

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN KENYA: CASE OF ISO CERTIFIED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Issues of Quality of Education, rather than mass production, have had to move to the forefront of the educational agenda of policy makers at higher education level. Considering the huge public and private investment in university education, evaluation of how effectively the investment is being utilized by examining the quality of the educational infrastructure, the cadre of qualified tutors and other resources in place, and the quality of teaching and learning has become critical. The main objective of the study is to investigate the effect of Quality Management Practices on the performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya. The study also covered: top management commitment, stakeholder involvement, and customer orientation and employee empowerment. The approach of the study was descriptive research design. The target population of the study was 4017 respondents comprising of staff of the selected Public Institutions of higher learning. A sample of 10% was drawn from the population using stratified random sampling and will form the respondents for the study. The study collected both primary and secondary data. This was the use of questionnaires administered using drop and pick later method. The findings were presented using charts and graphs, frequencies, percentages, means and other central tendencies. The study found out that majority of the respondents felt that performance of their universities had improved as a result of putting in place ISO certification; ISO Systems approach has led to stronger resource generating capabilities; the top

management of the selected university institutions is committed towards the principles laid out by the ISO QMS Standards; stakeholder analysis, identification and management is a central point of orientations of the universities in Kenya; proactive customer orientation contributes towards performance of the university institutions; learning institutions provide the most important things that make employees give high quality services. The study concludes that top management commitment significantly affects performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya; The top management of the selected university institutions is committed towards the principles laid out by the ISO QMS Standards; Stakeholder involvement has insignificant effect on performance of ISO Certified public universities in Kenya; Customer orientation has significant effect on performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya; Employee empowerment significantly affects performance of ISO Certified public universities in Kenya. The study recommends that the top management of all Universities that are ISO Certified in Kenya should remain committed towards the principles indicated in the ISO QMS Standards; All stakeholders of ISO Certified universities in Kenya should ensure that actively be involved throughout the quality processes in the organization; The ministry of higher education and other donors should sponsor customer surveys among public universities on regular basis; public ISO Certified universities in Kenya ought to put in place sound employee empowerment strategies for example training of staff on quality.

Key Words: total quality management strategies, performance, institutions of higher learning, Kenya, ISO certified public universities, Nairobi City County, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

The concept of quality management is quite old and was first originated in Japan after Second World War with emphasis on improving quality and using quality control tools in the manufacturing sector. Later, the quality management concept moved to USA, UK, and other countries and was applied initially in the manufacturing sector. Since then, the idea of quality management has been growing fast. Numerous approaches of quality management have been suggested, in order to help industries improve efficiency and competitiveness through improvement of quality. One of the most popular and often recommended approaches is the philosophy of quality management that seeks to integrate all organizational functions to focus on meeting and surpassing customer's requirements and organizational objectives (Ezugwu & Agu, 2016).

In the competitive environment of today, it is crucial to stay ahead of competition and continuously satisfy customers. Quality management practices have been widely implemented, and while some organizations experience great success, other initiatives have failed (Jinhui Wu et al. 2011). Many studies have started questioning the universal application of quality management in all organizations, and they claim that some of the quality management practices are dependent on the organizational context, such as industry, firm size and country (Sousa & Voss 2001). Naor et al. (2008) state that quality management is more than tools and techniques and that it has a value system as an underlying foundation. The cultural setting of the organization will affect the outcome of the methods and also the performance of the organization.

From the last two decades the awareness of quality management has considerably increased and become a well established field of research for academia (Arumugam et al., 2008). Voluminous work has been done and still been undertaken on quality management practices and business performance in the service sector. Many empirical studies have reported strong and positive results on the link between quality management practices and quality performance (Prajogo & Sohal, 2003; Fryer et al., 2007) while some other studies also suggested a positive link between quality management practices and organizational performance. Quality is not only a strategic weapon for competing in the current marketplace, but it also means pleasing consumers, not just protecting them from annoyances. Therefore, a company's specific advantage is to identify and then compete on one or more of the dimensions of quality (Kumar, V. et al., 2009).

Many organizations have come to realize that achieving zero-defect goods and services can lead not only to customer satisfaction but also to improved internal efficiency and reduced costs. Over the past decade, companies experienced dramatic changes in business environment characterized by such phenomenon as increasing consumer consciousness of quality, rapid technology transfer,

globalization and low cost competition. As a result of the continuous decline on international trade, the global economy begins to recover but this news can block the development and also can block policies adopted in order not to fall into a new crisis (Anagnoste & Agoston, 2009). Therefore in response to these challenges, many companies have joined the quality movement and implemented various quality improvement initiatives as a means to enhanced competitiveness. The complexities of modern business require approaches that are more sophisticated.

Many organizations have difficulties with measuring progress of quality management, which is one of the reasons for the failure of attempts to introduce quality management .There is support for conducting a cultural assessment before implementing quality management or similar initiatives in order to identify possible barriers and to assist in designing the implementation programme The critical factors of quality management practices found vary from one author to another, although there is a common core, formed by the following requirements: customer focus, leadership, quality planning, management based on facts, continuous improvement, human resource management, learning, process management, cooperation with suppliers and organizational awareness and concern for the social and environmental context(Arumugam, V. et al., 2009).

A company's success in the long term depends on how effectively it satisfies its customers' needs on a constant basis. Therefore, Quality management's success is determined by how willing the organization is to change and whether it uses customer satisfaction as a measure in assessing the success of its decisions and actions (Arumugam, V. et al., 2009).Preliminary evidence seems to indicate that Quality management adopting firms obtain a competitive advantage over firms that do not adopt quality management (Sadikoglu, 2004; Kaynak, 2003). Firms that focus on continuous improvement, involve and motivate employees to achieve quality output and focus on satisfying customers' needs are more likely to outperform firms that do not have this focus. According to Crosby (2002) implicit in the quality management philosophy are values of teamwork and collaboration in the pursuit of quality and continuous improvement. It appears evident that working with supportive co-workers who readily share task-relevant information and expertise is more likely to be associated with successful quality management implementation. That is, for firms implementing quality management practices, higher co-worker support is likely to be associated with enhanced organizational performance.

Although an organization may encourage support in a number of areas, this study focuses specifically on organization support for creativity, which refers to the extent to which an employee perceives that the organization encourages, respects, rewards and recognizes employees who exhibit creativity. Indeed, the organizational creativity literature has demonstrated that organizational contexts can play a significant role in encouraging or impeding employee creativity. As such this study will consider various measures of performance as a result of quality management which include quality of output, new product development, time of

project (efficiency) and costs. The benefits of quality improvement can not only be reflected on decreasing costs, but also on maximizing business profits (Zhou and George, 2001).

In terms of quality improvement, what really counts for a firm is not just cost minimization, but the effect of superior quality has on maximizing profits. Thus, the study will focus on the relationship between quality management and firm performance as critical for firms and researchers to better understand the effects of quality management onto different levels of firm performance. According to prior researches on, quality management the study will attempt to examine the relationship between quality management practices and various levels of business performance and with a special focus on higher education organizations in Kenya (Zhou and George, 2001).

Performance of Public Universities in Kenya

Organizational performance encompasses accumulated end results of all the organization's work processes and activities. Performance measures can be financial or non-financial. Both measures are used for competitive firms in the dynamic business environment. Financial measures of organizational performance include; return on assets, return on sales, return on equity, return on investment, return on capital employed and sales growth. Therefore performance is measured by either subjective or objective criteria; arguments for subjective measures include difficulties with collecting qualitative performance data from small firms and with reliability of such data arising from differences in accounting methods used by firms (Gerrit & Abdolmohammadi, 2010).

Organizational performance comprises the actual output or results of an organization as measured against its intended outputs (or goals and objectives). It involves the ability of an organization to fulfill its mission through sound management, strong governance and a persistent rededication to achieving results. Effective nonprofits are mission-driven, adaptable, customer-focused, entrepreneurial, outcomes oriented and sustainable. Creating flexible, high-performing, learning organizations is the secret to gaining competitive advantage. Performance measures can be financial or non-financial. Both measures are used for competitive firms in the dynamic business environment (Jenning et al., 2008).

The privatization of Universities and liberalization of the Kenya economy in the 1990s changed the competitive environment in which the service industries operated. This contributed to the universities repositioning themselves for the challenge and development of both strategic and performance objectives. Public universities, as other government institutions operate within such an environment and are therefore environment dependent. As a result of the liberation, turbulence in the economy, and new government policies, public universities have been undergoing changes to survive and compete effectively (GoK, 2005).

Public universities that succeed often have access to leading scientific research, highly skilled and creative services and products development team, strong sales team with the ability to successfully communicate the perceived strengths of the services and products and corporate

reputation for quality and innovation (Prescott, 1998). If the desired features are incorporated into services and products they encourage buyer preference for the services and products. The basis for competitive advantage is a services and products whose attributes differ significantly from rivals services and products. Efforts to differentiate often result in higher costs. Profitable differentiation is achieved by either keeping the cost of differentiation below the price premium that the differentiating features command, or by offsetting the lower profit margins through more sales volumes (Grant, 2002).

Most universities are collaborating with other institutions and industries to enhance performance. The partnerships have involved linkages between local Kenyan universities and their foreign counterparts. The linkages are typically a one way stream in which Kenyan universities receive books, equipment, training opportunities and even grants support for their development. In return, foreign academics have an opportunity to spend time in the local universities as visiting lecturers or researchers where they collaborate with the Kenyan counterparts. To coordinate and manage these linkages, most public universities have established International liaison offices under the headship of a senior academic, thus calling for clear and effective strategic plans to ensure that performance is promoted and the institutions benefit from the collaborations (Muchiri, 2010).

Quality Management Strategies and Performance

A strategic approach to quality management is when quality approaches move beyond incremental, operational improvements to those that influence the strategy process for the organisation (Leonard and McAdam, 2004). Gitlow (2000) defines quality a predictable degree of uniformity and dependability at low cost and suited to market. The extent to which an organization and suppliers can produce products and services with predictable degree of conformity and dependability at a cost that is in-keeping with quality characteristics is determined in quality design. An organization should continuously strive to make sure that the specification of the quality design is eventually surpassed. This ensures that there is a sustained competitive advantage and performance over the rest of the industry players .Quality Management Systems models establish the quality criteria in most industries and form the principles on which quality is gauged. They also offer step-by-step practical techniques on how to ‘do’ quality.

Benner and Tushman (2003) asset that Quality management activities aim at mapping, streamlining, and adhering the improved processes. They propose that the improved process management makes progress in terms of responsiveness and performance. The progress involves the contingent influences of organisational form and environmental context. They point out that the contexts of so-called ambidextrous organisational form and incremental technological change positively influence progress towards responsiveness and performance, while the context of non-incremental technological change influences the progress negatively.

Hendricks and Singhal (1997) noted that implementing an effective quality management program improves performance of firms. They defined performance as a function of market returns, operating income, sales capital expenditure, assets, number of employees, and assets. The objective of quality management implementation ranges from operational efficiency to organizational effectiveness, and with internal or external orientations. Linking the process of implementation to the expected performance requires attention to the role of contingencies. The developed practices in Indonesian organisations did provide benefits, but observations have also indicated the existence of doubtful practices. Amar and Zain (2002) noted some challenges that affected quality management implementation in Indonesia which related to developing quality control tools, managing processes and resources to support improvement, and the attitude of people in decision-making.

ISO Certification of Universities in Kenya

The International Organization for standardization (ISO) is an international organization whose purpose is to establish agreement on international quality standards. It has been created to develop and promote quality. ISO 9000 consists of a set of standards and a certification process for companies. By receiving ISO 9000 certification, companies demonstrate that they have met the standards specified by the ISO. The standards are applicable for all types of companies and have gained global acceptance. In many industries ISO certification has become a requirement for doing business. ISO 9000 is used to comprehend the principles of quality management, function of quality management and correct use of terms. It describes fundamentals of quality management systems and specifies the terminology for quality management systems. ISO 9001 is used to assess a QMS or specify generic requirements for a quality management system where an organization needs to demonstrate its ability to provide products that fulfill customer and applicable regulatory requirements and aims to enhance customer satisfaction (KEBS, 2008).

Globally, organizations have seen implementation of ISO 9001:2008 requirements a valuable aid to improving the quality of their products and services and not just as certificate they need to have on the walls. ISO 9001 has gained wide interests in new management of public administrations. It also represents an international consensus on good management practices. It is a tried and tested framework of managing any business process (Bureau Veritas, 2007). ISO 9001's mission is to develop, promote and publish international standards. It develops voluntary technical standards, which add value to all types of business operations. They make the trade between countries easier and fairer. The standards also serve to safeguard consumers and users in general of products and services and to make their lives simpler. This is a voluntary issue and does not enforce their implementation. The standards are market-driven and developed on the basis of international consensus .The adoption of ISO 9001:2008 QMS standards by public universities shows the Universities commitment to public sector reforms as a way of institutionalizing citizen-focused service. Customer focus is given adequate consideration in all

the processes including definition of authority, responsibility and delivery times for all the activities at public universities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Issues of Quality of Education, rather than mass production, have had to move to the forefront of the educational agenda of policy makers at higher education level. Considering the huge public and private investment in university education, evaluation of how effectively the investment is being utilized by examining the quality of the educational infrastructure, the cadre of qualified tutors and other resources in place, and the quality of teaching and learning has become critical (UNESCO, 2003). Douglas and Judge (2001) showed how the extent to which quality management practices are implemented is positively and significantly related to perceived financial performance as defined by growth in earnings, growth in revenue, changes in market share, return on assets, and long run level of profitability. Kenya's public universities, like many others in the world, have suffered many years of underfunding. The causes have been many but generally have included changing donor priorities, changing government rules and regulations to cope with national economic turbulence, international economic trends, legislation and political trends in the country. ISO 9001:2008 QMS has both short and long term benefits to public universities including: increased efficiency in all its operations, increased output in terms of completion rates for students, high employee morale out of the clearly defined roles and responsibilities and accountability by management, international recognition of both the University and the University programs, factual approach to decision making at the university and setting out clear instructions for audits and process reviews that facilitate information gathering and decision making by University Managers based on the provided information. Unfortunately, obtaining the ISO 9000 certification is a necessary, but not in itself sufficient, condition to construct an effective QMS and to increase organizational performance. Without careful design and implementation of ISO 9000, it is difficult for registered organizations to expect a performance superior to those of nonregistered firms (Feng et al., 2008). Although quality systems continue to gain popularity and awareness, a surprising number of institutions do not have effective quality systems established. The responsiveness to the importance of implementing effective and efficient quality practices which would give more edge by high quality standard has not been remarkable. There are challenges of lost time and increased costs that cannot be regained. Institutions can lose lots of money as a result of not using significant opportunities to increase the quality of their processes and products. (Rodchua, 2006). It is against this backdrop that the researcher aimed to investigate the effects of Quality Management Practices on the performance of Public Institutions of Higher Learning in Kenya; a case study of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of the study was to investigate the effect of Quality Management strategies and performance of institutions of higher learning in Kenya, a case of Public Universities in Kenya.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To find out how Top management Commitment to quality affects the performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya.
2. To establish the effect of Stakeholder involvement of systems and Processes on the performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya.
3. To determine the extent to which customer orientation affects performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya.
4. To examine the relationship between employee empowerment and the performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Quality Management (QM) presents a strategic option and an integrated management philosophy for organizations, which allows them to reach their objectives effectively and efficiently, and to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Goldberg and Cole, 2002). QM is generally described as a collective, interlinked system of quality management practices that is associated with organizational performance underlined the importance of causal relations between quality management practices (Cua et al. (2001). There is a prevailing belief that higher education has entered a new environment in which quality plays an increasingly important role (Bergman, 1995).

Resource Based View

Resource-Based View Theory suggests that internal organizational resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable and without a substitute are a source of sustainable competitive advantage and therefore enhance performance. Resource-Based View Theory states that firms achieve sustainable competitive advantage if they possess certain key resources and if they effectively deploy these resources in their chosen markets (Barney, 2007). The theory adds that performance is driven by the resource profile of the firm, whereas the source of superior performance is embedded in the possession and deployment of distinctive resources that are difficult to imitate (Wernerfelt, 1984).

A firm develops competitive advantage by not only acquiring but also developing, combining, and effectively deploying its physical, human, and organizational resources in ways that add

unique value and are difficult for competitors to imitate. The Resource-Based View Theory postulates that competitive advantage comes from the internal resources that are possessed by an organization (Barney (2001); Wernerfelt, 1984). To transform a short run competitive advantage into a sustained competitive advantage requires that these resources be heterogeneous in nature and not perfectly mobile. If these conditions hold, the firm's bundle of resources can assist the firm sustain above average returns. Quality management practices are a resource for creating quality image, which an organization uses to improve the firm's performance. The quality management practices must be valuable, rare, inimitable and not substitutable for manufacturing firms to achieve competitive advantage and thus realize performance (Barney, 2007).

Joseph Juran's Theory

Joseph Juran is responsible for what has become known as the “Quality Trilogy.” The quality trilogy is made up of quality planning, quality improvement, and quality control. If a quality improvement project is to be successful, then all quality improvement actions must be carefully planned out and controlled. Juran believed there were ten steps to quality improvement. These steps are: An awareness of the opportunities and needs for improvement must be created, Improvement goals must be determined, Organization is required for reaching the goals, Training needs to be provided, Initialize projects, Monitor progress, Recognize performance, Report on results and track achievement of improvements (Juran, 2009).

Deming's Theory

Deming's theory of Total Quality Management rests upon fourteen points of management, the system of profound knowledge, and the Shewart Cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act). Quality is equal to the result of work efforts over the total costs. If a company is to focus on costs, the problem is that costs rise while quality deteriorates. Deming's system of profound knowledge consists of the System Appreciation which entails an understanding of the way that the company's processes and systems work; Variation Knowledge through an understanding of the variation occurring and the causes of the variation ; Knowledge Theory which is the understanding of what can be known, and Psychology Knowledge which is the understanding of human nature (Bowen,2013).

Deming (1986) noted that no quality management system could succeed without top management commitment; it is the management that invests in the processes, creates corporate culture and also selects suppliers and develops long-term relationships. Deming's Quality Improvement Theory provides business with a plan to eliminate poor quality control issues through effective managerial techniques. It's a fact that management's behavior shapes the corporate attitude and defines what is important for the success and survival of the firm.

Quality involves tweaking processes using knowledge. The fourteen points of Deming's theory of total quality management are; Create constancy of purpose, Adopt the new philosophy, Stop dependencies on mass inspections, Don't award business based upon the price, Aim for

continuous production and service improvement, Bring in cutting-edge on the job training, Implement cutting-edge methods for leadership, Abolish fear from the company, Deconstruct departmental barriers, Get rid of quantity-based work goals, Get rid of quotas and standards, Support pride of craftsmanship, Ensure everyone is trained and educated and making sure the top management structure supports the previous thirteen points (Goetsch, et al, 2013).

Agency Theory

Agency theory is about the relationship between two parties, the principal (owner) and the agent (Eisenhardt, 1989). More specifically, it examines this relationship from a behavioral and a structural perspective. It suggests that given the chance, agents will behave in a self-interested manner, behavior that may conflict with the principal's interest (Chrisman et al., 2004). Firm performance by way of cost minimization and greater efficiencies is the desired outcome of the agency theory perspective (Corbetta and Salvato, 2004). When the ownership and management of a firm are separated, theory suggests that agency problems are created, and agency costs are incurred to alleviate these problems (Tracey, and Phillips, 2006). Agency theory assumes agents will instead behave opportunistically because they too are self-serving. Therefore, the principal enacts mechanisms to minimize losses to their own utility (Davis et al., 1997)

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Quality Management

Quality Management strategies take into consideration the methods used to enhance quality and productivity in organizations, particularly businesses. It is a comprehensive system approach that works horizontally across an organization, involving all departments and employees and extending backward and forward to include both suppliers and clients/customers (Barnard, 1999).

Youngless (2000), asserted that rather than trying to inspect the quality of products and services after they have been completed, quality management instils a philosophy of doing the job correctly the first time. It all sounds simple, but implementing the process requires an organizational culture and climate that are often alien and intimidating. Roffe (1998) added that while there are a small number of quality indicators, these are more numerous and complex in higher education and are therefore more difficult to assess. Quality Management has the potential to encompass the quality perspectives of both external and internal stakeholders in an integrated manner and thereby enable a comprehensive approach to quality management that will assure quality as well as facilitate change and innovation.

Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2003) noted that the quality management in higher education is deteriorating into managerialism because of the disparity between quality management techniques and educational processes, as well as the lack of shared vision within institutions or

educational fields. They suggested that an alternative view is necessary of quality in higher education. A starting point for this process is arguably a comprehensive assessment of current practices to determine the extent to which different meanings of quality and different stakeholder perspectives are taken into account. Although higher education is able to adopt many of the principles of quality management, it is reasonable to expect some problems when applying them to a different organizational structure to that of the commercial environment. The concern is that there will be a direct relationship between the conception of higher education being taken, the definition of quality being used and the performance indicators chosen to measure quality (Tam, 2001).

Top Management Commitment and Performance

Executive commitment, an open organisation, and employee empowerment, produce significant correlations to financial performance made up of sales, growth, profitability, and revenue growth (Powell, 1995). Top Management in organizations maintains the leadership responsibility for the quality management systems, with involvement of all organizational staffs. This responsibility includes; ensuring the availability of resources to all staff to ensure improved service delivery is achieved for the realization of the organization's vision and mission. Establishing and reviewing the quality policy and quality objectives quarterly to ensure compliance to the quality standards (Soltani, 2005). McLeod and MacDonell (2011) emphasize the importance of top management in projects as it plays various roles in the organization such as influencing attitudes, encouraging user participation, creating a positive context for change, overseeing the development of the project, managing political conflicts, and ensuring the availability of resources.

Cole and Phil (2011) define leadership as the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives. Such leaders should provide a clear vision of the organization's future and set challenging goals and targets. It is only through unity of purpose and direction of employees that achieves organization's objectives. They should maintain internal environment where people can get fully involved by establishing trust and eliminating fear. It is the role of leadership to define the mission, vision and goals that promote a quality culture and establish a set of shared values, resulting in high performance (Kanji, 2008). Therefore, the need for full commitment of top management should be understood, communicated, implemented and maintained at all levels in the organization. The importance of quality management practices should begin to be emphasized at the top, where serious commitment to performance must be demonstrated through vision framework which comprises the organization's guiding philosophy, core values and beliefs, purpose and mission (Terziovski et al., 2003).

The magnitude of a successful project depends on the level of top management committed. The three main facets of top management support which are crucial in quality management practice

and project realization include: showing interest by participating in team meetings, willingness to spend time with people and listen to feedback as well as willing to help resolve problem; providing necessary resources, including training and other crucial resources and Providing leadership by helping to translate plan into action, regular review of project programs and official commissioning of project leaders and project team. The fact that top management are expected to set the overall directions of the project by formally forming an executive steering committee to tract, review and monitor the project progress (Olorunniwo & Udo, 2002).

Stakeholder Involvement and Performance

Stakeholders refer to those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist (Freeman, 1984). An organization as a collaboration of multiple and diverse constituencies and interests, referred to as stakeholders. Stakeholder view of the organization integrates stakeholder relationships within a company's resource base, industry setting, and sociopolitical arena into a single analytical framework. Although it is not that difficult to envision a stakeholder focus in running a business, it is exceedingly difficult to implement such a focus (Walker & Marr, 2001). Different stakeholders can be a part of a large project's executive team and depending on how they get involved and what their roles are, they might have different interests in, impacts on and ambitions for a project (Kolltveit & Grønhaug, 2004). Nevertheless, the apparent role of key stakeholders is an important factor in determining quality levels has not to date been widely examined in the literature (Joaquin et al., 2010).

The key relationships for a business go far beyond the relationships with its customers to include the relationships with its employees, suppliers and partners, investors and market analysts, and even government regulators, trade associations and other entities that influence the general business climate in which a given business operates (Galbreath, 2002). Li and Calantone (1998) point out, that competitor knowledge process creates information asymmetry between firms, which can be used to gain competitive advantage. In the case of new software ventures, which operate in markets with short product life cycles and changing specifications, information on what the competitors are doing and what they plan for the future is vital for business survival and development.

All of these relationships constitute a complex relationship network where a change in any particular relationship can readily cascade throughout all of the other relationships (Gass, 1997). There comes total quality management "where quality means successfully meeting expectations of stakeholders like Organization Investors, Suppliers, Customers, Government, Community, Political groups, Business associations' stakeholders (Radder, 1998). In order to convince investors to stay with the organization and keep their shares, employees need to cooperate between themselves, customers to buy more products and services, and suppliers to maintain strong supply chain there is no choice but to keep positive relationships with all stakeholder groups.

Customer Orientation and Performance

It is essential for an organization to understand current and future customer needs. It should strive to meet customer requirements and exceed customer expectations. This could be done by communication throughout the organization, measuring customer satisfaction and systematically managing customer relationships. Ensuring a balanced approach and acting on findings is vital. Organizations depend on their customers and therefore should understand current and future customer needs, should meet customer requirements and strive to exceed customer expectations. Customer focus is a key requirement of ISO 9000:2000. As the standard indicates that top management shall ensure customer requirements are determined and are met with the aim of enhancing customer satisfaction. Therefore the responsibility for customer focus lies on senior management (Evans & Lindsay, 2008).

Customer orientation and competitor orientation cannot be viewed at without taking into consideration the environment a company is working in. A more sophisticated approach is needed to illustrate properly the relevance of these constructs for company performance (Matsuno & Mentzer 2000). Homburg (1998) suggests closeness to the customer, with dimensions such as openness in providing information to customers and flexibility in dealing with customers, to describe how companies should interact with their customers. Therefore a customer-oriented company has to establish continuous communication with its actual and potential customers and create a customer-focused environment within a company (Hartline et al., 2000).

Customer satisfaction is a good target but not a sufficient one. It only weakly estimates and forecasts how to keep our customers in tough competitive markets. Companies always lose customers, and companies should focus on keeping their customer. Organizations should therefore make their customer delighted, not satisfied (Kotler, 2005). A study by Augustyn, (1998) revealed that the customer determines the quality, much of what is expected if given is deemed to be a quality service but if they fall short then the customer is left wanting and therefore not satisfied. The study also revealed those businesses that have little or no knowledge about an industry they tend to offer what they feel is acceptable but most of it falls short of the expected standard. The customer is the focal point of any business establishment and without understanding what he/she expects is a direct spell for trouble.

Employee Empowerment and Performance

People at all levels are the essence of an organization and their full involvement enables their abilities to be used for the organization's benefit. Involving people and their abilities at all levels can only bring benefit to the organization. Motivating people, holding them accountable for their own performance and involving them in decision making inspires innovation and creativity. Employee involvement approaches can range from simple sharing of information or providing input on work-related issues and making suggestions to self-directed responsibilities such as

setting goals, making business decisions and solving problems, often in cross-functional teams (James and Williams, 2008, Goetsch, et al, 2013).

Subburaj (2005) asserts that the abilities of employees should be improved and harnessed only through training. Since the workforce is constantly changing, these education programs must be continued for as long as an organization exists. The well trained and well informed staff member is mostly relevant for the introduction of TQM. Employees are the strength of the organisation and thus the prime contributors to its success. When an organisation wants to expand its business or increase its profits, only the employees can make it happen. The only expandable resources in the organisation are the employees. Any improvement will happen only because of the employees.

Aryee and Chen (2006) pointed out, that empowerment of employees leads to cognitions of self-determination at work and empowered employees feel their work more meaningful. It can also improve engagement of task achievement. Equally, empowered employees can be more efficient compared to non-empowered ones in terms of solving customer's problem (Hancer & George 2003). Empowered employees have a feeling of belongingness and ownership which in turn decreases employee turnover. Therefore empowered employees can be an important source of creating new ideas for customer service improvement. Due to the direct contact with customers, these employees have better understanding of customer problems, needs and wishes. Thus, employees can easily share such information with management to facilitate improvements (Grönroos, 2001). In addition Tari and Sabater (2006) suggest that empowerment helps to improve employee's performance that leads to better service delivery

Performance of Public Universities

Firms that focus on improving the quality of their product and processes leads to improve revenues and reduction of costs. So the financial performance of a firm as a result of quality initiatives can be measured by the increase in the level of sales, revenue produced, and level of cost performance, the return on investment and assets and by the increase in market share (Fotopoulos et al , 2009). Psomas and Kafetzopoulos (2012) argue that performance contributes to providing the competitive advantage to the firms in cut-throat competition in the market. The company takes advantage over its competitors and performs better in business. Their study revealed that ISO certified manufacturing firms significantly outperformed the non-certified ones with regard to product quality, firm performance, operational, market and financial performance.

Wilson and Collier (2000) showed how process management and information management, have significant and positive direct effects on financial performance as defined by market share, market share growth, Return On Investment and Return On Investment growth, Return On Sales and Return On Sales growth, and customer satisfaction. Douglas and Judge (2001) showed how the extent to which TQM practices are implemented is positively and significantly related to

perceived financial performance as defined by growth in earnings, growth in revenue, changes in market share, return on assets, and long run level of profitability.

Parzinger and Nath (2000) examined the link between TQM and software quality and noted that TQM implementation improves quality and performance therefore increasing customer satisfaction. Hasan and Kerr (2003) studied the relationship between TQM practices and organization performance in service organizations and discovered that TQM practices like top-management commitment; employee involvement; training; supplier quality; quality costs; service design; quality techniques, benchmarking; and customer satisfaction leads to higher productivity and quality performance. Prajogo and Brown (2004) noted in their study of Australian organizations that the relationship between TQM practices and quality performance, indicated a strong and positive linkage.

Samson and Terziovski (1999) conducted a study and realized that the relationship between TQM practice and organizational performance is significant in a cross-sectional sense and thus a significant proportion of variance in performance. Categories of leadership, management of people and customer focus are the strongest significant predictors of operational performance. Allen and Kilmann (2001) adds that higher levels of company performance are significantly correlated with greater use of TQM practices. Chin and Choi (2003) conducted a study on the impact of ISO and the firm's performance established that the most important factor was the way the certification is perceived by top management, as this is classified as the most influential factor for implementing the standard. If certification is perceived positively, top management will provide full support to it. After all, the top management acts as a driver in the implementation of quality management systems through the provision of the necessary resources, which are major factors in continuous improvement through the creation of values, goals and systems to satisfy customer expectations and improve the organization's performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Research design refers to the method used to carry out a research. Orodho (2003) defines a research design as the scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems. Research design is an understanding of conditions for collections and analysis of data in a way that combines their relationships with the research to the economy of procedures. This study adopted a descriptive case study design because it answers questions concerning current status of the subjects in the study. Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) define descriptive research as a process of collecting data to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject in the study. According to (Cooper & Schindler, 2006), descriptive case study discover and measures cause and effects relationships among variables. This design was chosen as it provided the

researcher with a deep understanding of events being studied, and was helpful in getting firsthand information of the study.

The Target Population

A target population contains members of a group that a researcher is interested in studying. According to Ngechu (2004), a population is a well defined or set of people, services, elements, group of things or households that are being investigated. The target population consisted of selected key respondents from the selected public universities namely Kenyatta University, University of Nairobi, Moi University and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology. The universities were selected due to being among the top public universities and with considerable student numbers in the country. The target population was the academic staffs who were considered as very critical in service delivery to the major customers who are the students totaled to 4,017.

Sampling Design

From the above population of 4,017 a sample of 10% was selected on the population using stratified random sampling, hence the sample size was 402. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), a representative sample is one that is at least 10% of the population of interest. Therefore the sample of 10% was a representative sample. The selected population is mutually exclusive and was expected to give answers that were unique to the topic of the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected mainly by use of questionnaire method. This method of data collection ensures a high response rate and accurate sampling. The questionnaire used the Likert scale format of the '*strongly agree...strongly disagree*' style. The Likert scales tend to perform well when it comes to a reliable, ordering of people with regard to a particular subject (Oppenheim, 2001). Questions were directed towards the variables as brought out in the conceptual framework. The questionnaire used both open ended and closed ended questions.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics has an advantage to the researcher because it allows a researcher to organize information in an effective way and also allows information to be reduced to an understandable form. The presentation methods statistics to be used included frequency distributions, pie charts, bar graphs and histograms (Nachmias and Nachmias, 2006). There was the use of the Microsoft Excel and SPSS softwares to aid in the analysis. Reliability of the questionnaire was censured by carefully structuring of the questions and confirming the layout. In addition, test retest was performed on

the questionnaires to confirm the consistency of the feedback. The researcher conducted a multiple regression analysis to establish relationship between the variables of the study. The equation of the regression model is indicated below:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + e$$

Where: Y= Performance; X₁= Top Management Commitment; X₂= Stakeholder Involvement; X₃= Customer Orientation; X₄= Employee Empowerment; B₀= constant; β₁, β₂, β₃, β₄ = are regression coefficients to be estimated; e= stochastic term

RESEARCH RESULTS

Performance

The study revealed that majority of the respondents 83% felt that performance of their universities had improved as a result of putting in place ISO certification. The study established that ISO Systems approach has led to stronger resource generating capabilities since the mean was 4.25 with standard deviation of 0.437. The study established that whether student enrollment has increased due to efficient systems as the mean were 4.23 with standard deviation of 1.026. The study also established that profitability of the university has improved due to the introduction of ISO Principles for the mean was 4.07 with standard deviation of 1.120.

Top Management Commitment

The study revealed the top management of the selected university institutions is committed towards the principles laid out by the ISO QMS Standards as supported by 83% of the respondents. The study established that the QMS is everybody's business in the organization as the mean was 4.15 with standard deviation of 0.557. The study established that the management support to service delivery is felt at levels of the organization since the mean was 3.66 with standard deviation of 0.472.

Stakeholder Involvement

The study found out that stakeholder analysis, identification and management is a central point of orientations of the universities in Kenya. The study found out that stakeholder participation is key to the performance of the University for the mean was 4.17 with standard deviation of 0.494. The study revealed that stakeholders are consulted and their views are taken into account since the mean was 4.16 with standard deviation of 0.373. The study found out that there is involvement of relevant issues from all stakeholders in the formulation of the strategy to ensure it's all inclusive as the mean was 4.16 with standard deviation of 0.688.

Customer Orientation

The study found out that proactive customer orientation contributes towards performance of the university institutions as supported by 83% of the respondents. The study revealed that customer surveys are conducted on a regular basis since the mean was 4.23 with standard deviation of 0.848. The study revealed that customer complaints have reduced since the introduction of ISO QMS system at the University as supported by a mean of 3.92 and standard deviation of 0.959.

Employee Empowerment

The study found out that learning institutions provide the most important things that make employees give high quality services as supported by 83% of the respondents. The study established that employee empowerment affects the performance of the University as the mean was 4.34 with standard deviation of 0.829. The study found out that employees perform tasks that are important to them personally for the mean was 4.24 with standard deviation of 0.429. The findings of the study indicated that employees have the feeling that they can contribute towards achieving the goal/success of the company while performing their job since the mean was 4.05 with standard deviation of 0.581.

From the findings of regression analysis, the study established that for top management commitment, the p value was 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and therefore top management was significant affecting performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya. With regard to stakeholder involvement, the p value was 0.197 and there it was statistically insignificant in affecting performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya. In respect to customer orientation, the p value was 0.000 and therefore customer orientation was significant in affecting performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya. On employee empowerment, the p value was 0.000 and therefore employee empowerment was significant in affecting performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The researcher conducted multiple regression analysis to establish the relationship between Quality Management Practices on the performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya. The findings are indicated in subsequent sections.

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.877 ^a	.770	.766	.67408

The Table above indicates the model summary. From the findings, R was 0.877, R square was 0.770 and adjusted R squared was 0.766. An R square of 0.766 implies that 76.6% of changes in performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya is explained by the independent variables of the study. There is however other factors not covered within the model that accounts for the rest 23.4%. An R of 0.877 on the other hand signifies strong positive correlation between the variables of the study.

Table 2: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	447.754	4	111.938	246.353	.000 ^b
Residual	134.043	295	.454		
Total	581.797	299			

From the ANOVA Table 4.10 above, the value of F calculated is 246.353 while F critical (from F Tables) is 2.402. Since the value of F calculated is greater than F critical ($246.353 > 2.402$) this signifies that the overall regression model was significant and therefore a reliable predictor of the study findings. In terms of p values, the study indicated 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and therefore statistically significant.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized t Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	4.310	.893		4.828 .000
Top Management Commitment	1.400	.058	.976	24.303 .000
Stakeholder Involvement	.048	.037	.047	1.293 .197
Customer Orientation	.856	.033	.929	26.111 .000
Employee Empowerment	.270	.037	.231	7.380 .000

The resultant regression equation becomes:

$$Y=4.310+1.4X_1+0.048X_2+0.856X_3+0.270X_4$$

Where: Y is Performance; β_1 ; β_2 ; β_3 and β_4 represents regression coefficient and X_1 , X_2 , X_3 and X_4 represents top management commitment, stakeholder involvement, and customer orientation and employee empowerment respectively.

This implies that when all the variables of the study were to be held constant, performance of universities in Kenya would be at 4.310. A unit increase in top management commitment while other factors held constant would increase performance of ISO Certified universities in Kenya by 1.4. A unit increase in stakeholder involvement holding other factors constant would increase performance of ISO Certified Universities by 0.048. A unit increase in customer orientation

while holding other variables constant would increase performance of ISO Certified Universities by 0.856. A unit change in Employee empowerment with other factors held constant would affect performance of ISO Certified universities in Kenya by 0.270.

In view of the significance at 0.05 levels, the study documents the significance of each individual variable. For top management commitment, the p value was 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and therefore top management was significant affecting performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya. According to Olorunniwo and Udo (2002), the magnitude of a successful project depends on the level of top management committed.

With regard to stakeholder involvement, the p value was 0.197 and there it was statistically insignificant in affecting performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya. In respect to customer orientation, the p value was 0.000 and therefore customer orientation was significant in affecting performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya. This finding concurs with Augustyn, (1998) who customer is the focal point of any business establishment and without understanding what he/she expects is a direct spell for trouble.

On employee empowerment, the p value was 0.000 and therefore employee empowerment was significant in affecting performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya. The finding is in line with Grönroos (2001) who held that due to the direct contact with customers, these employees have better understanding of customer problems, needs and wishes. Thus, employees can easily share such information with management to facilitate improvements. Tari and Sabater (2006) further suggest that empowerment helps to improve employee's performance that leads to better service delivery.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that top management commitment significantly affects performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya. The top management of the selected university institutions is committed towards the principles laid out by the ISO QMS Standards. The QMS is everybody's business in the organization. The management support to service delivery is felt at levels of the organization.

Stakeholder involvement has insignificant effect on performance of ISO Certified public universities in Kenya. Stakeholder participation is key to the performance of the University. The stakeholders are consulted and their views are taken into account. There is involvement of relevant issues from all stakeholders in the formulation of the strategy to ensure it's all inclusive.

Customer orientation has significant effect on performance of ISO Certified Public Universities in Kenya. Customer surveys are conducted on a regular basis. Customer complaints have reduced since the introduction of ISO QMS system at the University.

Employee empowerment significantly affects performance of ISO Certified public universities in Kenya. The learning institutions provide the most important things that make employees give high quality services. Employee empowerment affects the performance of the University. Employees perform tasks that are important to them personally. Employees have the feeling that they can contribute towards achieving the goal/success of the company while performing their job.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the top management of all Universities that are ISO Certified in Kenya should remain committed towards the principles indicated in the ISO QMS Standards. ISO Certified public universities in Kenya should realize that the QMS is everybody's business within the institution.

All stakeholders of ISO Certified universities in Kenya should ensure that actively be involved throughout the quality processes in the organization. There is need to widely consult for the views of the stakeholders on aspects of quality within the institutions of higher learning.

The ministry of higher education and other donors should sponsor customer surveys among public universities on regular basis.

The study recommends that public ISO Certified universities in Kenya ought to put in place sound employee empowerment strategies for example training of staff on quality.

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