

Extent of Adoption of Implementation Practices by Public Universities in Western Kenya

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Abstract: According to the Human Capital Report 2015, Kenya's overall human capital index was 57.54, indicating that public universities contributes to economic success. However, Kenya Audit Report 2012/2013 indicated public universities were in a financial crisis with Western Kenya universities leading suggesting ineffective adoption of implementation practices. Past studies have focused on reduced funding, lack of innovation, ineffective systems and customer dissatisfaction but failed to consider extent of adoption of implementation practices by public universities in Western Kenya. The purpose was to establish extent of adoption implementation practices. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design of 4 public universities in Western Kenya. The population comprised 191 staff with 13 used for piloting. The remaining 178 comprised 166 senior managers including deans; chairs of departments; registrars; finance officers; librarians and 12 top managers including Vice-Chancellors and their deputies. The response was 84%. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires and interview schedules. Pre-validated questionnaires had reliability alpha for implementation practices $\alpha=0.805$. Findings revealed that Implementation had mean $M=2.88(SD=0.086)$. The findings implied that implementation practices are adopted. It is concluded that implementation practices are prioritized in universities. The study recommends that effort should be put on resourcing aspect of implementation since it registered lowest. Public universities can be enlightened on benefits of adopting implementation practices.

Keywords: Implementation Practices, Western Kenya, Public Universities

1. Introduction

Strategic management encompasses implementation which is the application of strategic thinking to doing the business of an organization. Noble (1999b)^[13] defines implementation as the process that turns plans into action assignments and ensures that such assignments are executed in a manner that accomplishes the stated objectives of the plans. Strategy implementation has long been recognized as being critical for business success. However, more than half of the new strategic initiatives fail to get implemented (Miller, 2002)^[11].

The purpose of this research was to establish the extent of adoption of implementation practices by public universities in Western Kenya.

2. Literature Review

Noble (1999)^[13] defines implementation as the process that turns plans into action assignments and ensures that such assignments are executed in a manner that accomplishes the stated objectives of the plans. According to Pinto and Slevin (1987)^[16], the attributes are clarity of direction, resourcing and specification of action and communication. Hickson et al. (2003)^[6] identified eight variables that have a significant impact on success of implementation. The variables that represent experience are assessability, resourcing, familiarity, acceptability, specificity while variables that representing readiness or priority include structural facilitation, priority and receptivity. This construct is more reliable and can be used to measure the success of implementation practices. In this study, implementation practice is operationalized as based on application of prior experience and prioritization of activities. This is because each approach enhances the chance of success and the most advantageous position is to follow both approaches together, although it is relatively rare.

Hickson et al. (2003)^[6] identified eight aspects that have a significant impact on success of implementation. The eight aspects which are recommended by Miller (2004)^[11] for implementation success are categorized into two. These are the variables that represent experience based which are assessability, resourcing, familiarity, acceptability and specificity and; the variables representing priority-based which are structural facilitation, priority and receptivity. Despite the proposition by Hickson et al. (2003)^[6] and subsequent recommendation by Miller et al. (2004)^[11], Arnety et al. (2013)^[1] in their study on implementation of Enterprise Resource Planning Systems in Masinde Muliro University, Kenya, defined implementation in a different way. They used departmental integrations and other constructs not recommended by the two sets of authors. Oana (2011)^[14] did a study on the strategic management process in 200 small and medium sized enterprises in the North West region of Romania. His construction of implementation was consistent with that of Miller et al. (2004)^[11] and Hickson et al. (2003)^[6] proposal but limited themselves to only two constructs namely, resources and communication. He also differed with Arnety et al. (2013)^[1] approach. Whereas Oana (2011)^[14] looked at two aspects of implementation, Messah (2011)^[10] in a study on an analysis of factors that influence the implementation of strategic management plans in selected tertiary institutions in Meru Central District, Kenya, studied four aspects namely, managerial behavior, institutional policies, resource allocation and reward management.

Arnety et al. (2013)^[1] did a qualitative study which is not generalizeable while Oana (2011)^[14] did a study of an exploratory nature which provides for limited decision making and Messah (2011)^[10] failed to establish extent of the factors influencing the implementation of strategic management plans. These studies (Arnety et al., 2013^[1]; Oana, 2011^[14]; Messah, 2011^[10]) all agree that implementation alludes to plans being made a reality.

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Similarly, the above studies have covered various aspects of implementation but did not include all the aspects proposed by Hickson et al. (2003)^[6] and recommended by Miller et al. (2004)^[11]. Therefore, these studies were limited in their construction of implementation. It is for this reason that the extent of implementation still remains unclear. As such, The application of implementation practices in Public Universities in Western Kenya is therefore not known.

3. Problem Definition

According to the Human Capital Report 2015, the overall human capital index for Kenya was 57.54, an indication that public universities contribute to economic success. However, the Kenya audit report for year ended June 30, 2013 indicated that public universities were in a financial crisis with a higher number coming from Western Kenya. This suggests ineffective implementation of strategies. Past studies have focused on reduced funding, lack of innovation, ineffective systems and customer dissatisfaction but no known studies have focused on extent of application of implementation practices by public universities in Western Kenya.

4. Research Methodology

The study utilized cross-sectional survey research design. According to Creswell (2003)^[2], a survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. A cross-sectional survey was deemed appropriate for the study because it enables the researcher to collect data and make inferences about a population of interest at one point in time. Cross-sectional surveys have been described as snapshots of the populations about which they gather data. Cross-sectional surveys can be conducted using any mode of data collection, including interviews and mailed or self-administered questionnaires. Nachmias and Nachmias (2008)^[12] also asserts that a survey design is most suitable in a research aimed at establishing a problem and determining its extent. This approach also intended to facilitate the development of a broad -based understanding

rather than study of individual units. Therefore, the method of knowledge enquiry and research design adopted were appropriate for the focus and objective of the study.

This study focused on public universities in Kenya as per the Commission of University Education report (2013). It was conducted in the four public universities in Western Kenya. Kenya has 22 public universities (Appendix IV). The region lies between latitudes and longitudes 0°30'N: 34°30'E. The study covered western Kenya, formerly Nyanza and Western Provinces. The full-fledged universities in Western Region of Kenya are Maseno University, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kisii University and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology. The researcher chose to study Kenyan public universities since they are subjected to strategic planning in the face of spiraling demand and declining government funding and are new to the concept compared to the private universities. A map of Kenya is attached as Appendix V.

The unit of analysis for the study was the management. Several definitions stress the role of top management (such as Schaap, 2006^[17]) who argues that senior-level leadership behaviours and activities transform a working plan into concrete reality. The target population of this study constituted respondents from the purposively selected 4 public universities. The interviewees consisted of the top management being the Vice Chancellors and Deputy Vice Chancellors and senior management being registrars, finance officers, deans, chairpersons of departments and librarians. A census approach was adopted since the units were not many and were concentrated in one region thereby favouring costs, time and other resources (Sekaran, 2000)^[18]. According to Kothari (2004)^[9], census sampling enhances validity of the study providing a true measure of the population with no sampling error, availing detailed information about small subgroups within the population and providing benchmark data for future studies. Owing to the superiority of a census survey as evidenced here, the method was adopted for this study.

Table 3.1: Population Distribution
Public Universities in Western Kenya

<i>Positions (Management)</i>	<i>Maseno</i>	<i>Masinde Muliro</i>	<i>Kisii</i>	<i>Jaramogi Oginga Odinga</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Vice Chancellor	1	1	1	1	4
Deputy Vice Chancellors	3	3	2	3	11
Registrars	2	3	3	3	11
Finance Officers	1	1	1	1	4
Deans	13	15	11	12	51
Chief Librarian	1	1	1	1	4
Chair of Departments	40	30	24	12	106
TOTALS:	61	54	43	33	191

Sources: Information from respective universities, Commission of University Education (2013) and University Records (2014)

The study mainly utilized primary data supplemented by secondary data from university records. The study aimed at collecting data relating to implementation practices by public universities in Western Kenya. In an effort to improve the content validity and response rate, the survey was

formulated and implemented with guidelines adapted from Dillman (2000)^[4]. The scales for the questionnaire and other quantitative measures were drawn from in-depth literature review from which indicators for implementation practices were selected. The pool of items in the questionnaire were

subjected to evaluation by experts from academics. The questionnaires were also supplemented by semi-structured interviews to elicit valid data as much as possible (Appendix III). The questionnaire was then pilot-tested on 13 managers at one of the universities. These thirteen managers in the pilot study were excluded from the final survey.

Both primary and secondary data were used. The researcher gathered secondary data from the university records and Kenya National Audit Reports. Primary data was obtained from the top and senior managers. Both quantitative and qualitative data were sought. Primary data was obtained from the structured and semi structured questionnaires. The theoretical constructs were developed from the literature review. Implementation practices were measured in terms of planning efforts that is the degree of emphasis given to planning and prioritization while implementing strategies. Planning emphasis was measured using five items and prioritization using three items on a Likert scale of 1 to 4 as recommended by Miller et al. (2004) ^[11]. Reliability is concerned with the consistency of the data (Hussey and Hussey, 1997) ^[7]. Since it is difficult to administer the instrument to the survey respondents twice when dealing with top management (Sekaran, 2000) ^[18], the researcher used Cronbach's alpha method. In this regard, Cronbach's coefficient alpha is commonly used as a measure of internal consistency. The value of coefficient alpha ranges from zero (no internal consistency) to one (complete internal consistency). The Cronbach alpha coefficient threshold level is regarded as 0.6, Hair et al. (1998) ^[5]. Moreover, Carmines and Zellner (1979) ^[3] indicate that Cronbach's alpha is a superior measure of internal consistency than test-retest or split-halves approaches. In the current study, the Cronbach alpha was computed for implementation practices. Cronbach's alpha of 0.707 or above are termed as suitable that items are performing well in capturing a particular latent variable. However, this threshold can be flexible and 0.60 level is also adequate when additional items are added in the block or other questions measuring the same latent variable have high reliability scores (Hair et al. 2006) ^[5]. Implementation scale indicated 0.805 which was well above the recommended threshold of 0.70, (Pallant, 2007) ^[15].

5. Results and Discussion

Response rate was determined by the response out of the original survey population. The results for the response return in Table 2 indicate that the overall response rate was 84% out of a population of 178 respondents. The respondents used for the pilot study were 1(One) Vice Chancellor, 2(Two) Deputy Vice Chancellors, 5(Five) Deans and 5(Five) Chairpersons of Departments. These respondents were not included in the final analysis.

Many social science studies, consider a threshold of at least 60% adequate to generalize the sample and population without threatening the external validity and statistical conclusion validity of inferences made in research using questionnaires (Johnson & Owen, 1962) ^[8].

Table 2: Response Rate

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Response Received</i>	<i>Rate (%)</i>
Vice Chancellors	3	3	3	100
Deputy Vice Chancellors	9	9	7	77.8
Registrars	11	11	10	90.9
Finance Officers	4	4	3	75
Deans	46	46	39	84.8
Chairs of Department	101	101	84	83.1
Librarian	4	4	4	100
TOTAL	178	178	150	84.2

Source: Survey data, 2015

The study sought responses from respondents whose characteristics in terms of Job Title and years of work in the universities are presented as shown in table 3.

Table 3 indicates that majority of the respondents were 84 were chairs of departments, out of which, 35 had served for a period of 3-5 years, 21 had served over 10 years, 10 had served between 8-10 years, 9 had served between 6-8 years and 9 had served less than three years. 16 Deans had served over 10 years, 11 between 3-5 years, 4 had served between 8-10 years and only 7 had served less than 3 years. The rest were evenly distributed over the number of years they had served. Therefore majority of the respondents, 51 had served 3-5 years followed by 43 who had served over 10 years.

Table 3: Job title and duration of service

Job title	Duration Of Service In University					Total
	Less Than 3 Years	3-5 Years	6-8 Years	8-10 Years	Over 10 Years	
Chairs of Department	9	35	9	10	21	84
Deans	7	11	1	4	16	39
Finance Officers	0	2	0	1	0	3
Librarians	0	0	1	0	3	4
Registrars	1	3	1	2	3	10
Total	17	51	12	17	43	140

Source: Survey data, 2015

The study established the highest level of education of the respondents. The results are presented as shown in Table 4. Table 4 results indicate that majority of the respondents, 83 (59.3%) were PhD holders, followed by the holders of

master's degree, 46(32.9%) and those who had a bachelor's degree, 10(7.1%).

Table 4: Highest level of Education for the Respondents

Education	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor	10	7.1
Masters	46	32.9
Doctorate	83	59.3
Others	1	0.7
Total	140	100

Source: Survey data, 2015

The study established through secondary records that the oldest public university in Western Kenya has been in operation for over 20 years and the youngest has been in operation for less than 5 years as shown in Table 5. This is relevant since strategic plans cover a large span of time that is several years.

Table 5: Name of the University and Number of Years in Operation

List of Public Universities Operating In Western Kenya

S/No.	University Name	Area	University Status	Constitute College
1	Maseno University	Maseno	2001	1990
2	Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology	Kakamega	2009	2002
3	Kisii University	Kisii	2013	2007
4	Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology	Kisumu	2013	2009

Source: Commission of Higher Education report (2013).

The planning horizon of public universities is shown in Table 6. 78.6% had a planning horizon of five years, whereas 6.4% planned for over five years, 5.7% planned

for 1 year, 5% planned for one year and 4.3% for two years. The planning horizon is the amount of time an organization will look into the future when preparing strategies, many institutions use a five-year planning horizon.

Table 6: Planning Horizon

Period of Planning	Frequency	Percent
One Year	7	5
Two Year	6	4.3
Four Years	8	5.7
Five Years	110	78.6
Over Five Years	9	6.4
Total	140	100

Source: Survey data, 2015

6. Extent of Implementation Practices adopted by Public Universities in Western Kenya

Implementation was measured by specificity, structural facilitation, resourcing, familiarity, receptivity, acceptability, priority and assessability. The variables are categorized into two. Variables representing experience based practices are assessability, resourcing, familiarity, acceptability and specificity.

Variables representing prior experience are structural facilitation, priority and receptivity. All the 8 items of implementation measurement were also scored on a five point Likert scale such that 1 represented 'strongly disagree' while 4 represented 'strongly agree'. The results are presented in Table 4.6

Table 4.6: Implementation

Items for implementation	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Means	S/D
The tasks to be performed were specified before hand to ensure effective strategy implementation.(Specificity)	3(2.1)	15(10.7)	82(58.6)	40(28.6)	3.14	.681
Organizational structure facilitated the strategy implementation process through appropriate allocations of responsibilities and roles.(Structural Facilitation)	6(4.3)	11(7.9)	83(59.3)	40(28.6)	3.12	.724
Resources (including People, Money and Time) were available during the strategy implementation process. (Resourcing)	17(12.1)	46(32.9)	62(44.3)	15(10.7)	2.54	.843
The criteria for success of strategy implementation were clear.(Familiarity)	2(1.4)	38(27.1)	81(57.9)	19(13.6)	2.84	.664
Strategy implementation had receptive context at the onset due to the condition within and/or external to your organization.(Receptivity)	3(2.1)	40(28.6)	74(52.9)	23(16.4)	2.84	.716
What is done during the implementation process was acceptable to those involved.(Acceptability)	4(2.9)	38(27.1)	71(50.7)	27(19.3)	2.86	.751
Strategy Implementation is given priority over other commitments.(Priority)	7(5.0)	47(33.6)	67(47.9)	19(13.6)	2.70	.765
Relevant experience is available (either in-house, outsourced or brought-in) to implement strategies in your organization.(Assessability)	5(3.6)	25(17.9)	69(49.3)	41(29.3)	3.04	.785
Overall mean of the implementation					2.88	.741

Source: Research Data, 2015

The results in Table 4.6 indicate that tasks to be performed were specified before hand to ensure effective strategy implementation as reported by majority of the respondents (specificity), 82(58.6%) with a mean of 3.14. Organizational structure facilitated the strategy implementation process through appropriate allocation of responsibilities and roles

(structural facilitation) as reported by 83(59.3%) and a mean of 3.12. Besides, relevant experience is available (either in-house, outsourced or brought-in) to implement strategies in universities (assessability), 69(49.3%) agreed and 41(29.3%) strongly agreed, making a mean of 3.04. To some extent, as shown by a mean of 2.86, what is done during the

implementation process was acceptable to those involved (acceptability) as reported by 71(50.7%) who agreed and 27(19.3%) who strongly agreed. Availability of resources (including people, money and time) during the strategy implementation process (resourcing) was the least with 17(12.1%) with a mean of 2.54. The overall mean of implementation was 2.88, with a standard deviation of .741, which implies that the responses were concentrated around the mean and the views were not varied. This means that implementation practices are adopted. It also implies that the responses portrayed an accurate representation of the data.

7. Summary Conclusions and Recommendations

The major findings revealed that various aspects of implementation, which are specificity, structural facilitation, resourcing, familiarity, receptivity, acceptability, priority and assessability are adopted in public universities in Western Kenya. This implies that various aspects of implementation are adopted in public universities in Western Kenya, it is concluded that tasks to be performed are specified before hand and appropriate allocation of roles is done, however, resources are still a challenge as it indicated the least mean and regarding performance. The study recommends that effort should be put on resourcing aspect of implementation since it registered lowest.

8. Future Scope

Future studies should focus on all the public universities in Kenya and they can also research on the other variables apart from implementation practices.

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Author Profile



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Appendix I: List of Public Universities Operating in Kenya

S/No.	University Name	Area	University Status	Yr. Established
1	University of Nairobi	Nairobi	1970	1956
2	Moi University	Eldoret	1984	1984
3	Kenyatta University	Nairobi	1985	1965
4	Egerton University	Njoro	1991	1939
5	Maseno University	Maseno	2001	1955
6	Jomo Kenyatta Univ. of Agricultural Technology	Nairobi	1994	1981
7	Masinde Muliro Univ. of Science and Technology	Kakamega	2009	2002
8	Dedan Kimathi Univ. of Technology	Nyeri	2012	1972
9	Chuka University	Chuka	2012	2004
10	Technical Univ. of Kenya	Nairobi	2013	1961
11	Technical Univ. of Mombasa	Mombasa	2013	1940
12	Pwani University	Kilifi	2013	2007
13	Kisii University	Kisii	2013	1965
14	University of Eldoret	Eldoret	2013	2008
15	Maasai Mara Univ.	Narok	2013	2008
16	Jaramogi Oginga Odinga university of Science& Tech.	Kisumu	2013	2009
17	Laikipia University	Laikipia	2013	2009
18	South Eastern Kenya Univ.	Kitui	2013	2008
19	Multimedia Univ. of Kenya	Nairobi	2013	2008
20	Univ. of Kabianga	Kericho	2013	2009
21	Karatina University	Karatina	2013	2008
22	Meru University of Science & Techn.	Meru	2013	2008

Source: Commission of Higher Education report.(2013).

Appendix 11: Map of Study Area (Kenya)

Western parts of Kenya, formerly Nyanza and Western Provinces

APHIAplus Western(Nyanza/Western) Activity Locations

