


# Availability and the Level of Implementation of Strategic Plans in Secondary Schools in Nandi County, Kenya

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Francis Kipkemboi Sang<sup>1</sup>, Jonah Nyaga Kindiki<sup>1</sup>, James K. Sang<sup>1</sup>, Gladys Jematia Rotich<sup>1</sup>, and Keror Kipruto<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

The need for performance-based management in Kenya has brought in itself changes in the approach of management of institutions. Strategic planning is very crucial in realization of this important management outlook. The purpose of this study was to establish availability and the level of implementation of strategic plans in schools in Nandi County. The study adopted a mixed-method design. The target population included district education officials, senior teachers, and principals of secondary schools. A sample of 322 respondents which form 16% of the population arrived at using Krejcie and Morgan Formula was used. The study sample comprised of 85 secondary school principals out of a population of 152 and 234 senior teachers out of 1,900, and all the 5 district education officers. The respondents were selected using purposive, proportionate, and simple random sampling technique, and the instruments for data collection were questionnaires and interview schedule. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as measures of central tendencies. The findings of this study revealed that majority of the secondary schools in Nandi County had no functional strategic plans to guide their respective schools to achieve their desired mission and vision; most of the plans in place are used in academic purposes, planning, and infrastructure development. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should train well all school managers in public secondary schools on strategic planning process. The study therefore amplifies the need for the government to streamline the strategic plan policy in view of expectations of Ministry of Education circular in strategic planning of 2003.

## Keywords

availability, implementation, strategic planning

## Background of the Study

Recent requirement in education reforms in Kenya demanded that education management and the sector as a whole needs to refocus its role so as to achieve its set targets. Hence, there was need for schools to adopt and embrace performance-based management for effective attainment of the school objectives (Republic of Kenya, 2006). Among the many challenges facing educational institutions were poor performance and lack of adequate physical and human resources (Education News Magazine, 2006). The Kenya's Ministry of Education (MOE) was responsible for providing an appropriate regulatory framework, developing policies and guidelines, providing educational support services, mobilizing resources for education sector inputs, and coordinating human capital development through education and training (Republic of Kenya, 2005).

The Kenyan Education Sector has since the year 2003 embarked on plans to institute reforms at all levels. The MOE

circular, MOE/PLAN POLICY/NO.12/ 04/2003, instructed that all secondary schools develop strategic plans and submit copies to the permanent secretary. In view of that, the Kenya's MOE demanded that adequate and deliberate planning should be made to ensure continuous and phase improvement and provision of all resources that contribute to effective and efficient performance and development.

Strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it (Cunningham, 2006). To deliver the best results, strategic planning requires broad yet effective information gathering, development, and

<sup>1</sup>Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

<sup>2</sup>University of Eldoret, Kenya

## Corresponding Author:

Francis Kipkemboi Sang, Moi University, 3900 30100 Eldoret, Eldoret, Kenya.

Email: [fk\\_sang@yahoo.com](mailto:fk_sang@yahoo.com)



exploration of strategic alternative, and an emphasis on future implications of present decisions. The foregoing authors (Bryson, 1998; Romney, 1996) consent that strategic planning involves a process of charting the way of the future in consideration of the present and the means to get to the desired future.

Canole (1999) conducted a study on strategic planning in three Rhode Island school districts in the United States and found that strategic planning had several benefits. One of the major benefits was the change in the way people worked. The planning process involved the entire community; it was a much more democratic way of planning for the district. The study also revealed that strategic thinking and acting emanate from strategic planning. Indeed, Lane, Bishop, and Wilson-Jones (2005) also pointed out that strategic planning in education had several benefits as it establishes a vision, mission, and beliefs for the school district; establishes the path to accomplish its desired future; provides for a path that allows the community to work together to accomplish these goals, objectives, and activities that constitute the strategic plan; allows for an understanding of how a school district works and how finances are spent, and identifies the needs of the school district; and allows the school district to set a specific data-driven priorities. The foregoing authors agree that strategic planning is beneficial as a management tool as well as for providing the desired ends.

Results of the research done by Ralph (2006) concluded that the intensity with which education institutions engage in the use of formal strategic planning has a direct positive effect on schools' general development and mediates the effect of managerial and organizational factors on school's overall performance. The results also indicated a reciprocal relationship between strategic planning intensity and performance. That is, strategic plan intensity causes better performance, and in turn, better performance causes greater strategic planning intensity (Ralph, 2006).

Strategic planning emerged in public education as a management tool in the mid-1980s (Kaufman & Herman, 1991). The term appeared in educational publications for the first time around 1984, and by 1987, an estimated 500 school districts around the United States were using some type of strategic planning (Conley, 1992). Kaufman and Herman (1991) presented a clear picture of the process of strategic planning from start to finish. This process includes selecting desired results, identifying a mission, assessing needs to formulate new purposes, developing and implementing action plans, and evaluating the success of the strategic plan. Kaufman and Herman (1991) supported this and suggested similar practical guidelines, concrete techniques, and pragmatic advice geared explicitly to educational practitioners.

A study on analysis of the factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans in selected Technical Training Institutes in Meru Central District, Kenya, by Omboi and Mucai (2011) focused on managerial behavior, institutional policies, resources allocation, reward, and incentive influence on implementation of strategic plans. The study findings pointed out

that the strategic thinking of the school managers and the extrinsic motivation of the teachers contributed largely to the extent to which the strategies were implemented. Most of the strategic plans are kept in the office only to be made available to external school inspectors (Omboi & Mucai, 2011).

The preceding authors have clearly pointed out that strategic planning was very important in management of both education institutions and business world. Although emphasis has been clearly placed on the need of strategic plans in developed countries, little emphasis has been placed on strategic planning in Kenyan education institutions. Hence, there is need to carry out a study on the availability and the level of use of strategic plans in Kenyan education institutions to establish the availability and the level of use and make appropriate recommendations on the future use of these important management tools.

## Implementation of Strategic Plans

Implementation is the system-wide action taken by institutional members aimed at accomplishing formulated strategies. Implementation is important to institutional performance because strategies do not add value unless properly implemented (Raps, 2009). In the United States, Romney (1996) analyzed implementation studies conducted on strategic plan implementation process. Among these studies, most variables are related to the strategic plan implementation process. They include consensus building, information flow, group cohesiveness, control systems, and risk undertaking. The highlight is on the critical role that employee capability plays in the implementation process, stressing that success in this area can become a core competency. As well, a study by Porter and Harper (2003) in the United States contended that managers, employees, and institutional infrastructure must be brought together in a way that culminates in a high level of implementation capability, which when accomplished will provide an institution with a core competence.

One of the major purposes of strategic plans is to promote the process of adaptive thinking or thinking about how to attain and maintain institutional environment alignment (Ansoff, 1991). Educational institutions, however, appear to gain more because they can derive considerable benefits not only from adaptive thinking, but also from integration and control in strategic plan implementation. Small institutions can derive considerable benefits from adaptive thinking but probably gain less than large institutions from the integration and control aspects of strategic plan implementation.

However, development of the strategic plan greatly helps to clarify the organization's vision and mission and ensure that key leaders are all on the same script (Berry, 1997). The strategic planning process begins with an assessment of the current economic situation, first, by examining factors outside the school that can affect the school's performance. In most cases, it makes sense to focus on the national, local or regional, and the sectors forecasts. This part of the analysis should begin early, at least a quarter or so before the formal planning process

begins. Hence, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) observe that strategic planning positively affects institutions' performance, or more specifically, the amount of strategic planning an institution conducts positively affects its general performance.

An effective strategic plan implementation process involves devising of a well-crafted mission and objectives statement, environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation and control (Ralph, 2008). The principal as a chief executive plays a critical role in this engagement. The principal is required to come up with plan strategies that are geared toward incorporating all stakeholders in the school.

Cross-unit working relationships have a key role to play in the successful implementation of strategic decisions (Chimhanzi, 2004). Effectiveness in implementation is affected negatively by conflicts and positively by interpersonal communication. In turn, these interdepartmental dynamics are affected by senior management support, joint reward systems, and informal integration. The relationships between different strategy levels also reflect the effect of relationships among different cross-organizational levels on strategy implementation (Slater & Olson, 2001). The above authors concur that for effective implementation of strategic plans, there has to be cooperation and good working relationship among all stakeholders.

In a school situation, different stakeholders and players affect the implementation process. These could include the principal, deputy principal, departmental heads, and teachers, parents, the school board of governors (BoG), and the parents teachers association (PTA). The relationship between these school entities affects the smooth running of all the school activities, thus affecting strategy implementation. This study therefore aimed at determining the availability and the level of implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Nandi County, Kenya

### Statement of the Research Problem

In a time of performance-based management and education reforms in Kenya, strategic plans are very important tools to achieve desired education and academic goals. Different education institutions have therefore developed their own strategic plans depending on their status, needs, and objectives. Kenya's MOE in the year 2003 made it mandatory for schools to develop their domesticated strategic plans to guide the school development. Canole's (1999) and Lane et al.'s (2005) studies observed that there is a positive relationship between plans and performance in schools. Use of plans brings about attainment of projections in performance and success all round. Since the time (2006) the MOE made its own strategic plan and further reinforced the need for each school to develop a domesticated strategic plan, some schools had attempted to make their own strategic plans, whereas others were yet to embrace this idea.

In Nandi County, several schools were yet to embrace strategic planning idea. Statistics from reports of the district

education officers (DEOs) in the county pointed out this trend in implementation of strategic plans. Out of 152 public secondary schools, a few of the Nandi County schools had embraced implementation of strategic plans in schools' general progress. Of particular interest were Nandi South and Tinderet Districts where the percentages of the schools which had implemented the plans were each less than 10%. This was an alarmingly low statistic despite the government policy to embrace performance-based approaches one of which was the implementation of strategic plans in schools. It was against this background that the researcher was motivated to carry out a study on the availability and the level of implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Nandi County.

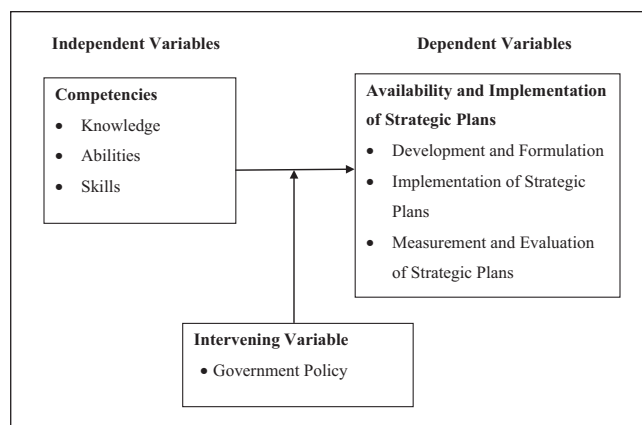
### Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to establish availability and the level of implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Nandi County, Kenya.

### Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Competency Model postulated by Boyatzis (1998). The model held that the competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) or qualities that a person had determined performance of a task at a particular time in an organization. As applied to this study, the model held that competencies associated with the task of undertaking mission and objectives, environmental scan, strategy formulation, implementation, measurement, and evaluation of strategic planning determine the availability and implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools. This implies that the principals who had implemented or who would implement strategic plans were those with relevant competencies on their implementation.

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework on relationship between competencies and strategic plan implementation.

## Research Design

Research designs are plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). This study adopted a mixed-methods design for it was useful in helping researchers meet the criteria for evaluating the “goodness” of their answers (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) better than do the single-approach designs. A mixed-method research is an approach to inquiry that combines both qualitative and quantitative forms. It involved integration of philosophical assumptions, the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study. It was thus more than simply collecting and analyzing both kinds of data; it also involved the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study was greater than either one of the two approaches (Creswell, 2009).

## Target Population

The study targeted all teachers, principals, and DEOs in the Nandi County. The study area was the entire Nandi County. The region was made up of five administrative districts: Nandi North, Nandi Central, Nandi South, Nandi East, and Tinderet Districts. The districts were situated in the North Rift region of Kenya. The region was made up of 152 public secondary schools. The target population of this study included all the 1,854 teachers, 152 principals in the public secondary schools, and 5 DEOs in the county, all totaling 2,011 respondents.

## Sampling

The sample size depends on what one wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what is useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resource. The sample size formula for this study was Krejcie and Morgan (1970) as quoted by Kasomo (2001). The formula is given as follows:

$$n = \frac{\chi^2 \times N \times P(1-P)}{(ME^2 \times (N-1)) + (\chi^2 \times P \times (1-P))}$$

Where

$n$  = sample size

$\chi^2$  = chi-square for the specified confidence level at 1 degree of freedom = (3.841) from tables

$N$  = population size

$P$  = population proportion (.50 in the table)

$ME$  = desired margin of error (expressed as a proportion = .05)

$= 3.841 \times 2006 \times 0.5 (1 - .5) / .05 \times .05 (2006 - 1) + 3.841 \times .5 (1 - .5)$

$= 1926.2615 / 5.97275$

$= 322$

Using the formula, the sample size for a target of 2,006 respondents excluding the 5 key informants was 322 (16%) respondents. Apart from the 322 respondents who were selected, the study also had 5 in-depth interviews with key informants who included all DEOs in all the 5 districts.

## Sampling Techniques

This study used various sampling techniques so as to come up with a representative population that enhanced generalization of the research findings, because it was not possible to seek the views of everyone for generalization of results. These included the following:

### Census

A census (“sample survey”) for DEOs was used (Kothari, 2008). This consideration was made because the target was small and hence the population was easily handled.

### Simple Random, Purposive, and Proportionate Sampling

Simple random sampling technique was used to select samples from the population of principals and teachers. This procedure ensured that all the members of population in each districts of the Nandi County were given equal chances of being included in the sample. The results obtained from probability or random sampling were assured in terms of probability, and this fact brought out the superiority of random sampling design over the deliberate sampling design (Kothari, 2008).

From 85 schools as per the number of 85 principals randomly selected, senior teachers were purposively and proportionately selected on the basis of length of stay and the number of teachers respectively in each of the 85 secondary schools all totaling 237 senior teachers.

## Research Instruments

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), social science commonly uses questionnaires, interview schedules, observational forms, and standardized test as research instruments. This study used both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, which involved key informant interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis.

## Pilot Study

After securing a research permit, piloting was done. Piloting was important to establish both the reliability and content validity of the instrument and to improve questions, formats, and scales (Ross, 2005). A pilot study was carried out in a neighboring County of Uasin Gishu. The county was chosen

because it shared similar characteristics as the study area. The researcher selected a total of 10 principals and 20 teachers from each of the three districts of the greater Uasin Gishu County. The results from the piloting were incorporated in the final instruments' revisions and improved its content validity as well as questions, format, and scale reliability (Ross, 2005).

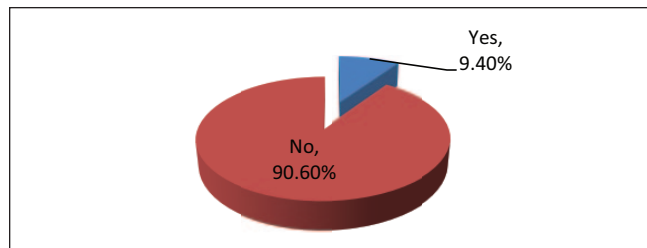
### Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

To determine reliability of research instruments, the researcher re-administered the same test 2 weeks after the first administration in a pilot study that was conducted with 10 principals and 20 teachers in a neighboring Uasin Gishu District. The responses were used to determine the reliability of the instrument. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used. Cronbach's alpha is a coefficient of reliability. It is commonly used as a measure of internal consistency. Using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient formula, the researcher found a reliability coefficient of .89, which was considered a good strong and acceptable measure of reliability by every standard between the two scores.

Golafshani (2003) described validity as the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences based on the research results. To evaluate the content validity of the instruments, the researcher came up with dimensions and elements that constituted adequate coverage as per the studies' objectives. This validity was a function of how well the dimensions and elements of a concept have been delineated (Brewer, 2000; Ross, 2005). Face validity was done by ascertaining whether at face value, the questions appear to be measuring the construct as per the research objectives. Face validity indicates that the items that are intended to measure a concept on the face of it look as if they measure the concept. The researcher observed this to ensure that the instruments provided adequate coverage of the study concepts. This was largely a common sense assessment, but also relied on knowledge of the way people respond to survey questions (Brewer, 2000; Ross, 2005).

### Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected in visits between the months of October, 2011, and February, 2012. A copy of the permit was made and issued to research assistants and made available to authorities in the field. The first visit involved reconnaissance visit to the study area to familiarize with the research area and obtain relevant data for refining the research thesis. The second visit was to identify research assistants and induct them on how to administer the questionnaires. During the second visit, research assistants were trained for a period of 2 days on ethical issues such as safety, how to obtain informed consent from participants, privacy and confidentiality concerns, and how to handle adverse events among other techniques of data collection.



**Figure 2.** Availability of strategic plans in secondary schools.

The questionnaires were then administered to principals and senior teachers with the help of four research assistants when schools were on session. In the third visit, the researcher administered the interview schedules to DEOs and obtained information related to document analysis.

### Data Analysis

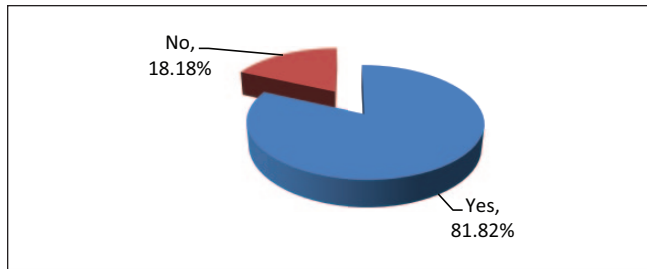
Data analysis involves organization, interpretation, and presentation of collected data to reduce the field information to a usable size (Onen & Oso, 2005). The questionnaire data were first subjected to preliminary processing through validation, coding, and editing and tabulated before in readiness for analysis with the help of the SPSS computer package as a "tool-box" to analyze data related to objectives. The missing scores were checked for completion, and where missing, the average of the completed scores was taken as representative of the entire score on the considered items. After analysis, data were presented in tabular form using frequencies and percentages. Percentages were used to determine and explain proportions. Precisely, descriptive statistics, frequencies, and percentages were used to analyze data on the availability and level of implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools. The results from the interviews were transcribed and put in themes before being reported thematically with the one with the highest rate of responses given priority just after presentation of quantitative data. The information obtained from the documents such as strategic plan booklets augmented information from the questionnaires and interviews.

### Results

The principals were asked to indicate whether their schools had strategic plans. The results are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 indicates that 8 (9.4%) secondary schools in Nandi County had functional strategic plans, whereas 77 (90.6%) secondary schools had no strategic plans. Those schools with strategic plans have had them mostly for 5 years or less. The results indicate that majority of the secondary school principals in Nandi County had no functional strategic plans to guide their respective schools to achieve their desired mission and vision

The DEOs were interviewed to provide in-depth information about strategic plan availability and level of implementation in their district's secondary schools. When asked about



**Figure 3.** Strategic plan development in the secondary schools in Nandi County.

the status of strategic plan implementation in the district, one DEO had the following to say:

As few as two schools have developed and implemented strategic plans in their schools. Most schools have not implemented strategic plans in the district in spite of the benefits attached to strategic plan use as a management tool. In fact most principals are skeptical about the use of the strategic plans in their schools.

The DEOs' report reinforces the principals' responses concerning availability of strategic plans in the secondary schools.

Those principals whose schools had no strategic plans were further asked to indicate whether they had plans of developing a strategic plan for their schools. The results are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3 points out that 63 (81.82%) principals indicated that they had plans of formulating a strategic plan for their respective schools, whereas 14 (18.18%) principals indicated that they had no plans of obtaining a strategic plan for their schools. Hence, majority of the principals in secondary schools in Nandi County who had no strategic plans for their schools were in the process of developing one, whereas a few had no plans of developing a strategic plan for their schools.

Those principals in secondary schools with strategic plans were further asked to respond to items on the implementation of strategic plans in their respective schools. The results are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4 points out that 8 (100%) principals indicated that they had implemented strategic plans in their schools in academic performance purposes, 7 (87.5%) had implemented in budgeting purposes, whereas 1 (12.5%) had implemented it in budgeting. Five (62.55%) principals had implemented strategic plans in capacity building, 4 (50%) had implemented it in human resource development, 8 (100%) principals had implemented strategic plans in planning purposes, and, at the same time, 8 (100%) principals had strategic plans implemented in infrastructure development. This therefore indicated that all the principals who had developed strategic plans in their schools had implemented them for academic purposes, planning, and infrastructure development, whereas

some had implemented them in budgeting, capacity building, and human resource development in their respective schools.

Furthermore, the DEOs were asked to give their views concerning strategic plan implementation in their district's secondary schools. When asked about the implementation of strategic plans in the district schools, one DEO stated,

The secondary schools with strategic plans have implemented mostly in academic performance and infrastructure development. The schools have seldom implemented in human resource development and capacity building. This could be attributed to newness of plans in their schools hence are still making tryout on application of the plans in their schools.

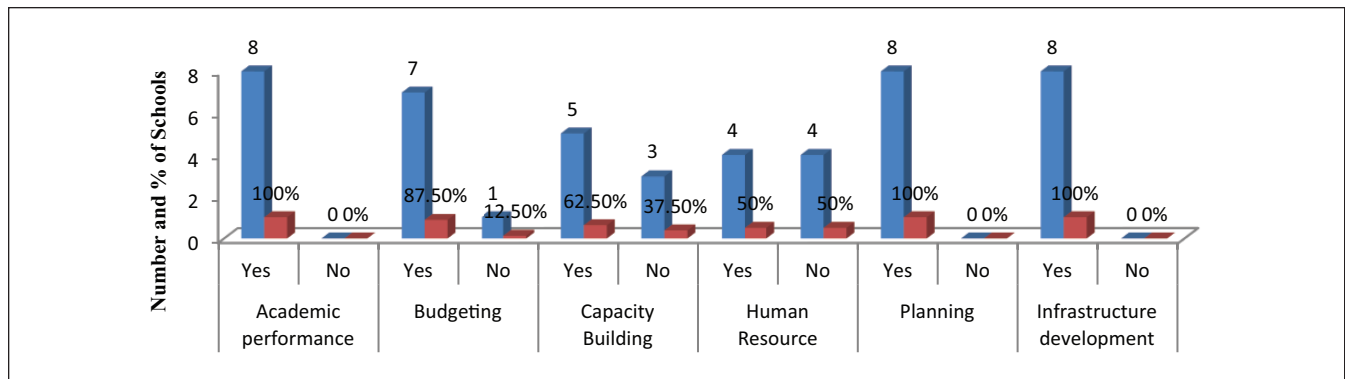
This response reinforces those of the principals that majority of the strategic plans had been implemented in infrastructure development and academic performance. In schools, implementation of strategic planning is best done in all areas in school management for it to serve its intended purpose. These results concur with Bell (2002) and Lerner (1999) that strategic plans should be implemented in academic performance and infrastructure development, human resource development, and capacity building, planning, and budgeting in education institutions. It was therefore important for schools to implement strategic plans in their schools in all areas so as to achieve the anticipated overall performance.

## Summary of the Study Findings

It was found out that very few (8; 9.4%) secondary schools in Nandi County have functional strategic plans, whereas majority (77; 90.6%) of secondary schools had no strategic plans. The results indicated that majority of the secondary school principals in Nandi County had no functional strategic plans to guide their respective schools to achieve their desired mission and vision.

On whether the schools were having plans of adopting strategic plans, it was found out that 63 (81.82%) principals indicated that they had plans of developing a strategic plan for their respective schools, whereas a few principals (14; 18.18%) indicated that they had no resolve of developing a strategic plan for their schools. It was therefore concluded that majority of the principals in secondary schools in Nandi County who had no strategic plans for their schools were in the process of developing one, whereas a few had no plans of developing a strategic plan for their schools.

Regarding implementation of strategic plans in their respective schools, it was found out that all principals (8; 100%) indicated that they had implemented strategic plans in their schools in academic performance purposes, majority (7; 87.5%) had implemented in budgeting purposes, whereas only 1 had not implemented it in budgeting. Similarly, majority of the principals (5; 62.55%) had implemented available strategic plans in capacity building, half (4; 50%) had implemented



**Figure 4.** Implementation of strategic plans in the county secondary schools.

it in human resource development, all (8; 100%) principals had implemented the strategic plans in planning purposes, and, at the same time, all principals had implemented strategic plans in infrastructure development. It can therefore be concluded that majority of the secondary schools with strategic plans in Nandi County had implemented strategic plans for their rightful purposes and intentions.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that majority of the secondary school principals in Nandi County had no functional strategic plans to guide their respective schools to achieve their desired mission and vision; that all the principals who had developed strategic plans in their schools implemented them in academic purposes, planning, and infrastructure development, whereas some had implemented theirs in budgeting, capacity building, and human resource development in their respective schools. It is therefore important that a competent and representative stakeholders' team should be put in place and through in-service and training on strategic planning process, competencies on strategic planning is enhanced so as to increase the level of its implementation.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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### Author Biographies

**Francis Kipkemboi Sang** has a PhD in Educational Administration and is currently a board member Nandi county Public Service Board. He is also a part time lecturer in numerous universities in Kenya. He has published in various international refereed journals.

**James K. Sang** is a professor of Education in Moi University's department of Educational Management and Policy Studies. He has been serving in Moi University's top administration for over thirty years. He has also published in various international refereed journals.

**Jonah Nyaga Kindiki** is a professor of Education, Educational Management in Moi University. He has been a head of department of Educational Management and Policy Studies and is currently dean of Faculty of Education, Moi University. He has published in various refereed journals.

**Keror Kipruto** is a lecturer of Development Studies in University of Eldoret's Department of Human Resource. He was previously head of department, Development Studies in Mount Kenya University Eldoret. He is currently pursuing PhD studies in Environmental Economics at the University of Eldoret. He has also published in various refereed journals.

**Gladys Jematia Rotich** is a PhD student at Moi University's department of Educational Administration and Policy Studies. She is currently a lecturer and head of department of Curriculum and Teaching in Mount Kenya University, Eldoret.