Factors Affecting Project Implementation of School Projects In Private Secondary Schools in the Larger Nyeri District

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ABSTRACT

Many Secondary schools in Kenya have been receiving funding meant to establish or improve existing facilities such as classes, dormitories, laboratories, libraries, especially since the current Government took over in 2003. However, some of the projects have stalled along the way or even before commencement. As a result some facilities remain unutilized especially due to none completion. The main goal of the study was to establish the factors affecting project implementation in private secondary schools in the larger Nyeri District. Since the free tuition programme commenced in public schools, a challenge has been looming, that parents will opt for public secondary schools, at the expense of the growth of the private secondary sector. The study aimed at determining whether implementation of projects in private secondary schools in the larger Nyeri District is affected by competence of management and conflict which were the independent variables. The study used descriptive survey design. The study comprised 20 Principals and 20 Board of Management members from the 20 Private Secondary Schools in the larger Nyeri District. Questionnaires were administered to principals and board members. Open ended and close ended questionnaires were used. The study established that successful implementation of projects is greatly affected by managerial skills. It was established that conflicts existed over many issues regarding implementation of projects, and these conflicts had a negative impact on implementation of projects. The study recommends that tendering and procurement systems in private schools should become more streamlined and open since some of the respondents were of the view that the system is not always transparent; private schools should initiate income generating activities in order to supplement the finances coming from parents through payment of fees; and owners and sponsors of private schools should inculcate professionalism in their managerial systems especially on recruitment of staff.

Key words: Project implementation, competence of management, funding and Conflicts

INTRODUCTION

A project is a temporal Endeavour carried out by people together, with a view of creating a product or service within an established period and budget to produce identifiable deliverables (Kithuka, 2013); for over 50 years project success has been defined by the criteria of time budget and deliverables (Flaman Gallager, 2001). Antil (1974) had earlier identified the above noted criteria as being the basic criteria, which when fully satisfied, qualifies a project as successful. According to the findings a project is only successful, if it is carried out on schedule and on budget. A project should also achieve the deliverables originally set for it and have deliverables accepted and used by the clients for whom the project was intended.

According to (Boyce and Hadad 2001) projects poses certain characteristics one of which is that projects are temporal; with a start date and end date. Projects also produce unique results and the product or service at the end of the project should be different from existing projects. It can be an invention or an innovation. Projects have progressive elaboration, due to their uniqueness and therefore planning and execution of projects many times take place in separate steps or phases. As a project progresses the project team understand the next step, deliverables and way of execution much better. Based on this knowledge team members elaborate initial draft plans and execute the next phase of project based on these detailed plans. A project usually needs resource to deliver results. Project execution also considers external factors and constraints.

In Kenya Private secondary schools funding by parents and donors among other sources has been undertaken, yet in many cases no corresponding improvement has been registered and some Private Secondary Schools have been experiencing declining academic standards, unlike Private Primary School's hence it is imperative, to establish why, despite, projects being undertaken, a commensurate, improvement in academic standards has not been realized. Private Secondary Schools sustainability has also been affected, by the free tuition programme in public schools. In some private schools implementation of projects has been successfully undertaken and it is possible to learn from such schools and apply similar or improved strategies in institutions where project implementation poses challenges.

Factors Influencing Successful Implementation of Projects

A project goes through 4 phases; project initiation, project planning, project implementation and the closure stage. In reality the phases may not follow sequentially and in some cases, the succeeding phases overlap with the preceding ones, either deliberately or coincidentally. To realize successful implementation of projects, involvement of stakeholders, is a key factor. If relevant stakeholders are not adequately involved in a project, there is a tendency to sabotage the project either is an overt or covert manner, hence an appropriate analysis of stakeholders should be undertaken. Stakeholders can be divided into two; primary stakeholders, who benefit from a project or are adversely affected by the project activities, the second category are people and institutions with an interest in the resources of area being considered to initiate a project. It is imperative to identify all stakeholders early enough, to avoid failing to take into account needs and aims of this group leading to the likelihood of failure.

Experienced project managers, have a wealth of experience that is invaluable to the successful implementation of a project. An experienced manager is in a better position to resolve conflict and other issues that can distract a project from successful completion. The manager should be an effective communicator and a good listener, well organized, a generalist rather than a specialist and be able to motivate others. Support of team members and other interested parties in case of a school, Boards of management, parents, teachers and students is crucial. Without the support of these groups a projects successful implementation can be seriously jeopardized.

According to Meredith and Mantel (2002), conflicts in implementation of projects in private secondary schools are from within and without and can be attributed to incompatibility of goals between individuals or between groups of individuals. The principal may issue instructions that are later overruled by the Board of management or by the owner, this creates conflicts due to incompatibility of goals. The principal may propose starting of a computer project and the board of management or the school's proprietor in turn, will root for construction of a dormitory, and the students prefer grandiose projects, such as purchase of a state of art bus. This causes conflict within the private secondary school and hinders

implementation of a project. In an environment that depends on the co-operation of many people, it is inevitable that some personalities will crash (Meredith and Mantel 2009).

In accurate estimates also generates conflict in project implementation Law and Kelton (1990) noted that in real world of Project Management it is common to deal with estimates of task durations and material costs among other expenses as if the information was known with certainty and when expenses exceed estimates, conflict with workers and suppliers are inevitable. The estimates or the budget should therefore be reliable and realistic. In planning, for the estimated cost, those charged with the responsibility should not inflate the costs expected or under estimate. In implementing projects there should be good management of time, with all the scheduled activities clearly authored and adverse hindrances such as rain, noted early.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study was to establish the factors affecting implementation of projects in private secondary schools in the larger Nyeri District.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

i) To determine whether management competency affects implementation of projects in private secondary schools in the larger Nyeri District.

ii) To evaluate whether conflict affects implementation of projects in private secondary schools in the larger Nyeri District.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey research design. This design enabled the researcher to gather information, summarize, present and interpret (Kothari 2007). Through descriptive survey the researcher generated numerical and descriptive data that enhances measuring of correlation between variables. The study was carried out in Nyeri district, targeting all the 20 Private secondary schools in the district. The study sample comprised of 20 Principals and 20 Board of Management members from the 20 Private Secondary Schools in the larger Nyeri District, giving a total of 40 respondents. Two questionnaires, one designed for the principals and the other one designed for Board of Management were used as the main tools for data collection. Data analysis procedure employed involved both quantitative and qualitative procedure. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. Qualitative data was analyzed qualitatively using content analysis based on analysis of meanings and implications emanating from respondent information. This analysis was thematically presented in narrative form and where possible in tabular form. The results of the analysis were presented using tables, pie charts and bar charts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effect of Management Competence in Implementation of Projects

One goal of the study was to find out the effect of management competence in implementation of projects. In relation to this objective, the study findings revealed that majority of the respondents (70.0%) had attended training on institutional management (See table 1). This implies that majority of the board members would have no trouble implementing project management because they had attended institutional management training seminars. Managerial skills are likely to affect successful implementation of projects positively. In addition to this, the study established that 50% of the board members and 65%

of the principals indicated that the management training courses they attended affected their roles in school management (See figure 1). These findings were in agreement with Koskela and Howell (2002), who contend that understanding of management is based on three theories: management-as-planning, the dispatching model and the thermostat model. In management-as-planning, management at the operations level is seen to consist of the creation, revision and implementation of plans. This approach to management views a strong causal connection between the actions of management and outcomes of the organization. Management effectiveness determines organizational success as measured through its projects.

Effect of Conflict on Implementation of Projects in Secondary Schools

Another goal of the study was to find out effect of conflict on implementation of projects in secondary schools. To address this objective, respondents were asked to indicate the frequency in which they experience conflicts over project management. Ten (10%) of the principals and all the board members (100.0%) indicated that conflicts occurred often while 70% of the principals indicated that conflicts rarely occurred (Table 2). This shows that principals and board members differ in their views about the occurrence of conflicts implying that there may be disparity between them. The major cause of these conflicts as reported by 45% of the board members was ignorance, followed personality difference (40.0%) and then contention over policy (10.0%). Only 1 (5.0%) respondent indicated embezzlement of funds (Table 3). These results concurred with the findings by Meredith and mantel (2009) who established that conflicts in implementation of projects in private secondary schools are from within and without can be attributed to incompatibility of goals between individuals or between groups of individuals. In an environment they depends on the co-operation of many persons, it is inevitable that some personalities will crash (Meredith and mantel 2002). All the board members agreed that these conflicts affected implementation of projects. In the process of projects implementation in private secondary schools, uncertainty creeps in over who has what authority in the project.   In addition to this, Githongo (2008) conducted a study to find out the working relationship between secondary school principals and board members in Bomet District. He established that in most secondary schools, headteachers and members of the board are in conflict because of lack of transparency and corrupt practices in the procurement process.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that managerial skills are likely to affect successful implementation of projects. Results of the analysis showed that majority of principals and half of the board of Management reported that training positively affected their roles in school management. This therefore means that management competence had an effect on project implementation. However, it was established that conflicts existed over many issues regarding implementation of projects, and these conflicts had a negative impact on implementation of projects. The major causes of these conflicts were ignorance and personality differences. To minimize these differences, the study recommends that:-

i.   School administrators should organize more frequent meetings with the school community with an aim of devising ways of working together in order to improve school management practices.

ii.   Project managers in private schools should be provided with opportunities to undergo project management training frequently as this would equip them with the requisite skills.

iii.   Tendering and procurement systems in private schools should become more streamlined and open since some of the respondents were of the view that the system is not always transparent.

iv.   A comparative research should be conducted to find out how school ownership influences project management effectiveness.

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Table 1. Attendance of institution management seminars

	Frequency	*Percent*
Yes	14	70.0
No	6	30.0
Total	*20*	*100.0*
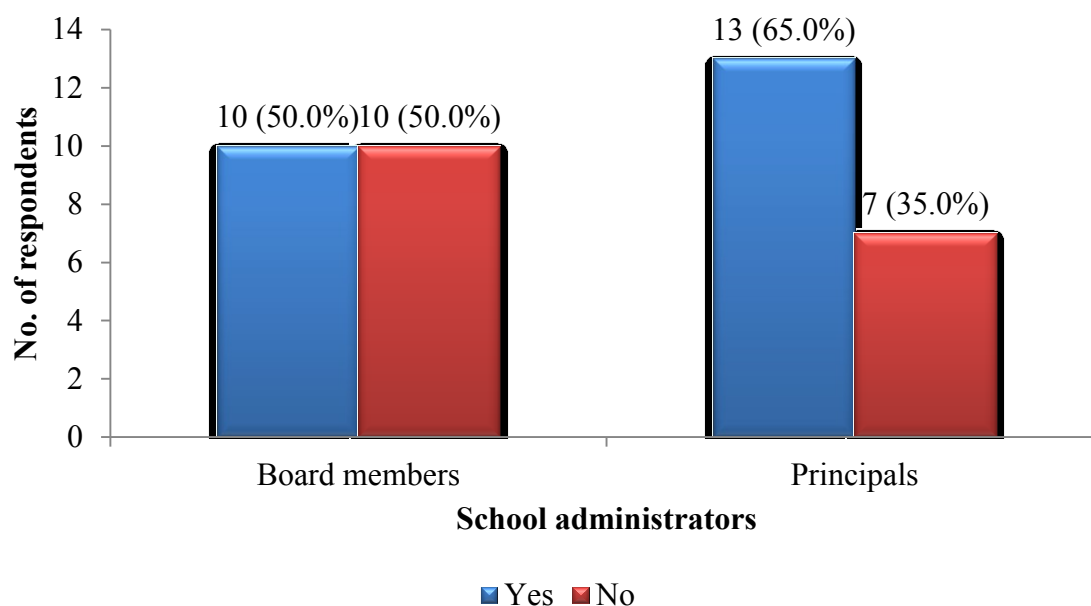
Figure 1: Respondents' Views of whether course attendance affected management of projects

Table 2. Occurrence of conflicts over project management

Conflict occurrence	Principals		Board members	
	Frequency	*Percent*	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Often	2	10.0	20	100.0
Fairly often	4	20.0	0	0.0
Rarely	14	70.0	0	0.0
Total	*20*	*100.0*	*20*	*100.0*

Table 3. Causes of conflicts as reported by Board of Management members

Causes of conflicts	Frequency	Percent
Embezzlement of funds	1	5.0
Ignorance	9	45.0
Personality difference	8	40.0
Contention over policy	2	10.0
Total	*20*	*100.0*