

# **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION IN SELECTED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Successful change implementation is important to any organization either public or private. Change is inevitable and organizations in the modern world are operating under ever changing demands. It is important for organization to implement change initiatives successfully and effectively to achieve organizational goals. Inability to implement changes in public universities has not only resulted to inefficiency and ineffectiveness in service delivery but also contributed lecturer and student strikes. However, based on the fact that universities are institutions of higher learning dedicated to offer quality services, little has been done by previous researchers to establish the link between strategic management practices and change implementation thus formed the basis of the study. The study sought to investigate strategic management practices and change implementation in public universities in Kenya. The research objectives that guided that study were to determine the effects of strategic leadership, organizational culture and employee empowerment on change implementation in public universities in Kenya. The study was anchored on Kurt Lewin theory and McKinsey 7S Model. The study employed a descriptive research design to investigate the problem under investigation. The target population comprised of 309 employees of 5 selected universities which included Karatina University, University of Embu, Kirinyaga University, Chuka University and Machakos University. The sample size of the population constituted of 174 respondents

selected from teaching and non-teaching staff of 5 universities selected in the study. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires with open and closed ended questions. Validity of the instrument was tested using strategic management consultants and lecturers of Kenyatta University while reliability was tested using Cronbach Alpha coefficients of 0.7 and above. Quantitative data was analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 24). Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis method where key themes were analyzed and deductive conclusions were made based on the principles of theories adopted. Correlation and regression analysis method were conducted to determine the statistical relationship between variables of the study. The analyzed data was presented descriptively using mean scores, standard deviation and percentages. Subsequently the analyzed data was presented in form of tables in order to inform managerial, policy and academic decisions. The study revealed that there exist a significant positive relationship between strategic drivers and change implementation in public universities in Kenya. The study concludes that for effective competitiveness, public universities should strive to embrace strategic management practices such as employee empowerment, strategic leadership and organizational culture. The study recommends that public universities should seek to sponsor teaching and non-teaching staff, delegate responsibility, appoint employees on administrative posts based on management experience and encourage teamwork and communication by

reorganizing the structures thus enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.

**Key Words:** *strategic management practices, change implementation, selected public universities, Kenya*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Turbulent business environment, influence of technology, globalization, change of customer demands and stiff competition are aspects that triggers organizations to embark on strategic management practices (Manktelow & Carlson, 2014). Without effective strategies in an organization, change implementation in private and public organizations is viewed to be a challenging task (Kariel, 2016). Strategic management practices are thought to be drivers of change implementation even though limited studies have been conducted to examine the link between strategic management and change implementation in the university context (Rothermel & Lamarsh, 2012).

In today's turbulent environment, many organizations in developed countries such China, United States, Australia and Vietnam and are operating under ever changing demands (Imran, Rehman, Aslam, & Bilal, 2016). Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2013) observed that manufacturing firms in Singapore was finding it difficult to cope in a turbulent business environment without strategic management approaches. Imran, Rehman, Aslam and Bila (2016) in Finland observed that with the rise of the entire economy, technological advancements, high demands from the society, and the need to provide more social services with constrained resources.

Regionally, Aarons, Ehrhart, Farahnak and Hurlburt (2015) in India observed that organizational desire to implement change is accelerated by firm rivalry, globalization, client changing demands and emergence of new technologies. Further, Karuhanga, (2015) in Uganda observed that strategy implementation was thought to be influenced by strategic competencies of leaderships. Similarly, Alshaher (2013) in Somalia observed that most of the private and public organizations were incapable of implementing new changes due to structural inertia and failure to articulate strategic planning.

Locally, Mathooko and Ogutu (2014) assert that change in higher institutions of learning in Kenya is dragging due to lack of strategic approach and dedicated leaders. Similarly, Ofori and Atiogbe (2012) ascertain that market dynamics have made it difficult for higher institutions of learning to implement new policies in order to compete in the global education sector. Ndunda (2017) acknowledges that public universities in Kenya were underperforming due to challenges of implementing new changes. Further, Njega and Gachunga (2016) found out that with increased student enrolment in public universities, little was done by the top leaderships to embrace the new changes. Issues of capacity development, physical infrastructure, research and development, inconsistencies in service delivery are among the critical factors that have triggered public universities to embark on strategic practices.

The emergence of new economies has made organizations to establish ways for doing things by developing strategies that will help them embrace the concept of change (Van der Voet, 2014). Many organizations worldwide are recognizing the importance of accepting the aspect of change and also realizing that if they fail to implement change they will become extinct or irrelevant (Alshaher, 2013). Increasing demand for higher education and expectations of quality work and high performance have exerted extreme pressure on management and employees in organizations, depicting change as a continuous activity. Change remains difficult to implement in organizations. Majority of change initiatives in organizations have failed leading to low success rate in change implementation (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van De Ven, 2013).

Choosing the correct point is not a simple assignment, and there is no single right response for all organization (Bakar, Tufail, Yusof & Virgiyanti, 2011). Such components as the way of the organization's financial stability, the general population in the organization, the current culture, administration, strategies, structures to give some examples, have differential impact on how much change an organization needs and on how it effectively executes the change (Cuganesan, Dunford & Palmer, 2012). Regularly the inability to effectively implement change is an after effect of the inability to create shared understanding or significance among authoritative individuals required in the change (Jansson, 2013).

Based on the fact that strategic management practices influences change implementation in the organization, it is observed that there is no clear understanding on the link between strategic management practices and change implementation thus formed the basis of the study. To uncover research gaps in the in this area of study, the study sought to utilize an expanded framework to establish the effect of each independent variable on the dependent.

### **Strategic Management Practices**

Strategic management practices are thought to be initiatives that organizations puts in place and have the capacity to influence change implementation in any given system. The selected strategic management practices that are conceptualized to influence change in the university context includes strategic leadership, organizational culture and employee empowerment. (Bakar, Tufail, Yusof, & Virgiyanti, 2011). Effective change implementation can be measured using employee motivation, customer satisfaction and enhanced system efficiency and effectiveness (Achitsa, 2014).

Melchorita (2013) posits that strategic leadership is a strategic moves of attaining organizational excellence. The ability of managers to have unique qualities to influence employees will result to improved organizational productivity in the changing business environment. Using a combination of management styles like democratic, bureaucratic, free style, management by objectives and management by walking around will facilitate change implementation in an organizations (Maina, 2012).

According to Rumsey (2013), strategic leadership is concerned with what effective top leaders actually do to produce a strategy-focused organization. Effective leaders are fit for reframing the thinking of those whom they control, empowering them to see that critical changes are basic as well as achievable (Sethuraman and Suresh, 2014). Strategic leadership is presumed to have an effect on individuals and in addition on groups, and generally even on the whole organization (Muscalu, 2014). Leadership produces change by outlining all necessary direction, inspiring, aligning individuals and motivating them to adopt change (Adair, 2012). To some extent, leadership is thought to be a naturally multilevel phenomenon (Aarons, Ehrhart, Farahnak & Hurlburt, 2015).

Effective implementation of change initiatives relies on facilitated leadership being ordered from leaders living within various organizational levels (Mathooko & Ogutu, 2014). The role and nature of leadership have an imperative influence in change implementation. Leaders need to move, offer, assemble, empower and explore successfully to get change going, however, leadership has progressively been viewed as a team and in addition as an individual. Leaders require clarity of vision and qualities, the capacity to impart these by what they say and do, and emotional resilience (Nanjundeswaras & Swamy, 2014).

Organizational culture involves beliefs, practices, unwritten traditions that ensure decision making is effective in regard to structure, basic leadership and power (Bakar, Tufail, Yusof, & Virgiyanti, 2011). By extension, Mathooko and Ogutu (2014) ascertain that organizational culture are deep rooted intangible norms and values displayed by employees of an organization through their way of conduct in the formal and informal context. Organization with employees with a common mental models such as beliefs performs effectively compared workers with different beliefs. Achievement of organizational goals is only determined employee attitude to management and strategies. Change resistance can be as a result of lack of understanding, miscommunication, structural inertia and lack of participatory management approach (Musyoka, 2011).

Bijuna, Mohan and Sequeira (2016) assert that employee empowerment is an organized increase from the know-how skills and sensations needed for staff members to execute efficiently in the offered process, as well as, to operate in underling situation. Moreover, it also enhances the capabilities of panel of employees in very effective way by motivating them and transforming them in to well organize and well-mannered, that ultimately affects the performance of the organization (Kinyanjui & Juma, 2014).

Odongo and Owuor (2015) revealed that employee training is considered as the process of improving the existing knowledge, exposure and general performance abilities in an individual. Training is an organized increase of the know-how skills and sensations needed for staff members to execute efficiently in the offered process, as well as, to operate in underling situation. Flavián and Guinalfú (2015) argue that satisfied employees are likely to adapt to

changes more easily compared to dissatisfied workers. Institutionalization and operationalization of strategy in any organization is based on empowering staff with relevant skills to perform the task with less difficulty (Mbaka & Mugambi, 2014).

Employee empowerment assumes a dynamic part in guaranteeing that people take an interest completely in the change implementation (Rothermel & LaMarsh, 2012). Organizations are planned in a way to utilize the energy and capacity of employees keeping in mind the end goal to finish their job and to accomplish their objectives. If the supervisors or managers can build the capacities of the employees, organizations will actually execute change activities. One of the primary standards of change implementation in organizations is the utilization of cooperation-empowerment model (Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012).

### **Change Implementation**

Change is regarded as a continuous process that is concerned with renewing of institutions' direction, structure and capabilities to achieve the ever changing needs of both external and internal consumers (Waldersee & Griffiths, 2004). Change can be viewed as feature that organizations cannot avoid because of its continued presence in the organizational life. Change implementation refers to the process of developing programs to create a series of organizational activities, procedures for daily operations and budgets to allocate resources. The means in which change is implemented and appropriateness of the method adopted, have significant impacts on how individuals experience change initiatives and perception of the end result (Raineri, 2011).

Individuals in charge of change execution really need learning and awareness of a few significant issues required in accomplishing the proposed change (Kuyvenhoven & Buss, 2011). On the fact that organizations are to effectively achieve their development targets, the top management ought to build up a structure of contemplating change activities and understanding the imperative issues related to change implementation (Mathooko & Ogutu, 2014). Change implementation is a key action in organizations, for example, universities which need to exploit the current or new opportunities and to overcome the difficulties hindering them from accomplishing a more noteworthy level of achievement in their set objectives.

### **Public Universities in Kenya**

A public university is an institution of higher education which is enacted by the Act of Parliament (The Universities Act Cap 210 B). Universities are mandated to provide research, training and grant academic certificates, diplomas, undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees among other related services (CUE, 2016). The introduction and growth of Higher Education was first done in 1961. During this time, Royal College situated in Nairobi was promoted to University College status.

The collaboration between the University College and University of London was significant to facilitate students to pursue degrees offered at the University of London. The establishment of the University of East Africa was done in 1963, when Kenya was attaining independence from Britain. During this period of independence, the Royal College was promoted to University College, Nairobi (Tarus, Gichoya, & Muumbo, 2015).

The University of East Africa had other constituent colleges which included the Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania and Makerere University in Uganda. Taking after the independence, the Kenyan government apportioned heavy budget to the education sector with the purpose of sufficiently growing labor base to encourage national development and reduce poverty and lack of education. Notwithstanding, the Kenyan education sector expanded rapidly because of high demand for education (Mathooko & Ogutu, 2014).

The advancement and expansion of universities in Kenya can be comprehended in terms of the education system in the nation and the expansion popular for training at all levels because of rapid growth in population (Commission for University Education, 2016). Currently in Kenya there are 31 public and 22 private local universities and university colleges totaling 53 universities (CUE, 2016). However, despite that the annual budgetary allocation to implement various projects initiated, it is observed that yet public universities in Kenya are underperforming in terms of change implementation.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Despite annual budget allocation to public universities in Kenya, newly initiated policies are not executed effectively thus calling concerns from different stakeholders such as students, parents and quality assurance regulatory authorities such as Commission for University Education (Kimathi & Henry, 2014). With increased demand of university education, most of the public universities are experiencing challenges of coping with the new regulations intended to enhance customer service delivery (Gudo, Olel & Oanda, 2011). Change is conceptualized to be continuous in any competitive organization operating in the changing business environment (Karuhanga, 2015). Most of the public and private organizations which have managed to implement change not only experience systemic resistance but also individual resistance (Mathooko & Ogutu, 2014). Change implementation in public universities in Kenya is viewed to be a challenging task even though limited studies have been conducted trying to examine the link between strategic management and change implementation. Despite various concerns which have been raised by students, parents and quality regulatory authorities such as Commission for University Education, change implementation in public universities in Kenya has remained a challenging task that calls for a strategic management approaches to solve the problem (Mathooko & Ogutu, 2014). Due to the inability of public universities to implement changes, lecturer and student strikes have resulted to deteriorating performance of public universities in terms of service delivery (Ndunda, 2017). Further, some of the academic programs offered seem

not to be relevant in world of competition, modernized, industrialized and globalized economies that demand graduates with diverse competencies to perform. Commission for University Education (2016) ascertains that public universities are dragging behind in implementing the quality regulations proposed such as capacity development, system automation, review of the curriculum and investment in infrastructural facilities to enhance service delivery. A study by Ndunda (2017) revealed that here exist a significant positive relationship between strategy communication, organizational leadership, employee participation, and resource allocation and strategy implementation. Njega and Gachunga (2016) established that there exist a statistical effect between communication, leadership, planning and execution strategies influences university performance. Moreover, Mucai (2016) found out that there exist a significant difference between reward management, resource allocation and institutional policies and implementation of strategic management plans by technical training institutes. Further, Agili and Okibo (2015) observed that change leadership and organizational culture influences implementation of change in public universities in Kenya. Mwangi (2006) found out that there exist a difference between strategic management practices and performance of universities in Kenya. It is observed from the findings of the studies that there are controversial findings and absence of a framework to show the link between strategic management practices of this study on the change implementation in public universities in Kenya creating conceptual gaps. Further, the studies conducted examined variables of the study partially and in isolation and were confined to different countries and sectors thus contextual gaps. Moreover, constraints of operationalizing and contextualizing theories of adopted by the previous studies formed theoretical research gaps. In addition, inconsistencies of research results caused by research design, sample size, research instruments and data analysis methods created methodological research gaps. Based on these research gaps, it is on this premise the study sought to adopt an expanded framework to investigate the effect of strategic management practices on change implementation in public universities in Kenya.

## **GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

The general objective of the study was to investigate the effect of strategic management practices on change implementation in public universities in Kenya.

## **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

1. To establish the effect of strategic leadership on change implementation in public universities in Kenya.
2. To determine the influence of organizational culture on change implementation in public Universities
3. To examine the effect of employee empowerment on change implementation in public universities in Kenya.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **Kurt Lewis Change Management Theory**

This model was established by Kurt Lewin in 1950s. The theory proposed that the majority of people tend to prefer and operate within certain zones of safety (Sarayreh, Khudair, & Barakat, 2013). The three stages proposed by Kurt Lewin for effective implementation of reforms in any organization were unfreezing, transition and refreezing (Kariel, 2016). First, managers must unfreeze or disrupt any comfort zone that may tend to support the status quo. Managers should discourage old practices among workers and replace them with new practices for effective implementation of reforms (Kariel, 2016). Second, managers should ensure that appropriate policies and initiatives are implemented for the organization to realize transition from old state to the new state. Leaders should manager the change process and identify obstacles that hinder the reform process and suggest appropriate measure to be taken. Third, managers should refreeze or reinforce new behaviours after implementation of reforms (Rajala, Ruokonen & Ruismäki, 2012).

Sarayreh et al. (2013) advocate that managers should encourage new reforms by training workers, delegating, promoting, rewarding and recognizing employee efforts towards implementation of reforms. The theory argues that all employees should comprehend what is expected of them correctly during any reform process and keeps a strong focal point in the area of communication, accountability and transparency (Cummings, Bridgman, & Brown, 2016). The fundamental aspects employees should keep in mind when going through any form of an organizational reform process is that they should be flexible to accept new practices and be part of the reform process (Pearce & Robinson, 2011).

Further, Rajala et al. (2013) posit that to achieve any strategic objectives, changes are necessary for private and public entities in the competitive business sectors. Effective communication between the top level managers and lower level employees promote implementation of reforms in any organization. Interaction in the planning process for reforms is essential as well as it gives an opportunity to minimize change resistance in the system. For systemic and individual acceptance of reforms, employees are the key determinants of any successful change (Burnes & Cooke, 2013).

The theory was applicable in this study based on the premise that public universities are linkely to implent changes if they can effectively embrace or embark on adopting appropriate strategic management practices such as employee empowerment, strategic leadership and organizational cuslture. In the world of competition, public universities like eny commercial entity have to embrace strategic practices in order to enhance their competitiveness in service delivery.

## **McKinsey 7S Theory**

The 7S Model was created in 1980 by the consulting entity, McKinsey and Company (Manktelow & Carlson, 2014). The McKinsey 7S Framework has been extensively applied in literature despite constraints of operationalizing and contextualizing the elements of the model from context to context. The seven variables of the model which include skills, shared values, staff, systems, structure, strategy, and style and thought to influence change implementation (Rajala, Ruokonen & Ruismäki, 2012). This theory demonstrates that successful change execution should be adjusted to the seven components inside the organization setting. For organizations to perform better, these seven factors ought to be adjusted and mutually reinforced (Tarus, Gichoya & Muumbo, 2015).

Rothermel and Lamarsh (2012) contend that this model can be used to identify areas that need realignment in order to improve organizational performance, or to maintain high performance amid different change initiatives. Whatever the sort of change, for instance, change of leadership, new procedures, organizational merger, restructuring, the model can be utilized to perceive how the organization segments interrelate with each other and ensure that the more broad effect of changes made in one sector is put into consideration (Raineri, 2011). Structure of the organization is one of the key determinants of effective change it promotes communication and continuous feedback to key stakeholders (Lee & Yang, 2011). Systems are the day by day activities that staffs participate into complete the work. Shared qualities are the core values of the organization that can be found in the general work ethics and corporate culture (Ofori & Atiogbe 2012). Style identifies with the leadership style embraced. Staff is the employees and their general capacities. Skills are the abilities of the staff working for the organization (Noble & Smith, 2015).

The 7S system can be used in circumstances whereby there is a requirement for realignment keeping in mind the end goal to enhance organization performance and to determine the best approach to implement the proposed change initiative (Alshaher, 2013). This theory provides insights on the steps that public universities can adopt to implement change with minimal difficulty. The seven levers relate with the variables under the study that influence effective change implementation in public universities. The theory views implementation of change in public universities as a function of strategic leadership, employee training and organizational culture.

## **Dynamic Capabilities Theory**

The dynamic-capabilities theory was established by Teece et al. in 1997. The theory is an extension of the resource-based theory of the firm. It examines how firms integrate, build, and reconfigure their internal and external firm-specific competencies into new competencies that match their turbulent environment (Sanchez & Cralle, 2012). The theory assumes that firms with

greater dynamic capabilities will outperform those with smaller dynamic capabilities (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). The theory depicts that firms can use strategic management practices such as leadership to create and sustain a competitive advantage over other firms.

Hitt, Keats and Marie (2012) argue that capabilities are a collection of high-level, learned, patterned, repetitious behaviors that an organization can perform better relative to its competition. The aim of the theory is to understand how firms are called zero-level capabilities, as they refer to how an organization earns a living by continuing to sell the same product, on the same scale, to the same customers (Rothermel & LaMarsh, 2012). Dynamic capabilities are called first-order capabilities because they refer to intentionally changing the product, the production process, the scale, or the markets served by a firm (Sifuna, 2012),

The resource base of an organization includes its physical, human, and organizational assets. Dynamic capabilities are learned and stable patterns of behavior through which a firm systematically generates and modifies its way of doing things, so that it can become more effective (Scott, 2014). Yusufu (2013) suggests that an organization has dynamic capabilities when it can integrate, build, and reconfigure its internal and external firm-specific capabilities in response to its changing environment. Whereas organizational capabilities have to do with efficient exploitation of existing resources, dynamic capabilities refer to efficient exploration and implementation of new opportunities (Kariel, 2016). A firm has a capability if it has some minimal ability to perform a task, regardless of whether or not that task is performed well or poorly. However, on average, firms have to use their capabilities in order to sustain their ability to use them (Nor et al, 2010). A dynamic capability is the capacity of an organization to purposefully create, extend, and modify its resource base.

The theory was applicable in the study because it sheds light on the ideology that public universities in Kenya can service delivery by implementing the new changes proposed by quality assurance authorities such as Commission for university education. The theory views change implementation as a function of employee empowerment, organization culture and strategic leadership. For effective change implementation, leaders should ensure that the vision and mission reflects service delivery charter policies. Further, participatory leadership style, delegation, promotion and trainings are all aspects that can enhance and facilitate change implementation in any competitive enterprises if effectively controlled.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

### **Strategic Leadership and Change Implementation**

Martindale (2011) established that strategic leadership entails the ability of leaders to institutionalize and conceptualize the formulated vision, mission, objectives and strategies. Strategic leader's eyes are always on the horizon, not just on the near at hand. The study pointed

out that strategic leaders influences the organization by aligning the systems, culture and structure to ensure consistency with the strategy. Influencing employees to voluntarily make decisions that enhance the organization is the most important part of strategic leadership. However, the study was limited to the single variable of the study but did not establish the relationship between strategic leadership and change implementation in the university context in Kenya.

Okibo and Agili (2015) revealed that there exist a positive correlation between strategic leadership and strategy implementation. The philosophy behind the practice of leadership is to use strategy in every act of decision making. A more thoughtful management approach can lead to greater success in the workplace if many factors are considered before action is implemented. However, the study was confined to strategy implementation and sought to establish the link between leadership and strategy implementation in selected public universities though not in State owned corporations.

Waititu (2016) noted that there exist a relationship between strategy implementation and performance of commercial banks in Nairobi County-Kenya. The study established that leadership commitment to the strategic direction of an organization is of paramount importance and therefore top management must not spare any effort to persuade, inspire, motivate and encourage employees in order to generate valuable ideas for effective strategy implementation. Gudo et al. (2011) point out that effective leaders implement change through articulating the vision, fostering acceptance of group goals, providing individualized support and intellectual stimulation and clarifying performance expectations. Strategic leaders re-think the situation rather than going through with a change. They make proactive rather than reactive measures. However, it was observed that study was limited to different variables such as communication systems, organization structure and culture though failed to focus on the integrated framework of the current study in the university context.

Ombui and Mwendu (2014) assert that success of any change initiative lies in the understanding of that change by visionary leaders. Change in any form, irrespective of how minor, will usually face opposition of some kind. Clearly when the decision to change is made, the change initiators will need to have a vision as to why it is required. Unless these visions are shared with the employees concerned, total acceptance is unlikely. To overcome this, change initiators can merge the change processes that include the 'wants' of employees as well as that of the organization. However, it was noted that the results of the study were limited to Cooperative banks of Kenya though not in the university context.

Achitsa (2013) studied leadership and management of strategic change at equity bank limited Kenya. This study sought to determine the role of leadership in the management of strategic change at Equity Bank Kenya Limited, with a view to enhancing the practice of leadership, performance and management of the bank and other organizations in Kenya. Sifuna (2012)

carried out a study which investigated the leadership and the challenges of academic freedom and autonomy in public universities in Kenya. The study found out that there are many challenges that are affecting public universities in Kenya today that need continuous change and innovation to the universities to cope effectively.

### **Organizational Culture and Change Implementation**

Aluko (2003) studied the influence of culture on organization performance in Textile Firms in Nigeria using qualitative and quantitative techniques with a sample size of 630 employees. The study found out that employees' beliefs and attitudes significantly affect organization performance. Riany (2012) investigated the impact of restructuring on organization performance of mobile phone service providers in Kenya using a causal research design and found out that organizational culture plays a critical role in organizational transformation.

Further, Karani and Bichange (2012) studied the effects total quality management implementation on business performance using descriptive survey research design on 60 Kenya Wildlife Service Employees. The study found out that 54% of the respondents agreed that organization culture affects change implementation. Awadh and Saad (2013) on the other hand studied the relationship between organizational culture and performance and found that there exist a statistical relationship between cultural dimensions such as norms and values and firm performance. The study concludes that solid organizational culture can be established by leaders with a futuristic view of the organization.

Mopeni, Sobi and Modi (2014) established that strategy implementation in any organization is determined by mental beliefs of workers. Employees should have shared vision that fosters objectives addressing the critical actions needed for adopting strategies and reaching long-term goals. Lack of team work and communication between top level managers and lower level employees resulted to 71% failure of strategy implementation by state corporations. Top management plays a key role in building a supportive system that ensures strategy implementation.

Rajala, Ruokonen and Ruismäki (2012) found out that well-developed systems can help to overcome the resistance of strategy implementation within an organization. Top management is involved in resolving the conflict by mediating between groups, and they are also involved in promoting project acceptance by building cooperation between various stakeholders. The study concluded that despite the fact that organizational culture influences performance, there exist a difference between culture and change implementation.

Rothermel and LaMarsh (2012) revealed that there exist a positive correlation between employee commitment, organization culture and organizational performance despite individual norms, customs and traditions. The study pointed out that rewards and punishment models can deliberately facilitate strategy execution. However, excessive control can make employees form

attitudes thus resistance to change. For effective change implementation, employees in the organization needs to have strong commitment established on the philosophy of trust and hard work.

Riwo, Njanja and Ochieng (2012) acknowledge that attitude and perception of employees towards the organizations can facilitate influence change implementation if effectively managed through management styles and motivation. Negative attitude of employees towards top leadership, policies and lack of appreciation and delegation in the systems can lead to conflicts thus failure to realize the intended goals. Further, when top management responds to employee challenges, change enforcers are motivated to ensure successful implementation of the new policies. The study concludes that organizational culture moderately influences performance of organizations.

Ofunya (2013) observed that organizational internal factors such culture, communication, leadership, and resource allocation and employee skill can influence change implementation in any competitive enterprise. The study further argues that top management is directly responsible in setting the norms, customs and traditions that should guide the behaviour of workers in the organization. Failure of top leadership to embrace good ethics can result to negative attitudes among workers thus decreased organization productivity in terms of profits, accountability and transparency.

### **Employee Empowerment and Change Implementation**

KIPPRA (2015) concur that there is a positive correlation between strategic interventions and quality service delivery. They noted that customer satisfaction was the centric point of quality management. The concept of quality was determined by all stakeholders of the organization. The study concluded that organizations were to satisfy their customers if only invested in modern technology, employee training, visionary leadership, team work, and product innovation and consumer research.

Kwamboka (2013) on the other hand argues that employee training is considered as the process of improving the existing skills, knowledge, exposure and abilities in an individual. Mutunga (2011) established that there exist a relationship between top management commitment, customer orientation, continuous improvement and change implementation. However, it was noted that the study focused on strategy implementation but not strategic drivers but not strategic management practices in the university context.

Mohamud, Mohamud and Mohamed (2015) established that integration of technology in the system and employees training were key determinants of organizational change institutions of learning. The study also established that employee resistance to accept new technology was a challenge to quality of education in Kenya. However, the study focused on performance firms in Somalia but not institutions of higher learning. Similarly, Tarus, Gichoya and Muumbo (2015)

found out that inadequate training and awareness were key challenge to effective implementation change in Kenyan universities. However the study focused challenges of e-learning but did not examine the link between variables of this study.

Igwe (2014) found out that change is viewed as an organization's response through employees' participation as a constraint. Virama (2013) ascertain that effective change management is viewed as the procedure that is utilized to enable every individual working in the organization to adjust effectively to the change initiatives. It is intended to move the employees' mentality from their present state to a new future state. However, the study was limited to manufacturing firms in South East Nigeria but not in the higher education sector.

Mwangi (2006) established that change management was a measure of organizational performance of public institutions of higher learning in Kenya. Employees' ability to adopt new change initiatives is attributed to organizational growth in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Further, Odongo and Owuor (2015) found out that workers are the only natural organisms who can change their attitudes and perceptions and transform systems from the old state to a new state that enhances organizational competitiveness in terms of service delivery.

Mulinge (2014) indicated that there is a positive relationship between employee training and organizational performance. Employee skill development is a tool that managers can utilize to service standards and their desired level of performance. The challenge for the organization is to design training options that give employees the information or skills they need and then measure whether those training options were effective in producing desired outcomes.

Ombui and Mwendu (2014) established that organization having much better skilled and creative employees can easily avoid wasteful investment to improve efficiency and performance of organization. Training is the most important part of human resource management function on the effective use of human resources. Training enhances knowledge and information about a certain field and also adds advantage to networking for efficiency and performance of employees.

Rothermel and Lamarsh (2012) revealed that the need to ensure total visible top management commitment to quality, embracing customer orientation in quality issues, adoption of process approach in implementation of quality practices and ensuring existence and maintenance of continuous improvement practices for products and services are some of the metrics that can be used to measure effectiveness of change implementation.

Kemboi (2016) suggests that the goal of employee training is to enhance the organization effectiveness. It also demands an influence on employee's performance, as well as in relation to organizational performance which is mediated by means of employee's performance. Training is a driver organizational development and competitiveness. In this competitive world, training is the key strategy to achieve the organizational objectives. Training benefits employees'

performance and organizational effectiveness. Attractive employee's performance is highly demanding in this competitive world for achieving the organizational performance

Moturi (2010) revealed that training employees promotes motivation among workers thus giving them the drive to accomplish their duties. Achievement in the workplace deals with the pride and sense of accomplishment employees feel about their jobs and employers. Training is one of non-financial rewards that drive and empower workers to work towards organizational strategic intent. In any organization, employee training promotes innovation and creativity, quality customer service delivery, good communication culture and high level of professionalism. Nevertheless, it was noted that the study was confined to government ministries in Kenya but not the higher institutions of learning.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

A research design is a plan or an approach that articulates principles of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data (Guest 2010). Fisher (2010) argues that descriptive research designs are effective in research based on the fact that it gives that opportunity to collect and analyze data without manipulation. The study employed a cross-sectional research design to investigate the effect of strategic management practices on change implementation in public universities in Kenya. The design helps the researcher to collect quantitative data and test the relationship between variables. It provided the opportunity to collect, analyze and interpret data without manipulation. Further, the design provides the opportunity to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data and make recommendations and conclusions on the findings of the study objectively. Moreover, the design provides the opportunity to discover new knowledge concerning the problem under investigation thus prediction and control of the problem under investigation (Crowther & Lancaster, 2012).

### **Target Population**

Target population is regarded as the total number of respondents, units or objects which the researcher targets and considers appropriate in obtaining data concerning an issue of concern (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The target population constituted 5 selected public universities in Kenya based on the fact that they are currently under pressure to initiate and implement new commission for university regulations. The universities included university of Embu, Karatina University, Machakos University, Chuka University and Kirinyaga University. The researcher used preliminary information to judge which universities could be holding relevant information. Further, from the 5 public universities selected, a total number of 309 respondents formed the target population of the study. The unit of analysis was public universities and unit of observation was employees of public universities who included.

## **Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

According to Fisher (2010), sample size refers to the number of items to be selected from the universe to constitute a sample. The size of sample should neither be excessively large, nor too small. It should be optimum. An optimum sample is one which fulfils the requirements of efficiency, representativeness, reliability and flexibility. According to Guest (2010), the aim of the research should be to recruit clearly identified individuals who could best address the purpose and goals of the research. Individuals who are invited to participate in a research must be able and willing to provide the desired information and must be representative of the population of interest. The respondents of the study were categorized into three groups or strata which included lecturers, departmental head and deans of schools. The study sample size of 174 respondents was determined using Isarel (2002) formular. Random sampling technique was used to select respondents from each strata. The formula adopted to determine the sample was of the form:  $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$ , where: n represents Sample Size, N represents Population Size and  $\alpha$  represents Confidence level (0.05). Using N that represents the total population of 309 who comprised of top managers, business unit managers and technical team, the sample size (n) was 174 employees of public universities in Kenya who comprised of lecturers, departmental head and deans of schools.

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{309}{1+309(0.05)^2} \\ &= 174 \text{ Employees} \end{aligned}$$

## **Data Collection and Methods**

Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires with both open and closed ended questions. Fisher (2010) avers that questionnaires are instruments used to capture data in a structures manner concerning a particular issue of concern. Guest (2012) point out that questionnaires are preferred instruments of data collection based on the fact that they help to capture data in a consistent manner and provides an opportunity to collect data without interference of the researcher. The questionnaire was administered and items were measured using a likert point scale of 5-1 where, 5represented strongly agree, 4 represents agree, 3 represented moderately agree, 2 represented disagree, 1 represented strongly disagree. The questionnaires were administered using through drop and pick later method. To analyze data on time, follow-ups were made using phone calls and clarity was sought on specific items.

## **Data Analysis and Presentation**

After data collection, cleaning to eliminate discrepancies was conducted and completeness of the information was confirmed before coding the information. Statistical Package for Social

Sciences (SPSS version 21) was applied to analyze data. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Multiple regression was considered appropriate because it provided an opportunity to test the strength of the relationship between variables. Multiple regression was conducted at 95% confidence level. The general multiple regression method adopted was of the form:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Where: Y represents change implementation in public universities,  $\beta_0$  = Y intercept,  $\beta_1$  to  $\beta_4$  represents regression coefficients,  $X_1$ ,  $X_2$  and  $X_3$  represents independent variables (strategic leadership, organizational culture and employee empowerment) while  $\varepsilon$  denotes other factors not included in the model.

The analyzed data was presented in form of tables and graphs.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS**

After data analysis, quantitative values were used to interpret the information according the study objectives. The study objectives that guided analysis and interpretation of data included determining the effect strategic leadership, organizational culture and employee empowerment on change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya. After analysis of information, the study concludes that there exist a significant relationship between strategic leadership, organizational culture and employee empowerment in relation to change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya.

### **Strategic Leadership**

The study established that there exist a significant positive relationship between strategic leadership and change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya. Although it was pointed out that most of the leaders in public universities in Kenya were not embracing participatory leadership to some extent. Further, it emerged that leaders were not in a position to develop globally competitive academic programs due to lack of benchmarking with best institutions of higher learning in the global market. In addition, evaluation of strategies implemented was a challenging task due to limited resources available. Achievement of particular goals was unrealistic to some employees due to lack of top leadership support.

### **Organizational Culture**

The study revealed that there exist a moderate significant relationship between organizational culture and change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya. However, the study revealed that most of the employees were not satisfied with procedures to higher and appoint employees in specific positions. Further, it was observed that top-down communication

embraced by majority of the public universities. Decisions were made from the top and communicated to lower levels. Moreover, it was noted that most of the universities did not give customer care a priority as they struggled to attract students to enroll in various programs offered by their respective universities.

### **Employee Empowerment**

The study established that there exit a positive significant relationship between employee empowerment and change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya. Although, the study revealed that to a larger extent most of the universities were not motivating workers effectively. To some extent employees were not willing to take more responsibilities as monetary rewards attached were not satisfactory. The criteria of appointment and promoting workers was also unclear. However, it was also noted that sponsoring workers to advance their studies was not given first priority by the top leadership as most of the workers sponsored themselves in pursuing doctoral studies in various universities.

### **INFERENTIAL STATISTICS**

To determine the statistical effect of each independent variables of the study on the dependent variable, Statistical Package of Social Sciences version 24 was applies to conduct correlation and multiple regression analysis of data.

### **Correlation Analysis**

Pearson’s product moment correlation analysis was conducted at 95% confidence interval and 5% confidence level 2-tailed to assess the statistical relationship between the each independent variable on change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Correlations Results Analysis**

	<b>Strategic Leadership</b>	<b>Organizational Culture</b>	<b>Employee Empowerment</b>	<b>Change Implementation</b>
<b>Strategic Leadership</b>	1			
<b>Organizational Culture</b>	.710	1		
<b>Employee Empowerment</b>	.693	.027	1	
<b>Change Implementation</b>	.0017	.799	.762	1
	.579	.560	.560	
	.0023	.000	.234	
**p< 0.05	.543	.340	.000	
	.000	.000		

Table 2 indicates that there was statistical correlation between strategic leadership (0.710), organizational culture (0.693) and employee empowerment (579). The positive relationship indicates that there was a correlation between the three variables of the study on change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya. The Significance values of the three independent variables were less than 5% (0.0012, 0.0017 and 0.0023) which indicated that a unit increase of strategic leadership, organizational culture and employee empowerment resulted to a unit increase in change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya.

### **Regression Analysis**

To determine the predictive power of each independent variable on change implementation in public universities in Kenya, multiple regression analysis was conducted to find out the linear relationship between all the independent variables and the dependent variable as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Regression Results Analysis**

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Beta Value</b>	<b>T- Value</b>	<b>Sig</b>
Change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya.	Strategic Leadership	0.456	3.277	0.002
Change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya.	Organizational Culture	0.244	3.217	0.000
Change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya.	Employee Empowerment	0.354	3.446	0.001

As shown on table 2, the multiple regression analysis indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between strategic leadership, organizational culture and employee empowerment and change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya. The significance values of the three independent variables were; strategic leadership ( $\beta=0.456$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), organizational culture ( $\beta=0.244$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and employee empowerment ( $\beta=0.354$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These results correspond with the view of Tarus, Gichoya & Muumbo (2015); Sifuna, D (2012) & Waititu (2016) who found out that there exist a significant positive relationship between employee training firm traditions and leadership and organization performance.

As illustrated in Table 3, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the consolidated variables of strategic management practices on change implementation of selected public universities in Kenya. As per the SPSS generated Table (4.7) above, the equation ( $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \epsilon$ ) became:  $Y= 1.349+ 0.787X_1+ 0.752X_2 + 0.665X_3$ . As depicted in Table 4.7, it is established that, taking all factors into account (strategic leadership, organizational culture and employee empowerment) constant at zero, change implementation will be 1.349.

**Table 3: Correlation Coefficient**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.349	1.2235		0.930	0.000
Strategic Leadership	0.787	0.3132	0.152	2.512	0.000
Organization Culture	0.752	0.3425	0.154	2.195	0.001
Employee Empowerment	0.645	0.2178	0.116	2.961	0.002

Further, the data findings analyzed also shows that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit increase in strategic leadership, organizational culture and employee empowerment will increase change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya by a magnitude of 0.787, 0.752 and 0.665. At 5% level of significance and 95% level of confidence, the significance values of all the three variables is less than the critical value of 0.05, indicating that there exist a significant positive relationship between independent variables (strategic leadership, organizational culture and employee empowerment) and dependent variable (change implementation in selected public universities in Kenya).

## CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that despite challenges associated with strategic leadership, organizational culture and employee empowerment in public selected public universities in Kenya, it is necessary for public universities to embrace strategic leadership practices such as institutionalization of the vision and mission among workers, motivating workers, setting achievable goals, evaluating strategies against set standards and analyzing the business environment for competitive advantage of public universities.

Further, organizational culture should be embraced through teamwork among workers, open communication culture, consultation, socialization, transparency and accountability. Organizing periodical events such as sports, conferences and customer service culture. In addition, employee empowerment should be embraced through sponsoring workers to advance their studies, conducting employee evaluations and providing feedback, paying reasonable wages and salaries for extra responsibilities, improvement of working environment and delegating responsibility to lower level employees.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study identified that most of the public universities did not involve workers in formulating key decisions. Therefore, the study recommends that top leadership of public universities should ensure employees are involved when making key decision in order to implement change

effectively. Further, the study noted that leaders did not have the capacity to evaluate strategies formulated. Therefore, the study recommends that universities should partner with consultancy firms in order to formulate, implement and evaluate strategies formulated. In addition, it was observed that limited resources of public universities hindered implementation of strategies formulated. Therefore, the study recommends that top leadership should rethink on diversifying into other businesses in order to raise adequate funds to support various program such as employing workers and investing in physical facilities.

Since the study revealed that organizational culture was embraced on a small extent, the study recommends that top leaders should establish frameworks that seek to orient newly recruited workers effectively. Further, the spirit of teamwork, socialization and consultation should be embraced through sponsorship of internal events such as sports and events organized by students and staffs. Moreover, bottom up communication should be encouraged by leaders through periodical meetings with workers and updates on the development of the university.

The study revealed that employee empowerment in public universities was not given the attention it deserved. Therefore, this study recommends that top leaders should prioritize compensating workers effectively with monetary and non-monetary rewards. Salary or wage review should be based on performance evaluations. By extension, providing opportunities of advancing studies through sponsorships is should be prioritized. Appointments should be done based on individual competencies such as management skills and knowledge rather than using academic qualifications only. In addition, Improving working environment and promoting workers based on performance should be given first priority for effective change implementation in public universities in Kenya.

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