ABSTRACT

Few studies in Kenya have examined the identification and application of critical success factors (CSFs) to various areas of operation in Kenya. The primary purpose of this study was to determine the critical success factors that count for good performance in KCSE by public secondary schools in Kiambaa division. A secondary purpose was to determine whether public secondary schools in Kiambaa division based their success strategies on the critical success factors. The study was informed by the theory on the CSFs approach to management as well as the many studies that have been conducted to determine the major school related factors that influence learner achievement.

Data was obtained by means of a census survey. The respondents were principals, deputy principals and heads of departments in all the 19 public schools in Kiambaa Division. Self administered questionnaires were circulated to all the selected respondents and the response rate was 79% (120/152). To answer the research questions, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics i.e. measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion.

The study found that there were eight critical success factors that count for good performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations in public secondary schools in Kiambaa division. These were high standards of discipline by students; commitment and dedication to the job; proper time management in school; collaborative and supportive leadership style; high standards of discipline by staff; textbooks; training students on study skills; laboratory equipment and chemicals. The study also found that the success strategies given high priority in schools were only somewhat based on the critical success factors. Critical success factor areas were not adequately addressed because schools primarily focused on four of these CSFs i.e. provision of adequate textbooks, high standards of discipline by students, provision of laboratory chemicals and equipment and high standards of discipline by staff. Schools did not pay exceptionally high and continuous attention to proper time management, collaborative and supportive leadership and training students on study skills.
Recommendations for practice include suggestions that education policy makers review their policies on education management to ensure that they reflect the Critical Success Factors, ensure explicit communication of these factors to all appropriate levels of management in a structured manner and design mechanisms to monitor and evaluate how adequately these CSF areas are being addressed in schools. Student discipline being most critical to success should be given very serious and continuous attention by schools administrators who should come up with creative approaches to create or enhance a school culture that embraces self-discipline at its core. School administrators should re-evaluating their strategic priorities and agenda in light of the findings on CSFs and where necessary, rework their strategic plans accordingly.