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STRATEGIC CONTINGENCY PLANNING ON PERFORMANCE OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN KENYA: NAROK COUNTY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: *Emergency management and business continuity planning are vital programs for any County Government that wants to survive and prosper in Technical Education. In this paper, the fields of emergency management, County Government continuity, strategic planning and scenario futuring were critically analyzed with a goal of developing an integrated strategic contingency planning in Technical Education. The paper employed a descriptive survey study design to get detailed analysis of emergency management of Narok County Technical Education crisis. Data for the paper was collected using questionnaire and interview guide and was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings showed that top management of Narok County Government had not dedicated adequate funds and resources to strategic contingency planning of Technical Education. The paper concluded that strategic contingency planning was especially needed as there was a tendency overreliance on Central Government to cover expenses incurred in Education administration and management at all levels in Kenya. It was also noted that it was becoming more difficult to get crisis funds to fund Village Polytechnics that provide Technical Education in the Counties from central Government due to stricter accounting and record keeping requirements. The paper recommends that Narok County Government to look for new ways to fund contingency plans such as allocating a specific amount per revenue shilling to the contingency planning in support of Technical Education. The paper also recommends that contingency planning processes to be included in the organization's overall strategic plan and in its annual operating plans.*

Keywords: *Technical Education; Emergency management; Strategic planning and Scenario futuring*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Technical and vocational education (TVET) is broadly defined as "Education which is mainly to lead participants to acquire the practical skills, knowhow and understanding, and necessary for employment in a particular occupation, trade or group of occupations (Atchoarena, D & Delluc, A 2001). Such practical skills or knowhow can be provided in a wide range of settings by multiple providers both in the public and private sector. The role of TVET in furnishing skills required to improve productivity, raise income levels and improve access to employment opportunities has been widely recognized (Bennell, 1999). Developments in the last three decades have made the role of TVET more decisive; the globalization process, technological change, and increased competition due to trade liberalization necessitates requirements of higher skills and productivity among workers in both modern sector firms and Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE). The greatest obstacles to youth led sustainable development in Kenya has predominantly been the poor education system, inadequate policy framework and strategies, poor implementation mechanism of policies, strategies and plans that focused on youth among others (Waikenda, 2013). He further noted that the greatest of all is the lack of means by biggest constituency created by inefficient policy frameworks, which then subject youth into poverty, effectively making them impotent in the face of many other barriers.

The tradition in Kenya, which the Jubilee governmental should throw away, has been that government structures don't support young initiatives and actions about sustainable development. For successive governments, such structure constructs assume that young people are not idle, not responsible enough and are only useful in political situations (MoEST, 2007). But even worse, because of diverse political affiliations young people subscribe to, successive governments have continuously kept them at disadvantaged levels. Therefore, going forward, we need to have the young speaking the same language which is well researched, demand based, and a rights based approach not calculated to govern but rather, strive to become educated to take the lead by right. Henceforth, County Governments need to prioritise policies and must also develop macroeconomic policies that focus on job creation particularly targeted at youth for young women to foster greater linkages between the labour market and the education and training system to ensure curricula are aligned to the needs of the labour market, and that youth are being trained in

fields where employment opportunities are available or are growing(Waikenda, 2013). Hence County Governments must break from the past and have Kenyan youth vision first by strategically planning inclusion of youth agenda on training and development in their agenda. This should be true especially those who do not transit to secondary schools. In effect, there is need for legislations that strengthen these initiatives of development of technical education especially the youth polytechnics.

Indeed Youth polytechnics started as low-cost, post-primary training centers in rural areas in the 1960s to help stem the problem of low enrolment in secondary schools. The institutions were aimed at absorbing young people who failed to enroll in secondary schools (Waikenda, 2013). They specialize in courses such as carpentry, basic accounting/book-keeping, welding, mechanics, catering and teaching and have been Kenya's most important institutions providing vocational skills. Polytechnics have over the years produced even better skilled artisans than most of the numerous private and public universities. A while back, holding a higher national diploma from a polytechnic or technical college was considered as equitable to a university degree (Waikenda, 2013). However, due to the eroded value that has been attached to these institutions, this is no longer the case.

County Governments must work on building new institutions instead of converting technical training colleges into affiliate campuses. Even while they seek highly educated university graduates, also the need for lower level graduates for effective production is necessary. This is why County Governments need to rebuild middle-level technical training colleges and village polytechnics. Narok County as one of the developing counties needs skilled labour. Technical colleges and village polytechnics when well planned and structured give this opportunity (Waikenda, 2013). When well equipped, these institutions can help the county come up with the skilled labour. The county should realize that some of the contractors it will give jobs in constructions of houses are not university graduates and Most of them obtained their skills in polytechnics and then gained experience in construction sites in the village (Ngerechi, 2003). This formed the basis for this paper which sought to establish the effects of strategic contingency planning on performance of technical education in Kenya with reference to Narok County.

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

After KCSE results are announced every year and different groups of students move to colleges and university. However, the Country continues to record a poor transition rate which leaves a lot of students out of school. It is a worrying state of affairs that needs to be addressed before we raise a generation of schooled but uneducated and unskilled young people. Kenya's general election crisis of December 2007 highlighted the problems of a large population of unskilled, unemployed youth amidst growing poverty.

To address some of the underlying causes of the restlessness among youth, the government made initiatives for skills development. Hence Kenya at large needs major reforms in the education sector starting from the basic level to tertiary level. This should be a collective effort that should be handled by both the County and National governments to ensure Kenya has the best possible education system. Sadly, we are at a situation where the secondary schools and tertiary institutions cannot accommodate those who come from the lower levels. According to the Constitution, County Governments are in charge of Early Childhood Educational institutions and village polytechnics (Waikenda, 2013). Hence this gives Counties an opportunity to help reform their education system and management.

It could be noted that village polytechnics were major institutions in the 1970s and 80s that helped government manage the low rate of transition to institutions of higher learning. Polytechnics were responsible for bringing up skilled artisans in areas such as carpentry, welding, mechanics and tailoring. But with the glorification of university education, these institutions were demonized and run down as people shunned them. Efforts to revive them have not been successful but with the low transition rate from primary and secondary schools, it is time to rethink the role of polytechnics. That is why the current paper sought to establish the effects of strategic contingency planning on performance of technical education in Kenya with reference to Narok County.

3.0 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the effects of financial contingency planning on performance of technical and vocational education in Narok County.
2. To determine how the county government's contingency policy in education affects performance of technical and vocational education in Narok County

3. To assess the influence of contingency planning of tools and equipment's on performance of technical and vocational education in Narok County

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Yin (1994) argues in favour of the use of surveys in educational fact-finding because they provide a great deal of accurate information. The intention of survey research is to gather data at a particular point in time and to use it to describe existing conditions. The descriptive nature of research was used in order to gain information on how the institution has become attractive. The target population of the study consisted of the County Director of Education, Narok County education committee members, village polytechnics principals, the heads of departments of the village polytechnics, and the students schooling in village polytechnics in Narok County. The Narok County was deliberately chosen because it is one of those counties facing barriers of low primary schools to tertiary transition. In addition, the institution was accessible to the researcher without difficulty.

In collecting data, two major instruments were used: questionnaires and interviews. Most items on the questionnaire were based on a five-point Likert scale. The statements were formulated in a positive form. The statements required the subjects to select any one of the options: strongly agree (SA), which was awarded five points; agree (A), four points; undecided (UD), three points; disagree (DA), two points; and strongly disagree (SDA), one point. The questionnaires were all distributed at one time by the researcher and his assistants and were followed up by interviews. Both activities were easy to co-ordinate due to a manageable number of participants. One of the more obvious ways of gathering data is by observing the culture or environment under study.

The observation schedule was thus used to identify, explain and describe the physical facilities and infrastructure of the institution, which would shed more light on how the institution is run. The research instruments were validated beforehand by the research experts at Maasai Mara University. They reviewed and analysed the contents of the questionnaires and interview schedule in order to ascertain that the instruments were suitable for the purpose for which they were designed.

They offered suggestions which the researcher used in introducing the necessary corrections and improvements to the instruments. Data were analysed in terms of both

quantity and quality. Both types of data were collected in order to provide a balanced assessment and interpretation of past, current and developing practices. Data gathering involved the collection of specific information and visits to the workshops of the village polytechnics. The completed questionnaires were first grouped manually according to the categories of respondents. Based on the information gathered during data collection, they were then coded.

The researcher analyzed information in a systematic way in order to come up with conclusions as well as recommendations. The feedback that was obtained from the questionnaires was used to gather the data needed for the paper. During data analysis, qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted. Data was edited, coded and classified to present the results of the data analysis in a systematic and clear way. Frequency distributions and percentages were generated to facilitate comparisons and cross-tabulations of various items. Further grouping and analyses were carried out. Using tabulated frequencies and percentages, the background of those respondents interviewed shed some light on their performance indicators.

5.0 SUMMARY OF PAPER FINDINGS

The findings of this research revealed that the major contingency financial constraint the village polytechnics faced was the limited budget and that was the core issue as to why those institutions were not able to employ trained instructors or teachers and support them in updating and upgrading their skills, purchase most appropriate training facilities, aid and technology for practical training and thus were not able to market themselves effectively. Although the polytechnics had tools and equipment's to be used by the students, the principals indicated that the major barrier with those tools and equipment's is that most of them were out-dated and the ones which were broken down were never repaired.

The finding of this paper also revealed that in order to move contingency planning to a higher priority in the organization, it is necessary to apply strategic management and scenario futuring processes to the normal planning processes of emergency management and business continuity. The strategic contingency plan is based on the organization's overall strategic plan. The organization's existing documents such as vision statement, mission statement, values statement, and so forth, should be used as a basis for developing similar documents for the strategic contingency plan. The organization's vision and mission

statements may be created once and used throughout the company's life or revised as times change. So, too, will be the case for the strategic contingency plan's vision and mission statements. Everything in the strategic contingency plan should support the organization's goals and use the organization's formats.

The study finding also showed that the contingency planning department needs to become a business partner and assess technical education based on what's best for the County Governments. It also established that contingency planners could bring strategies to the table, showing how the County Governments can benefit from technical education and improve it to benefit youth. It further established that contingency planning practices can be distributed throughout the organization, at all levels of personnel, to increase resiliency.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Respondents in this study highlighted different barriers faced by the youth polytechnics. Principals and teachers were of the view that lack of contingency strategic planning especially on funding from the County Government was one of the factors affecting performance of technical education in Narok County. They also observed that a weak curriculum and the county government policy on technical education were the major barriers faced by the village polytechnics. According to the teachers, and students tools and equipment's were a barrier since most of them were broken, old and out-dated and the county government had no contingency money planned for their repair or replacement.

Hence it should be concluded that strategic contingency planning for County Governments is especially needed as there is a tendency to rely on State government to address the immediate challenges. County Governments have a variety of techniques available to influence the location, type, intensity, design, quality, and timing of development of Technical Education. A variety of business tools such as strategic planning and metrics can be adapted to help mature the contingency strategic planning. Contingency planning processes are of strategic importance and, as such, need to fit into the organizational structure more coherently. County Governments are facing greater challenges in an increasingly interconnected world, and contingency planning can help ensure the entity's operations continue especially in running of technical education. It is time for contingency planning to be an active part of the County Governments overall strategic planning process.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Contingency planning initiatives, no matter how well the technical education case is presented, may be given low priority in the budget process. Therefore this paper recommends new ways to fund contingency plans such as allocating a specific amount per revenue shilling to the contingency planning program. Developing and performing to best-practices and industry standards will help drive visibility. Even relatively small actions, such as purchasing tools and equipment supplies in bulk across entire large village polytechnics, could save money and time.

Contingency planning processes should be included in the county government's overall strategic plan and in its annual operating plans. The research recommends emergency management document reviews and business continuity plan updates also should be part of revision of technical, vocational and education by establishing more linkages between TIVET and other sectors as well as orienting TIVET towards sustainable development. The paper also recommends promotion of a broad access to learning and training throughout life, and making TIVET an instrument for social inclusiveness and cohesion.

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