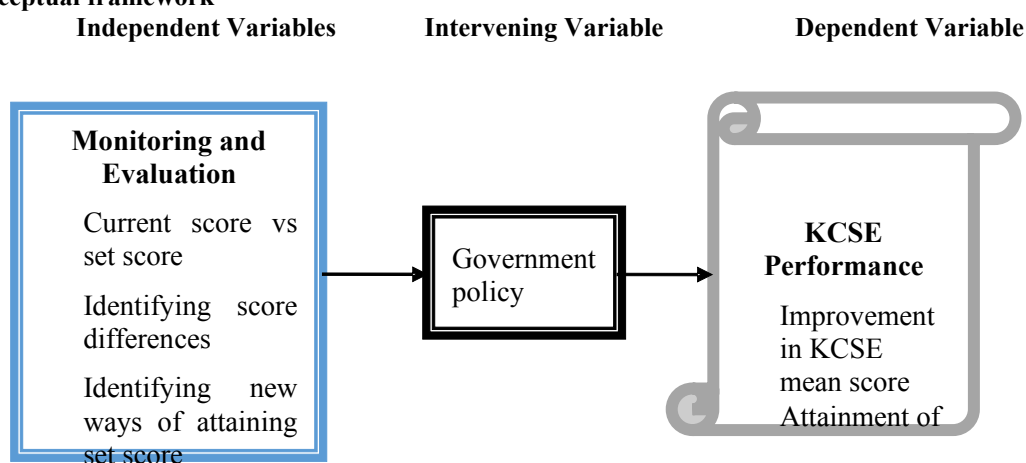
The study was guided by the Resource Based View (RBV) propounded by Barney in 1991. The main thrust of the theory is that all firms have strategic resources. Organizations should aim to maximize these internal resources to create and dominate future opportunities (Bryson, Ackermann & Eden, 2013). This theory was derived stems from the tenet that a firms' main foundation of its competitive advantage is its internal resources, rather than its alignment in its exterior environment. In other words, rather than merely assessing the opportunities and risks posed by the environment when conducting business, a company's competitive

advantage is dependent on the distinctive resources and competencies that it possesses (Baia, Ferreira, & Rodrigues, 2020). RBV states that the resources and capabilities possessed by an institution are requisite for its competitive edge. Competitive advantage in this study was evaluated in terms of KCSE performance. All the resources and capabilities of the school should be deployed to ensure that the school posts better performance in KCSE. In a school setting, the resources include both the human and financial resources deployed for the seamless operations of the institution.

This theory was relevant to the current study given its central premise that resources, capabilities and competencies are one of the central pillars in strategy implementation. There is no doubt that the school must acquire the necessary resources, competencies and capabilities before it embarks on a journey of the implementation of its formulated strategic plan. The success of any strategy squarely hinges on the availability of resources and the abilities of the executors. In this respect resources would need to be set aside for bringing all the stakeholders together; the principal, board of management, sponsors, parents and learners together to set goals for the institution. Again, monitoring and evaluation of any strategy also requires both financial and human/technical resources. Whether monitoring and evaluation is done internally or externally, resources; financial, human and technical must be committed to facilitate the internal or external evaluator.

Some of the criticisms to the theory include; the theory lacks direct managerial applications and suggests an infinite regress, indicating a continuous and recursive reasoning process without a definitive endpoint. The theory’s applicability is too limited; the theory is not a theory of the firm; (Chatterjee, 2023). This theory therefore relates to this study in that monitoring and evaluation of resources is important for competitive advantage, in this case posting C+ and above grades in KCSE.

**Conceptual framework**



*Figure 1: Conceptual Framework*

**II. Research Methodology And Methods**

The research used the descriptive research design. The study targeted all the 28 principals, the 140 executive members of the schools’ board of management and the 439 teachers of the public secondary schools in Lamu County. Stratified sampling was utilized to stratify the schools in the county into the various strata that is; national, extra-county, county and sub-county. The respondents were also stratified into male and female. The intention of stratified sampling is achieving anticipated representation from the various categories of the population.

Proportionate sampling was then adopted. This ensured that every sub-group within the population was adequately represented in the sample (Zohrabi, 2018).

All the respondents were then identified using simple random sampling to provide them with fair chances and impartial representation of the population within the sample (Kothari, 2014).

The sample size for the principals was determined using the Mugenda and Mugenda (2008) argument that a sample size of 10-30% of the total population is adequate for analysis. The study therefore used 30% as the sample size.

The sample size for the teachers and boards of management members were determined using Kothari’s (2014) formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2pqN}{e^2(N-1) + Z^2pq}$$

Where;

n = sample size for a finite population

N = size of population  
 p = population reliability (where p is 0.5 for all population)  
 q = 1 – p = 0.5  
 e = margin of error considered as 10% for this study  
 Z = value for the selected alpha level (at 0.05 level of significance)  
 Z is 1.96  
 substituting the above formula, the sample size for the informants was;  
 $n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 \times 140}{(0.1)^2 (140 - 1) + [(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5]}$   
 n = 56 BoM executive members  
 $n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 \times 439}{(0.1)^2 (439 - 1) + [(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5]}$   
 n = 97 teachers  
 The sample size was therefore as shown on Table 1

*Table 1: Sample size*

| School Category | Principals (N) | Sample @ 30% | Teachers (N) | Sample    | BoM (N)    | Sample    |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| National        | 2              | 1            | 65           | 7         | 10         | 4         |
| Extra county    | 3              | 1            | 79           | 10        | 15         | 6         |
| County          | 5              | 2            | 109          | 17        | 25         | 10        |
| Sub-county      | 18             | 5            | 186          | 63        | 90         | 36        |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>28</b>      | <b>9</b>     | <b>439</b>   | <b>97</b> | <b>140</b> | <b>56</b> |

Questionnaires, interview guides and focused group discussions were used to collect data. Field data was organized, coded and input into SPSS. Quantitative data from the close-ended parts of the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics i.e. through use of mean and standard deviation, frequencies and percentages (Kothari, 2014). Qualitative data from the open-ended parts of the questionnaire and the interview guide were grouped according to themes guided by the research objectives. The unit of data analysis was the school. This study had both qualitative (from the questionnaire) and quantitative data (from the interviews and FGDs). Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics that is using the measures of central tendencies (Mean and Standard Deviation). Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis.

The SPSS (version 24.0) was employed to analyse both qualitative and quantitative data and generate output. The researcher also used the multiple linear regression analysis to establish the association between strategic planning and KCSE performance. Tables, charts and graphs were generated appropriately for presenting data.

The multiple regression model described below was utilized to determine the nature of the connection between the variables.

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

$Y_i$  = KCSE performance,

$\alpha$  = regression constant for the y-intercept,

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$  = regression coefficients,

$X_1$  = goal setting,

$X_2$  = monitoring and evaluation,

$\varepsilon$  = error term.

**Findings on Monitoring and Evaluation and its influence on KCSE performance**

The study also wanted to find out the influence of M&E on KCSE performance. Teachers were consequently tasked to demonstrate their consensus with certain assertions. Their answers were classified on a 5-point Likert scale where: 5 - Strongly Agree, 4 - Agree, 3 - Neutral, 2 – Disagree and 1 - Strongly Disagree. The mean and standard deviations were generated using SPSS. A standard deviation of 0.0000 meant unanimous agreement on a certain statement while figures above 0.0000 showed varying degrees of agreement with the same statement as illustrated on Table 4.

**Table 4: Informants’ opinions on the influence of monitoring and evaluation on KCSE performance**

| Statement  | Mean   | SD    |
|--|--------|-------|
| The school has a monitoring and evaluation system in place | 2.1212 | .5136 |
| The school conducts frequent monitoring and evaluation     | 2.2461 | .8063 |
| The school regularly benchmarks with other schools         | 2.2515 | .8772 |

|  |  |        |       |
|--|--|--------|-------|
| The school regularly revises its strategic plan after evaluation |  | 2.3091 | .4281 |
| Monitoring and evaluation helps improve KCSE performance         |  | 1.2091 | .6459 |

From Table 4, the teachers disagreed that the school regularly revised its strategic plan after evaluation (Mean 2.3091). This implied that if the schools still had strategic plans, the teachers had not been involved in any way in their updates and therefore not part of any improvements thereof. This would beat the whole purpose of having a strategic plan in the first place. The strategic plan is a living document which should be consulted every now and then in the running of the school.

The teachers disagreed that their school regularly benchmarked with other schools (Mean 2.2515). This implied that the teachers had not been involved in any benchmarking exercise in other schools during the life of the strategic plan, or they were excluded from such activities if they happened. Perhaps the failure to involve them at the onset of the SP creation meant that they would also be excluded in the consecutive stages of its implementation. This meant that the teachers missed the opportunities of learning from others and thereby enriching their own experiences.

Again, the teachers disagreed that the school conducted frequent monitoring and evaluation (Mean 2.2461). This once again implied that the teachers were not aware of any monitoring and evaluation of the school's strategy. Perhaps monitoring of the strategy was never done, or the teachers were not involved in the process, yet they were the key implementers of the same. The key to the success of any strategic plan is monitoring, since only then can one tell whether the project is on course or not.

Furthermore, the teachers disagreed that the school had a monitoring system to collect information (Mean 2.1212). This again implied that the teachers were unaware of any system in place for the collection of information on the strategic plan. This meant that the teachers were not involved in the monitoring information collection exercise, or the exercise never took place at all. Perhaps the schools lacked the expertise to and the necessary resources to conduct these important exercises, important as they were. It could also be that they failed to understand the important role played by monitoring and evaluation in the life of a strategic plan.

Further, they disagreed that the school had defined the key performance indicators to the stakeholders (Mean 2.0973). This implied that the teachers were not aware of how their own performance and that of other stakeholders was being measured, therefore there was no way of assessing whether they were on the right track or not. The KPIs are the gauge that measures the overall health of the strategic plan, so that remedial action is taken where necessary.

Finally, they strongly disagreed that monitoring and evaluation helped improve KCSE performance (Mean 1.2091). This implied that the teachers were generally unaware of whether their schools conducted monitoring and evaluation exercises. Perhaps the schools did not have strategic plans anyway or if they had, these documents could have been lying somewhere in the principals' office. Arguably, if the plans were not being regularly referred to in the course of running the school, it was no wonder that the KCSE results were dismal.

A principal [P05] commented

*The only monitoring and evaluation we do is the one on the TPAD tool by the TSC, which has to do with the daily management of the school rather than the implementation of the long-term goals and objectives of the school. Concerning training, we received basic training prior to the introduction of the strategic plans. There have not been courses on monitoring and evaluation; I therefore do not know what to do in matters M&E. We only sit with the teachers after every KCSE exam to evaluate the performance.*

[P05 Lady principal, Bahari Secondary School, August 2024]

The findings from the principal implied that M&E processes are narrowly focused and not aligned with broader strategic goals, which limits the school's ability to assess the progress and impact of its long-term initiatives. Again, while they received basic training before the introduction of strategic plans, there has been no specific training on monitoring and evaluation. This indicates a knowledge and skills gap in M&E practices, which is essential for tracking the implementation of strategic plans and assessing their effectiveness in improving KCSE performance. Without proper M&E training, school leaders may struggle to make data-driven decisions that could enhance academic outcomes. Furthermore, the informant describes how the school's approach to evaluation is reactive, focusing on performance reviews with teachers after the release of KCSE exam results. This suggests that evaluation is being conducted retrospectively rather than proactively. This form of evaluation, limited to post-exam discussions, does not provide timely insights that could inform ongoing improvements or adjustments to teaching methods, resource allocation, or strategic initiatives during the academic year.

A group of Board of management members reported:

*We do not have the pre-requisite expertise to implement the M&E activities; we have never received any training on the same. The principal explains this to us but we have no experts. Perhaps one may ask why we do not invite experts to train us but then again, the issue of funding comes back. We do not have funds to conduct these trainings. Most of the school resources are used on the daily running of the schools and none for the non-essential programmes in the school.*

[BM 09 Male discussant, August 2024]

The findings from the FGD indicate systemic challenges in the implementation of strategic planning through M&E due to a combination of lack of expertise, absence of training, and funding constraints. These challenges have a direct bearing on the schools' ability to track progress, evaluate performance, and adjust strategies to improve KCSE outcomes. The BoM's focus on day-to-day operations and the prioritization of essential activities over long-term strategic initiatives highlights a broader issue of resource allocation. Schools are not investing in areas such as M&E because they do not have the financial flexibility to do so. This reflects a short-term focus, where schools are forced to prioritize immediate needs at the expense of long-term strategic goals.

Without adequate training and funding, schools are unable to build the necessary capacity for effective M&E. This lack of capacity means that strategic plans are not rigorously monitored, and schools miss opportunities for continuous improvement. Consequently, this may contribute to slow progress in improving KCSE performance in these schools.

The findings agree with those of Msila and Setlhako (2019) whose study established that monitoring was a continuing examination of whether strategic results were being attained, in order to engage a timely remedial action.

The findings further agree with those of Kusek and Rist (2020) who argue that a crucial part of the strategic leadership process is the monitoring and reporting of progress toward achieving strategic goals. Consequently, organizations are encouraged to establish systems that continuously collect data and provide at least annual reports.

**Inferential statistics**

The relationship between the study variables was determined using multiple regression analysis and provided the following results:

**Model Summary**

R-squared explains the proportion of variation in the dependent variable that is accounted for by the independent variables. Therefore, the four independent variables studied that is goal setting, training and development, monitoring and evaluation and school culture), explained 69.8% of variance in KCSE performance. Consequently, factors beyond this study contributed to 30.2% of the variance in the dependent variable as shown on Table 8

**Table 8: Model summary**

| Model | R     | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | 0.835 | 0.698    | 0.683             | 1.5237                     |

- a. Predictors: (Constant), monitoring and evaluation
- b. Dependent Variable: KCSE performance

**Analysis of Variance**

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) entails computations that help to determine the levels of variability within a regression model. This technique assesses how much of the total variation in a dependent variable can be attributed to different sources, providing valuable insights into relationships among variables.

**Table 9: ANOVA**

| Model | Sum of Squares | df      | Mean Square | F       | Sig.   |                    |
|-------|----------------|---------|-------------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| 1     | Regression     | 215.223 | 1           | 107.612 | 45.188 | .0000 <sup>b</sup> |
|       | Residual       | 92.876  | 59          | 2.381   |        |                    |
|       | Total          | 308.099 | 60          |         |        |                    |

- a. Predictors: (Constant), goal setting, training and development, monitoring and evaluation, school culture
- b. Dependent Variable: KCSE performance

From Table 9, The significance value was 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the model demonstrated statistical significance in predicting the relationship between the independent variables on the

dependent variable, indicating that its findings are reliable and meaningful within the given study. This was demonstrated through the F-test which measures the F-distribution and used to compare the statistical models fitted to a data set, to recognize the one which has a best fit to the population where the sampled data came from. In this analysis, the F statistic was significant (45.188) compared to the predetermined value of 2.76, indicating that the model had good fit.

**Table 10: Multiple regression on strategic planning and KCSE performance**

| Model |                           | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t     | Sig.   |
|-------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|--------|
|       |                           | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |        |
| 1     | (Constant)                | 6.182                       | .826       |                           | 7.484 | 0.0000 |
|       | Monitoring and evaluation | 0.367                       | .234       | 0.045                     | 2.423 | 0.0201 |

**Source: Research Data (2024)**

Therefore; substituting the regression model:

$$Y = 6.182 + 0.242X_1 + \epsilon$$

Therefore, according to the equation, taking all factors (goal setting, training and development, monitoring and evaluation, school culture) constant at zero, KCSE performance would be 6.182 units. The study also discovered a significant positive relationship between goal setting and KCSE performance ( $\beta=0.242$  and P value < 0.05); meaning that a unit improvement in goal setting would lead to an improvement in KCSE performance by 0.242 units.

The findings agree with those of Msila and Setlhako (2019) whose study established that monitoring was a continuing examination of whether strategic results were being attained, in order to engage a timely remedial action.

The findings however further agree with those of Kusek and Rist (2020) who argue that a crucial part of the strategic leadership process is the monitoring and reporting of progress toward achieving strategic goals. Consequently, organizations are encouraged to establish systems that continuously collect data and provide at least annual reports.

### III. Limitation

Geographical location was a limitation in that Lamu county is only one of the 47 counties in the country, therefore the sample drawn from only one county may not adequately represent the whole country. As such generalization of the study findings to the whole country should be approached with adequate caution.

### IV. Conclusion

The study concluded that goal setting influenced performance in KCSE. The schools therefore had put in place vision and mission statements, and even mottoes as part of their goal setting processes. The study also concluded that goal setting positively influenced KCSE performance. The study also concluded that monitoring and evaluation influenced KCSE performance. There were however no monitoring systems in place in the schools. The study also concluded that monitoring and evaluation positively influenced KCSE performance.

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