Human Resource Related Factors Affecting the Implementation of Strategic Plans in Local Authorities in Kenya. A case of Municipal Council of Eldoret

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Abstract

The study sought to determine effects of human resource related factors, affecting the implementation of strategic plans in local authorities in Kenya with a view on the Municipal council of Eldoret strategic plan. The study adopted a descriptive research design on a sample of 254 respondents who were selected through purposive, stratified and snowball sampling from a target population of 836 employees. Data collection was done by the use of questionnaires and interview schedules and the data analyzed by the aid of Statistical Package of Social Scientists Program (SPSS). The findings were summarized using statistical measures of central tendency, measures of dispersion and asymmetry. Data was presented using tables. Based on the study findings it was concluded that human resource related factors such as inadequate employee training, inadequate information, and inadequate employee participation in decision making and implementation of the strategic plan and limited number of employees posed challenges on the implementation of the Municipal Council of Eldoret strategic plan. The study recommended that the Municipal council of Eldoret should train its employees on issues focusing on strategic plans, provide its employees with adequate information about her strategic plan , involve its employees in decision making, allocate enough funds, recruit enough expertise, review its management strategies, provide adequate technical resources and a friendly working environment.

Key words: Human resource related factors, implementation of strategic plans

1.1 Background of the Study

Since the 1980s, developed and developing countries embarked on public sector management reforms which resulted to the public sector being put under pressure to adopt private sector orientations (Economic for Africa Report, 2003). As a result of the pressure, Hope (2001) observed that many governments embraced New Public Management (NPM) as the framework through which governments were modernized and the public sector re-engineered, indeed, NPM offered important lessons and analysis for public management throughout the world and African countries had no exception to the process of implementation of efforts aimed at achieving the outcomes embodied in the said framework.

According to the Economic for Africa Report (2003), Local Authorities having been a tool available for African Governments for the implementation of development goals and objectives, had to be put under pressure to adopt incentives which were inspired by NPM policies such as strategic management which advocated for the development and implementation of strategic plans. Wright (2003) indicated that strategic planning determines where an organization is going over the next year or more, how it's going to get there and how it will know if it is there or not, moreover, the focus of a strategic plan is usually the entire organization in which the focus tends to be on a particular

service, output or programme. Strategic plans may fail to produce the desired results as noted by (Noble, 1999) who said that "the best-formulated strategies may fail to produce superior performance for the firm if they are not successfully implemented."

Noble (1999)   argued that, there was a growing recognition that the most important problems in the field of strategic management were not related to strategy formulation, but rather to strategy implementation and that the high failure rate of organizational initiatives in a dynamic business environment were primarily due to poor implementation of new strategies. Sterling (2003) argued that in spite of the importance of strategy execution in organizations' success and the achievement of their goals, most of them fail to execute those strategies efficiently.

Hrebiniak (2005) recognized the difficulty of strategy execution with challenges such as lack of feelings "ownership" of a strategy or execution plans among key employees; lack of guidelines or a model to guide strategy execution efforts; lack of understanding of the role of organizational structure and design in the execution process; inability to generate "buy-in" or agreement on critical execution steps or actions; lack of incentives or inappropriate incentives to support execution objectives and insufficient financial resources to execute the strategy.

Hrebiniak (2006) argued that, good execution cannot overcome the shortcomings of a bad strategy or a poor strategic planning effort. Yang (2008) echoed Hrebiniak (2006) words when he argued that after a comprehensive strategy or single strategic decision has been formulated, significant difficulties usually arise during the subsequent implementation process.

Kalali (2011) revealed that the discussions on the problems and difficulties of strategy implementation in the recent years had been highly fascinated by the strategic management discourse since the implementation of strategic plans and decisions have not been as successful as their designers expected. For instance one of the greatest challenges for managers and decision-makers in organizations is to implement managerial strategic decisions while many strategic decisions fail; sometimes, despite sensitivities expressed in decision-making stage, they face with many problems to implement such decisions. It was however not clear about the challenges that were being faced in the implementation of strategic plans by local Authorities in Kenya. Therefore, the major concern of this study was to determine the challenges facing the implementation of strategic plans by the Municipal Council of Eldoret and to suggest the way forward.

2.0 Literature Review

Various studies have focused on human resource related factors affecting implementation of strategies in organizations (Alexander 1985; Yang 2008; Govindarajan 1989; Lam 1997;   Peng & Litteljohn 2001; Baines, and Sweeney 2005; Harrington 2006; Rapert & Lynch & Suter 1996).

Alexander (1985) study on implementation of strategies in corporations reveled that over half of the corporations studied experienced challenges frequently, for instance, the employees involved had insufficient capabilities to perform their jobs, lower-level employees were inadequate, departmental managers provided inadequate training, leadership and direction while (Govindarajan, 1989) noted that, the effectiveness of strategy implementation was at least in part affected by the quality of people involved in the process.

Lam (1997) argued out that the declining civil service morale was an impediment to the implementation of NPM techniques. The argument was that public sector reform was unlikely to be successful if public servants regarded themselves as being involuntarily pledged to perform to externally imposed standards without commensurate remuneration.

Fears of being measured, increased possibility of loss of jobs, fears that staff do not have the necessary skills, increased paper work and workload, and health and safety concerns are some of the fears which underlie the resistance to changes embodied in the NPM (Lam 1997).

Yang (2008) stated that, executors of strategies comprises of the top management, middle management, lower management and non-management while Peng & Litteljohn (2001) referred quality to skills, attitudes, capabilities, experiences and other characteristics of people required by a specific task or position.

Viseras, Baines, and Sweeney (2005) findings indicated that, strategy implementation success depended crucially on the human or people side of project management, and less on organization and systems related factors.   While Harrington (2006) findings revealed that, a higher a level in total organizational involvement during strategy

implementation, lead to positive effects on the level of implementation success hence leading to firm profits and overall firm success.

Rapert, Lynch & Suter (1996) believed that an organization must first persuade its employees about the importance of the strategy before turning to customers. The Economic Commission for Africa (2003) noted that, Public service ethics are the traditional values of the public service, which emphasized equity, probity, integrity, moral conduct and political neutrality therefore Public service delivery, will be enhanced through an organization culture that strengthens employee involvement, rewards teamwork, recognizes individual effort and incorporates the needs of clients and users. However, Agere (1999) argued that one of the major challenges to public sector management reforms was the declining social value of society itself. Values such as integrity, honesty, dependability, helpfulness, impartiality, courteousness, and fairness are gradually disappearing from the public services. Unfortunately, in most African societies, there is no system for reinforcing these values.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study employed a descriptive research design. Orodho (2002) stated that descriptive research designs are used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification while Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) on the other hand gave the purpose of descriptive research as determining and reporting the way things are.

3.2 Target population

According to Borg & Gall (1989), target population is defined as all the members of a real or hypothetical set of people, events or objects to which a researcher wishes to generalize the results of the research study. Therefore, the study targeted a total population of 836 employees, who comprised of 176 employees from the Towns Clerk Department, 159 from the Treasury, 109 from the Public Health Department, 184 from the Environment Department, 33 from Social Services and Housing, 58 from Education Department and 117 from the Engineering Department.

3.3 Data Collection

The researcher used both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was obtained from journals, Municipal councils of Eldoret records, Government records, books, news papers, statistical abstracts and economic surveys while primary data was obtained using questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires were used for data collection because they offered considerable advantages in administration. They present an even stimulus potentially to large numbers of people simultaneously and provide the investigation with easy accumulation of data. Gay (1992) pointed out that questionnaires give respondents freedom to express their views and to make suggestions. Its anonymous property helps to produce more candid answers than is possible in an interview. Interview schedules were used to guide interviews which were conducted among the Directors of departments on challenges facing the implementation of strategic plans in the Municipal Council of Eldoret.

3.4 Data Analysis

After all data was collected, the researcher conducted data sorting whereby the collected data was arranged to bring some order hence allowing systematic handing and storing of raw data. Obure (2002) stated that data sorting is actually the beginning of detection, correction and avoidance of errors occurring as a result of mix-ups. Data editing was then done, this involved reading through the filled in questionnaires and the interview schedules to spot any errors which occurred during data collection. Data coding was done after editing of data, it involved the creation of dummy variable names according to the set rules whereby responses were assigned numeric values that was processed by Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS). The codes were designed so as to minimize errors during data entry and also allow easy interpretation of results.

After data coding, data entry was done through the keying of data according to the designed codes along with the assembly of the variables which were required for analysis. Data cleaning was then done; this involved conducting final check on the data file for accuracy, erroneous data, completeness and consistency. This final validation check of the data was absolutely necessary to avoid having to go back to original questionnaires many times to correct errors

during data analysis. The data was then processed whereby the prepared data was submitted to the SPSS processor which computed the data and hence released the results.

This research yielded both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data was analyzed qualitatively using content analysis based on analysis of meanings and implications emanating from respondents information and documented data. According to Gray (2004) qualitative data provides rich descriptions and explanations that demonstrate the chronological flow of events as well as often leading to serendipitous (chance) findings. On the other hand, quantitative data was analyzed using various statistics including measures of central tendency, dispersion and asymmetry. Processed data was then presented in tables and explanation in prose.

4.0 Findings

4.1.1 Employee training

In an attempt to determine the adequacy of employee training on the implementation of strategic plans, the study indicated that majority of the respondents 101(45.9%) were of the view that there was inadequate employee training on the implementation of strategic plan while minority 22(10.0%) were of a contrary view. This view was supported by a mean of 3.73 as shown in table 4.0 which was based on a likert scale of range between one to five where one represented strongly disagree with the issue, two disagree, three undecided, four agree and five strongly agree with the issue. The interpretations of these means were 1.1 to 1.6 indicated strongly disagree, 1.7 to 2.2 disagree, 2.3 to 2.8 undecided, 2.9 to 3.4 agree, while 3.5 to 5.0 strongly agree. Therefore, this could imply that most of the employees faced challenges in implementation of the council's strategic plan due to inadequate training which is very essential for the employees as the trainings act as an avenue where employees get to be trained on how to handle various issues during the implementation of strategic plans. The study conquered with Alexander, (1985) study in the literature review which revealed that there were many problems which organizations experienced frequently, such as the involvement of employees who had insufficient capabilities to perform their jobs and this might have been due to insufficient training opportunities for the workers while Govindarajan (1989) noted that, the effectiveness of strategy implementation was at least in part affected by the quality of people involved in the process.

4.1.2 Information on strategic plans

The study sought to determine the adequacy of information on issues focusing the implementation of the council's strategic plan as the findings may be used in determining the effects of human resource related factors affecting the implementation of the Municipal council of Eldoret strategic plan. The study findings indicated that majority of the respondents 145(65.5%) were of the view that there was inadequate information on the implementation of the councils strategic plan while minority 7(3.2%) were of the contrary view. This view was supported by a mean of 3.55 as shown on table 4.0 which was based on a likert scale of range between one to five where one represented strongly disagree with the issue, two disagree, three undecided, four agree and five strongly agree with the issue. The interpretations of these means were 1.1 to 1.6 indicated strongly disagree, 1.7 to 2.2 disagree, 2.3 to 2.8 undecided, 2.9 to 3.4 agree, while 3.5 to 5.0 strongly agree. This could imply that most of the employee lacked adequate information on implementation of strategic plans. The study findings conquered with Noble (1999) arguments as in the literature review which stated that, if lower level management and non-management personnel are not aware of the same information, or if information must pass through several (management) layers in the organization, consensus regarding the information may never come about. Thus, the lack of shared knowledge with lower –level management employees creates a barrier to successful strategy implementation. Alexander (1985) study findings pointed out that communication was mentioned more frequently than any other single item promoting successful strategy implementation.

4.1.3 Employee participation in decision making

The study sought to determine the adequacy of employees' participation in decision making on matters focusing on implementation of the council's strategic plan. The study findings indicated that majority of the respondents 104(47.3%) were of the view that inadequate employee participation in decision making on matters involving the implementation of the councils strategic plan while 23(10.5%) were of contrary view. The above view was supported by a mean of 3.42 as shown on table 4.0 which was based on a likert scale of range between one to five where one represented strongly disagree with the issue, two disagree, three undecided, four agree and five strongly agree with

the issue. The interpretations of these means were 1.1 to 1.6 indicated strongly disagree, 1.7 to 2.2 disagree, 2.3 to 2.8 undecided, 2.9 to 3.4 agree, while 3.5 to 5.0 strongly agree. This could imply that most of the employees may had not been involved decision making on matters focusing on the implementation of strategic plans. Young (2008) argued that, executors of strategies comprises of the top management, middle management, lower management and non-management while Harrington (2006) findings revealed that, a higher level in total organizational involvement during strategy implementation, lead to positive effects on the level of implementation success hence leading to overall firm success. Therefore, this means that all the employees of an institution should all be involved in the implementation of the strategic plans and moreover be involved in decisions making, this is contrary to the study findings.

4.1.4 Employee involvement in implementation of strategic plans

In an attempt of determining the adequacy of employee involvement in implementation of the councils strategic plan, the study findings indicated that majority of the respondents 100(45.5%) were of the view that employees participation in implementation of the councils strategic plan was inadequate while minority 20(9.1%) were of a contrary view. The above view was supported by a mean of 3.28 as shown on table 4.0 which was based on a likert scale of range between one to five where one represented strongly disagree with the issue, two disagree, three undecided, four agree and five strongly agree with the issue. The interpretations of these means were 1.1 to 1.6 indicated strongly disagree, 1.7 to 2.2 disagree, 2.3 to 2.8 undecided, 2.9 to 3.4 agree, while 3.5 to 5.0 strongly agree. This could imply that most of the employees may have not been fully involved in the implementation of strategic plans. The study findings conquered with Harrington (2006) findings in the literature review which revealed that, a higher a level in total organizational involvement during strategy implementation leads to positive effects on the level of successful implementation, firm profits and the overall firm's success. Moreover, Hrebiniak and snow (1982) findings, revealed that the process of interaction and participation among the top management team typically leads to greater commitment to the firms goals and strategies therefore this in turn serves to ensure the successful implementation of the firms chosen strategy.

4.1.5 Number of employees

The findings indicated that majority of the respondents 106(48.2%) were of the view that the number of the councils employees was inadequate while minority 23 (10.5%) were of the contrary view. This view was supported by a mean 3.24 as shown on table 4.0 which was based on a likert scale of range between one to five where one represented strongly disagree with the issue, two disagree, three undecided, four agree and five strongly agree with the issue. The interpretations of these means were 1.1 to 1.6 indicated strongly disagree, 1.7 to 2.2 disagree, 2.3 to 2.8 undecided, 2.9 to 3.4 agree, while 3.5 to 5.0 strongly agree. This could imply that most of the employees may have been over worked in the endeavor of executing the council's strategic plan. The study findings conquered with Viseras, Baines and Sweeney (2005) findings which indicated that, strategy implementation success depended crucially on people's side of project management, and less on organization and systems related factors.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the study findings it was concluded that Municipal council of Eldoret faced challenges in her endeavor of implementing her strategic plan. This included human resource related factors which affected the implementation of the councils strategic plan, this included factors such as inadequate employee training on matters focusing on implementation of the strategic plan, inadequate information concerning strategic plans, inadequate employee participation in decision making, inadequate employee involvement in the implementation of the strategic plan and limited number the councils employees.

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that; Training of the employees on matters focusing on strategic plans is very essential in ensuring efficient and effective implementation of strategic plans. Therefore all the employees should be trained on various matters concerning the implementation of strategic plans. There should be availability of information on issues of strategic plans therefore the management of the council should ensure that all information concerning strategic plans is at the disposal of all the employees. All employees should be involved in decision making on matters focusing the implementation of strategic plans. Therefore, the council's management

should be inclusive in all matters focusing on strategic plans. It should allow all the staff members to participate fully from the formulation until the evaluation of her strategic plan.

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Table 4.0 Descriptive statistics on human resource related factors

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Inadequate employee training	220	3.73	1.270	-1.023	.164
Inadequate information on strategic plans	220	3.55	1.008	-.988	.164
Inadequate employee participation in decisions making	220	3.42	1.288	-.599	.164
Inadequate employee involvement in the implementation of strategic plans	220	3.28	1.261	-.385	.164
Inadequate number of employees	220	3.24	1.242	-.444	.164
Valid N (listwise)	**220**				

Source: Field data 2012

The study sought to find out the effects of human resource related factors affecting the implementation of strategic plans in the Municipal council of Eldoret. In addressing the above objective, the respondents were asked questions which focused on human resource related factors affecting the implementation of strategic plan the results were as shown in table 4.0. The mean statistics of the sample for the human resource related factors ranged between a mean of 3.24 and 3.73 with standard deviation ranging between 1.008 and 1.270.