

The status of school strategic plan implementation on the quality of education in public secondary schools in Busia County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

School strategic plan implementation plays a crucial role in enhancing quality of education in public secondary schools in Busia County, Kenya, where concerns have been raised over persistently low Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KSCE) performance despite the presence of strategic plans in schools. The problem motivating the study was that although most schools are expected to implement strategic plans to improve academic outcomes, their effectiveness in enhancing quality of education remains unclear. The study objective was to establish school strategic plan implementation status on quality of education in public secondary schools in Busia County. The study was guided by Ecleticroots of strategy implementation model of strategy implementation. Ex-post facto research design was used, Census approach was used to target 160 principals and 7 Sub-County Directors of Education, giving a total sample of 167 respondents. Data were collected using questionnaires, interview guides, and document analysis and analyzed using qualitative and quantitative data. multiple linear regression was done and significance level at 0.05 level. The findings suggested that approximately 49.6% of schools had not fully implemented strategic plans, while about 50.4% were implementing them, though many struggled to achieve set targets. The overall KCSE mean score was 3.707 (D+), with a negligible and statistically insignificant difference of 0.0536 between schools implementing and those not implementing strategic plans ($p = 0.805$). The findings of the study suggest most schools have a weak implementation strategy on strategic plans and has limited influence on academic performance. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education enforce full implementation of strategic plans in all schools, while Boards of Management, principals, parents, and other stakeholders strengthen resource mobilization strategies and improve monitoring and evaluation systems to enhance effective implementation and improve quality of education in secondary schools in Busia County, Kenya.

Keywords: Implementation Status, Monitoring and Evaluation, Quality Education, Strategic Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning has remained a cornerstone of educational reform, continuing to shape school improvement agendas globally well into the 2020s. Recent scholarship affirms that strategy and tactics constitute essential elements of educational strategic planning, with strategy representing the action plan of the educational organization and tactics comprising the concrete operations for its effective and efficient development to guarantee organizational vision and mission achievement (Wilson & Nyakwara, 2022). In Kenya, strategic planning has been a key feature of educational reform efforts. However, recent research indicates that while strategic plans are available in schools with clear strategy implementation designs and structures, the implementation levels remain low, weak, and ineffective, adversely affecting improvement in performance management practices (Wemaya, 2018). A study evaluating the implementation of strategic planning as a tool for improving performance management practices by principals of public secondary schools in Nyamira County found that implementation processes faced many constraints resulting from inadequate funding, weak control and evaluation structures, lack of training, and Board of Management, sponsor, and community influence (Wemaya, 2018). Similarly, research from Kitui has examined the ongoing debate on whether strategic planning improves organizational performance, with findings suggesting that the argument remains unresolved among theorists and practitioners (Queen, 2022).

Studies from Kakamega County have further identified determinants influencing the implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools, highlighting the need for understanding the specific factors that facilitate or hinder successful plan implementation (Queen, 2022). Research from Kisumu and Uasin Gishu Counties has established that despite heavy government investment and several initiatives, strategic plan implementation remains instrumental in ensuring internal efficiency (Nyong'a & Maina, 2019) found that effective strategic plan implementation significantly influences internal efficiency indicators such as student retention, progression rates, and completion rates in public secondary schools. Strategic plan implementation in Kenyan public secondary schools can be influenced by factors such as resource allocation, government involvement, communication, and employee motivation (Mulandi & Wamitu, 2022).

Research has further demonstrated that Board of Management commitment levels significantly influence strategic planning implementation in schools (Mwakisaghu, 2023). Mwakisaghu (2023) found that schools with highly committed Boards of Management demonstrated more effective strategic planning implementation compared to those with low commitment levels. This finding highlights the critical importance of governance structures and stakeholder engagement in enabling successful strategic plan implementation.

Studies have further shown that household economic factors significantly influence educational participation and outcomes in kakamega County (Imende & Olel, 2020). Household income instability has been identified as a primary driver of student dropout rates, with families facing significant economic constraints often unable to support their children's education (Imende & Olel., 2020). This finding highlights that strategic planning implementation must be understood within the broader socioeconomic context that shapes educational opportunities and outcomes (Imende & Olel, 2020). Implementing strategic plans yields quality education inform of increase in quality grades which increases students' chances in joining higher education and enrolling in competitive courses in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). This course promises better economic rewards. This may in turn impact positively on the accomplishment of Kenya Vision 2030 and the realization of the SDGs.

However, despite school strategic plans existence, there has been persistent poor performance in KCSE by public secondary schools in Busia County. This has negatively impacted on the students' progression to tertiary level and career choices. However, empirical evidence on the effect of implementation of school strategic plans on quality of education in public secondary schools in Busia County is lacking. This is in terms of how school strategic plans are implemented, resources are mobilized and monitoring and evaluation is done and how such practices affect quality of education in public secondary schools in Busia County. This study was conceptualized to establish the effect of school strategic plan implementation on quality of education in public secondary schools in Busia County, Kenya with a view of suggesting ways of improving education in the County.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

According to Guzman (2022), national examinations play a significant role in the Kenyan 8-4-4 education system, where performance is often used as an indicator of the quality of education in examination-oriented systems. Strategic planning is a useful management tool for improving institutional effectiveness in education. For instance, recent studies indicate that strategic plan implementation is positively associated with improved institutional performance, resource utilization, and efficiency in educational organizations (Johnson et al., 2021). In Kenya, the Ministry of Education has further emphasized the need for all public schools to develop and implement strategic plans as part of education sector reforms aimed at improving quality and accountability (Republic of Kenya, 2024).

Despite this policy requirement, evidence from various studies shows that although most schools have developed strategic plans, the level of implementation remains low and inconsistent across institutions (Johnson et al., 2021). This weak implementation has been associated with challenges such as inadequate resources, limited stakeholder involvement, and weak monitoring systems, which may hinder the realization of intended educational outcomes (Kawinzi et al., 2023). Consequently, many public secondary schools continue to experience suboptimal academic performance despite the existence of strategic plans.

In Busia County, Kenya National Examination Council statistics continue to show relatively low scores in KCSE, with only a small proportion of candidates attaining the university entry grade (C+ and above). For example, in earlier years only about 10% to 11% of candidates attained this benchmark, while recent performance trends still indicate that a majority of learners score below the expected threshold. Despite the widespread adoption of strategic plans in public secondary schools, there is implementation of these plans influences the quality of education in Busia County. This presents a related and empirical gap that this study sought to address by examining the relationship between school strategic plan implementation and quality of education in public secondary schools in Busia County, Kenya.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To establish the status of school strategic plan implementation on the quality of education in public secondary schools in Busia county, Kenya
- ii. To determine the effect of school strategic plan resource mobilization practices on the quality of education in public secondary schools in Busia County, Kenya
- iii. To examine the effect of school strategic plan monitoring and evaluation practices on quality of education in public secondary schools in Busia County.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 The Eclectic Roots of strategy implementation

This study was guided by a theoretical model by Noble (1999) on his research on the eclectic roots of strategy implementation. Noble's theory differentiates between implementation and formulation with concepts from process oriented literature. Which bring about the following limitations; it overrules the chances of involvement in the formulation stage, a decision is already made if the strategy implementation starts with communication therefore performance may not be suitable to this kind of predestination. Linearity of the stages poses a further problem to this model, if the concepts of communication, interpretation, adoption and enactment as a sequence it will create a top-down communication model with a linear view. For the linear relationship to succeed, the top management plays a crucial part in stating the strategic content and communication process. The interpretation, adoption, enactment (implementation) and actual performance is monitored by the middle managers. Also, this model does not provide relationships between the process components for feedback purposes. This was addressed by creating a loop between the results and the management as described in the conceptual framework of this study.

This model theory is applicable to this study because those in top management will participate first in the formulation of strategy which will earn the consensus of people from different functions. Noble (1999) states that Planning and Formulation of the strategy are vital. Management ensured that the strategic plan adopted communication to the other middle managers (heads of departments) who interpreted what is expected of them before they engage in cross-functional coordination.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Status of School Strategic Plan Implementation and Quality of Education

Globally, strategic plan is a critical management tool that organizations have effectively used to dynamic and uncertain environments. Contemporary strategic management literature emphasizes that organizations must continuously adapt their strategies to maintain competitiveness, efficiency, and sustainability (Whittington et al 2020). Strategic planning is therefore viewed as a systematic process of defining organizational direction and aligning internal resources with external opportunities and threats. In the education sector, strategic planning is widely used in school improvement frameworks, particularly in developed countries. Schools in countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia have integrated strategic planning into accountability systems aimed at improving student learning outcomes and institutional performance. For instance, school improvement initiatives in the Malaysia emphasize data-driven planning, continuous evaluation, and outcome-based performance targets as mechanisms for enhancing school effectiveness (Mariani et al, 2022). These systems ensure that strategic planning is not only a documentation exercise but a continuous process of institutional development.

Furthermore, research indicates that effective strategic planning in schools contributes to improved alignment between teaching practices and institutional goals. Schools that successfully implement strategic plans tend to demonstrate improved academic performance, better resource utilization, and stronger stakeholder engagement. However, even in developed systems, challenges such as resistance to change and inconsistency in implementation still exist, indicating that strategic planning is complex and context-dependent. In Africa, strategic planning has gained prominence as governments and education stakeholders seek to improve efficiency, accountability, and quality in public institutions. Many African countries have adopted education reforms that emphasize school-based management and strategic planning as mechanisms for improving performance.

Studies show that while strategic planning is widely adopted across African education systems, implementation remains a major challenge. In many cases, schools are able to develop strategic plans but struggle to execute them effectively due to limited financial resources, inadequate managerial capacity, and weak monitoring systems (Kawinzi et al., 2023). This creates a gap between policy intentions and actual practice. In South Africa, research on strategic leadership has revealed that organizations often perform better in strategy formulation than in implementation. The implementation gap is frequently attributed to weak leadership structures, poor communication,

and lack of coordination between strategic actors (Jooste & Fourie, 2009). This suggests that strategic planning success depends not only on formulation but also on the effectiveness of implementation processes.

Additionally, studies show that school performance is influenced by multiple factors beyond strategic planning, including teacher quality, infrastructure availability, leadership styles, and student socio-economic backgrounds. This suggests that strategic planning alone cannot guarantee improved educational outcomes unless supported by effective implementation systems. At the county and district level in Kenya, studies have further highlighted factors affecting implementation of strategic plan. Mulandi and Wamitu (2022) found that school managers face significant challenges in implementing strategic plans due to limited managerial skills and inadequate stakeholder involvement. Similarly, Owino and Oloko (2015) established that while a majority of schools engage in formal strategic planning, the translation of plans into actionable activities remains weak.

Other studies have shown that although many schools have adopted strategic planning, the level of implementation varies significantly across institutions. For example, Owino and Oloko (2015) reported that while most schools had strategic plans, the quality and effectiveness of implementation differed depending on leadership capacity and resource availability. This suggests that strategic planning outcomes are highly dependent on contextual factors within individual schools. Furthermore, research indicates that principals play a central role in the success of strategic planning processes. However, their effectiveness is often constrained by limited training in strategic management, inadequate support systems, and competing administrative demands. As a result, implementation gaps persist even where strategic plans exist.

Despite the growing body of literature on strategic planning in education, several gaps remain evident. First, most studies have focused primarily on the formulation of strategic plans rather than their actual implementation and impact on educational outcomes. This leaves limited empirical evidence on how implementation processes influence school performance. Second, many existing studies are conducted in different geographical and institutional contexts, making it difficult to generalize findings to specific local settings such as Busia County. There is therefore a need for localized studies that reflect contextual realities within Kenyan public secondary schools.

Finally, there is limited integration of theoretical models such as Noble's (1999) strategy implementation framework in empirical studies within the Kenyan education context. This creates a gap in linking theory with practical school-level implementation processes. This study addresses these gaps by focusing specifically by examining implementation of strategic and its relation to quality of education. It goes beyond general discussions of strategic planning by disaggregating implementation into key dimensions, including overall implementation status, resource mobilization practices, and monitoring and evaluation practices. As a results of adopting a correlational research design, the study further establishes the relationship between these variables and educational outcomes such as KCSE performance and learning quality indicators. In addition, the study contributes to existing literature by applying Noble's (1999) model of strategy implementation in a school context, thereby linking theoretical perspectives with practical implementation realities.

2.2.2 Resource Mobilization Practices and Quality of Education

Studies show that while strategic planning is widely adopted across African education systems, implementation remains a major challenge. In many cases, schools are able to develop strategic plans but struggle to execute them effectively due to limited financial resources, inadequate managerial capacity, and weak monitoring systems (Kawinzi et al., 2023). Other studies have shown that although many schools have adopted strategic planning, the level of implementation varies significantly across institutions. For example, Owino and Oloko (2015) reported that while most schools had strategic plans, the quality and effectiveness of implementation differed depending on leadership capacity and resource availability. Third, previous research has largely treated strategic planning as a single construct, without disaggregating it into key components such as resource mobilization and monitoring and evaluation. This limits understanding of which specific aspects of implementation have the greatest influence on quality of education.

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2.2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation Practices and Quality of Education

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III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This study adopted Ex-post facto research design because it examines relationships among variables that had already occurred and could not be altered by the researcher. In this study, these schools have already generated measurable academic outcomes, particularly Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) mean scores, during the strategic plan implementation period. This implies that both the independent variable (school strategic plan implementation practices) and the dependent variable (quality of education as reflected in KCSE performance) have already occurred and are observable in existing records.

The selection of this research design was informed by the implementation of school strategic plans was already ongoing in public secondary schools, meaning that the phenomenon under investigation is naturally occurring rather than experimentally introduced. Second, KCSE performance data is already available for the period under which strategic plans have been implemented, making it possible to analyze existing outcomes rather than generating new experimental conditions. Therefore, the study focused on examining how variations in strategic plan implementation practices are associated with differences in educational quality outcomes across schools.

3.2 Study Area

This study was conducted in public secondary schools in Busia County, Kenya. Busia County is geographically located at latitude 0.46005°N and longitude 34.11169°E and borders Uganda to the west, giving it a unique cross-border socio-economic and educational context. The county is administratively divided into seven sub-counties, namely Matayos, Teso South, Nambale, Teso North, Samia, Butula, and Bunyala, and has approximately 160 public secondary schools classified into national, extra-county, county, and sub-county categories (Republic of Kenya, 2024).

Busia County was selected for this study due to persistent disparities in academic performance as reflected in KCSE outcomes. Recent examination reports indicate that the proportion of candidates attaining grade C+ and above the minimum university entry requirement remains relatively low compared to national expectations and top-performing counties in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education, 2024). Although there are occasional improvements in individual schools, such as Kolanya Girls and Butula Boys, county-wide performance trends continue to reflect uneven academic achievement. These disparities are widely attributed to variations in resource availability, school leadership capacity, and socio-economic conditions affecting learners' access to educational support systems. Studies have shown that schools in rural and border counties often experience limited infrastructure, higher poverty levels, and increased learner mobility, all of which negatively influence academic performance (World Bank, 2018; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2020). Busia County, being largely rural and located along a busy international border, also experiences additional socio-cultural dynamics such as cross-border trade-related mobility, which can disrupt consistent school attendance and engagement.

3.3 Target population

The study population comprised all 167 respondents in Busia County, Kenya, together with their respective principals and Sub-County Directors of Education (SCDs). Busia County has a total of 160 public secondary schools

distributed across seven sub-counties, namely Butula, Busia, Samia, Bunyala, Teso South, Teso North, and Nambale. Each school is headed by one principal, who serves as the chief executive officer responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of school policies and programmes. In addition, the county has seven Sub-County Directors of Education, who are responsible for overseeing curriculum implementation, policy compliance, and supervision of schools within their respective jurisdictions. Therefore, the total study population consisted of 160 principals and 7 Sub-County Directors of Education, giving a combined population of 167 respondents.

Although all schools were included in the study population, they were further categorized based on the status of school strategic plan implementation, where some schools were actively implementing strategic plans while others were at different stages of adoption. This classification was used for analytical purposes rather than defining the study population.

The distribution of schools, principals, and Sub-County Directors across the seven sub-counties is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Population of Schools by Sub-County in Busia County

Sub Counties	School Status				Principals	Sub County Directors	Total
	Sub-County	County	Extra-County	National			
Butula	20	7	1	1	29	1	30
Busia	18	2	2	0	22	1	23
Samia	18	0	2	0	20	1	21
Bunyala	7	3	1	0	11	1	12
Teso South	21	1	2	1	25	1	26
Teso North	23	5	2	1	31	1	32
Nambale	18	2	2	0	22	1	23
Totals	125	20	12	3	160	7	167

Source: Busia County Education Office, 2021

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The sampling frame for this study comprised all public secondary schools in Busia County, while the unit of analysis was at the school level. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), where time and resources allow, researchers are encouraged to use large samples to enhance representativeness and reduce sampling error. In this study, a proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select a sample of 124 public secondary schools out of the 160 schools in Busia County. The sample was drawn to ensure representation across all categories of schools, including national, extra-county, county, and sub-county schools. In addition, all Sub-County Directors of Education ($n = 7$) were included through census sampling due to their small number and supervisory role.

The study did not exclude schools based on whether they had a school strategic plan or not. Instead, all sampled schools were considered as part of a continuum of strategic plan implementation, where schools were categorized during analysis into: schools with fully implemented strategic plans, schools with partially implemented strategic plans, and schools without strategic plans. This categorization enabled comparative analysis. One hundred and twenty four (124) school principals served as key respondents because they are responsible for the implementation of school policies and strategic plans at the institutional level. The Sub-County Directors of Education were purposively included due to their oversight role in monitoring and ensuring compliance with Ministry of Education policies. Therefore, the total sample size for the study was 131 respondents. The distribution of the sample size is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Sample size

Sub-County	Sub-County Schools	County Schools	Extra-County Schools	National Schools	Total Sample (Principals)	Sub-County Directors	Total Respondents
Butula	16	5	1	1	23	1	24
Busia	14	2	2	0	18	1	19
Samia	13	0	2	0	15	1	16
Bunyala	6	2	1	0	9	1	10
Teso South	17	1	2	1	21	1	22
Teso North	18	4	2	1	25	1	26
Nambale	15	2	2	0	13	1	14
TOTAL	99	16	12	3	124	7	131

Source Data (2023)

3.5 Sampling Strategy

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3.6 Data Collection

The instruments of data collection were : questionnaires, Document analysis guides and interview schedules. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the principals on school strategic plan implementation and quality of education in public secondary schools . In addition, an interview was conducted with the seven sub-County Directors of Education in Busia County on school strategic plan implementation

3.7 Data Analysis

The raw data collected through questionnaires and document analysis were first organized in Microsoft Excel and then imported into SPSS version 27 for analysis. Data cleaning involved checking for missing values, outliers and inconsistencies. Cases with excessive missing data (more than 20% per variable) were excluded, while missing values in key variables were handled through listwise deletion or mean imputation where appropriate and justified by the low percentage of missingness. Outliers were identified using boxplots and z-scores (values beyond ± 3 standard deviations) and were retained after verification against original records to avoid data loss. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages) were computed for all variables to provide an overview of the data distribution and respondent characteristics. Diagnostic tests, including test of normality (Shapiro-Wilk), were performed before inferential analyses to ensure that assumptions for the chosen statistical techniques were met. Where violations occurred, appropriate remedies (e.g., data transformation or robust standard errors) were applied. Data analysis was conducted objective by objective, aligning univariate, bivariate and multivariate techniques with the nature of the variables and the study's hypotheses.

For the second and third objectives, the study uses multiple regression analysis to test the null hypothesis that: School strategic plan resource mobilization practices, and school strategic plan monitoring and evaluation practices has no statistically significant effect on quality of education in Busia County while controlling for school level variables. The multiple regression analysis is deemed appropriate because school strategic plan resource mobilization practices and school strategic plan monitoring and evaluation practices are multiple variables while the outcome variable (quality of education) as indicated by the mean score in KCSE is continuous. Besides, multiple linear regression enabled the study to establish the magnitude and the direction of the effect of the explanatory variable on the outcome variable.

For both objectives two and three in model 1, this study computed the effect of school strategic plan resource mobilization practices and school strategic plan monitoring and evaluation practices; on quality of education .The second model assessed the results of school strategic plan resource mobilization practices and school strategic plan practices while controlling for school level variables. In the model, the positive sign of the coefficient indicates increased effect of the explanatory variable on the outcome variable while the negative sign indicates decreased effect of the explanatory variable on the outcome variable. The value of the coefficient of the explanatory variable signifies the magnitude of its effect on the outcome variable. The level of significance which shows the relationship between the outcome variable was tested at value of 0.05. The auto taped interview information of the Sub County Directors of Education were summarized under common themes and used in the triangulation of the study findings. The summary of statistical data analysis is presented in Table 4.

Table 3

Summary of Statistical Data Analysis

No	Objective	Explanatory Variable	Outcome Variable	Statistical Tool
1	status of school strategic plan implementation and quality of education in secondary schools in Busia County Kenya.	Status of school strategic plan implementation	Quality of education (school KCSE mean score)	Frequencies, proportions means, standard deviation

2	To determine the effect of school strategic plan resource mobilization practices on quality of education in public secondary schools in Busia County	School strategic plan resource mobilization practices	Quality of education (school KCSE mean score)	Frequencies, proportions means, and multiple linear regression
3	To determine the effect of school strategic plan monitoring and evaluation practices on quality of education in public secondary schools in Busia County	School strategic plan monitoring and evaluation practices	Quality of education (school KCSE mean score)	Frequencies, proportions means, and multiple linear regression

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The researcher duly informed the respondents in the study that their participation is voluntary and that they are free to drop from the study at any particular point if they choose so. The researcher assured respondents of their confidentiality. Data collected was only used for this study and was not be shared to the third party. All sources are acknowledged.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Status of School Strategic Plan Implementation in Public Secondary Schools in Busia County Kenya

The first objective of the study was to establish the status of school strategic plan implementation in public secondary schools in Busia County, Kenya. Therefore, the study sought data from the principals on whether the school is implementing a strategic plan or not, the date when the school started implanting the strategic plan, and the implementation status on quality education .Data generated for objective one was subjected to descriptive statistics (frequencies, proportions, standard deviations and means) in order to know the status of school strategic plan implementation in secondary schools in Busia, Kenya. Descriptive statistics on implementation status of school strategic plans, longevity of implementation of school strategic plans, and the status of the achieved targets in implementation of school strategic plans were used as proxy indicators school strategic plan implementation status in secondary schools on quality education in Busia County. The study generated a binary variable s32x as a measure of schools implementing and not implementing strategic plans. Table 4 presents the findings.

Table 4

Implementation Status of School Strategic Plans

Implementation Level	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative %
Low implementation	38	30.65	30.65
Moderate implementation	52	41.94	72.59
High implementation	34	27.41	100.00
Total	124	100.00	

The study assessed the level of implementation of school strategic plans in public secondary schools in Busia County, Kenya. Unlike a binary classification of presence or absence of strategic plans, implementation was measured as a continuum to capture the extent to which planned activities had been translated into action at the school level. The results indicate that 38 schools (30.65%) were categorized as having low implementation levels of their strategic plans. This implies that although strategic plans may exist in these schools, their execution of planned priorities remains minimal and inconsistent. This finding aligns with studies which indicate that strategic planning in many public institutions often suffers from weak implementation due to resource constraints and leadership challenges (UNESCO, 2020; Bell, 2002).

Further, 52 schools (41.94%) demonstrated moderate levels of implementation. This suggests that while these schools had begun executing key strategic priorities, implementation was partial and not fully institutionalized. According to the Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education (2024), partial implementation is common in many Kenyan public secondary schools due to competing priorities, limited funding, and insufficient monitoring mechanisms.

Additionally, 34 schools (27.41%) exhibited high levels of strategic plan implementation. These schools had largely operationalized their strategic priorities, indicating strong leadership, accountability structures, and resource mobilization capacity. This is consistent with findings by Mwakisaghu (2023), which emphasize that successful strategic plan implementation is strongly associated with effective school leadership and continuous performance monitoring systems. From the researcher's perspective, these findings demonstrate that strategic planning in public

secondary schools is not uniform, but rather exists on a continuum of implementation. This variation is important because it allows for meaningful comparison of how different levels of implementation influence educational outcomes, rather than simply focusing on whether a plan exists or not.

4.1.2 Longevity of Implementation of School Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools in Busia County Kenya

The study further examined the longevity of implementation of school strategic plans in public secondary schools in Busia County. This was necessary to determine how long schools had been engaged in strategic planning practices and whether duration influenced the effectiveness of implementation. Table 5 shows the results.

Table 5

Longevity of Implementation of School Strategic Plans

Duration Category	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative %
0–2 years (recent implementation)	35	28.23	28.23
3–5 years (moderate duration)	49	39.52	67.75
6–10 years (long-term implementation)	28	22.58	90.33
Above 10 years (very long-term)	12	9.67	100.00
Total	124	100.00	

The findings indicate that 35 schools (28.23%) had recently implemented strategic plans within a period of 0–2 years. This suggests that strategic planning is still a relatively new practice in a significant proportion of schools, and therefore implementation processes may still be developing. According to Ndegwa (2014), newly introduced strategic initiatives often require time to stabilize due to adjustment challenges in institutional planning systems. Further, 49 schools (39.52%) had implemented strategic plans for a period of 3–5 years, indicating moderate experience in strategic planning. This duration is considered sufficient for institutions to begin aligning planning activities with performance outcomes, although full institutionalization may still be evolving (Wilson & Nyakwara, 2022).

Additionally, 28 schools (22.58%) had implemented strategic plans for 6–10 years, suggesting a relatively mature stage of strategic planning practice. Schools in this category are more likely to have established systems for monitoring and evaluation of strategic objectives. This aligns with Kithuka (2016) findings that longer exposure to structured planning improves institutional performance through learning and adaptation. Finally, 12 schools (9.67%) had implemented strategic plans for more than 10 years, indicating highly established strategic planning systems. Such institutions are expected to demonstrate stronger governance structures and improved educational outcomes due to accumulated implementation experience (Okwako, 2013). From the researcher's perspective, the variation in implementation duration suggests that strategic planning in public secondary schools is not uniform but evolves over time. This variation is important for understanding differences in institutional performance, as longevity of implementation may influence the effectiveness of school strategic plans.

4.1.3 Status of the Achieved Targets on School Strategic Plans in Secondary Schools in Busia county.

Strategic plans are meant to achieve the schools set targets using a number of indicators as enshrined in the school strategic plan. This study sought to establish the status of school strategic plan implementation in public secondary schools in Busia County Kenya by establishing the extent to which public schools have achieved the set targets namely; curriculum implementation, physical infrastructure, financial management, human resource management, student and staff welfare, and cooperate social responsibility while implementing the schools strategic plans. The school principals were tasked to show achieved targets (curriculum implementation, physical infrastructure, financial management, human resource management, student and staff welfare, and cooperate social responsibility) of school strategic plan implementation on a scale of 0 to 10 where 10= Targets fully achieved and 0=Targets not achieved, The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Status of Achieved Targets in the Implementation of School Strategic Plans

Variable Name	Obs.	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
Curriculum implementation	124	4.01613	3.78698	0	10
Physical infrastructure	124	3.66936	3.56752	0	10
Financial management	124	4.22581	4.04816	0	10
Human resource management	124	4.22581	3.89983	0	10
Student and staff welfare	124	4.20161	4.02226	0	10
Cooperate Social Responsibility	124	3.70161	3.73509	0	10
Average	124	4.00672	3.84331	0	10

The findings from table the above table suggests that most schools were below average in achieving all set targets (curriculum implementation, physical infrastructure, financial management, human resource management, student and staff welfare, and cooperate social responsibility) as indicated in their strategic plans for the period of implementation which averaged four years.. The results indicate that most public schools in Busia County during the year under review were yet to achieve 50% of any of the set targets while implementing schools strategic plans for the past four years. The results suggest that most in public secondary schools in Busia County are struggling in achieving set targets in their strategic plans and may not be enjoying the benefits of implementing strategic plans. This has greatly affected either positively or negatively the nature of quality education in Busia county. The results indicate that of the main set targets in most strategic plans, a fair attempt is towards achieving financial management, human resource management, and student and staff welfare. However, set targets in human resource management and cooperate social responsibility is most wanting. Yet these two targets also play a vital role in achieving quality learning in schools. The results point to the fact that maybe schools lack strategy in the implementation of the school strategic plans as indicated by low mean scores of less than five points in achievement of all set targets.

This finding aligns with Jooste and Fourie (2009) posits that strategy implementation is perceived to be more difficult than strategy formulation and poor strategy implementation is perceived to result in a high failure rate of change initiatives. They argue that organizations are better at formulating strategy than at implementing strategy. This may be a likelihood in the implementation of school strategic plans in Busia County. Perhaps this can be explained better by findings of Chukwumah (2015) study in Nigeria on the extent to which development of quality strategic plans for Anambra State secondary schools' improvement had been done by schools. Findings indicate that as much as 85.4% of schools indicated to have implementable strategic plans some of the essential and requisite components in the strategic plans such as targets, expected outputs and performance indicators were found to be low in implementation. This perhaps is the context of implementation of school strategic plans in Busia County whose requisite components (curriculum implementation, physical infrastructure, financial management, human resource management, student and staff welfare, and cooperate social responsibility) are partially being achieved. This may point to the fact that either the schools lack strategy in implementing the school strategic plans or have no committed leadership to deliver the school strategic plan implementation as exposit by Falqueto et al. 2020) who argues that the principal as a chief executive plays a critical role of coming up with plan strategies that are geared toward incorporating all stakeholders in the school in pursuit of strategic plans thus promoting quality education.

4.2 Interview Findings

The first objective sought to establish the status of school strategic plan implementation in public secondary schools in Busia County and its relationship with the quality of education. from interviews revealed that implementation was partial and largely compliance-driven. One sub county director #1:

THEME: Status and extend of strategic plan implementation

"Implementation is uneven across schools. Most schools have a strategic plan because TSC and MOE require it for performance contracting and audits. But as directors, we see that only about 50-60% of activities are implemented. Infrastructure and discipline cases move faster because they are visible. Areas like ICT integration, teacher CPD, and income-generating projects lag behind. The main issue is that many plans are developed to meet compliance, not to guide improvement. When we go for quality assurance, you find the plan in the office but it's not reflected in the school's day-to-day operations. Without follow-up and funding, implementation stalls after the first year." (Sub county director 1, 14/03/2023)

Theme: Resource mobilization practices and implementation outcomes

"Resource mobilization is what separates schools that implement from those that don't. Where BOMs and principals are active in fundraising, running income-generating projects and partnering with NGOs, you see better implementation of quality-related activities like labs, libraries, and teacher training. The challenge is that most schools rely on capitation and fees and capitation is delayed while fee payment is low. As a director, I can tell you that schools with weak mobilization keep requesting for exemptions and support and this directly affects their ability to implement academic and infrastructure goals in the plan. If mobilization is strong, implementation moves. If it's weak, the plan remains on paper." (Sub county Director #2, 14/03/2023).

Theme 3: Monitoring and evaluation practices and accountability

"Monitoring & Evaluation is the weakest link in most schools. Schools that hold quarterly BOM meetings, have clear M&E tools, and assign responsibility to HODs tend to implement better. We use departmental reports and performance appraisals during our Quarter and Annual visits to track this. But in many schools, Monitoring & Evaluation is done as a formality when TSC or the director's office is coming. Some don't have any monitoring tool at all. When M&E is weak, there's no accountability and activities are forgotten. Regular, honest review keeps principals and teachers on track. As directors, we now insist that schools submit quarterly progress reports tied to the strategic plan before we approve any other plans." (Sub county Director# 3, 14/03/2023).

Qualitative data from interviews and document analysis triangulated these results. Sub-county directors described implementation as "uneven," "compliance-driven," and estimated at 50–60%, noting that plans are developed mainly to meet TSC and MOE requirements rather than to guide school improvement.

Document analysis for 15 schools showed an average implementation rate of 49%, with infrastructure projects at 51% completion while teacher continuous professional development and ICT integration lagged at 28% and 35% respectively. In 11 out of 15 schools, work plans were not updated quarterly, indicating weak operationalization. These findings align with Nyong'a and Maina (2019) who reported a 55–65% implementation rate in Kisumu County with infrastructure prioritized over academic programs, and with Mulandi and Wamitu (2022) which found that 90% of schools had written plans but less than 40% used them for decision-making.

These findings from document analysis aligns with Mwakisaghu (2023) who reported a 55-65% implementation rate in Kisumu County, with infrastructure prioritized over academic programs. They also mirror Kawinzi et al. (2023), which found that 90% of schools had written plans but less than 40% used them for decision-making. The limited use of plans reduces their potential to improve quality indicators such as KCSE performance and student retention. The partial implementation limits the strategic plan's contribution to quality of education. When plans are not actively used, schools miss opportunities to address gaps in teaching, learning resources, and teacher development.

From the researcher's perspective, the findings demonstrate a clear link between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The low to moderate status of strategic plan implementation in most schools directly undermines the quality of education. Specifically, the poor achievement of curriculum implementation and human resource management targets limits the alignment between teaching practices and institutional goals, which the literature identifies as a key pathway through which strategic planning improves academic performance. The compliance driven approach means plans are not actively used to address gaps in teaching, learning resources, and teacher development, thereby reducing their potential to improve KCSE performance and student retention. This supports the problem statement and the literature gap identified in the empirical review: that most studies focus on formulation rather than actual implementation and impact. The results also validate the application of Noble's (1999) strategy implementation framework in this study, showing that implementation processes, not merely the existence of plans, determine educational outcomes. The weak achievement of monitoring-related targets further underscores the need to disaggregate implementation into components such as resource mobilization and monitoring and evaluation, as addressed in the subsequent objectives of this study.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The findings suggest that School strategic plan implementation in Busia County occurs along a continuum, with most schools showing low to moderate levels of implementation. Only a small portion of schools had genuinely institutionalized their strategic plans. A substantial number of schools had no strategic plan at all, which goes against Ministry of Education policy that requires all public secondary schools to have operational strategic plans. This problem has persisted despite national policy being in place for many years.

Most schools had implemented their strategic plans for a short period, with many in existence for under two years. Because of this, most plans had not completed a full implementation cycle, which makes it difficult to assess their full impact. Schools with long-term strategic plans are more likely to benefit from them, so the short lifespan of most plans in Busia County limits their developmental contribution.

Target achievement remains critically low across all dimensions of the strategic plans. The average scores for curriculum implementation, physical infrastructure, financial management, human resource management, student and staff welfare, and corporate social responsibility were all below the midpoint on the measurement scale. This means schools had, on average, achieved less than half of their own self-set targets after several years of implementation.

Schools are typically better at formulating strategies than implementing them, and essential implementation components such as targets and performance indicators were poorly executed.

Using Noble's model, the stages of adoption and enactment, which involve translating strategic content into operational action, are weak in Busia County schools. Communication of strategy from top management to middle management appears inadequate, leading to limited cross-functional coordination. The idea that implementation status influences quality education is difficult to confirm because implementation itself is incomplete.

The most direct victims of poor strategic plan implementation are students in Busia County's public secondary schools, the majority of whom come from rural, low-income households. When schools fail to achieve targets in curriculum delivery, physical infrastructure, and human resource management, learners experience inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms, and limited academic support. The county's mean KCSE score remains far below the national average. This represents many young people who are being denied pathways to tertiary education, gainful employment, and upward social mobility. Strategic plan implementation is fundamentally a social justice issue.

5.2 Recommendations

The study therefore recommended that the Ministry of Education should enforce the policy that requires that every school must have a strategic plan. All stakeholders should device practical ways in which schools can be assisted and supported to achieve set targets while implementing strategic plans.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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