

INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATION CULTURE ON STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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Abstract

Strategy implementation has become an essential part of business strategies in today's competition. Higher education institutions have many stakeholders who must be involved in the strategic management process. The institutions are complex organizations with a strong sense of tradition and a distinct culture whose growth demands that strategic management be an aid in goal determination and achievement. The general objective of the study was to establish the influence of organization culture on strategy implementation. The study used a descriptive survey design to target 103 employees that were sampled by the researcher. The study respondents were identified using the proportionate stratified sampling method. Questionnaires were administered to obtain primary data. The results indicated that organization culture had an influence on strategy implementation in institutions of higher learning and can be concluded that dominant characteristics and behavior norms have a strong influence on strategy implementation.

Keywords: Organization culture, Strategy, Dominant characteristics, Behavior norms, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Baker (2002) traces the origins of organization culture to the human relations view of the organization which conceptualizes culture as exemplified by Hawthorne studies of the 1920s. In the relay assembly experiments conducted in the Hawthorne works factory, researchers concluded that workers worked harder because they thought they were being monitored individually. The bank wiring room experiments results reinforced the above findings as they concluded that workers were more responsive to the social force of their peers than to the control and incentives of management. McGregor (1960) concurs when he points out that

current effort to manage organization culture were influenced by the Hawthorne studies. Deal and Kennedy (1982) identify culture as the single most important factor of success or failure. Fowler (2002) concurs when he indicates that researchers have identified organization culture as a factor having the greatest potential to affect organization improvement or decline.

There are two general approaches used in the investigation of organizational culture: the phenomenological and functionalist approach. The phenomenological approach emphasizes on the emergent and phenomenal nature of organizations and has been postulated by most researchers (Trice and Beyer 1994; Meek, 1988; and Sackman, 2001) who advocate for a qualitative understanding of meaning and interpretation. The functionalist approach accentuates the predictable impacts of purposive, intentional forms of the social organization (Denison and Mishra, 1995).

To achieve theoretical rigor a number of scholars have attempted to fuse the two approaches of organizational culture (Denison, 1990; Hofstede, 1985; Jermier, Slocum, Fry & Gains, 1991). These researchers use both qualitative and quantitative methods in their empirical investigation of different aspects of organizational culture. Organization culture has been identified by the various frameworks of strategy implementation as a variable that influences the success of the implementation process.

Strategy implementation is the translation of chosen strategy into organization action so as to achieve strategic goals and objectives (Kalali, 2011). Frameworks that have been previously developed (Stonich, 1982; Hrebiniack and Joyce, 1984; Galbraith and Kanzajian, 1986 and Reed and Buckley, 1988) have identified organization culture as one of the factors affecting strategy implementation. In an organization, implementation obtains special value developing tasks and roles and states how these tasks and roles can be correlated so as maximize efficiency, quality, and customer satisfaction-the pillars of competitive advantage. For implementation to be possible there has to be stability between strategy and each organization dimension such as organization culture, structure, reward structure and resource allocation otherwise excellently formulated strategies will fail if they are not properly implemented.

The Technical University of Mombasa (TUM) was one of the national polytechnics recently elevated to the status of University having previously been a constituent college of the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT). Owing to the need to transit into a full university, the formulation of a strategic plan to guide the institution in its future development became necessary. The institution developed a strategic plan that covers the period 2010 – 2014 with the intention to inculcate the use of engineering, science, technology and innovation its objectives and the realization of the country's Vision 2030. The plan covers five years and it has identified thirteen strategic focus areas. Focus is in line with various

government policies including the guidelines on strategic planning from the Ministry for Planning and National Development. Implementation plans have been developed for each focus area indicating specific targets, leadership and resources.

Pwani University was started in 1984, when it was then known as the Kilifi Institute of Agriculture. In August 2007, it was upgraded to a constituent college of Kenyatta University and in January 2013, it became a fully-fledged university. The setting up of the college has been necessitated by Kenya's objective of industrialization as contained in the country's vision 2030 blueprint. The institution has a strategic plan that covers the period 2010 – 2014 and charts the path for the university to help it contribute to national agenda and transform itself into a leading world class university.

Problem statement

Existing strategy implementation frameworks have largely centered on identifying the factors affecting strategy implementation. Hambrick and Cannella (1989), in a research of a multi-business company identified organization culture, structure, people, communication, control and outcome as the factors affecting strategy implementation. Awino (2009) advanced a framework that identified culture, governmental, societal, compliance with international standards and stiff competition as the factors affecting strategy implementation. Little research has been conducted on the influence that organization culture has on strategy implementation. Most of the studies have just enlisted organization culture as one of the factors affecting implementation yet a couple of researchers (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Fowler 2002; Scott, 2003) found out that culture is the single most important factor of success or failure with the greatest potential to affect organizational improvements. Universities have developed ambitious strategic plans with strategic focus on areas in line with government policies. There is no known study that has been conducted to determine the influence that organization culture has on strategy implementation in public universities thus the need to critically assess and evaluate the major facets of strategy implementation in these institutions since it relates to all aspects of management and determines the achievement of the strategic goals. Organizations fail to implement more than 70 per cent of their strategic initiatives (Miller, 2002). Gurowitz (2001) notes that only one out of ten companies that do an effective job of formulating strategy is doing an equally effective job of implementing it. For the 30 per cent well-crafted strategies, they are either lost or left to languish in reports of organizations. Alexander (1991) states that common frameworks on strategy analysis and formulation exist but there are no agreed-upon dominant frameworks for strategy implementation. Previous research into strategy has consistently identified organization culture as a factor affecting effective strategy implementation. Nan Jiang & Carpenter (2012)

found out that little attention has been given to particular issues and challenges arising from higher education. Being the most important decision made in the highest organization levels, each organization seeks to ensure that strategic decisions generate value through implementation. Implementation has always been influenced by organization culture but previous studies have only highlighted the variable overlooking the specific effect of its dimensions.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study was to determine the influence of organization culture on strategy implementation.

The specific objectives of the study were;

- i) To determine the influence of dominant characteristics on strategy implementation
- ii) To establish the influence of behavior norms on strategy implementation

Importance of the study

The study will enable the management of public universities and other institutions appreciate the influence of organization culture on their strategy. It will provide details of the specific techniques and actions to undertake against each dimension of culture identified. Researchers and academicians will be able to access this study from public repository domains. They will be able to add value on the gaps identified by this study. It will further contribute to the existing literature on strategic management being a new area with little case studies. Policy makers will benefit from the suggestions that will be made from the study since they will need to new orientation in formulation and implementation of policies that will enhance strategy implementation in institutions of higher learning. The recommendations of the study will enable policy makers to design more broad-minded and operational policies aimed at ensuring effective strategy implementation.

Limitations of the study

The study will use a sample to generalize conclusions about the characteristics of the population. Biasness has been identified as a weakness in sampling especially if the sample is chosen in a deleterious manner. To mitigate this, proportionate stratified sampling will be used to ensure that all characteristics of the population are captured. The study is also limited to the variables stated in the objectives and it won't cover other subjects beyond the stated objectives. Due to financial and time constraints, the study will cover only two institutions of higher learning – Technical University of Mombasa and Pwani University.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organization Culture

Goffee and Jones (1996) describe organization culture as the “glue that holds organizations together”. It has been described as a critical success factor in implementing manufacturing strategy (Bates, Schroeder and Morris, 1995). It has played a crucial role in the success or failures of mergers and acquisitions. On a much smaller level, there exist significant relationships between the prevailing organization culture and a number of outcomes such as job commitment and turnover (Kotter and Heskett, 1992).

Debates still engulf the meaning and content of organizational culture, the methods by which it should be measured, the feasibility of managing culture and change (Van Fleet and Griffins 2006). The meaning and content of organization culture has never been agreed upon and so are the methods by which it should be measured (Black, 2003). Struwig and Smith (2002) state that defining the term organizational culture is a difficult task since it manifests itself in intangible ways, such as behaviours throughout the organization.

Factors influencing Organisation Culture

Examining the various sources of literature suggests that have an impact on organization culture fall into three groups (Schein, 2004; Driskill , 2005): Factors indirectly influencing organizational culture (macro-environment of an organization), directly influencing the micro-environment of an organization and factors of leader’s impact (primary and secondary mechanisms, methods of the change of the organizational culture).

Kulvinskiene’ and Seimiene (2009), state that factors indirectly influencing organizational culture – macro-environment of an organization - consist of economic, social-cultural, political-legal, scientific-technological, natural environment and international events. They further describe the Factors directly influencing organizational culture as the micro-environment of an organization, which consists of consumers and customers, partners and other organizations. The third factor that has impact on the formation and change of organizational culture are leaders of the organization: i.e. beliefs, values and their building techniques brought by organization founders and later by its new leaders.

The “Management study guide” (2012) identified several factors that influence organization culture. Employees affect the culture of an organization as it is their attitudes, mentalities, interests, perceptions and thought process that affect organization culture. It further states that organizations with a majority of youngsters encourage healthy competition at the work place and employees are always on toes to perform better than fellow workers.

The goals and objectives of an organization affect its culture. "Management study guide" (2012) states that the strategies and procedures designed to achieve the targets of the organization contribute to its culture. The work culture of an institution is also affected by the stakeholders of an organization. Depending on the operating environment, an organization has no option but to adapt to their timings and other requirements.

An organization's culture is affected by the nature of business that it's conducting. Stock broking industries and financial services are dependent on external factors like demand and supply and market capitalization. Market fluctuations may lead to unrest, tension and demotivate individuals.

The management style also affects the culture of an organization. In organizations where employees are allowed to take their own decisions, they get attached to their management and look forward to a long term association with the organization. To avoid a culture where employees work only for money, the management must respect employees.

Empirical studies in Organization Culture

Since the 1980s organization culture has emerged as one of the key themes in organization research. It has been referred to as workplace, corporate culture or company (Linstead and Grafton- small 1992). Beil and Hildebrand (2002) posited that culture has been inherent in institutional excellence, empowerment, total quality management and human resource management.

Existing literature has explored links between organization culture and leadership (Block, 2003), performance (Ogbonna and Harris 2002), change (Cunha and Cooper 2002), employee attitudes and behavior (Cabrera 2001; Alas and Vadi 2004), learning (Lea 2003; Aksu and Ozdemir 2005). Notably absent is the linkage between organization culture and strategy implementation. Studies on organization culture have gradually shifted from the mechanistic approach as postulated by Fredrick Taylor to a human relations view.

Watson (2006) emphasizes that the concept of culture, originally derived from a metaphor of the organization as 'something cultivated'. Schein, (2004) adds that the concept of culture is the climate and practices that organizations develop around their handling of people, or to the promoted values and statement of beliefs of an organization. Culture therefore gives organizations a sense of identity and determines, through the organization's legends, rituals, beliefs, meanings, values, norms and language, the way in which 'things are done around here'. An organization's culture encapsulates what it has been good at and what has worked in the past. These practices can often be accepted without question by long-serving members of an organization. Ngángá & Nyongesa (2012) define organization culture as a set of important

assumptions – often unstated – that members of an organization share in common. They are largely manifested in the behaviour of individuals in the organization. The assumptions are beliefs and values. Belief is a state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing. Values are a set of ideals shared by a group of members. Azhar (2003) adds that when beliefs and values are shared in an organization, they create corporate culture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was adopted in this study. Design is the logical manner in which elements sampled are compared and analyzed in order to make interpretations from the data. Descriptive survey is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2003). It is undertaken in order to ascertain and describe the characteristics of variables of interest in the study. It has several advantages; it helps in understanding the characteristics of a group in a given situation and offers concepts for extra review and study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2011).

The target population of this study was all the 1,026 employees of both TUM and Pwani University while the accessible population was those employees that were sampled by the researcher. Employees in public universities comprise of three categories of staff; support, administrative & technical and management. Support staffs are the employees who undertake the routine tasks of the institution. Administrative staffs direct and supervise support staff and also undertake basic management roles. Management comprises of the heads of departments and sections that supervise administrative staff and oversee the implementation of strategies formulated by the senior management. The choice of the employees of these institutions was due to the fact that strategic plans in an institution are implemented through these staff. The sample of the study was thus drawn from these employees.

The sampling technique that was adopted in this study is proportionate stratified sampling. A stratified sampling method is recommended when accessing a wider range of views within an organization (Franck, 2005). This is because the targeted population is the employees of the institution who were divided according to strata based on their job category. Employees were selected proportionately from the three strata of support, administrative and management staff as shown in the table 1.

The sample size of this study was 103 employees. Gay (1983), states that for descriptive studies a sample size of 10% is a good representative of the population.

Figure 1: Sample distribution

Job Category	N (Population)	Proportion (%)	n (Sample) 10%
Domestic & Allied (1-4)	378	37	38
Administrative & Technical Staff (5 – 10)	384	37	38
Supervisory & Management Staff (11-15)	264	26	27
Total	1,026	100	103

ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

Respondent profile

The researcher targeted 103 respondents where each was given a questionnaire. Out of the 103 questionnaires administered, 94 were returned giving a response rate of 91%. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a response rate of 50% is adequate and based on this statement, a 90% response rate was satisfactory for this study as outline in Table 2.

Table 2. Gender of the respondents

		Valid Frequenc	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	28	29.8	29.8
	Male	66	70.2	100.0
	Total	94	100.0	

From the above table, majority of the respondents were male with a frequency of 66 representing a 70.2% while female responses were 28 representing a response rate of 29.8%

Number of years served in the organization

As indicated by table 3, majority of the respondents had served in the institution for 3-6 years since it is represented by the highest frequency of 34 out of the 94 respondents with 36.2 percentage points. Employees who had served between 7-10 years and 11-15 years also follow closely with a frequency of 20 and 16 respectively and 21.3 and 17 percentage points. From the analysis, most of the employees' tenure in the institutions is between 3-6 years.

Table 3: Number of years served in the organization

Period of tenure in the institution				
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-2 years	8	8.5	8.5
	3-6 years	34	36.2	44.7
	7-10 years	20	21.3	66.0
	11-15 years	16	17.0	83.0
	16-20 years	8	8.5	91.5
	> 20 years	8	8.5	100.0
	Total		94	100.0

Dominant characteristics and strategy implementation.

The study sought to establish the influence that dominant characteristics have on strategy implementation. As illustrated in table 4 below, 76.1% agreed and another 13% strongly agreed thus constituting a total of 89.1% of those who agreed with the statement that the institutions have dominant prevailing characteristics. However neither of the respondents disagreed nor strongly disagreed with this statement. 10.9% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. 68% of the respondents agreed with the statement that the dominant characteristics present affect the values upheld by the institution. 2.1% strongly agreed to the statement thus culminating to 70.1% of those who agreed. 8.5% disagreed while 21.3% were of the indifferent opinion. 59.6% agreed with the statement that the dominant characteristics affect the financial strategy of the institution. In addition, 8.5% strongly agreed to this statement bringing a total of 68.1% of those who agreed. Meanwhile 17% of the respondents disagreed while 4.3% strongly disagreed. However, 10.6 neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

73.3% of the respondents agreed with the statement that the institution is a very structured and controlled place. A further 15.6% strongly agreed with this statement thus constituting 88.9% who agreed with this statement. 4.4% of the respondents were indifferent while 6.7% disagreed with this statement. None of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

Majority of the respondents – 62.2% agreed with the statement that formal structures generally govern what people do. 6.7% strongly agreed with this statement thus constituting a total of 68.9%. However 13.3% neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement but 17.8% of

the respondents disagreed with this statement. None of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

Table 4: Dominant characteristics and strategy implementation

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The Institution has dominant characteristics	0	0	11%	76.10%	13%
Dominant characteristics affect the values upheld by the institution	0	8.50%	21.30%	68.10%	2.10%
Dominant characteristics affect the financial and physical strategy	4.30%	17.00%	10.60%	59.60%	8.50%
The institution is a very structured and controlled place	0	6.70%	4.40%	73.30%	15.60%
Formal procedures govern what people do.	0	17.80%	13.30%	62.20%	6.70%

Behaviour norms and strategy implementation.

As illustrated in table 5 below, 76.1% agreed and another 4.3% strongly agreed thus constituting a total of 80.4% of those who agreed with the statement that the institutions have formal norms. However 15.2% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. 2.2% of the respondents disagreed and an equally same number strongly disagreed with the statement. 60.9% of the respondents agreed with the statement that the norms of the institution drive the pursuant of goals and objectives clearly and indirectly. 4.3% strongly agreed to this statement thus culminating to 65.2% of those who agreed. 17.4% disagreed and 4.3% strongly disagreed while 13.0% were of the indifferent opinion. 41.3% agreed with the statement that the norms of the institutions prioritize their budgetary allocation fairly. Meanwhile 34.8% of the respondents disagreed while 2.2% strongly disagreed. However, 21.7% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

72.3% of the respondents agreed with the statement that informal norms exist in the institution. A further 4.3% strongly agreed with this statement thus constituting 76.6% who agreed with this statement. 10.6% of the respondents were indifferent while 8.5% disagreed with this statement. 4.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

Majority of the respondents – 60.0% agreed with the statement that informal norms of the institutions influence their behaviour. None of the respondents strongly agreed nor strongly

disagreed with this statement but however 24.4% of the respondents disagreed with this statement.

29.8% agreed with the statement that the leaders of the institutions are influenced by the informal norms. 4.3% strongly agreed with this statement thus constituting a total of 34.1%. However 36.2% neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement but 25.5% of the respondents disagreed with this statement. 4.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

Table 5: Behaviour norms and strategy implementation

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The institution has formal norms	2.20%	2.20%	15.20%	76.10%	4.30%
The norms of the institution drive the pursuant of goals and objectives clearly and indirectly	4.30%	17.40%	13.00%	60.90%	4.30%
The norms of the institution prioritize its budgetary allocation fairly	2.20%	34.80%	21.70%	41.30%	0.00%
Informal norms exist in the institution	4.30%	8.50%	10.60%	72.30%	4.30%
The informal norms of the institution influence your behaviour.	0	24.40%	15.60%	60%	0.00%
The leadership of the institution is influenced by the informal norms	4.30%	25.50%	36.20%	29.80%	4.30%

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The general objective of the study was to determine the influence that organization culture has on strategy implementation. The study found out that dominant characteristics do influence strategy implementation in institutions of higher learning. Pease (2003), states that the underlying pressure that results from dominant characteristics is a discrimination and fairness culture whose goal is that everyone should assimilate and reflect the dominant culture. While the intentions of those who promote such a culture might be good, employees may feel that they are not being encouraged to bring their cultural assets to the workplace thus resulting to non-inclusive organizations.

The second objective was to determine the influence that behaviour norms have on strategy implementation. Kotter and Heskett (1992) describe behaviour patterns as the more visible level of organization culture. Conventional practices do exist in the institutions and they do influence the behaviour of both leaders and employees of the institution. Norms have a relatively great impact on individual and are potentially indicative of environments that support organization learning and knowledge management (Baltharad, 2006). Norms have a more

direct impact on the day to day activities and work situation of organizational members than work values

The findings of this study indicate that organization culture has an influence on strategy implementation of an institution. However the difference lay in the influence that each component of culture has. Dominant characteristics do have an effect on the values upheld by the institution and on the financial strategy. The formal norms present in these institutions do drive the pursuant of goals and objectives clearly and directly. On the other hand, the informal norms present in the institution do determine the behaviour of both employees and leaders of the institution.

There exists histories and myths about the institution but they do not influence the decision making process of both the employees and leaders of the institution. However the values upheld by the institution have been greatly shaped by the histories and organization myths.

Based on these findings, further research is recommended on the problems of change management in institutions of higher learning especially the ones on transition e.g. from a university college to a chartered university.

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