

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES ADOPTED
BY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY
OF EVURORI LOCATION IN MBEERE DISTRICT**

BY

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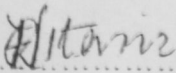
**A Management Research Project Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Business Administration
(MBA), School of Business, University of Nairobi.**

2006

DECLARATION

This Management Research Project is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other University.

To my mother, wife, daughter & son and the entire family.

Signed  Date 07/11/06

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The success of this study was a result of a number of people to whom I am proud to give my thanks. First, many thanks goes to the University of Nairobi for the scholarship awarded to me, without this, I could not have joined the MBA programme.

I am most indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Maria Oguni who constantly guided and inspired me throughout the research work. His vast knowledge, patience and his constructive criticism, comments and guidance led to the realization of this work.

To: My late mum, wife, daughter & son and the entire family.

I am also grateful to my friends and classmates who never ceased to advise me and intervene whenever there was a difficulty. Special thanks go to my group discussion members and classmates: Leopold, Faith, Magutu, Bulitia, and Kooy.

I am grateful to my wife, daughter & son, brothers and sisters for their moral and material support.

May God bless all of them.

Mostly, my thanks go to Almighty God who never abandoned me throughout my journey and who, I believe, will continue to be with me in future.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to determine whether the competitive strategies used by public primary schools differed from those of private primary schools and establish factors that influenced the choice of competitive strategies by a school. In order to achieve these objectives, a descriptive design was adopted and a census study carried out. Primary data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire which was administered through drop and pick later method. The data collected was analyzed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores and chi square tests.

The following conclusions were made: various factors that attracted pupils to certain schools and not others were found to be; free primary education, performance in examination, close proximity, good leadership, quality facilities and ample learning environment, popularity in extra curricula activities, feeding programme, transport services, boarding facilities, religious background or spiritual formation, considerable fees etc.

Secondly, to achieve overall low cost leadership, public primary schools capitalized on free primary education, use of school rules and school motto. For private primary schools, they used to a great extent, school rules and school motto to remain competitive, but to a minimal extent the free primary education, which does not benefit them in any way. In order to remain competitive, private schools had provided over and above what their public counterparts were offering. Both the public and private primary schools used the focused low cost/differentiation as a competitive strategy to some little extent and large extent. There were therefore some differences in the use of the strategy among the public and private primary schools.

Lastly, the factors that had very great influence on primary schools' choice of competitive strategies were the management perception and leadership style, but with great influence were factors ranging from leadership, degree of firm's external dependence, management perception, power, competitive reaction, availability of resources, and corporate governance whereas altitude towards risk and culture had least influence.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Organizations of every type, be they public or private, exist and operate in an environment (Hunger and Wheelen, 1995). The firm's environment (internal and external) consists of variables, which are not only becoming increasingly uncertain but also more tightly interconnected. The internal environment of the firm is made up of factors such as the organization capabilities and both tangible and intangible assets that are all within the firm and affects its ability to meet its objectives.

The external environment consists of the remote, industry and the operating environment. The remote environment is made up of economic, social, political, technological and ecological factors. These present the firm with opportunities, threats and constraints but rarely does any single firm exert any meaningful reciprocal influence. According to Porter (1979), there are five forces that shape competition in an industry. These include; threat of new entrants, threat of substitutes, rivalry within the industry, bargaining power of buyers and bargaining power of suppliers. These are the factors that constitute the industry environment and are used in formulation of a firm's strategies in a particular industry. The operating environment comprises of factors in the competitive situation that affect a firm's success in acquiring needed resources or in profitably marketing its goods and services. The main factors considered here are: the firm's competitive position, the composition of its customers, its reputation among suppliers & creditors and its ability to attract and retain capable employees.

Environment-serving organizations, such as business firms, being 'open systems' are in constant two-way interaction with their environment. They take in an assortment of resources from the environment, add value to them, and deliver them back to the environment in the form of goods and services. Continued organizational survival therefore depends on its ability to secure rewards from the environment, which replenishes the resources consumed in the conversion process. To ensure success and survival, firms need to develop capabilities to manage threats and exploit emerging opportunities. This calls for a proactive approach to business that requires the formulation

of strategies that constantly match capabilities to environmental requirements, (Pearce and Robinson, 1997).

The success of every organization is therefore determined by its responsiveness to the environment. The environment can be relatively stable or highly turbulent. As each level of turbulence has different characteristics and requires a different strategy to match, organizations need to constantly scan their environment both internal & external and respond accordingly so as to retain competitive advantage (Porter, 1985). The strategy in turn has to be matched with appropriate organizational capability for survival, growth and development (Ansoff and McDonnell, 1990). Organizations being environment dependent have to constantly adapt their activities and internal configurations to reflect any new external realities and failure to do this may put the future success of an organization in jeopardy (Aosa, 1998).

1.1.1 Competitive Strategies.

A company's competitive strategy consists of the business approaches and initiatives it undertakes to attract customers and fulfill their expectations, to withstand competitive pressures and to strengthen its market position. Competitive strategies provide a framework for the firm to respond to the various changes within its operating environment.

Porter (1998), states that, competitive strategy is the search for a favorable competitive position in an industry, the fundamental arena in which competition occurs. It aims at establishing a profitable and sustainable position against the forces that determine industry competition. He further argues that, competitive strategies not only respond to the environment but also attempts to shape that environment in firms' favor in order to gain competitive advantage.

Johnson and Scholes (2002), defines competitive strategy as, 'the basis on which a business unit might achieve competitive advantage in its market'. Organizations achieve competitive advantage by providing their customers with what they want, or need, better or more efficiently than competitors, and in ways, which their competitors find difficult to imitate. Porter (1998) further argues that, competitive advantage grows fundamentally out of the value a firm is able to create for its buyers that exceed the firm's cost of

creating it. Value is what the buyers are willing to pay for and superior value stems from offering lower prices than competitors for equivalent benefits or providing unique benefits that more than offset a higher price.

The core of a company's competitive strategy consists of its internal and external initiatives to deliver superior value to its customers. It includes offensive and defensive moves to counter the maneuvering of rivals, actions to shift resources around to improve the firm's long term competitive capabilities and market position and tactical efforts to respond to whatever market conditions prevailing at the moment. The competitive aim is therefore to do a significantly better job of providing what buyers are looking for; thereby enabling the companies earn a competitive advantage and out compete rivals in the market place.

1.1.2 Public and Private Primary Schools in Kenya.

Primary education is essentially the first phase of the Kenyan education system. Its main purpose is to prepare children to participate in the social, political and economic wellbeing of the nation. The curriculum is thus designed in such a way that it is functional and practical to cater for those children who end their education at the primary level and also for those who wish to continue with secondary education.

Most of the primary schools in the country are in the public sector with most of their operational expenses taken care by the government. Kenya has witnessed remarkable expansion in primary education both in terms of number of schools established and in enrolment rates especially with the introduction of free primary education in 2003. The Kamunge (1988) report recommended that the government allow individuals to establish primary schools to supplement the government supported ones. This was because the educational expenditures were becoming burdensome to the government. Even with the introduction of cost sharing initiatives, the government was still unable to fill the gap in education and enrollment rates.

As a result of the recommendations, currently, there are two types of schools; public (receive funding from the public budget) and private or non-public (that do not receive any public funding). This is except in as far as they benefit directly from treasury

subventions for curriculum development, teacher training, examinations and inspection (Deolalikar, 1990).

1.2 The Research Problem

Ring and Perry (1985) observes that whereas private organizations have entrepreneurial roots, their public counterparts are created by some controlling authority usually composed of multiple and competing interests and for which they are also dependent on for their resources. For primary schools to achieve their objectives, Farrant (1997) observes that, various resources should be made available. These includes; classroom resources such as chalkboards, textbooks and workbooks; equipments like furniture, storage cupboards and physical education equipments. The school should also be located in an area which is easily accessible or the means of accessibility be provided. It should have spacious land for buildings and sport fields, have a good water supply and be fenced to keep away-unwanted visitors. It is on the basis of such factors and other attributes that the research was based on to compare the competitive strategies of public and private primary schools in the said location.

The public sector environment in Kenya today is undergoing changes that make the distinctiveness between public and private sector less obvious. The demands on public sector organizations for greater efficiency in utilization of resources and provision of goods and services is growing from the general public and the international donor agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The demands of globalization have also resulted in public sector organizations behaving like private sector firms. Similarities in the operating environments of public and private organizations suggest that strategic management practices that have enabled more efficiency and effectiveness of private sector firms can also be harnessed for the benefit of public organizations. There was therefore a need to investigate the competitiveness of each category of schools for the betterment of both.

Most of the postgraduate studies undertaken had concentrated on tertiary education at the expense of primary education. Mutua (2004) focused on responses to changing environment by the University of Nairobi. The researcher found out that, the university was facing a lot of challenges, the greatest of all being, competition from other

institutions and it had responded in various ways. Kitoto (2005) looked at, how competitive strategies adopted by Kenyan universities have helped these institutions achieve competitive advantage.

Primary education forms the basis for higher education. It would be detrimental to ignore this important sub sector as the government and the society spends so much of its scarce resources on primary schools, e.g. providing free primary education. Thus Oluoch (2001) in her, "In Search Of Excellence" concluded that, it was the integration of factors that creates an enabling environment of excellence.

It was therefore interesting to find out, if what various researchers of competitive strategies had found as attributes of competitiveness held true even for such organizations as primary schools.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

- a) To determine whether the competitive strategies used by public primary schools differed from those of private primary schools.
- b) To establish factors that influenced choice of competitive strategies by a school.

1.4 Importance of the Study

Given the kind of investment made in education and the concern of management over effective utilization of resources, if the study could identify attributes of better performance, then it would be worthwhile. The findings of this study are expected to be beneficial to:

- The Kenyan primary schools by determining the effectiveness of the competitive strategies they are currently employing to compete. For school heads, by being competitive, it is not only a pride to them but they also stand better chances of promotion. For school entrepreneurs, they will be able to attract more pupils to their schools hence increase their profits.
- The government especially the ministry of education will find the information valuable in formulating policies and coordinating primary education.
- Future scholars and researchers as they may use the results as a source of reference and areas to be identified for further study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept of Strategy

Various perceptions of strategy exist, but writers have not come up with an agreed, all-inclusive definition of strategy. Indeed, one of the pioneers of business strategy (Ansoff, 1987) warned that, strategy is an elusive and somewhat abstract concept that is still developing. Strategy authors therefore argue that strategy is a multidimensional & situational concept that embraces all the critical activities of the firm, providing it with a sense of unity, direction and purpose, as well as facilitating the necessary changes induced by its environment (Oluoch, 2001).

Organizational strategy relates to a 'grand design' something of significance to the whole pattern of an organization's activities. Strategies in their broadest sense provide a guide or sense of direction to the organization. According to Chandler (1962), strategy is the establishment of the long-term goals and objectives of an organization, including the taking of action and allocation of resources for achieving these goals. He views the emergence of strategy in civilian organizational life to have resulted from an awareness of opportunities and needs-created by changing population, income and technology- to employ existing and expanding resources more profitably.

Andrew (1971), defined strategy as, a pattern of objectives, purposes or goals and the major policies and plans for achieving these goals stated in such a way as to define what business the company is in or is to be in and the kind of company it is or is to be. Strategy therefore gives an indication of the company and its business both in the present and in the future. Porter (1980), states that, strategy is basically about competition and the means by which an organization tries to gain a competitive edge. Ansoff and McDonnell (1990) defined strategy as, a set of decision-making rules for guidance of organizational behavior. Such rules are; the yardsticks by which present and future performance of the firm is measured (i.e. goals and objectives); rules for developing the firm relationship with its external environment (i.e. business strategy); then rules for establishing the

internal relations and processes within an organization (organizational concept), and the rules by which a firm conducts its day to day business (operating policies).

The views of Johnson and Scholes (2002) seem to have captured the important facets about strategy. They opine that strategy is concerned with long-term direction of an organization and that it involves the matching of resources and activities of an organization to the environment in which it operates. They identified three levels of strategy i.e. corporate, business and functional level strategies. Corporate strategies are concerned with, the overall purpose and scope of the organization to meet the expectations of the owners or major shareholders and add value to the different parts of the organization. Business level strategy is about how to compete successfully in a particular market. Operational level strategies are concerned with how the components parts of an organization in terms of resources, processes, people and skills effectively deliver corporate and business strategic direction.

The essence of formulating strategy then is to relate a firm to its environment (Porter 1998). Hamel and Prahalad (1994) further argued that, the essence of strategy lies in creating tomorrow's competitive advantages faster than competitors mimic the ones you possess today. Thus Ansoff and McDonnell (1990) stated that, strategy is a powerful tool, which offers significant help for coping with turbulences confronted by firms today. As an organization's environment changes, it is necessary that the firm continuously adapt its activities and internal configurations to reflect the new external situation. Failure to do this endangers the future success of the organization (Aosa, 1998). Thus when there are changes in the environment, the organization's capabilities and strategies would have to be changed in order to ensure a continued strategic fit.

A well-formulated strategy thus enables an organization marshal and allocates its resources in a unique way on the basis of its relative internal competences and limitations, expected changes in the environment and contingent actions of competitors. Strategy can therefore be seen either as building of defenses against competitive forces or as finding of positions in the industry where competitive forces are weakest.

2.2 Competition and its Challenges

A company rarely stands alone in its effort to serve its target market. It is surrounded by a host of companies (competitors). Customers, suppliers, potential entrants and substitute products are all competitors that may be more or less prominent or active depending on the industry (Kotler, 2003). Firms are in competition with each other when they try to sell identical products and or services to the same group of customers or try to employ factors from the same group of suppliers.

Industry and competitive analysis seeks to analyze the industry's competitive process to discover the main sources of competitive pressures and how strong each force is. Porter (1980) argues that, businesses must respond to five basic competitive forces that drive industry competition. These five forces are: threat of new entrants, bargaining power of buyers, bargaining power of suppliers, substitute products and rivalry within the industry.

New entrants to an industry bring new capacity, the desire to gain market share and often-substantial resources. The seriousness of the threat to entry depends on the barriers present and on the reaction from the existing competitors that the entrant can expect. If the barriers to entry are high and new comers can expect sharp reactions from the entrenched competitors, then he will not pose a serious threat to entry. Bargaining power of buyers and suppliers: Customers can force down prices, demand higher quality or more services and play competitors off against each other. Suppliers on the other hand can exert bargaining power on participants in an industry by raising prices or reducing the quality of purchased goods and services. The worst scenario is where there are powerful buyers and suppliers as they squeeze out profitability in an industry for a firm to be unable to recover cost increase in its own prices (Porter, 1980).

By placing a ceiling on prices it can charge, substitute products or services limit the profit potential of an industry. Unless it can upgrade the quality of products and services or differentiate them via marketing, the industry will suffer in earnings and possibly growth. The more attractive the price performance trade-off offered by substitute products, the firmer the lid placed on the industry's profit potential. Rivalry among existing

competitors takes the familiar form of jockeying for positions using tactics like price competition, product introduction, advertising slugs and increased customer services or warranties all in an effort to gain market share (Porter, 1980).

Porter (1998) discusses government as a force in industry competition. He explains that, government at all levels must be recognized as potentially influencing many if not all aspects of industry structure both directly and indirectly. In many industries, government is a buyer and or a supplier and can influence industry competition by the policies it adopts. It can also affect the position of an industry with substitutes through regulations, subsidies or other means.

Porter's model exposes what competition is like in a given market in terms of the strengths of each force, the nature of competitive pressure comprising each force and the overall structure of the industry. The stronger the collective impact of the forces, the lower the combined profitability of participating firms (Porter, 1998). Knowledge of these underlying sources of competitive pressures highlights the critical strength and weaknesses of the company, animates its positioning in the industry, clarifies areas where strategic change may yield the greatest payoff and highlights the areas where industry trends promise to hold the greatest significance as either opportunities or threats.

The core of success or failure of businesses rests in the level of competition. It is competition that defines the appropriateness of a firm's activities that can contribute to its performance such as a cohesive culture or good implementation. Increased competition threatens the attractiveness of an industry by reducing the profit potential of players. It exerts pressure on firms to be proactive and formulate successful strategies to changes in the competitive environment all in an effort to gain competitive advantage. According to Porter (1985), the key to a firm's success is, to formulate competitive strategies so as to establish a position, which is less vulnerable to attacks from competitors and to erosion from buyers, suppliers and substitute goods.

2.3 Competitive Strategies

In examining the concept of competitive strategy, different authors have approached the concept from different angles. However, studies in this area have been largely the work of Michael Porter who defines competitive strategy as the art of relating a company to the economic environment within which it exists (Bennet, 1990). Competitive strategies therefore provide a framework for the firm to respond to the various changes within its operating environment.

Porter (1980) explains that every firm competing in an industry has a competitive strategy whether explicit (i.e. developed through formal planning process) or implicit (i.e. has evolved through the various functional planning activities of the firm). The goal of competitive strategy is therefore to find a position in the industry where the company can best defend itself against competitive forces or use them in its favor. It focuses on improving the competitive position of a company's products or services within the specific market segment that the company or its business serves (Wheelen and Hunger, 1995).

Firms also develop competitive strategies to enable them develop strategic initiatives and maintain a competitive edge in the market (Grant, 1998). Ansoff and McDonnell (1990) thus defined competitive strategies as the distinctive approaches that a firm uses or intends to use to succeed in the market. Companies pursue competitive strategies to gain a competitive advantage that allows them to outperform rivals and achieve above average profitability. Developing a competitive strategy is essentially developing a broad formula of how the business is going to compete, what its goals should be and what policies are needed to achieve these goals.

Competitive strategies should lead to competitive dominance which, according to Tang and Roy (1995) is about sustained leadership and levels of undisputed excellence. They contend that competitive dominance is an altitude that begins with the realization that leadership position is no guarantee for long-term success, especially in the global market place. It begins with a strong conviction that leadership is temporary and a belief that smart and competent competitors are fully prepared to dislodge the leader or displace the

incumbent. Competitive dominance therefore seeks to position the firm for future opportunities through quality initiatives and offering that which delights customers. It seeks to align, integrate and synchronize strategy and quality to achieve future leadership and be able to sustain it.

The core of a company's competitive strategy consists of its internal initiatives to deliver superior value to customers. But it also includes offensive and defensive moves to counter the maneuvering of rivals, actions to shift resources around to improve the firm's long-term competitive capabilities and market position and tactical efforts to respond to whatever market conditions prevailing at the moment (Thompson and Strickland, 2003).

At the broadest context, formulation of competitive strategies involves considering four factors that determine the limits of what a company can successfully accomplish. These are the firm's strengths and weaknesses, industry opportunities and threats, personal values of implementers and broader societal expectations (Murage, 2001). Using this analysis, Porter (1980), identified three generic strategies that can be viable in the long term. A firm can develop a strategy of overall cost leadership, differentiation strategy, and focus strategy.

Under overall cost leadership strategy, the firm strives to have the lowest cost in the industry and offers its products and services at the lowest prices. Porter (1998) states that, the characteristics of cost strategy include; low level of differentiation, aim for average customers, use of knowledge gained from past experience and the addition of new products only after the market demands them. Thomson and Strickland (2003) states that, this strategy calls for being the low cost producer in an industry for a given level of quality.

Firms acquire cost advantages by improving process efficiencies, accessing low cost materials, making optimal outsourcing, vertical integration decisions or avoiding some costs altogether. Firms sell their products at average industry prices to earn a profit that is higher than that of its rivals or below the average industry prices to gain market share. As industries and prices decline, firms that can produce more cheaply will remain profitable for a longer period of time (<http://www.quickmba.com/strategy/generic.shtml>, 2002).

Cost leadership strategy has advantages. Firms that succeed in cost leadership strategy usually have adequate capital, skills experience and efficient distribution channels. The cost advantages protect a firm from new entrants hence reducing competition. However the risk of cost leadership is that, competitors may leapfrog the technology and production capabilities hence eliminating the competitive advantages acquired from cost reduction.

Differentiation strategy is one in which a firm offers products or services with unique features that customers value (Ndubai, 2003). According to Coulter (2002), the key characteristic of differentiation strategy is perceived quality whether real or not. This may be through superior product design, technology, customer services or other dimensions. The firm hopes to cover extra cost by the premium price commanded by the product or service uniqueness. The advantage of differentiation strategy is that the perceived quality insulates a company from threats of any of the five forces that determine the state of competition in an industry. Firms using this strategy have some internal strength including high research and development capabilities, strong sales team and corporate reputation for quality and innovation.

Focus strategy is about the identification of a particular customer segment or geographical market and coming up with products suitable for that segment. It is built around serving a particular target very well and once the segment is identified, then the firm may pursue either cost or differentiation strategy (Porter, 1980). Cost focus is a low competitive strategy that focuses on a particular buyer group or a geographical market and attempts to serve only this niche. Differentiation focus concentrates on a particular buyer group, product line segment while seeking differentiation in its target market. It seeks to offer segment members something they perceive as better. According to Porter (1985), the target market segment must either have buyers with unusual needs or else the production and delivery system that best serve the market segment must differ from that of other industry segments. Focusing is attractive where the segment has good growth potential and the focusing firm has the capabilities and resources to serve the targeted niche effectively.

In order to address specific issues related to this study, it was important to identify key aspects that were used to identify the competitive strategies adopted by either private or public primary schools. These were addressed based on the extent to which members of primary schools were employing specific strategies to achieve the goal of competitive strategy, which are to gain competitive advantage, cultivate a clientele of loyal customers and outperforming rivals ethically and honorably.

Pricing and cost management strategies may include: charging lower fees or same as competitors, providing free primary education, offering bursaries. Schools may also focus on maintaining their overhead costs at the same level as competitors through improvisation of cheap inputs, producing their own inputs instead of buying them etc. Staffing strategies include; acquisition of qualified teachers with Teachers Service Commission accreditations, support staff, instructing them on customer service and motivating them through awards, commissions, recognition and other incentives. Marketing strategies may include; use of brand names such as school motto, painting of building with school colors, uniforms be printed with school logos etc; giving parents discounts, credit facilities; advertisements through the media. The school should be strategically located e.g. in areas easily accessible to children or the means of accessibility be provided through school transport.

Customer care and service relates to the manner in which the service or product is conveyed to the customer (pupils and parents). Good customer care and service strategies involve choosing to strategically serve only a specific type of customer or serving all types of customers. Market research systems for receiving customer feedback should also be put in place for the firm to be able to improve its services and serve its customers better. In schools, pupils are both the product to be and at the same time the customers together with their parents. The education system is thus complex since one has to deal with employees and pupils as the customers and at the same time as assets. Schools should hence ensure that they have the necessary resources so that they can offer their customers high quality services and produce high quality products.

2.4 Competitive Strategies and Organization Performance.

Various studies have been conducted to determine the competitive strategies adopted by firms in different sectors of the economy. Most of these studies such as: Kandie (2001) on telecommunication; Nyokabi (2001) on oil industry; Obando (2005) on the sugar industry pointed out that organizations had resulted to formulating competitive strategies due to the challenges posed by the environment. They argued that as a result of liberalization of the economy, there has been stiff competition. Developing a competitive strategy is essentially developing a broad formula of how the business is going to compete, what its goals should be and what policies are needed to achieve these goals.

Educational aims are multifarious. Education is supposed to mould a whole individual to contribute to a profitable society. However, the success or failure of our current institutions of learning is gauged on how well they perform in national exams. Competitive strategies are presumed to lead to better performance of an organization. The main aim of adopting competitive strategies in schools should therefore be to enable them achieve high performance in examinations. Various attributes contribute to good performance. Oluoch (2001) notes some of these as: a pleasant learning environment, adequate resources, good management and leadership, regular communication, continuous training, and support from critical stakeholders among others. She contends that, as indicated by Gephart (1995), organizations that exhibit high performance use all their resources – human, material, and technology to achieve and sustain competitive advantage, schools tend to exhibit the same tendencies.

Peters and Waterman (1982) notes that, success today is based on intangibles like customer loyalty, customer service, market image and many others. By being competitive, schools are likely to use their names to attract a certain caliber of pupils thus ensuring success. It is therefore expected that competitive strategies will lead to higher enrolment rates in such schools. This is not only a pride to head teachers and teachers who stand a better chance of promotion but also to school entrepreneurs who will reap higher profits as a result of more pupils joining their schools.

High performance work places are cool places to work. High performing organizations do not have problems of attracting dedicated employees as they prefer to be associated with excellence. By being competitive, schools stand a better chance of acquiring needed labor force easily. These institutions should not have labor shortages- there is no labor shortage if you are a great place to work. Competitive institutions should also not have problems of acquiring other needed resources from suppliers as they have confidence in them. By adopting competitive strategies, it is expected that, if they are properly implemented, they will lead to better performance of organizations by delivering superior value to customers hence maintain a competitive edge in the market.

2.5 Factors Influencing Choice of Competitive Strategies.

Strategy choices are concerned with decisions about an organization's future and the way in which it needs to respond to many pressures and influences from the environment. The consideration of future strategies must therefore be mindful of the realities of translating strategy into action.

Hofer and Schendel (1978), states that, for an organization to be both effective and efficient, there will be four components to any of its strategy. They name, scope i.e. the extent of the organization's present and planned interactions with its environment; resource deployment; competitive advantage and synergy i.e. the joint effect between an organization's operations or the degree to which various resource deployment and interaction of the organization with its environment reinforces or negates one another. Any decision that affect the four components of strategy would produce a different strategy and hence a different effort by an organization. Before a strategic choice is made, many alternatives are examined and various factors come into play to guide which alternative should be adopted.

Availability of resources: Organization's past and present resources and skills deployment will affect how it achieves its goals and objectives. The availability of resources especially financial allows the organizations, the choice of certain strategies. Financial strategies need to take care of risks and returns. Gantt (1991) contends that value-maximizing techniques must guide strategy making sure that only projects with positive Net Present Value (NPV) are chosen. Lack of money constrains the project

range, possibilities of investment and hire of qualified staff. The human resource base of an organization may enable it select various strategies. A workforce with young, educated managers is likely to increase the scope of an organization's choices through innovation. They easily train and are likely to work better in unstructured change prone environment. The skills an organization has could therefore enable it deliver a product or service in such a way that no other organization can replicate.

Management: The age, education, training and experience of management is indicative of the ability and innovation the management will bring to bear on strategic decisions that they will be faced with in their organizations. Young and educated management are more receptive to change and use current technology more readily. In situations where an organization is international, management is likely to be interracial. This presents the organization with diverse and rich cultural experience from which it would draw solutions to its problems. Attitude towards risk greatly influences strategic choice. Where attitudes favor risk, the range of strategic choice expands and high-risk strategies are desirable. However, where management is risk averse, the range of strategic choices is limited.

Leadership: The role of leadership in strategic decision-making is critical as leaders set the tone, culture and widens the horizon of the organization. Organizations need strategic leaders to help it overcome inhibitions on risk taking and resource allocation. Leadership of an organization may emphasize different aspects of the strategy at different times. At times, tight controls, cross-functional coordination or marketing may be required. As organizations mature and face transition, leadership must be able read transition and recognize the new skills required.

Power: Johnson and Scholes (2002), argue that, managers are usually in powerful positions within organizations to influence the expectations of other stakeholders. They have access to information and channels of influence that are not available to other stakeholders. Given that strategy development can be an intensely political process, managers often find real difficulties in establishing and maintaining their position of integrity since there is a potential conflict for managers between what strategies are best for their careers and what strategies are in the long term interest of their organizations.

Pearce and Robinson (1997) argued that, the CEO is the catalyst in strategic management, and he is most accountable for strategies success.

Corporate governance: The main issue addressed here is, who should the organization primarily serve and how will the managers be held responsible for this. Johnson and Scholes (2002) argue that, the expectations of different stakeholders affect purpose and what will be seen as acceptable in terms of strategies advocated for by management and which view prevails will depend on which group has the greatest power. The understanding of this helps in recognizing why organizations follow the strategy the do.

Influence by current strategy: Strategies are often the architects of past strategies and most executives are logically comfortable with a choice that parallels or involves incremental alterations to the current strategy.

Competitive reaction: In weighing strategic choices, top management incorporates perceptions of likely competitor reaction to those choices chosen. If it chooses an aggressive strategy directly challenging a key competitor, that competitor can be expected to mount an aggressive counter strategy. Roberts (1998), argues that, once a client is convinced of the suitability of attacking a competitor's weakness, the natural tendency is to say, "lets instead, identify the competitor's driving force, business concepts and areas of excellence and then try to outperform our competitor".

Degree of the firm's external dependence: If a firm is highly dependent on one or more environmental elements, then its strategic alternatives must accommodate that dependence. The greater a firm's external dependence, the lower is its range and flexibility in strategic choices.

Organization structure: Organization structure suggests what, whom, when and where decisions are made. The corporate center is usually in charge of what business the organization is in (what it does). The organization may as well have strategic business unit and functional area strategy. When a hierarchy of functional level exists, coordination and integration of activities within a single activity would be the major concern of the corporate center. Then, at no one time should the strategist contradict the organization structure.

Culture: These are signs, symbols and colors deliberately used by organizations to aid them in strategic decisions. Organizational culture has been used by various organizations to communicate uniqueness and promote their products and services. The cultures of the communities in which organizations operate also aid or constrain strategic choices available to them, (Gekonge, 2000).

Ethics: Strategic choice has an ethical aspect. An organization's activities will be examined against the standards or expectations of the society it operates in. From the available strategies, some may seem attractive to the executive but when the public good is considered, they may be discarded. Many organizations have crafted strategies that not only meet the sensitivity of the community but also demonstrate that they care about the society.

The population of interest in this study consisted of all the public and private primary schools in the location. Due to the few number of schools expected in a location, a census study was conducted. Census method is justified as this approach to research ensures that data is collected from all the study units in the population thereby enhancing confidence in the findings and conclusions arrived at. It is also most appropriate whenever the population of interest is small and the population units markedly different.

A list of all the primary schools was obtained from the location education office (appendix 2). The location was selected for study because of its all-inclusive nature such as high and low agro-ecological potential, rural and urban integration, and ease of accessibility by the researcher due to its gentle terrain. These aspects made the schools in the location to be an appropriate representation of the schools in the country.

3.3 Data Collection Method

This study used primary data. Primary information was collected using a questionnaire containing both structured and unstructured questions. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher using the drop and pick list method. Responses were sought from the head teachers of the primary schools in the location.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research adopted a descriptive census survey design. The aim was to determine whether the competitive strategies used by public primary schools differed from those of private primary schools and establish factors that influenced the choice of competitive strategies by a school, which fitted the descriptive framework. Comparisons were important in this study; hence a survey design was suitable because it enabled collection of data from broad survey units.

3.2 The Population

The population of interest in this study consisted of all the public and private primary schools in the location. Due to the few number of schools expected in a location, a census study was conducted. Census method is justified as this approach to research ensures that data is collected from all the study units in the population thereby enhancing confidence in the findings and conclusions arrived at. It is also most appropriate whenever the population of interest is small and the population units markedly different.

A list of all the primary schools was obtained from the location education office (appendix 3). The location was selected for study because of its all-inclusive nature such as high and low agro-ecological potential, rural and urban integration, and ease of accessibility by the researcher due to its gentle terrain. These aspects made the schools in the location to be an appropriate representation of the schools in the country.

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3.4 Data Analysis

FOUR. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Data in this study was analyzed using descriptive statistics. These included proportions/percentages, mean scores and chi square tests. Proportions/percentages were used to analyze the demographic aspects of the schools while mean scores were used to find out the extent to which certain strategies were relied upon. The chi square test was performed to determine whether the strategies used and factors influencing the choice of competitive strategies by public primary school significantly differed from those adopted by private primary schools. The results of the findings were presented in tabular form by use of tables. These descriptive analytical techniques have been used in related studies in the past including Chepkwony (2001) and Muchemi (2005).

A total of nineteen questionnaires were distributed to the respondents: 14 to public primary schools and 5 to private primary schools. 12 public primary schools and 4 private primary schools responded by completing and returning the questionnaires. This gave a response rate of 86 % and 80 % respectively.

4.2 School Profile

Section A of the questionnaire sought to establish the name and type of the school, year started, location, title and gender of the respondent, the number of teachers, pupils and support staff.

Table 4.1 Years of Operation.

No. of years	Public		Private	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1-10	1	8 %	4	100 %
11-20	4	34 %	0	0
21-30	1	8 %	0	0
31-40	3	25 %	0	0
Over 40 years	3	25 %	0	0
Total	12	100 %	4	100 %

Source: Research Data

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the analysis and interpretation of the data pertaining to the objectives of the study which were to determine whether the competitive strategies used by the public primary schools differed from those adopted by their private counterparts and establish factors that influence choice of competitive strategies by a school.

The questionnaire was designed in three parts. The first section gathered data on demographic aspects of the schools. Section B sought to establish the competitive strategies adopted by schools to gain a competitive edge in the market. The last section looked at the factors that influenced the choice of competitive strategies by a school.

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31-40	3	25 %	0	0
Over 40 years	3	25 %	0	0
Total	12	100 %	4	100 %

Source: Research Data

Table 4.1 indicates that private education is a recent phenomenon in the location as all the private primary schools have been in operation for a period of between 1 and 10 years. Most public primary schools have been in operation for more than 10 years.

Table 4.2 Type of the School

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Public	12	75 %
Private	4	25 %
Total	16	100 %

Source: Research Data

Table 4.2 shows that 75 % of the respondents were public primary schools while 25 % were from the private sector. By far public primary schools outnumber private primary schools, as private education is a recent phenomenon dating back to 1988 following the recommendations of the Kamunge report. This also concurs with the findings of table 4.1 above

Table 4.3 Location of the School

Location	Public		Private	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Rural	10	83 %	1	25 %
Urban	2	17 %	3	75 %
Total	12	100 %	4	100 %

Source: Research Data

As indicated in Table 4.3, most of the public primary schools are located in the rural areas represented by 83 %. By contrast, 75 % of the private primary schools are in the urban centers. Public primary schools are established to serve particular locations whereas private primary schools target the working class in urban areas.

Table 4.4 Title of the Respondent

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
Head teacher	8	50 %
Deputy head teacher	6	38 %
Senior teacher	2	12 %
Total	16	100 %

Source: Research Data

Table 4.4 shows that 50 % of the respondents were head teachers, 38 % deputy head teachers and 12 % senior teachers. The head teacher or his/her deputy is the manager or the strategist of most operations in primary schools.

Table 4.5 Gender of the Respondent

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	12	75 %
Female	4	25 %
Total	16	100 %

Source: Research Data

Table 4.5 indicates that most of the respondents 75% were male while the female were 25 %. This shows that there are more male respondents in higher positions running primary schools.

Table 4.6 Numbers of Teachers

Teachers	Frequency	Percentage
6	1	6 %
8	5	31 %
9	4	25 %
10 and above	6	38 %
Total	16	100 %

Source: Research Data

Table 4.6 indicates that most schools (nine) had 8 or 9 teachers. This corresponds with the number of classrooms in a primary school. Those with ten teachers and above had double classes. One school had 6 teachers as it was up to class six. The table shows that there is no understaffing in the location.

Table 4.7 Numbers of Pupils

Number	Public	Percentage	Private	Percentage
Boys	1671	50 %	274	49 %
Girls	1681	50 %	281	51 %
Total	3352	100 %	555	100 %

Source: Research Data

Table 4.7 indicates that the ratio of boys to girls is roughly the same in both type of schools. There is therefore gender parity in provision of primary education in the location.

Table 4.8 Number of Support Staff

Number	Frequency	Percentage
2	8	50 %
3	2	13 %
4 and above	6	37 %
Total	16	100 %

Source: Research Data

Table 4.8 indicates that most schools 50 % had two support staff. These were the cook and the watchman. Schools that provided boarding facilities, transport services and or taught technical subjects had additional support staff such as the driver, matron, secretary etc.

4.3 Adoption of Competitive Strategies by Schools

Table 4.9a Extent of Use of Low Cost as a Competitive Strategy

Strategy	Public		Private	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Charge lower (maintenance) fees	1.4167	.79296	3.0000	.00000
Free primary education	5.0000	.00000	1.0000	.00000
Improvisation of required inputs	3.8333	.93744	3.7500	.50000
Use of school motto	4.2500	.86603	4.7500	.50000
School rules (high discipline)	4.5833	.51493	4.0000	.81650
Central location	3.5833	.90034	3.5000	.57735

Source: Research Data

Table 4.10a Extent of Use of Differentiation as a Competitive Strategy

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent of use of low cost as a competitive strategy and the results are as in Table 4.9a. From Table 4.9a, public primary schools capitalized on free primary education to a very great extent (mean = 5), and to a great extent (Mean = 4), use school rules and school motto. For private primary schools, they used to a great extent, school rules and school motto to remain competitive, but to a minimum extent, the free primary education, which actually does not benefit them in any way. This is indeed true since with free primary education, public schools charge little or no fee (maintenance costs) as the government caters for most of their operating expenditure. Private schools bear all their cost and as result have to charge fees commensurate to their financial requirements. Both type of institutions had to improvise whenever necessary hence a moderate mean score. The use of school motto coupled with high discipline ranked highly with a mean of four (4) for both institutions.

Table 4.9b Test Statistics for the Extent of Use of Low Cost as a Competitive Strategy

Test Statistics	Public Schools	Private Schools
Chi-Square (a)	.000	.000
df	5	5
Asymp. Sig.	1.000	1.000

Source: Research Data

From Table 4.9b, all the 6 variables i.e. indicated as “a” (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected variable frequency is 1.0. Thus since the variations (Chi-Square) between the private and public primary schools is equal to zero, it clearly show that both categories used low cost as a competitive strategy to a varying extent, but not to a very great extent.

Source: Research Data

From table 4.10b, all the 5 variables i.e. indicated as “a” (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected variable frequency is 1.0. Thus since the variations (Chi-Square) between the private and public primary schools is equal to zero, it clearly show that both categories used differentiation as a competitive strategy to a varying extent, but not to a very great extent.

Table 4.10a Extent of Use of Differentiation as a Competitive Strategy

Strategy	Public		Private	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Class size	3.1667	.93744	3.5000	1.00000
Teach technical subject e.g. computer	1.4167	.79296	3.0000	2.30940
Advertisement through the media	1.0833	.28868	2.0000	1.15470
Provide school transport	1.0000	.00000	2.2500	1.89297
Providing meals to pupils	3.0000	1.47710	5.0000	.00000

Source: Research Data

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent of use of differentiation as a competitive strategy and the results are in Table 4.10a. From the results in Table 4.10a, public primary schools used class size and provision of meals to pupils to a moderate extent (mean=3), and to minimal extent (mean= 1), teaching technical subject e.g. computer, advertisement through the media and providing transport services. For private primary schools, they used provision of meals to pupils to a very great extent (mean=5), class size and teaching technical subjects like computer to a moderate extent (mean = 3); and lastly advertisement through the media and providing school transport to little extent (mean = 2). In order to remain competitive, private schools had to provide over and above what their public counterparts are offering. They had to look for features highly valued by their customers.

Table 4.10b Test Statistics for the Extent of Use of Differentiation as a Competitive Strategy

Test Statistics	Public Schools	Private Schools
Chi-Square (a)	.000	.000
df	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	1.000	1.000

Source: Research Data

From table 4.10b, all the 5 variables i.e. indicated as "a" (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected variable frequency is 1.0. Thus since the variations (Chi-Square) between the private and public primary schools is equal to zero, it clearly show that both categories used differentiation as a competitive strategy to a varying extent, but not to a very great extent.

Table 4.11a Extent of Use of Focused Low Cost / Differentiation as a Competitive Strategy

Strategy	Public School		Private School	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Allow parents to pay on credit	1.3333	.49237	2.5000	.57735
Well stocked library	2.9167	.66856	1.5000	.57735
Boarding Facilities	1.7500	1.28806	2.5000	1.00000
Good performance in examinations	3.7500	.75378	4.5000	.57735
Coaching (drilling)	3.2500	1.05529	3.7500	.50000

Source: Research Data

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent of use of focused low cost / differentiation as a competitive strategy, and the results are as in Table 4.11a. From Table 4.11a, public schools used good performance in examinations and coaching (drilling) to a moderate extent (mean = 3), to little extent (mean = 2), well-stocked library, but to minimal extent (mean = 1) boarding facilities and allowing parents to pay on credit. Also from Table 4.11a, private primary schools used to a great extent (Mean = 4), good performance in examinations, to a moderate extent (Mean = 3) coaching (drilling) of pupils, to little extent (mean = 2): allowing parents to pay on credit and the boarding facilities. To a minimal extent: well-stocked library. This shows that private primary schools used focused low cost/differentiation strategy to higher extent than their public counterparts as they have higher mean scores. It should be noted that free primary education greatly boosted the mean score for the well-stocked library variable in public schools.

Table 4.11b Test Statistics for the Extent of Use of Focused Low Cost/ Differentiation as a Competitive Strategy

Test Statistics	Public schools	Private schools
Chi-Square (a, b)	.000	.600
df	4	3
Asymp. Sig.	1.000	.896

Source: Research Data

From Table 4.11b, all the 5 variables i.e. indicated as "a" (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected variable frequency is 1.0. This shows that there is some difference in the use of the variables that make focused low cost /

differentiation as a competitive strategy. Also from Table 4.11b, some 4 variables, indicated as “b” (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected variable frequency is 1.3. Thus both the public and private primary schools used the focused low cost / differentiation as a competitive strategy to some little extent and large extent. There are therefore some differences in the use of the strategy among the public and private primary schools (Chi-square = 0.6).

4.4 Factors Influencing Choice of Competitive Strategies by a School

There are many factors that can influence the choice of competitive strategies to be used by a school. The respondents from both public and private primary schools were asked to indicate the extent of influence [1 = no influence at all, 2 = little influence, 3 = moderate influence, 4 = great influence, 5 = very great influence], of the factors on the choice of competitive strategies used by their schools, and the results are in Table 4.12a.

Table 4.12a Factors Influencing Choice of Competitive Strategies by a School

Factors	Public		Private	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Availability of resources	3.8333	.71774	4.2500	.95743
Management perception	4.4167	.66856	4.5000	.57735
Attitude towards risk	3.0833	.99620	2.3333	.57735
Leadership	4.0000	1.12815	4.7500	.50000
Power	3.2500	.96531	4.3333	1.15470
Corporate governance	3.8333	.83485	4.0000	1.00000
Influence by current strategy	3.7500	.62158	2.6667	.57735
Organization structure	3.9167	.66856	5.0000	.00000
Competitive reaction	3.7500	.75378	4.3333	.57735
Degree of firm's external dependence	3.0833	1.08362	4.6667	.57735
Culture	3.2500	1.21543	3.0000	.00000
Ethics	3.7500	1.21543	3.7500	.95743

Source: Research Data

From Table 4.12a, for public primary schools, the factors that had a great influence on the choice of competitive strategies were: the management perception and leadership style, but with a moderate influence were factors ranging from organization structure, corporate governance, availability of resources, competitive reaction, ethics, influence by current strategy, culture, power, attitude towards risk, degree of firm's external dependence. For

private primary schools, the factor with a very great influence was organization structure; the factors with great influence were leadership, degree of firm's external dependence, management perception, power, competitive reaction, availability of resources, and corporate governance. Those with moderate influence were ethics and culture. Lastly those with little influence were: influence by current strategy and attitude towards risk. Thus, organization structure had a very great influence in strategy choice for private primary schools. The owner or proprietor of the school made most decisions. Factors that had great influence on the choice of competitive strategies by both types of schools were: availability of resources, management perception, leadership and organization structure. Altitude towards risk, and culture had least influence for both type of organization.

Table 4.12b Test Statistics for the Factors Influencing Choice of Competitive Strategies by a School

Test Statistics	Public schools	Private schools
Chi-Square (a, b)	2.000	.833
df	6	10
Asymp. Sig.	.920	1.000

Source: Research Data

From Table 4.12 b, some of the 7 factors discussed above indicated as “a” in the analysis (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected variables frequency is 1.7. Therefore for both public and private primary schools’ choice of competitive strategies, some seven factors have between little influence (mean $1.7 \leq 2$) and great influence (Mean $4 < 5$). Also from Table 4.12b, some 11 factors, in the analysis indicated as “b” (100.0%), have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected factor frequency is 1.1(no influence at all). Thus their influence ranges from no influence at all to great influence.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of the study was to compare the adoption of competitive strategies between public and private primary schools. It also sought to establish the factors that influence the choice of competitive strategy by a school.

5.1 Summary

On the school profile, it was found that private education was a recent phenomenon in the location as all the private schools had been in operation for a period of between 1 and 10 years. Most public schools had been in operation for more than 10 years. Most of the public schools are located in rural areas whereas the private schools are in the urban centers. Public schools are established to serve particular locations whereas private schools target the working class in urban areas.

Most respondents from both categories were head teachers and majority of the positions dominated by male employees. It was also found that most schools (nine) had 8 or 9 teachers, which was corresponding with the number of classrooms in a primary school. The ratio of boys to girls is roughly the same in both types of schools. There is therefore gender parity in provision of primary education in the location.

On the adoption of competitive strategies by schools, with respect to the extent of use of low cost as a competitive strategy, it was found that public primary schools capitalized on free primary education to a very great extent, and to a great extent school rules and motto. For private primary schools, they used to a great extent the school rules and school motto to remain competitive, but to a minimum extent the free primary education, which does not benefit them in any way. This is indeed true, since with free primary education, public schools charge little or no fee (maintenance costs) as the government caters for most of their operating expenditure. But the variations (Chi-Square) between the private and public primary schools were equal to zero, an indication that both categories used low cost as a competitive strategy to a varying extent, but not to a very great extent.

With respect to the extent of use of differentiation as a competitive strategy: public primary schools had used class size and provision of meals to pupils to a moderate extent and to minimal extent, teaching technical subjects e.g. computer, advertisement through the media and provision of school transport. For private schools, they had used the provision of meals to pupils to a very greater extent, class size and teaching technical subjects like computer to a moderate extent; and lastly advertisement through the media and providing school transport to little extent. In order to remain competitive, private schools had to provide over and above what their public counterparts were offering. Thus since the variations (Chi-Square) between the private and public primary schools is equal to zero, it clearly show that both categories used differentiation as a competitive strategy to a varying extent, but not to a very great extent.

With respect to the extent of use of *focused low cost / differentiation* as a competitive strategy, public schools used good performance in examinations and coaching (drilling) to a moderate extent, to little extent, well stocked library, but to minimal extent, boarding facilities and allowing parents to pay on credit. Private primary schools also used to a great extent good performance in examinations, to a moderate extent coaching (drilling) of student, to little extent allowing parents to pay on credit and the boarding Facilities. To a minimal extent well stocked library. This showed that private primary schools used focused low cost/differentiation strategy to higher extent than their public counterparts.

On the factors influencing choice of competitive strategies by a school, it was found that the factors that had a great influence on public schools' choice of competitive strategies were: the management perception and leadership style, but with a moderate influence were factors ranging from organization structure, corporate governance, availability of resources, competitive reaction, ethics, influence by current strategy, culture, power, attitude towards risk, to the degree of firm's external dependence. For private schools, the factor with a very great influence was organization structure; the factors with great influence were leadership, degree of firm's external dependence, management perception, power, competitive reaction, availability of resources, and corporate governance. Those with moderate influence were ethics and culture.

Lastly those with little influence were: influence by current strategy and attitude towards risk. Thus, organization structure had a very great influence in strategy choice for private schools. The owner or proprietor of the school made most decisions. Factors that had great influence on the choice of competitive strategies by both types of schools were: availability of resources, management perception, leadership and organization structure. Altitude towards risk and culture had least influence for both type of organization. Therefore for both public and private primary schools' choice of competitive strategies, some seven factors had between little influence and great influence. Thus their influence ranges from no influence at all to great influence.

5.2 Conclusions

From the study findings, the following conclusions were made; various factors that attracted pupils to certain schools and not others were found to be; free primary education, performance in examination, close proximity, good leadership, quality facilities and ample learning environment, popularity in extra curricula activities, feeding programme, transport services, boarding facilities, religious background or spiritual formation, considerable fees etc.

Secondly, to achieve overall low cost leadership, public primary schools had capitalized on free primary education, use of school rules and school motto. For private primary schools, they used to a great extent the school rules and motto to remain competitive, but to a minimal extent the free primary education, which does not benefit them in any way. In order to remain competitive, private schools provided over and above what their public counterparts are offering. Both the public and private primary schools used the focused low cost / differentiation as a competitive strategy to some little extent and large extent. There were therefore some differences in the use of the strategy among the public and private primary schools.

Lastly, the factors that had a great influence on public schools' choice of competitive strategies were the management perception and leadership style, but with a very great influence were factors ranging from leadership, degree of firm's external dependence, management perception, power, competitive reaction, availability of resources, and corporate governance.

5.3 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The following recommendations are worth making in regard to the primary schools both public and private: The public primary schools' management should emphasize organization structure, corporate governance, availability of resources, competitive reaction, ethics, influence of current strategy, culture, power, attitude towards risk, and degree of firm's external dependence in their strategic planning process in the wake of free primary education to protect the quality and standard of Kenyan primary education. The private primary schools' management should also emphasize ethics, culture and attitude towards risk in their current strategy planning process.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

1. Time and financial constraint were limiting factors in carrying out the research. The head teachers and deputy head teachers who were the main participants in the study were busy most of the time and kept turning down the appointments.
2. Most of the informants were reluctant to participate in the research and had to be convinced that it was only an academic exercise. Some schools thought the information would be used for other purposes and declined to participate in the study.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

The aim of the study was to compare the adoption of competitive strategies between public and private primary schools. It also sought to establish the factors that influenced the choice of competitive strategy by a school. The researcher recommends a study to be conducted to compare the adoption of competitive strategies between public and private institutions in higher education, for example between public and private secondary schools, middle level colleges or universities. Such studies will also document the factors that influence the choice of competitive strategy by institutions.

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Thank you very much

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear _____

I am a student pursuing a postgraduate degree at the School of Business, University of Nairobi. The title of my study is **“COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF EVURORI LOCATION IN MBEERE DISTRICT”**. You are selected to participate in this study as a categorical respondent in your school’s population because of your role in school administration activities.

The questionnaire attached asks questions about your school administration activities, processes and practices. Your participation is essential to this study and will enhance our knowledge on competitiveness and the factors that influence the choice of competitive strategies in the basic education arena. I also wish to inform you that the information you provide will only be used for academic purposes. If you would like, we can send to you the report of the findings on request. My address is provided below.

Thank you very much.

Kiringa Edward Gitare

University of Nairobi

P.o. Box 30197

Nairobi.

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SECTION B

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is divided into three parts. Section A, B and C. Kindly answer the questions in each section. Your answers will remain anonymous and strictly confidential and in no instance will your school be mentioned in the report.

SECTION A

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of the school _____

Year started _____

Please tick (✓) as appropriate

Type of the school (1) public _____ (2) private _____

Location of the school (1) rural _____ (2) urban _____

Respondent: (1) Head teacher _____ (2) Deputy head teacher _____

(3) Senior teacher _____ (4) Other (specify) _____

Gender of the respondent (1) Male _____ (2) Female _____

Number of teachers _____

Number of pupils

(1) Boys _____ (2) Girls _____

Number of support staff _____

SECTION B

A. Please indicate (✓) the extent to which you have used the following strategies to remain competitive in the market. Use a five point scale where: (1) Not at all (2) little extent (3) moderate extent (4) great extent (5) very great extent.

		Not at all	Little Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent	Very great extent
	Strategy	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.	Charge lower (maintenance) fees					
2.	Free primary education					
3.	Improvisation of required inputs					
4.	Use of school motto					
5.	Allow parents to pay on credit					
6.	Central location					
7.	School rules (high discipline)					
8.	Boarding facilities					
9.	Class size					
10.	Good performance in examinations					
11.	Teach technical subject e.g. computer					
12.	Well stocked library					
13.	Advertisement through the media					
14.	Coaching (drilling)					
15.	Provide school transport					
16.	Providing meals to pupils					

SECTION C

B. In your view, how do you rate the extent of influence of each of the following factors in your choice of strategies you use in order to cope with competition among schools. Please circle the number on the right of each statement. Use a five point scale where: (1) no influence at all (2) little influence (3) moderate influence (4) great influence (5) very great influence.

<u>Factors</u>	<u>Level of influence</u>				
	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of resources	1	2	3	4	5
Management perception	1	2	3	4	5
Attitude towards risk	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Power	1	2	3	4	5
Corporate governance	1	2	3	4	5
Influence by current strategy	1	2	3	4	5
Organization structure	1	2	3	4	5
Competitive reaction	1	2	3	4	5
Degree of firm's external dependence	1	2	3	4	5
Culture	1	2	3	4	5
Ethics	1	2	3	4	5
Others					

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION

APPENDIX 3: 2006 LIST OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN EVURORI LOCATION MBEERE DISTRICT

Public Schools

Ciaikungugu Primary School
Ciangera Primary School
Kianjeru Primary School
Kianthenge Primary School
Kambungu Primary School
Kamutu Primary School
Karangare Primary School
Kathangari Primary School
Kogari Primary School
Mbacu Primary School
Mbaraga Primary School
Muthanthara Primary School
Njarange Primary School
St Mary Primary School
St Peter Upper Primary School

Private Primary School

Minimax Education Centre
Nicodemous Junior School
Precious Kids Academy
St Lucy Academy
St Teresa Fasce Primary School