



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Influence of Strategic Planning on Academic Performance: A Case of Public Secondary Schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District

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Abstract:

Many schools have introduced strategic planning aspects to achieve their goals. However, an evaluation of these strategic planning processes suggest that after the plan was developed it was either not followed as written or implemented at all. Often stakeholders lacked the necessary resources and commitment to implement and evaluate plans and/or assumed a closed system using timelines with fixed years of planning. The purpose of this study was to examine influence of strategic planning on students' academic performance in the secondary school by establishing how the school vision influence students' academic performance; determining the extent to which school mission influence students' academic performance; establishing how the school core values influence students' academic performance and examine how school academic strategies influence students' academic performance in Kimilili-Bungoma district. The target population consisted of 23 public secondary schools, 138 Heads of Departments (HODs) and 23 principals of public secondary school and one Education Officer (DEO) in the district. The researcher employed simple random sampling technique to select 7 public secondary schools, 42 HODs, 7 principals and one DEO. The research instruments were the questionnaires and interview schedules. The study was guided by the descriptive survey design. The data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tool like regression. Results of the study revealed that there was a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) relationship established between school vision and academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma district. Regression analysis conducted on the influence of school mission and academic performance revealed there was a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) relationship established between school mission and academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma district. Study findings show that there was a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) relationship between school core values and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma district. Results indicated that academic strategy had a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) influence on academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma district to varying degrees. It was therefore recommended that the Ministry of Education (MoE) together with education office to have a long-term plan that includes a vision of effective schools, the intervening steps that schools need to take and the support schools need from the sub-county. Schools should have a vision for highly engaging and high-performing schools. Schools should create the right vision and support system for school improvement. Schools should have a clear vision of a high-performing school and a long-term plan for reaching it and that the school principals and teachers need to take ownership of school improvement. The school management should put strongest emphasis on high expectations and have a succinct and powerful mission statement that is attainable. The MoE should provide a clear focus and a strategic framework and effective strategies for improving student academic performance. The element of trust, coupled with support, and a collaborative working relationship is necessary in achieving students' academic performance.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Over time the concept and practice of strategic planning has been embraced worldwide and across sectors because of its perceived contribution to organizational effectiveness. Today organizations from both the private and public sectors have taken the practice of strategic planning seriously as a tool that can be utilized to fast track their performances (Arasa and K'Obonyo, 2012). Strategic

planning is arguably important ingredient in the conduct of strategic management. Steiner (1979) noted that the framework for formulating and implementing strategies is the formal strategic planning system. Porter (1985) noted that despite the criticism leveled against strategic planning during the 1970s and 80s, it was still useful and it only needed to be improved and recasted. Greenley (1986) noted that strategic planning has potential advantages and intrinsic values that eventually translate into improved firm performance. It is therefore, a vehicle that facilitates improved firm performance.

The concept of strategic planning traces its roots to the USA. By 1960s formal strategic planning was increasingly, getting adopted in the USA and in other developed countries. Today the practice has gained a lot of prominence worldwide and across businesses, public and private. Various writers have argued that strategic planning facilitates effective organization performance (Arasa and K'Obonyo, 2012).

Many of the studies on the relationship between strategic planning and firm performance were done between 1970s and early 1990s, in the developed economies. These studies focused on the direct relationship between strategic planning and firm performance. Although the studies within the African context by Woodburn (1984), Adegbite (1986) and Fubara (1986) noted that firms that practiced strategic planning recorded better performance compared to non-planners, their focus, however, was on the formality of planning rather than the link between planning and firm performance. It is noted that the past studies did not give attention to the individual steps that make up the strategic planning process. It is perceived that the manner and extent to which each of the strategic planning steps is addressed could have implications on the realization of the expected corporate goals.

Strategic planning originates in the business community in the 1960's. It attempts to combine short-term and long-term planning. Organizations conducting strategic planning typically commit themselves to a formal process in which a group of "planners" articulates a mission statement, sets goals and objectives, audits the organization for internal strengths and weaknesses, assesses the external environment for opportunities and threats, evaluates strategic options, and then selects and operationalizes an organizational strategy. The basic aim of strategic planning is to link daily organizational decisions with a vision of where the organization wants to be at some point in the future, usually five years (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992).

Strategic institutional management is defined as the conduct of drafting, implementing and evaluating cross-functional decisions that will enable an organization to achieve its long-term objectives (Vision). It is the process of specifying the organizations' mission, vision and objectives, developing policies and plans, often in terms of projects and programs which are desired to achieve their objectives and then allocating resources to implement the policies, plans, projects and programs. A balanced score card is often used to evaluate overall performance of the business or results towards objectives commonly referred to as performance indicators, in contemporary business. Strategic management is a level of managerial activity under setting goals from the variables in a mission statement and other tactics (Boone and Kurtz, 2003).

Two aspects of the strategic planning are critical to dramatically improving the performance of the country's largest school districts. The first is talent per se. One of strategic planning's primary objectives is to identify how the highest quality human capital talent can be recruited and retained as teachers, principals, and human capital management leaders in the nation's schools. The schools need top talent at all levels, from teachers to leadership positions in schools, and to instructional leadership for every classroom and teaching context. Strategies to recruit, place, develop and retain top talent should be one prime emphasis of management strategies (Barrington, 1997).

The second issue is strategic management. It is not sufficient for schools just to find top talent and turn them loose. The highest Performance organizations not only recruit and retain top talent, but also manage them in ways that support the strategic directions of the organization (Childress, Stacey, Elmore, and Grossman, 2006). Thus, strategic management addresses what strategic management of talent, or human capital, should look like in public education. Strategic management addresses all aspects of the human resource management system including recruitment, screening, selection, placement, induction, professional development (focused on curriculum and classroom practice), evaluation, compensation and promotion into instructional leadership. The goal is to redesign the entire human capital systems so that top talent is acquired, strategically placed and equitably distributed in key roles in schools, developed and retained over time, all driven by metrics on teacher and leadership performance and effectiveness (Alutto and Belasco, 1973).

Strategic planning emerged in public education as a management tool in the mid-1980s. The term appeared in educational publications for the first time around 1984, and by 1987 an estimated five hundred school districts around America were using some type of strategic planning (Conley, 1992). Two professional organizations, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), promoted strategic planning in education through publishing and widely disseminating two strategic planning handbooks written by national consultants Shirley McCune (Strategic Planning for Educators, 1986) and Bill Cook (Strategic Planning for America's Schools, 1988). McCune and Cook proceeded to lead strategic planning workshops for educators around the country under the sponsorship of the two associations, with Cook graduating over four hundred "certified strategic planners" from his AASA-approved program. Educational Leadership, the professional organ of the ASCD, dedicated its April 1991 issue to strategic planning. Today the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) lists over 340 titles written since 1989 under the subject of "strategic planning," which address strategic planning in a variety of educational settings, including schools, universities, and libraries.

The need for effective strategic planning has intensified because of the constraints in resources and increased expectations for accountability from external agencies such as state governments (Welsh, 2005). In order to effectively meet these challenges school districts must interpret these regulations and policies and then develop system-wide action plans to effectively put them into practice. Solutions now require detailed blueprints for systemic change that identify strategic performance indicators and benchmarks. These

plans require that administrators, teachers, counselors and other related professionals work collaboratively to identify and improve positive academic and behavioral supports across the curriculum with simplicity and commitment (Quinn, 2000). Therefore, professional collaboration is critical.

Results Based Management has gained currency in Kenya especially with the adoption of Session Paper No. 1 of 2005 of the Republic of Kenya. The introduction for strategic plans for schools means embracing strategic management approach. The requirement for strategic plans and service charters for schools is mandatory in order to practice Result-Based Management and operating ethos. Secondary schools in Kenya provide the base for further training and future career development. They basically aim at increasing knowledge of economic production and its relationship with the social context and the natural environment. The management of secondary schools should be strategized hence the need for strategic management program which can enhance result based operations. Strategic management planning provides overall direction to the institution and is closely, related to the field of organization studies.

The theory of Chandler (1962) and Chaffe (1985) stated and showed that long-term coordinated strategy was necessary to give an organization structure, direction and management for quality outcomes. For identity, schools that operate strategic management programs have shared visions, shared mission statements formulated corporately, with independent variables in-built on which the respective schools hook shared goals that branch out to objectives and guide their ultimate activities. They will do this through developed strategic plans (ROK, Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005).

In education, strategic alignment between the institution and its environment to maintain “strategic consistency” is essential (Ariew, 2007). In Kimilili-Bungoma district, some schools have formulated smart mission statements and have five year strategic plans which are guiding prioritization of projects, programs and directing the available resources towards those priority targets. Incidentally while some schools that have workable strategic plans are performing better in terms of academic performance, some school continue post poor academic performance despite strategic plan. That is why this study is set to study influence of strategic planning in the public secondary schools on students’ academic performance in Kimilili-Bungoma district.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Strategic Planning

There are numerous definitions of strategic planning, and there are many different approaches that can be used to undertake strategic planning. Most definitions focus on aligning the organization with its environment in the future and are based on ideal constructs that yield planning methods that are primary rational, sequential, and comprehensive. Olsen and Eadie (1982) define strategic planning as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it acts as it does. Strategic planning usually requires broad-scale information gathering, generation and exploration of alternative courses of action, and an emphasis on the future implications of near-term decisions.

Businesses first used strategic planning as a way to maintain or improve their competitive advantage. Public managers adopted these business practices expecting to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their organizations and accrue benefits similar to those produced, or advertised, in the private sector. Public organizations may have difficulty realizing these benefits because public managers do not always account for differences in public and private organizations when adopting strategic planning and management processes that were designed for businesses (Baile, 1998).

Typically, strategic planning includes the following components: setting a vision for the organization; scanning the external environment; assessing internal capabilities; and establishing goals, performance measures, and implementation plans. Implementation addresses specifics about how the organization’s financial resources, human resources, information, and reward systems, along with structure and culture, will be changed in the near term to achieve long-term, strategic goals (Bourgeois, 1984; Campbell and Garnett, 1989; Galbraith and Kazanjian, 1986; Hill and Jones, 1995; Roush and Ball, 1980).

Strategic planning in private organizations is often considered a crucial managerial activity to ensure competitive advantage for the firm. Here a firm seeks to align itself with anticipated changes in its environment, and the overall goal is economic, related to increasing market share. Strategic planning concepts and methods were not readily adapted to public organizations because they failed to account for political factors and organizational constraints. Accruing benefits from strategic planning in public organizations involves changing business-based expectations for improving the bottom line to helping agencies be more relevant, responsive, and efficient. How best to account for factors associated with the public organizations is a key question in adapting private practices to public organizations. Halachmi (1993) points out that although strategic planning for public organizations has received much attention and has widespread advocacy, it does not have an impressive record of success and there are few accounts of what went wrong and why.

2.2. Vision and Academic Performance

American school districts’ actions can either lead schools to greater success or stifle progress in student learning. Yet, despite their central role in education, school districts are among the least understood components of the nation’s public education infrastructure. Often, the school board and district staff are considered no more than middlemen in the education enterprise, passing federal and state funds on to schools — where the “real work” of education takes place — and keeping track of school compliance with federal and state laws, regulations and policies (Kowalski, 2001).

The first element necessary for accountability and autonomy is vision. District education officials cannot hold a principal accountable if its leaders do not have a vision for highly engaging and high-performing high schools. In the absence of a strategic plan based on a

shared vision, districts cannot lead schools toward success. District education officers too often are forced into a reactionary mode, responding to problems as they arise and in isolation from each other. School districts must have a long-term plan that includes a vision of effective schools, the intervening steps that schools need to take and the support schools need from the district. The vision and the strategic plan can establish the boundaries in which principals have discretion to operate. They also can enable schools to identify the skills and expertise that school staff, principals and teachers need in order to create effective schools (SREB, 2009).

While schools must create the right vision and support system for school improvement, they cannot be expected to act alone in this effort. The Ministry of Education must build capacity, helping local schools develop a coherent vision for the future of their schools, as well as the knowledge and skills to support principals and teachers as they create their own vision and goals at the school level and then hold themselves accountable for results. Highly supportive schools engage the whole community in setting a common vision for student learning. They seek principals' and teacher-leaders' ideas on major decisions about school policies, changes in curriculum and instructional improvements, use of professional development resources and the school's budget. They encourage principals to use leadership teams to lead their schools and to engage the school community in setting a vision and creating a school improvement plan (Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis, 2010).

When a school has a clear vision of a high-performing school and a long-term plan for reaching it, then the school principal and teacher leaders need to take ownership of school improvement. Principals can be held accountable to work with their teachers to identify the specific needs of their own students and to craft and implement strategies to meet those needs, and for identifying and solving problems in their own schools. They and their staff must have the ownership, motivation and passion to take the steps necessary to improve instruction throughout the school. Change cannot be mass-produced, but must be accomplished school by school. Districts must provide support and the tools for continuously building the capacity in each school so that its principal and teacher-leaders take ownership of problems (Fullan, 2007).

In some school districts, administrators attempt to exert complete control over every phase of instruction and school operations. They try to own all the problems and enforce all solutions from the top down. In other districts, administrators turn all the problems over to the principal, offering little or no sense of direction or support, just a demand for results. Five of the seven districts studied fell into one of these two categories. In the two highly supportive districts, however, district and school board leaders exhibited a clear vision of what constitutes a good school and have created a framework in which the principal has autonomy to work with faculty on an improvement agenda with collaborative support from the district (Bottoms and Fry, 2009).

Few principals have the capacity to rise above a school district's lack of vision and clear purpose. If district leaders cannot see beyond "test-prep" - if they expend most of the system's time, attention and energy on getting children to pass low-level tests and meet minimum standards-then even the most capable principals will likely find themselves trapped in caretaker roles, presiding over schools and faculties that lack the direction, the goals and the belief in themselves necessary to create a powerful learning experience for all their students (Elmore, Grossman and King, 2007).

2.3. Mission and Academic Performance

Studies have indicated that more respondents in the highly and moderately supportive schools said their schools stress high expectations of students than in minimally supportive schools. While approximately 80 percent of respondents from highly and moderately supportive districts offered comments indicative of high expectations, less than half of respondents from minimally supportive districts offered such statements. The school with the strongest emphasis on high expectations had a succinct and powerful mission statement: "Striving for excellence — no exceptions, no excuses." Mission statements in education have become ubiquitous, but this school has succeeded in turning the mission statement into a school culture (Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis, 2010). All four respondents from these made clear references to setting high expectations, with an average of 4.25 references per interview.

The other schools in the study averaged fewer than two references to high expectations, and only four of 31 other respondents referenced high expectations as many as three times in their interviews. The school that embraced high expectations and recognized that gaps in achievement often are the result of lower classroom expectations for some students. The principal of a high performing school said this about high expectations: "It's just the belief in this school that all kids are going to learn. And you hear a lot of people saying that, but we really believe it. ... I think it's just a matter of being very diligent about dealing with kids in the most effective way and recognizing the fact that we're their opportunity for success. ... Our administrators have really, really worked hard to get that done. Our teachers have worked hard to get that done. It's just an attitude of, 'We're their hope, and we're there for them, and we have to do whatever it takes to be sure they stay in school' " (Bill, and Taylor, 2009).

Examples of statements that indicate schools have high expectations include observations that schools can set goals for themselves beyond No Child Left Behind or state requirements like, "There's also nothing preventing us from going above and beyond" and "Even though [the goal for] No Child Left Behind is 100 percent for reading and mathematics by 2013–2014, we're actually aspiring to go toward 100 percent in all subject areas." Other interviewees evidenced higher expectations through school increases in participation in and performance on Advanced Placement (AP) tests. Over the last four years, one of the schools had more than tripled the number of AP tests its students take and now has more students scoring at least a 3 and qualifying for college credit (Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis, 2010).

2.4. Core Value and Academic Performance

Highly supportive districts provide a clear focus and a strategic framework of core beliefs, effective practices and goals for improving academic performance. This can be a short mission statement, such as "Striving for excellence no exceptions, no excuses." Or, it can

be a living framework collectively adopted and developed by the community over a period of time and continuously monitored and revised by an active school board (Blankstein, 2004).

The element of trust, coupled with support, and a collaborative working relationship is necessary in achieving students' academic performance. The education office must trust its principals to do the right thing, and principals must trust the education office to provide meaningful support and to make them a true partner in framing and achieving the district education plan. Five of the 10 respondents from highly supportive districts mentioned the importance of creating a culture of trust, while only one of the other respondents in the study brought up the issue of trust. As SREB reported in *The District Leadership Challenge*, some high school principals said that they did not trust that their district staff had the capacity to provide meaningful assistance in improving curriculum and instruction. Education office must respond to those concerns where they exist by increasing their own capacity and by challenging the district culture to focus more on support and collaborative working relationships with high schools (Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis, 2010).

At the same time, the education office needs to know their principals are up to the challenge. In many low performing schools, principals may be expected to fail, resulting in a high annual attrition rate. This occurs because a district has neither a plan to support and develop the principals it has, nor a plan to identify, recruit, develop and support future principals. Every school should ensure a pipeline of strong school leaders by developing a carefully crafted succession plan that includes preparing aspiring principals in collaboration with a university partner or another entity and provides future leaders with opportunities to engage in progressively challenging learning experiences. When the education office knows a highly capable person is leading a school, it is more likely to support that principal rather than look for a replacement at the first sign of trouble. When principals know they are trusted, they are more open to expressing their needs and concerns and will be more confident, innovative, collaborative, and likely to create a highly engaging, high-performing school culture (Muller, 2004).

Moreover, the Ministry of Education should help school leaders develop a school culture based on the belief that students can succeed at high levels when they have a sense of belonging and support, can relate their learning activities to their goals and are supported to make greater effort to succeed. "The prime responsibility of all school leaders is to sustain learning. Leaders of learning put learning at the center of everything they do: student learning first, then everyone else's learning in support of it" (Blankstein, 2004).

2.5. Academic Strategy and Academic Performance

The school academic strategies begin with the school setting a direction by articulating a vision for schools, specific goals consistent with that vision and a framework of best practices that principals can use to achieve that vision and meet key goals. The strategies give principals and their teachers the support, the capacity, the resources and the flexibility to meet their goals. A comprehensive strategic plan provides principals and their staff with direction and support so they can shape and implement a school improvement plan based on the unique context of their school and the academic, social and emotional needs of their students. The district education office can assist each school leadership team in developing a school improvement plan and provide the resources, the high-quality professional development, and the technical assistance, coaching and feedback to the school principal and teachers, then school leadership team should be held accountable for implementing the plan with fidelity and, eventually, for improved student performance (Bottoms and Fry, 2009).

As long as school management board and office staffs operate without a sound and comprehensive strategic plan, the flavor-of-the-month approach will prevail, and low-performing schools will not have the continuity of direction and support they need to become functional and successful schools. Supportive districts and their leaders know that without a thoughtful vision, effective principal leadership and teacher cooperation, little progress will be made to improve student outcomes (Kowalski, 2001).

According to Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010), strategies of highly supportive Ministry of Education is to promote school leaders' confidence in their ability to succeed and in their belief that improved school practices are important to their students' future; share a common vision of high expectations for all groups of students and have a strategic planning framework that enables school leaders and faculty to customize a set of strategic goals and actions for their school and to hold district education leaders and staff accountable for working collaboratively with principals, their school leadership teams and faculties to implement a strategic plan and to hold principals accountable for creating excellent leadership teams.

Minimally supportive schools tend to set low expectations by focusing most of their time and energy on strategies for helping students meet minimum Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements, rather than teaching an accelerated curriculum using engaging instructional strategies to prepare more students for success in college, advanced training or a good job. ACT Inc. recently provided an example of the gap between the skills most high school students have and the skills they should be gaining to be ready for college. It reported that only 23 percent of the nation's high school graduating class of 2009 is prepared for college in all four areas covered by the ACT (ACT Inc., 2009).

In a climate of minimum expectations, student achievement fails to improve and often declines. An over-emphasis on test preparation to meet minimum standards often results in only small achievement gains, but ultimately disengages students. Less supportive schools often are so focused on meeting minimum standards that they fail to articulate a vision of higher expectations and to provide strategic support for school leadership teams using a more balanced approach to improve the achievement and motivation of all students (SREB, 2010).

Highly supportive schools more often realize that the minimal standards represented by AYP requirements are not sufficient to prepare students for college or advanced training. Accordingly, they set high expectations that challenge students to acquire the knowledge and develop the skills they will need, SREB interviews showed. Supportive schools more often have a strategic vision of accelerated

learning for all groups of students aimed at meeting higher-than-required standards, because too many students fail to graduate from high school and to prepare for college and career training (Schmidt-Davis, 2010).

Setting and maintaining high expectations sometimes means making tough decisions to remove employees who are not able or willing to perform at necessary levels because they lack expertise or beliefs that all groups of students can achieve at higher levels and meet college- and career readiness standards. The education officer in one of the highly supportive districts said that some school leaders (Board of Governors and Parent Teachers' Association) had to be removed early in his tenure because they lacked the commitment and skill set needed to create a high-performing learning culture. He said that a sign the school had developed higher expectations for students and adults came when the teachers in a school approached their principal about an incompetent teacher and insisted that something be done. The education officer in the other highly supportive school identified in this study emphasized his commitment to giving his principals the autonomy, flexibility and support necessary to lead their own schools. He indicates by word and action that he is doing everything he can to set them up for success, and to hold them accountable for good results (Muller, 2004).

The education officer told a story about an underperforming high school science department and his having to replace the entire department. Getting a commitment from school principals and teacher-leaders to teach all groups of students sometimes requires more than resources — it requires a willingness to make difficult decisions. At the same time, a necessary precondition for meaningful accountability is a district emphasis on building capacity and providing support to principals and their school leadership teams. Thus, the first job of the education officers should be helping principals focus their attention on improving student achievement and learning. A focus on motivating and engaging students in learning and achievement can become an individual mandate that all educators follow — from the education ministry to the classroom teacher. The focus on students' intellectual and academic growth can become a matter of teachers' self-regulation rather than a response to external pressure as the school establishes benchmarks to ensure that students are on track to graduate from high school prepared for college and careers (National Research Council, 2003).

The Ministry of Education cannot hold principals accountable for improved student results if they fail to provide necessary resources, to give them the authority to select staff and remove unproductive staff, and provide technical assistance, professional development and coaching to address problems and implement proven practices. Rather, they must establish "reciprocal accountability," holding principals accountable, but also holding them accountable for providing support. They endeavour to provide a framework for aligning the curriculum from one grade level to the next and from one transition point to the next (such as middle grades to high school) and for instructional practices to engage students in learning and develop students' intellectual, analytical and problem-solving skills. They should have a practice of preparing principals and district office staff to observe classrooms and conduct walkthroughs to ensure teachers' instruction and assessment is engaging, relevant, intellectually challenging and grade-level appropriate and give principals more autonomy to adjust schedules and curriculum and instruction to help students succeed and stay on course to graduate (National Research Council, 2004; Villani and Susan, 2006).

Strategies of highly supportive schools include organizing the education office — including human resources, finance, curriculum and instruction — to function cohesively to support principals and school leadership teams. The education office hires a staff that fits the needs of school strategic plans, assists principals to remove ineffective teachers and, either through central-office staff or consultants, provides technical expertise to schools in implementing their own strategic improvement plans; focus not on micro-managing schools, but on developing school principals' and staffs' capacity to implement their school's strategic improvement plan successfully and establish a collaborative presence in the schools, focused on building the capacity of principals and teachers to own school problems and to implement proven solutions (Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis, 2010).

Interviews showed that principals are better supported when their school boards and education office share a common framework, guiding principles, mission, goals and values that enable them to work together to help more students from all groups achieve at higher levels. All of the interviews reinforced research on best school board practices that stress the superintendents' role in setting direction and creating a healthy climate for the district. Since the school board members are elected or appointed and may not have experience in education, the superintendent must bear the responsibility for providing the board with thoughtful, research-based recommendations for improving school curriculum and instruction, enabling the board to make good policy decisions (McAdams, 2006).

Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act, America's education landscape has been flooded with data. Schools now have enough data to clearly define their strengths and weaknesses. The challenge no longer is getting data. The challenge now is using data to improve school and classroom practices and to raise students' achievement while they are in school, rather than allowing them to drop out or graduate without the academic skills they need for college and careers. Current state assessment and accountability systems give schools end-of-the-year data, but schools need actionable data on an ongoing basis to help teachers know how to tailor instruction to prevent student failures. The Ministry of Education must help schools interpret and use data to inform school and classroom practices that raise achievement. The highly supportive districts in this study were more likely to offer evidence demonstrating use of data and to report that they use formative assessments and diagnostic data to identify and meet the needs of individual students (Bottoms, Gene, Spence, and Young, 2009).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study was guided by descriptive survey design to ascertain the influence of strategic planning on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma district. Gay (1981) defines descriptive research as a process of collecting data in

order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects in the study. A descriptive research determines and reports the way things were, that was the existence of the strategic plans and trends of academic performance of public secondary schools. This type of research attempts to describe such things as possible behaviours, attitudes, values and characteristics.

3.2. Population

This study was carried out in 23 public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma district in Bungoma County. The target population consisted of 138 Heads of Departments (HODs) and 23 Principals in public secondary schools, one Education Officer in the district. According to the school board policy, the minimum number of HODs in a school that has enrolment of between 0-600 students, there should be a minimum of six departments namely; Mathematics, Sciences, Humanities, Languages, Technical subjects and Guidance and Counselling (MOEST, 2001).

3.3. Sampling Frame

	Schools	Principals	Heads of Departments		Total
Population	23	23	138		184
Sample	7	7	42		56

Table 1

3.4. Sample and Sampling Technique

Kline (1980) says that despite the geographical distribution, the sample size shall be guided by the general rule in most Social Science Research which suggests the use of the largest sample to facilitate generalization. The total number of HODs was 138 ($23 \times 6 = 138$) from a total of 23 public secondary school. A number of 7 public secondary schools were selected from a total of 23 schools by simple random sampling based on Kothari (2003) who recommends a sample size of 30% being representative. Therefore, the sample size of HODs, principals was selected based on Kothari's recommendations. The number of principals was seven based on seven schools sampled by purposive random sampling, one representative from DEOs, while the number of HODs (42) was calculated as follows (see Table 1):

HODs' number was 42 who were selected by simple random sampling techniques from a total of 138 HODs.

$$(138 \times 30\%) = 42 \text{ HODs} \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Principals' number was 7 who were selected by simple random sampling techniques from a total of 23 principals

$$(23 \times 30\%) = 7 \text{ principals} \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Schools' number was 7 who were selected by simple random sampling techniques from a total of 23 schools

$$(23 \times 30\%) = 7 \text{ schools} \dots\dots\dots (3)$$

3.5. Instruments

The study used both the questionnaire and interview schedules for data collection.

3.5.1. Questionnaire for School Principals and HODs

The structured (closed-ended) and unstructured (open-ended) questionnaire were used so as to get the responses from respondents. The structured questionnaires were accompanied by a list of all possible alternatives from which respondents selected the suitable answer that described their situation by simply ticking (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The advantage of using this type of instrument was the ease that it accords the researcher during the analysis. Moreover, questionnaires are easy to administer and economical to use in terms of time and money. There were two sets of questionnaires: for HODs and school principals based on objectives of the study and the literature review (see Appendices 2a and 2b).

3.5.2. Interview Schedules for Education Officials

Interview schedules basically, consist of question asking, listening to individuals and recording their responses. At times, you may find it more profitable to ask questions to a few individuals instead of carrying out a large-scale questionnaire based survey. The interview can be done very informally, for example as conversations with people met in the fields, banking halls or block offices. In these settings, one question leads to the next based on the responses given to the previous one. For example, the interview schedules targeting the head teachers contained straight forward questions on the influence of the strategic planning on schools' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District. The interview schedules were administered personally by the researcher to get first-hand information on the key concepts of the study. Interview schedules give in-depth information or insightful information on the subject of the study.

The researcher sought for a research authorization letter from the School of Human Resource Development of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology before embarking on data collection process as dictated by ethics. The instruments were administered through personal visits on appointment with heads of schools and District Education Officers. The questionnaire were then administered in the presence of the researcher after agreeing on the dates and then collected personally and with the use research assistants. The researcher took time to explain any issues that arose from the questionnaires.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Influence of School Vision on Academic Performance

This sub-section focuses on how school vision influence academic performance variables like school has a clear vision of a high-performing school and a long-term plan for reaching it, school creates right vision and support system for school improvement, schools engage community in setting a common vision for student learning, school principal and teachers create their own vision and create a school improvement plan and school principal and teachers have developed a coherent vision for the future of their schools. This was the first objective of this study whose results are recorded in Table 2. On the question asked if school has a clear vision of a high-performing school and a long-term plan for reaching it, majority respondents (75.9%) agreed, 10.5% of respondents were undecided, 11.7% of respondents disagreed while 6.3% strongly disagreed. With reference to the question asked whether the school management creates right vision and support system for school improvement, 39.4% of respondents strongly agreed, 58.5% of respondents agreed while 2.1% of respondents strongly disagreed. This was an indication that most of the school management creates right vision and support system for school improvement.

Variables	SA	A	U	D	SD
School has a clear vision of a high-performing school and a long-term plan for reaching it	36.4%	39.5%	10.5%	11.7%	6.3%
School management creates right vision & support system for school improvement	39.4%	58.5%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%
Schools engage community in setting a common vision for student learning	35.9%	48.6%	7.7%	7.7%	0.0%
School principals and teachers create their own vision and create a school improvement plan	20.4%	59.2%	6.1%	6.1%	8.2%
School principal and teachers have developed a coherent vision for the future of their schools	14.3%	46.9%	8.2%	26.5%	4.1%

Table 2: Influence of School Vision on Academic Performance

$N = 49$; strongly Agreed (SA = 5), Agree (A = 4), Undecided (U = 3), Disagree (D = 2), strongly disagree (SD = 1)

Majority of respondents (84.5%) were of the views that schools engage community in setting a common vision for student learning, 7.7% of respondents were undecided and 7.7% of respondents disagreed. Moreover, most of the respondents (79.6%) indicated that school principals and teachers create their own vision and create a school improvement plan, 6.1% of respondents were undecided, and 6.1% disagreed while 8.2% of respondents strongly disagreed. Furthermore, results illustrated that school principal and teachers have developed a coherent vision for the future of their schools (14.3% strongly agreed, 46.9% agreed, 8.2% of respondents were undecided, 26.5% disagreed and 4.1% of respondents strongly disagreed). Therefore, these descriptive results do point out that school vision has contributed to academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District to some good extent.

Inferential results indicated there was a positive and significant relationship between school vision and academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District ($b = 0.289$, $t = 3.54$, $p < 0.05$). It should be noted that correlation values obtained were below the average of 0.5, an indication that school vision was not 100% efficient in promoting academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District. Findings from the interviews indicated that some of the teachers were not involved in the formulation of the school vision and there was difficult in implementing the school vision. Some of the primary stakeholders like the school principals and education officers affirmed that some schools had school visions while others did not have. Some of these selected schools had school visions which were not operational and therefore, did not understand the influence the school vision had on academic performance. For example, Bottoms and Fry (2009) asserted that some school principals attempt to exert complete control over every phase of instruction and school operations (formulation and implementation of the school vision). They try to own all the problems and enforce all solutions from the top down without the participation of other school stakeholders

like teachers. Surprisingly some of the public schools did not have strategic plans. This view was supported by Hambright and Diamontes (2004), who observed that many schools have introduced strategic plans to achieve their goals. However, an evaluation of these traditional planning processes suggest that after the plan was developed it was either not followed as written or implemented at all. Often stakeholders lacked the necessary resources and commitment to implement and evaluate plans and/or assumed a closed system using timelines with fixed years of planning. This could explain why the school vision has not significantly influenced academic performance in these schools.

These study findings remove doubts from the research conducted by Basham and Lunenburg (1989). In their 1989 study, Vicki Basham and Fred Lunenburg found an "inconsistent and weak" association between district participation in strategic planning and students' academic achievement, as measured by standardized test scores in reading, language arts, and mathematics in grades 3, 5, 7, and 10. Basham and Lunenburg wrote in their review of prior research that "no other study shows a direct tie-in between strategic planning in school districts and school district performance on standardized achievement tests," and they can add their own work to the list. These results therefore have proved beyond reasonable doubt that there is a positive and significant influence school vision on academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma district.

Variables	Regression coefficient, b	t-value	p-value/ Sig.
School has a clear vision of a high-performing school and a long-term plan for reaching it	0.323	4.123	<0.05 (s)
School management creates right vision & support system for school improvement	0.216	3.831	<0.05 (s)
Schools engage community in setting a common vision for student learning	0.151	0.958	<0.05 (s)
School principal and teachers create their own vision and create a school improvement plan	0.475	4.324	<0.05 (s)
School principal and teachers have developed a coherent vision for the future of their schools	0.278	4.453	<0.05 (s)
Overall influence	0.289	3.54	<0.05 (s)

Table 3: Influence of School Vision on Academic Performance

N = 49; s-significant with p-value <0.05; Constant/predictor variable: School Vision; Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

4.2. Influence of School Mission on Academic Performance

The second objective of this study was to determine the influence of school mission on academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District. The results are recorded in Table 4. Results show that schools have concise and powerful mission statement (84.5% of respondents agreed while 10.5% of respondents disagreed). The question on whether schools have succeeded in turning mission statement into school culture received varied responses: 3.5% of respondents strongly agreed, 48.2% agreed, 18.7% of respondents were undecided, 24.6% disagreed and 4.9% strongly disagreed). Most of the respondents (82.4%) were of the opinion that their schools set goals and strive to achieve the goals, 3.5% of respondents were not sure, 8.5% of respondents were undecided while 5.6% of respondents strongly agreed.

Variables	SA	A	U	D	SD
School has a concise and powerful mission statement	39.4%	45.1%	4.9%	7.7%	2.8%
School has succeeded in turning mission statement into a school culture	3.5%	48.2%	18.7%	24.6%	4.9%
School sets goals and strives to achieve the goals	35.9%	46.5%	3.5%	8.5%	5.6%
Setting of objectives and goals has enabled the school to perform better in academics	4.9%	39.2%	14.3%	38.7%	2.8%
Schools that have the mission perform better academically	32.4%	23.2%	17.6%	23.9%	2.8%
Teachers are usually trained and have adequate skills and knowledge as far as school vision & mission are concerned	38.0%	3.5%	1.4%	52.8%	4.2%

Table 4: Influence of School Mission on Academic Performance

$N = 49$; strongly Agreed (SA = 5), Agree (A = 4), Undecided (U = 3), Disagree (D = 2), strongly disagree (SD = 1)

On the question asking whether there setting of objectives and goals has enabled the schools to perform better in academics, 4.9% of respondents strongly agreed, 39.2% of respondents agreed, 14.3% of respondents were undecided, 38.7% of respondents disagreed while 2.8% of respondents strongly disagreed. Moreover, the respondents gave different views on the question asked whether schools that have the mission perform better academically (32.4% of respondents strongly agreed, 23.2% agreed, 17.6% of respondents were undecided, 23.9% of respondents disagreed and 2.8% of respondents strongly disagreed). Similarly, the question on whether teachers were usually trained and had adequate skills and knowledge as far as school vision and mission were concerned, respondents gave different responses, for example, 38% of respondents strongly agreed, 3.5% of respondents agreed, 1.4% were undecided, 52.8% disagreed and 4.2% of respondents strongly disagreed.

Regression analysis conducted on the influence of school mission on academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District revealed a positive and significant correlation between these two variables ($b = 0.752$, $t = 3.07$, $p < 0.05$). A strong relationship was established school has a concise and powerful mission statement and academic performance ($b = 2.453$, $t = 4.573$, $p < 0.05$) while a marginally weak but positive correlation was observed between the variable, teachers are usually trained and have adequate skills and knowledge as far as school vision & mission are concerned and academic performance ($b = 0.286$, $t = 1.747$, $p < 0.05$) as illustrated in Table 5.

Variables	Regression coefficient, b	t-value	p-value/ Sig.
School has a concise and powerful mission statement	2.453	4.573	0.000 (s)
School has succeeded in turning mission statement into a school culture	0.506	3.943	0.000 (s)
School sets goals and strives to achieve the goals	0.427	3.108	0.001 (s)
Setting of objectives and goals has enabled the school to perform better in academics	0.275	1.086	0.005 (s)
Schools that have the mission perform better academically	0.565	3.947	0.000 (s)
Teachers are usually trained and have adequate skills and knowledge as far as school vision & mission are concerned	0.286	1.747	0.000 (s)
Overall influence	0.752	3.07	<0.05 (s)

Table 5: Influence of School Mission on Academic Performance

$N = 49$; s-significant with p -value < 0.05 ; Constant/predictor variable: School Mission; Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

The study of Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) seem to agree with these study findings by saying that the schools with the strongest emphasis on high expectations in academic achievements had a succinct and powerful mission statement and these schools have succeeded in turning the mission statement into a school culture. The teachers' commitment and the culture of hard working and

determination can result in better academic achievement (Bill, and Taylor, 2009). It was also observed that schools can set goals for themselves beyond No Child Left Behind or state requirements like, "There's also nothing preventing us from going above and beyond." Other interviewees evidenced higher expectations through school increases in participation in and performance on Advanced Placement (AP) tests. Over the last four years, one of the schools had more than tripled the number of AP tests its students take and now has more students scoring at least a 3 and qualifying for college credit (Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis, 2010). It was therefore, conclude that there was a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) relationship established between school mission and academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District revealed.

4.3. Influence of School Core Values on Students' Academic Performance

This sub-section looks at how school core values influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District. This was the third objective. School core values were measured through variables like there is element of trust and hard work among stakeholders, school principals and teachers are taken for refresher courses to enhance their performance, teachers and principals are held accountable for the KCSE results, school has strategic framework of core beliefs, effective practices and goals for improving student achievement and school creates cultures of success uniquely suited to the students' needs. Simple regression analysis was performed as illustrated in Table 6 at confidence interval of 95% ($p < 0.05$). From the results there was an indication that the variable on teachers and principals are held accountable for the KCSE results had a higher significant positive association on academic performance compared to other variables ($b = 0.441$, $t\text{-value} = 3.755$, $p < 0.05$). The variable on there is element of trust and hard work among stakeholders ($b = 0.260$, $t\text{-value} = 1.312$, $p < 0.05$) and school principals and teachers are taken for refresher ($b = 0.246$, $t\text{-value} = 1.297$, $p < 0.05$) had lower associations on academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District. This was an indication that there is lack of trust and cohesiveness among stakeholders and that teachers and school principals do not receive adequate training on the formulation and importance of school vision and mission.

Variables	Regression coefficient, b	t-value	p-value/ Sig.
There is element of trust & hard work among stakeholders	0.260	1.312	<0.05 (s)
School principals and teachers are taken for refresher courses to enhance their performance	0.246	1.297	<0.05 (s)
Teachers and principals are held accountable for the KCSE results	0.441	3.755	<0.05 (s)
School has strategic framework of core beliefs, effective practices & goals for improving student achievement	0.362	3.214	<0.05 (s)
School creates cultures of success uniquely suited to the students' needs	0.267	1.109	<0.05 (s)
Overall influence	0.315	2.14	<0.05 (s)

Table 6: Influence of School Core Values on Students' Academic Performance
N = 49; *s*-significant with *p*-value ≤ 0.05 ; Constant/predictor variable: School Core Values;
 Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

The overall results between school core values and students' academic performance indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between these two variables ($b = 0.315$, $t\text{-value} = 2.14$, $p < 0.05$). Other variables also had positive and significant association: school has strategic framework of core beliefs, effective practices and goals for improving student achievement ($b = 0.362$, $t\text{-value} = 3.214$, $p < 0.05$) and school creates cultures of success uniquely suited to the students' needs ($b = 0.267$, $t\text{-value} = 1.109$, $p < 0.05$). The regression values obtained were below the average of $b = 0.5$, an indication that school core values do not effectively contribute to students' academic performance. In support of these findings, Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) echoed that the element of trust, coupled with support, and a collaborative working relationship is necessary in achieving students' academic performance. The Ministry of Education must trust its principals to do the right thing, and principals must trust the ministry to provide meaningful support and to make them a true partner in framing and achieving the district education plan.

Muller (2004) reiterated that every school should ensure a pipeline of strong school leaders by developing a carefully crafted succession plan that includes preparing aspiring principals in collaboration with a university partner or another entity and provides future leaders with opportunities to engage in progressively challenging learning experiences. When the MoE knows a highly capable person is leading a school, it is more likely to support that principal rather than look for a replacement at the first sign of trouble. When principals know they are trusted, they are more open to expressing their needs and concerns and will be more confident, innovative, collaborative, and likely to create a highly engaging, high-performing school culture. Moreover, Blankstein (2004) emphasised that the MoE should help school leaders develop a school culture based on the belief that students can succeed at high

levels when they have a sense of belonging and support, can relate their learning activities to their goals and are supported to make greater effort to succeed.

Therefore, the third objective showed that there was a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) relationship between school core values and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma district.

4.4. Influence of Academic Strategies on Students' Academic Performance

This sub-section gives the results on how academic strategy influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District. The results are recorded in Table 7. Results indicate that school articulates a vision for schools, specific goals consistent with that vision and a framework of best practices to enhance academic performance enhances products offered meeting the customers' specifications and this had positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) influence on academic performance ($b = 0.308$, $r = 0.285$, $p < 0.05$). There was a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) association between presence of a sound and comprehensive strategic plan and academic performance ($b = 0.311$, $r = 0.60$, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, results show that setting of high academic expectations that challenge students to acquire the knowledge and develop the skills to succeed had a positive and significant relationship on academic performance ($b = 0.263$, $r = 0.252$, $p < 0.05$).

Variables	Correlation coefficient, r	Regression coefficient, b	Regression Model
School articulates a vision for schools, specific goals consistent with that vision & a framework of best practices to enhance academic performance	0.285, $p < 0.05$	0.308, $p < 0.05$	$y = 0.308x + 1.183$
Presence of a sound and comprehensive strategic plan	0.60, $p > 0.05$	0.311, $p > 0.05$	$y = 0.311x + 1.802$
Setting of high academic expectations that challenge students to acquire the knowledge and develop the skills to succeed	0.252, $p < 0.05$	0.263, $p < 0.05$	$y = 0.263x + 1.802$
Having a well-trained and adequate teaching force	0.285, $p < 0.05$	0.308, $p < 0.05$	$y = 0.308x + 1.183$
The school has clear organization structure in terms of leadership and MoE support	0.60, $p > 0.05$	0.311, $p > 0.05$	$y = 0.311x + 1.802$

Table 7: Influence of Academic Strategies on Academic Performance

$N = 49$; s -significant with p -value ≤ 0.05 ; Constant/predictor variable: Academic Strategy;
Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

The variable on having a well-trained and adequate teaching force also had a positive and significant association on academic performance ($b = 0.308$, $r = 0.285$, $p < 0.05$). It was evident that the schools with clear organization structure in terms of leadership and MoE support performed better in academics than those schools that do not ($b = 0.311$, $r = 0.60$, $p < 0.05$).

According to Bottoms and Fry (2009), the school academic strategies begin with the school setting a direction by articulating a vision for schools, specific goals consistent with that vision and a framework of best practices that principals can use to achieve that vision and meet key goals. The district education office can assist each school leadership team in developing a school improvement plan and provide the resources, the high-quality professional development, and the technical assistance, coaching and feedback to the school principal and teachers, then school leadership team should be held accountable for implementing the plan with fidelity and, eventually, for improved student performance. It can therefore be concluded that academic strategies had a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) influence on academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma district to varying degrees.

5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Summary of the Findings

Inferential results indicated there was a positive and significant relationship between school vision and academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District ($b = 0.289$, $t = 3.54$, $p < 0.05$). It should be noted that correlation values obtained were below the average of 0.5, an indication that school vision was not 100% efficient in promoting academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District.

Regression analysis conducted on the influence of school mission on academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District revealed a positive and significant correlation between these two variables ($b = 0.752$, $t = 3.07$, $p < 0.05$). A strong relationship was established school has a concise and powerful mission statement and academic performance ($b = 2.453$, $t = 4.573$, $p < 0.05$) while a marginally weak but positive correlation was observed between the variable, teachers are usually trained and have adequate skills and knowledge as far as school vision & mission are concerned and academic performance ($b = 0.286$, $t = 1.747$, $p < 0.05$).

The overall results between school core values and students' academic performance indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between these two variables ($b = 0.315$, $t\text{-value} = 2.14$, $p < 0.05$). Other variables also had positive and significant association: school has strategic framework of core beliefs, effective practices and goals for improving student achievement ($b = 0.362$, $t\text{-value} = 3.214$, $p < 0.05$) and school creates cultures of success uniquely suited to the students' needs ($b = 0.267$, $t\text{-value} = 1.109$, $p < 0.05$). The regression values obtained were below the average of $b = 0.5$, an indication that school core values do not effectively contribute to students' academic performance.

The results are recorded in Table 7. Results indicate that school articulates a vision for schools, specific goals consistent with that vision and a framework of best practices to enhance academic performance enhances products offered meeting the customers' specifications and this had positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) influence on academic performance ($b = 0.308$, $r = 0.285$, $p < 0.05$). There was a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) association between presence of a sound and comprehensive strategic plan and academic performance ($b = 0.311$, $r = 0.60$, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, results show that setting of high academic expectations that challenge students to acquire the knowledge and develop the skills to succeed had a positive and significant relationship on academic performance ($b = 0.263$, $r = 0.252$, $p < 0.05$). It can therefore be concluded that academic strategies had a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) influence on academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District to varying degrees.

5.2. Conclusion

The following conclusions were derived from the study findings:

- There was a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) influence of school vision and academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District. It should be noted that correlation values obtained were below an average of 0.5, an indication that school vision was not 100% efficient in promoting academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District.
- Regression analysis conducted on the influence of school mission on academic performance revealed there was a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) influence was established by school mission on academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District.
- Study findings show that there was a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) influence by school core values on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District.
- Results indicated that academic strategies had a positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) influence on academic performance in public secondary schools in Kimilili-Bungoma District to varying degrees.

5.3. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings and the conclusions of the study:

- The study findings should help MoE together with education office to have a long-term plan that includes a vision of effective schools, the intervening steps that schools need to take and the support schools need from the district. Schools should have a vision for highly engaging and high-performing schools. Schools should create the right vision and support system for school improvement.
- Schools should have a clear vision of a high-performing school and a long-term plan for reaching it and that the school principals and teachers need to take ownership of school improvement.
- The school management should have put strongest emphasis on high expectations and have a succinct and powerful mission statement that is attainable.
- The MoE should provide a clear focus and a strategic framework of core beliefs, effective practices and goals for improving student achievement. The element of trust, coupled with support, and a collaborative working relationship is necessary in achieving students' academic performance.

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