

Factors Affecting Project Implementation of School Projects in Private Secondary Schools in the Nyeri County

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ABSTRACT

In Kenya, some of the projects have stalled along the way or even before commencement leading to some facilities remaining unutilized especially due to none completion. The study aimed at establishing the factors affecting project implementation in private secondary schools in the larger Nyeri District. Since the free tuition program commenced in public schools, there has been a challenge, that parents may prefer 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 Nyeri County is affected by, Funding and Monitoring, Evaluation which were the independent variables. The study used descriptive survey design. The study targeted 20 Principals and 20 Board of Management members from the 20 Private Secondary Schools in the larger Nyeri County. 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 affected by, Funding, Monitoring and Evaluation. 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 feasibility studies regarding income generating activities and owners and sponsors of private schools should redouble efforts in monitoring and evaluation

Keywords: Project implementation, Funding, Monitoring, Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Projects poses certain characteristics one of which is that projects are temporal; with a start date and end date according to (Boyce and Hadad 2001). 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. 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.

The terms Monitoring & Evaluation are distinct but complimentary. Monitoring gives information on where a policy, problem or project is at any given time (and overtime) relative to respective targets and outcomes. It's descriptive in intent and it gives evidence of why targets and outcomes are not being achieved. It seeks to address the issues of causality. When the monitoring systems send signals that efforts are going off track e.g. that the target population is not making use of the services or that costs are escalating and that there is a real resistance to adopting an innovation then there is need of good evaluative information and clarify the realities and trends noted in the monitoring system (Kuzek & Rist 2004).

If proper systems to monitor and evaluate the progress made towards the attainment of vision are not in place then attainment of objectives will be difficult. Concerted efforts are required by all sectors of the economy including private schools so as to participate actively in enhancing attainment of set targets. Monitoring and evaluation methods are not always applied to the highest standard in various sectors due to among other reasons, lack of infrastructure (high quality data systems), in appropriate application of methodology (impact evaluation when a process was needed, or non-integration of findings into decision making process,

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of projects refers to a process that determines the progress status in relationship to the plan through systematic collection of data. Monitoring is undertaken continually on specified indicators with a view of providing management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing project with indication of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives in the use of allocated funds, Kusek J. Z & Rist, R. C (2004). Evaluation is a systematic and objective assessment of the value or worth of an ongoing or completed pro, project or policy. The OECD (2002) defines monitoring and evaluation as follows, monitoring is a continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds (p.27).

Evaluation is defined as systematic assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program or policy including its designs implementation and results (Kuzek & Rist 2004). The aim is to determine the relevance and the fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful enabling the incorporation of lessons learnt into decision making process of both recipient and donors especially in relationship to future projects.

Developing an effective monitoring and evaluation unit requires adequate resources at every stage of the project. There should be adequate planning funding at all the requisite phases of the project life cycle, so as to enhance the carrying out of effective monitoring and evaluation.

There are four key parts in a monitoring and evaluation unit; setting up (or designing the unit), gathering and managing information using and information more effectively to improve action and communicating and improving results (Kuzek & Rist 2004).

Funding and M&E in Implementation of Projects

For private school projects, funded by parents, and other sponsors board of management discuss the projects first, with a view of having them factored in the budget, after which once parents pay fees, the projects are undertaken, in case of some of the privately sponsored religious institution, the management applies to the finance director, this application must

also be supported by architectural drawings, structural drawings and cost estimate drawn by a quantity surveyor.

Tenders for supply of materials by the private schools are advertised, especially if the amounts of monies involved are colossal. The procurement committee in private schools, discusses the tender bids, and identifies the successful bidders. The secretary of the procurement committee writes to the successful applicants, who enter into written contractual agreement, with the school. Schools can either engage a contractor, or a foreman and a team to undertake the construction work. However some private schools source for quotations after which tenders are awarded, in most cases to the lowest bidder. Periodic supervisions are normally undertaken by professionals from the ministry of works, such as architects, structural engineer and quantity surveyors. The management board undertakes periodic review of the progress in project work. For donor funded projects, periodic reports are provided and the donors occasionally visit the site, to acquaint themselves with the progress realized.

Other projects such as dairy farming pig rearing are normally monitored by the board of management with the assistance of some of their employees. Owners and Sponsors of school's during their inspection visits also evaluate such projects. Farm visits are also undertaken by veterinarians, subject to invitations being extended by the individual schools. School also submit financial records to the owners or sponsors of projects as a way of facilitating M&E Project implementation in Kenya private secondary school requires funds availability, proper preparation, participatory planning knowledge, effective M&E among other requirements. Disregard for the above noted requirements has more often than not resulted in poorly conceived, designed and decentralized projects (Manda *et al*, 2001)

Implementation of Projects

To realize successful implementation of projects, involvement of stakeholders, is a key factor and plays a significant role in M&E and in mobilization of funds hence accurate stakeholder analysis and identification is required. 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.

The estimates or the budget should 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. The Gantt chart assists in looking at sequencing of activities since some activities depends on others being completed first

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The study aimed at establishing factors affecting project implementation in private secondary schools in Nyeri County.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To establish whether funding affects implementation of projects in private secondary schools in the larger Nyeri County.
2. To determine whether monitoring and evaluation affects project implementation in private secondary Schools in the larger Nyeri County.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher used descriptive survey to gather information, summarize, present and interpret (Kothari 2007). The researcher generated numerical and descriptive data through descriptive survey that also enhanced measuring of correlation between variables. The descriptive survey design is appropriate for gathering information, summarizing, presenting and interpreting it for the purpose of clarification, (Orodho and Njeru, 2004) the researcher tried as much as possible to be detached from the respondent (Kombo & Tromp 2006). The study was conducted in Nyeri County and twenty private schools were targeted and the respondents were the Principal and one member of the Board of Management from each of the schools. In analysis of data generated qualitatively this was done using content analysis based on analyzing meanings and implications elicited from respondents and quantitative data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The generated data was organized into themes, through categorization, ordering and summarizing so as to enhance the researcher obtained information that is relevant to the research questions objectives. Descriptive statistics and statistical package for social science was employed to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Effect of Funding on Implementation of Projects in Secondary Schools

There are very few things that can be done without the use of money, and implementation of projects does not fall into this category because it requires money and one objective of the study was to establish the effects of funding on implementation of projects. Figure 1 below shows that 55% of the board members found school project funding to be good, 25% found it fair while the rest, (20%), found it excellent and very good respectively. Successful implementation of project will be greatly affected by availability of funds. Projects that are over ambitious require massive funding before they can be effectively completed, If the funding is not forthcoming, such projects, will stall. The funding is not structured in a very consistent way and is dependent on the good will of parents, owners, churches and external donors.

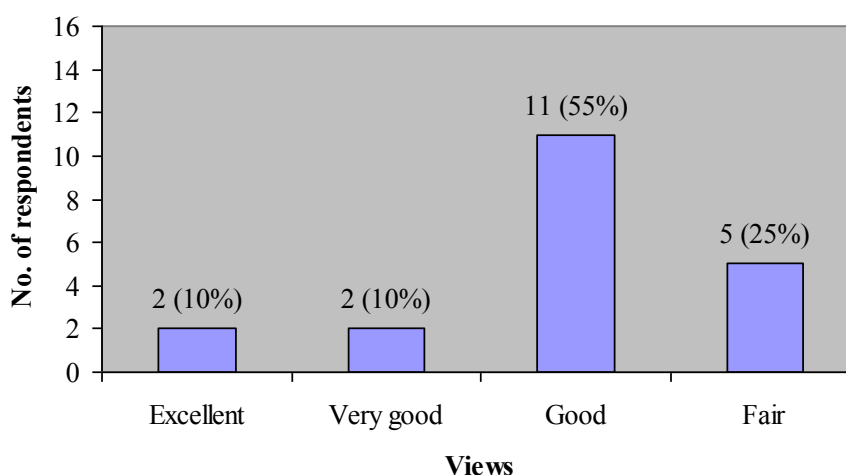


Figure 1. Ratings of funding of projects in schools

Members' Views on Effectiveness of Fund Raising

Table 1 below shows that the majority 75% of the board members indicated that parents' contribution, 60% indicated that church contribution and 55% indicated that donors' contribution affected the effectiveness of raising funds to some extent. Income generating projects are undertaken without project feasibility studies being undertaken to establish issues such as availability of member for the produce and the accompanying risk.

Table 1. Effectiveness of methods used in raising funds

| <i>Extent of Effect</i> | <i>Parents' Contribution</i> | | <i>Church Contribution</i> | | <i>Donors Contribution</i> | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------|
| | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>%</i> |
| Great Extent | 3 | 15.0 | 3 | 15.0 | 5 | 25.0 |
| Some Extent | 15 | 75.0 | 12 | 60.0 | 11 | 55.0 |
| Not Used | 2 | 10.0 | 5 | 20.0 | 4 | 20.0 |
| Total | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 2. Use of project funds

| | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|-------------|------------------|----------------|
| Excellently | 9 | 45.0 |
| Fairly | 8 | 40.0 |
| Poorly | 3 | 15.0 |
| Total | 20 | 100.0 |

Board members' views as to how project funds are used

Table 2 shows that 45% of the board members indicated that project funds were used excellently, 40% indicated they were used fairly while only 15% indicated they were used poorly. This therefore shows that most of the board members were satisfied with the way funds were utilized. Funds should be efficiently managed to meet organizational goals. Stroh (2001) has defined management as continuous and integrated process whereby certain individuals with authority ensure institutional goal-setting and optimum realization of objectives.

Board Members' Views on How Parents Paid Levies Charged

Table 3 below shows that the majority 80% of the board members indicated they viewed parents as occasional payers of the levies charged while 15% viewed them as prompt payers. This shows that parents occasionally paid levies, which might reflect negatively on project management. 90% of the board members also indicated that they failed to receive funds that had been promised earlier while only 10% received. This implies that most schools did not run projects effectively due to lack of funds.

Table 3. Views on how parents pay levies charged

| <i>Payment of Levies</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Prompt Payers | 3 | 15.0 |
| Occasional Payers | 16 | 80.0 |
| Extreme Defaulters | 1 | 5.0 |
| Total | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 4. Conduct of Procurement process

| <i>Transparency in Procurement</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Always | 12 | 60.0 |
| Sometimes | 5 | 25.0 |
| Not at all | 3 | 15.0 |
| Total | 20 | 100.0 |

Views Regarding Tendering and Procurement

Table 4 shows that 60% of the principals indicated that the procurement process was always done transparently while 25% indicated it was done transparently sometimes. This shows that most of the schools were transparent in procurement. Some previous studies have shown that lack of transparency was a major challenge facing effective implementation of projects in schools. For instance, Githongo (2008) conducted a study in Bomet District. He established that in most secondary schools, head teachers and members of the board are in conflict because of lack of transparency and corrupt practices in the procurement process. Githongo's (2008) study further established that a significant proportion of board members did not have the relevant training to allow them fit well in school management because they are not able to handle and interpret complex data especially regarding finances. Such members are not able to understand and conceptualize project management processes.

The study found out that 55% of the board members found school project funding to be good, 25% found it fair while the rest, (20%), found it excellent and very good. Thirty five percent (35%) of the principals indicated that they received over 2,000,000 shillings from donors, 35% indicated they received between 100,000 – 500,000 shillings while 15% received 500,001 – 1,000,000 shillings while the same number received 1,500,001 – 2,000,000 shillings. 80% of the board members indicated they viewed parents as occasional payers of the levies charged while 15% viewed them as prompt payers. This shows that parents occasionally paid levies, which might reflect negatively on project management. 90% of the board members also indicated that they failed to receive funds that had been promised earlier while only 10% received.

Forty five (45%) of the parents/church funded 3 – 4 projects while 65% of the donors funded the same number of projects. 35% of the donors also funded 5 – 6 projects while 20% of the parents/church funded the same number of projects. 65% of the donors did not assess projects they had funded while the same number of BOMs, proprietors and church officials assessed projects they had funded. At least 20% of all the parties involved assessed the projects they had funded 3 – 4 times. The principals indicated that other supervisors rarely visited the project sites and when they did, they did not go with written reports, which if they did, principals would regard it as very helpful. 55% of the principals indicated that management competence influenced project implementation greatly, 40% indicated it affected to some extent. 60% indicated that funding influenced project implementation to some extent while 40% indicated conflict moderately affected implementation. 50% indicated that monitoring and evaluation affected implementation moderately.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study found out that funds were not utilized properly. Stroh (2001) has defined management as continuous and integrated process whereby certain individuals with authority ensure institutional goal-setting and optimum realization of objectives. So the aim of management is to give direction in the institution and facilitate the optimal achievement of organization goals by effectively and efficiently using financial resources at the disposal of the organization. One of the main challenges facing private schools in Kenya is delays in payment of school fees by parents. According to Karani (2002), Kenya's domestic credit markets and institutions have suffered in recent years from considerable uncertainty, brought about by macroeconomic mismanagement and political interference. Commercial interest rates have been 25 to 30 percent. For the most part, only short-term credit is available, making it difficult for schools to undertake long-term investments. Furthermore, domestic financial institutions which do make loans have institutional restrictions on lending to schools (Karani, 2002).

Most of the schools were transparent in procurement. Some previous studies have shown that lack of transparency was a major challenge facing effective implementation of projects in schools

Effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation in the Implementation of Projects

As regards M&E the principals indicated that other supervisors rarely visited the project sites and when they did, they did not go with written reports, which if they did, principals would regard it as very helpful. Ministries of works, officials, also do visit project sites with a view of authenticating whether the projects are being implemented in conformity to the laid down standards. However more often than not, they do not provide written reports, and they are not in a position to exercise direct authority over private secondary schools just like their counterparts in the Ministry of Education. Clearly laid down Audit procedures are not in existence (Meredith and Mantel, 2008).

It is necessary to evaluate and monitor a project in order to know its progress and how many resources have gone into it. In private secondary schools monitoring and evaluation can help in measuring compliance to the budget and schedule. In Private secondary schools, the owners and founders undertake monitoring and evaluation work through it is often undertaken irregularly. A priest representing the church attends meeting of the board of management that deliberately on implementation of project, in some of the privately owned schools of the Catholic Church, and the church runs the major bank account. Individuals' schools have minor account. It is important to note, that without the input of professionals in the monitoring and evaluation work, site visits by board of management, owners or the church hence, an elaborate monitoring and evaluation system needs to be in place.

Table 5. Number of projects funded by parents/church and donors

| <i>No. of Projects</i> | <i>Funded By Parents/Church</i> | | <i>Funded by Donors</i> | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
| 1 - 2 | 3 | 15.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 3 - 4 | 9 | 45.0 | 13 | 65.0 |
| 5 - 6 | 4 | 20.0 | 7 | 35.0 |
| 7 or more | 4 | 20.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | 20 | 100.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

The Number of Projects Funded by the Parents/Church and Donors in the Last Five Years

Table 5 shows that 45% of the parents/church funded 3 – 4 projects while 65% of the donors funded the same number of projects. 35% of the donors also funded 5 – 6 projects while 20% of the parents/church funded the same number of projects. This shows that a reasonable level of funding of private schools' projects exists.

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

Successful implementation of project was greatly affected by availability of funds. Private schools attracted considerable funding from donors. Financial management requires skills such as book keeping, budgeting, procurement, and internal auditing. Lack of such skills would lead to poor utilization of funds and weak accounting processes. Most of the board members were satisfied with the way funds were utilized. Parents occasionally paid levies, which might reflect negatively on project management. Most schools did not run projects effectively due to lack of funds.

Most of the schools were transparent in procurement. Principals and board members differ in their views about the occurrence of conflicts implying that there may be disparity between them. The greatest interests of the local community in the implementation of projects was to be suppliers.

In Private secondary schools, the owners and funders undertake monitoring and evaluation work through it is often undertaken irregularly. A reasonable level of funding of private schools' projects exists. Project implementation is susceptible to outside factors which a good project manager should try to eliminate. It was also established that most donors do not assess and evaluate projects that they had funded and if they did, they did not give any recommendations and this affected the implementation of projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Donors should develop policy guidelines on monitoring and evaluation of projects initiated through their funds to ensure prudent utilization of resources.
2. The 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.
3. Private schools should initiate income generating activities in order to supplement the finances coming from parents through payment of fees. In addition, internal and external auditing needs to be streamlined to operate on clear cut guideline.

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