



# **Challenges of Implementing Educational Strategic Plans on Students Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Njombe Town Council, Tanzania**

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study assessed the challenges of implementing education strategic planning in public secondary schools. The study used qualitative research approach and case study research design, were employed whereby data were analyzed through thematic and presentation of themes related to specific objectives. The study used a sample size of 40 respondents; data were collected through

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interviews, documentary review and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) from four public secondary schools. The findings revealed that education strategic planning has been affected by various challenges such as financial challenge, poor cooperation between teachers and parents, long distance from residence to school, lack of enough science teachers, lack of enough infrastructure, top-down planning model, unstable education policy, poor selections of students from primary schools to public secondary school and lack of enough teaching and learning materials. The study concludes that lack of enough funds is major problem which affects in implementing school strategic planning in whole public secondary schools, Lack of enough science teachers are also factors affecting in implementing education strategic planning. Government should increase education budget for effectiveness implementations of all education strategic plans indicated by public secondary schools. It recommended that Policy makers should make reform on Education policy and curriculum, Government should inform the communities about education strategic plans so as to be familiar with what is going on educational issues. Recommendation for further studies: This study covered only Njombe Town Council specific public secondary schools, so furthermore study should be done in other part of Tanzania and the study conducted only public secondary schools, so the studies should also be conducted in privates' secondary schools and primary schools.

*Keywords: Implementing; strategic planning; students academic performance and public secondary schools.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“Worldwide, strategic planning in education sector emerged in the United States early in the late of 1970s. But at the intuitional (university and colleges) level started in mid-1980s, an estimated 500 Districts were practicing some form of strategic planning and special hand books were prepared and widely disseminated by professional organization such as the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). Strategic planning at school level was also introduced in many other countries as part of broader decentralization and school-based management reforms of late 1980s” [1] “Therefore, Strategic planning emerged in public Education as a management tool in the mid1980’s. The term appeared in Educational publication for first time around 1984 and by 1987 estimated five hundred school Districts around America were using some type of strategic planning” [2].

“In Europe there have been some strides made in school developing planning although the sector is still faced with major challenges such as learning, skills and attitudes in planning Education and practice, role of new technologies in planning education (e-learning-tools and e-networking) and place of ethic in planning education. Kiprop” [3] cited by (Deal and Peterson, 2008).

“In South Africa, the South Africa Schools Act (SASA) Act No.84 of 1996, prioritizes the role of

principal as an academic leader. In accordance with the SASA, the role of school principal is to be part of the process of strategic management and strategic thinking, which are derived from the process of strategic planning. The purposes of strategic planning for schools are to ensure they are able to face the challenges of changing environment (both internal and external)” [4].

“In Kenya the government developed education sector strategic plan (2003) and set targets outlined in the sectional paper No.1 of 2005, EFA by 2015 (Sectional paper No.1 2005) the government developed educational sector strategic plan of 2003 and set target outlined in the sectional paper No.1 of 2005. In 2013, the government of Kenya through the ministry of education science and technology mandated all public instructions to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate its internal strategic plan as a means of enhancing result based management and efficiency in their operations. In Nakuru sub-country, most schools operate under school development plans and very few schools have developed strategic plans” [3]. “It is ministerial requirement that all schools formulate strategic plans with time frame of 3-5 years and action plans for each year. According to DQASO, Nakuru sub- country, it has been established that some schools rarely develop strategic plans leading to poor school management hence lowering the academic standard and poor school environment” [3].

“In the 1990’s the government of Tanzania begins an expansive public sector reform by introducing a strategic plan to all ministries department and agencies (MDA’s) Tanzania’s strategic planning budgeting and reporting process aim to improve public sector performance by focusing institution on the delivery of results improving internal decision making, fostering internal and external accountability and improving the allocation of resources and ensuring their prioritization” [5].

In Tanzania Secondary Education has attained a remarkable achievement since the establishment of secondary education development plan (SEDP) 2004-2009, which was in line with the implementation of ESDP. The strategic priority areas of the plan were aimed at improving access, equity and quality. In its effort to empower the grass-root level in provisional of education services and enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the overall running of the schools, the government decentralized by devolution, the management and administration of secondary schools to the local government authorities (LGAs) in 2009. Therefore secondary education development program (SEDP) was implemented between the years 2004 to 2009 in order to solve the challenges of secondary [6]. Also government of Tanzania formulated the Education Training Policy (ETP) of 1995, which provided procedures for the future provision of secondary education in Tanzania. The purpose of both ETP of 1995 and secondary education development plan (SEDP) of 2004, was to put together the national goals of education by consideration the effects of community members for better implementation monitoring and evaluation process of strategic plans [7]. Moreover, the rise of strategic plan in education system of Tanzania have improved various sectors such infrastructures, availability of teachers as well as it has increased the number of students (enrollment of students). With all these improvement that has been aligned in the strategic plans, little is known on the contribution of strategic plans to the student’s academic performance to public secondary schools.

### 1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the implementation of Education strategic plan and how they contribute to the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Njombe Town Council, Tanzania.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1 Empirical Literature Review

#### 2.1.1 Challenges of implementing education strategic planning on students academic performance in public secondary schools

“One of the major challenges of strategic planning is ensuring commitment at the top, because in some ways, strategic planning reduces, executive decision- making power. It encourages involvement throughout the organization, and empowers people to make decisions within the frame work defined by the strategic planning process. As result, this shifts some of the decision making from the executive office to participants” [8].

“Most school lacked relevant skills, leadership qualities and commitment to strategic planning, that strategic planning in schools is greatly hindered by inadequate resources in terms of physical facilities, finances and human resources; that ignorance of existing policies, high headship turn over and lack of training hinders strategic planning in schools” [3].

“All the schools in Mwense District Zambia schools have strategic plans. However, most head teachers find it a challenge to implement them. One of challenges is that schools do not receive enough funds for the incentive purposes for the teachers. Other challenges include failure to prepare pupils for the examinations and failure to have a proper record management” [9].

“Inadequate skills and training in strategic planning, process. Training deals with teaching learners to acquire relevant skills and knowledge in their areas of specific goals of improving one’s capability, capacity, production and performance” [10]. “Top-down management in the study, top-down management where decisions, advice and ideas originate from the top management team which is senior to the lover category comprising junior staff” [11].

“Unclear and conflicting priorities, this involve identifying areas of need and setting goals or targets but instead of dealing with the most pressing issues, they are met without any order or unclear guidance. The study reported that 7% of respondent cited unclear and conflicting priorities as challenges in the

development and implementation of strategic plans in the schools” [11].

“Inadequate financial resources, as used in this context refer to shortage of finances that can be used to drive the process of strategic planning from initial stage development up to the utilization. The study revealed that in adequate financial resources are the biggest challenges facing the development and the implementation of strategic plans in schools and cited by 12% of respondent” [11].

“Lack of involvement of stakeholders and lack of involvement indicates lack of participation by the key stakeholders in whole or part of the strategic planning process from the first stage up to the final stage of implementation”, [11]. “Most stakeholders have limited knowledge of the following; how to carry out planning, how best to conduct the planning process, how to come up with the strategies, how to identify strategies that are best sustainable to their context and how best to apply strategic planning to improve all round performance in students achievement. He further argued that strategic planning does not provide the financial resources deficit that accrues from mapping strategies required for improvement, thereby making implementation challenges” [12].

Report done by Wanjala (2014) [13] the findings indicates that “financial services play an important role in ensuring the achievement of developed strategic plans. Source of funding for the two schools were limited not guaranteed and externally and centrally controlled by the states ministry of education”.

As a result, the principals found it difficult to predict how much the school will receive from the ministry and how the best it could be utilized. Also she added the information that most of communities around are not rich so as to contribute the planned strategies.

**Leadership:** the study done by (Catherine, Emily and Jane. 2015) observed that 93% of managers lacked relevant skills of planning. In addition the report stated the most of teachers had not trained in administration and this made them ineffective and lacked accountability [11].

**Resources allocation:** “in Kenya secondary school financial assistance come from the government funding, parents’ contribution, income generating school projects and the donors. Employees know how usefully is in

formulation of strategic plans and where an organization does not have qualified man power. It is has to outsource from expert consultants. In Kenya school setup various stakeholders have no strategic plans formulation” [11].

“In adequate skills and training in strategic planning, the training element is vital in the planning process. Training deal with teaching learners to acquire relevant skills and knowledge in their area of specialization. Training has specific goals of improving ones capacity production and performance. The study revealed that there were 9% of respondents who stated that there were lack of skills and training in strategic planning” [11].

“Resistance to change, this can also impede development and implementation of strategic plan as indicated by 6% of the respondents in the study” [11].

“Yet, in school expenditure budget there is no votes head to help train the right human capital for strategy formulation. This became the major challenges to leaders because policy development expects schools to formulate the plans”. Nyagah [14].

“Training and formulation of strategic plans in schools, the heads of schools play a major role in strategic planning, principals training on strategic planning helps them to effectively guide in strategic planning , principals trained on strategic planning are statistically more likely to formulate strategic plans for their schools than the untrained ones. The master plan on education and training (1997-2010), however stated that many secondary schools head teachers have not been adequately trained in management and administration and are ineffective and lacking accountability. The plan point out that the poor terms and condition of service have led to poor morale. The report also mentions that the school system is dogged by nepotism and corruption allegation in promoting teachers. Needless to say, these malpractices are likely to affect teachers’ performance and commitment to strategic planning since non-performers are rewarded” [14].

The study done by Phiri and chileshe [9] revealed that “teachers, head teachers and DEBS all expressed lack of teaching and learning materials. This made it difficult for the successfully implementation of the strategic plan to improve pupils performance in the schools

according to many schools reviewed, lack of learning materials negatively affected the implementation of plan”.

“The finding also revealed that some head teachers found it a challenge to implement some components of strategic plan that is to prepare pupils for the examination. This was because most pupils were not able to attend prep since most of them were day scholars. In addition, books were not available to enhance their studies this contributed to the challenge of implementing the strategic plan” [9].

“The report showed that the head of teachers found it a challenge to implement the record management and the decision made due to the fact that teachers were sometimes not willingly to follow the advice and record book are not provided hence this make it a challenge to keep a good record management this is poor school management according to most studies”. Phiri & Chileshe [9].

A study done by Kamau [15] assessed “the challenges facing public secondary schools managers in the implantation of strategic plans in Gatundu North District Kiambu Kenya. The study established that most of the school lacked enough finances to implement their strategic planning mandatory as a condition for government funding” [15].

The study done by Kiprop [3] reported that “among of challenges of strategic planning in secondary school is in adequate fund. The study revealed that 91% of inadequate funds are resources challenges into adaptation of strategic planning in schools. The study emerged that 81% were indicated inadequate teaching staffs and teaching resources posed a challenge into adaptation of strategic planning in schools” [3] Also the study revealed that manpower training is a challenge of adopting strategic plans on public schools and 88% of respondent agree on that situation [3].

The study done by Kiprop [3] concluded that “most of schools leaders lacked relevant skills, leadership qualities and commitment to strategic planning, that strategic planning in schools is greatly hindered by inadequate resources in terms of physical facilities and lack of training hinder strategic planning in schools”.

“Different planning practices indicate different understanding and skill levels, many schools leaders are still confused between strategic plans

and school annual plans and don not implement school strategic planning in accordance with the guideline provided by the ministry of the education. This weakness indicates that most of the school leaders lack of knowledge and skills in the process of strategic planning” [16].

“Nine (69.2%) out of 13 schools acknowledged that they did not involve the external stakeholders such as representative of committee alumni and board of foundation. The practice relates to its background of local tradition that all the decision drawn by those who have authority and higher social status” [16].

“There is difficulty for a school to apply the model or templates offered by education department. Many of them expressed that the most difficult part in the planning is set strategies based both on internal and external environment analysis and how to formulate the goals (vision, goals and objective). Data collection in 21 senior high schools in Ende Regency shows that eight schools (38.1%) do not yet have strategic plan with various models and processes. All schools do not have strategic plan are private strategic plan are nine public schools (42.9%) and four private schools (19%). At the beginning of the interview, all schools reported to have strategic plan. However after examining the documents, it turned out that the schools do not have medium-term program for three to five years and only have annual work plan, the schools only attach their visions and mission at the beginning of the annual and considered as strategic plan” [16].

“Seven schools principals (53.8%) admitted that the implementation process often make adjustment changing the activity plans set with new activities arising due to the situation demand many school leaders expressed that, in course of time they have to align their plan with the arising needs and resources of schools” [16]

The study done by Kirimu, Kathuri and Thuba (2017) concluded that “lack of personnel with the appropriate skills is a major challenge to the implementation process, most of human resources are not trained on strategic planning and lack of finances. The study revealed that the school culture affects implementation of strategic plans schools do not operate in a value free vacuum the management and control of the implementation process is done by the top level managers and this enhances the implementation process”.

The study done by Kwaslema and Onyango (2021) shows that “44.7% of teachers stated that the strategic plan is a motivating factor for school community members to work hard as a team. Furthermore, 32.9% of the teachers stated that the strategic plan gives direction which leads to a good academic performance by the schools. On the other hand, 22.4% of teachers stated that the strategic plan creates commitment to work. This is due to reason that the formulated plans help teachers and students to be committed to teaching and learning process toward a specific target”.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

This is a plan and procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation [17]. The study employed a qualitative research. The qualitative approach was aid the research in gathering and analyzing respondent's opinions, feelings and recommendation in their natural environment. Furthermore qualitative approach was employed because it relied on research strategy that is flexible, interactive and suggestion from respondents under their natural setting.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The study used qualitative with application of interpretivism paradigm. Case study research design was used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context, in-depth investigation and multiple sources of evidence.

#### **3.3 Sample Size**

The study involved sample size of 40 respondents, with the following representative; 4 respondents were heads of public secondary schools, 2 Ward Education Officers, 2 parents, 16students and 16 respondents were teachers of public secondary schools.

### **4. DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

#### **4.1 Interview**

The study used semi-structured interview which was based on written list of questions that was covered by the interview. The researcher was used semi-structured questions since they were

flexible, in-depth information by using both open and closed-ended questions.

#### **4.2 Documentary Review**

in this study documentary review was done through analyzing form four National Examination results, form two National Examination and syllabus coverage which were used for assessing performance of students on three years consecutive from 2018-2021.

#### **4.3 Focus Group Discussions**

in focus group discussion, the researcher posses an issue and keeps probing questions to the respondents and hence sustains a lively interaction with teachers who were an able to elicit significant information about the study. In this study focus group discussion used to collect data from teachers and students of public secondary schools in Njombe Town Council.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis used to classify and present themes related to the questions related to specific objectives. Moreover thematic analysis is crucial for this study because; develops a coding system based on samples of collecting data, classifies major issues or topic covered

### **5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **5.1 Challenges of Implementing Education Strategic Planning on Students Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools**

In the study second objective, researcher aimed to identify the challenges of implementing schools strategic plans on academic performance specific in public secondary schools. The findings reveal that all of the schools A, B, C, and D were constrained by lack of funds for implementing schools strategic plans related to financial such as money for buying teaching and learning materials including books and geography operates.

Also the study found that, due to scarcity of funds it enhance poor implementation of buildings dormitories, teachers house and dining hall. The findings are similar with the study of conducted in Mwense District in Zambia schools whereby teachers failed to prepare Examination and records due to lack of enough funds. (Phiri & Chilelishe, 2016) [9].

In addition, inadequacy financial resources in enhancing poor implementation of school strategic plans from initial stage development up to utilization stage (Okonya, 2016) [11].

Moreover, findings revealed that poor corporation between teachers and parents, this challenge even if is not very big problem in Njombe public secondary schools but hinders effectiveness implementation of schools strategic plans. The interview of head of schools D said that some parents are not participating in effectively in food program to their student which led to poor performance, on other hand the interview of parent 01 who asked question if they are aware of schools activities related to academic performance he said some activities. This revealed that there are some poor cooperation between teachers and parents

Long distance of schools from residences, this challenge is due to most of public secondary schools are day scholars who are also coming far away from residence to school. The findings show that in school A and B some students coming far away from schools ranging 7km to 9km, this influence to poor academic performance on other hand the finding the finding indicated that the even if they are far away from student residences also there is no public transport especially in school D.

Lack of enough teachers, the findings found that all of public secondary schools (A,B, C and D) they lacked enough science subject teachers some schools geography. Example in school A they were only two (2) physics teachers while the total number of students are 1110, in school B only two teachers of geography and chemistry while total number of student is 996, schools C only two physics and chemistry teachers while total number of student are 400. This shows that there are very difficult for students to perform their subject's lesson.

Also findings were shown that there were lacked enough physical infrastructures, it revealed that in all public secondary schools A, B, C and D lacked teachers houses, dining hall, ground and geography rooms the interview of the head of schools focal group discussion of teachers and students both stated that, due to the lack of physical infrastructure affects academic performance in their schools. The finding related to the study done by Kiprop, Bormet and Michael (2015) [3] who indicated a challenge which hinders implementation of school strategic

planning, which are lack of physical facilities in public secondary schools in Kenya.

Top down planning model, this challenge is due to the way of planning in public secondary schools, who are involved in planning and who are implementing schools plans. The findings show that there is top-down planning model where by Njombe Town Council leaders are planning while public secondary schools teachers are implementing. Example focus group discussion of school D, revealed that they supposed to eliminate zero in final examinations of form two and form four, they given joint examination without their timetable consideration and without consider nature of their students. This lead to poor implementation of plans due to variation of schools environment, students, and stakeholders like parents so as to raise academic performance. This findings also related to the study conducted by (O Konya, 2016) [11] who reported that top-down management is where decision, advise and ideas originates from the top management team which is senior to the lower category comprising junior staffs this lead to poor performance of action plan of an organization.

Furthermore, unstable education policy, the finding shows that frequent changes of education policy since 1967 to 2014 led to poor implementation of schools strategic plans and enhancing poor academic performance. Example the interview of the head of school Added by the academic teacher of the same school revealed that education policy since 1967 to 2014 it has different goals and objectives which affects in long terms schools strategic planning due to frequent changes. This also added by some teachers of school C who stated that changes of the education policy with the influence of politician affects the schools plans and enhancing poor academic performance.

Nature of selection of the student from primary schools to public secondary school, the findings revealed that some students are selected to join the public secondary schools while they have low capacity of learning in secondary schools. The interview of head of schools A,B and D stated that some students are selected while they unable even to read and to write this make challenges on academic performance.

Lack of enough teaching and learning materials, the findings revealed that some schools lacked enough teaching and learning materials specific in schools B, C and D which affects academic

performance. Example the focus group discussion of teachers of school C and D stated that there are few teaching and learning materials of art subject like geography and history compared to number of students. This finding related to the study conducted by Phiri and Chileshe (2015) [9] and learning materials which affects academic performance of public secondary schools.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings the following conclusions were drawn; Through findings, indicates that academic performance raises in whole public secondary schools of Njombe Town Council and this evidenced by reviewing form four and form two National Examination results since 2018 to 2021, there are some motivations to teachers and students in public secondary schools, by making evaluation for every school academic plans, helps innovations for both teachers and students which enhance to raise academic performance, food programmes in public secondary schools are most important factors which motivate students in academic performance, on the other hand Lack of enough funds is major problem which affects in implementing school strategic planning in whole public secondary school, lack of enough science teachers are also factors affecting in implementing school strategic planning, long distance of some schools from residences is among of the challenge affecting implanting school strategic plans, lack of enough schools infrastructure such as dormitories and halls, top down planning model, lack of teaching and learning materials, poor section of students from primary schools to public secondary schools. Furthermore all stakeholders' involvement in educational strategic plans is crucial so as to upgrade performance of students in public secondary schools, motivations, building teacher's houses, dormitories, classes and other school infrastructures will help more in raises academic performance of public secondary schools and training and employ teachers related to number of students per subject is indicating factor for improving students' academic performance.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS

In this study in order to improve effectiveness implementing school strategic plans on academic performance of public secondary schools, the researcher suggests the followings recommendations ;Government should increase education budget for effectiveness

implementations of all strategic plans indicated by public secondary schools, building of schools infrastructures should go hand-in-hand with employing teachers as well as teaching and learning materials, Government should cooperate with stakeholders in implementing schools strategic planning so as to increase academic performance and improvement of education system, Government should make reform education policy and curriculum so as to improve Education system of Tanzania and teachers should be motivated through various ways such as increases salaries, building teacher's houses and teaching allowance.

## CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

The researcher obtained permit letter from respective authority, from the director of post graduates studies-University of Iringa (UOI). This allowed the researcher to be acceptable in other authorities like Njombe Regional Administrative Secretary Njombe town executive director and Njombe Town Education Officer who was introduced the researcher to be respected to the heads of secondary schools and ward educational officers during the data collections. Researcher realized by requesting the participants to participate in the study on voluntary basis after the researcher has explained the purpose of the study. This was enabled respondents in the position to either withdraw from the study or decide to join deliberately in the study. Also the researcher was provided the prior information to respondents before they engage into conversations or responding to the questions in order to keep focused to the study. The study considered all issue of confidentiality, that any information identified or provided by any means will not be shared to irrelevant people who are not directly involve in the study. The researcher ensured to the respondents that no repercussions arisen from their participation and hence, the researcher was given an assurance of anonymity of identify and confidentiality of the information to be rendered for academic only.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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