Involvement of Stakeholders in Establishment of Infrastructure Projects in Schools

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ABSTRACT

Headteachers’ involvement of stakeholders is crucial in enabling them to develop and implement infrastructure projects in public primary schools. This formed the basis of the proposed study to assess headteachers’ planning skills and their influence on the implementation of infrastructure projects in public primary schools in Kisii South Sub-county, Kisii County, Kenya. Using the mixed methodology and concurrent triangulation research design, the study target population of 773 consisted of 59 headteachers and 714 teachers in public primary schools in Kisii South Sub-county. Yamane’s Formula was used to determine a sample size of 264 respondents. Through stratified random sampling, the population was categorized into wards with Kisii South Sub-county. The study then used purposive sampling to select two primary headteachers from each ward. 31 teachers were selected from each of the zones using simple random sampling. Qualitative data was collected from headteachers using interviews, while quantitative data was collected from the teachers using questionnaires. Qualitative data was categorized according to various themes, analyzed thematically, and presented using verbatim. On the other hand, the quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means. This was accompanied by correlation analysis to examine the degree of association between the independent variables and the dependent variable of study findings are hoped to assist the headteachers in improving their planning skills by bringing forth quality educational concerns and useful recommendations. The Ministry of Education may benefit from this study in evaluating and strengthening the processes of implementation of projects in primary schools.

Keywords: Infrastructure projects, performance, public primary schools, resource management skills, stakeholders.

I. INTRODUCTION

Per the United States Department of Education, the primary responsibility for education in the United States of America (USA) lies with the State and local governments: “It is States and communities, as well as public and private organizations of all kinds, that establish schools and colleges, develop curricula, and determine requirements for enrollment and graduation. Public schools are funded and operated by local school districts, with curriculum standards and regulations set by the state education departments” (USDE, n.d.-c).

In the USA, there are common aspects in the structure of education. Prekindergarten (preprimary) education is not provided or required by the government but is widely available through private preschools, daycares, and federally funded programs like Head Start (OCC, n.d.). Nevertheless, recent reports show that 50.4% of 3- to 4-year-olds in the USA were enrolled in school overall in 2021 and 40.3% in 2019 (NCES, 2023). That is an increase from pre-covid to post-covid. Although this age group of preprimary students increased, the USA was still below and falling behind the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average in the participation level in early childhood education programs. “Between 2005 and 2019, average enrollment rates for 3- to 5-year-olds across OECD countries increased from 77 to 87%. In contrast, the rate in the USA remained stable at 66% during this period” (Dinkes, 2021). Post-covid, the USA enrollment for 3-to 5-year-olds was 62.8% (NCES, 2023).

In the USA, kindergarten is the first formal year of education for children. It is usually attached to a primary or elementary school. Therefore, in the USA, elementary (or primary) education usually covers grades kindergarten to 5 or 6. Meanwhile, secondary education includes middle school or junior high school (grades 6 or 7 to 8) and high school (grades 9 to 12). State laws vary on the minimum age limit to which free education must be offered; a few states require free public education as young as 4 years of age, and
most require free public education as young as 5, whereas the age of required school attendance varies from 5 to 7 years of age (Frances & Perez, 2020). Therefore, many states may fund preschool education but required attendance for the formal state- and locally funded education begins with elementary (primary) school.

Options within the USA public school system include schools within a specific local school district, public charter schools, and primary and secondary high magnet schools specializing in specific areas such as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); arts and humanities; International Baccalaureate (IB); other college preparation or leadership: career and technical; and foreign language and cultural studies (Walton & Ford, 2014).

Post-secondary education in the USA includes community colleges, public universities, and vocational schools. The accreditation of post-secondary education providers is conducted by regional and national accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) (2021). Education in the USA is primarily funded through local, state, and federal sources. Local property taxes typically provide a significant portion of funding for public schools, with additional support from state and federal funds. Higher education is often financed through scholarships, grants, loans, and personal contributions.

Infrastructure for primary schools in the USA is typically accomplished through government funding, local initiatives, and public-private partnerships. The main aspects involved in establishing and maintaining infrastructure for primary schools are building/facility construction, facility maintenance, technology and educational resources (e.g., computers, projectors, interactive whiteboards, internet connectivity, libraries, laboratories, playgrounds, and sports facilities), safety and security (including measures such as security cameras, controlled access systems, emergency preparedness plans, and safety protocols), accessibility and inclusivity for students with disabilities (e.g., ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, and specialized equipment or technology to support students with specific needs), and environmental considerations (e.g., energy-efficient lighting, HVAC systems, and eco-friendly building materials).

The responsibility for primary school infrastructure lies primarily with local school districts, working in conjunction with state and federal authorities. They collaborate with education professionals, architects, contractors, and community stakeholders to ensure that the infrastructure meets students’ educational and safety needs while adhering to relevant regulations and standards. An example of adequate USA school safety infrastructure is Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), which Carter and Carter (2001) assert must involve those responsible for school design, use, and maintenance. According to the National Crime Prevention Council, “schools should include designers, administrators, facilities personnel, law-enforcement officials, teachers, and students as they identify and develop appropriate strategies.” In the USA, local school districts may have voters pass bond proposals to fund the design and construction (redesign and renovation) of elementary school buildings, upgrading technology, and purchase of fuel-efficient transportation systems (Sargent, 2023).

Federal funding through programs like the Every Student Succeeds Act (USDE, n.d.-a) or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (USDE, n.d.-b) may also contribute to infrastructure development, especially for schools serving economically disadvantaged areas or students with special needs. However, Carter (2000) asserts that competent principals leading high-performing schools in higher-poverty areas of the USA have the authority to determine budget allocations, personnel selection, and curriculum decisions. To achieve optimal teaching outcomes, principals must have the autonomy to establish their curricula, recruit faculty members independently, and employ teaching methods aligned with their vision. The absence of such freedom renders a school principal devoid of power. Effective principals acquire autonomy through institutional support or asserting it themselves. Principals who have successfully cultivated an environment of academic achievement generally enjoy the liberty to operate independently. However, attaining this status necessitates exceptional principals to exhibit non-conformist tendencies that challenge existing norms or adopt a low-key approach to accomplish their objectives. Schools catering to low-income students frequently encounter financial constraints. Despite operating on limited budgets, proficient principals exhibit resourcefulness in ensuring the success of their schools. Their achievements depend on their ability to innovate and adapt. Unless principals are granted the freedom to allocate their budgets according to their discretion, the integrity of their schools will be compromised.

In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, successful implementation of projects is important in enabling schools to achieve their curriculum objectives. In Lesotho, for instance, primary schools that adhere to and implement projects realize 76.8% of their curriculum objectives (Ntho, 2013). Such primary schools witness improved implementation of infrastructure projects, meet deadlines for particular tasks, and school heads have full mastery of what is expected of them while implementing the projects. In Ghana, Agosiobo (2015) avers that, for any school to achieve its objectives, school heads must implement their projects as the focal point of any organization and operation. However, Agosiobo (2015) asserts that the implementation of school projects is often challenging and problematic and requires the attention of school management. In Zimbabwe, an assessment report by Hope and Timmel (2016) shows that many primary schools fail to implement projects due to school heads’ inadequacies. Hope and Timmel (2016) note that
many primary school headteachers cannot mobilize resources, identify and involve stakeholders and trained staff, or undertake monitoring and evaluation skills as strategies for achieving school objectives. This means perfect educational arrangements are vital to attaining educational goals and realizing quality education.

In Kenya, the scenario is the same with an appreciation of the fact that planning skills such as the ability to mobilize resources, involve stakeholders, identify trained staff, and undertake monitoring and evaluation activities, which headteachers play a crucial role in implementing infrastructure projects. In Kakamega County, for example, Mukabi et al. (2020) note that headteachers’ project planning and implementation skills are critical to primary schools’ success. Mukabi et al. (2020) indicated that poor planning is one of the leading causes of failure of many projects in primary schools. Kisii South Sub-county is no exception, with many public primary schools having been victims of ineffective implementation of projects.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Implementation of infrastructure projects is the process of realizing or actualizing the objectives of strategies developed by different schools or organizations. Aaltonen and Ikavalko (2012) opine that infrastructure projects and their implementation are the focal point of any school organization and its operations. In a study carried out in Slovenia, Čater and Pučko (2010) pointed out that implementation refers to the process that changes plans and strategies into useful actions to hit the set goals.

However, according to Čater and Pučko (2013), how school plans are implemented matters in determining their outcomes. This means the success of the organization lies in favour of the strategy and implementations made. To support this assertion, Pearce et al. (2010) carried out a study in the Netherlands which confirmed that poor planning and implementation are the core cause of an organization’s failure.

In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Teklemariam (2016) asserts that implementing these establishments is regarded as carrying out the decisions made and controlling subsequent performance. However, in a study in Nigeria, Omolola (2016) revealed that little time has been allocated to these school projects, favoring the moves taken in infrastructure projects.

In Kenya, there is recognition that the implementation of such plans has not been smooth due to the concerns raised by the majority on how they perceive the lack or inadequacy of resources (Mwita, 2017). The research made in Kisii South Sub-county, Ngugi (2015) revealed that these establishment has been very difficult and problematic and requires management attention across all level of the organization without understanding the challenges. Implementing infrastructure projects in primary schools has not been devoid of strategic challenges and, thus, the need for this study.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher used triangulation to combine the data. This design fits because it gives the researcher a chance to collect both qualitative and quantitative data that can be tabulated in numerical form. The study was conducted in Kisii South Sub-county of Kisii County, Kenya. Kisii South Sub-county has 59 public primary schools, and thus, the target population was 773 respondents, which comprised 59 headteachers and 714 teachers in public primary schools in Kisii Sub-county (Kisii South Sub-county Education Office, 2022). A sample frame entailed a sample of 264 subjects consisting of 248 teachers and 16 headteachers. Research instruments refer to the tools used to gather data about specific set themes and include the questionnaire for teachers and the interview guide for head teachers. Data analysis started by pointing out common themes, which were assigned labels and codes. The data was split into phases. The questionnaire items were labeled and coded. The responses were then entered into SPSS v.24.0. Descriptive statistics relating to each individual thematic area were generated. The statistics were in the form of frequencies, percentages, and means. Similarly, there was correlation analysis to ascertain the degree of association between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The statistics were presented using tables and charts. On the other hand, qualitative data was analyzed thematically aligned to research objectives with narrations to depict the first-person responses. As such, fewer distortions can be experienced. The qualitative findings were then presented using verbatim.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Response Rate

The study sampled 264 research participants consisting of 16 public primary school head teachers and 248 classroom teachers from the Kisii South Sub-county. Owing to various challenges, the study managed a response rate of 80% (n=198) for the questionnaires among the classroom teachers and 68% (n = 11) key informant interviews among the 16 sampled head teachers. The response of the questionnaires as a source
of quantitative data was analyzed and presented using Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 shows the yield of the questionnaire return rate at 80%. This higher return rate was achieved through persistence in follow-ups through physical visits and phone calls. Moreover, the close liaison with the respondents developed a rapport that enhanced the response. According to Draugalis et al. (2008), a response rate of at least 80% is expected. The response rate of 80% attained this expectation. Based on the assertion, the response rate was considered to be sufficient enough for use in data analysis.

B. Headteachers’ Stakeholders’ Involvement Skills and Implementation of Infrastructure Projects in Primary Schools

The collection of quantitative data through questionnaires among the teachers entailed various items aligned to the theme of stakeholders’ involvement. The teachers were asked to rate how often their head teacher manifests the following skills while involving stakeholders in the implementation of infrastructure projects in their school. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics through frequencies and percentages. The findings were presented using Fig. 2.

Fig. 2 shows that 90 teachers (45.5%) indicated that the head teacher often identified skills that manifested different stakeholders. 10 teachers (5.2%) indicated that their head teachers never identified skills that manifested different stakeholders.

Fig. 2 shows the same trends in the teachers’ feelings about the head teachers’ identification of tasks with different stakeholders. About 45.5% of the teachers indicated that the head teacher often identified tasks associated with stakeholders. This is necessary for the implementation of the infrastructure projects in schools.

In a different questionnaire item, the teachers were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with the following statements on the influence of headteachers’ stakeholders’ involvement skills on the implementation of infrastructure projects in their primary schools. The data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages and presented in Table I.
Table I shows that the largest portion of the teachers (46%) agreed that their headteachers understood how to involve stakeholders with specific skills for the implementation of school infrastructure projects. While another portion of the teachers (16%) strongly agreed with the statement, about 4% of them strongly disagreed with it. This shows differences that may exist in the schools among the head teachers on practice through involving stakeholders in school projects. Sbicca et al. (2019) argue for the involvement of many stakeholders to embrace collaborative concession projects of any kind. This is thought to be an attribute of resource mobilization.

Table I also shows that 47% of the teachers indicated that in their schools, the headteachers had the ability to assign tasks to be undertaken by different stakeholders while implementing infrastructure projects. The trends in the findings depict similar positions among the teachers, as the largest portions agree with the subsequent statements. About 55% of the teachers agreed that in their schools, the headteachers understood the role of stakeholders in achieving the objectives of infrastructure projects. About 44% agreed with the statements “In my school, the ability of the head teacher to involve the right stakeholders has led to the successful implementation of infrastructure projects” and “While drawing infrastructure projects, my school head teacher usually consults with stakeholders who eventually become the implementers of the plans.”

The findings depict an understanding and embrace of stakeholder involvement among the head teachers in public primary schools in Kisii South Sub-county.

The qualitative findings through interviews with the head teachers showed consistency with the quantitative findings. Each head teacher anonymously pointed out the importance of cooperating with all stakeholders to consult infrastructure projects in the schools. One head teacher mentioned:

“Without taking into account that parents, the community, the political leaders, the school BOM, the teachers, and even the ministry, projects may not succeed in these schools. Their goodwill is as good as having funds for the projects themselves. Having funds alone is not sufficient to run a successful infrastructure project in the school. We need all of them to succeed.” (Interviewee KI 01)

The findings also reflect the findings from other earlier studies. De Oliveira and Rabechini (2019) analyzed how stakeholder management influenced trust in project management. Using primary data from practitioners of project management in Brazil, the study employed the PLS-PM methods. The findings showed an influence of relational stakeholder management on trust in project management. It was reported and recommended that project officers need to embrace stakeholders’ participation in projects for success.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study findings showed that about 45.5% of the teachers indicated that the head teacher often identified tasks associated with particular stakeholders. This was necessary for the implementation of the infrastructure projects in schools. The study revealed differences that may exist in the schools among the
head teachers on practice through involving stakeholders in school projects. The trends in the findings depict similar positions among the teachers, as the largest portions agree with the subsequent statements. For instance, about 55% of the teachers agreed that in their schools, the headteachers understood the role of stakeholders in achieving the objectives of infrastructure projects.

The findings depict an understanding and embrace of stakeholder involvement among the head teachers in public primary schools in Kisii South Sub-county. The correlation analysis revealed that the headteachers’ involvement of stakeholders to a relatively large and significant extent ($r = 0.643$) influenced the implementation of infrastructure projects in public primary schools in Kisii South Sub-county.

REFERENCES


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