Strategies for Performing Educational Projects: Use of Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and Tools

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Abstract: There exists an immediate necessity for a well-organized monitoring and evaluation procedure across the country in the Kenyan county government structure and the increasing monetary decentralization concerning to growth policies, projects, and programmes (Phiri, 2015). In reference to Kumar, Kumar, and Vivekadhish (2016), data shows there are actual challenges in realizing the eventual aim of the various ventures in Kiambu County. The absurdity is that there are still occurrences of project disappointment in Kiambu, given an agreement within and between scholars that appropriate monitoring and evaluation influence the degree to which a project attains its main intended aims. The purpose of the study was to analyze the influence of the monitoring and evaluation plan and tools on the performance of education projects funded by the Kiambu County Government. The study was guided by change theory and realistic evaluation theories. The study used descriptive design. The study was conducted within Kiambu County with a sample size of 96 participants. The study used questionnaires ad interviews to collect data. The study revealed that an express impact of monitoring and evaluation exists as monitoring is described in basic terms as overseeing the project while implementation takes place. Deductions can be made from this research that monitoring and evaluation strategy is the summary of design of the project which primes the impact of school county funded project success. To speed-up the success of projects, the researcher recommended formulating and implementing an exclusive monitoring and evaluation strategy.

Keywords: *Strategies, Educational Projects, Monitoring and Evaluation, M&E Plans, M&E Tools*

I.   Introduction

Each educational institution has an obligation to monitor the efficiency of the services being delivered to its young people and children. Several things ought to be considered when measuring the efficiency of an educational institution. These include factors such as safety and health, financial control, turnout, employee development, child safeguarding, ethos, cooperation with other development organizations and, of course, the curriculum, teaching and learning. The better the collective comprehension of the nature and purpose of these fundamental undertakings, the higher is the probability that every employee was aware of and appreciate the significance of their own roles in maintaining, assuring and refining the standards (Glascow Education Services, 2013).

Glascow Education Services (2013) notes, in a bid to achieve endless perfection in standards of education, institutions of learning have to participate in a complete range of quality procedures. The basic ones consist of planning with regard to development, the execution of institutions of learning improvement strategies, monitoring and assessment and ongoing expertise improvement of staff. Every one of these procedures must have, as the very center of their purpose, enhancing the quality of training and learning

so that each child and the young person may attain to the limit of his or her potential. In this context, it is obvious that particular significance must attach to monitoring and assessing the quality of training and learning.

Due to the importance attached to M&E in projects implementation, studies have been done across the world to focus on some issues influencing their success. From the global angle, for example, China has been known and is still known today to be among the best-performing countries in their M&E process as a tool of performance in both the public and private sector (UNDP, 2015). According to PASSIA (2013) in their report on the performance of sanitation projects construction in central elementary school, several factors determined their success. Among the major cited factor was the M&E process as implemented by the government management bodies, the contractors and the school leaders. In the report, over 230 teachers filled-out a questionnaire that required them to break down some of the factors they felt had an influence on the M&E process. In a chi-square test, a calculated value of 35.1, 24.1, 43.9, and 54.1 were found against the critical value of 9.49 for factors like stakeholders' participation, financial resources, and attitudes towards M&E by staff members and training and M&E education to members. The same factors have been cited to influence the performance of monitoring and evaluation in school infrastructural ventures implementation in New Delhi India today by Work (2015).

There exists an immediate necessity for a well-organized monitoring and evaluation procedure across the country in the Kenyan county government structure and the increasing monetary decentralization concerning to growth policies, projects, and programmes (Phiri, 2015). In reference to Kumar, Kumar, and Vivekadhish (2016), data shows there are actual challenges in realizing the eventual aim of the various ventures in Kiambu County. Similarly, in reference to the assessment of the financial reports for the period ended 30 June year 2016, the Kiambu County auditor general executive several numbers of projects didn't meet the stakeholder's expectations, the projects include the following: the construction and rehabilitation of lavatory block in Githunguri ECD center. This points to the failed Monitoring and evaluation systems in the projects. M&E helps in tracking down the progress of such projects to ensure effectiveness.

In 2014, the classroom floor was refurbished tiles as a substitute to laying out a 40mm thick hard wearing grade terrazzo, there was no proof of approval for the charge of materials, toilet painting exposed poor workmanship resulting from this anomaly. It has not been possible to check if the value for money used throughout the year that ended 30 June 2016, an additional venture was on refurbishment and rehabilitation of Gachie Early Childhood Development Nursery school that was given to service provider on 2nd December year 2014 at a total budget of 1,961,200. The records showed that a disbursement worth Kshs1,053, 788 was already actualized by 12th January year 2016, though a checkup carried out on the progress of the project showed that the construction work was not complete. In reference to Mwangi, Nyang'wara and Ole Kulet (2015), construction of two classrooms and a lavatory block at Kahembeta Secondary School, however, the construction of the two classrooms was done the toilets were left not complete and the veranda area wasn't done, additionally, the contractor was not in the site during the inspection in October 2016 (Fiscal statement of government county executive of Kiambu, 2016). The absurdity is that there are still occurrences of project disappointment in Kiambu, given an agreement within and between scholars that appropriate monitoring and evaluation influence the degree to which a project attains its main intended aims. The purpose of the study was to analyze the influence of the monitoring and evaluation plan and tools on the performance of education projects funded by the Kiambu County Government.

II.   Literature Review

Most scholars, for example, Chitkara, and Kohli (2008) recognize that project evaluation and monitoring should be exercised at the very beginning of the project planning, a few argues that it ought to be set after the planning phase of the project. Nyonje et al (2012). Regardless of these differences, majority of the scholar, agrees that planning the venture should include comprehensive details of how it should be evaluated (Cleland and Ireland, 2007).

Vivekadhish, Kumar and Kumar (2016) point out that monitoring and evaluating career progress is a "way of looking at, investigating, following as a change of pace to meet the indicated principles used in the plan". The authors further clarify that monitoring produces, measuring progress and project current position. Performance reports make available the tails of presentation of activities in terms of scope, system, assets, cost, quality, as well as risk, that may be utilized as functions in several programs. Viewing and viewing activities may be fundamental to a variety of players, as well as experienced factions, as it can make certain that proximity of efforts is re-introduce several attempts by a money related component showing two or three locations (Stevens and Kanie, 2016). The ace outlined three vital id for emphasizing on the evaluation and assessment of performance of the board through creative evaluation. The three points of view join the power of the monitoring, the alignment strategies of the M&E categories and engagement organizations. These three viewing conditions are developed in the 2-3-2-1 outline review.

Kanine and Stevens (2016) indicated that anywhere the power of monitoring and assessment is localized or connected to the quality of basic expression work, thought should be done. They also made it clear that monitoring and assessment units ought to be seen as grateful contributors and ought to have the choice to formalize their expansion work so that monitoring and assessment executives require flexible inputs to back their legitimacy (Kanie and Stephens, 2016). It suggests that the spectator system ought to be developed achieved a specific goal of having a greater impact on shaping its thinking. Empowered for M&E social events, a variety of factors are often playing part in refining the visibility of the merger, including re-examining to see progress, the number of people evaluating the experimental program, the amount of understanding to consider cost over performance, (Kanie and Stephens 2016).

Opinions necessitate undeniable monitoring and assessment points under the design outlining, possible, recognition and support requirements. It is very important, when coming up with monitoring and evaluation structure to identify the framework, plans, and modifications that was used to see to it M&E requirements (Chaplowe, 2008). There is a distinct distinction from the tools used to assist managers of the project with planning and controlling of the project need activities for example: selection of the venture and risk management tools and procedures; tools for project implementation and strategies; project management tools for execution; venture management; monitoring and control tools and processes.

The logical framework (Logframe), seen by the hundred, tools of the most widely used tool and techniques for planning and viewing experiences. The Log structure further is a physical integration that is the interaction of all the governments and non-governmental organizations that are progressively successful. It is a structure that uses M&E indicators all the time to perform sequentially as we perceive the expected risks. The expected structure in this way reflects the area used when using the M&E structure in Chaplowe, (2008). In addition, it works respectfully with other instruments of monitoring and assessment (Jaszczolt, 2010).

Brunner (2010) also require that it continue with the use of the Log framework taking into account two or three variables. You agree that the Log Frames Approach has not been disabled by experts. Apart from the way various providers perceive the points and their shortcomings; that watendodels has technologies that have a tendency in society to look at a specific area that can backfire such as opposing and revitalizing neighborly acquisition, combined effort, and possessions (so it is important to encourage and lie around decorators, particularly supervisors, to change their comprehension of log plots) or whether they continue to utilize it. Myrick (2013) observes that the business-to-business approach to M&E management is completely ineffective, and ultimately, masters may be forced into extraordinary measures to implement either a log case or a silent M&E management strategy. Therefore, whatever process is used, the basic principles of M&E intended to be achievable, performance limits, available locations and special announcements should be applied to the plan. The benefits of the Log Line combine comprehension and adequacy in data collection, record and determination. The M&E apparatus includes performance indicators, logical framework, theory-based evaluation, formal surveys, and rapid appraisal methods, and many others. The choice of the instruments is dependent on required data, accessories as well as costs to be incurred (World Bank, 2002).

Apart from the two basic data gathering strategies which are the normal one and less formal method (Nabris, 2002). However, formal processes have a high demand for uninterrupted legitimacy and quality, as well as reviews, hands-on ideas, and straight checks. A less formal meaningful detail is a symbol, and as the requirements are very close to the end. They include field visits, as well as informal social issue. In order to improve the capability of M&E framework, the evaluation and assessment system and planning should be established as a fundamental element (Nabris, 2002).

III.   Materials and Methods

The study was guided by change theory and realistic evaluation theories. The study used descriptive design to describe the M&E in county sponsored school projects. The study was conducted within Kiambu County with a target population of 240 stakeholders in the teaching fraternity and school projects' implementation phase (Kiambu County). The sample size entailed 96 participants including and the County Executive Committee Member (CEC) (40% of the population). The study used questionnaires to collect data from the in-house audit team, the Education management team, the Ward administrators (WA) and use interviews to collect the data from the Executive Committee Member (CEC). The questionnaire was piloted in Gatanga - a sub county of Muranga County. The pilot data was used to examine validity and reliability of the tool. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics using SPSS version 24.0.

IV.   Results

Demographics of the Questionnaire respondents

The study collected data on the demographics of the questionnaire study participants to determine their status based on their age, gender, level of education as well as encounters with their current employer at the Kiambu County Government. The data was analyzed and presented using Table 1.

Table 1 Demographics of the Questionnaire respondents

Item	Category	F	%
Gender	Male	50	64.94
	Female	27	35.06
Age	a) Below the age of 35	10	12.99
	b) 36 to 45 years	19	24.68
	c) 46 years to 55 Years	32	41.56
	d) Above 55 years	16	20.78
Highest level of education	a) Post-graduate Level	10	12.99
	b) Graduate	45	58.44
	c) Higher College	20	25.97
	d) Secondary	2	2.597
Experience with current employer	a) 1 year and under	20	25.97
	b) Between 1-5 years	25	32.47
	c) More than 5 years	32	41.56

Effect of the monitoring and evaluation plan on the performance of education projects funded by the Kiambu County Government

This study investigated the impact of the monitoring and evaluation plan on how education projects funded by the Kiambu County Government performed through analyzing their project lifetime as well as the aims of the monitoring and evaluation department since the inception of the counties after declaring the 2010 constitution in Kenya.

Period of existence and primary objective of the M&E Department

The M&E department and its units for this study existed between the periods of less than 2 years to above 8 years as shown in table 2 below. The primary objective of the school funding project was to improve the quality of literacy and numeracy instruction for girls and boys in Early Child Development Education and Vocational training programs in Kiambu county. On the average, the staffs have been on the school funding project for a period of 2 years.

Table 2 Period of existence of M&E department and its units

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 2yrs	2	3.1
2-3	2	3.1
4-5	5	6.2
6-7	14	18.8
8 & above	53	68.8
Total	77	100.0

Table 2 shows that the majority of the M&E units 53(68.8%) in Kiambu county have existed since over 8 years ago. The implications affirm how such units must have been established or been in existence before the promulgation of the 2010 constitution that brought about the legal administrative boundaries of counties in Kenya.

Monitoring and Evaluation roles and responsibilities

This survey further examined what influences of M&E plans by collecting data on M& E roles and responsibilities. The findings are presented in Table 5. Each of those who took part in this study participated in monitoring and evaluation interventions at different levels depending on their job positions within the assessed programs. Among these participants were project managers whose roles revolved around the conception and execution of the exact activities, the teams from the Information Communication Technology departments as well as those from the Management Information System organization, networking and advocacy officers and administrators and logisticians.

Table 3 up next represents the duty distribution within the interventions where the implementers included management officials who coordinate Information Communication Technology, employees who carry out the information gathering and record-keeping, corporate officers as well as officers in charge of communication, governance, and planning.

Table 3 Role of respondents in the school funded projects Project

Category of M&E planning team	Roles	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Project Management team members	Conceptualization and project planning ICT/ MIS coordination	5	21.8
	Liaison and communication	4	
	Administration & logistics	4	
		4	
Project M&E staffs	Data collection and documentation	3	15.6
	ICT/ MIS coordination	4	
	Liaison and communication	5	

Project officers	Conceptualization and project planning	9	34.5
	Data collection and documentation		
	Liaison and communication	7	
	Administration & logistics	8	
		2	
Consultants	Conceptualization and project planning	4	28.1
	Data collection and documentation		
	ICT/ MIS coordination	7	
	Liaison and communication	8	
		3	
Total		77	100.0

Table 3 illustrates how most of the participants 26 (34.5%) worked as project officers in the planning for supervising and assessing county school-sponsored ventures. In this, their roles included conceptualization and project planning, gathering information, recording, networking and corporation, advocacy, and planning. Within this table is also other staff 22(28.1%) who worked as consultants in the planning of supervision and assessment of the county school-sponsored engagements.

Elsewhere, in a different investigation, the survey, found that all the participants representing 100% (n=77) showed knowledge of the supervision and assessment plots of the various interventions. Despite the fact that preparations and strategy for these plots were not inclusive of the ideas of everyone, participants quickly grasped the idea following an assessment training. It was noted that it was the institution executing the project which also formulated this M&E scheme immediately following the unveiling of the County School Funding project. The production of such resources was affected by the availability of funds for the implementation of actions, the readiness as well as the capability of the personnel in implementing outlined action points within the M&E framework like gathering and analyzing information, the practicability of the listed action points, the workplan of the intervention and viability of the stated deadlines, issues around ethics, and any apparent risks.

Additionally, the participants clearly explained the major constituents of these M&E schemes as including the project purposes, pointers/gauges, foundational information, and goals. Others outlined on the list were explanations on pointers, routines for gathering information, periodic evolutionary report preparations for every pointer, how the information would be verified, mechanisms for report preparations, task allocations to individuals and a budget line for the whole process.

In the same sense, the participants were questioned on if they thought the M&E schemes assisted implementers to better conceptualize the prospects of the interventions and all (n=77) representing 100% gave an affirmative. Also, the participants expressed their thoughts that monitoring, and evaluation plans greatly impact how interventions are executed at 8.2 out of 10.

Largely, therefore, it is acceptable to conclude that enough effort was placed on achieving outputs, outcomes, and impact of the project. The implication is M&E frameworks are formulated for providing a roadmap for the interventions and actions of any project. M&E frameworks also help in stalking the achievements at every stage of the project.

Through the interviews with the Executive Committee Members (ECM), the study revealed that there was sufficient planning for follow-ups and assessments of the school county-funded projects. One noted:

> *It is within the documentation that every project has a guided monitoring and evaluation plan. It is therefore important that under every project funded by the county government, project monitoring and evaluation plans are in order and as required* [KI 002]

Effect of the Monitoring and Evaluation tools on the performance of education projects

The mechanisms and equipment useful for taking information, storing, analyzing, and preparing reports for the project were considered important. All the 77 participants representing 100% agreed that there were such procedures in place, for example that

information was taken and stored in the project information catalogue for the project since the ground-breaking reports and statistics, on-going supervision reports and so forth. The information catalogue was utilized for drawing required data at any point and also for producing trajectories on the project course which advised any changes to be made for better outcomes.

Additionally, 72 participants representing 94% of all, stated that they had taken part actively in gathering information during varied periods whereas 24 persons representing 31% of the participants declared that they carry out frequent information cleansing where they check to remove some information. This category also stated that they keep abreast with quality of the information periodically in order to analyze the information and produce reports. Again, those who took part in gathering the information clarified that the process added value to their knowledge in terms of what the intervention expected since, during the activity, tendencies were visible on how various targets were to be met along the implementation period.

Averagely, how data management mechanisms impact the way projects perform was ranked 7.8 out of 10 by those who took part in the study. This implied that there was a higher impact of the data mechanisms. Nonetheless, this rating was below compared the impact of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms such as the M&E strategies and competencies on how the interventions performed.

V.   Discussions

The findings of the current study show how monitoring and evaluation procedures such as M&E strategies, skills, equipment, and the involvement of relevant partners impact the success of the project either as a person or as a team. Strategic M&E refers to procedural planning of the project funds in a more organized manner with the aim of excelling its purposes (Faniran, Love and Smith 2000). Examining the influence of monitoring and evaluation plans on the performance of projects was one of the objectives of the current research. Results have shown that monitoring and evaluation of the County School Funding project remained directed by the M&E strategies that were formulated soon after the project inauguration, as advised by Gray (2009). The consequence of the findings explains the fact that project implementers posses the necessary competencies for procedural organization of the project funds so that they are used to succeed the project goal. As explained by Nuguti, (2009), the recognition of required information while carrying out a project and also the pointers of success of the project are central in any monitoring and evaluation strategy. It was seen that all the participants at 100% declared their familiarity with the monitoring and evaluation strategy that worked in the project consisting of the pointers to success. Alcock (2009) advises that in the process of monitoring and evaluation, clear information gathering itineraries as well as clarity in role distribution for the implementers must be drawn. Likewise, this research confirmed that information gathering itineraries and clear distribution of the responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation were specified in the monitoring and evaluation strategies in preparation of the success of the project. Such are in line with monitoring and evaluation study results explained by various previous works in the literature review section.

In general, a monitoring and evaluation strategy provides a clear framework of the causal expectations that highly affect the outcome of the project, including how the items in the log frames relate for instance the activities, inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact (Mackay 2007; Alcock 2009; Nuguti 2009). The current research established the growing of project logical frameworks by the County School Funding projects detailing with clarity the pointers to success, any root conventions that highly determine the success of the project and the expected correlation between elements of the log frame like the inputs, events, outputs, outcomes, and impact. Equally, such procedures made sure that the strategies outlined in the project monitoring and evaluation strategy was realizable, attainable, and practical for the success of the project.

Moreover, these results were in line with Dvir et al. (2003) who suggested the centrality of project objectives in formulating monitoring and evaluation strategies for all the activities and roles. The reason is that the strategies are drawn directly from the objectives of the project. While developing the project monitoring and evaluation frameworks, each of the objective is described,

before designing how they could be achieved which are usually produced as the monitoring and evaluation strategies and utilized for assessing the success of the objectives (Dvir et al., 2003).

VI. Conclusion

This study reveals that an express impact of monitoring and evaluation exists as monitoring is described in basic terms as overseeing the project while implementation takes place. Evaluation on the side is described as assessing and providing judgments of how the project has performed against the already formulated aims and goals. Hence, it is the monitoring and evaluation process only that provides an effective analysis of the performance as well as any suggested that must be implemented to enhance the success of the project. Authoritatively therefore, central monitoring and evaluation procedures surveyed must be implemented for optimum outcomes.

Deductions can be made from this research that monitoring and evaluation strategy is the summary of design of the project which primes the impact of school county funded project success. Engaging in a project that do not have a project monitoring and evaluation strategy refers to interventions lacking all the central components of M&E like organization, pointers to success that help in tracking success, information gathering instruments or plans, role distribution for implementers, as well as frameworks and methodologies for analyzing data. As such, project implementation remains difficult to conduct required monitoring and evaluation activities if such a framework is missing.

Any monitoring and evaluation strategies outlines required capabilities, funds as well as information for monitoring growth and success of the project. It moves on to outline the program and procedures of gathering information, duty allocation for the staffs working in the project. When projects utilize the monitoring and evaluation strategy, capability breaches are quickly recognized, and trainings are organized to fill the same customized to meet specific needs. Additionally, monitoring and evaluation strategies are used to develop exclusive data management systems for the project. According to this research, monitoring and evaluation can only impact the success of the project if the monitoring strategy must presently direct the engagements of the project in terms of action mechanisms of the project so as to be conversant with targets.

VII. Recommendations

Monitoring and evaluation strategies from the results of this research showed a great correlation with project success for school county-funded projects. To speed-up the success of projects, the researcher recommended formulating and implementing an exclusive monitoring and evaluation strategy. In addition, results discovered that skills in monitoring and evaluation are brought about by ensuring training and capability enhancement for the staff implementing the project thereby securing and driving their knowledgeability on project deliverables, goals, and targets.

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