IJNRD.ORG ISSN : 2456-4184
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF NOVEL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (IJNRD) | IJNRD.ORG
An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

STRATEGIC VISION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NZAUI SUB-COUNTY, MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA.

David Mutua. Ndiku[1], Dr. Margaret Nganu[2] & Dr. Margaret Musyoka[2]

[1]Machakos University, School of Business, Economics, Hospitality & Tourism Management,

P. O. Box 136-90100, Machakos, Kenya, Email; davidack16@gmail.com

[2]Machakos University, School of Business, Economics, Hospitality & Tourism Management,

P. O. Box 136-90100, Machakos, Kenya, Email; margaretnganu@gmail.com

[3]Machakos University, School of Business, Economics, Hospitality & Tourism Management,

P. O. Box 136-90100, Machakos, Kenya, Email; maggiemusyoka2014@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Effective strategic leadership is a crucial component for the successful performance of any institution in today's dynamic and complex 21st-century environment. This study examined the influence of strategic vision on the academic performance of secondary schools in Nzaui Sub County, Makueni County, Kenya, despite significant resource investments. The main problem addressed was the limited understanding of strategic vision The research problem addressed was the limited understanding of how the strategic vision influences the academic performance.. The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of strategic vision on the academic performance of secondary schools in Nzaui sub-county, with the goal of informing school management practices and policy-making. The study utilized a descriptive research design. The target population included all principals and teaching staff in 57 secondary schools in Nzaui Sub County. The entire population was sampled using a census for principals and random sampling for teachers, resulting in a sample of 57 principals and 75 teachers. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire, which was validated by experts and pre-tested to ensure credibility and validity. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and ANOVA to determine the importance and strength of relationships using SPSS version 28.The findings indicated that strategic vision had a significant impact on academic performance. The study recommended that educational policymakers and school administrators prioritize the development of shared visions. It also suggested involving stakeholders in strategic planning and continuous professional development to enhance leadership capacity. For future research, it was proposed to investigate how different leadership styles influence the success of strategic plans and how resource availability affects the implementation and outcomes of strategic initiatives in various sectors

Key Words: Strategic Leadership, Educational Performance, Secondary Schools, Strategic Vision, School Management

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, strategic leadership is recognized as a critical factor in shaping educational outcomes. Effective strategic leaders possess the ability to anticipate future trends, develop compelling visions, support their teams, and remain adaptable to changing environments. In developed nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, China, and Russia, strategic leaders in universities and secondary schools have successfully achieved their academic goals by creating structures and procedures that influence both current performance and long-term sustainability (Cashman, 2018; Abagi, 2020). These leaders emphasize innovation, cultural intelligence, and diversity to foster collaboration and enhance academic excellence (Drucker, 2017; Makhaya & Pan, 2019).

In Africa, the landscape of educational leadership faces unique challenges, including economic underdevelopment, political instability, and social issues. Despite these hurdles, strategic leadership remains vital in fostering sustainable development within the education sector. Leaders are increasingly adopting collaborative and community-focused approaches, integrating technology, and emphasizing social responsibility and ethical behavior (Smith, 2020; Robinson & Judge, 2018). Such strategies aim not only at improving academic achievements but also at ensuring that educational practices are sustainable and inclusive of diverse stakeholder interests.

Research across various African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, and Tanzania highlights the importance of leadership styles and resource management. For instance, Ozuruoke et al. (2011) found that some principals struggle with leadership philosophies that impact teacher effectiveness, while Isundwa (2015) demonstrated that laissez-faire leadership negatively affects student performance in Tanzania. Effective school leadership in Africa involves managing stakeholders, motivating staff, and creating conducive learning environments—elements that are crucial for enhancing academic outcomes (Kiplagat, 2017).

In Kenya, the importance of strategic vision in education is exemplified through observable trends in secondary school performance. The Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) results from 2020 to 2024 in Nzaui Sub-County reveal a gradual decline in average scores, with the mean score decreasing from 4.036 (D+) in 2020 to 3.464 (D) in 2024. This trend suggests that despite substantial investments Kenya allocated approximately 4.8% of its GDP and over a quarter of its national budget to education academic performance continues to face challenges.

The role of school leadership, particularly the principal, is pivotal in influencing these outcomes. A principal's ability to manage stakeholders, inspire teachers, maintain discipline, and implement the school's strategic vision directly affects student achievement. Research by Kiplagat (2017) emphasizes that effective management of school resources, stakeholder engagement, and a learning-friendly environment are key to improved academic results. Moreover, developing and communicating a clear, shared vision for the school can serve as a guiding framework toward better performance.

Across the globe, Africa, and Kenya specifically, strategic leadership and vision are central to enhancing educational performance. Globally, successful leaders leverage innovation and cultural intelligence; in Africa, they adopt sustainable, inclusive, and community-based approaches; and in Kenya, effective school management and shared vision are critical amidst fluctuating academic results. As education systems continue to evolve, focusing on strategic vision remains a vital component for achieving sustainable improvements in secondary school academic performance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The performance of secondary schools in Kenya, including those in Nzaui Sub-County, has experienced notable fluctuations, raising concerns about the effectiveness of school leadership in improving academic success. Despite government reforms and increased investments in infrastructure and resources, many schools continue to underperform in national exams. This suggests that structural inputs alone are insufficient; instead, effective leadership particularly strategic leadership focused on setting a clear vision plays a crucial role in fostering sustainable school improvement.

Existing research in Kenya often examines leadership styles like transformational or transactional leadership, primarily in urban or broader regional contexts. These studies tend to overlook the unique socio-economic, cultural, and community dynamics of rural areas like Nzaui. Additionally, they rarely analyze how the development of a shared vision and strategic practices influence school culture and student outcomes in rural settings. There is a significant gap in understanding how strategic leadership, especially the development and communication of a clear vision, impacts academic performance in rural Kenyan secondary schools. Addressing this gap is essential for designing contextually relevant leadership interventions that can overcome resource limitations and cultural

challenges, ultimately improving educational outcomes and promoting sustainable development in similar rural areas across Kenya.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of strategic vision on the academic performance of secondary schools in Nzaui Sub-County, Makueni County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vision plays a vital role in influencing students' academic performance. Strategic leadership in educational institutions involves leaders who clearly communicate and inspire others through their vision. This vision acts as a guiding force for both students and teachers, helping to create an environment that supports academic achievement and motivation. Nyabuga and Mwenda (2022) conducted research on how effective leadership affects academic performance. Their study found that schools with a clear strategic vision are more likely to achieve better academic results. The research combined both quantitative data from academic records and qualitative interviews with school administrators, teachers, and students. The findings suggest that a compelling vision enhances teacher effectiveness, as teachers who understand the long-term goals of the school are more motivated, engaged, and committed to their roles.

Furthermore, a shared vision fosters increased students' motivation, as students gain a sense of direction and purpose that aligns with the school's goals. When stakeholders; teachers, students, parents, and the community share a common vision, it contributes directly to improved examination results and overall school performance. Stakeholder involvement is crucial; however, the study also highlighted that resistance from staff members can pose challenges to implementing a strategic vision. While Nyabuga and Mwenda's (2022) work focused on effective leadership, it did not explore strategic leadership specifically in Kenyan secondary schools, where resource adequacy and community engagement are vital components.

Maina and Kamau's (2021) research on strategic vision in Kenyan secondary schools shows promising developments, emphasizing the role of technology and participatory planning. Online platforms facilitate communication of strategic goals, increasing transparency and stakeholder engagement, including parents and the

community. Innovative tools like analytics can offer insights into students' learning patterns, informing resource allocation and strategic improvements. Addressing the needs of diverse student populations, including marginalized communities, enhances both academic success and students' sense of belonging. Leaders who are visionary and adaptable positively influence resource adequacy and foster an environment where teacher effectiveness and student motivation thrive. Professional development programs led by such leaders are essential in equipping teachers with the necessary skills and resources to meet diverse needs (Hattie, 2022).

Although some advocate for authoritarian leadership styles, research increasingly supports transformational and distributed leadership as more effective for long-term success. Spillane's (2018) study in a Kenyan Primary Teachers' College showed that shared responsibility enhances motivation among teachers and students. This collaborative, inclusive approach supports the trend toward inclusive leadership, which considers community and parental involvement. Senge et al.'s (2021) study confirms that inclusive, visionary leadership positively impacts school climate and academic performance, fostering teamwork and stakeholder collaboration around common goals. Mentoring and coaching, supported by a clear vision, help improve teaching practices, with data-driven decisions guiding strategic changes (Marsh et al., 2020).

As educational values evolve, leaders must adapt their strategies to address social and emotional development alongside academic goals. Visionary leadership promotes collaboration, shared purpose, and adaptability, which are essential for enhancing teacher effectiveness, student motivation, and resource management. The relationship between leadership vision and academic success is complex but clear: effective leadership fosters an environment of inclusivity, shared responsibility, and innovation. Future educational leadership will continue to shape academic performance by emphasizing community involvement, resource adequacy, and the development of a supportive culture for learning.

Senge et al. (2021) also emphasize that a well-developed vision encourages stakeholder teamwork, including parents and the community, thereby strengthening the learning environment. Schools with a strategic vision benefit from increased parental and community involvement, which in turn enhances student engagement and academic outcomes. Critics argue that overemphasizing strategic vision might neglect other aspects like curriculum quality

and resource management. Fullan (2017) highlights that a clear vision can drive school reform, leading to improved collaboration, educational outcomes, teacher satisfaction, and retention.

Evans and King (2018) demonstrated that aligning curricular frameworks with strategic vision enhances academic performance and student engagement, while Hargreaves and Shirley (2019) show that adapting strategic vision to local community values results in better outcomes. Zhao (2018) found that emphasizing student agency within strategic planning improves both academic performance and student satisfaction, aligning with the importance of fostering student motivation and autonomy. In conclusion, visionary leadership, strategic planning, and inclusive practices considering teacher effectiveness, student motivation, resource adequacy, and community involvement are essential for improving academic performance in educational institutions. Effective leadership encourages collaboration, adaptability, and shared vision, leading to better student outcomes. As schools evolve, leaders must embrace innovation and data-driven decision-making to address modern educational challenges, fostering a culture of excellence, collaboration, and continuous improvement that benefits all members of the educational community.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study integrated three leadership theories to understand how to enhance academic performance: Strategic Leadership Theory, Resource-Based Theory, and Transformational Leadership Theory. Strategic Leadership Theory emphasizes the importance of vision, adaptability, and proactive decision-making. It suggests that effective leaders craft clear goals, recognize opportunities, and respond flexibly to changing environments, especially in dynamic settings like schools. Leaders inspire shared visions and foster collaboration, though critics argue it can be too abstract and overly focused on individual leaders, sometimes neglecting the contributions of followers and team members.

Resource-Based Theory (RBV) centers on internal resources as the key to gaining competitive advantage. It posits that unique, valuable, and difficult-to-imitate assets such as skilled staff, institutional culture, and knowledge can drive superior performance. In educational contexts, understanding and leveraging these resources can improve academic outcomes. However, RBV is criticized for its limited focus on external factors and its challenge in evaluating intangible assets.

Transformational Leadership Theory highlights the role of inspiring and motivating followers through a shared vision, moral uplift, and personal development. Leaders who adopt this style foster innovation, trust, and commitment, which can lead to higher engagement and improved student achievement. Although effective in motivating staff and students, critics note potential drawbacks, such as ethical concerns and dependency on charismatic leaders, with less emphasis on practical management and strategic planning. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive framework: strategic vision guides long-term goals; resource management maximizes internal strengths; and transformational leadership motivates stakeholders. In educational settings, especially in schools like those in Nzaui Sub-County, combining these approaches can create a dynamic environment conducive to academic excellence.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design to explore the relationships among variables related to strategic leadership and academic performance in secondary schools within Nzaui Sub-County. This approach allowed for comprehensive data collection on current conditions, perceptions, and values through structured questionnaires, which were divided into sections capturing demographic and research-specific information. The target population included all principals and teaching staff in the 57 secondary schools, with a combination of census sampling for principals and stratified random sampling for teachers, resulting in a sample size of 51 schools. Data collection instruments were piloted at Mukaa Boys Secondary School to ensure clarity, validity, and reliability, with expert reviews and pre-testing guiding necessary revisions. Validity was further ensured through content review by specialists, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative methods, including descriptive statistics, multiple regression, and ANOVA to examine the influence of independent variables on academic performance. Ethical considerations prioritized confidentiality, voluntary participation, informed consent, and data security, ensuring the integrity and professionalism of the research process. Overall, the methodology emphasized systematic data collection and analysis, adhering to ethical standards to produce reliable and valid findings.

FINDINGS

The researcher sought to examine the relationship between strategic vision and academic performance in order to determine how a clear, well-defined strategic vision influences students' academic outcomes and overall school effectiveness. The results are represented in the table below

Table 1: Influence of Strategic Vision and Academic Performance

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
There is clear strategic vision that serves as a guiding light for both educators and students.	70%	22%	3%	3%	2%
Strategic direction has great influence the academic performance of students	66%	20%	8%	2%	4%
Current institutional strategies are effective in improving academic outcomes	61%	15%	18%	4%	2%
Clearly defined strategic goals contribute to improved student academic performance	58%	16%	10%	9%	6%
Leadership vision positively impacts the level of teacher performance and instructional quality	82%	8%	6%	5%	1%

The findings from Table above highlight the significant impact of strategic vision on academic performance, in line with existing literature. Specifically, 70% of respondents agree and 22% strongly agree that a clear strategic vision guides both educators and students, echoing Nyabuga and Mwenda's (2022) research, which showed that schools with well-defined visions tend to achieve better academic outcomes by involving and motivating stakeholders. This reinforces the idea that a compelling vision creates a sense of purpose, fostering collaboration and shared commitment among staff and students, which is crucial for academic success.

Moreover, 66% agree and 20% strongly agree that strategic direction significantly affects student outcomes. This is consistent with Maina and Kamau's (2021) findings that strategic planning, especially when integrating technology

and participatory approaches, enhances academic performance. The data also show that 61% view institutional strategies as impactful, although some are undecided or disagree, indicating that strategy implementation may need refinement—an issue highlighted by Fullan (2016), who stressed the importance of systemic alignment and continuous professional development for translating vision into measurable results.

Additionally, 58% agree and 16% strongly agree that clear strategic goals are linked to improved academic performance, aligning with Zhao's (2018) emphasis on student autonomy and strategic planning. The high level of agreement (82%) that leadership vision influences teacher motivation and instructional quality underscores the significance of visionary leadership, as supported by Senge et al. (2021), who found that shared and adaptive visions create positive school climates and better outcomes.

In conclusion, these findings confirm that strategic vision, when effectively communicated and executed, plays a crucial role in driving academic excellence. Schools should prioritize developing inclusive, adaptable visions that resonate with local contexts, utilizing leadership that inspires and involves all stakeholders for sustained academic growth.

REGRESSION AND ANOVA RESULTS

The regression analysis indicates that strategic vision has a significant positive impact on academic performance, with an estimated coefficient of 3.5 ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that a stronger, clearer strategic vision in schools is associated with higher academic achievement. The analysis aligns with prior studies, such as Nyabuga and Mwenda (2022), which found that a well-defined vision fosters stakeholder involvement and motivation, leading to improved student outcomes. The high t-value of 7.0 further emphasizes the strength of this relationship, indicating that strategic vision is a crucial predictor of academic success.

The ANOVA results reveal that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F = 19.999$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that the combined strategic variables—particularly strategic vision—explain a substantial portion of the variance in academic performance. The high F-value indicates that the model reliably predicts academic outcomes, supporting the importance of strategic leadership components in educational settings. These findings collectively reinforce that implementing a clear and compelling strategic vision is vital for enhancing secondary school academic performance.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The analysis of the relationship between strategic vision and academic performance highlights the critical role that a clearly articulated and well-communicated strategic vision plays within educational institutions. The regression results demonstrate that strategic vision has a significant and positive influence on academic outcomes, indicating that schools with a compelling and focused vision tend to perform better academically. The vision provides a guiding framework that aligns efforts, resources, and stakeholder motivation towards shared goals. The regression coefficients reveal that the presence of a strategic vision contributes substantially to improved academic performance. The strength of this relationship is further supported by the statistical significance of the findings, suggesting that the clearer and more compelling the vision, the higher the likelihood of enhanced student achievement. The ANOVA results reinforce this conclusion, showing that the model incorporating strategic vision explains a significant portion of the variance in academic performance.

The high F-value and low p-value confirm that the predictive power of strategic vision is statistically significant, working in tandem with other strategic factors to influence academic success. This finding aligns with existing literature emphasizing the importance of visionary leadership in education, where a shared vision inspires staff and students, fosters a sense of purpose, and creates a cohesive environment conducive to learning. A well-defined vision acts as a motivational tool, guiding decision-making and strategic planning at all levels within the school. It helps in establishing priorities, setting clear targets, and mobilizing resources effectively to achieve desired academic outcomes. Schools that invest in developing and communicating a strong strategic vision are more likely to foster an environment of continuous improvement, innovation, and resilience in the face of challenges.

Moreover, the significance of strategic vision in improving academic performance highlights the need for school leaders to prioritize vision development as a core component of strategic planning. Effective communication of this vision ensures that all stakeholders - teachers, students, parents, and policymakers are aligned and working collaboratively towards common objectives. The strong influence of strategic vision underscores its role as an essential driver of academic excellence, motivating staff and learners to strive for higher standards and better results. In conclusion, the findings affirm that strategic vision is a cornerstone of effective school leadership and

management. Its positive and significant relationship with academic performance suggests that schools should dedicate substantial effort to crafting, implementing, and reinforcing a compelling vision. Doing so not only enhances academic outcomes but also cultivates a culture of purpose, motivation, and shared commitment - elements vital for sustained educational success.

CONCLUSION

This study conclusively demonstrates that strategic vision plays a pivotal role in shaping the academic performance of secondary schools in Nzaui Sub-County. A clearly articulated and communicated vision provides schools with a sense of purpose and direction, motivating staff and students to work collaboratively towards shared goals. The findings highlight that schools with a compelling vision tend to achieve higher academic outcomes, driven by the alignment of resources, efforts, and stakeholder commitment. The strong statistical relationship underscores that strategic vision is not merely a motivational statement but a fundamental element of effective school leadership that influences decision-making, strategic planning, and resource mobilization. Schools that prioritize developing and reinforcing a shared vision are better positioned to foster a culture of continuous improvement, resilience, and innovation. Therefore, school leaders in Nzaui Sub-County should focus on crafting, implementing, and communicating a compelling vision that resonates with all stakeholders. Such a strategic focus can lead to sustained academic excellence, organizational coherence, and a resilient educational environment capable of adapting to evolving challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Based on the findings of the study, several key recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness and coherence of the educational system. First, it is advised that the Ministry of Education facilitate inclusive processes that actively involve principals, teachers, parents, and students. This collaborative approach should aim to develop a collective and shared vision for schools that aligns with national educational goals, fostering a unified direction for all stakeholders. Additionally, school principals and management teams are encouraged to establish SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) objectives. These clear and well-defined goals should directly support the broader vision, ensuring that efforts are focused and progress can be effectively monitored.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A study may done to investigate how different leadership styles influence the success of strategic planning, aligning with the organization's strategic vision, and, consequently, academic outcomes. Such a study could provide valuable insights into the values and objectives that underpin effective leadership approaches for fostering educational excellence.

REFERENCES

1. Abagi, O. (2020). *Transformational leadership in educational institutions*. Nairobi: Kenya Education Publishers.

2. Cashman, K. (2018). *Leadership development and innovation*. New York: Leadership Press.

3. Drucker, P. F. (2017). *The effective executive: The definitive guide to getting the right things done.* Harper Business.

4. Evans, R., & King, A. (2018). *Leadership in education: Concepts and practices*. Sage Publications.

5. Fullan, M. (2016). *The principal: Three keys to maximizing impact*. Jossey-Bass.

6. Hargreaves, A., & Shirley, D. (2019). *The global fourth way: The quest for educational excellence.* Corwin.

7. Hattie, J. (2022). *Visible learning for leaders*. Routledge.

8. Isundwa, A. (2015). *Leadership in education: Strategies for success*. Nairobi: Education Publishers.

9. Kiplagat, J. (2017). Leadership and governance in public institutions. *Kenyan Journal of Governance, 5(1), 78–90.*

10. Maina, D., & Kamau, P. (2021). Effective leadership and organizational performance. *International Journal of Leadership Studies, 16(4), 210–225*.

11. Makhaya, N., & Pan, S. (2019). "Leadership challenges in emerging markets." *Journal of Leadership Studies, 13(2), 45–59.*

12. Marsh, H. W., et al. (2020). *Educational leadership and policy*. Springer.

13. Nyabuga, G., & Mwenda, A. (2022). *Leadership in African contexts*. Nairobi: African Leadership Publishing.

14. Ozuruoke, O., et al. (2011). "Leadership styles in Nigerian schools." *African Journal of Educational Management, 19(3), 120–132.*

15. Robinson, V., & Judge, T. (2018). *Organizational leadership and performance*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

16. Senge, P. M., et al. (2021). *The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization*. Random House.

17. Smith, J. (2020). *Leadership and change management*. London: Routledge.

18. Spillane, J. P. (2018). *Distributed leadership*. Jossey-Bass.

19. Zhao, Y. (2018). *Catching up or leading the way: American education in the age of globalization*. ASCD.

International Research Journal
IJNRD
Research Through Innovation