Influence of Leadership in Strategy Implementation in State Corporations in Kenya: A Case of Local Authorities Provident Fund (Lapfund)

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Abstract

Strategy implementation has been described as an integral part of strategic management process in organisations in the modern competitive world. This is due to the fact that, it is through strategy implementation that written goals and plans are translated into results that could improve the organization’s position. Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine the influence of leadership in strategy implementation in state corporations in Kenya; a case of local authorities provident fund (LAPFUND). This study utilized descriptive survey design. A sample size of 63 respondents was adopted for the study. Simple random sampling was used since the sampled population had homogenous characteristics. This study used primary data which was collected through use of questionnaires. Data was collected, coded and analyzed using SPSS version 24.0. The findings were presented in form of frequency tables and percentages and discussions and interpretation of the same given. The results indicated that: majority of the respondents as indicated by a computed mean score of 4.1 and a percentage reorientation of 82% agreed that leadership influences strategy implementation in the state corporations significantly. Also, a computed mean score of 4.08 indicated that majority of the respondents agreed that leaders with idealized characteristics influence the implementation of proposed strategies at LAPFUND significantly. Majority of the respondents on the other hand strongly agreed that: Leaders with intellectual stimulation characteristics (indicated by a mean score of 4.2); Leaders with inspiration motivation characteristics (indicated by a mean score of 4.4); Leaders with individualized consideration characteristics (indicated by a mean score of 4.2); and Transformational style of leadership (as indicated by a mean score of 4.2) influence the implementation of the said strategies at LAPFUND significantly. The regressions analysis conducted showed that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit increase in the leadership would lead to a 0.682 increase in the scores of strategy implementation at LAPFUND. Based on the results, the study recommended that the strategic leaders should be equipped with modern leadership skills that bring every stakeholder on board for better strategies implementation. The Strategic leaders should also understand the organizational culture of their organizations, create an enabling organizational environment and structure, do better strategy communication and mobilize the required resources or strategy implementation effectively and efficiently. The study also recommended that the top managers must be willing to give energy and loyalty to the implementation process of the various strategies in the organization.

Key words: Strategy Implementation, Strategic Leadership, Organizations, LAPFUND

1. Introduction

Strategy implementation has been described as an integral part of strategic management process in organisations in the modern competitive world. This is due to the fact that, it is through strategy implementation that written goals and plans are translated into results that could improve the organization’s position (Chepkirui, 2015). Sheahan (2017) noted that the implementation of a strategy in an organization is the central point of converting the plans of performance into actual outputs of performance. Strategic implementation is a fundamental step in turning a company’s vision of a project into reality. Through a series of action-based phases and tasks, the implementation process maps out the life cycle of a project. Without strategic implementation, a project would not be able to get off the ground, since strategic implementation functions as a project’s blueprint. The implementation process identifies what tasks need to be completed, and when. Strategic implementation is action-based and uses a variety of tools to keep the project team on track (Chepkirui, 2015; Sheahan, 2017; Arooj A. et al., 2016).

However, evidence has indicated that a number of organisations have always come up with very wonderful strategic plans but transforming them into action by implementing them has always been a fail; leading to poor performance. The implementation process of strategies has not been put in practice by many managers in organisations despite very wonderful strategy plans (Aldehyyat, Khattab & Anchor, 2016). The failure to transform the strategic plans into actions has left organisations make losses; normally considered as one indicator of organisations performance for the profit oriented organisations while those organisations that are service oriented have failed to offer the services to their clients effectively; thus said to have failed (Mapetere, 2016).
Among the reasons as why organisations are scoring poorly in implementing the strategic plans as opposed to planning include: poor leadership styles and poor commitment of the strategic leaders, poor strategy communications, poor organizational culture, very confusing organizational structure, poor strategy implementation resources that cut across financial and human resources (Mapetere, et al. 2016). Mapetere et al (2016) in their work that focused on the strategic role of leadership in strategy implementation in Zimbabwe's State Owned Enterprises, leadership plays a very significant role in strategic plans implementation and this either influences the performance of state owned enterprises positively or negatively. In details, the study revealed a relatively low leadership involvement in strategy implementation leading to partial strategy success. Leadership has being failing to role model the ideal behaviour necessary for successful strategy implementation. The absence of a well-crafted strategic vision and the lack of communication were also identified as failures posted by the leadership. 

A number of studies in the state owned enterprises in Kenya have also indicated that the failure of strategy implementation is tied to a number of factors; central of them being poor leadership. According to Kipkemboi & Mugambi (2014) strategies frequently fail not because of inadequate strategy formulation, but because of insufficient implementation. Strategy implementation is a vital component of strategic management process in all organizations, whether public or private and needs to be emphasized in all stages or organizations’ operation; although a big majority of organisations fail to execute the implementation part. Some of the reasons as to majority of the organisations; especially in the public sector fail to execute the well laid down strategies is also blamed on poor strategic leadership (Kipkemboi & Mugambi, 2014).

LAPFUND for over the last 20 years has adopted a number of strategic plans as a way of enhancing its effectiveness of services delivery to the citizens (GoK, 2017). However, World Bank (2017) reports that the implementation process of some of this strategies has been very slow and the final goals not achieved due to a number of challenges like: political interference, poor top management commitment, poor leadership styles and leaders with ulterior motives, very confusing communication program and organizational culture, poorly laid down organizational structure, lack of enough resources for strategy implementation and many more that at any point needs to be studied into details.

2. Problem Statement

For better organizational performance in the 21st century, organisations must link the strategic planning component to strategy implementation. It is through implementation that the organisations shall convert the intended plans into deliverables hence improved performance. Strategy implementation therefore ensures that strategies and policies are put into action through development of programs, budgets, and procedures. Consequently, strategy gives an organization a competitive edge only if it is skillfully executed through the decisions and actions of front-line managers and employees (Daft, 2016). Despite the important role strategies play in organizational performance, the implementation is slow in a number of organisations as compared to their planning (Arooj et al., 2016; Aldehyyat, Al Khattab and Anchor, 2016; Mapetere et al, 2016); and Sheahan, 2017). Arooj et al (2016) have noted in their study that the failure in strategy implementation in various state-owned corporations is strictly tied to poor leadership styles, poor leadership commitment, and poor perceptions among the leaders towards the implementation process despite the fact that the proposed strategies consume numerous resources during the strategy plans development phase. The consumption of tax payer’s money during strategic planning by the various leaders and strategic managers calls for an examination of the various factors leading to poor strategy implementation; calling for such a study.

Studies in Kenya have indicated that organisations have very well laid down strategies, but the implementation of these strategies has been a challenge or has been slow. This is despite the fact that these organisations consume a lot of resources in the planning stage of these strategies. A number of factors have been said to influence this poor rate of strategy implementation by government run corporations in the country. Some of the challenged include poor organizational cultures and structures, poor communication and employee’s motivation, poor top management perceptions etc. However, the studies have not singled out the extent to which the various components or rather indicators of leadership influence the implementation of the planned strategies; thus, a need for such a study (Acholla, 2015).

Equally, according to the Republic of Kenya (2017), the LAPFUND for over the last 20 years has adopted a number of strategic plans as a way of enhancing its effectiveness of services delivery to the citizens but their implementation has been very slow. This means that there needs to be a detailed study that should examine why these strategies are performing poorly. Besides, very little (if any) research that addresses the implementation of strategies in the LAPFUND has been done; calling for such a study. Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine the influence of leadership in strategy implementation in state corporations in Kenya; a case of local authorities’ provident fund (LAPFUND).

3. Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this paper was to establish the influence of leadership in strategy implementation in state corporations in Kenya: a case of local authorities’ provident fund (LAPFUND).
4. Review of Literature

Leaders in all organisations are aware of the need to strategically plan the future of their organisations as well as to partake in the effective implementation of these crafted strategies. A leader is viewed in this study as a managerial employee who is tasked to oversee the successful execution of strategic initiatives. While issues of strategic planning have presented challenges to strategic leaders, it is in the area of strategy implementation where these leaders have encountered a number of challenges. Hrebiniak (2016) reported that although formulating a consistent strategy and making it work is fairly easy, implementing it throughout the organisation is even more difficult.

Allio (2015) also concluded from an economist survey of 276 senior operating executives that a discouraging 57% of firms were unsuccessful at executing strategic initiatives. Strategy implementation is an area that is now highly valued by entities. The ever-rising fiscal burden of the Zimbabwe Government has raised expectations on State Owned Enterprises strategy implementation so that they turnaround their fortunes and be self funded. Strategy implementation which refers to the process that turns plans into action assignments and ensures that such assignments are executed in a manner that accomplishes the plan's stated objectives, is the hallmark of effective leadership. Strategy implementation is only successful when it is backed by effective leadership. This study explored the importance of effective leadership in the success of strategy implementation amongst State Owned Enterprises Zimbabwe.

Similarly, Mapetere D. et al., (2016) did a study that focused on the strategic role of leadership in strategy implementation in Zimbabwe's State Owned Enterprises. The study revealed a relatively low leadership involvement in strategy implementation leading to partial strategy success. Leadership has been failing to role model the ideal behaviour necessary for successful strategy implementation. The absence of a well crafted strategic vision and the lack of communication were also identified. The study concluded that leadership should be able to craft a vision for any strategic programme, design effective communication strategies as well as to role model behaviour changes that are consistent with new strategies.

In his study, Olsen (2018) postulates that in the public parastatals, leaders play a critical role in shaping the future of the parastatals. In this study that was carried out in 10 state owned organisations, it was discovered that: leadership skills, leadership styles, leadership characteristics, and types of roles played by leaders have a significant influence on the implementation of strategies in various organisations or rather parastatals.

In their study called ‘Implementing strategies successfully in manufacturing firms in Russia,’ Aaltonen & Ikavallo (2012) argue that leadership styles have a significant influence on the success of strategies in organisation. In this study that interviewed 170 respondents, 89% of the respondents indicated that transformational leadership style influenced the rate of strategy implementation significantly. From the study, 67% of the respondents indicated a strong relationship between transactional leadership and the implementation of strategies in the firms while 80% of the respondents in a separate question indicated a strong relationship between passive/avoidant leadership style and the implementation of strategies in manufacturing firms.

Mugambi & Murugi (2014); and (Riungu, 2015) note that persons in superior positions have three overlapping leadership roles: managerial, entrepreneurial, and human and social capital building. Managerial role involves building and enforcing systems and procedures that ensure high standards of performance with equitable treatment of subordinates. Entrepreneurial role requires leaders to scan business environment and take strategic decisions in order to render the organization competitive and profitable. Human and social capital building role requires leaders to remain altruistic, accept strengths and weaknesses of their subordinates, help them overcome their deficiencies, enable them to perform well, and progress in their career.

Reilly, Caldwell & Chat Man (2016) did a study that focused on How Leadership Matters: Effects of Leaders Alignment on Strategy Implementation. In the study, it was suggested that the tactics used in leadership plays an important role in overcoming obstructions from the lower levels that sometimes may appear in the implementation strategies. Further, it was noted that strategic decisions formulated by the top managers of a firm may be administratively imposed on lower-level managers and non-managers while inadequately considering the resulting functional level perceptions. The implementation of strategies therefore, may not be successful if the lower level managers and the non-management employees are not adequately informed on issues concerning the implementation of strategies, moreover, where the information passes through several management levels in an organization may lead to lack of consensus concerning the information hence creation of a barrier that hinders the success of implementing a strategy.

Kipchirchir & Kipkorir (2015) did a study on the factors influencing strategy implementation at the National Treasury Ministry in Kenya. In this study, the focused their efforts on the role of strategic leadership and according to them, it is a prerequisite for top managers to be committed to the strategic direction itself and demonstrate the willingness to give energy and loyalty to the implementation process as this provides a positive signal for all employees in the organization. The top executives should not spare any effort in disseminating the strategy and persuading all employees to support its implementation. Several other researchers have emphasized the effect of top management on strategy implementation and point out the important figurehead role of top management in the process of strategy implementation (Brauer & Schmidt 2006; Schaap 2006; Chemutai,
2014). According to Chemutai (2014) for example, leadership is the actual support and involvement of the CEO/organization leadership is a crucial factor in the success of strategies implemented in commercial banks in Kenya and other organisations.

In her study, Ellah (2013) has focused on types of leaders and how they help in strategy implementation in Community Based Organizations in Seme Sub - County, Kenya. According to her, Transformational and Authentic leaders are believed to have a high self-awareness about their values, beliefs, and emotions, self-identities, and abilities; making them better strategy implementers in organisations.

According to Yukl (2010) the actions of Transformational and Authentic leaders are strongly determined by their values and beliefs, not by a desire to be liked and admired or to retain their position. The core values for authentic leaders motivate them to do what is right and fair for followers, and to create a special type of relationship with them that includes high mutual trust, transparency, guidance toward worthy shared objectives, and emphasis on follower welfare and development. Most versions of the theory propose that people who follow authentic leadership share the leader’s values and beliefs, and “followers recognize that the leader’s behavior is consistent with their shared values” (Yukl, 2010).

Merhabi et al., (2013) studied the effect of leader’s participative behaviors on employee’s perception of effectiveness and performance of set strategies in organisations. The statistical population of this study was 105 employees. 83 employees were chosen as sample members. Regressions test and Pearson correlation test was the main statistical test that was used for the purpose. The results of the study indicated that there are significant relationships between leader’s participative behavior and employee’s participation in strategy implementation which later influenced the employee’s performance. In addition, the results showed that there are significant relationships between perception of collective effectiveness and employee’s performance towards the implementation of set strategies.

Onyango (2012) did a study on factors influencing the implementation of strategies in the Kenya Sugar Industry. In this study where Mumias Sugar Company was selected and a population sample of 89 respondents filled a questionnaire, it revealed a major relationship between leadership and strategy implementation. In this study, a regression analysis was done and it indicated a relationship between the activities that leaders performed like resources identification, strategy planning/formulation, acquiring of resources and the implementation of said strategies.

This has been supported by a number of scholars like Oyugi (2014) who argues that the strategic leaders formulate policies that govern the implementation of proposed strategies, communicates the strategy, allocates resources, hires manpower and evaluates the process. Kweri (2013) also did a study on ‘Challenges of Strategy Implementation at Ritho Farmers’ Cooperative Society, Kenya,’ and argues that, top management of organisations help in sourcing for resources meant for strategy implementation, allocate the resources, mobilize for better policies formulation and by all means communicate the strategy to the employees of an organization.

5. Research Methodology

This study utilized descriptive survey design. According to Mugenda (2008), descriptive design studies are commonly used when examining social issues that exist in communities. In this study the target population comprised of the 75 employees working at the LAPFUND as per the human resource department report that was obtained in October 2018. The sample size in this study was obtained by use of the calculations in Krejcie and Morgan table of 1970. Therefore a sample size of 63 respondents was adopted for the study. Simple random sampling was used since the sampled population had homogenous characteristics. This study used primary data which was collected through use of questionnaires, Data was collected, coded and analyzed using SPSS version 24.0. The findings were presented in form of frequency tables and percentages and discussions and interpretation of the same given.

6. Research Findings and Analysis

6.1 Descriptive Statistics

The objective of the study was to examine the influence of the influence of leadership in strategy implementation in state corporations in Kenya; a case of local authorities provident fund (LAPFUND). A self-administered questionnaire for this study had five sections with each having between five to seven items. Researchers have assumed that likert type data are equidistant so that parametric methods of data analysis are used (Lantz, 2013). According to Carifio and Racco (2007), when using a five point likert scale the following is the scoring scale: strongly disagree Agree (SA) 4.2<SA<5.0; agree (A) 3.4<A<4.2; neutral (N) 2.6<N<3.4; Disagree (D) 1.8<D<2.6; and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1.0<SD<1.8.

The results were as indicated in table 1 below:
Table 1 Influence of Leadership on Strategy Implementation

| Leaders with idealized characteristics influence the implementation of proposed strategies | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| Leaders with intellectual stimulation characteristics significantly influence the implementation of proposed strategies | 4.08 | 0.991 |
| Leaders with inspiration motivation characteristics significantly influence the implementation of proposed strategies | 4.2 | 1.911 |
| Leaders with individualized consideration characteristics significantly influence the implementation of proposed strategies | 4.4 | 0.979 |
| Transformational style of leadership influences strategy implementation | 4.2 | 0.928 |
| Transactional style of leadership influences strategy implementation | 3.98 | 0.971 |
| Passive/avoidant style of leadership influences strategy implementation | 3.4 | 0.501 |

On average, majority of the respondents as indicated by a computed mean score of 4.1 and a percentage reorientation of 82% agreed that leadership influences strategy implementation in the state corporations significantly. A computed mean score of 4.08 indicated that majority of the respondents agreed that leaders with idealized characteristics influence the implementation of proposed strategies at LAPFUND significantly. Majority of the respondents on the other hand strongly agreed that: Leaders with intellectual stimulation characteristics (indicated by a mean score of 4.2); Leaders with inspiration motivation characteristics (indicated by a mean score of 4.4); Leaders with individualized consideration characteristics (indicated by a mean score of 4.2); and Transformational style of leadership (as indicated by a mean score of 4.2) influence the implementation of the said strategies at LAPFUND significantly.

Further, a computed mean of 3.98 indicated that majority of the respondents agreed that Transactional style of leadership influences strategy implementation at LAPFUND. Finally, a computed mean score of 3.4 indicated that they were never sure whether passive/avoidant style of leadership influences strategy implementation at LAPFUND or not. In agreement to these findings is Olsen (2018) who postulates that in the public parastatals, leaders play a critical role in shaping the future of the parastatals. In this study that was carried out in 10 state owned organisations, it was discovered that: leadership skills, leadership styles, leadership characteristics, and types of roles played by leaders have a significant influence on the implementation of strategies in various organisations or rather parastatals. Similarly, in their study called ‘Implementing strategies successfully in manufacturing firms in Russia,’ Aaltonen & Ikavallo (2012) argue that leadership styles have a significant influence on the success of strategies in organisation. In this study that interviewed 170 respondents, 89% of the respondents indicated that transformational leadership style influenced the rate of strategy implementation significantly. From the study, 67% of the respondents indicated a strong relationship between transactional leadership and the implementation of strategies in the firms while 80% of the respondents in a separate question indicated a strong relationship between passive/avoidant leadership style and the implementation of strategies in manufacturing firms.

6.2 Inferential Statistics

6.2.1 Regression Analysis

| Model | R       | R Squared | Adjusted R squared | R of Estimate | Std. Error of Estimate |
|-------|---------|-----------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1     | 0.8662  | 0.7503    | 0.5987            | 0.6325        |                       |

Regression analysis was conducted to empirically determine whether leadership was a significant determinant of strategy implementation at the LAPFUND. Regression results in Table 2 indicated the goodness of fit for the regression between leadership and strategy implementation was satisfactory. An adjusted R squared of 0.5987 indicates that 59.87% of the variations in strategy implementation at LAPFUND are explained by the variations in leadership effectiveness. This implies that 40.13% of the unexplained variations in strategy implementation are accounted for by the other variables including organizational culture, organizational structure, human resource and communication. Kipchirchir & Kipkorir (2015) did a study on the factors influencing strategy implementation at the National Treasury Ministry in Kenya. In this study, the focused their efforts on the role...
of strategic leadership and according to them, it is a prerequisite for top managers to be committed to the strategic direction itself and demonstrate the willingness to give energy and loyalty to the implementation process as this provides a positive signal for all employees in the organization.

Table 3: ANOVA for Leadership

| Model       | Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F     | Sig.  |
|-------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|-------|
| Regression  | 9.499          | 1  | 2.451       | 3.336 | 0.015b|
| Residual    | 32.876         | 3  |             |       |       |
| Total       | 28.099         | 4  |             |       |       |

a. Dependent Variable: Strategy Implementation
b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership

The probability value of 0.015 indicates that the regression relationship was highly significant in predicting how leadership influenced the implementation of the said strategies at the LAPFUND. The F calculated at 95% level of significance was 3.336. Since F calculated is greater than the F critical (value = 2.5252), this shows that the overall model was significant.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients of the Relationship between Strategy Implementation and Leadership

| Model       | Unstandardized Coefficients B | Std. Error | Standardized Coefficients Beta | t    | sig  |
|-------------|------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------|------|------|
| (Constant)  | 1.051                        | 0.217      |                               | 2.889| 0.090|
| Leadership  | 0.682                        | 0.149      | 0.613                         | 5.309| 0.015|

a. Dependent Variable: Strategy Implementation

The regression model is thus represented as:

\[ Y = 1.051 + 0.682X_1 \]

The results show that strategic leadership contributes significantly to the model since the p-value for the constant and gradient are less than 0.05. The regression equation above has established that taking all factors (leadership etc) into account constant at zero strategy implementation will be 1.051. The findings presented also show that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit increase in the leadership would lead to a 0.682 increase in the scores of strategy implementation at LAPFUND.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study established a very significant role played by the organizational leadership in ensuring that the laid down strategies are adopted and implemented effectively. Leadership is very significant in influencing the direction the organization employees take in relation to strategy implementation and holding other factors constant, leadership carries almost a half of the responsibility of strategy success in organisations. Based on these findings, the study concludes that. Strategic leadership strongly influences the implementation of the said strategies in organisations as indicated in the case of LAPFUND. The various styles of leadership from the strategic leaders influence the extent to which fellow employees are eager and willing to support the whole process of strategy implementation. This extends to other stakeholders whether primary or secondary. The study also concludes that leaders with inspiration motivation characteristics are more significant influencers of the implementation of proposed strategies at LAPFUND as compared to leaders with passive/avoidant style of leadership.

The study recommends that the strategic leaders should be equipped with modern leadership skills that bring every stakeholder on board for better strategies implementation. The Strategic leaders should understand the organizational culture of their organizations, create an enabling organizational environment and structure, do better strategy communication and mobilize the required resources or strategy implementation effectively and efficiently. The study also recommends that the top managers must be willing to give energy and loyalty to the implementation process of the various strategies in the organization. Further, for the purpose of strategy implementation, leaders should be able to craft a vision that create a fit between intended strategy and the specific personality profile of the implementation’s key players in the different departments of the organization. Finally, leadership should make use of their skills and abilities such as Human, technical and conceptual skills to create the need for change and enhance strategy implementation receptivity through imparting knowledge, motivation and guidance to strategy implementation individuals and teams.

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