

**STRATEGIC RESPONSES OF PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN
WESTLANDS DISTRICT NAIROBI COUNTY TO CHANGES IN
THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT**

BY

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DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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This research project has been submitted with my approval as University Supervisor.

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DEDICATION

To my parents Wilfred and Lucy for their continuous belief in the power of education and to my loving wife and siblings for their continuous support and inspiration.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF ACCRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	ix
ABSTRACT	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the study	1
1.1.1 The External Environment and Organization.....	2
1.1.2 Strategic responses.....	4
1.1.3 The education sector in kenya.....	5
1.1.4 Primary school education in kenya.....	8
1.2 Research problem.....	9
1.3 Research Objectives.....	11
1.4 Value of the study	11
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 Introduction.....	13
2.2 Concept of strategy	13
2.3 The organization and external Environment.....	15
2.4 Strategic Responses	18
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	22
3.1 Introduction.....	22
3.2 Research Design.....	22
3.3 Population	22
3.3 Data Collection	23
3.4 Data Analysis	24

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	
4.1 Introduction.....	25
4.2 Background Information of respondents	25
4.3 Institutional profile.....	26
4.4 Changes in the external environment and challenges faced	31
4.5 Response strategies	34
4.6 Constraining factors	35
4.7 Discussion	36
4.7.1 Comparison with theory.....	36
4.7.2 Comparison with other studies	37
CHAPTER FIVE	39
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	39
5.1 Introduction.....	39
5.2 Summary of the findings.....	39
5.3 Conclusions.....	41
5.4 Implications to policy and practice.....	43
5.5 Limitations of study	44
5.6 Suggestions for further research	44
REFERENCES	45
APPENDICES	49
APPENDIX 1 : LIST OF PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN WESTLANDS	49
APPENDIX 2: INTRODUCTION LETTER.....	50
APPENDIX 3 : QUESTIONNAIRE	51

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Respondents' duration of years in the current position

Table 4.2: Population of students in the school

Table 4.3: Student population change over the last 10 years

Table 4.4: Buildings constructed/expanded over the last 10 years

Table 4.5: The Extent of the Importance of PESTEL Factors

Table 4.6: Constraining factors

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: Students' composition and home locations

Figure 4.2: Students' home locations

Figure 4.3: Teacher population changes over the last 10 years

Figure 4.4: Extent of Influence to aspects of institution by Changes in the external environment

Figure 4.5: Extent changes in the education sector has affected the institution

Figure 4.6: Importance of strategic options to responding to changes in the external environment

LIST OF ACCRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

UNESCO-	United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization
MOE-	Ministry of Education
UPE-	Universal primary education
FPE-	Free primary education
PESTEL-	Acronym for; Political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, ecological and legal factors
SPSS-	Statistical package for social scientists
NSE-	Nairobi stock exchange
SMC-	School management committee
BOG-	Board of governors
PTA-	Parents teachers association
MDG's-	Millennium development goals

ABSTRACT

Changes in the external environment of organizations are unavoidable. Changes can occur as a result of improvements in technology, realignment of government policies and strategies, increase in competition and changes in the political environment among others. Organizations respond to these changes by crafting strategies which guarantee sustainable competitive advantage in spite of the ever changing external environment. This study evaluates the strategic responses being adopted by public primary schools in Nairobi County in Kenya in order to stay relevant despite the constant changes in the external environment.

The objective of the study was to determine the strategic responses to changes in the external environment by public primary schools in Westlands District Nairobi County. The study population consisted of all the public primary schools in Westlands District. Data was collected through structured questionnaires that were answered by Head teachers and or their deputies. Analysis of data was done using descriptive statistical methods and means, frequencies and percentages computed. These statistics were then presented in frequency distribution tables.

The findings indicated that political, economic, socio-cultural and technological factors influence the running of public primary schools in Kenya. As such, majority of schools adopted strategic responses such as forecasting and planning among others. The biggest challenges to the strategic responses were lack of support from parents and school management committees. Based on the findings of the study, various conclusions, recommendations for policy and practice as well as further study have been made.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Organizations exist in the environment from where they derive their inputs and outputs. They are environment serving and environment dependent. The environment in which organizations operate in is constantly changing under the influence of several factors. According to Pearce and Robinson (2005) these factors existing in the external environment are beyond the control of the organization and they influence its choice of direction, action, organizational structure and internal processes. The environment gives organizations their means of survival and is also a source threats (Johnson, Scholes and Whittington, 2008). Therefore, managers both in public and private organizations must learn to deal effectively with the rapidly changing environment. They must be able to anticipate this changing environment and develop the vision and competencies at all levels in their organizations to embrace this dynamic future Njanja (2009).

According to Eshiwani (1990), an educational system of the country can be considered as a sophisticated organism: all the physical, social and cultural factors and condition influencing its existence and development constitute the so called educational environment. Friendly environment of the students and teachers plays an increasingly important role as a strategic component in today's education- a role that is transforming the traditional educational system into a flexible, efficient, and extremely capable tool which meets the demands of ever evolving modern society. The conclusion is obvious there's a demand for more thorough analysis of the educational environment components the factors which influence its formation and perfection as well as its ability to adapt and

keep up with the rapid technological and social changes. The formation of a properly organized educational environment is one of the key elements of the country's educational system development.

1.1.1 The External Environment and Organizations

The external environment of the organization comprises of all the entities that exist outside its boundary, but have significant influence on its growth and survival. An organization has no control over its environment but needs to constantly monitor and adapt to these external changes. The external environment provides an organization with threats and opportunities. These external environmental factors include political, economic, socio-cultural, technological and legal factors.

The external environment is very important to organizations. An organization is directly affected by events happening in the environment that it is supposed to be functioning in. Organizations that easily adapt to the environment essentially survive and the ones that do not are eliminated in the competition. Organizations have to continuously adapt their operations in order to survive the environmental challenges. In today's business environment, organizations have found themselves in a position where they not only have to address environmental changes but actually anticipate them.

External environment of a firm are the conditions and forces that define its strategic options and competitive situation. It consists of three interactive segments, which are remote, industry and operating environment. Pearce and Robinson (2007) argue that

remote environment consist of factors that are beyond the control of a firm and these include economic, social, political, technological and ecological factors. These factors provide an organization with opportunities and threats. They define the industry environment as the general conditions for competition that influence all business offering similar products and services. On operating environment, they postulate it consists of factors that give an organization success through positioning, composition of its customers, its reputation and ability to attract the best employees.

Environment has been characterized as complex, dynamic, multi-facet and having far reaching impact (Kazmi, 2002). The environment is composed of various factors, events, conditions and influence, which interact with each other to create an entirely new set of influences leading to constant environmental change in its shape and character. When selecting the response strategy to be used by the organization, management usually undergoes the following processes: analyzing the competitive environment which includes competitors' strategic moves and market signals, analyzing the industry by looking at discreet market segments, changes in industry structure, which strategic group to compete in and selecting a generic competitive strategy based on identified target market segments, strategic options and SWOT analysis (Porter, 1998).

In this changing environment, organizations have to constantly adapt their activities and internal configurations to reflect the new external realities. Failure to do this may put the future of the organization in jeopardy Aosa (1998).

1.1.2 Strategic responses

Organizations don't exist in a vacuum. They are intricately connected to an outside world with a constantly changing landscape. The dynamic and turbulent environment poses challenges to organizations which as open systems have to respond through appropriate strategies (Ngaluma, 2008). Since the environment does not change on an orderly or regular basis Mintzberg (1998), it's important that organizations draw a plan of responding to the environment. According to Pearce and Robinson (1997) there must be a match between strategic choices and the challenges in environment. Strategic responses can be seen as the matching of the activities of an organization to the environment in which it operates. Strategic responses affect the long term direction of an organization and require large amounts of resources. It is aimed at achieving advantage for the organization and as such it is concerned with the scope of the entire organization's activities (Johnson and Scholes, 1999).

One of the major effects of liberalization and globalization has been the opening up of markets to competitive forces. For any organization to succeed, it is important for managers to appreciate where the greatest opportunities and threats lie at any time and focus on those areas which are currently affecting the organization and which require strategic attention. To succeed in the long term, organizations must compete effectively and out-perform their rivals in a dynamic environment. To accomplish this, they must find suitable ways for creating and adding value for their customers. The days when firms could simply wait for clients to beat a path to their door are long gone. Organizations must realize that their services and products, regardless of how good they are, simply do

not sell themselves (Kotler, 2000). Coping with the increasingly competitive environment has called on firms to rethink their marketing strategies (Pearce and Robinson, 2005). Rapid technological changes have created a new business environment where innovation has become a top competitive strategy (Kamau, 2007).

Different authors/scholars have approached the concept of strategic responses in diverse ways. However, the dominant idea that springs forth is that an organization has to respond to changes in the environment. The environment dictates the responses the organization puts in place to guide managerial decision making.

1.1.3 The education sector in Kenya

Education has been defined as the process through which knowledge, skills, attitudes and values are imparted for the purpose of integrating the individual in a given society, or changing the values and norms of a society. For individuals, this process is lifelong. It begins at birth and ends with death. The United Nation educational, scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO) International standard classification of education defines education as comprising organized and sustained communication designed to bring about learning (UNESCO, 1975). In Kenya, as in any other country, this sustained communication is organized and managed through a coherent system put in place by the Government.

Before the coming of Europeans, Kenyan societies had their own systems of education. There were no classrooms and no special class of people called teachers. All members of the community were involved in the education of the children. Children learnt cultural

traditions and customs of their ancestors from the community as well as specific skills from their families and other specialized individuals through apprenticeship programs. Localized, relevant indigenous knowledge was, therefore, very important in the organization and transmission of knowledge.

The foundation of modern education was laid by missionaries who introduced reading to spread Christianity. They also taught practical subjects like carpentry and gardening which were useful around the missions. The Frazer report of 1909 recommended the establishment of separate educational systems for Europeans, Asians and Africans. This system was maintained until independence in 1963.

After independence, a commission was set up to make changes in the formal educational system. The focus of the commission was to build a national identity and to unify the different ethnicities through subjects in school such as history and civics, and civic education for the masses. Between 1964 and 1985, the 7-4-2-3 education structure modeled after the British education system was followed. The system was designed to provide seven years of primary education, four years of lower secondary education, two years of upper secondary education, and three years of university (Buchmann, 1999). The country was in dire and immediate need for skilled workers to hold positions previously held by the British. Hence, the government set out to quickly expand educational opportunities to its citizens.

In 1981, a Presidential Working Party was commissioned to examine curriculum reform of the entire education system in the country. The committee submitted a

recommendation to change the 7-4-2-3 education system to the current 8-4-4 system of education, whose overall structure was similar to the U.S. education system. The 8-4-4 system was launched in January 1985, and was designed to provide eight years of primary education, four years of secondary, and four years of university education. Emphasis was placed on Mathematics, English, and vocational subjects. The focus on vocational education was aimed at preparing students who would not continue on with secondary education, those who would be self-employed, and those who would be seeking employment in the non-formal sector.

Prior to joining primary school, children between the ages of three and six are required to attend pre-primary (pre-unit) for one or two years. The main objective of pre-primary education is to cater to the total development of a child, including the physical, spiritual, social, and mental growth, brought about through formal and informal interaction with the parents and the community taking a leading role. A focus of pre-primary education has been health, nutrition, care, and basic education. Programs are run through partnership with the government, district-based agencies, local communities and external agencies. The Pre-School section of the ministry of Education is responsible for the registration of pre-schools and the coordination of all partners. It is estimated that 47% of eligible pre primary school children were enrolled in those schools by 2007 (ministry of education, 2008).

1.1.4 Primary school education in Kenya

Primary school is the first phase of the 8-4-4 education system and serves students between the ages of 6-14 years. The main purpose of primary education is to prepare students to participate in the social, political and economic well being of the country, and prepare them to be global citizens ("Education Info Center," 2006). The new primary school curriculum has therefore been designed to provide a more functional and practical education to cater to the needs of children who complete their education at the primary school level and also for those who wish to continue with secondary education. In addition it caters to students who wish, and have the means, to continue on with secondary school education. Primary education is universal and free but not compulsory. A major goal of primary education is to develop self-expression, self-discipline, and self-reliance, while at the same time providing a rounded educational experience.

When a new government was formed in 2003, one of the priorities was to re-avail educational opportunities in order to meet UPE, the second of the eight MDGs. Figures for instance show that massive school dropouts were recorded and that out of about one million students who enrolled in standard one in 1993 and in 1998, less than half a million got to standard eight (Oketch and Rolleston, 2007; Onyango, 2003).

Free primary education (FPE) was, therefore, introduced. This resulted in a significant increase in enrollment from 5.9 to 7.2 million pupils. However, most schools were not equipped to handle the large numbers of students in terms of the number of teachers, physical classroom space, and learning resources (Mukudi, 2004). In some schools, some

classes now have as many as 80-100 students. Ironically, the introduction of free primary education has led to a dramatic increase in the number of privately owned and operated schools. These schools target families who can afford to pay school fees and have their children taught in small groups.

The first school in Nairobi started in the year 1918 at St. Peter Clavers. The period between 1953-1963 saw a rapid increase in the number of schools under the guidance of the government sponsored Nairobi City education board. Public primary schools in Nairobi are managed by the city education department which works in close liaison with the Ministry of Education in matters related to implementation of the school's curriculum, education policies and evaluation.

There were 193 public primary schools in Nairobi County by the year 2011. Westlands District has 25 public primary schools. The District is divided into two zones; Parklands zone with 13 primary schools and Kilimani zone with 12 primary schools.

1.2 Research problem

Organizations are dependent on the environment because they source their inputs such as capital, raw materials and human resources from it and produce their output in the form of products and services to it. The environment within which organizations operate is constantly changing presenting opportunities, challenges and threats Mintzberg (1987). The opportunities and threats provide the agenda for strategic positions taken by an organization. Organizations' success is dependent on how well it interacts and responds

to environmental condition and forces. Thus, to survive and remain relevant, organizations need to continuously devise strategies and enhance internal capabilities to match and fit their environmental influences.

The education sector in Kenya has witnessed various changes in the last ten years. Key among these changes have been brought about by the introduction of free primary education in the year 2003, the introduction of free secondary education in the year 2008 and the constant changes in the education curriculum handled by the Ministry of Education and related agencies (Shiundu and Omulando 1992, Kinuthia, 2009). The ever changing technology has also had major effects on the sector. Koech (1999) contends that analysis of the educational environment components and further elaboration of the recommendations for their development is vital for educational experts. Such analysis might help educators better understand the relations between social, pedagogical, technological and other aspects of the educational environment. It might also provide some guidelines and assistance for the development of the educational environment oriented teaching methods and materials. By exploring the factors that influence the formation of the educational environment components education experts can work out the basic principles of the educational environment.

Various studies have been done to document strategic responses by various organizations to changes in the environment. They include those done by Gumo (2009), Angara (2010), Kabui (2010), Kudoyi (2010), Muchelule (2010) and Mumbi (2011). In these studies it was generally found out that organizations made appropriate adjustments to respond to the environment to ensure continued growth and survival.

Despite having many studies in this area, the results cannot be applied to any other organization such as public primary schools due to contextual differences. What are the strategic responses to changes in the external environment by public primary schools in Westlands District Nairobi County?

1.3 Research objectives

The objective of the study was to determine the strategic responses to changes in the external environment by public primary schools in westlands district, Nairobi County.

1.4 Value of the study

The findings of this study will be of importance to a number of groups and individuals. The study will give school heads and staff an insight on issues of organizational responses which they must take cognizance of since the survival of the organization in the changing environment depends on how well it is able to adapt to the changes. All those parties who are directly and indirectly affected by activities in the education sector like lobby groups, educationist and private institutions will use this information to understand the challenges in this sector.

The study will provide reference to further empirical studies into little known organizational responses to the changing environment in the education sector. This will assist other researchers in their work.

The policy makers will obtain knowledge of the dynamics in the education sector and the responses that are appropriate. They will therefore obtain guidance from this study in designing appropriate policies that will regulate the sector.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of review of existing literature on the topic of study. It focuses on strategic responses that organizations take so as to remain relevant in the sectors of the economy they are operating and the environmental factors and challenges they experience. The PESTEL framework has been discussed in depth. PESTEL analysis is used by managers to enable them develop more informed strategies. The chapter covers the concept of strategy, external environment and organization and specific focus on strategic responses.

2.2 Concept of strategy

Strategy is a set of decision making rules for guidance of organizational behavior (Ansoff, 1965). According to Johnson and Scholes (2002) strategy is the direction and scope of an organization over the long run which achieves advantage for the organization through its configuration of resources within a changing environment and fulfills stakeholders expectations. Aosa (1988) defines strategy as solving a strategic problem, which is, a mismatch between the internal characteristics of an organization and its external environment, by matching organizational core capabilities with external environment in order to exploit opportunities existing in the external environment and minimize the impact of threats from external environment in the organization.

Chandler (1962) sees strategy as an establishment of long term goals and objectives of an organization, including taking of actions and allocation of resources, for achieving these goals. Pearce and Robinson (1997) see strategy as the building of defenses against competitive forces or finding a position in the industry where competitive forces are weakest. Strategy is a plan that sets out together an organization major goal, policies, and action sequences.

Strategic management is defined as a process through which a firm manages its relationship with the environment in which it operates, Ansoff and Macdonell (1990). It consists of strategic planning, capability planning and management of change. Hax and Majluff (1996) argues that strategic management is the way of conducting business. It has the ultimate objective of the development of corporate values managerial capabilities and through it focuses the decisions of the entire organization in one direction. They further argue that strategic management ensure that opportunities are grasped, risks are acceptable, failure can be contained and success can be built upon and sustained. Porter (1980) argues that strategic management provides central purpose and direction, enables management to adapt to changing environment, credits competitive advantages and allows allocation of resources to key success factors.

It can be seen that strategic management is a continuous process and not an event. Firm's operate in an environment and any changes occurring in the environment should be carefully monitored in order to successfully carry out strategic management. Strategies may require to be modified in order to respond to changes in both internal environment

and this factor makes the whole process of strategic management flexible in order to achieve both long term and short term objectives of the firm.

2.3 The External Environment and organizations

Organizations have to continually interact with the environment as it is the resource of its input and depository of its output creating harmony in the strategy of the organization, (Sababu, 2007). The external environment of the organization is influenced by political, economic, socio-cultural, ecological and legal factors.

Political activities of the state through its legislature and law enforcement agencies impinge considerably on the organizations; businesses, public – and charities are all affected by government fiscal and economic policies, and all have to operate within the law of the land (Cole, 1997). At both national and local levels, the government affects organizations activities, on daily basis through its policies and authority and its strategic decisions by creating opportunities and threats arising from the structure of the sector. This is through the imposed taxes, monopoly and restricted trade practice. The government is a large supplier of fiscal and trade benefits and at the same time a larger customer and can therefore affect running of business (Sababu, 2007). It can also protect local business entities from foreign competition by enacting competition legislations. Utterances and lobbying by key politicians in a country can also affect the business environment in a country.

Economic variables affect organizations in every part of their activities. They have a direct impact on the potential attractiveness of various organizational strategies. Economic conditions affect how easy or difficult it is to be successful and profitable at any time because they affect both capital availability and cost, and demand (Thompson, 2002). The timing and relative success of particular strategies can be influenced by economic conditions. When the economy, as a whole or certain sectors of the economy are growing, demand may exist for a product or service which would not be in more depressed circumstances. Similarly, the opportunity to exploit a particular strategy successfully may depend on demand which exists in growth conditions and does not in recession. Although a depressed economy will generally result in a number of organizations going out of business, it can provide opportunities for some (Robinson et al., 1978; Thompson, 2002).

Economic conditions are influenced by political and government policy. Government decisions will affect organizations both directly and indirectly, as they provide both opportunities and threats. While economic conditions and government policy are closely related, they both influence a number of other environmental forces that can affect organizations. Capital markets determine the conditions for alternative types of funding for organizations. They tend to be a subject to government controls, and they will be guided by the prevailing economic conditions. The rate of interest charged for loans will be affected by inflation and by international economics and, although the determining rate may be fixed by central bank that will also be influenced by the stated government

priorities. According to Thompson (2002), government can increase the money supply and make capital markets more buoyant.

According to Pearce and Robinson (1991) social culture variables which affect an organization involve belief, values, attitudes, opinion, activities and lifestyle of persons in the organizations external environment as developed from cultural ecological, demographic, religions, educational and ethical conditions. These factors tend to change and dictate individual wants and needs. Changes in these variables shape the way people live, work, produce and consume commodities and therefore an organization must aim at providing services or products that will meet these needs.

The socio-cultural environment encapsulates demand and tastes, which vary with fashion, disposable income and the changes, can provide both opportunities and threats for particular companies (Thompson, 2002; Pearce Robinson, 2005). Over-time most products change from being a novelty to a situation of market saturation, and as this happens pricing and promotion strategies have to change. Demographic variables are human attributes of a given community. This may include one's age, gender, family life, life cycle experience, income, education, occupation, religion, ethnic groups and nationality (Sababu, 2007). These factors guide organizations in selecting the kind of products or services that should be offered to a particular population at a given point in time. Banks and Insurance firms, for example, have come up with products that are favorable to Muslim community, students, children, women, high and low income earners.

Technology variables also affect the running of the organization. Rapid developments in technology can exert a powerful influence on all organization has adopted the concept of information and communication Technology (ICT) to ensure its operations are efficient. A firm should take note of technological changes affecting its industry to avoid obsolescence and instead promote innovation. Creative technology helps in coming up with new products and at the same time improving on the existing products or manufacturing and marketing techniques. Technology helps in increasing job effectiveness and efficiency.

Technology is widely recognized by various literatures on strategic management (Capron and Glazer, 1987; Johnson and Scholes, 1993), as part of the organization and the industry part of the model as it is used for the creation of competitive advantage. However, technology external to the industry can also be captured and used, and this again can be influenced by government support and encouragement. Technological breakthroughs can create new industries which might prove a threat to existing organizations whose products or services might be rendered redundant, and those firms which might be affected in this way should be alert to the possibility. Equally, new technology could provide a useful input, in both manufacturing and service industries, but in turn its purchase will require funding possibly employee training before it can be used.

2.4 Strategic Responses

Strategic responses according to Pearce and Robinson (1991) are the set of decisions and actions that result in the formation and implementation of plans designed to achieve a

firm's objectives. Strategic responses are part of competitive strategies that organizations develop in defining goal and policies. They are reactions to what is happening in the environment of the organization. Porter (1980) observes that the knowledge of the underlying sources of competitive pressure provides the groundwork for strategic agenda in action. When organizations are faced with unfamiliar changes they should revise their strategies to match their turbulence levels (Ansoff and MacDonnell, 1990). New technologies, new competition, new dimensions of social control and above all an unprecedented questioning of the organization role in the society define the unfamiliar world. Organizations must adapt their strategies to new environment (Ansoff, 1999). Changes in the external environment will require new strategies which will in turn call for reformed organization capability.

Pearce and Robinson (1997) assert that the degree of competitiveness is manifested not only in other players but rather other competitive forces exist that go well beyond the established combatants in a particular industry. Porter (1980) identifies five forces that affect rules embodied in the entry of new competitors, the threat of substitutes, the bargaining power of suppliers, bargaining power of buyers and the rivalry among the existing competitors. Organizations are environment dependent, no organization can exist without the environment for survival and they have to scan the environment in an effort of budding trends and conditions that would eventually affect the industry and adopt to them. Such scanning involves studying and interpreting social, political, economic and technological events so as to identify trends that could affect the industry. Environmental

scanning enables the manager to become aware of developments that pose new opportunities and threats to the organization (Thompson and Strickland, 1993).

Strategic managers are often put to task in determining what responses to take towards different environmental changes. These responses can either be operational or strategic or both. Strategic decisions are likely to affect operational decisions. An organization strategy cannot succeed if the operation aspects of the organization are not in line with the strategy. Organizations that have successfully managed change have been able to link strategic change and every aspect of organization in relation to the dynamic external environment.

Kotler (1998) observed that marketing plays a critical role in the company's strategic planning process and that is the most significant contributor to this process. Marketing plays a role in defining the business mission, analyzing the environment, competitive and business situations. Porter (1980) asserts that to achieve cost leadership in the industry, a firm can adopt functional policies and resort to aggressiveness construction of scale facilities. This is possible by sourcing inputs from cheaper suppliers or by putting up state of the art equipment, which can reduce costs of customer service delays and minimize the cost of errors. He further notes that a firm can adopt a strategy of differentiating its products or services as a way of creating something that is considered unique industry wide. On focus strategy, Porter (1980) argues that firms have to focus on a particular buyer group, segmentations of the product line of geographical market. This assertion is

based on the realization that in a competitive environment, firms should trim their operations and target specific markets so as to develop a competitive edge.

Ansoff (1999) discusses the role of general management into organization strategic responses. He states that for an organization to implement a strategic response, three components are essential. These are the right climate (will to respond), competence (ability to respond) and capacity (volume of responses). The general management should therefore direct the organization towards behavior which optimizes the attainment of long term goals. Climate setting determines the organization culture and involves mentality and power positions of the managers. Competence determines the organization structures, systems, and shared knowledge and involves the talents, skills, and knowledge of management. It also involves capacity to accommodate various management challenges that may arise over time.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methods that were applied in the study. The areas covered are research design, population of the study, data collection instruments and procedures and data analysis procedures to be applied

3.2 Research Design

A research design is a program that guides the investigator in the process of collecting analyzing and interpreting observation (Cava and Nathmias, 2005). The research design for this study was a census survey. A census collects information from every unit in a population. As a result, data is truly representative of the whole population and detailed accurate data can be made available.

There are two ways of collecting data from a population: cross-sectional survey and longitudinal survey. Cross-sectional survey is used to gather information on a population at a single point in time while longitudinal survey gathers data over a period of time. Cross-sectional survey was deemed the best option to fulfill the objectives of the study.

3.3 Population

Castillo (2009) defines a research population as a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a scientific query. A research population is also known

as a well-defined collection of individuals or objects known to have similar characteristics. All individuals or objects within a certain population usually have a common, binding characteristic or trait.

The population of this study comprised all public primary schools in Westlands. According to the ministry of education and technology list of 2011 there were 25 registered public primary schools in Westlands. The researcher carried out a census survey.

3.4 Data Collection

The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data is data gathered for the first time by the researcher; secondary data is data taken by the researcher from secondary sources, internal or external. Secondary data was collected from available records at the schools under study and the Nairobi city council education department.

Primary data was collected using a questionnaire which contained both open-ended and closed ended questions. The items in the questionnaire were developed from the literature review. The questionnaires were administered using the drop and pick later method, which is a modification of mail questionnaire.

The respondents in the study were school heads. This is because it is the school heads that are familiar with and are involved in formulating strategic responses to various issues in their schools.

3.5 Data Analysis

The study used descriptive statistics in analyzing data. Descriptive statistics are used to describe basic features of the data in study. They provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures. This involves the use of frequency tables, percentages and other statistical measures.

Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected. Quantitative data requires the establishment of mean and percentages to get a comparison of responses. The qualitative data was analyzed by establishing the frequency of a given response and obtaining means thereof to the given specific question. The means were then tabulated and conclusions drawn.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and findings of the study whose objective was to determine the strategic responses to changes in the external environment by public primary schools in Westlands District Nairobi County. The study covered 25 public primary schools registered by the Ministry of education as at December 2011. Out of the 25 questionnaires sent out, 20 were returned completed, giving an 80% response rate.

4.2 Background information of respondents

This section sought to establish the positions held by respondents and the number of years in the current position.

From the findings the majority of the respondents were head teachers of the schools. This implies that relevant information was collected from the institutions as head teachers who are managers of schools are involved in making decisions and running the schools.

The study sought to establish the duration that the respondents had been in their current positions. The findings were as presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Respondents' duration of years in the current position

Duration of years in the current position	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 year	1	5
Between 1 and 5 years	6	30
Between 5 and 10 years	6	30
More than 10 years	7	35
Total	20	100

The findings indicate that majority of the respondents have held their current position for more than 5 years. This is a clear indication that majority of the respondents have good experience and understanding on both the internal and external factors affecting their institutions.

4.3 Institutional profile

Several aspects of the school were investigated as discussed below.

The respondents were asked to specify the years their institutions have been in existence.

From the findings all the respondents indicated that their institutions have been in existence for more than 10 years.

The respondents were asked to indicate the size of population of students in their schools.

The response was as illustrated in Table 4.2

Table 4.2 Population of students in the school

School population	Frequency	Percent
Less than 250	1	5
Between 250 and 500	5	25
Between 500 and 1000	4	20
More than 1000	10	50
Total	20	100

The findings indicate that most schools have populations of more than 1000 students. There are a myriad of factors that explain the population of schools which include the location of a school-those located in densely populated areas tend to have more students than those located in sparsely populated areas, the accessibility of a school and its performance in national exams among others.

This section sought to establish the students' composition in terms of gender and religion.

The findings were as presented in figure 4.1

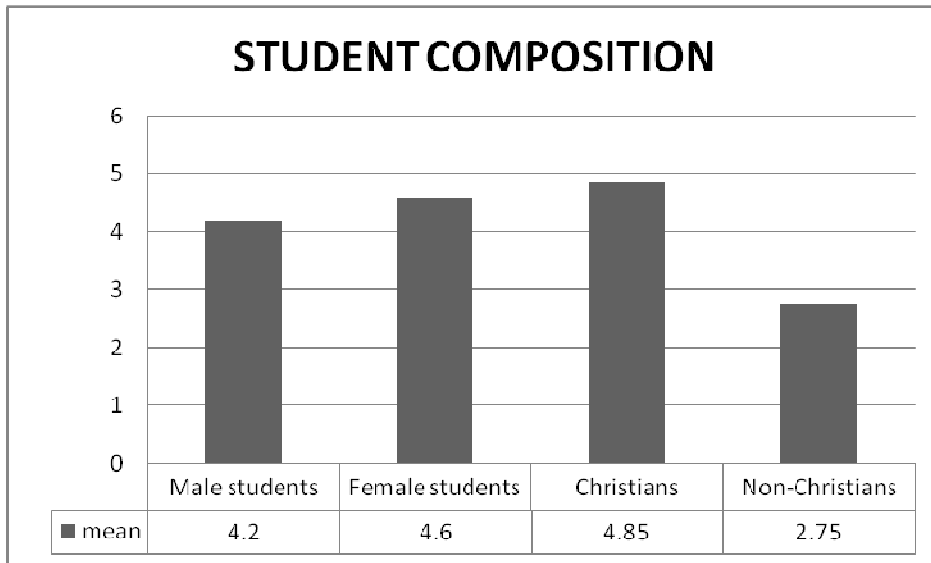


Figure 4.1: Students' composition

Figure 4.1 shows the composition of the students in terms of gender and religion. From the findings, majority of the respondents indicated that female students were more than their male counterparts. Similarly, most schools have more Christians than non-Christians.

The respondents were asked to indicate the home locations of their students- those who reside within the District, those who reside outside the District but within the County and those who reside outside the County. The findings were as presented in figure 4.2

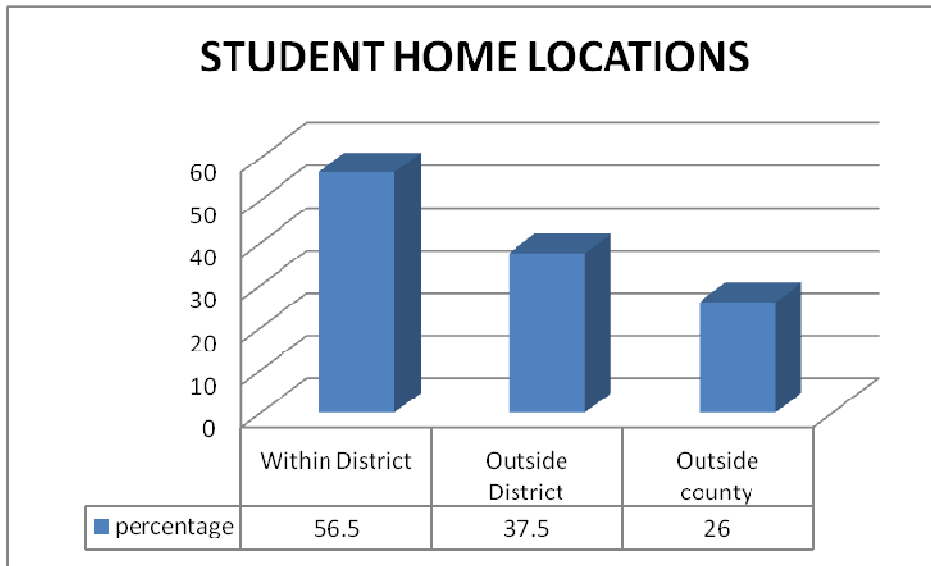


Figure 4.2: Students' home locations

From the findings majority of the respondents indicated that most students reside within the District. Only a few of the respondents stated that they had students who came from outside of the district and the county.

The study also sought to find out changes in the population size of the schools over the last 10 years. The findings were as presented in table 4.3

Table 4.3: Population change of students over the last 10 years

	Frequency	Percentage
Has remained constant	3	15
Has increased by approximately 25%	4	20
Has increased by more than 25%	8	40
Has decreased by approximately 25%	5	25
Total	20	100

The majority of the respondents indicated that their schools have witnessed an increase of students over the last 10 years.

The respondents were asked to indicate the change in the number of teachers in their schools in the last 10 years. The result were as presented in figure 4.3

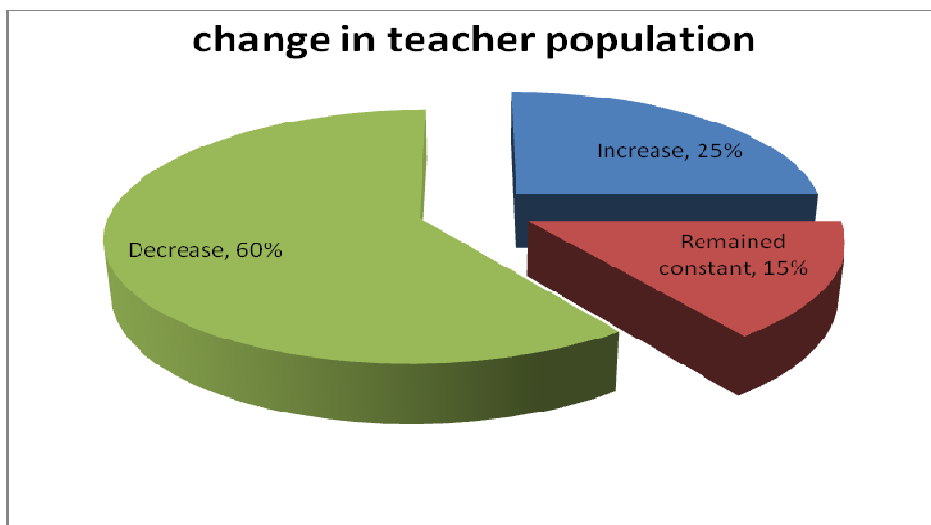


Figure 4.3: Changes in the number of teachers in the school in the last 10 years

From figure 4.3 majority of the respondents stated that there has been a decrease in the number of teachers in their schools.

The study sought to find out whether there had been construction and or expansion of learning facilities to cater for the increasing student populations. The result were as presented in table 4.4

Table 4.4: Buildings constructed over the last 10 years

	Frequency	Percentage
Buildings constructed/expanded	6	30
Buildings have not been constructed/expanded	13	70
Total	20	100

From table 4.4 majority of the respondents, 70% each stated that there had not been construction or expansion of learning facilities in their schools while only 30% indicated that construction and or expansion of learning facilities had taken place in their institutions in the last 10 years respectively.

4.4 Changes in the External Environment and challenges faced

The challenges from the external environment were investigated under this section. To begin with, the study sought to find out to what extent the changing environment had influenced certain aspects of the institution. The response was as illustrated in figure 4.4

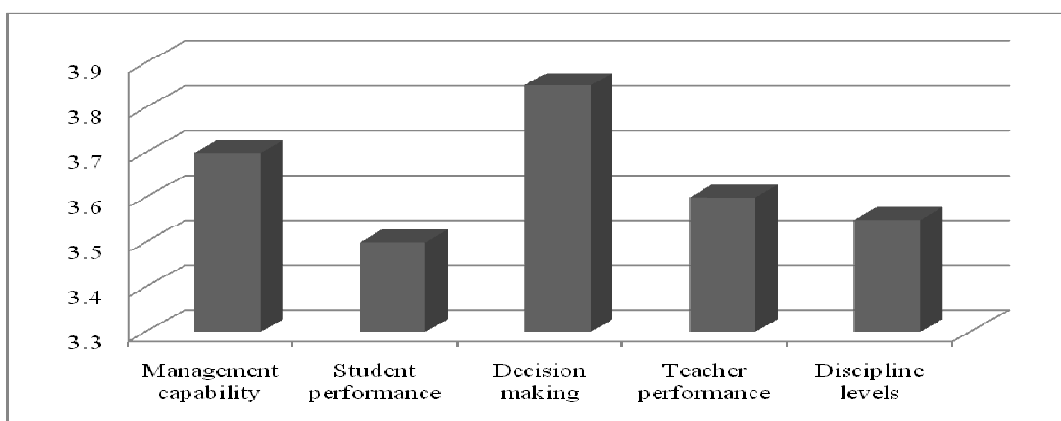


Figure 4.4: Influence to aspects of institution by Changes in the external environment

From figure 4.4 there were varying responses as to the extent the outlined aspects of the institution were influenced by changes in the external environment. Majority of the respondents stated that decision making was greatly influenced by changes in the external environment. The least affected aspect of the institution as stated by the respondents was student performance indicated by a mean of 3.50.

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which changes in the education sector had affected their institutions. The response was as illustrated in figure 4.5

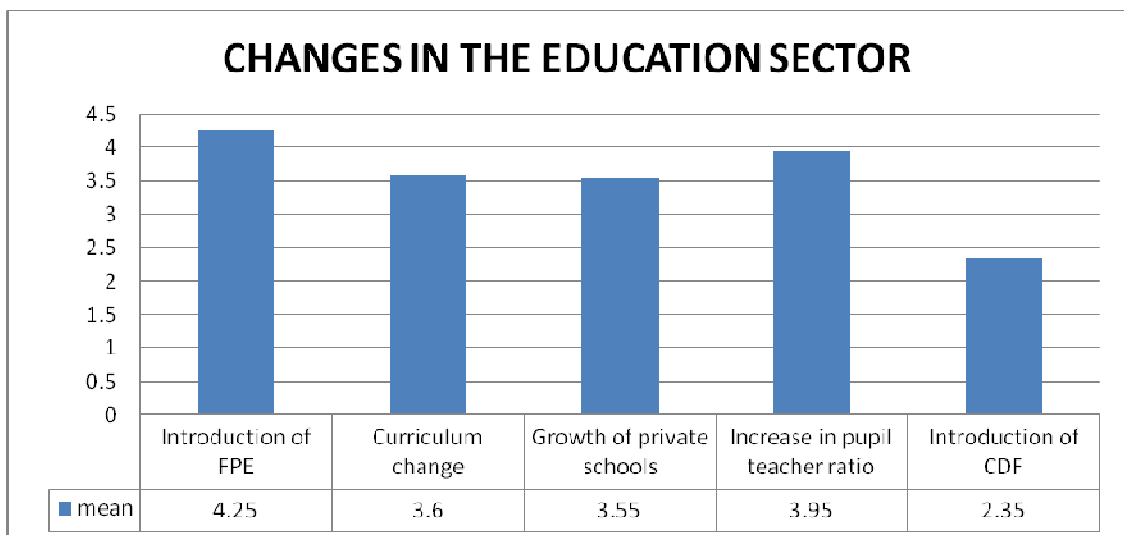


Figure 4.5: Extent changes in the education sector has affected the institution

From figure 4.5 above the respondents stated that the introduction of FPE had affected their institutions to a very great extent. Similarly increase in pupil teacher ratio had also affected the institutions to a great extent. Other factors are clearly presented on the chart.

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural and Technological factors had influenced the running of their institutions.

The results are as presented in Table 4.6

Table 4.5: Extent PESTEL factors influence the institution

	Mean rank	Percentage
Political Factors		
Influence by political leaders	2.35	47
Government policies	3.75	75
Economic factor		
Level of economic growth	3.55	71
Socio-cultural factors		
Customs and beliefs	2.15	43
Opinions and attitudes	3.35	67
Religion	2.2	44
Language	2.55	51
Technological factor		
Availability of IT Facilities	3.85	77

From Table 4.5, it was found out that most respondents considered influence by political leaders not to have influenced their institutions to a great extent while government policies had a great influence on the institutions. Availability of IT facilities was considered to be the most important factor by most respondents. The influence of other factors is indicated on the table.

4.5 Response strategies

This section sought to establish strategic responses and their importance to the institution. The respondents were asked to indicate how important the following strategic options were used to respond to changes in the external environment. The result were as presented in figure 4.6

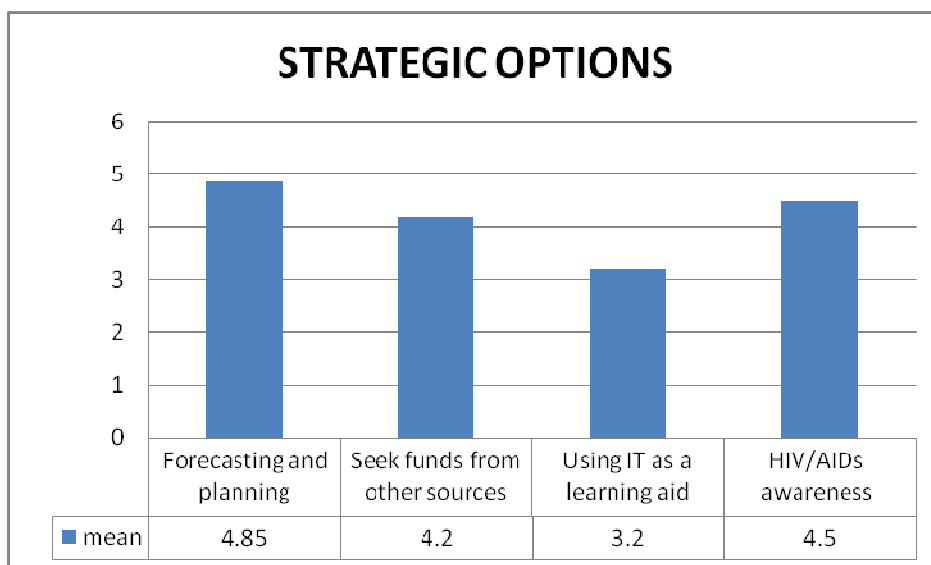


Figure 4.6: Importance of strategic options in responding to changes in the external environment

The study revealed that public primary schools adopted various strategies in responding to the external environment. Firstly, the respondents admitted that government policies such as introduction of FPE had strained the available learning facilities and had also lowered education quality due to increase in PTR. Despite this, the government had not been quick to address the emerging problems occasioned by this ambitious project. This has led school managers to partner with the corporate sector, NGO's and other interested

parties by appealing to them to finance projects like building new classrooms and sponsoring feeding programmes and needy students.

HIV/AIDs pandemic has had an impact on schools under this study resulting in an increase in orphans who require financial and emotional assistance. This has led schools to work closely with relevant NGO's together with the ministry of health in trying to address the pandemic by educating pupils on HIV/AID's and instituting support for those affected.

The study has shown that most schools are behind in adopting the use of IT as a teaching and learning aid. However some school managers have initiated projects to setup IT laboratories which will be useful in imparting IT skills to both staff and pupils.

4.6 Constraining factors

The study sought to establish the extent to which certain factors have hindered the ability of the institution to respond to changes in the external environment. The results were as shown in Table 4.6

Table 4.6: Constraining factors

	Mean	Percentage
Lack of enough finances	4.25	85
Employees resistance to change	2.70	54
Lack of parent support	3.90	78
Responsiveness of SMC	3.00	60

From table 4.6 majority of the respondents, indicated that lack of sufficient funds was to blame to a very great extent to the inability of their institutions to respond appropriately to influences from the external environment. Lack of parent support and poor response by SMC's were also considered as hindrances in responding to challenges from the environment.

4.7 Discussion

4.7.1 Comparison with theory

The concepts of strategy and strategic management are just as important in the public sector as in commercial firms. Many parts of the public sector provide services to paying customers in the same way as commercial organizations, for example the education sector. However the role of ideology in the development of strategy in the public sector is probably greater than that in commercial organizations (Johnson and Scholes, 2002). A sector that is state controlled may find planning horizons determined more by political than by market conditions and also constraints on sources of finance since the funding is from taxation rather than by paying customers. This can put restriction on strategic choices: for example, they may not be able to specialize on a few customers or- they must provide a universal service. Also strategic priorities tend to be dictated by the provider of funds rather than the user of the service so the notion of competition is usually concerned with competition for resource inputs, typically within a political arena.

Public primary schools in Nairobi with a specific focus on schools in Westlands District have faced many challenges posed by the external environment. Some of these factors

such as government policies on education ,the level of economic growth and opinions and attitudes were shown to have influenced the schools to a great extent. The results further indicate that these factors that exist in the external environment had influenced certain aspects of the school to differing extents. For instance, the respondents indicated that management capability and freedom to make decisions was largely influenced by external factors. Moreover, changes in the external environment of schools with a specific mention of introduction of FPE in 2003 and growth of private schools were shown to have had a major influence on the institutions.

To mitigate on the influence of the external environment the school managers had put in place various response strategies. Seeking funds from external sources such as NGO's and the corporate sector was popular among most respondents. The financing was channeled into expanding learning facilities, sponsoring feeding programmes and or sponsoring needy students. Similarly, to address the social needs of students most schools had guidance and counseling teams which run behavior change programs and educated students on HIV/AIDS.

4.7.2 Comparison with other studies

Different scholars have studied this subject under different contexts. In all these studies it was generally found out that organizations responded to the external environment by crafting response strategies.

Migunde (2003) did a study on strategic responses by the Kenya broadcasting corporation (KBC) to increased competition. The study concluded that KBC responded by improving its programmes as well as venturing on an expansion strategy to reach a wider coverage. Mugambi (2003) found out that tourist hotels in Nairobi had responded to the external environment by employing various marketing as well as promotional studies.

Mumbi (2011) found out that secondary schools in Matungulu Division Machakos County had faced various challenges posed by the external environment. To respond to these challenges the school managers had put in place appropriate response strategies. Kabui (2010) also concluded that various response strategies had been put in place to respond to social changes by catholic secondary schools in the archdiocese of Nairobi.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a summary of the findings as well as the conclusions gathered from analysis of data. Findings have been summarized alongside the objective of the study; conclusions have been drawn from the study and the recommendations for actions given.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The study aimed at identifying strategic responses of public primary schools in Westlands District, Nairobi County to changes in the external environment. The challenges faced by public primary schools and how they respond to them are discussed below.

The study found out that all the public schools sampled have existed for more than ten years and are managed by the ministry of education via the city education department of Nairobi county council. Most of the schools had populations size exceeding 1000 students of which majority were female students. Further majority of the respondents stated that there were more Christians in their schools than non-Christians and that most students resided within the district. Most of the respondents also indicated that population size of students in their schools had increased especially after introduction of FPE however the number of teachers did not increase proportionately. Similarly most schools had not constructed and or expanded learning facilities to handle the increase in student population.

Further, the degree to which changes in the external environment had affected certain aspects of institution in the last 10 years was varied. For instance, management capability and decision making by management was influenced to a great extent. Teacher and student performance as well as discipline levels were also affected to a great extent.

Changes that had taken place in the education sector in the last 10 years had affected schools to varying extents. Majority of the respondents indicated that introduction of FPE in the year 2003 and ongoing curriculum changes had affected their institutions to a great extent. Similarly most respondents indicated that the increase in pupil teacher ratio and growth of private schools had affected their institutions to a great extent. There were divergent views on the influence brought about by the introduction CDF with majority suggesting that though they lobbied financing from CDF kitty to expand learning facilities it was not forthcoming, only a minority of institutions had benefitted from this kitty.

The PEST factors were important to the schools to different extents. Political factors such as influence by political leaders in terms of appointments and transfers of teachers affects in the management of the institutions. Political instability that occurs during the electioneering year affect the population sizes of institutions; some increase and or reduce in size due to migration. Government policies such as the FPE and children's act were considered as an important factor to a great extent. On economic factors, most respondents indicated the level of economic growth was important to a great extent. Customs and beliefs and religion were important socio-cultural factors to a less extent.

Interestingly, opinions and attitudes and language were important only to a moderate extent. On technological factors, the availability of information technology facilities was seen to be important to great extents.

Finally, respondents were asked to indicate the importance of strategic options in response to the changes in the external environment. The views were divergent; lack of finances and parent support was considered to be important to great extent while employee resistance to change and responsiveness of the SMC's was only important to a moderate extent. The importance of strategic options in response to the changes in the external environment was enumerated. Forecasting and planning, seeking funding from other sources and HIV/AIDS awareness were very important strategic option in response to the changes in the external environment. On the contrary, using information technology as learning and teaching aid was considered to be least important strategic option in response to the changes in the external environment.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that public primary schools operate in a dynamic environment just like any other business entity. The schools under study were found to have deployed various strategic options in responding to the external environment.

From the study no new schools have been constructed to cater for the burgeoning population in the city and especially the huge uptake of students that has been witnessed since the introduction of FPE in 2003. As such, schools have witnessed a great pressure

on their learning facilities and other resources. The teaching staff has not increased in proportion to the increase in student population this has led to overpopulated classrooms which reduces the teacher student contact and overworking of teachers, this could explain why the performance of public primary schools has deteriorated over the years in comparison to private schools.

The study has identified the PEST factors among others to be challenges to the public primary schools. The most crucial were government policies which include introduction of FPE and children's act. These factors affect management and learning in schools. However, to mitigate on the effects managers have been proactive in crafting response strategies. For instance some head teachers have sought financial help from NGO's and other well wishers who have supported by launching programmes in schools such as the feeding programmes. Others have identified very needy kids and sponsored them with uniform and other basic needs. HIV/AIDS and guidance and counseling programmes have been implemented to enhance an all round development of the student.

However, in responding to the environment this institutions have faced various constraints. For instance, since the introduction of FPE parents support in cash and kind for school programmes has slowly faded away. Similarly the schools management committees have not been very supportive and or responsive to schools programme. These are challenges that the institutions under this study faced and may be said to be a replica of what institutions in other Counties are undergoing.

5.4 Implications of the study to policy and practice

The study touches on a very key aspect in the growth of a society, primary education. Primary education prepares students to participate in the social, political and economic well being of the country. To remain relevant institutions within the education sector must ensure that they respond strategically to mitigate on external environmental factors. These institutions should continuously lobby the government for allocation of more funds per child. These funds should be channeled to these institutions in good time to enhance running of programmes. The private sector and NGO's as part of their corporate social responsibility should offer sponsorship to needy students in order to keep them in school

The government and other development partners should prioritize in building new schools especially in areas with dense population and or expand learning facilities in existing schools. These coupled with hiring more teachers and remunerating them fairly would be a huge boost in the education sector.

Information technology should be embraced by organizations as a mode of communication as well as a teaching and learning aid. This would enable institutions to respond appropriately to the environment and give students a proper foundation on information technology as the country gears on achieving vision 2030.

Finally, the responsibility of ensuring citizens obtain quality basic education belongs to the government. However, educationists, lobby groups and all other parties with interests

in education should persuade the public to support the gains that have been made in the education sector.

5.5 limitations of the study

This study was done during the school holidays followed by a nationwide teachers strike. Hence, it was not easy to get the respondents in most schools. Time and financial resources were also a major impediment to the researcher's ability to carrying out a comprehensive study. Further, questionnaires did not allow for in-depth probing to get more information.

5.6 Suggestions for Further research

This study concentrated on the strategic responses to changes in the external environment by public primary schools in Nairobi. Further studies on the same area should be carried in other Counties in Kenya before generalizations are made. There is need to carry out similar research in private primary schools this will inform policy makers in the education sector on a wider scale.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN WESTLANDS DISTRICT, NAIROBI COUNTY

Kilimani primary school
Milimani primary school
St. George's primary school
State House primary school
Kileleshwa primary school
Lavington primary school
Muthangari primary school
Kangemi primary school
New Kihumbuini primary school
Kihumbuini primary school
Kabete Vet. Lab primary school
Hospital Hill primary school
Aga Khan primary school
Highridge primary school
North Highridge primary school
Visa Oshwal primary school
Westlands primary school
Bohra Road primary school
Karurua Forest primary school
Loresho primary school
Lower Kabete primary school
Farasi Lane primary school
Muguga Green primary school
Cheleta primary school
Nairobi primary school

Source: Nairobi city council education department (2010)

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE

STRATEGIC RESPONSES TO CHANGES IN THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT BY PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN WESTLANDS DISTRICT NAIROBI COUNTY

Section A: Details of the Respondent

1) Name of your Organization.....

2) Position/Title of the respondent.....

3) Number of years in the current position.....

- (a) Less than 1 year ()
- (b) Between 1 and 5 years ()
- (c) Between 5 and 10 years ()
- (d) More than 10 years ()

Institution Profile

4) How many years has the school been in existence?

- (a) Less than 1 year ()
- (b) Between 1 and 5 years ()
- (c) Between 5 and 10 years ()
- (d) More than 10 years ()

5) Approximately, what is the population of the students in the school?

- (a) Less than 250
- (b) Between 250 and 500
- (c) Between 500 and 1000
- (d) More than 1,000

6) Please indicate the students' composition

Category	None	1-10%	11-25%	26-50%	50-70%
Male					
Female					
Christians					
Non-Christians					

7) Please indicate below the students' home locations- where the students come from

Category	None	1-10%	11-25%	26-50%	50-70%
From within the district					
From outside the district But within county					
From outside county					

8) How would you describe changes in student population over the last 10 years or since the school's inception?

- population has remained constant
- there has been an increase by approximately 25%
- there has been an increase by more than 25%
- there has been a decrease by approximately 25%

9) Has there been any changes in the number of teachers in the school over the last 10 years. Please indicate the specific change below.

- increase
- remained constant
- decrease

10) Has the school constructed/expanded learning facilities over the last 10 years. Please indicate below.

Yes

No

Section B: Changes in the External Environment and Challenges faced

11) External environmental factors are influences that affect an institutions performance. They are factors from outside of an organization for instance political, economic, socio-cultural and technological.

Please state to what extent changes in the external environment have influenced the following aspects of the institution.

	To least extent	To less extent	To Moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
Management capability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decision making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discipline levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12) Listed below are among the changes that have taken place in the external environment in the last 10 years as far as the education sector in Kenya is concerned. Please indicate to what extent your institution has been affected by this changes.

	To least extent	To less extent	To Moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
Introduction of FPE	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Curriculum change	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Growth of Private schools	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Increase in pupil Teacher ratio	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Introduction of CDF	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Any other effects (please specify).....					

13) Please indicate the extent which each of the following factors have affected your institution (tick as appropriate in the relevant box)

	To least extent	To less extent	To Moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
Political Factors					
Influence by Political leaders	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Government Policies	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Economic Factors					
Level of Economic growth	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Socio-Cultural Factors					
Customs and Beliefs	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Opinions and attitudes	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Religion	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Language	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

To least extent	To less extent	To Moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
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Technological Factors

Availability of Information Technology facilities	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
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Section C: Response strategies

14) How have the following factors affected the ability of your institution to respond to changes in the environment? (Tick as appropriate).

To least extent	To less extent	To Moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
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Lack of Finances	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
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Employee resistance to Change	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
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Lack of parent support	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
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Responsiveness of BOG	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
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Any other Changes (please specify).....

15) Please indicate to what extent your institution has used the following strategies to respond to changes in the external environment (rank them in order of importance, 1 being least and 5 being the most important) –Tick as appropriate

	5	4	3	2	1
	Very	Moderately	Neither important	Less	Least
	Important	Important	nor un-important	important	important

Forecasting and

Planning [] [] [] [] []

Seeking funding from other sources e.g donors,harambees and

NGO's [] [] [] [] []

Using IT as a learning and

Teaching aid [] [] [] [] []

HIV/AIDs awareness

[] [] [] [] []

Any other strategies (please specify)

.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION