COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY KITUI HIGH SCHOOL, KENYA

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A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA), FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my original work and has not been submitted to any university or other learning institution for examination.
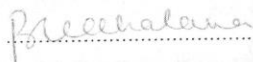
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This Research Project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my late mother Jennifer Mwaniki who was a secondary school teacher, my father Fouris Matheka and my other family members, Elizabeth, Mercy, Constance, Aidan and Alicen.

I further dedicate this project to my girlfriend Joy Mutuku and my friend and colleague Judy Mumo.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BNC   British National Curriculum

BOM   Board of Management

CBC   Competency Based Curriculum

CBE   Curriculum Based Establishment

CCTV   Closed Circuit Television

CDF   Constituency Development Fund

GCSE   General Certificate of Secondary Education

KCPE   Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination

KCSE   Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination

KPLC   Kenya Power and Lighting Company

RBV   Resource Based View

TSC   Teachers Service Commission

TVET   Technical and Vocational Education and Training

ABSTRACT

This study examined competitive strategies adopted by secondary schools in Kenya to achieve good performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination. The study was based on two theories; Porter's Theory of Competitive Advantage and the Resource Based View. The objective of this study was to determine the competitive strategies adopted by Kitui High School. Primary data was collected using an interview guide. The data was collected from 9 respondents which included a board member, deputy principals, heads of department, parent and student leaders. The data was then analyzed using content analysis and the Gioia methodology. The findings of the study were that the school utilized differentiation, focus, cost leadership and resource-based strategies to achieve performance. The school analyzes and monitors performance of individual students using technology then comes up with a way forward. In case the cause of drop in performance is mental health issue, peer counsellors and guidance and counselling departments help the student to have peace of mind. Teachers give attention to weak students and offer them extra classes, extra homework, books and revision materials. The school gives attention to needy students by paying school fees for some of them and informing them about bursaries so that they can apply for them. The school motivates teachers to offer the best services by giving them tokens to teach remedial classes and also giving them tokens when students get good grades in KCSE. The school ensures that student utilize its library, science laboratories and Computer laboratory to get good grades. The study recommends further research on competitive strategies applied by other public secondary schools to achieve performance, Comparative studies between strategies adopted by public secondary schools and private secondary schools to achieve performance, Comparative studies between schools that have had good consistent performance and schools that have not had a consistent performance.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

A strategy is a broad course of action established for an organization and its various components to achieve a desired future state. Johnson, Whittington, Regner, Scholes, & Angwin (2020) defined strategy as an organization's long-term direction. Strategy enables organizations to create competitive advantage. David (2011) suggested that an organization has competitive advantage if it does something that the competitors cannot do or owns something that the competitors do not own. Competitive advantage becomes sustainable when an organization is able to attract and retain customers who have a choice.

This study was guided by the theory of competitive advantage and the resource-based view. The Resource based view guided this study because it explains how an organization's resources can enable it to have competitive advantage. Rare and non-substitutable resources enable an organization's competitive advantage to be stronger and to last longer. Porter (1985) proposed three possible strategies that an organization can apply to achieve competitive advantage.

This is a case study on Kitui High School which is a public national boys secondary school located in Kitui County which is in the lower eastern part of Kenya. This study sought to explore the relationship between the competitive strategies applied by Kitui High School and the educational performance of the school. It sought to identify whether differentiation, cost leadership and focus strategies enabled the students to get good grades in exams. It explored if resources owned by Kitui high school affected educational performance. It explored if skilled teachers, equipped library, enough classes to accommodate students, adequate facilities for extra-curriculum activities, enough finances to cater for school

expenses, equipped science laboratories and an equipped computer laboratory affected the educational performance of the school. It explored any other resources owned by the school that enabled students to get good grades in examinations.

1.1.1 Competitive Strategies

A strategy is a comprehensive and coordinated set of commitments and actions intended to capitalize on key competencies and gain a competitive advantage (Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2017). An organization relates with its external environment through its strategy. Therefore, an organization cannot operate without a strategy. Even though some organizations do not have written strategies that guide them, they have informal strategies.

According to Wheelen, Hunger, Hoffman, & Bamford (2018) there are three levels of strategy, Corporate or top strategy, Business or middle strategy and Functional or operational strategy. Corporate strategy describes an organization's overall direction, Business strategy occurs at the product or business unit level and stresses on improvement of competitiveness of products or services of the organization in particular industry. Functional/ operational strategy focuses on how to implement the business and corporate strategies. According Wheelen, Hunger, Hoffman, & Bamford environmental scanning, strategy creation, strategy implementation, evaluation and control are the four fundamental components of strategic management. Failure to scan the environment, failure to do a thorough industrial analysis and setting of unrealistic goals while hiding weaknesses can make an organization to have a poor strategy.

A company has a competitive advantage if customers buy products of that company instead of those of its competitors. For a company to remain successful, it should respond to changes in the market faster than its competitors. Five fundamental competitive forces that

determine the level of competition in an industry include; threat of new entrants, bargaining power of consumers, bargaining power of suppliers, threat of substitute goods or services and rivalry between existing businesses (Porter, 1980).

According to Porter (1985) organizations can apply the following three strategies to achieve competitive advantage; differentiation, cost leadership, and focus. In cost leadership, a firm reduces its cost of production so that the cost of the final product is lower compared to that of other companies. Low cost strategy should not make a company produce poor quality products. The products should meet market standards (Johnson, Whittington, Regner, Scholes, & Angwin, 2020). A company can reduce costs through economies of scale, adopting the best or the latest technology, through value chain analysis. Non-value adding activities in value chain analysis are identified and eliminated hence reducing the production costs. Non-value adding activities are those that a customer would not be willing to pay for. Organizations should also analyze value chains of their competitors to know where competitors are doing better than them and where they are not. Cost leadership targets a price sensitive market.

In differentiation, a company makes its product slightly unique from that of its competitors so that customers can see some perceived benefit that is not in the products of the competitors. Sources of differentiation can arise anywhere in the value chain. Some policy choices that lead to uniqueness include; features of a product and performance offered; services offered; technology used; quality of inputs used; skills and experience level of personnel employed (Porter, 1985). The price of the differentiated product may be higher than that of products from other companies.

Porter (1985) stated that in focus strategy, a company concentrates on a narrow segment of an industry. It chooses a certain group of customers with unique needs and produces commodities that meet those needs. The quality of that product can be the same as that offered in other regions or of a lower value. Porter stated that focus strategy can be divided into two, that is cost focus and differentiation focus. An organization that is cost-focused looks for a cost advantage in its target segment whereas an organization that is differentiation-focused looks for differentiation in its target segment.

1.1.2 Organizational Performance

According to Hill & Jones (2009), an organization is efficient if it uses few inputs to produce an output. Capital productivity and employee productivity are important elements of efficiency. A good/ service has superior quality if customers feel that its attributes provide them with higher value compared to that of competitors. Differentiated products have superior quality. An organization can use innovation to either come up with new products or come up with new production processes. An organization has to understand the needs of its customers so that it can respond to those needs by offering the correct products.

A school can perform well in academics, sports and even drama/music festivals. Some students may not perform well in academics but can be talented in sports or music. Academic performance of schools is measured by the grades that students score in examinations. The grades of individual students contribute to the mean grades of a school. In Kenya, grades are categorized in Grade A, B, C, D and E where A represents very good performance while grade E represents poor performance as shown in the second schedule of (KNEC, 2012). The grades are also categorized into points where 12 points are the highest while 1 point is the lowest. Lastly, the grades are also categorized into marks where

100% is the highest while 0% is the lowest. Students who score a grade of C+ and above are able to join universities to pursue degrees. The KCSE grading system is summarized on the table below.

Table 1.1 Grading system of KCSE

Letter Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
Points	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Percentage (%) grade	80-100	75-79	70-74	65-69	60-64	55-59	50-54	45-49	40-44	35-39	30-34	0-29

The letter grades and points scale shown on table 1.1 are constant but the percentage grades can be slightly different for different subjects and can be changed depending with students' performance in a subject.

1.1.3 Education Sector in Kenya

In Kenya, students attend primary school for 8 years, secondary school for 4 years and university for 4 years. This system is known as the 8-4-4 curriculum of education and was introduced in the year 1985 (Republic of Kenya, 2018). In the last year of primary school, students are examined with Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination (KCPE) and their grades determine the secondary schools that they join. Those who get good grades have a chance to join the best secondary schools while those who get poor grades join average secondary schools. Secondary schools in Kenya are classified as National schools, extra-county schools, county schools, sub-county schools and private secondary schools (Nyangweso, Maiyo, & Kati, 2019).

The curriculum was revised on 2017 and is now divided into 2 years of Pre-primary education, 6 years of Primary education, 6 years of Secondary education and 3 years of

University education. This new curriculum is known as Competency based curriculum (CBC) (Republic of Kenya, 2019). Children join pre-primary school at the age of 4 years (Republic of Kenya, 2018). Some private schools and International schools adopt more than one curriculum. Other curriculums adopted by private and international schools in Kenya include the British National Curriculum (BNC).

As at 2019, Kenya had 8,933 public secondary schools and 1,554 private secondary schools (Republic of Kenya, 2019). In the last year of secondary school, students are examined with KCSE which determines the Universities, Colleges or TVETs which they join and which courses they study. Students who get mean grades of C+ and above in KCSE qualify to study Bachelor's degree in a university while those who get mean grades below C+ study Diplomas and Certificates.

1.1.4 Kitui High School

Kitui High School is a national boys' secondary school located in Kitui County which is in the lower eastern part of Kenya. It is a boarding school with around 1,148 students. The school had good mean grades in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination between the year 2017 and 2021 and enabled a good percentage of its students to join universities and pursue degrees of their choice. It began as an intermediate school in 1908 and later changed into a boarding school in 1948 (Mwangi, 2016). It was initially known as Campbell Academy.

From 2017 to 2021, most secondary schools have not been performing well in KCSE. Table 1.1 below shows the educational performance of Kitui High School in KCSE from the year 2017 to 2021.

Table 1.2: Mean scores of Kitui High School from 2017 to 2021

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Mean	7.2140	7.6316	8.5878	9.1509	9.500

From Table 1.2, it can be observed that Kitui high school improved and performed very well in the KCSE exams in the year 2019, 2020 and 2021. These results suggested that there was something unique that is happening in the school.

1.2 Research Problem

When a company adopts a value-creating strategy that is not being adopted at the same time by any present or potential competitors and when these organizations are unable to duplicate the advantages of this strategy, this is referred to as having a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Johnson, Whittington, Regner, Scholes, & Angwin (2020) suggested that the following are important features of competitive advantage; for an organization to be competitive, it must ensure that customers see sufficient value in a commodity so that they have willingness to pay an amount higher than the supply cost. To have an advantage, firms must ensure that their products are of a higher value compared to those of their competitors.

On May 2016, Dr. Fred Matiang'i who was the cabinet secretary of education in Kenya unveiled tough measures to curb cheating in national examinations (Oduor, 2016). This was an effort to ensure that the results candidates get are credible. In 2016 KCSE, there was a sharp drop in performance. There were 141 grade As in 2016 while there were 2,636 grade As in 2015 (Ngechu, 2016). Schools that were honest had a consistent performance but those that were dishonest had a sharp drop in performance across the country. Kitui High School is one of those schools whose mean grade has been improving.

According to a study by Wekesa (2012) on the competitive strategies used by the Riara Group of Schools to create a sustained competitive advantage, the schools used both Porter's general strategies and certain grand strategies. In the Nairobi city county, Ngima (2014) conducted research on the relationship between competitive strategies and public secondary schools' performance in the KCSE and findings were that the schools that adopt competitive strategies to a great extent achieve high mean scores in KCSE. Kabutia (2014) conducted research on Competitive Strategies Used by Catholic Secondary Schools in Nairobi, Kenya to Gain a Competitive Advantage and findings were that the strategies adopted to a large extent to remain competitive are differentiation and collaborative strategies.

Schools can have intelligent pupils, intelligent teachers and intelligent parents yet students in some of the schools get good grades while students in other schools get poor grades in KCSE. Even though several studies have been done on strategies applied by schools to achieve competitive advantage, schools located in different regions and environment face different challenges. Each school therefore has to come up with relevant strategies for its case. This research sought to answer the question, what competitive strategies have been adopted by Kitui High School to achieve educational performance?

1.3 Research objective

The objective of this study was to determine the competitive strategies adopted by Kitui High School.

1.4 Value of the study

The study will contribute to the existing knowledge on competitive strategies adopted by secondary schools to achieve educational performance. It will seek to be a reference point

for scholars studying competitive strategies and educational performance of schools in a rural set up. The study will also complement the resource-based view and theory of competitive advantage.

The study will seek to help to practitioners in secondary schools. Principals of schools will be able to refer to the study to know which strategies are applicable in public schools in rural set up and either maintain their strategies or change them. Principals of both public and private schools will also be able to get an idea how resources owned by the school can lead to competitive advantage and decide which ones to give priority.

The study will also seek to be of help to policy makers in the education sector and other related sectors. It will guide organizations like Ministry of Education when funding schools and also when allocating teachers in schools. It will also be a guide to the national government, county government and donors when undertaking development projects in schools.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores theoretical foundation of strategies adopted by organizations to achieve competitive advantage. It also reviews existing literature related to strategies adopted by organizations to achieve competitive advantage. The study highlights findings of the existing literature and knowledge gaps from that literature is highlighted.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

This section discusses existing theories and shows how they are related to this study. The section states who started each theory and explain the arguments of the theories. Even though the theories have been supported by many scholars, there are some critiques by some scholars. This section shows some critiques of the theories by scholars. The major theory for this study was Porter's theory of competitive advantage which was supported by the Resource based view.

2.2.1 Porter's Theory of Competitive Advantage

This theory explains how firms can produce their products and be competitive in the market, how they can be better than their competitors. It also shows which markets the firms should target with the different types of products that they produce. Porter (1985) came up with three generic strategies that organizations can adopt to achieve competitive advantage. They include; Differentiation, Cost leadership and Focus. According to Barney (1991), a sustainable competitive advantage is one that cannot be imitated by rivals, rather than one that will remain indefinately. Barney also stated that changes in an industry may interfere with the source of sustainable competitive advantage of an organization in that industry. Organizations have to keep up with changes in their environment in order to remain competitive.

An organization that produces differentiated products should invest in research and development, give awards to creative employees, procure raw materials that have a high quality, train employees, invest in good technologies, maintain a close contact with customers and suppliers (Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2009). David (2011) stated that a differentiated product can have the following unique features; superior service, longer useful life, available spare parts, a good design, easy to use.

In order to reduce operating costs, an organization can come up with an organizational structure with fewer managerial levels to reduce overhead costs, it should offer relevant trainings to its employees so that they can do their jobs in the best way, it can be evaluating the performance of suppliers in order to choose the best suppliers (Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2009). David (2011) stated that cost leadership is effective in a market that has many price-sensitive customers. David stated that as an organization reduces the prices of its products, it should be careful not to reduce its profits or make losses.

Focus depends on competencies of an organization and not its products. An organization should work on its competencies because the competencies can be used to make several products (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). A focus strategy enables a firm to respond faster to the change of needs of its customer because the firm is close to its customers (Hill & Jones, 2009). Focus strategy involves offering goods/services to a market segment and that can be a certain geographical market, a group of customers or a certain line of product. A focus strategy can either target a market segment of price-sensitive customers or a segment of quality-sensitive customers (David, 2011).

There are some critiques on this theory. Porter (1980) stated that an organization needs to have a high market share in order for its low-cost strategy to be effective. Porter did not explain how a firm acquires that market share. A firm acquires that market share through differentiation (Datta, 2010). Porter stated that in cost leadership high capital investment in equipment is required. However, according to Datta, a firm can spend most of its funds on acquiring the equipment then fail to get the expected returns. This study confirmed if the theory of competitive advantage is applicable in a public school and if schools apply one strategy or they are stuck in the middle.

2.2.2 Resource Based View

The view explains that the competitiveness of a firm depends on the resources that the firm has. It states the resources an organization needs to have in order to be competitive and explains how the competitiveness can last long. Wernerfelt (1984) started the Resource based view then other authors such as Barney (1991) and Peteraf (1993) made their contributions. Resources are factors of production. Wernerfelt stated that firms can have the following resources; skilled personnel, capital, machinery, technology, efficient procedures, trade contracts, brand names. The Resource-Based View (RBV) shows that an organization's internal resources are more useful than external factors in gaining and sustaining competitive advantage (David, 2011). The model assumes that each organization has unique resources and capabilities that it uses to develop a strategy and earn returns that are above average (Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2017).

Barney (1991) stated that for an organization's resource to have the potential of sustainable competitive advantage, it must be imperfectly imitable, rare, valuable and has no equivalent substitutes. Resources are valuable if they can make an organization more efficient and

more effective. A rare resource is one that is not possessed by many firms in the industry. If the resource is possessed by many firms, they can all exploit it. If there are fewer firms that own a resource than are necessary for perfect competition in a sector, that resource can produce a competitive advantage. A firm's resource is imperfectly imitable if acquisition of that resource relies on unique historical conditions; if the other firms cannot understand the connection between that firm's sustained competitive advantage and the resources it has; if a firm's resource is socially complex for example how managers of the firm relate among themselves, how the organizations relates with its suppliers and how it relates with its customers. RBV can assist managers in identifying valuable resources that can result in sustainable competitive advantage.

According to Peteraf (1993), conditions must be met for a firm to have a sustainable competitive advantage. The conditions include resource heterogeneity, *ex post* competition limits, imperfect resource mobility, and *ex ante* competition limits. According to Peteraf, heterogeneity means that organizations with varying capabilities can compete in a market and at the very least break even. It reflects presence of superior factors of production in an industry which have limited supply. Organizations with marginal resources breakeven while those with superior resources get rents. *Ex post* limits to competition imply that forces that limit competition must exist after an organization achieves a superior position and earns rent. This is because competition can lead to an increase of scarce resources and may deplete rents earned by firms. Perfectly immobile resources are those that cannot be traded. Imperfectly mobile resources are those that can be traded but have more benefit to the firm currently using them compared to the benefit they would have to another firm. These resources enable firms to achieve sustainable competitive advantage because they

are less valuable to other organizations and therefore can be used in a firm over the long run. *Ex ante* limits to competition means that before an organization creates a superior resource position, competition for that position must be limited.

There are some critiques on RBV. Eisenhardt & Martin (2000) argued that sustainable competitive advantage is not based on dynamic capabilities but on resource configurations. Fiol (2001) argued that it is impossible for an organization to have sustainable competitive advantage. This is because firms constantly change their skills and resources and how they apply them and so their advantages are temporary. Connor (2002) argued that RBV does not offer strategists practical building propositions of competitive advantage because it is descriptive and not explanatory in nature. Connor further stated that RBV is applicable on large firms and not applicable on small ones. This study confirmed if resources owned by a public school affects its competitiveness.

2.3 Competitive strategies

Competitive strategy, according to Wheelen, Hunger, Hoffman, & Bamford (2018), is a strategy that shows how an organization can compete in an industry. Firms can use the following generic competitive strategies to achieve competitive advantage; differentiation, cost leadership and focus (Porter, 1985). (Ansoff, 1957) came up with four growth strategies; market development, product development, diversification, market penetration. Some of these strategies can be applicable in both public and private schools while others are only applicable in private schools because their aim is making profit.

Mintzberg (1987) came up with five definitions of strategy, that is, as a plan, pattern, ploy, perspective and position. Mintzberg stated that strategy is a plan because it is a set of guidelines or courses of actions to be used in a certain situation. Strategies are developed

before the actions in which they apply. As a ploy, strategy can be a tactic used by a firm to outsmart its competitors. Strategy is a pattern because it involves intended or unintended consistent behavior. Strategy is a position because it is a means of connecting a firm to the external environment. Strategy is a perspective because it shows how organization perceive things.

2.4 Competitive strategy and organizational performance

Dess & Davis (1984) suggested that an organization can achieve differentiation through brand identification, controlling distribution channels, procurement of inputs, advertisements, market growth forecasting, innovating marketing methods. An organization can achieve cost leadership through efficiency in operations, procurement of inputs, staff trainings, market growth forecasting, controlling quality of products, innovating the manufacturing process. Day & Wensley (1988) stated that superior skills and superior resources are sources of competitive advantage and these enable the organization to have lower relative costs and superior customer value. An organization with competitive advantage is able to satisfy its customers and have loyal customers and therefore make profits and increase its market share.

Tanwar (2013) listed various factors that can make an organization to be successful in cost leadership; monitoring labor closely, products that can be easily manufactured, access to affordable capital, controlling costs and ensuring that they are minimal. Differentiation of a product is associated with features, technology, brand image, customer service, network, design, dealers. Focus strategy also known as niche can be achieved by either offering low cost products for a market segment or offering differentiated products for a market

segment. Lynch (2015) stated that competitive advantage becomes sustainable when competitors cannot imitate it easily.

Hill & Jones (2009) defined strategy as actions taken by managers to improve performance of their organization compared to that of their competitors. Porter (1985) stated that for a firm to achieve high performance it has to adopt one of the three generic strategies and should not be stuck in the middle. Competitive advantage makes a company better than its competitors because it is able to attract many customers; The company achieves higher profit margins compared to its competitors.

The Balanced Scorecard, according to Kaplan and Norton (1992), connects performance measures. It provides answers to four fundamental questions: What do our customers think of us? (From the customer's point of view), What are we expected to excel at? (internal perspective) Can we continue to improve and add value? (In terms of innovation and learning) How do we appear to our shareholders? (From a monetary standpoint.) According to Kaplan and Norton, the top four customer concerns are time, quality, performance and service, and cost. To implement the balanced scorecard, businesses should define time, quality, performance, and service goals before translating these goals into precise measures.

2.5 Key Performance indicators of Education institutions

Performance of school can be categorized into academic performance, performance in co-curriculum activities. Academic performance, less disciplinary problems, effective teaching and learning, job satisfaction are some of the key performance indicators in schools (Lyer, 2011). Other key performance indicators include; financial management in schools, facilities, extra-curricular activities, school leadership, qualification of teachers.

When students get good grades in KCPE, they have a chance to join the best secondary schools. When students get good grades in KCSE, they get a wide option of undergraduate degrees that they can study in universities.

Teachers are important resources in schools. Learned and dedicated teachers are likely to give the best knowledge to students. According to Kimani, Kara, and Njagi (2013), teachers who are much educated are likely to make students perform better in academics compared to less educated teachers. Schools get qualified teachers from the Teachers Service Commission. Most of the schools do not get enough teachers from TSC so the Board of management ends up employing more teachers to reduce the understaffing. Good salaries and rewards for good performance encourage teachers to do a better job.

Funds received by most schools are limited. Schools rely on the government, school fees, donors and investments for funding. A school should balance well its revenues and its expenditures. Ofem, et al. (2021) in their study on financial resources and secondary school students' academic performance in Nigeria found that academic performance of students is predicted by financial resources which includes amount of funds, allocation of funds, investments in school facilities. Ngigi & Tanui (2019) in their study on financial management practices by principals, administration of education and secondary schools' performance in Kenya found that there was a weak positive relationship between financial management, educational administration and performance of schools.

2.6 Empirical review and knowledge gaps

In a study on 16 international schools in Nairobi County, Kenya, Mauti (2010) studied Competitive Strategies' influence on the performance of International Schools offering the British National Curriculum (BNC). Findings of the study were that differentiation was the

most adopted strategy for schools' performance, focus strategy came second while cost leadership strategy was the least adopted. A study on 43 private secondary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya revealed that cost leadership strategy and differentiation strategy were moderately used by the private secondary schools and their adoption varied among the schools (Racho, 2011).

Kimani, Kara, and Njagi (2013) conducted a study on teacher factors influencing students' academic achievement in secondary schools using data from 18 secondary schools in Kenya's Nyandarua County. Findings of this study were that job groups of teachers had an influence on students' academic performance. They also found that workload of teachers, assessing students' results of Continuous Assessment Tests, assignments, giving weak students attention, setting KCSE performance targets and when form four syllabus is completed affects the academic achievement of students. A study on 11 private mixed day and boarding schools, 8 private boarding schools and 15 private day schools in Mavoko District of Machakos County, Kenya revealed that cost leadership strategy had the highest influence on private schools' performance while differentiation strategy and focus strategy had a small influence on performance (Wambua, 2014).

Nyamongo, Sang, Nyaoga, and Matoke (2014) investigated the relationship between school-based factors and KCSE performance in a study of 24 public secondary schools in Masaba North District of Nyamira County in Kenya. Their findings were that the qualification of teachers, the supervisory role of headteachers and teaching resources were positively correlated with the performance of students. The relationship was however weak, so no significant relationship. A study on 35 private primary schools offering GCSE curriculum in Nairobi County, Kenya established that focus strategy was the most adopted

strategy to achieve performance of the private schools, differentiation was the second most adopted strategy while cost leadership was the least adopted strategy (Nthambi, 2016).

Mauti (2010) established that most international schools offering the BNC target parents with high incomes. Nthambi (2016) also established that private schools offering GCSE curriculum targeted wealthy families and middle-class families. This shows why cost leadership was the least adopted strategy in the two studies. Public schools on the other hand target students from all social classes. There is a contextual gap in these two studies because they were limited to private schools.

Most studies reviewed have methodological gaps, they collected data from principals and deputy principals but did not consider the opinions of members of the board, teachers with low ranks in the schools, students and parents. Most of the studies collected data using questionnaires with close-ended questions which limits responses. Some researchers focused on schools in urban areas whose challenges may differ with those located in the rural areas. Study of several schools at the same time did not allow the researchers collect adequate information from each individual school. The study done by Kimani, Kara, & Njagi (2013) focused on one resource (teachers) but the current study considered more resources such as equipped libraries and equipped laboratories which can affect performance of students.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology that was used in the study to achieve its objective. It entails; research design, data collection and data analysis. It explains the research design adopted in this study. It explains the tool used for data collection and why that was preferred. It also lists the respondents of the research and highlights the data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

A research design has the following components; research questions, propositions, logic that links data to propositions, unit of analysis, criteria used to interpret findings (Yin, 2003). Kothari (2004) stated that a research design makes the research process smooth and efficient, it maximizes the information obtained and minimizes expenditure on time, effort and money. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), a research design is a master plan that guides data collection, measurement, and analysis in order to answer research questions. This research applied a case study research design. Sekaran & Bougie stated that a case study is a research design that emphasizes on collection of data about a particular object, event or activity, such as a specific business unit or organization.

The merits of a case study include; it enables a researcher to understand the history of a social unit and its interaction with the external environment; Since case study involves intensive study of a social unit, it enables the researchers to understand the social unit fully; it enables the researcher to obtain real personal experiences of the respondents; it enables the researcher to determine nature of units being studied; it enhances the researcher's experience (Kothari, 2004). The demerits of a case study include; the findings of one case may not represent the findings of other cases, bias by the researcher leads to lack of rigor

in collections and analysis of empirical evidence that led to the study, it is prone to false generalization due to lack of set rules to be followed during data collection and just few units are studied, response of the researcher can limit the case study if he/she thinks that he/she has much knowledge about the unit under study, a case study is expensive and time-consuming (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993; Kothari, 2004).

3.3 Data Collection

The research used both primary qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data was collected using interview guides (Appendix I) whereas the quantitative data was collected using a Data Sheet (Appendix II). The unit of study was Kitui High School. The respondents included representatives from the top management of the school, student leadership, and parents. The top management formulates the strategies of the school. According to Sekaran & Bougie (2016), an interview is a guided, purposeful conversation between two or several people. An interview can be structured or unstructured. A structured interview has a planned sequence of questions to be asked while an unstructured interview does not have a planned sequence of questions to be asked. Bryman & Bell (2011) stated that a structured interview aims at giving all the respondents exactly same context of questioning. Kothari (2004) stated that an interview helps to avoid misinterpretation of questions since the interviewer can use a language that different respondents can understand, enables the researcher to collect adequate data and minimizes the percentage of non-response.

The data was collected using an interview guide that had open ended questions. Legard, Keegan, & Ward (2003) stated that even though interviews use open ended questions, some closed ended questions can be included when the response of the respondent is out of topic.

Legard, Keegan, & Ward listed the following features of an in-depth interview; its intention is to combine flexibility with structure, it is interactive so there is communication between the respondent and the interviewer, the researcher uses probing questions among other techniques to get clear responses, the interview is likely to generate new knowledge and new thoughts, most common way of conducting qualitative interviews is face-to-face.

The qualitative data was therefore be collected using in-depth interviews from 9 respondents while quantitative data was collected using a data sheet. These are listed in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 List of respondents

Category	Number	Justification
Board of Management	1	By Statute, BOM have overall mandate for governance and management in the school.
Deputy Principals	2	Participate in formulation of strategies
Heads of Department	3	Participate in formulation of strategies
Student Council	2	Represent students who participate in implementation of strategies
Parent	1	Participate in implementation of strategies

Attempts were made to have an interview with the principal but were unsuccessful as he was not available for the interview. To mitigate against biases, use of assurance and confidentiality ensured that responses are consistent, are not affected by moods. The interviewer took notes during the interview hence enabling the interviewer to capture responses accurately (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003).

3.4 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed to come up with conclusions. Data analysis involves examination, categorization, tabulation and testing of qualitative or quantitative data to address the propositions of the study (Yin, 2003). Content analysis technique was used in this study. Bhattacherjee (2012) stated that a qualitative research is analyzed using techniques such as content analysis while quantitative research is analyzed using statistical analysis like regression analysis. This is because qualitative research uses non-numerical data, for instance interviews while quantitative research uses numerical data such as scores. In content analysis the collected data is grouped into key words, phrases sentences or paragraphs in order to make it systematically comparable (Berg, 2001). In order for scholars to get deeper explanations of research findings, the data and findings should be categorized into first order which is informant-centered and second order which is theory-centered (Gioia D. , 2021). This study used Gioia methodology to analyse and achieve qualitative rigor and generate appropriate research findings (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013).

Gioia Methodology is evidence based and a systematic approach that allows one to generate a Grounded Theory (Gehman, Glaser, Eisenhardt, Gioia, & Ann Langley, 2018). The raw data is used to generate 1st order concepts which are informant-centric terms. 2nd order themes which are theory-centric are then generated (Gehman, Glaser, Eisenhardt, Gioia, & Ann Langley, 2018). From the data collected, the researcher checks the similarities and differences. Similar terms and codes are grouped together. Labels are then given to each terms/ codes. 2nd order themes are then generated from the 1st order concepts.

Finally, aggregate dimensions are generated from the 2nd order themes (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013).

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains how the collected data was analyzed to come up with conclusions. It explains the findings of the study. It shows how the research contributed to its anchoring theories. The study discusses its old and new variables. It also highlights studies by other scholars that had similar findings.

4.2 Profile of Interview Respondents

The respondents of this study were the management of Kitui High School, 2 student leaders and a parent. The representatives of the management included a board member, Deputy principal Administration, Deputy principal Academics and 3 Heads of department. One of the heads of department sits in the board. Interviews were carried out in the period October 2022 to November 2022. Table 4.1 below shows the time taken for each interview.

Table 4.1 Time taken for interviews

Participants	Time Taken (Minutes)
Board Member	90
Deputy Principal Administration	33
Deputy Principal Academics	47
HoD Maths/ Sits in the Board	32
HoD Games	60
HoD Sciences	20
Parent	22
Outgoing School Captain	25
New School Captain	30

From table 4.1, the minimum time taken for an interview was 20 minutes while the maximum time taken for an interview was 90 minutes.

4.3 Interview Environment

The interviews were done in rooms which had few or no other people so that the interviewees could talk openly. The researcher avoided recording the interviews and took notes instead. This made the interviewees be objective and not biased in their discussions. Table 4.2 below shows the environment where each of the interviews were conducted.

Table 4.2 Interview environment

	Partcipants	Environment/ Venue	Number of people at the place
P1	HoD Games	HoD games office	2 (interviewer and the HoD games)
P2	Deputy principal Academics	Deputy principal Academics office	2 (interviewer and the Deputy principal academics)
P3	New Student captain	Old staff room	2 (interviewer and the student captain)
P4	Board Member	Hotel	2 sharing a table (interviewer and board member)
P5	HOD Mathematics/ sits in the board	Mathematics Department Office	4 (interviewer, HoD Mathematics, 2 Mathematics teachers)
P6	HOD Sciences	Science department office	4 (interviewer, HoD Sciences, 2 science teachers)
P7	Outgoing student captain	Old staff room	2 (interviewer and the student captain)
P8	Deputy principal Administration	Deputy principal Administration office	2 (interviewer and the Deputy principal administration)
P9	Parent	Boardroom	2 (interviewer and the parent)

From table 4.2 it can be observed that 7 out of 9 interviews were conducted in venues where there were no other people apart from the researcher and the interviewee. This minimized bias because the interviewees expressed themselves openly.

4.4 Data Sheet Findings

Table 4.3 below shows the data collected using the data sheet.

Table 4.3 Data sheet responses

Data sheet	Response
Student Population	1148
School fees charged by the school	The government regulates the school fees charged by different categories of school.
Number of teachers	52
CBE load of the school	Number of classes: 21; Number of students: 1148; Number of teachers: 52
Recommended CBE load	Shown on table 4.4
Ratio of BOM vs TSC Teachers	2:11
KCSE mean score from year 2017 to 2021	2017: 7.2140; 2018: 7.6316; 2019: 8.5878; 2020: 9.1509; 2021: 9.500

The table below shows the CBE load for secondary schools according to (TSC, 2017)

Table 4.4 CBE Load

Stream/s	Classes	Maximum Enrolment	CBE	Deputy Principal/s	Senior Master/s
1	4	180	9	1	1
2	8	360	19	1	2
3	12	540	28	1	4
4	16	720	38	1	5
5	20	900	47	1	5
6	24	1080	55	2	6
7	28	1260	63	2	6
8	32	1440	68	2	7
9	36	1620	76	2	7
10	40	1800	85	2	7
11	44	1980	93	2	8
12	48	2160	101	2	9

4.5 Study Findings

4.5.1 Cost leadership strategy

Kitui high School applies some cost leadership strategies to achieve competitive advantage. The government contributes school fees for each student then the remaining amount is paid by the parents. The government regulates the school fees charged by secondary schools. Schools in different categories are allowed to charge specific amounts of fees. In case a school wants to charge a higher levy than the one recommended by the government, it has to seek authority from the government. Sometimes schools may want to charge extra levies when they want to undertake a project and do not have enough funding. Increase in costs of running the school for example because of drought which leads to increase of food prices can tempt schools to charge higher levies. Schools therefore have to adopt cost cutting measures in order to be able to achieve much with the funds they have without asking for extra levy from parents every time.

The school has made effort to reduce it operating costs. The school drilled borehole and that has reduced costs of buying water for the students and school staff.

> *"Before the school drilled a borehole, it used to buy water from a 10,000 litres water bowser every day."* (P#3)

The school repairs most games equipment instead of buying new ones every time and therefore saves some cost. For example, repair of goal posts, balls, uniforms, shoes. The school hosts most of the friendly matches and saves on the cost of transporting its players to the other schools. The school bought a van and minimized the cost of fueling the school bus to transport a small number of people.

The school has reduced frequency of unnecessary BOM meetings. Some issues are solved via the phone. This reduces the cost incurred in paying sitting allowances. The school engages TSC in order to get additional TSC teachers and therefore reduce the number of BOM teachers. This reduces the expenditure for paying BOM teachers' salaries.

When procuring items for the school, the school uses competitive methods of procurement. This enables the school to purchase items from the bidders with the lowest prices. Some of those competitive methods of procurement include tenders and request for quotations.

> *"The principal pays suppliers within the agreed time to ensure that suppliers have faith in the school and deliver the goods and services at an affordable cost."* (P#1)

Low value items are ordered from the supermarket which does not charge delivery costs. The school therefore saves on delivery costs. In construction of buildings, the school uses labour contracts instead of full contractors. This reduces the construction costs because the school is able to buy each construction materials from the lowest bidders.

The school also uses technology to minimize its costs. The accounts office has digitized some of its records. It has a system for receipts and payments (Digitization). This has minimized paperwork and made it easy to retrieve information. The school has CCTV in the compound and in classes. This has contributed to the security of the school and reduced cases of theft by students and outsiders. Parents therefore don't have to replace lost items of students every time. The school has wi-fi which minimizes cost incurred to give each teacher airtime/ internet bundles for downloading teaching content/ resources from the internet. The school has a smart board and projectors which are used by teachers to teach and also show pictorial content easily. This saves on cost of printing such content.

Even as the school comes up with ways of minimizing its costs, it also has to follow up on its income. Funding from government is consistent but school fees paid by parents are not consistent. Sometimes the school has big fee arrears and therefore has come up with ways of reducing the fee arrears. During class clinics, parents are encouraged to pay school fees. Class teachers also call parents to listen to individual cases about the fee arrears. Teacher representatives engage parents through whatsapp groups.

> *"Teachers call individual parents about fee payments, for example they tell parents that when students are chased home, they spend money on fare apart from school fees."* (P#9)

The government restricts sending home of students because of fee arrears. Sometimes schools send home students with fee arrears so that parents make effort to clear the fee arrears. The principal avoids chasing students home because of fee arrears. Maintaining students in school ensures that they don't miss classes and also ensures that students have peace of mind as they study.

4.5.2 Differentiation strategy
Kitui High School offers good quality service.

> *"Kitui high school has been the best in KCSE in the lower eastern region for 3 years. In the year 2021, it was position 11 countrywide in KCSE."* (P#6)

> *"Good performance, discipline and good management of resources attracts students to Kitui High School."* (P#5)

The school plans its activities well. The school always sets a KCSE target and works hard to achieve it. The routine of the school is a bit relaxed, no much pressure on students.

Students are given some time to read for themselves and this contributes to good performance. The school covers syllabus on time. This enables teachers to have time to cover any topics that students have a weakness. It also enables students to have enough time for revision.

Kitui High School offers the best services compared to most of its competitors. Teachers have remedial classes in the morning and evening. Students have discussion programmes where they discuss questions in past papers. Students are allowed to participate in games, music festivals/drama. In the 2022 drama festivals, the school went up to national level. The school has wi-fi which helps the teachers with research and development of teaching materials, examination from other schools, communication with other schools through social media.

The school monitors and evaluates the performance of students. There are Continuous Assessment Tests (CATs) every week to determine if students have understood what teachers taught. Students also have opening, midterm and end term examinations.

> *"Form 4 students have many cycle examinations and talks to help in performance."*
> (P#3)

The performance in CATS and examinations enables the teachers to know which topics students have not understood well and therefore give more attention to those topics when teaching.

The school uses technology to offer best services. The school has CCTV cameras which monitor students and teachers. They ensure that teachers and students attend classes. The school has an automatic generator which ensures constant power supply in case there's no

KPLC electricity. The school has biometrics at the gate to monitor the movement of students in and out of the school. When a student logs into the biometric, the parent gets a text message.

The school negotiates with parents so that they can pay school fees within the required time. Apart from paying school fees through the banks, the school also has a paybill account which makes fee payment convenient. The school accepts payment of fees in kind. This is where parents bring goods for example maize, beans, firewood or other items then the school buys them and that money is used to pay school fees.

4.5.3 Focus strategy

Kitui High School complies with government laws on form 1 admission. The ministry of education distributes primary school candidates to secondary schools depending with their performance in KCPE. National secondary schools get the top performers. The government considers performance of each county because different counties perform differently. Some of the form 1 students fail to report in the secondary schools where there are placed by the Ministry of education in case they are not comfortable with the school. This creates some slots in some schools and therefore the principal can admit some students who want to join the school. The principal of Kitui High School gives a chance to only the students that have attained the KCPE grade required to join a national secondary school.

The school monitors and evaluates academic performance in every examination. This happen from when the students are in form 1. The school does data analysis of examination results and monitors performance of each student. When students drop in performance, teachers follow up with the student to know the cause of drop in performance.

The school gives attention on low grades. When students drop to a grade of C- and below, parents are called by teachers and have a discussion with the student to know why the student is not performing well.

> *"They even check if the environment or family issues contribute to the poor performance."* (P#2)

After the meeting, they agree on a way forward. In case the cause of academic performance drop is mental, the student is referred to the guidance and counselling department. Teachers offer the weak students extra lessons on weekends and in the evenings when there are no other remedial programmes. They also give the students extra homework. They avail books, revision materials and also recommend tuitions when schools are closed. Teachers ask students who perform well in certain subjects to help those who are weak in those subjects through discussions.

The school gives attention to needy students. It supports needy students in the following ways; Some income from the school canteen is used to pay school fees for needy students. Teachers' staff welfare sponsors 2 needy students every term. Students from able families are encouraged to come with extra shopping so that they can share with the needy students through the guidance and counselling department.

> *"The school offers a quarter bread to every student to ensure a balance between those from rich families and those from poor families."* (P#2)

The school inform students about bursaries and encourages them to apply. That includes bursaries by; county government, CDF, from other sources. Sometimes the school approaches local leaders where the students come from so that they can help. Old boys'

association (Alumni) also contribute school fees for needy students. There are also contributions through harambees.

Apart from studies, the school also focuses on talent management of students. This is mostly through games, and music/drama. It has teachers and coaches for the activities and also has facilities for students to participate those curriculum activities. If the school gets opportunities for talented students, it encourages the students to apply.

> *"A boy in 2019 was last in KCSE but he was good in high jump. I connected him* > *with the barracks and he is now working in Airforce."* (P#1)

4.5.4 Resource-based strategy

The school has a well-equipped library. Even though most teachers offer adequate notes to students, they also refer students to the library to read some books for extra knowledge. The library is quiet and sometimes students go there to read their own notes. The school has enough course work textbooks and does not ask parents to buy textbooks unless they are for revision.

The school has well-equipped science laboratories although they are not enough. Since the science laboratories are not enough, the school organizes many practical lessons so that all students participate. The school also has a well-equipped computer laboratory. This enables the students to have practical computer lessons. However, the laboratory is only used by the computer students.

The school has a good number of teachers. It has 52 teachers and 1148 students. Out of the 52 teachers, 44 are TSC teachers while 8 are BOM teachers. Teachers have teamwork. This has contributed to the good performance. Teachers spend enough time in class and even

create extra time. Teachers rarely miss classes. They even teach on behalf of others in case they are not around.

4.6 Extension of existing strategies

This study made an extension to the Resource based view. The extension was made through the psychosocial state and human resource development variables. According to Barney (1991), for an organization's resource to have the potential of sustainable competitive advantage, it must be imperfectly imitable, rare, valuable and has no equivalent substitutes. One of the resources of a school is teachers.

A school can make its teachers more productive by motivating them and training them. Students do the examinations and therefore a school has to make effort to ensure that students understand what they are taught. One way of achieving this is by offering guidance and counselling to ensure that the students have peace of mind.

4.6.1 Psychosocial state

The school ensures that the mental health of students is okay. It does this through guidance and counselling. Mental illnesses include Stress, depression and anxiety disorders. Some causes of mental illness include death of a student's parents, divorce of students' parents, lack of school fees, abuse. Mental health issues can make students fail to concentrate in their studies and perform poorly in examinations.

Kitui High School has peer counsellors (counsellors who are students) who offer advice to fellow students in case of stress or other mental issues.

> *"Some students fear approaching teachers when they have issues."* (P#7)

Major issues are however handled by the guidance and counselling department. The school contributes some money for bereaved students (when students lose their parents).

> *"Last year, the highest number of students lost parents. 6 students lost parents and the school made contribution to each of them"* (P#8)

4.6.2 Human Resource Development

Kitui high school increases the productivity of its employees by motivating them and organizing or encouraging them to attend trainings, seminars and workshops. Staff motivation enables the school to retain its current staff and attract new staff. Trainings, seminars and workshop enable teachers to improve their knowledge and skills. Seminars also enable teachers to learn from teachers of other schools.

> *"Training teachers and benchmarking from other schools really helps teachers to deliver their best. It gives teachers confidence and self-belief."* (P#4)

Kitui High School motivates teachers in the following ways; Teachers are provided food by the school throughout. The school has several staff quarters which accommodate many teachers. Teachers are given tokens when they teach during morning preps, even preps and on weekends. Teachers are given tokens when their students get good grades in KCSE.

> *"On 2021, after the school got good grades in KCSE, teachers were taken to Mombasa using a flight, spend time in Travelers Inn Hotel and travelled back with Standard Gauge Railway."* (P#8)

> *"The principal has good chemistry with the teachers. Teachers are highly motivated so they work hard"* (P#4)

4.7 Data Analysis through data structure

Data analysis was done using content analysis to come up with conclusions. Gioia methodology was used to achieve qualitative rigor. The findings were categorized into first order (informant-centered) and second order (theory-centered).

1st Order Concept	2nd Order theme	Aggregate Dimension
Proper planning of events Long term projects to cut daily costs	Planning	
Flexible payment of school fees Follow up on clearance of pending bills	Negotiation with customers	
Repairs and maintenance Saving on transport costs Reduction of BOM meetings	Operational costs reduction	Cost Leadership
Digitization CCTV, Projectors, laptops, smart board Shared wifi	Technological advancement	
Academic performance monitoring and evaluation	Monitoring and Evaluation	
Timely payment of suppliers After-sale services from suppliers Buying items from lowest bidders	Competitive procurement	

Figure 4.1 Cost leadership

From the data collected, similar statements were grouped together. Labels were then given to each term as shown on the 1st order concepts in figure 4.1. Similar 1st order concepts were then grouped together to form 2nd order Themes. Aggerate dimension was then generated from the 2nd order themes. Figure 4.1 shows that Kitui High School applies cost leadership strategy to achieve performance. The school applies cost leadership strategy through planning, negotiation with customers, reduction of operational costs, use of

technology, Monitoring and evaluating academic performance and Competitive procurement of goods and services.

1st Order Concept	2nd Order theme	Aggregate Dimension

Target setting.
Time management. → Planning

Talent Management.
Research and Development.
Extra classes (Remedials).
Group discussions. → Best Services

Digitization.
CCTV, Projectors, laptops, smart board, automatic generator. → Technological advancement → Differentiation

Academic performance monitoring and evaluation. → Monitoring and Evaluation

Flexible school fee payment.
Follow up on arrears. → Negotiation with customers

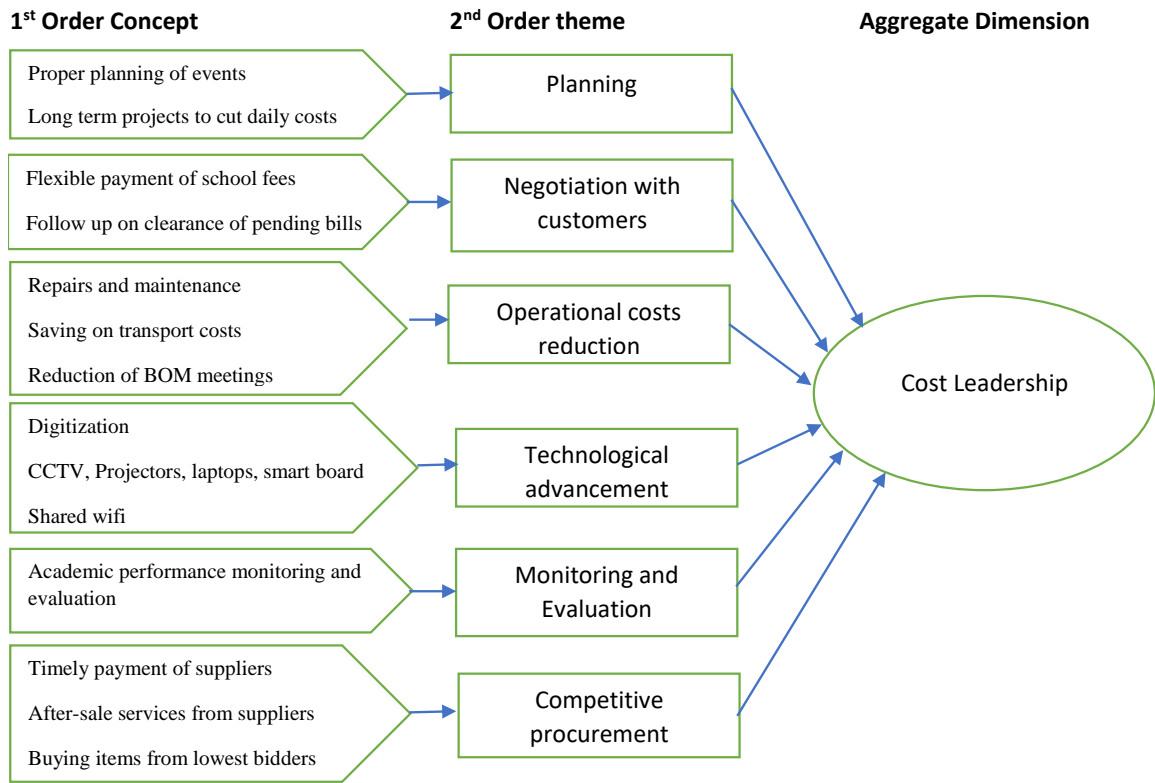Discipline.
Teamwork. → Core Values

Figure 4.2 Differentiation

From the data collected, similar statements were grouped together. Labels were then given to each term as shown on the 1st order concepts in figure 4.2. Similar 1st order concepts were then grouped together to form 2nd order Themes. Aggerate dimension was then generated from the 2nd order themes. Figure 4.2 shows that the school applies differentiation strategy to achieve performance. It applies differentiation strategy through planning, offering best services, use of technology, monitoring and evaluating students' performance, negotiation with customers and core values.

1st Order Concept **2nd Order theme** **Aggregate Dimension**

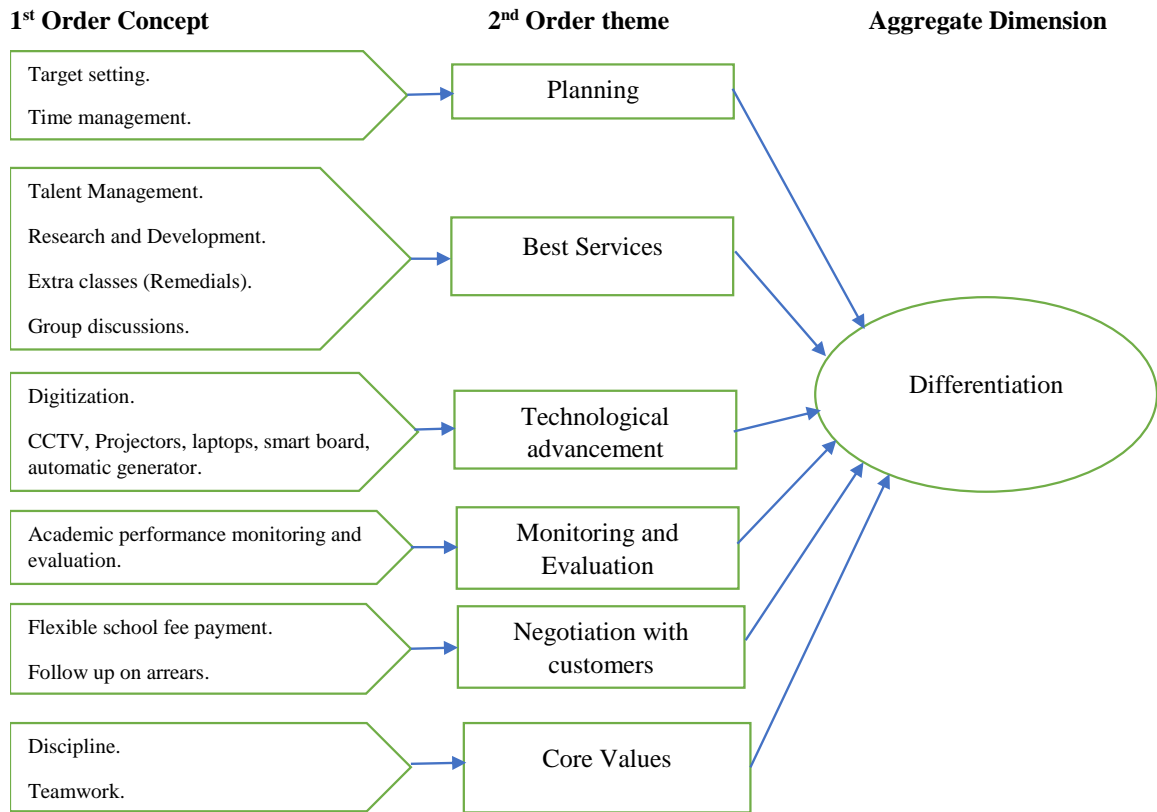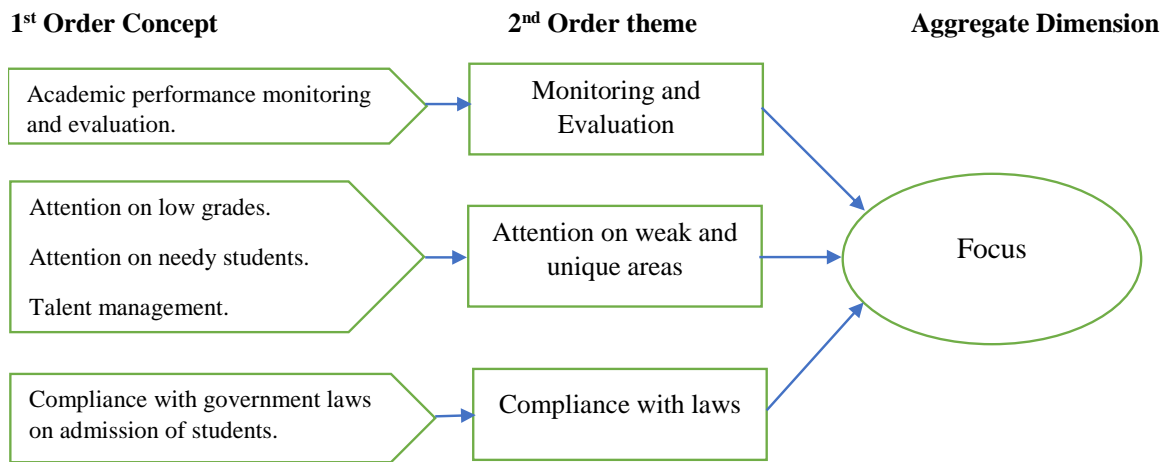| Academic performance monitoring and evaluation. | → | Monitoring and Evaluation | ↘ | |
| Attention on low grades. Attention on needy students. Talent management. | → | Attention on weak and unique areas | → | Focus |
| Compliance with government laws on admission of students. | → | Compliance with laws | ↗ | |

Figure 4.3 Focus

From the data collected, similar statements were grouped together. Labels were then given to each term as shown on the 1st order concepts in figure 4.3. Similar 1st order concepts were then grouped together to form 2nd order Themes. Aggerate dimension was then generated from the 2nd order themes. Figure 4.3 shows that the school applies Focus strategy to achieve performance. It applies focus strategy through monitoring and evaluating students' performance, giving attention to weak and unique areas, compliance with laws.

1st Order Concept **2nd Order theme** **Aggregate Dimension**

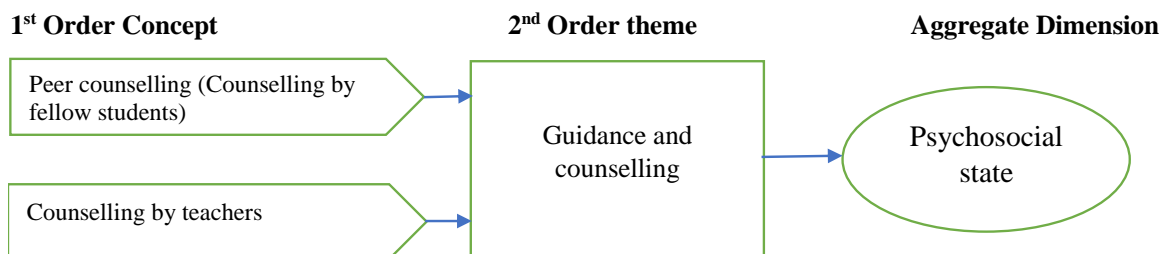| Peer counselling (Counselling by fellow students) | → | Guidance and counselling | → | Psychosocial state |
| Counselling by teachers | → | | | |

Figure 4.4 Psychosocial State

From the data collected, similar statements were grouped together. Labels were then given to each term as shown on the 1st order concepts in figure 4.4. Similar 1st order concepts were then grouped together to form 2nd order Themes. Aggerate dimension was then generated from the 2nd order themes. Figure 4.4 shows that the school monitors the mental health of students in order to ensure that they have peace of mind and therefore perform well. It does this through guidance and counselling.
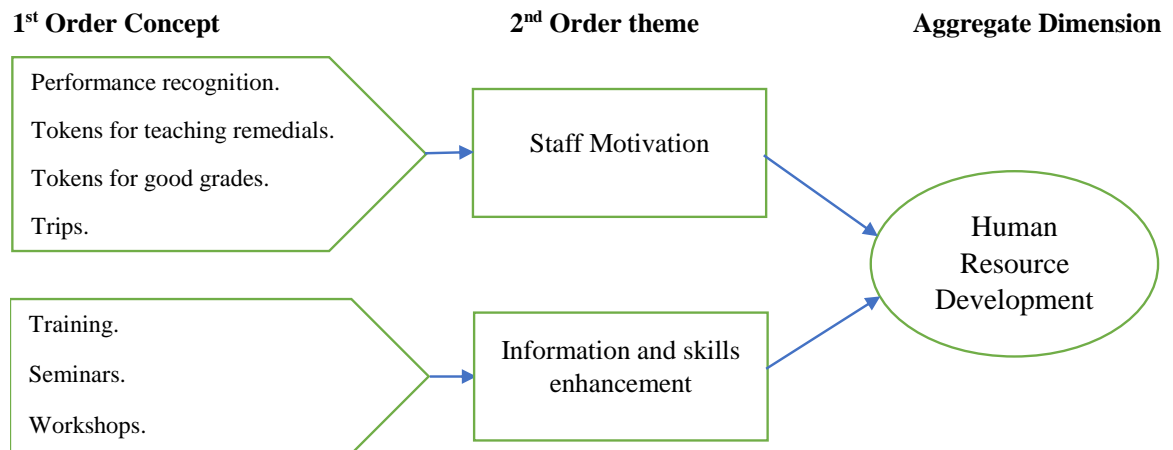
1st Order Concept   **2nd Order theme**   **Aggregate Dimension**

Performance recognition.
Tokens for teaching remedials.   Staff Motivation
Tokens for good grades.
Trips.
                                                                    Human
                                                                    Resource
                                                                    Development
Training.
Seminars.   Information and skills
Workshops.   enhancement

Figure 4.5 Human Resource Development

From the data collected, similar statements were grouped together. Labels were then given to each term as shown on the 1st order concepts in figure 4.5. Similar 1st order concepts were then grouped together to form 2nd order Themes. Aggerate dimension was then generated from the 2nd order themes. Figure 4.2 shows that the school uses resource-based strategies to achieve performance. One of the resources is the teachers. The school motivates teachers and offers them trainings, seminars and workshop in order to improve their productivity.

4.8 Discussion of Findings

The objective of this study was to determine the competitive strategies adopted by Kitui High School. From analysis the study revealed several competitive strategies adopted Kitui High School to achieve good performance. These competitive strategies include; cost leadership, differentiation, Focus and Resource-based strategies.

This study made contribution to Porter's Theory of competitive advantage. Scholars have identified cost leadership, differentiation and focus as some of the competitive strategies used by schools to achieve good academic performance (Kabutia, 2014; Onchaga, 2015; Njoroge, 2018; Mauti, 2010; Wambua, 2014). This study agreed with the scholars and revealed that Kitui High School also applies Porter's competitive strategies to achieve performance. The school applies cost cutting measures, the school offers differentiated services and the school gives focus to needy students, students who are weak in some subjects, students with mental health issue and talented students.

This study made contribution to the Resource-Based-View. Scholars have identified several resources such as teachers that schools can use to be competitive (Kimani, Kara, & Njagi, 2013) (Nyamongo, Sang, Nyaoga, & Matoke, 2014). This study revealed that Kitui High School also uses its resources to be competitive. Some of the resources used by Kitui High School include teachers, library, science laboratories and Computer laboratory. The school motivates teachers so that they can teach the students in the best way. The school ensures that the library has adequate books so that students can refer when they need extra information apart from teachers' notes. With well-equipped science laboratories, students have many practical lessons of biology, chemistry and physics subjects. A well-equipped computer laboratory ensures.

This study made an extension to the RBV through human resource development and psychosocial state variables. Organizations may want to offer cheaper products, differentiated products or target a certain group of customers but that may not be achieved easily if employees are not motivated. When employees are motivated they are likely to perform better and even work for longer hours. Organizations that deal with goods may look for machinery to replace some human capital but then an organization that offers services cannot ignore its employees when trying to offer the best services. Firms have to invest on human resource development. They should reward good performance. They should also organize training, seminars so that they can improve the knowledge and skills of their employees.

In universalistic perspective theory (Delery & Doty, 1996) stated that strategic human resource practices have an impact on an organization's performance. Trainings, appraisal measures, job security, internal career opportunities, job definition, voice mechanisms, and profit sharing are examples of strategic human resource practices. Kitui High School encourages teachers to participate in trainings, seminars and workshops. This leads to improvement of the quality of education offered by the teachers. The school recognizes the good work done by teachers. When teachers create time to teach in remedials, they are rewarded tokens. When students get good grades in KCSE, teachers get tokens and a trip to a good place.

This study agreed with other scholars whose findings were that human resource development can lead to improved performance of an organization. Becker & Gerhart (1996) stated that it is hard to imitate human resource strategies of an organization and therefore human resource is a unique source of sustained competitive advantage.

According to Macduffie (1995) innovative human resource practices can lead to an increase in productivity of an organization. According to Huselid (1995) management practices affect both intermediate employee outcomes (turnover and productivity) as well as short- and long-term metrics of corporate financial performance.

Many organizations make effort to offer the best product to their customers either by making it cheaper than that of its competitors or by making it unique. schools are slightly unique, apart from focusing on their products, they also have to ensure that students are ready to receive their products. They can do this by monitoring the performance of each student in each exam. In case of drop in performance, they can identify the cause of the performance drop. One cause of performance drop is mental health issue. Schools can offer guidance and counselling through trained students (peers) or through teachers (guidance and counselling department). This can ensure that such students get peace of mind and perform well in examinations.

Ecological theory is useful for directing mental health interventions (Eriksson, Ghazinour, & Hammarstro, 2018). Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2006) Ecological theory examines how humans interact with their surroundings. People interact with four different environmental systems: the microsystem, which is made up of people and their immediate surroundings, the mesosystem, which is made up of interactions between settings that contain people, like home and school, the exosystem, which is made up of important institutions, and the macrosystem, which is made up of the rules and laws that govern a society. Changes within a person as well as changes in the environment have an impact on the person's developmental outcome (Erickson, 2018).

Firms should monitor psychosocial state of their employees. They should create awareness about mental health issues, that is their causes and effects. They should also give solutions. Organizations that have medical cover should have an allocation to deal with mental health so that their staff are able to visit psychiatrists. Firms can also have guidance and counselling departments or train their human resource departments to play the role.

This study agreed with other scholars who found that psychosocial state of employees or students affects productivity. Promoting mental health in schools, according to Dix, Slee, Lawson, and Keeves (2012), leads to better learning outcomes. Violence against students is linked to poor mental health and academic performance (Karen M. Devries, 2014). Mental health issues in early childhood and adolescence increase the risk of poor academic performance, indicating the importance of raising awareness and providing treatment to ensure equal access to education (Agnafors, Barmark, & Sydsjö, 2021). (Bostani, Nadri, & Nasab, 2014) found that depression and anxiety have a significant impact on academic performance.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study, gives recommendations and conclusions of the study with reference to the topic of the study, competitive strategies and performance of Kitui High School. The chapter also includes the limitations of the study and suggests further research.

5.2 Summary

The objective of this study was to determine the competitive strategies adopted by Kitui High School to achieve performance. Strategies that were being utilized by the school to achieve performance were differentiation, focus, cost leadership and resource-based strategies.

The school analyzes and monitors performance of individual students using technology and in case there is a drop in academic performance, a meeting is held between the student, parents and teachers. In case the cause of drop in performance is mental health issue, peer counsellors and guidance and counselling departments help the student to have peace of mind. Teachers give attention to weak students and offer them extra classes, extra homework, books and revision materials. The school gives attention to needy students by paying school fees for some of them and informing the about bursaries that that they can apply for them.

The school avoids sending students home because of fee balances so that the students have peace of mind while studying and don't miss classes. The school motivates teachers so that they can continue offering best service. Teachers receive tokens when the school performs

well in KCSE, they receive tokens when they teach during remedial classes, they also have a trip whenever the school performs well in KCSE. The school adopts cost cutting measures in order to avoid charging parents extra school fees and in order to have funds for human resource development and to offer differentiated services.

The school utilizes it resources well to achieve good performance. These resources include; teachers, science laboratories, Computer laboratories and technology. The school motivates teachers to be productive. Some of the ways the school utilizes technology is by having wi-fi so that teachers can access teaching materials in the internet, having a software for analyzing students' performance. The school also has CCTV cameras for security and to monitor students and teachers Even though the school has few science laboratories, there are many shifts of the practical lessons to ensure that the laboratories are not crowded and therefore each student can participate in the practical lessons.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concluded that if schools apply the correct competitive strategies they achieve good performance in academics and curricular activities. Since schools are located in different environments and faced by different challenges, they can apply the strategies that suit them best. They should also consider their target students when formulating the strategies. Schools should also analyze performance of individual students and follow up on individual cases in case there is drop in academic performance. They should not rush to punish the students without evaluating the cause of decline in performance.

Even if some schools have limited resources, they can maximize the use of those resources and that can affect their performance positively. If schools adopt cost cutting measures, they can save and do more things and avoid requesting for extra school fees from parents.

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If schools motivate their teachers and appreciate them when they do a good job, teachers can offer best services and that can lead to good performance. Schools should also give attention to students who are weak in some subjects and needy students.

5.4 Recommendation

The study recommends that government should consider that state of schools while funding schools especially Maintenance and improvement funds that are used for new constructions and repairs of existing constructions. Some schools have less than the required number of science laboratories, less classes, less dormitories. Instead of the government only focusing on categories of schools it should check the facilities that each individual school has.

The government should distribute TSC teachers among schools fairly. It should consider the number of students and class streams that each school has. When schools receive more TSC teachers they can reduce the number of BOM teachers. TSC teachers are paid by the government while BOM teachers are paid by the school. When a school reduces the number of BOM teachers it reduces the cost incurred in paying those teachers. TSC can also consider employing the BOM teachers.

When the government is placing form 1 students in secondary schools, it should consider the capacity of each secondary school. The government should consider the capacity of dormitories, classes, laboratories and number of teachers that the school has. The government has been trying to achieve 100% transition of student from primary school to secondary school. Some schools have had to accommodate more students than the capacity of schools while others have been lucky to have a manageable number.

When giving bursaries to needy students, the government should do due diligence to ensure that students who receive bursaries are really needy students. This will minimize cases

where students from able families receive bursaries while students from poor families fail to get the bursaries. When funding schools, the government should also consider inflation. In some periods, food prices can be high because of factors such as drought.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The teachers had a busy schedule because they had classes to teach so it was not easy for some teachers to create time for the interviews. The study focused on Kitui High Schools which is a national school and the findings could not be generalized to other schools in different categories such as extra-county schools, county schools, sub-county schools and private secondary schools.

5.6 Suggestions for further Research

Further research on competitive strategies applied by other public secondary schools to achieve performance should be done. This can be a national school like Kitui High School, extra-county schools, county schools or sub-county schools. More Studies on strategies adopted by private secondary schools to achieve performance should also be done.

Comparative studies between strategies adopted by public secondary schools and private secondary schools to achieve performance should be carried out. This will enable the schools learn from each other. Comparative studies between strategies adopted by private primary schools and private secondary schools should be carried out. This can show why private primary schools in some countries like Kenya perform well but private secondary schools do not perform that well.

Comparative studies between schools that have had good consistent performance and schools that have not had a consistent performance should be carried out. This will enable

the schools performing poorly know what could be the issue with the strategies adopted

and therefore make changes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview guide

I.   Principal/ Deputy Principals/ Board Member

General: Explain the purpose of the research and the interview

Part A: Personal information

1. What is your name (optional)

2. What is your role in the school?

3. How long have you worked with Kitui High School?

Part B: Competitive Strategies adopted by Kitui High School to achieve educational performance

General:

1. Does your school have a strategic plan?
2. What is the GOK policy on Strategic Plans?
3. When was the last time you reviewed your SP?
4. How do you prepare your strategic plan?
5. How do you monitor the implementation of the SP?
6. What training do you have in Strategic Planning?

Cost leadership

1. How do you manage your costs within the school? Please explain in detail

    a. Have you adopted any cost cutting measures in your school?

2. How is school fees collection done in the school?

    a. What are the challenges associated with collection?

    b. Does the school accept payment of school fees in instalments?

    c. How do you deal with school fees arrears collection?

3. What are some of your biggest cost drivers?

    a. What have been the trends of these costs?

    b. What have been the challenges in managing these costs?

      c.   Have you utilized technology to minimize cost? please explain

4.   Does your school shop around for discounted prices from suppliers to reduce input costs? Please explain

5.   Which cost management strategies has your school implemented over the past 3 years?

Differentiation

1.   How does the school compare its service quality as compared to other competing schools? Name some of the schools

2.   How has the school been able to offer better quality services compared to its competitors?

3.   How does the school motivate teachers to offer the best services? Give some examples.

4.   How does the school incentivize parents to pay school fees? Name some of them e.g payment of fees in kind

5.   How has the school been able to diversity its curricular? Name some of these activities

6.   How has the school embraced technology in offering services? Name some of the initiatives.

7.   Which unique strategies has your school implemented that allowed it to attract students?

8.   Which unique strategy has your school implemented that has allowed it to perform well in the national examinations.

Focus

1.   How does the school attract/ target pupils who have scored specific marks in Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination (KCPE)

2.   What is the geographical diversity of the student population?

3.   How does the school deal with leaners who require remedial or focused attention?

4.   How does the school treat needy students?

5.   How does the school help talented students to get opportunities to enhance their talents?

6. Which deliberate strategies has the school implemented in improving performance.

Part C: Resource-based strategies

1. Do you feel that the school has a well-equipped library? Do you feel that it is adequately stocked and spacious?

2. How has this library affected student performance?

3. Do you feel that the school has adequately-equipped laboratories? Are they enough?

4. How have these laboratories affected the student's performance?

5. What kind of training is offered to the teachers? Is it adequate?

6. What sort of facilities does the school have for extracurricular activities? Are they adequate?

7. Which other resources has the school used to ensure that its performance has improved

Part D: Sustained competitive advantage

1. How has the adoption of the various strategies led to improved performance of the school?

2. How has the implementation of the different strategies had a long-term impact on the performance of the school?

Thank you for your time.

General: Explain the purpose of the research and the interview

Part A: Personal information

4. What is your name (optional)

5. What is your role in the school?

6. How long have you worked with Kitui High School?

Part B: Competitive Strategies adopted by Kitui High School to achieve educational performance

Cost leadership

6. How do you manage your costs within the school? Please explain in detail

    a. Have you adopted any cost cutting measures in your school?

7. How is school fees collection done in the school?

    a. What are the challenges associated with collection?

    b. Does the school accept payment of school fees in instalments?

    c. How do you deal with school fees arrears collection?

8. What are some of your biggest cost drivers?

    a. What have been the trends of these costs?

    b. What have been the challenges in managing these costs?

    c. Have you utilized technology to minimize cost? please explain

9. Does your school shop around for discounted prices from suppliers to reduce input costs? Please explain

10. Which cost management strategies has your school implemented over the past 3 years?

Differentiation

9. How does the school compare its service quality as compared to other competing schools? Name some of the schools

10. How has the school been able to offer better quality services compared to its competitors?

11. How does the school motivate teachers to offer the best services? Give some examples.

12. How does the school incentivize parents to pay school fees? Name some of them e.g payment of fees in kind

13. How has the school been able to diversity its curricular? Name some of these activities

14. How has the school embraced technology in offering services? Name some of the initiatives.

15. Which unique strategies has your school implemented that allowed it to attract students?

16. Which unique strategy has your school implemented that has allowed it to perform well in the national examinations.

Focus

7. How does the school attract/ target pupils who have scored specific marks in Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination (KCPE)

8. What is the geographical diversity of the student population?

9. How does the school deal with leaners who require remedial or focused attention?

10. How does the school treat needy students?

11. How does the school help talented students to get opportunities to enhance their talents?

12. Which deliberate strategies has the school implemented in improving performance.

Part C: Resource-based strategies

8. Do you feel that the school has a well-equipped library? Do you feel that it is adequately stocked and spacious?

9. How has this library affected student performance?

10. Do you feel that the school has adequately-equipped laboratories? Are they enough?

11. How have these laboratories affected the student's performance?

12. What kind of training is offered to the teachers? Is it adequate?

13. What sort of facilities does the school have for extracurricular activities? Are they adequate?

14. Which other resources has the school used to ensure that its performance has improved.

Part D: Sustained competitive advantage

3. How has the adoption of the various strategies led to improved performance of the school?

4. How has the implementation of the different strategies had a long-term impact on the performance of the school?

Thank you for your time

III. Students/ Parents

General: Explain the purpose of the research and the interview

Part A: Personal information

7. What is your name (optional)

8. What is your role in the school?

Part B: Competitive Strategies adopted by Kitui High School to achieve educational performance

Cost leadership

11. Has the school adopted any cost cutting measures?

12. How is school fees collection done in the school?

    a. What are the challenges associated with collection?

    b. Does the school accept payment of school fees in instalments?

    c. How do you deal with school fees arrears collection?

13. What are some of the biggest costs in the school?

    a. Have you utilized technology to minimize cost? please explain

Differentiation

17. How does the school compare its service quality as compared to other competing schools? Name some of the schools (All)

18. How has the school been able to offer better quality services compared to its competitors? (All)

19. How does the school motivate teachers to offer the best services? Give some examples. (All)

20. Does the school accept payment of fees in kind? E.g payment using cereals, firewood

21. How has the school been able to diversity its curricular? Name some of these activities

22. How has the school embraced technology in offering services? Name some of the initiatives.

23. What attracts students to Kitui High School?

Focus

13. How does the school deal with leaners who require remedial or focused attention?

14. How does the school treat needy students?

15. How does the school help talented students to get opportunities to enhance their talents?

Part C: Resource-based strategies

15. Do you feel that the school has a well-equipped library? Do you feel that it is adequately stocked and spacious?

16. How has this library affected student performance?

17. Do you feel that the school has adequately-equipped laboratories? Are they enough?

18. How have these laboratories affected the student's performance?

19. What kind of training is offered to the teachers?

20. What sort of facilities does the school have for extracurricular activities? Are they adequate?

21. Which other resources has the school used to ensure that its performance has improved.

Part D: Sustained competitive advantage

5. How has the adoption of the various strategies led to improved performance of the school?

Thank you for your time

Appendix II: Data Sheet

1. What is the student population of the school? (Develop a data sheet)

2. What has been the number of admitted students in the past 5 years?

3. What has been the average KCPE mean score for the admitted students. (You can also get the cut-off marks for admission and trend over time.

4. How are your school fees in comparison with the amounts charged by the other national schools? Ask for School Fees Proforma for current year.

5. How many teachers does the school have?

6. What is the CBE load for the school?

7. What is the recommended CBE load?

8. What is the ratio of BOM vs TSC teacher?

9. Number of applicants vis-a-vis admissions in the school in the past 5 years

10. KCSE mean score of Kitui High School from year 2017 to year 2021

Appendix III: Introduction Letter

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
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Our Ref: D61/36247/2020   October 25, 2022

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
NACOSTI Headquarters
Upper Kabete, Off Waiyaki Way
P. O. Box 30623- 00100
NAIROBI

RE: **INTRODUCTION LETTER: FRANK MATHEKA MWANIKI**

The above named is a registered Master of Business Administration candidate at the University of Nairobi, Faculty of Business and Management Sciences. He is conducting research on *"Competitive Strategies and Performance of Kitui High School, Kenya".*

The purpose of this letter is to kindly request you to assist and facilitate the student with necessary data which forms an integral part of the Project.

The information and data required is needed for academic purposes only and will be treated in **Strict-Confidence.**

Your co-operation will be highly appreciated.
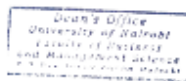
PROF. JAMES NJIHIA
FOR: DEAN, FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

JN/pgr

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