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Effects of Management Practices on Strategic Plans Execution among Vocational Training Centres in Kiambu County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study sought to establish the effect of selected management practices on the execution of strategic plans by Vocational Training Centres in Kiambu County. A total of 92 respondents consisting of heads of the institutions, their deputies, board members and instructors from 37 centres were targeted for interview. Data was collected using a self-administered structured questionnaire. Data was analysed using multiple linear regression at 95 percent confidence level (level of significance, $\alpha = 0.05$). The results of the study suggest that there is a statistically significant relationship between management practices and strategic plans execution among Vocational Training Centres in Kiambu County in Kenya. The management of these institutions are however urged to emphasize more on employee empowerment and planning aspects of their management practices in order to enhance the institutions' strategic plans execution.

Keywords: Strategic Management, Management Practices, Employee Empowerment, Organizational Leadership, Organizational Communication

1. Introduction

Vocational Education and Training (VET) supports lifelong learning. It is on this basis that strategic planning to improve the performance of VET institutions is increasingly being adopted to enhance the delivery of quality educational outcomes as well as effectiveness and relevance to learners and the labour market (McLeanand & Kamau, 2009). Delivery of quality education and training requires the involvement of all institutional stakeholders to ensure the acquisition of practical knowledge by learners for their personal and national development (Oduog, 2003).

Akong'o (2010) describes management practices as the working conditions and innovations that managers employ within the workplace to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the organization. In the same vein, Juma and Okibo (2016) note that management practices are the skills, qualities and competencies that managers possess that get things done effectively through people in the firm. Adopting management practices that are superior improve the performance of vocational



training institutes which ensures that there is survival, growth and maintenance of a sustainable competitive advantage (Omerzel & Antoncic, 2008).

Organizations that want to be successful must develop strategies and implement them successfully. However, if the strategies are developed without taking into consideration the organizational objectives, their implementation will lead to problems arising hence failing (Abuya, 2011). Strategy formulation and implementation involves variables such as cultures, attitudes, values, motivation, commitment, power relationships and perceptions. For successful strategy implementation, it is necessary to properly manage the changes that may occur in the whole process. Accordingly, Mintzberg (2008) observes that 90% of well formulated strategies fail due to poor implementation.

According to Lamb (2009), resource allocation, organizational culture, structure, effective leadership, change management and communication are positively associated with firm performance. Mwangi et al. (2015) observe that transformational leaders are more successful in strategic plans implementation than autocratic management teams and that continuous professional development programs for employees and communication strategies positively affect the implementation of strategic plans in institutions. Further, Karanja (2014) notes that financial management training on resource utilization as well as management competency and information sharing enhances project performance. A study by Omboi (2013) on the factors affecting the implementation of strategic plans in government tertiary institutions found that management behaviour, rewards and recognition systems influenced strategic plans implementation. On their part, Ogwengo and Osano (2017) examined the factors influencing strategy implementation in institutions of higher learning in Kenya and established that poor communication practices characterised by limited feedback systems derailed the implementation of strategies within institutions of higher learning.

Many countries experience enormous challenges in their education sectors key among them being lack of learning resources and underutilization of the available resources. In Kenya, most of these challenges have been worsening over time since the introduction of cost-sharing between the National and County Governments (Oduog, 2003). The education system in Kenya emphasizes more on academic higher education as opposed to the practical and hands-on education offered at the Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) which has affected their development over the years.

A study by Okolocha (2012) examined the challenges facing vocational training institutions and concluded that lack of resources, management competency and effective structural mechanisms were the key aspects limiting the institutions from advancing. A study by Sirat (2010) notes that lack of employee involvement, inadequate resource availability and management traits limits the strategic planning process across vocational training institutions. Omboi (2013) also concluded that lack



of resources, leadership skills and appropriate organizational structures inhibit effective strategy implementation within tertiary institutions. This study seeks to examine the effects of management practices on strategic plans implementation in vocational training centres in an effort to advance knowledge on effective strategic management practices required for the development of vocational training centres in Kenya.

1.2 Study Objective and Conceptual Framework

The main objective of the study was to determine the effect of selected management practices on strategic plans execution at Vocational Training Centres within Kiambu County in Kenya. The study was guided by the conceptual framework in Figure 1.

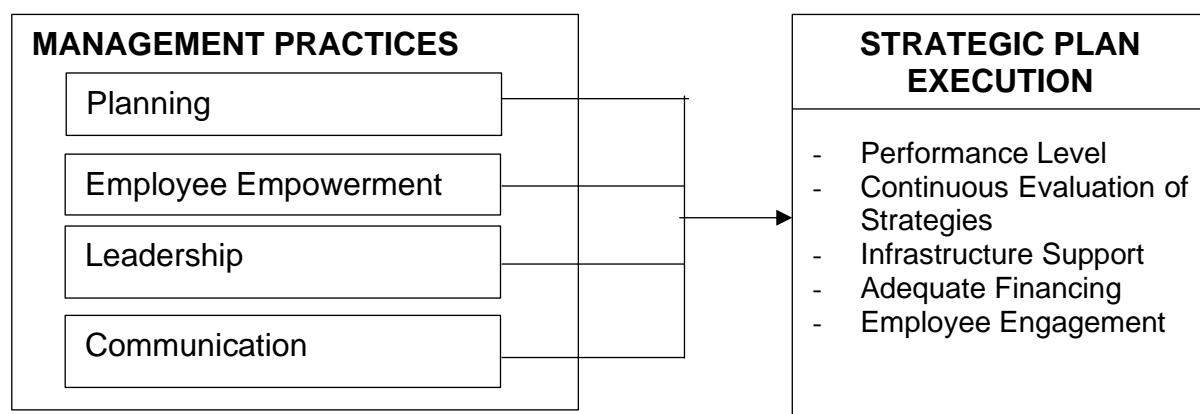


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Management Practices and Strategic Plan Execution

Source: Researcher (2019)

2. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by four theories namely resource-based view, contingency, strategic fit and the dynamic capabilities.

2.1 Resource-Based View Theory

This theory was advanced by [Penrose \(1959\)](#) and argues that firms are generally equipped with resources necessary to become competitive in improving their long-term performance. Resources that are rare are capable of improving a firm's competitive position but only when correctly utilized. Competitive position may be maintained over longer periods of time ensuring that the firm protects against wastage, transfer or substitution of resources ([Dollinger et al., 2010](#)). Availability of information resources may not necessarily translate to direct organization performance although the value of the information is critical to the long-term competitiveness of the organization ([Wade & Hulland, 2004](#)). In essence, the resource-based view is based on the premise that effective and efficient application of all useful resources that a firm can muster helps determine its competitive advantage. Critical resource mobilization

and utilization in a way that ensures competitiveness is therefore critical in ensuring the effective execution of the vocational training centres strategic plans.

2.2 Contingency Theory

Developed by Professor John Adair, this theory is an organizational management and leadership theory which argues that there is no best way to organize a corporation, to lead a firm or to make decisions. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent or dependent upon the internal and external situation. This theory informed the leadership aspect of this study in the context of vocational training centres.

2.3 Strategic Fit Theory

This theory was advanced by [Chandler \(1962\)](#) and argues that strategic fit or alignment of a firm's internal strategy, structure, capabilities and resources with the external environment is critical for the firm's performance. [Wright and Snell \(2005\)](#) argue that the application of strategic management practices depends on the institution's context, business strategy and structure. Proper alignment of the vocational training centres structure with their formulated strategy especially within the context of empowering employees and ensuring effective communication is key to the strategic plans' execution.

2.4 Dynamic Capabilities Theory

This theory advocates for firms to have the ability to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments and was advanced by [Teece et al. \(1997\)](#). The theory urges firms to use their internal resources to produce the maximum productivity since each firm's resources are unique and distinct to each company and remain rooted in the history of the company. The theory further advances that knowledge and skills should be put in place for the organizations to effectively leverage their resources. The vocational training centres should therefore effectively utilize their inherent capabilities to optimally and purposefully adapt and catapult their resource bases.

3 Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. 92 respondents consisting of the Principals, Deputy, Board Members, Heads of Departments, and Instructors respondents from 37 Vocational Training Centres in Kiambu County were randomly selected for interview since they make the key decisions concerning strategy formulation and/or execution within their respective institutions. Primary data was collected using a self-administered semi-structured questionnaire. Data was analysed using multiple linear regression at 95 percent confidence level (level of significance, $\alpha = 0.05$).



4 Results and Discussion

To establish the effect of management practices on strategic plans execution in Vocational Training Centres in Kiambu County, a multiple linear regression analysis was done. Tables 1 to 3 shows the relevant results

Table 1 Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.693 ^a	.480	.455	2.66215	1.944

a. Predictors: Planning, Employee Empowerment, Leadership, Communication

b. Dependent Variable: Strategic Plan Execution

Source: Research Data (2019)

The results in Table 1 indicate that the independent variables representing the management practices aspects namely planning, employee empowerment, leadership and communication collectively explained 48% of the variability in the strategic plans execution of the Vocational Training Centers in Kiambu County ($r^2= 0.480$) indicating a moderate robustness of the conceptual framework.

Table 2 ANOVA Model Summary

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Significance (p-value)
1 Regression	548.934	4	137.234	19.364	.000
Residual	595.313	84	7.087		
Total	1144.247	88			

a. Dependent Variable: Strategic Plan Execution

b. Predictors: Planning, Employee Empowerment, Leadership, Communication

Source: Research Data (2019)

Table 2 indicates that the overall significance of the multiple linear regression was statistically significant since p-value = 0.000, < 0.05 demonstrating the existence of a significant relationship between management practices and strategic plans execution indicating a statistically significant and fit association between the study's management practices variables and strategic plans execution among the Vocational Training Centers in Kiambu County.

Table 3 Coefficients of the Regression Model

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Significance (p-value)
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	1.019	1.797		.567	.572
	Planning	-.006	.043	-.013	-.135	.893
	Employee Empowerment	.108	.089	.150	1.209	.230
	Leadership	.243	.079	.329	3.079	.003
	Communication	.196	.074	.322	2.636	.010

a. Dependent Variable: Strategic Plan Execution

Source: Research Data (2019)

The findings in Table 3 reveal that two of the management practices variables namely leadership ($\beta = 0.329$; p-value = 0.003) and communication ($\beta = 0.322$; p-value = 0.10) had statistically significant moderate positive linear relationship with strategic plans execution by the Vocational Training Centres in Kiambu County.

On the other hand, the relationship between the management practices variable of employee empowerment ($\beta = 0.150$; p-value = 0.230) though slightly positive was not statistically significant while the management practices variable of planning ($\beta = -0.013$; p-value = 0.893) was inversely related to strategic plans execution by the Vocational Training Centres in Kiambu County and also not statistically significant.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of this study suggest that there is a statistically significant relationship between management practices and strategic plans execution among Vocational Training Centres in Kiambu County in Kenya. The management of these institutions are however urged to emphasize more on employee empowerment and planning aspects of their management practices in order to enhance the institutions' strategic plans execution.

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