

Preparedness of Secondary School Management in the Planning, Supervision, Monitoring and Evaluation of School Projects in Gucha District, Kenya

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Abstract

Infrastructure developments in schools are a major factor towards realization of the Kenya's vision 2030. Different stakeholders sponsor various school constructions; building of class rooms, school halls, laboratories, libraries, dormitories and so on. This research sought to establish the factors influencing the implementation of construction projects in public secondary schools in Gucha South District, Kisii County. The study was guided by the following objectives: to establish the extent to which competency of principals in project management influence implementation of construction projects in public secondary schools in Gucha South District; to assess the extent to which stakeholders' involvement influence the implementation of construction projects in public secondary schools in Gucha South District, to explore the extent to which availability of skilled labour influence the implementation of construction projects in public secondary schools in Gucha South District, Kisii County. Descriptive survey design was used in carrying out the study. All the forty two schools were used in the study. The respondents were 42 principals and 42 P.T.A chair persons representing the schools. The findings of the study showed that school principals lacked competency in planning, supervising and monitoring of school construction projects. The school chair persons similarly lacked the capacity to assist principals in project implementation. In conclusion school principals as managers of school constructions be trained and capacity build on project development, planning, management and supervision.

Introduction

Ministry of Education is one of the key players for the realization of the Kenya's vision 2030. National Action Plan for the realization of the Kenya's vision 2030 in education is focused on improvement of school infrastructure, expanding facilities and equipment at existing institutions. The overall aim is to cut down on costs, and achieve education policy goals on improving access, equity, transition rates and participation of all Kenyan children a move that will also propel the country towards the achievement of Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Republic of Kenya, 2003). Therefore, the onus falls on school managers to plan and ensure that whenever they are engaged in construction projects in schools there is efficiency in the utilization of the resources through prudent project planning, appraisal and implementation.

The project performance parameters are usually; completion of projects on schedule, minimal costs, ensures quality, utility and health and safety standards (Rwelamila, 2007). Several concerns have been raised in the field of construction from the government efforts. The investment in infrastructural facilities under the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP), Constituency Development Fund (CDF), Economic Stimulus Package (ESP), Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATIF) and the Centres of Excellence Fund (CEF) among others have attracted a lot of funds. The initiatives have stimulated a lot of infrastructural development facilities in secondary schools country wide. In spite of this positive gesture from the government, the legislative and structural frameworks are so weak at the grassroots to the extent that there is inadequate tracking on the funds invested in construction projects. Similarly, the Public Health Act (Cap 242) and the Architects and Quantity Surveyors Act (Cap 525) are hardly enforced to ensure successful implementation of construction projects.

Under the devolved government, counties are now the initiators and implementers of major projects. Funds are being channeled directly to the counties for whatever kinds of development education included. On the other hand management of secondary schools is the delegated to the schools' boards of management who are expected to initiate, finance, supervise and monitor the school constructions on behalf of the cabinet secretary ministry of education.

Gucha South District is in Kisii County. It is one of the Districts in Kenya with poor infrastructural facilities in secondary schools as attested by Onderi and Croll (2008). The District has 42 public secondary schools. Table 1.1 shows the number of schools that benefited from the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) funds for financing construction projects in the years 2009 and 2010.

Table 1.1. South Mugirango CDF allocations (2009-2010)

No. of Schools	Year	Amount disbursed (Kshs)
17	2009	5,450,000
11	2010	5,100,000

Source: Government of Kenya CDF website:<http://www.cdf.go.ke/projects>

From the data in table 1.1 it can be inferred that the average CDF allocation per school for the years 2009 and

2010 was Sh.320 588 and Sh.463 636 respectively though little if well supervised it can make a difference. Therefore, this study aimed to address the problem of inadequate infrastructural facilities in the schools in spite of the district benefitting from the government resources. The challenge has remained high especially for the district to accommodate the ever increasing number of pupils who complete primary school education in secondary schools.

Objectives of the study

The study was guided by the following objectives;

- i) To establish the extent to which the competency of the principals in project management affect implementation of construction projects in secondary schools in Gucha South, Kisii County. .
- ii) To examine stakeholders' involvement in the implementation of construction projects in public secondary schools in Gucha South, Kisii County.
- iii) To explore the effect of availability of skilled labour in implementation of construction projects in public secondary schools in Gucha South, Kisii County.

Significance of the study

The empirical evidence on the factors that influence the implementation of construction projects in secondary schools in Gucha South District may be used in the planning for the optimal use of the scarce resources in the district. This may ensure the provision of adequate infrastructure to enhance access and participation of students in secondary schools which remains the major reservoir for the recruitment of human resources for training. The study findings may be useful to project managers in schools especially on the kind of skills required for training in project evaluation, design and implementation. The findings and recommendations arising from this study may guide the government on policy initiatives on project management in public schools.

Research design

Research design is the plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived to address the objectives it provides a framework for planning and conducting of a research study. This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The research design was considered appropriate since the study intended data that could be used to describe the characteristics of the principals and other stakeholders on their skill competency on the construction projects in their schools.

The target population was all the 42 secondary schools in the district. The respondents were therefore 42 principals and 42 P.T.A chairmen of the schools. This study used questionnaires, observation schedules, interviews and document analysis to collect necessary data from the schools. The observations mainly aimed to ascertain the status of the completed, on-going or stalled projects in the schools. An interview was conducted on an informal group of PTA chairmen who provided information about the status and challenges of implementation and supervision of projects in their respective schools. Document analysis involved perusing of official documents pertaining project implementations including minutes of school board of managements' meetings and reports to the education and the CDF offices. The information sought was the amounts and types of funding received, adherence to procurement procedures on award of contracts from the minutes of schools' tender committee meetings and other necessary documentations.

Findings of the study

The first objective of the study was,

- i) *To establish the extent to which the competency of the principals in project management affect implementation of construction projects in secondary schools in Gucha South, Kisii County.*

In secondary school management hierarchy, principals are the first line managers. Their competency in project identification, planning, monitoring and evaluation is imperative. It was prudent therefore to establish their academic and professional qualifications as proxy for this variable on competency.

The academic qualifications of the school principals are recorded in table 1.

Table 1: Academic qualifications of the school principals

Educational level	Frequency	%
Diploma	3	7.142
Bachelors degree	33	78.571
Masters degree	6	14.285
Total	42	100

Table 1 show that the majority of the principals 78.57% had bachelors' degree in education. This is a good gesture. University training is regarded internationally as means of preparing high skilled labour force in their fields hence should be able to steer their school effectively in all spheres including project planning, supervision, monitoring and evaluation. The principals are therefore expected to manage projects in their schools competently. However, academic preparation alone may not suffice to equip practicing principal with necessary skills and attitude in the implementation of school projects. They need more knowledge through additional trainings and experience in the field. Kenya education management institute (KEMI) is one such institution that offers training in various managerial skills to principals and their deputies. The respondents were asked to state whether they had attended any KEMI management course. The responses are tabulated in table 2.

Table 2: Principals' attendance of KEMI course

Attended KEMI course	Frequency	%
Yes	34	80.9
No	8	19.1
Total	42	100

From table 2, the researcher found that 80.9% of the principals had attended KEMI course. However the interview with some of the principals on relevancy of the course to the tasks involved in the construction industry indicated that very little content was covered. They said that the KEMI courses they attended did not cover areas related to construction and implementation of projects.

The researchers sought to know the teaching and administrative experience of the principals. The data on this variable is in table 3.

Table 3: Principals' years of service in administration

Experience in years	Frequency	%
1-5	16	38.09
6-10	18	42.85
10 and over	8	19.04
Total	42	100

Table 3 shows that the majority of the principals 62% had served for six years and above. This period is good enough to expose someone to the necessary competencies in planning and supervision including projects the feeling that was shared by themselves. All the Principals interviewed felt they were competent enough in running construction projects in the schools. However, they agreed that the authority of the project manager is very crucial in the implementation process the views reported in table 4.

Table 4: Principals opinion on the importance of the authority of a project manager in the implementation

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	30	71.428
No	12	28.571
Total	42	100

The majority of the Principals 71.43 % felt the authority of the project manager is quite crucial in the implementation process.

The school PTA chair persons played a very significant role in the implementation of school construction projects. If a school has a competent PTA chair person then construction works can be supervised well. The competence of the person of the PTA chair can also be measured in terms of their academic qualifications and work experience. It therefore became necessary to determine these variables on the PTA officials.

The academic qualifications of the PTA chair persons are as shown in table 3.

Table 5: Academic qualifications of the schools' chair persons

Academic level	Frequency	%
University	2	4.761
College	6	14.285
Secondary	20	47.619
Primary	10	23.809
None	4	9.523
Total	42	100.0

From table 5, it can be observed that the majority of the PTA chair persons 63% were holders of secondary school qualifications and above. According the Kenyan education act the minimum qualifications of one to be appointed to serve on a secondary school board one should have a minimum of secondary school education. Schools in Gucha district have competent persons to run the management of the school legally. Perhaps they needed training on relevant skills to assist the principals an opportunity that they are never given as seen in table 6.

Table 6: Level of training of PTA chair person

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	4	9.52
No	38	90.48
Total	42	100.0

From table 6, the researcher sought to know whether the PTA chair persons were trained or inducted before assuming office and the results indicate that the majority of them 90.48% had no training or induction courses at all. These results are not pleasant if they have to play their roles competently of planning, and overseeing the implementation of construction projects in the schools.

Apart from academics their own exposure and experience can very crucial. It was therefore important to establish the experience of these people in the management of schools. The responses are presented in table 7.

Table 6: PTA chair persons' experience in school management

Experience in years	Frequency	%
1-4	30	71.43
5-9	9	21.43
10 and over	3	7.14
Total	42	100.00

The investigation on the period the PTA chair person had served as members of the school management as indicated in table 6 shows that the majority of the PTA chair persons representing 71.43% had been in office for between 1-4 years only. This is too short a period for to be very conversant in school management one is an educationist or of other related disciplines.

ii) To examine stakeholders' involvement in the implementation of construction projects in public secondary schools in Gucha South, Kisii County.

Before examining the involvement of the stakeholders in schools' project construction, it is important to know who they are. The data is contained in table 8.

Table 8: Types of stakeholders involved in project construction

Stakeholders	Frequency	%
Parents	10	23.8
Sponsor	1	2.38
CDF	8	19.05
PTA/BOM	20	47.62
Teachers	1	2.38
Donors	2	4.76
Total	42	100

From table 8 it can be observed that most of the stakeholders on the school constructions projects are the P.T.As and B.O.Ms who formed 47.62. These responses were expected as the PTAs are the ones who finance the school projects through their direct contributions a vote head in the fees structure recognized by the Kenyan government. Whereas the BOMs on the other hand, are the ones involved in the project identification, selection, costing and financing through funds drive exercise and writing proposals as stipulated in the education act.

The other very important and crucial stakeholder is the district public works officer who is supposed to oversee the standards of the construction as stipulated in the public works act. It was therefore important to examine this partner in the construction of school projects. The principals were asked to confirm if these people were involved during project implantation on the standards required. The responses are in table 9.

Table 9: Principals' responses on the support of the district works officer or infrastructural co-ordination team during the constructions

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	30	71.43
No	12	28.57
Total	42	100

The findings in table 9 indicate that the majority of the schools 71.43% benefited on the support from the district infrastructural coordination team.

It was prudent to know the kind and level of involvement by the district infrastructure development team. The table 10 gives the data obtained.

Table 10: The level and kinds of infrastructure development the team is involved in

Response	Frequency	%
Conception	5	11.90
Approval	15	35.71
Planning	18	42.86
Implementation	3	7.14
Commissioning	1	2.38
Total	42	100

From table 10, it can be observed that the infrastructure development team is mostly involved in the planning and approval of the construction stages of the projects at 42.86 and 35.71 percentages respectively. Though the two are crucial stages in infrastructural development, it is not enough they play other bigger roles to ensure that projects are done as planned.

The opinions of the Principals and the PTAs on the teams' involvement showed that they were comfortable with the arrangement and according to them they benefitted from their drawing and commissioning.

The other way to know the stakeholders is by determining the financiers of the various school projects. Both Principals and PTA members were asked to reveal the sources of funds for the school projects. From the responses, 66.7% of the projects are financed by the CDF, 23.9% by the parents through the PTA contributions and only 9.5% from government grants under the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP).

iii). *To explore the effect of availability of skilled labour in implementation of construction projects in public secondary schools in Gucha South, Kisii County.*

The challenge to the construction industry is the availability of the skilled labour force as qualified masons, carpenters, electricians, plumbers and draughtsman. An inquiry therefore was made to ascertain the availability of skilled labour in the school construction industry in Gucha district. The responses from both the school principals and their PTA chair persons indicated that there was a big challenge. Seventy six point two percent of the schools indicated that they did not use qualified artisans whereas only 23.8 % said were available and were engaged. Some of the principals commented that whereas the public procurement act requires that they hire competent persons from the locality in the constructions, there were no people with relevant certificates to be hired. Ninety five percent of the principals felt that skilled labour was a key in the project implementation and supervision. This sentiment was shared by 52.4% of the PTA chairmen.

And only 47.6% thought otherwise.

Conclusions of the study

From the study it can be concluded that construction of school projects is faced with numerous challenges. There is the challenge of incompetent Principals and PTA chair persons as managers in project planning, supervision, monitoring and evaluation, non availability of skilled labour forces and adequate funds as schools depended on CDF. The CDF though a government initiative, it is politically instigated and can be stopped any time. The government should organize capacity building of school managers (Principals, PTA chair persons and BOMs) in project implementation, planning, supervision monitoring and evaluation. They should also be assisted in the training for funds' proposal writing. The PTA chair persons should also be trained on their roles in school management to steer schools. The public works officers and the infrastructural implementation team should supervise the implementation of school projects to ensure that school projects are done to the standards required.

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APPENDIX II: PRINCIPAL'S QUESTIONNAIRE

You are kindly requested to provide answers to the following items touching on your personal details as well as issues related to construction projects in your school.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Indicate by ticking () your gender.
Male () Female ()
2. For how many years have you served as a principal
1-5 () 6-10 () Over 10 ()

3. Tick against the category that matches with your highest qualifications
A Level () Diploma () Bachelors Degree ()
Masters degree () Doctorate Degree ()
4. Have you ever attended KEMI Management courses?
Yes () No ()

SECTION B: PROJECT MANAGEMENT DATA

5. Do you get help from the district infrastructural co-ordination team?
Yes () No ()
6. Are the stakeholders involved in project construction
Yes () No ()
7. At what phase of project life-cycle are the stakeholders involved most in project implementation. Tick one
- i. Conception ()
 - ii. Approval ()
 - iii. Planning ()
 - iv. Implementation ()
 - v. Commissioning ()
8. Who, among the following stakeholders, is involved most in project implementation. Tick one.
(i) Parents () (ii) Sponsor () (iii) CDF ()
(iv) PTA/BOG () (v) Teachers () (vi) Donors ()
9. As a project manager, are you competent in managing construction workers
Yes () No ()
10. Project managers planning skills are key in project implementation
Yes () No ()
11. I thoroughly carry out monitoring and evaluation of the projects.
Yes () No ()
12. Indicate the main sources of funds/income for your school
(i) (ii) (iii)
13. Unavailability of skilled labour affects project implementation
Yes () No ()
14. Skilled labour enhances project implementation
Yes () No ()

APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR P.T.A.CHAIRMEN

1. What is your age bracket?
18-35 () 36-60 () 60 and Above ()
2. For how long have you served as P.T.A chairman?
1-5 Years () 6-10 Years () Over 10 years
4. Do you work hand in hand with the project manager during project implementation?
Yes () No ()
5. Were you inducted/trained on your responsibilities before assuming office?
Yes () No ()
8. Do you have a PTA fund in your school?
Yes () No ()
9. Are parents ready to participate in a fundraising after they have paid PTA fund?
Yes () No ()
10. Do you always use skilled labour in your school construction work?
Yes () No ()
11. As a PTA chairman, are you involved in the hiring of construction workers?
Yes () No ()

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