

Secondary Schools in Kenya at Crossroads of Policy Management Issues and Performance in Project Management: A case of Narok County

Dr. Justus Mochama Gori, PhD

School of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, Garissa University, P.O. Box
801-70100, GARISSA, KENYA. *mochamagori@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigated the challenges principals face in the management of projects in secondary schools in Narok County, Kenya. The following objectives were used to investigate this Phenomenon. To find out whether there is a relationship between funding of projects and management of projects by principals in Narok county; to investigate how the successful implementation of school projects in Narok County is affected by management constraints from principals; and to determine the challenges school principals in Narok County face during monitoring and evaluation of school projects. Cross-sectional research design was used in this study. The target population comprised of 61 secondary schools, 61 principals and 122 Heads of Department. The researcher selected 30% of the 61 schools out of which 18 principals, one each from the 18 sampled schools were interviewed. Questionnaires were used to collect data from 122 Heads of Department (2 each per school). Reliability of questionnaire items was ascertained using Cronbach's alpha index and was found to be .837 while their validity was arrived at by questionnaire items checked by departmental colleagues. Research interview schedule questions' reliability was ascertained by highly restructuring questions and being consistent during interviewing. Data collected by questionnaires were analyzed using Pearson r with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) while that collected by interviews were analyzed using Focus by Question Analysis Strategy (FQAS). Data analysis results were presented in Tables. The findings of the study revealed that there was a relationship between the management by secondary school principals and performance in project management in Narok County. The findings will be beneficial to secondary schools managers in Narok County and Kenya at large.

Key words - Management, Harambee, Cross-roads, Board of Management

1. Introduction

Management is a process of developing and effecting organizational objectives and resources so as to achieve the pre-determined organizational goals (Okumbe, 1998). Management of projects therefore is part of what principals do for the achievement of their schools' academic set objectives. Principals' school management policies and project management are inseparable. It is argued that most governments have decentralized in order to increase the efficiency of public services, for example to allow for greater local participation (Gori, 2014; Bush, 2003; Okojie, 2009). With decentralization in Kenya since 2013, schools were given more autonomy in soliciting for funds, managing and spending priorities (Gori, 2014; Okojie, 2009). Consequently, the task of project management in secondary schools is a

responsibility that rests on school principals. This responsibility that is added to the Principal who is the head and supervisor of the academic division does not only require extra finances to schools but calls for knowledge on project management. In this regard, many Principals in Narok County have found themselves called for spending extra energies and skill in handling this extra responsibility, however, with challenges (Kutsch, 2008). Apart from involving partners, principals are required to supervise and above all see to it that initiated projects are a success. Though with challenges, Principals in Narok County have to solicit for funds to overcome the management constraints and monitor and evaluate projects in their schools, phenomena that were explored in this study.

2. Background to the Study

As Kwak (2003) contend, the history of projects is as old as mankind's civilization. Understanding the past, gives us a chance to better understand the future. Studying the history of project management, one will understand that project management has evolved throughout history. Its continuous evolvement facilitated the advancement of project management, and hence paved the way for the next big project. In spite of the numerous substantial projects in history, there is little documentation of the methodologies or techniques before the 1950s. In the early 1960's, business and other organizations began to see the benefit of organizing work around projects and to understand the critical need to communicate and integrate work across multiple departments and professions (Kutsch, 2008).

Advancements in science and technology expedited the progression of project management as a profession. It is now widely accepted that a project manager requires a special set of skills (Fullan, 1999).

As organizations evolve so will the challenges facing future project managers. However, while the future may require future project managers to adapt by learning new specialized skills, the fundamental elements that make a project manager a great one will not change; leadership, pragmatism, decisiveness, communication and foresight (Erickson, 2009). In Southern Thailand, principals work under intensified and vulnerable situation, insufficient funding and also dealing with the effect of the intensity of cultural unrest and safety of pupils and staff (Sungtong, 2007).

While many developed countries moved to higher and efficient methods of funding of projects of schools through second and third funding formula as early as the 17th century, many developing ones are still in first formula and community funding like Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Thailand, among others (Dowling, 2007; Bray, 1998; Gori, 2012).

3. Statement of the Problem

Principals in Narok secondary schools manage different aspects of school life that include among others projects as routine duties. A survey at different schools in Narok County indicated that there were stalled projects at different levels. Reports by county quality assurance inspectors in their findings during regular supervision of schools indicate that 75% projects were incomplete (GoK, 2014). There are limited financial funders and financial resources that are essential to projects among secondary schools in Narok County. Though some of the projects were

funded by different bodies, partly the school financial bases to supplement such projects are small. Principals in Narok secondary schools have challenges in many aspects that included project management skills and monitoring and evaluation of projects.

4. Research Hypotheses

This research was guided by the following speculations:

- i. There is no relationship between funding and management of projects in secondary schools by principals in Narok county.
- ii. There is no relationship between project management challenges faced by principals and management of secondary school projects in Narok County.
- iii. There is no relationship between monitoring and evaluation challenges faced by principals and management of secondary school projects in Narok County.

5. Literature Review

According to Project Management Institute (2004), project management is the process of the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements. That is, project management is an interrelated group of processes that enables the project team to achieve a successful project. This progression requires project management acumen, expertise, tools and techniques, including risk management, contingency development and change control. These processes manage inputs to and produce outputs from specific activities; the progression from input to output is the nucleus of project management and requires integration and iteration (Prabhakar, 2008).

Yemin, Optlatka and Sagie (2018), argue that project management has increased pressures to school principals especially during decentralization era as they try to satisfy community needs. However, the mere fact that the potential beneficiaries of a proposed project are able to form an enthusiastic lobby for the project, it is in no sense a justification for its being undertaken. Bush (2003) on the other hand defines management as “a field of study and practice concerned with operations of educational organizations” (p.1). Editors’ foreword in Bush and Bell (2000) asserts that, “the effective management of education is regarded as a vital element in school and college improvement” (p.vii).

Fullan (1991) argues that, the principals’ job is to ensure that essential things get done, not to do it all by themselves. In principle, many school principals would agree, however, in practice the administration, management or leadership do vary and many principals appear to be victims of the moment. They are constantly pulled into every day’s events in the school life i.e. answering calls, meeting parents, resolving disputes, attending meetings, while at the same time being implementers or overseer of major educational projects. The head teacher therefore, has the overall responsibility for the leadership and management of the school (Okumbe, 1998).

The project life cycle consist of five essential stages. These stages are definition, planning and researching, implementation, handover and feedback (Qurix, 2001).

According to Qurix (2001) the first two stages are referred to as inception. It is at this stage that the scope is taking into consideration including its political impact as well. Planning is mapping in broad perspective what need to be done and the methods to do these things. At this stage a development and a budget for the project is required. Mobilization is very important for without it beautiful projects might fail due to lack of a good financial base. According to Kezerner (2003) and Qurix (2001), planning stage is where you need to make sure that the architectural designs are prepared to provide a basis for cost estimate is done. The detailed design produced after the client has approved the sketch design and used for cost estimates by the quantity surveyor and the contractors. At this stage, the owners of the project become responsible for thinking out and knowing how to make the project work successfully.

Sponsors of the project and the providers of funds may be interested in the supervision and the implementation through the preparation of progress report on the project or periodic basis. This aims to ensuring the project manager is complying with all government regulations, guidelines and agreements affecting the project (Kezerner, 2003). The implementation stage therefore is the most critical stage of the project since any deviation from the agreed terms can lead to the eventual collapse of the project. As a result, regular site meeting are held to ensure that the quantity of work is in order. When the contractor declares that the project is practically completed the consulting team always go to inspect the project to allow for the commencement of a defects liability period. After six months the team of consultants, client representative and the contractors ensure that the project meets the specification and conducts a pre hand-over inspection. A hand-over schedule is prepared by the architect and presented to the contractor for signing. The schedule reflects construction variations, deduction and the final amount due to the contractor. In this stage, the clients gather information about the project performance so as to improve on similar projects in future.

In project management, project control is essential as the element of a project that keeps it on-track, on-time and within budget. It begins early in the project with planning and ends late in the project with post-implementation review, having a thorough involvement of each step in the process. Like any human undertaking, school projects need to be performed and delivered under certain constraints. Traditionally, these constraints have been listed as "scope," "time," and "cost" (Chatfield, 2004). The time constraint refers to the amount of time available to complete a project. The cost constraint refers to the budgeted amount available for the project. The scope constraint refers to what must be done to produce the project's end result. These three constraints are often competing constraints: increased scope typically means increased time and increased cost, a tight time constraint could mean increased costs and reduced scope, and a tight budget could mean increased time and reduced scope. Each project should be assessed for the appropriate level of control needed: too much control is time consuming, too little control is risky. If project control is not implemented correctly, the cost to the business should be clarified in terms of errors, fixes, and additional audit fees.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of projects is concerned with systematically measuring variables and processes over time and its main purpose is to provide better means for learning from past experience, improving service delivery, planning and allocating resources, and demonstrating results as part of accountability to stakeholders (World Bank, 2004). M&E is an important instrument for the management of school projects and employs quantitative and qualitative measurement tools (Pinto, 2007). As such, it contributes to improving the implementation of projects by enabling continuous feedback of their performance, allowing for the identification of problems as they arise. Based on these premise, it is important that project managers and teams participate actively in the M&E of school projects for they are permanently on the field, are related to the various stakeholders and have a better idea as to how the project is being implemented (McShane & Travaglione, 2007).

School projects in Kenya have a long history. During colonial era, majority of school projects were funded by the government, managed and monitored by the government officials with very few funded and managed by different religious organizations. After independence, while some remained to be funded by the government, some school projects in *harambee* secondary schools were funded and managed by the community in the *harambee* (community pulling together of resources) spirit (Koech, 1999; Kariuki, 1995; Bray 1998). From 2013, under decentralization policy of political and school governance, school projects are funded by the county government, community and the central government (Kenya Constitution, 2010). However, the management of school projects has the school principal as the manager and link between the different funding bodies. Effective execution of school management tasks require that principals to be adequately trained. However, principals in Kenya are appointed from serving teachers (Okumbe, 1998). As Olembo (1992) and Okumbe (1998) note, little orientation is given as to the nature of the work they are supposed to do as education programme and project managers. It is not an easy task to measure the effectiveness of project management in a school setting. This, according to Okumbe (1998), is mainly because different schools have different financial capabilities and resource distribution.

6. Methodology

This research was carried out in Narok County in the former Rift valley Province of Kenya. The county is 150 km south west of Nairobi city. The target population comprised of 61 secondary schools, 61 principals. As Bell (1999), Kombo and Tromp (2006) and Bryman (2016) note, having a population known is essential because it is out of this that samples for actual study are taken. In this study, census sampling was used to select all the 61 secondary schools out of which 112 HODs (2 each per school) were selected as a sample to respond to the questionnaire items. The researcher selected 30% of the 61 schools out of which 18 principals, one each from the 18 sampled schools were interviewed. According to Chilisa and Preece (2005) and Gall, Gall and Borg (2003), a mixed method has advantages of triangulation, a phenomenon that was embraced in this study. Cross-sectional research design was used in this study. This design was deemed appropriate

because it involved collection of data in order to answer questions on the current status of the subjects of the study. It also allowed the researcher to generate both numerical and descriptive data that was used in measuring relationships between variables at a single area (Narok) within a short period of time (Gall et al, 2003; Bryman, 2016). Ethical issues were not only adhered to during data collection by adhering to aspects of confidentiality and anonymity but also during the write and preparation of the project by acknowledging and referencing of used sources (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

7. Research Instruments and Data Collection

The selection of tools for use for a particular study and purpose is essential (Bryman, 2016). The researcher designed the tools for use in this study. Data collected by questionnaires from HODs were processed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. For each of the hypotheses, testing was done by comparing the items of independent variables with those of dependent variables. To facilitate this, the items' means and standard deviations for each variable were established for comparison purposes during computation. To test the relationships between different variables, all the items testing independent variables were compared with all the items testing a dependent variable using Pearson r . The comparisons based on r -values, r -critical of 0.179 at a df of 122, p -values and an alpha level of .05 were used for the rejection or retention of the null hypotheses (Gall, et al, 2003; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006). The researcher also interviewed 18 principals who were considered key informants to enrich the information gathered by questionnaires as a form of triangulation (Gay et al, 2006; Chilisa & Preece, 2005). Data collected through interviews were analyzed using Focus by Question Analysis Strategy. Tables were used to present results of the analyses for both quantitatively and qualitatively collected data.

8. Reliability and Validity of Instruments

Validity and reliability of tools for use in research are essential. According to Gay et al. (2006), Muijis (2004) and Gall et al. (2003), the use of Chronbach's alpha index with the assistance of SPSS is a more accurate method of ascertaining reliability. Using Chronibach's Alpha index, reliability of questionnaire items was found to be .837. For structured questions, reliability was ascertained at two different stages. First, it was done by highly restructuring interview schedule questions at designing stage (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Secondly, it was done at interviewing stage by the researcher interviewing the interviewees by adhering to the same format and being consistent in asking same questions to different respondents using same words and expressions (Gori, 2012). To ascertain validity of questionnaire and structured interview items the researcher presented the tools to the colleagues in the field of educational management to tell whether the items were valid (Gay, et al., 2006; Gall, et al, 2003).

9. Presentation of Data Analysis for Each Hypothesis

For quantitatively collected data, study variables' Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) were established for computation when different variables were compared during analysis (see Table 1). For qualitatively collected data, grouping of respondents' answers according to each question was done before analysis

commenced. Data from both hypotheses and research questions that were testing the same phenomenon were analyzed under the same theme and results compared at interpretation stage.

9.1. Funding and Management Challenges of Secondary School Projects in Narok County

To determine whether there is a significant relationship between funding challenges and management of secondary school projects, hypotheses 1 was tested.

Hypothesis 1

There is no Significant Relationship Between Funding and Management of Projects by Principals in Narok County

To test this relationship, a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was done to determine the relationship between funding challenges (M=1.69, S.D=.317) and Management of school projects (M=1.66, S.D =.434) as indicated in Table 1. With 122 degrees of freedom (*df*), critical $r = .179$ at an alpha level of 0.05. The analysis produced an r of .771 which was greater than .179 (see Table 2). The results displayed in Table 2 indicate that there is a positive correlation between funding challenges faced by principals and management of school projects in Narok County. The two variables were correlated, $r(122) = .771, p < .05$.

From the results of the analysis done to test Hypothesis 1 (see Table 2), it was found that there is a significant relationship between funding challenges faced by principals and management of school projects in Narok County. With a Pearson’s correlation value of .771, it means that the relationship was significant. This means that funding challenges faced by principals affected management of school projects in Narok County.

Table 1
Study Variables’ Means and Standard Deviations

Variables	M	SD
Funding Challenges	1.69	.317
Management constraints	5.12	1.49
Monitoring and evaluation	1.60	.489
Management of school projects	1.66	.434

$p < .05$; $df = 122$; critical $r = .179$; $\alpha = 0.05$.

The results also indicated that r -critical (.179) was less than the Pearson’s correlation r (.771) that was used to determine the rejection or retention of the null hypothesis. This means that the null hypothesis was rejected, thus “there is a significant relationship between funding and challenges faced by principals in the management of school projects in Narok County”.

Table 2
Pearson's Correlation Analysis Between Funding and Management of School Projects in Narok County.

Variable		Funding	Management of School Projects
Funding	Pearson correlation	1	.771
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.000
	n	122	122
Management of school Projects	Pearson correlation	.771	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	
	n	122	122

$p < .05$ (2-tailed); $df = 122$; critical $r = .179$; $\alpha = 0.05$.

Structured interview Questions 1 and 2 sought to determine the financial aspects in relation to funding of projects in Narok County. These questions were designed to obtain relevant information from Principals in relation to funding of projects. In answering question one, out of the 18 sampled interviewees, 11(61%) indicated that secondary schools in Narok County had difficulties in funding of projects while 2 (11%) indicated that there were no funding problems while 5 (28%) indicated that money from funds to schools goes to corrupt deals (see Table 3).

Table 3
Funding of Secondary Schools in Narok County.

Funding	% responses from 18 sampled HODs
Has Difficulties	11 (61%)
No Difficulties	2 (11%)
Received Funds go to Corruption	5 (28%)
Total	18 (100%)

Table 4
Utilization of Funds by Secondary Schools in Narok County.

Fund Utilization	% responses from 18 sampled HODs
Not Fully Utilized	15 (83%)
Fully Utilized	3 (17%)
Total	18 (100%)

Question 2 was used to get data whether funds given by the government were fully utilized in secondary schools in Narok County. Based on question two, 15 (83%) of the interviewees said no while 3 (17%) said yes. Table 4 has details from respondents concerning this aspect. From interview results as displayed in Table 3, it can be interpreted that secondary schools have difficulties in getting funding for projects and that funds given to schools were not enough. On the other hand, Table 4 shows that the funds received are not fully used for projects in schools and that some funds end into corrupt deals. Information from interviewees has a link to the information that was given by HODs.

9.2. Project Management Constraints and Management of Secondary School Projects in Narok County

Hypothesis 2

There is no Relationship Between Project Management Constraints faced by Principals and Management of School Projects in Narok County.

To establish whether there was a significant relationship, a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was computed between project management constraints (M=5.12, SD=1.49) and management of school projects in Narok County (M=1.69, SD=.464) as shown in Table 1. With 122 degrees of freedom, critical r was .179 at an alpha level of .05. The analysis gave an r value of .741 which was greater than .179 (see Table 5). Results of the computation as shown in Table 5 indicated that there was a significant and positive correlation between the two variables, $r(122) = .741, p < .05$. This result shows that there is a significant positive relationship between project management constraints and management of secondary school projects in Narok County. With observed r of .741, it means that the relationship was strong according to the rule of thumb (Muijs, 2004). This means that principals have constraints in managing projects in their schools. This means that Hypothesis 2 was rejected. With rejection, it means “there is a significant relationship between project management constraints faced by principals and management of school projects in Narok County”.

Table 5

Pearson’s Correlation Analysis of the Relationship Between Project Management Constraints faced by Principals and Management of School Projects in Narok - County.

Variable	Management Constraints	Management of School Projects	
Implementation Constraints	Pearson correlation	1	.741
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.000
	n	122	122
Management of school Projects	Pearson correlation	.741	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	
	n	122	122

$p < .05$ (2-tailed); $df = 122$; critical $r = .179$; $\alpha = 0.05$.

On the other hand structured question 3 was used to get information whether schools had problems in the implementation of projects. Out 18 interviewees, 16 (89%) indicated yes, while 2(11%) indicated no as shown in Table 6. From the analyses, there seem to be related information from the principals and HODs that school principals experience difficulties in managing projects.

Table 6

Project Management Constraints faced by Principals and Management of School Projects in Narok County

Implementation Constraints	% responses from 18 sampled Principals
Yes	16 (89%)
No	2 (11%)
Total	18 (100%)

9.2. Monitoring and Evaluation Challenges Faced by Principals and Management of School projects in Narok County.

Hypothesis 3

There is no Significant Relationship Between Monitoring and Evaluation Challenges faced by Principals and Management of School Projects in Narok County.

Like hypotheses 1 and 2, a Pearson product-moment correlation was computed to assess the relationship between monitoring and evaluation challenges faced by principals ($M = 1.60$, $SD = .489$) and management of school projects in Narok county ($M=1.66$, $SD=.434$) as shown in Table 1. With 122 degrees of freedom, critical $r = .179$ at an alpha level of 0.05. The analysis produced an r of .726 which was greater than .179 (see Table 7). Results of the computation as shown in Table 7 indicate that there was a strong positive correlation between the two variables, $r(122) = .726$, $p < .05$. This shows that there is a positive significant relationship which means that the monitoring and evaluation challenges faced by principals affect the management of school projects in Narok County. With an r -critical less than observed r in this analysis, it meant that the null hypothesis 3 was rejected and it could now read as “there is a significant relationship between monitoring and evaluation challenges faced by principals sand management of school projects in Narok County”.

Structured question 4 was used to collect information from principals on whether monitoring, evaluation and feedback prevailed among the principals in regard to projects in Narok county secondary schools. When asked to tell whether principals monitored, evaluated and got feedback on the projects in their schools, 10 (55.5%) indicated yes, 7 (39%) said no while 1 (5.5%) did not have an idea. Table 8 has results for this analysis. From this result, it is revealed that monitoring and evaluation of projects is done by most heads. While HODs indicated that there

were challenges in monitoring and evaluation of projects, majority principals indicated that monitoring and evaluation was done.

Table 7
Pearson’s Correlation Analysis Between Monitoring and Evaluation Challenges Faced by Principals and Management of School projects in Narok County.

Variable	Monitoring and Evaluation	Management of School projects	
Monitoring and Evaluation	Pearson correlation	1	.726
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.000
	n	122	122
Management of school Projects	Pearson correlation	.726	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	
	n	122	122

$p < .05$ (2-tailed); $df = 122$; critical $r = .179$; $\alpha = 0.05$.

Table 8
Monitoring and Evaluation Challenges Faced by Principals and Management of School projects in Narok County.

Monitoring and Evaluation	% responses from 18 Sampled HODs
Takes Place	10 (55.5%)
Did not Take Place	7 (39%)
Not Sure	1(5.5%)
Total	18 (100%)

10. Discussions

Financial management related factors facing principals in Narok secondary schools affected the performance in managing projects just as the lack of skill and training on project management. From this study it also emerged that implementation of projects was a factor for below bar performance in managing projects. Principals were found to lack the necessary skill and training on project management and implementation strategies and this in the overall affected the management of projects in secondary schools in Narok County. This study is significant in that the variables studied were found to have a link with the principals’ inability to manage projects in their schools. In other words the implication is that for principals to be

able to manage projects well, all the variables studied should be seen to contribute positively towards this course. That is to say: finances should be readily available to finance projects, stake holders involved, principals trained and monitoring and evaluation of projects done well. Efficiency on how principals manage projects was found to have a relationship with the performance in project management.

Existing literature and knowledge on management of projects indicate that management of resources is an important phenomenon that has direct links to performance and that the manager's role in project management has a link to resulting educational outputs (Levacic, 1997). This is in line with Gori (2015) who found out that there is a link between management of resources and organizational performance. Funds for use in Narok secondary schools are availed by the community and the government (Bray, 1996, Gori, 2014). However, information from principals indicated that availing the resources for projects in Narok had challenges. The existing literature shows that there is a link between availing of funds for use in schools by the community and project management (Kariuki, 1995; Koech, 1999; Levacic, 1997).

11. Summary and Conclusions

This study investigated the challenges that principals in secondary schools face in their management of school projects in Narok County. The study was guided by three independent and one dependent variable (see Section 4 and Table 1). To investigate this, objectives and hypotheses were developed to guide the study; relevant information related to the topic/problem under investigation in form of literature review was done; methodology adapted for use in finding a solution to the problem was laid down; data was collected with the aid of questionnaires and interviews; and analysis of data was done using Pearson r and Focus by Question Analysis Strategy methods.

The analyzed results from data collected by questionnaires revealed that: funding of projects, Implementation constraints and monitoring and evaluation of projects had a relationship to management challenges faced by secondary school principals in managing of projects in Narok County. The findings of data from interviews on the other hand revealed that: secondary schools have difficulties in funding projects and that funds given to schools are not enough; that Principals had problems in implementation of projects in their schools; and that monitoring and evaluation of projects was done by most principals.

12. Recommendations and Further Research

Project management challenges were found to be vital. Out of the research findings, the following recommendations were made: Secondary schools in Narok County should find a reliable method of financing their projects. Dependence on the government funds was found inadequate in this study. Secondly, there is need to have compulsory seminars on school management and project management for principals upon which appointment of principals should be pegged.

It was suggested that the following areas be considered for further research. First, there is need to investigate whether other bodies other than the ministry of

education can be involved in the funding of projects and once projects are completed they are handed to the schools as the ministry of education pays the said bodies at the completion stage. This will remove the principals from doing the management of projects as they are left to concentrate in the management of school academic programmes. Secondly, there is need to carry out research on whether principals need special training on project management for better management of resources for project management. In this study it emerged that principals lack training on project management.

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