

Effect of Stakeholders' Involvement on Strategy Implementation in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Buuri East Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract

Implementation of strategies in senior public secondary schools remains unsuccessful despite the hard work put in by various sectors. This study examined the effect of stakeholders' involvement on strategy implementation in senior public secondary schools in Buuri East Sub-County, Meru County in Kenya. The stakeholder theory was the main theory of the study. A descriptive survey research design was employed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from stakeholders involved in the governance and management of senior public secondary schools. The target population comprises 22 senior public secondary schools in Buuri East Sub-County, with respondents including principals, deputy principals, Board of Management chairpersons, Parent Teacher Association chairpersons, teachers, and school bursars, resulting in a total population of 132 respondents. A census approach was used because the population size was small. Data were collected using structured questionnaires containing both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), as well as a linear regression model, while qualitative responses were analyzed thematically. The study found that the level of stakeholder participation played a significant role in strategy implementation within senior public secondary schools in Buuri East Sub-County, Meru County. Stakeholder involvement had a $\beta = 0.570$, signifying that it improved strategy implementation by 0.570. The study concluded that strengthening stakeholder participation enhances the successful implementation of school strategic plans, while inadequate participation impedes implementation. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education, Teachers Service Commission, Kenya Education Management Institute, Boards of Management, and school principals strengthen stakeholder engagement and continuous professional development to improve strategy implementation in senior public secondary schools.

Keywords: *Stakeholders' Involvement, Strategy Implementation, Senior Public Secondary Schools, Buuri East Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya*

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1. Introduction

Stakeholders' involvement is a critical factor influencing the success of strategy implementation across educational institutions and organizations. Inclusion of key actors enhances ownership, accountability, and alignment between planned strategies and actual outcomes (Bryson, 2018). Stakeholder involvement has been acknowledged as an important factor in determining the success of strategy implementation. The strategic management literature indicates that the participation of key players in planning, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of strategies increases success by increasing ownership, accountability, and commitment (Leithwood et al., 2020; Bryson et al., 2022). Lack of involvement of the right stakeholders results in poor implementation of strategies even when proper strategies exist.

Internationally, studies have consistently linked stakeholder participation with improved implementation outcomes in education. Studies from North America, Europe, and Asia reveal that teacher, parent, school principal, and community involvement improve collaboration, coordination among institutions, and the implementation of school strategies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021; OECD, 2023; Ng & Szeto, 2021). Nonetheless, implementation problems exist when there are problems of leadership and stakeholder participation.

In Africa, the participation of stakeholders has also been linked with effective implementation of educational programmes, but lack of money, governance, and accountability continues to influence the effectiveness of implementation (UNESCO, 2022; Uwizeyimana & Mukunzi, 2021; Mhando & Mboya, 2022). Implementation outcomes of schools using participatory leadership are better than those of schools using a centralized form of leadership.

In Kenya, some research has examined the role of stakeholders in ensuring effective implementation of the strategic plan in schools (Waweru & Orodho, 2021; Okonya et al., 2023; Kawinzi et al., 2024). However, there is little evidence on the role played by stakeholders in influencing the implementation of strategies in rural public secondary schools, specifically in Buuri East Sub-County in Meru County. The current study focused on the effect of stakeholders' involvement on strategy implementation in senior public secondary schools.

1.1 Problem Statement

Effective strategy implementation is vital for the success of educational institutions. Effective strategy implementation within senior public secondary schools involves transforming plans into improved academic performance, effective use of resources, and sustainable institutional development. Despite the legal requirement for Kenyan senior public secondary schools to have strategic plans consistent with national education policies, many continue to face implementation difficulties (Kabeyi, 2020; Wheelen et al., 2021).

Implementation challenges are indicated by poor academic performance and slow institutional development. For instance, Buuri East Sub-County in Meru County continues to be among the bottom four out of the thirteen sub-counties in KCSE performance. This indicates poor implementation of strategic plans within the senior public secondary schools. According to previous literature, some of the causes of implementation difficulties include inadequate stakeholder involvement, poor governance systems, poor allocation of financial resources, and inadequate administrative capacity (Mulandi & Wamitu, 2022; Juma et al., 2022; Kawinzi et al., 2023; Kibabii et al., 2024). The current study sought to investigate the impact of organizational factors on strategy implementation in senior public secondary schools in Buuri East Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

To determine the effect of stakeholders' involvement on strategy implementation in senior public secondary schools in Buuri East Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: Stakeholders' involvement has no significant effect on strategy implementation in senior public secondary schools in Buuri East Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Stakeholder Theory, formulated by Freeman (1984) and subsequently modified by Freeman and Evan (1990), states that organizational success is dependent on the active involvement of all stakeholders in decision-making processes. In relation to this particular study, Stakeholder Theory suggests that the successful implementation of strategic plans in senior public secondary schools depends on the involvement of various stakeholders such as Boards of Management, principals, teachers, parents, pupils, and the government. Through their involvement in planning, decision-making, resource mobilization, implementation, and monitoring, ownership, accountability, and commitment will be encouraged, increasing the likelihood of successful implementation of school strategic plans. Thus, through Stakeholder Theory, the influence of stakeholders' involvement on the implementation of strategies in senior public secondary schools in Buuri East Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya, was studied.

2.2 Empirical Review

Stakeholder involvement is an important determinant of successful strategy implementation in educational institutions. According to Arnahoutova et al. (2025) and Bryson (2018) from the United States, Souza and Secchi (2021) from Brazil, Tan (2021) from Singapore, Sasaki et al. (2024) from Japan, Caldwell (2020) from Australia, and El-Sayed (2021) from Egypt, participatory decision-making, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement facilitate ownership, accountability, resource mobilization, and implementation success. Similarly, findings from Africa include Oduro and Dachi (2021), Kessy and Mushi (2022), Katerengabo et al. (2023), Okonya et al. (2023), Njuguna (2024), Kawinzi et al. (2023), and Ouma and Wanyonyi (2024). Nevertheless, the reviewed literature was mainly conducted in developed countries, urban areas, or focused on school improvement, governance, infrastructure projects, or organizational performance rather than strategy implementation in rural public secondary schools. Furthermore, most studies used qualitative and cross-sectional designs or involved few stakeholder groups. Consequently, the gap in context, concept, and methodology prompted this research in Buuri East Sub-County, Meru County, using mixed-methods research involving stakeholders from various schools.

3. Methodology

The target population comprises 22 senior public secondary schools in Buuri East Sub-County, with respondents including principals, deputy principals, Board of Management chairpersons, Parent Teacher Association chairpersons, teachers, and school bursars, resulting in a total population of 132 respondents. A census approach was used because the population size was small. Data were collected using structured questionnaires containing both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), and a linear regression model, while qualitative responses were analyzed thematically.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

The study sampled 106 respondents and was issued with closed- and open-ended questionnaires. Their response rate is in Table 1.

Table 1: Response Rate

Respondents	Unreturned Questionnaires	Incomplete	Returned Questionnaires	Percentage
Principals	2	2	18	81.8
Deputy Principals	5		17	77.3
BOM Chairpersons	4	2	16	72.7
PTA Chairpersons	3	1	18	81.8
Teachers	3		19	86.4
School Bursars	3	1	18	81.8
Total	20	6	106	80.3

Table 1 demonstrates that 18(81.8%) principals, 17(77.3%) deputy principals, 16(72.7%) BOM chairpersons, 18(81.8%) PTA chairpersons, 19(86.4%) teachers and 18(81.8%) school bursars responded to the questionnaire. In total, 106 respondents out of the 132 targeted sample returned filled-in questionnaires, hence an average response rate of 80.3%. There were 26 questionnaires that were not returned and 6 incomplete sections. According to Juma et al. (2022), a high response rate was received from the findings of strategic planning and its execution in senior public secondary schools; therefore, the study was able to gain reliable results from analysis. This response rate was regarded as appropriate for data analysis.

4.2 Reliability Results

A pilot study was carried out in two senior public secondary schools in Buuri West Sub-County. The reliability results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability Results

Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients	Decision
Stakeholders' involvement	0.872	Reliable
Strategy Implementation	0.821	Reliable
Average	0.847	Reliable

The average Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.847, while specific variables like stakeholders' involvement (0.872) and strategy implementation (0.821) had coefficients greater than 0.07. The questionnaire as a data collection instrument was reliable because of good internal consistency. This is because all the reliability coefficients are greater than the recommended

threshold of 0.70. The questions developed in the study were considered acceptable, with most of them attaining internal consistency.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics of Stakeholders' Involvement

Stakeholders' involvement was measured through parent participation, teacher involvement in decision-making, student involvement, timely stakeholder meetings, and feedback mechanisms. Table 3 represents the descriptive results on an Ordinal Likert Scale where SD-Strongly Disagree, D-Disagree, N-Neutral, A-Agree, and SA-Strongly Agree, and thereafter the open-ended questions.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Stakeholders' Involvement

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Standard Dev
N=106							
Parents actively participate in school strategies	4 (3.8%)	7(6.6%)	62(58.5%)	16(15.1%)	17(16.0%)	3.33	0.953
Teachers are actively involved in decision-making	3(2.8%)	7(6.6%)	7 (6.6%)	36(34.0%)	53(50.0%)	4.22	1.024
Students are involved in development processes	40(37.7%)	29(27.4%)	11(10.4%)	11(10.4%)	15(14.2%)	2.36	1.436
Stakeholder meetings are conducted regularly	0(0.0%)	14(13.2%)	12(11.3%)	31(29.2%)	49(46.2%)	4.08	1.052
The school has effective communication and feedback mechanisms	7(6.6%)	2(1.9%)	82(77.4%)	4(3.8%)	11(10.4%)	3.09	0.857

The results indicated that 53(50%) strongly agreed and 36(34.0%) agreed, with a mean of 4.22, that teachers were actively involved in decision-making processes regarding school strategies.

A total of 49(46.2%) strongly agreed, and 31(29.2%) agreed, with a mean value of 4.08, about conducting regular stakeholder meetings in the schedule.

Precisely 62 (58.5%) were neutral, and 17 (16.0%) strongly agreed, with a mean value of 3.33, about parent involvement in the formulation and implementation of school strategies.

Furthermore, 82 (77.4%) were neutral, 11 (10.4%) were strongly agreed, and 11 (10.4%) were neutral, with a mean value of 3.09, about communication and feedback mechanisms being effective at the school.

It was revealed that 40 (37.7%) strongly disagreed and 29(27.4%) disagreed, with a mean value of 2.36, about students' involvement in school development and implementation activities.

From these results, it is certain that most senior public secondary schools in Buuri East Sub County, Meru County, Kenya, saw teachers as essential stakeholders in strategy development and implementation processes. The fact that 84.0% of respondents agreed with the statement

reveals the important role of teachers in strategy development and implementation in the majority of schools. In addition, a relatively high score obtained on the question concerning regular meetings of stakeholders demonstrated that schools had established formal processes of consulting and communicating with their stakeholders. The findings agree with OKonya et al. (2023), who established that stakeholders' involvement was very important in improving the implementation of strategies and internal efficiencies within senior public secondary schools in Mombasa County through cooperation and accountability. Notably, Oduro and Dachi (2021) in their study found that involvement of teachers and other stakeholders increased the effectiveness of schools by fostering better communication and collective decision-making.

Nevertheless, the high disagreement noted on involvement of students in senior public secondary school development and implementation activities uncovers that even though the teachers and other relevant stakeholders were well involved in the strategic process, the main beneficiary of the strategy, the students, were hardly involved in the processes. A study by Ouma and Wanyonyi (2024) found that inclusion of all stakeholders in school activities yielded better results. Unlike the current study, which revealed that student involvement was low, Ouma and Wanyonyi (2024) argued that full inclusion of stakeholders, including students, was critical in implementing strategies in schools.

The results confirm the stakeholder theory proposed, which stated that an organization's success relied on identifying and including all stakeholders who had any impact on the organization's decision-making process. The considerable involvement of teachers and stakeholder meetings demonstrated recognition of the need for collaborative governance and responsibility in implementing organizational strategies. However, low student involvement ran counter to the idea of including all stakeholders, since students were considered the primary stakeholder group in educational institutions.

Open-ended Results

Extent of stakeholders' involvement in the implementation of strategies in schools

The extent to which stakeholders' involvement influenced the implementation of strategies in senior public secondary schools. There were two major themes: great extent and small extent. Stakeholders influenced the implementation of strategies to a great extent through participatory decision-making, resource mobilization, communication, monitoring and evaluation, teamwork, and commitment among teachers, parents, students, boards, and government departments. This is because the respondents mentioned that early consultation and stakeholder involvement helped minimize resistance to change during strategy implementation. On the other hand, some respondents argued that stakeholder influence on the implementation strategy was low due to minimal participation, consultation, and the dominance of school principals in decision-making.

According to Oduro and Dachi (2021), meaningful engagement prevented resistance, secured vital resources, and ensured initiatives aligned with community needs. Uwizeyimana and Mukunzi (2021) noted that when stakeholders were consulted, implementation became smoother and more sustainable. Okonya et al. (2023) noted that stakeholders' involvement influenced strategy implementation to a very great extent. In sub-county schools, it served as the foundation for resource mobilization, infrastructure development, and overall academic performance.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Strategy Implementation

Strategy implementation was measured through adherence to timelines, stakeholder satisfaction, student enrolment growth, school performance in national exams, and infrastructure development, as in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Strategy Implementation

Statements N=106	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Standard Dev
The school implements its strategies within the set timelines.	42(39.6%)	35(33.0%)	12(11.3%)	9 (8.5%)	8 (7.5%)	2.11	1.237
The school effectively achieves most of its strategic objectives.	1 (0.9%)	4 (3.8%)	80(75.5%)	9 (8.5%)	12(11.3%)	3.25	0.744
Stakeholders are satisfied with the implementation of school strategies.	8 (7.5%)	1 (0.9%)	77(72.6%)	16(15.1%)	4 (3.8%)	3.07	0.784
The school has experienced growth of students	8 (7.5%)	3 (2.8%)	9 (8.5%)	45(42.5%)	41(38.7%)	4.02	1.130
The school has improved academic performance in national examinations (KCSE).	4 (3.8%)	2 (1.9%)	83(78.3%)	14(13.2%)	3(2.8%)	3.09	0.640
The school has achieved noticeable infrastructure development	3 (2.8%)	6(5.7%)	7(6.6%)	38(35.8%)	52(49.1%)	4.23	0.998

According to the results, 52 (49.1%) strongly agreed, and 38 (35.8%) agreed (average 4.23) that infrastructure development in the school is evident due to strategy implementation.

According to the results, 45 (42.5%) agreed and 41 (38.7%) strongly agreed (average 4.02) that there has been an increase in student enrollment and retention in the school.

According to the results, 80 (75.5%) were neutral, and 12 (11.3%) strongly agreed, on average 3.25, that the school has effectively accomplished most of its strategic goals.

According to the results, 83 (78.3%) were neutral, and 14 (13.2%) agreed, on average 3.09, that there has been an improvement in the academic performance of the students in national exams (KCSE).

According to the results, 77 (72.6%) were neutral, and 16 (15.1%) agreed, on average 3.07, that the stakeholders were satisfied with the implementation of school strategies.

According to the results, 42 (39.6%) strongly disagreed and 35 (33.0%) disagreed, on average 2.11, that the school has implemented its strategies within set timelines.

Table 4 asserts that strategies implemented by the schools had led to improvement in the physical infrastructure, including classroom blocks, laboratories, and libraries, among others. These were some of the signs that the strategies implemented in the senior public secondary schools had been successfully converted to institutional success. The high number of student enrolments demonstrated that strategic measures put in place had contributed towards making senior public secondary schools in Buuri East Sub-County attractive and competitive. Improvements in school administration, the environment, and programs led to increased enrolment and retention rates. Juma et al. (2023) also found that successful implementation of strategies improved the performance of the senior public secondary schools in learning and development. Kawinzi et al. (2023) established that implementation of strategic planning resulted in improvement of school performance due to good governance, development, and service delivery. Nevertheless, although the senior public secondary schools succeeded in meeting most of their strategic objectives, delays in implementing strategies were high.

Open-ended Results

Key achievements of strategy implementation in senior public secondary schools

The achievements included improved academic performance, development of school facilities, high student enrollment and retention rates, and improvements in teaching and learning resources. There were also better student discipline, improved classroom management, effective resource utilization, improved teacher capacity through professional development programs, increased parental participation, improved communication among various parties, and increased use of ICT in teaching and learning. Other accomplishments included the successful completion of various development programs, such as ICT labs, classrooms, dining facilities, school transport, and administrative blocks. Wasonga (2024) found that strategic interventions in senior public secondary schools improved academic outcomes, enhanced teacher capacity through targeted training, and improved resource allocation. Sasaki et al. (2024) reported stronger school culture and discipline, institutional growth and reputation, and better teaching and learning processes.

4.5 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis to determine the percentage variance of stakeholders' involvement in strategy implementation was presented in the model summary.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.748 ^a	.559	.555	1.461

a. Predictors: (Constant), Stakeholders' involvement

The R (0.748) and R-square (0.559) indicate that stakeholders' involvement determined 55.9% of the variance in strategy implementation. The regression analysis to determine if stakeholders' involvement had a positive or negative effect on strategy implementation was conducted through analysis of variance.

Table 6: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	279.816	1	279.816	131.80	.000 ^b
	Residual	220.750	104	2.123		
	Total	500.566	105			

a. Dependent Variable: Strategy Implementation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Stakeholders' involvement

The ANOVA significance is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating that stakeholders' involvement had a positive effect on strategy implementation. Okonya et al. (2023) research on the role of stakeholder engagement in the implementation of strategic plans in senior public secondary schools in Mombasa County revealed that such engagement was effective in improving the implementation of strategic plans since it enhanced collective responsibility and joint decision-making. Oduro and Dachi (2021) found in the Sub-Saharan African context that active stakeholder participation helped to make school programs successful, as it enhanced the commitment of teachers, parents, and the community to implement school programs.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	27.186	3.760		7.230	.000
	Stakeholders' involvement	0.570	0.050	0.748	11.45	.000

The beta values for the constant and stakeholders' involvement are: 27.186 and 0.570, respectively. Hence $Y = 27.186 + 0.570X_1 + 3.760e$. Interpreted further, the results mean that an increase of one unit of stakeholders' involvement increases strategy implementation significantly by 0.570. Brown et al. (2022) found that schools involving parents and communities were founded on superior governance structures and implemented more school programs because stakeholders felt more committed to the initiatives.

Hypothesis Testing Using Coefficients

This study had a null hypothesis that indicated stakeholders' involvement had no significant effect on strategy implementation in public senior secondary schools in Buuri East Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya. The result presented in Table 7 indicated that the significance coefficient of stakeholders' involvement was 0.000. Therefore, since the significance coefficient was greater than 0.05, the study rejected the null hypothesis.

4.6 Summary

Stakeholder engagement had a significant positive effect on strategy implementation. Based on descriptive statistics, engagement of parents, teachers, students, and BoMs in the process of planning, decision-making, and monitoring improved strategy implementation in senior public secondary schools in Buuri East Sub-County. From correlation analysis, it was evident that there was a strong positive correlation between stakeholder engagement and strategy implementation ($r = 0.748$; $\text{sig} = 0.03$). The bivariate regression analysis showed that stakeholder engagement accounted for 55.9% of the variance in strategy implementation ($R^2 = 0.559$), while the multiple regression analysis found that stakeholder engagement had the most influential impact of all organizational factors ($\beta = 0.570$).

5. Conclusion

It was concluded that stakeholder involvement was an important factor that determined strategy implementation in senior public secondary schools in Buuri East Sub County. The schools where parents, teachers, students, and Boards of Management participated in the process of planning and implementing strategies attained their strategic goals due to increased ownership, collaboration, commitment, and shared responsibility. Nevertheless, poor stakeholder participation, lack of consultation, poor communication, and centralization of decision-making by school principals were some factors that affected stakeholder commitment.

6. Recommendations

Stakeholder engagement processes need to be put in place by the BOM and school administrators, consulting with parent representatives and other key members of the surrounding community on strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. The Ministry of Education should develop policy guidelines that require regular stakeholder consultation to encourage involvement in the implementation process.

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