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Leadership Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting: Implications for Infrastructure Projects in Public Secondary Schools

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to assess the influence of leadership reporting strategies on the completion of infrastructure projects (IPs) in reference to Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E). Using a descriptive survey design, public secondary schools within Uriri Sub County in Kenya were considered. Data was collected from 156 censored respondents that included principals, chairpersons of the Boards of Management, chairpersons of school infrastructure committees, and deputy principals. Data was collected by use of questionnaires. Findings indicate that prioritizing transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in reporting enhances project outcomes. Also, being open to suggestions from evaluated reports and the need for continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of progress by school leaders is significant. The study concludes that M&E leadership reporting strategies have a significant and moderately positive correlation with the completion of IPs. It is recommended that standardized templates be adopted in documenting financial transactions in alignment with project budgets for reporting expenditures. Stalled projects are on the rise due to ineffective leadership and inappropriate project organization structures. The study offers valuable insights that can guide strategic planning and decision-making on IPs in the education institutions. Specifically, the study proposes a framework for effectively managing the change and growth of IPs to improve internal efficiency.

Introduction

In order to create conditions that are favorable for learning and to guarantee the general wellbeing of both students and staff, infrastructure development is essential in public secondary schools. However, due to a number of issues such a lack of funding, red tape, and insufficient monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, it is still difficult to undertake infrastructure projects successfully in many areas (Zacharia, 2023). In addition, while other project management areas are given a lot of attention in project delivery, the practice of M & E tends to be neglected in building and construction (Tengan et al., 2018). Further, insufficient attention is given to implementation process, which is necessary for effective completion (Sindayigaya, 2020). The only project activity that starts at project initiation and continues through project closing is M & E implying that it is essential for successful projects (Nilupa et al., 2022).

Project management requires M&E in order to help stakeholders evaluate project results by identifying obstacles, tracking progress, and making well-informed decisions. Monitoring involves the systematic collection of data to track progress, while evaluation entails the assessment of the outcomes and impact of infrastructure development projects. M & E is the process of comparing current and historical circumstances to assess goal achievement (Onyango, 2019). It should be the primary tool for evaluating an organization's performance (Dixon et al., 2019). Equally M & E has a positive impact on the implementation of development (Mose, 2022). Proper M&E throughout all project phases right from concept and design to completion stage is important (Odhiambo, 2020). However, Chepchieng (2018) and Otieno and Deya (2018) discovered that there is a lack of cooperation and financial knowledge in public facilities management.

Effective M&E requires leadership in managing the planning, implementation, and assessment phases of infrastructure projects. This ensures that resources are used effectively and project objectives are met. In Kenya, the Ministry of Education has mandated school leadership to manage and oversee IPs (Ben & Murundu, 2019). However, many Boards of Management fail to utilize Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) for informed decision-making (Chebet & Clinton, 2021). The purpose of infrastructure projects frequently differs from their actual results, even in spite of government initiatives and investments in education. This disparity emphasizes how crucial strong leadership is to the oversight and assessment of infrastructure projects in order to guarantee their impact and successful execution.

Numerous studies have emphasized how crucial monitoring and assessment are for educational projects (Sindayigaya et al., 2020). One study emphasized the unique aspects of M &E in educational projects, particularly the need for a specific approach to managing risks (Yemini, 2018). Another highlighted the necessity of having a thorough understanding of educational monitoring and evaluation ideas (Kivilä et al., 2017). Study findings also underscore the importance of having a systematic monitoring and evaluation process, especially when it comes to local government-funded educational initiatives (Warutere & Mutundu, 2022). Other studies examined practical implications of monitoring and evaluation in school projects (Nasution, 2023) while Belay et al., (2022) concentrated on planning and evaluation in school health programs. A number of studies in relation M&E have also been conducted in Kenya as well. Munyua (2018) found that implementation deficiencies are responsible for project completion failures. Kepkemoi et al. (2018) determined the impact of M&E on the efficient use of CDF IPs. Karioh (2019) on the contrary established that M&E did not contribute to IP success. While Johnson and Kisimbii (2018) found that financing, manpower, sociopolitical issues, and feasibility studies all had an impact on the implementation of construction projects. All of these studies highlight the value of M&E in educational initiatives, especially in guaranteeing quality control. However, they fail to underscore the role and significance of reporting as a critical component in M & E. The studies also seem not to address the aspect of leadership as a facilitative function.

Project success depends on accurate and excellent reporting (Thompson, 2007). Reporting is the methodical and prompt delivery of crucial data that forms the foundation for managerial decision-making at the proper levels. It is essential to the monitoring process. The funders and stakeholders of educational initiatives frequently inquire about the project's progress toward achieving the intended transformation (RahmanDongoran et al., 2023). This

will enable Project managers to keep stakeholders updated on the status of their projects. Project reporting is of paramount importance for the successful completion of a project, as it serves as a crucial element in providing validation of its efficacy (Iacovou, 2005.Reporting provides information for a variety of uses and fulfils a number of functions, such as project management, policy influence, tracking findings, stakeholder responsibility, learning dissemination, and marketing communication (Hoegl & Gemuenden, 2001). Through the documentation of real-world outcomes, project reporting aids in justifying the allocation of public resources, thereby highlighting the tangible benefits derived from taxpayer contributions.

The Kenyan government's 100% transition policy led to a 20% increase in secondary school transition rates, straining existing facilities and causing new structures to be erected (Kinyanzii, 2023). New buildings were built to house the increasing number of students, and existing schools had to enlarge their physical spaces, including dorms, classrooms, and restrooms, to accommodate more enrolment. In Migori County, inadequate project organization structures and ineffective leadership have resulted in a rise in stalled projects, with 70% at risk of cost and time escalation (Otieno & Ochieng (2020). A 2021 report by the Migori County Department of Public Works revealed poor performance in construction projects, with 70% experiencing cost increases and 50% delays exceeding 20%. Policymakers are addressing these issues. This indicates inadequate leadership tactics for M&E.

Through an examination of this facet this study will enhance knowledge for enhancement in M&E leadership reporting approaches, resulting in more effective distribution of resources, prompt decision-making, and superior results for infrastructure initiatives in public secondary schools. By filling in these gaps, this study hopes to improve infrastructure development initiatives. This study seeks to answer two specific questions first, what is the status of IPS in terms of duration, quality and cost? Second, what influence does leadership M & E reporting have on completion of infrastructure projects in public secondary schools?

Literature

In the contemporary period of rapid economic expansion, the ultimate objective of every entity is the accomplishment of projects (Jabran et al., 2020). Similarly, it is crucial to plan educational infrastructure in a way that maximizes the effectiveness and accessibility of the instruction being provided (World Bank, 2018). Construction or renovation of existing facilities is necessary for schools, necessitating a sizable staff and considerable obstacles (Daniels, et al., 2017). How to design school infrastructural projects (IPs) that will best support the educational process has long been a source of difficulty for school planners (Barrett et al., 2019). In order to remove uncertainty and promote wise decision-making, reporting on the completion of IPs is essential (Gökçek, 2020). It is essential for maintaining stakeholder relationships and carrying out organizational duties (Chaikovskaya, 2023).

Quality of Reporting

Enhancing the quality of reporting practices continuously has a favourable effect on the overall success of project management, particularly in terms of adhering to schedules, managing costs, and ensuring deliverable quality. In

essence, project reporting facilitates the evaluation of project outcomes, updating management on the progress of project activities and pointing out any potential deviations (Iacovou et al., 2005). Furthermore, reporting of IP practices can help identify good prospects to improve the productivity of IPs and achieve sustainability (Babalola et al., 2019). This can also enable the mitigation of driving factors for implementation such as commitment, respect, trust, early involvement, and knowledge (Al-Ashmori et al., 2020).

M&E reports are created for both internal and external audiences at different points during the life of a project or program. While outward reports show accountability, raise money, or foster learning, internal reports assist management (Ba, 2021). However, the mechanics of project status reporting can be complicated, and there's a chance that mistrust between project teams and auditors will become self-reinforcing (Keil, 2014). In many instances, little evidence is provided in project completion reports (Bia et al., 2018). There are also irregularities in the reporting of school project performance (Austin et al., 2022). It is observed that statements made in project reports are not specifically backed up by data (Garbero & Carneiro, 2016). This implies that Projects are more likely to report more instances of poor process when it comes to documentation decisions (Te et al., 2005). It therefore means that a clear communication link in project reporting is essential in monitoring and controlling projects (Emmers-Sommer, 2004)

Leadership Reporting Strategies and Completion of Infrastructure Projects

Proper coordination with development partners is crucial to harmonize requirements for approval and reporting for funded projects. This is because project management conflicts can cause significant delays in completing construction projects (Johnson & Kisimbii, 2018). Project leaders aim to meet time, performance, and cost objectives, aligning with project owner's expectations and stakeholder perceptions (LOCK, 2007). High-quality project management can be achieved through consistently improving the reporting quality of the project status (Atsushi et al., 2018). The training of project leaders, as well as the timing and extent of implementation, all affect how successful a project is (Assem, 2017). This means that leaders require a robust monitoring and evaluation system that gives stakeholders the data they need to make effective interventions. In the entire process public secondary schools should include stakeholders so they can negotiate their points of view, and make important decisions (Stellah, et al., 2018)

Evaluating the sustainability and impact of Infrastructure Projects (IPs) through reports is crucial as noted by Chileshe et al. (2022). However, the infrastructure sector disclosure by the leadership is lacking in the Global Reporting Initiative, as highlighted by Ferrarez et al. (2020). According to Norcini et al. (2018), leaders need to consider specific criteria when preparing for an assessment. According to a study by Shaikh et al. (2021), through open reports leaders can identify safety indicators such as people, culture and infrastructure processes. This can help streamline future applications to enhance performance and implementation of Ips (Kalteh et al., 2019). Therefore, improving leadership strategies and developing unique and more effective non-financial reporting is vital to achieve optimal levels of IP sustainability (Vukić et al., 2022).

It has been found that leadership inefficiencies can be a major reason for lapses in the development of IPs, as per

Kassem et al. (2021). In the Philippines for example, despite increased investment in IPs, there are accountability deficits. This is crucial for transparency, openness, and accountability in IP development (Mendoza et al., 2020). Furthermore, there are significant limitations to the effectiveness of digital-based measures in enhancing transparency (Attia, 2022). According to Batalla et al. (2018), the budgeting process and corruption often go hand-in-hand. This involves collusion between key stakeholders thus in most IPs reports, actual expenses often exceed the budgeted expenditure (Mukoka, 2020).

An efficient and effective reporting system can ensure accountability and transparency in the execution of public expenditure. Reviewing reports can help to identify discrepancies in the implementation process and challenges faced (Park et al., 2019). This means that leadership principles should be tailored to meet the varying organizational needs (Mui et al., 2018). They should employ a visionary leadership model, enabling them to adapt their strategies to the situation, thereby improving the quality of their program development (Lorensius et al., 2021).

Indicators of Completion of Ips

Three indicators of completion of Infrastructure Project Services (IPS) including cost, timely completion, and quality of infrastructure were taken into account in this study. First, in any IP undertaking assessment of cost serves as a pivotal measure in determining its success, reflecting adherence to budgetary limits and operational efficiency (Jenkins & Zeinali, 2015). Moreover, making a comparative cost analysis ensures optimal methodologies, while transparency in reporting ensures accountability among stakeholders. Secondly, timely completion of school infrastructure projects is critical in guaranteeing that learners reap the anticipated benefits. This also helps to mitigate unnecessary costs, and avoid potential deficits. In essence this means that school leadership should employ effective project management strategies such as realistic scheduling, having active stakeholder engagement, and ensuring prompt delivery for overall efficiency. Thirdly, the quality of infrastructural projects includes aspects such functionality, durability, aesthetics, and compliance with safety standards. This aspect not only enhances public safety and trust but also brings satisfaction of stakeholders (Barrett et al., 2015a). Consequently, it is imperative that quality assurance protocols are enforcement at each level of the project lifecycle from inception all through to completion.

Method

The study employed a descriptive survey design because of its ability to streamline data collection at a single time point. The target population for this study was public secondary schools in Uriri Sub County. The study included ongoing IPs in the 43 public secondary schools and those done from 2017 to 2023. Uriri Sub County has 43 principals, 43 chairpersons to the boards of management, 43 chairpersons of school infrastructure committees, and 45 deputy principals, of whom 43 are the secretaries to the respective school infrastructure committees. Respondents for this study were chosen using a census (Kumar et al., 2022). Participants were drawn from all 43 public secondary schools with active IPs and those with projects completed between 2017 and 2023.

Research Instruments

On the other hand, closed-ended questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data in order to improve the gathering of enriched data (Cohen et al., 2018). In order to gather data on leadership strategies in the reporting of completed infrastructure projects, a rigorous closed-ended questionnaire was designed. The areas covered in the questionnaire were: - Reporting on the efficiency of progress in ensuring that the project is completed within the specified timeline, confirming that expenditures match the bill of quotation, ensuring transparency in reporting, and declaring inspected financial records. The questionnaire also covered Benchmarking with other projects: to assess project's performance in comparison to other similar projects, implementing benchmarking reports, and assessing the implementation rate of the project with an aim of identify any areas that need improvement. Other critical strategies addressed included Reviewing implementation reports, implementing recommendations from reviewed reports, and Auditing reports which focused on evaluating the project's financial records through an audit process. In order to ensure the accuracy and dependability of the study, the researchers undertook a pilot study in Awendo Sub-County, which shares similar demographic and geographic characteristics with Uriri Sub-County. This was aimed at verifying whether the research instruments could successfully gather the necessary data. To conduct the pilot study, the researcher selected 18 respondents, as Perneger et al. (2015) suggest that 10% of the sample size is adequate for piloting. The researchers then analysed the results using Cronbach alpha, which was approved as the value was higher than the recommended.70, as argued by Bolarinwa (2015). A test-retest reliability study was conducted, with a correlation of.83, above the.7 threshold recommended by Denscombe (2014).

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers obtained a permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) and approvals from the relevant departments. The researchers administered questionnaires to the main respondents on appointed dates and collected them after a week. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of the source of the information. This was done by requesting that they not indicate their names and details on the data collection instrument. An informed consent letter was attached alongside the questionnaire for the respondents to read and accept by signing. They were further informed of the purpose of the study, expected duration of participation, and procedure to be followed after data collection. As recommended by Donald and Deno (2016), data collected was cleaned, coded, and computed in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively and inferentially and processed in SPSS version 26.0. In the case of descriptive statistics which summarizes and describes characteristics of data as posited by Kern (2013), quantitative data was analyzed based on frequency counts, mean and standard deviation. However, Kern (2013) noted that descriptive statistics hardly uncover new findings, hence this study used inferential statistics to make inferences and enrich the findings (Cohen et al., 2018). Pearson Product Moment correlation which is recommended for use when the data is on a linear relationship and interval in nature (Kern, 2013), was used to establish the influence of M&E leadership strategies towards completion of secondary school IPs.

Results

Current Infrastructure Projects (between 2017-2023)

It was first deemed important for the respondents to indicate the IPs which were either under construction in the respective schools or were completed within the period of study (between 2017-2023). The aim of this information was to show the IPs which were preferred by the stakeholders in the public secondary schools within the study area as per need.

Table 1. Infrastructure Projects within the Period of Study

	Frequency	Per cent (%)
Classroom	92	59.0
Laboratory	35	22.4
Dormitory	23	14.7
Library	6	3.8
Total	156	100.0

Respondents mentioned that 92 (59.0%) IPs under construction in the study area were classrooms and only 6 (3.8%) of the IPs were libraries between 2017 and 2023 as in Table 1. The first question this study sought to answer was what is the status of IPS in terms of duration, quality and cost? These aspects are critical because they are indicators of the dependent variable (completion of IPs). Findings appear in figures 1, 2 and 3.

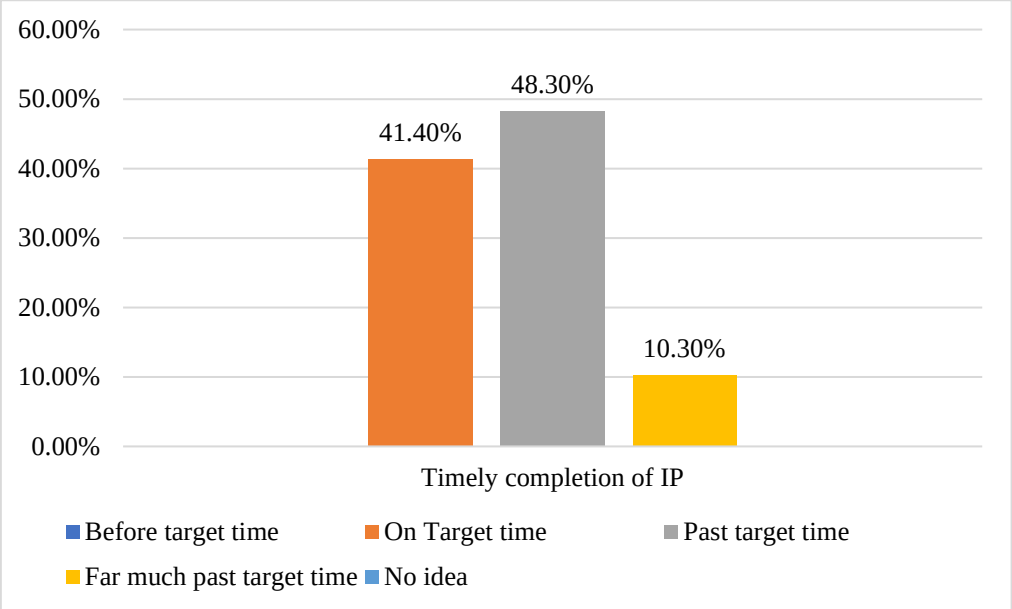

Figure 1. Timely Completion of IPs

Figure 1 shows that 75 (48.3%) respondents noted that the IPs implemented in their schools were done past the target time. In addition, the findings reveal that the margin between 'past target time' and 'on target time' was 6.9 per cent. This small margin could imply that the challenges in timely completion of IPs was more of a leadership

concern which could be addressed through stakeholder engagement.

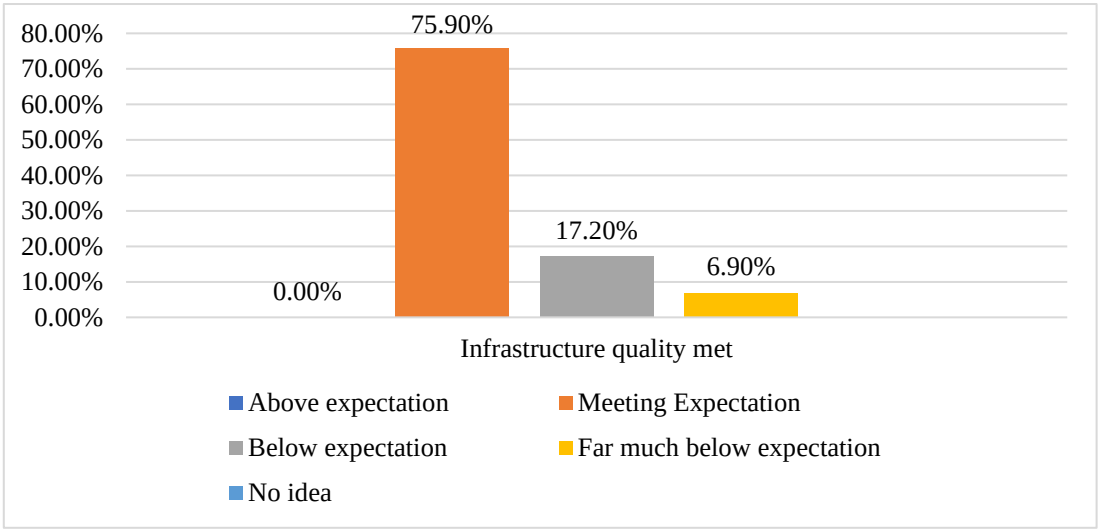

Figure 2. Quality of Implementation

In Figure 2 majority of the respondents 118 (75.9%) were satisfied with the quality of the implemented IPs in their schools during the period under study. These respondents observed that the implemented IPs met their expectations. However, none of the respondents reported that quality was above-expectation, while 17.2%of respondents rated the quality of Ips as below-expectation. Those that were of the opinion that quality was below-expectation constituted 6.90%.

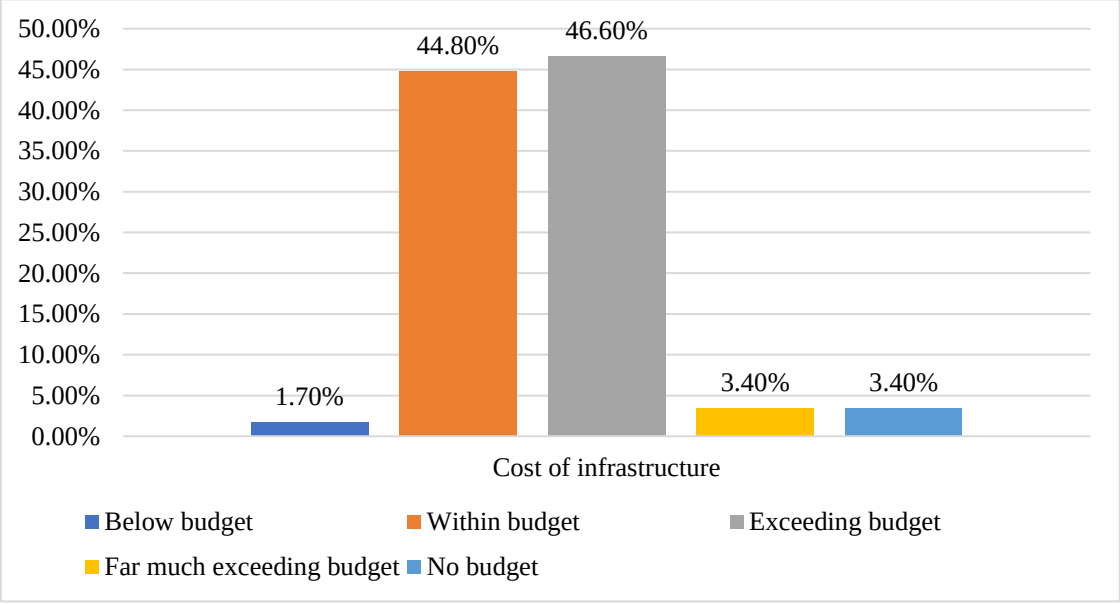

Figure 3. Cost of Infrastructure

Figure 3 shows that 72 (46.6%) respondents said that the cost of IPs in their schools were exceeding the budget while 44.80 were of the opinion that the cost was within budget. Comparatively, the difference between 'within budget' and 'exceeding budget' was very small (1.8%). Equally observed is that some IPs could have been

implemented without a budget (3.4%).

M&E Leadership Reporting Strategies towards Completion of Ips

The second question was: "what influence does leadership M & E reporting have on completion of infrastructure projects in public secondary schools? The responses were as presented in Table 2.

Table 2 M&E Leadership Reporting Strategies

	NI	LI	MI	HI	VHI	M	SD
Assessing efficiency of the progress	0 (.0%)	2 (1.3%)	37 (23.7%)	68 (43.6%)	49 (31.4%)	4.1	.80
Conformity of expenditure to bill of quotation	0 (.0%)	5 (3.2%)	14 (9.0%)	71 (45.5%)	66 (42.3%)	4.3	.80
Ensuring transparency in reporting	4 (2.6%)	3 (1.9%)	18 (11.5%)	77 (49.4%)	54 (34.6%)	4.3	.70
Declaring inspected financial records	0 (.0%)	6 (3.8%)	19 (12.2%)	76 (48.7%)	55 (35.3%)	4.2	.80
Benchmarking with other projects	2 (1.3%)	7 (4.5%)	25 (16.0%)	61 (39.1%)	61 (39.1%)	4.1	1.0
Implementing benchmarking reports	2 (1.3%)	7 (4.5%)	31 (19.9%)	67 (42.9%)	49 (31.4%)	4.1	.90
Assessing implementation rate of the project	5 (3.2%)	9 (5.8%)	22 (14.1%)	66 (42.3%)	54 (34.6%)	4.0	.80
Reviewing reports	1 (.6%)	3 (1.9%)	37 (23.7%)	69 (44.2%)	46 (29.5%)	4.0	.80
Implementing recommendations from reviewed reports	1 (.6%)	2 (1.3%)	25 (16.0%)	69 (44.2%)	59 (37.8%)	4.0	.90
Audited reports	2 (1.3%)	2 (1.3%)	37 (23.7%)	71 (45.5%)	44 (28.2%)	4.2	.90
Overall rating						**4.1**	**1.0**

Note:

NI=Nil Influence, LI=Low Influence, MI=Moderate Influence, HI= High Influence, VHI= Very High Influence, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

Findings in Table 2 show that 68 (43.6%) respondents noted that 'assessing efficiency of the progress has high influence towards completion of IPs. This is further supported by a mean rating of 4.1 and standard deviation of .80. It also emerged that 71 (45.5%) respondents noted that 'conformity of expenditure to bill of quotation' has high influence towards completion of IPs. This is further supported by a mean rating of 4.3 and standard deviation of .80. In addition, 77 (49.4%) respondents noted that 'ensuring transparency in reporting' has high influence towards completion of IPs. This is further supported by a mean rating of 4.3 and standard deviation of .70.

Concerning ‘declaring inspected financial records’, as shown in Table 2, 76 (48.7%) respondents noted that it has high influence towards completion of IPs. This is further supported by a mean rating of 4.2 and standard deviation of .80.

Results further show that 61 (39.1%) respondents noted that ‘benchmarking with other projects’ has very high influence towards completion of IPs. This is further supported by a mean rating of 4.1 and standard deviation of 1.0. Of concern is the observation that 7 (4.5%) respondents who were of the opinion that ‘benchmarking with other projects’ had low influence towards completion of IPs. This could be due to limitations in implementation of the benchmarking reports. On the other hand, 67 (42.9%) respondents agreed that 'implementing benchmarking reports' has very high influence towards completion of IPs. The mean rating of 4.1 and standard deviation of .90 further support this finding. It was also found that 66 (42.3%) respondents noted that ‘assessing implementation rate’ of the project has high influence towards completion of IPs. This is further supported by a mean rating of 4.0 and standard deviation of .80.

Table 2 shows that 69 (44.2%) respondents noted that ‘reviewing reports’ has high influence towards completion of IPs. This is further supported by a mean rating of 4.0 and standard deviation of .80. Concerning ‘implementing recommendations from reviewed reports’, as shown in Table 2 shows, 69 (44.2%) respondents agreed that has high influence towards completion of IPs (44.2%). This is further supported by a mean rating of 4.0 and standard deviation of .90. Finally, 71 (45.5%) respondents noted that ‘audited reports’ has high influence towards completion of IPs. This is further supported by a mean rating of 4.2 and standard deviation of .90.

Contribution of M&E Leadership Reporting Strategies on Completion of Ips

To test the relationship between M&E leadership reporting strategies and completion of infrastructure projects, an association was computed using Pearson Correlation as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Contribution of Leadership Reporting Strategies on Completion of IPs

Leadership Reporting strategies Versus Completion rate		**Correlation**
Assessing efficiency of progress	Pearson Correlation	-.07
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.40
Conformity of expenditure to bill of quotation	Pearson Correlation	.20*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.01
Ensuring transparency in reporting	Pearson Correlation	-.14
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.08
Declaring inspected financial records	Pearson Correlation	.01
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.91
Benchmarking with other projects	Pearson Correlation	.26**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00
Implementing benchmarking reports	Pearson Correlation	-.09
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.26

Leadership Reporting strategies Versus Completion rate		**Correlation**
Assessing implementation rate of project	Pearson Correlation	-.08
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.35
Reviewing reports	Pearson Correlation	.14
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.09
Implementing recommendation from reviewed reports	Pearson Correlation	.19*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.02
Audited reports	Pearson Correlation	.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.0
Overall Correlation		**.34**
P-value		**.00**

The analysis indicates that there exists a moderate positive correlation of .34 (p= .00) between the M&E leadership reporting strategies and the completion of Ips. The results of Table 3 reveal that the significance level was greater than the predetermined p-value of .05. This finding implies that the influence of M&E leadership reporting strategies on the completion of Ips is statistically significant. The study revealed that 'ensuring transparency in reporting' has high influence towards completion of IPs (49.4%).

Discussion

Among the many projects in secondary schools, the demand for more classrooms featured prominently. High preference for classrooms was attributable to the high influx of students in public secondary schools occasioned by the free primary education (Kinyanzii, 2023), subsidized secondary school education (Kinyanzii, 2023; Mashala, 2019), and 100 percent transition government policies (Otieno & Ochieng, 2020). In addition, findings on timely completion of Ips concurred with findings of Durdyev and Hosseini (2020) who revealed that delays on construction projects were pronounced in developing countries. This could be attributed to inconsistency in disbursement of funds, poor communication, and ineffective planning as also reported by Zidane and Andersen (2018). Besides, according to Mittal et al. (2020), timely completion of IPs is influenced by extent of stakeholder engagement. Reporting on implementation rate is also seen to be critical. This was further revealed by Tokdemir et al. (2019) that assessment of implementation rate enables experts in estimating the risk of delay, formulating effective risk response strategies, including preparing contingency plans needed in utilization of resources in the context of repetitive tasks. As further noted by Babalola et al. (2019), assessment of practices enables identifying good prospects to enhance productivity of IPs to achieve sustainability.

The finding that Ips met expectation was contrary to observations by Mittal et al. (2020) who noted that there were concerns with regard to quality of IPs. It was also inconsistent to observations made by Durdyev and Hosseini (2020) who noted that standard completion of IPs was a major challenge in developing countries. Given the huge margin of difference between 'meeting expectation' and 'below expectation' implies that despite dynamics in implementation of IPs, there was a general focus to meet the standards as outlined in the development plan. This sheds more hope that through effective leadership strategies, stalling of IPs can be addressed just the same way

quality of IPs is met.

Regarding the cost of construction, most schools exceeded the expected budget. This was in agreement with observations made by Graef et al. (2022) who pointed out increased costs as a major limitation to most IPs. This finding was also highly inevitable given that most IPs as reported by the respondents were completed either past target time or far much past target time. Besides, according to Mittal et al. (2020), delays, increased costs and inadequacies in quality were an outcome of inadequate stakeholder engagement, inadequate flow of information and dissatisfaction with projects. This showed that through effective leadership strategies IPs will be implemented as per the budget. Findings also raise the concern on stakeholder engagement and their familiarity with content and descriptions of the IPs; in addition to compliance with the Public Finance Management Act of 2012.

Generally, the findings underscore the critical role of leadership reporting strategies in the successful completion of infrastructure projects in schools. A moderate global positive correlation of 0.34 (p-value = 0.00) between effective leadership reporting and project completion suggests that strong leadership and strategic foresight are essential for enhancing project completion rates. This is because effective leadership is a key pillar of successful project management. The significant positive correlation of 0.20 (p = 0.01) between conformity of expenditure to the bill of quotation highlights the importance of adhering to budgeted costs. This ensures noble use of resources, and as pointed out by Ogah (2020), good accounting and internal control systems should be inculcated by public institutions to curb misappropriation of funds; thus, ensuring accountability and transparency in expenditure and implementation of IPs. The importance of having reports on expenditure and promptly acting on them is significant as it ensures prudent use of resources.

On the other hand, while respondents supported the idea of transparency in reporting, the correlation of -0.14 (p = 0.08) suggests that transparency alone does not guarantee project completion. Respondents' strong support of transparency in reporting concurs with findings of Mendoza et al. (2020) who observed that transparency, openness and accountability in implementation of IPs are important mitigations for corruption. Besides, as noted by Mendoza et al. (2020), it helps to bridge accountability deficits. As highlighted by Chebet and Clinton (2021) to ensure effective utilization of project funds, the school infrastructure committee should ensure that minutes and payments' receipts are kept. These are essential for transparency and accountability. The study reiterated that it influences implementation and strengthens effectiveness of success of school IPs. Transparency, openness and accountability in implementation are important mitigations for corruption. They help to bridge accountability deficits. For effective utilization of project funds, the school infrastructure committee should ensure that minutes and receipts payments made are well kept. These further influences implementation and strengthens effectiveness of success of school IPs.

Findings indicate that the act of leaders merely assessing efficiency of progress, with a Pearson correlation of 0.07 (p = 0.40), does not significantly impact project completion. This implies that assessment alone may not suffice. Instead, majority of respondents were in support of implementing recommendations from reviewed reports. This finding conquered with observations made by Porter (2020) that lessons learnt and recommendations from evaluation assist leaders in decision-making towards completion of IPs which has been a challenge especially in

developing countries. Such reviews, according to Park et al. (2019), helps highlighting discrepancies in the implementation approach and identifying challenges faced in the implementation process.

From the responses it emerged that the key concerns in leadership reporting strategies entailed assessing efficiency of the progress which was supposed to be done by analysts and experts at the end of every phase and recommendations for adjustments where need be done to ensure the IPs are completed with the planned budget and within the scheduled time. Reporting on efficiency of the progress has high influence on completion of Ips. This is attributable to the fact that it enables ascertaining as to whether the objectives are met or gauging performance (Dixon, 2019); as well as its effectiveness, and efficiency as highlighted by Ba (2021). Similarly, Onyango (2019) noted that it determines the extent to which set objectives are met. Therefore, as observed by Norcini et al. (2018), there is need for consideration to be given when preparing criteria for assessment; as it helps avert conflicts (Chileshe et al., 2022).

As revealed in the findings, it is important for the leadership to declare inspected financial records. This required conformity of expenditure to bill of quantities which directs on the progress from site clearance up to and including handing-over site procedure. This is in concurrence with observations of Ben and Murundu (2019) who attested that school leadership plays a pivotal role in M&E of CDF projects in public secondary schools with the recommendation that school financial records are inspected and evaluated to ensure the funds are utilized on the required project. Benchmarking with other projects, which showed a significant positive correlation of 0.26 ($p = 0.00$), underscores the value of comparative analysis in enhancing completion rates.

After completion of IPs or at the end of every phase the reports should be availed in time and discrepancies highlighted not only as a standard measure in project development but as also a learning process and ensuring accountability and transparency. The influence that implementation of benchmarking reports has of completion of Ips in this study, agrees with the insights of Helby (2019), who highlights the importance of benchmarking in providing a structured evaluation of performance, aiding policy-makers in selecting methods that offer optimal value for funds. The findings also concurred with World Bank Group (2020), which noted that benchmarking for IPs assesses regulatory quality for implementation of IPs. Besides, benchmarking impacts on costs, and affects multiple subcontracting arrangements (Shahid et al., 2023). As noted by Bariu (2020) benchmarking helps to save money and enhance sustainability.

Interestingly, the correlation of 0.19 ($p = 0.02$) for implementing recommendations from reviewed reports indicates that acting on these recommendations is a significant driver for project completion. This underscores the need for leadership to not only review reports but also act on recommendations made. Further there is an indication that 'audited reports' have a high influence on completion of Ips. This affirms significance of having and implementing audited reports, and concurs with observations made by Chileshe et al. (2022) and Mwelu et al. (2021) who noted that evaluating sustainability and impacts of IPs through reports is highly relevant. Besides, as noted by Shaikh et al. (2021), audited reports enable identifying safety indicators such as people, processes, culture, infrastructure, metrics, and indicators; thus, streamlining upcoming applications to increase safety performance in IP implementation.

Conclusion

The results indicate that effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) leadership and reporting strategies are crucial for the success of projects. As organizations increasingly recognize the significance of data-driven decision-making, it is important to invest in robust reporting systems to achieve the desired outcomes. Emphasis should be on transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. Additionally, integrating expenditure conformity reports as part of M&E leadership reporting strategies is important because it ensures that resources are allocated in line with the budget, reducing inefficiencies and maximizing the impact of leadership interventions.It is also worth noting that while transparency and financial declaration in reporting are important, they alone do not guarantee success. Therefore, there is a need for actionable insights from M&E processes. By actively engaging with feedback and suggestions from stakeholders and benchmarking with well-done IPS school leaders, schools can identify areas for improvement and adjust their strategies to achieve optimal results.

Recommendations

It is recommended that schools should have standardized templates to document financial transactions aligned with project budgets for reporting expenditure in line with the bills of quotation. School leaders should also establish communication channels for stakeholders to access project information and progress reports to enhance transparency. Lastly, regular progress reviews that integrate stakeholders' feedback should be conducted to enhance monitoring and evaluation practices.

Research Implications

Although the study was situated within the Kenyan context, the significance of these findings extends well beyond. Similar benchmarking techniques can be used by educational institutions around the world to enhance completion and efficiency. To a large extent, education in many underdeveloped countries heavily depends on outside funding. These findings can be used by international development agencies and donor groups to create funding models that prioritize project reporting. In addition, stakeholders and investors can use these results to evaluate project viability for better decision-making

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