

EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND THE PERFORMANCE OF EMBU COUNTY GOVERNMENT, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Implementation of strategies is one of the most challenging task County Governments are facing in Kenya today including Embu County. Due to challenges of implementing formulated strategies Embu County Government has been experiencing declining performance. Therefore, it is on this background that this study sought to establish the effect of employee on the performance of Embu County Government. The specific objective of the study was to determine the effect of employee training on performance of Embu County Government. The study was informed by resource based view and holistic strategy implementation theories. The study adopted a descriptive research design and census sampling approach where the respondents of the study comprised top level management of Embu County Government. Primary data was obtained by use of questionnaires containing semi structured questions with secondary data being obtained from strategic plans and sessional papers on development of Counties in Kenya. Validity of the instrument was determined by using experts in strategic management in the school of Business, Kenyatta University while reliability of the instrument was determined by using Cronbach Alpha coefficients of 0.7. Qualitative data and quantitative data was analyzed using content analysis, correlation and regression analysis respectively. 95% confidence level, regression analysis was used to test for statistical significance between variables. The study established that there exist a positive significant relationship between employee training and performance of Embu County Government. Since employee training had a positive effect on performance of Embu County Government the study recommends that more funds be allocated for training to enhancing employee capability to implement formulated strategies hence improving the overall county performance.

Key Words: *Employee Training, Organization Performance, Embu County Government, Kenya*

1. INTRODUCTION

World class organizations around the world are driven by successful implementation of strategies formulated plans (Odongo & Owuor, 2015). A strategy is of little use to an organization without a means of putting it into action. Strategy implementation is an essential part of the strategic planning process (Griffin, 2007). Most of the global companies operating in the developed countries like United States, Germany, China and Russia have achieved their strategic goals by successfully implementing their strategies. Turbulent business environments, competition, globalization and influence of technology are aspects that are directly or indirectly influencing the implementation of strategic plans in large and small organizations in the global, international, regional and local markets (Pearce & Robinson, 2009). Further, Pearce and Robinson (2011) asserts that management issues considered central to strategy implementation include linking performance and pay, creating an organizational climate conducive to change, managing political

relationships, creating a strategy-supportive culture, and managing human resources. Establishing annual objectives, devising policies, and allocating resources are central strategy implementation activities common to all organizations.

Depending on the size and type of the organization, other management issues could be equally important to successful strategy implementation. According to Pearce and Robinson (2013), open systems theory proposes that firms are open systems that lend themselves to the external environment. Strategic management, being an externally oriented management philosophy in the modern context, helps them circumnavigate through the ever-changing environment in order to be efficient and effective in the long run (Pearce & Robinson, 2011). Successful strategy implementation is the actualization of the formulated strategy. Despite the challenges encountered at the implementation stage, it requires consideration of the resources to be used, human resource requirements, structure, systems, and other variables (Charles & Gareth, 2007). Organizations after strategic planning embark on the implementation process. Strategy is implemented through organizational design in which an organization selects a combination of organizational structure and control systems that lets it create a sustainable competitive advantage (Pearce & Robinson, 2011). Hill and Jones (2010) suggest that strategy implementation process can vary from organization to organization and is dependent on internal factors ranging from structures, strategies, systems, staff, culture, management style among others. The controversial findings from empirical studies on the link between employee training and organization performance formed the basis of the study.

Arthur, Strickland and Gamble (2008) suggest that strategy implementation is the process that turns strategies and plans into actions in order to accomplish strategic objectives and goals. For successful strategy implementation, firms should have internal drivers that steer the implementation process. In other words, it must be realistic and solidly grounded in the underlying economics of the organization's markets. Implementation effectiveness can be measured by how well the business meets the financial projections set out in the strategic plan. To achieve effective implementation, a business must ensure that any changes initiated by the strategic plan are reflected in areas such as budgeting, reward schemes and information systems (Hrebiniak, 2006). According to Hill and Jones (2010), organizations operating in the changing business environment can adopt a number of interventions to translate formulated policies into action. Employee training is thought to be a practice that influences organizational performance. Employee training is seen as a process of equipping employees with the right mix of knowledge and skills in order to implement strategies more efficiently and effectively.

Kinyanjui and Juma (2014) revealed that employers seek workers who can handle the workload without needing too much guidance or hand-holding during the workday. This skill includes solving problems, being flexible with project changes and taking feedback from other workers. Employees often work together on projects, so some employees must take on the leadership role to ensure deadlines are met, problems are addressed and all ideas are being considered. Employers often seek employees who have natural leadership skills. In addition, these employees must also have creativity skills so they can find and use solutions for potential problems on tasks, projects or assignments. Lehner (2004) further affirms that performance or success of an organization is measured in terms of financial and non-financial performance. Financial performance is measured generally based on income statement or balance sheet components, and may also report changes in sales growth by product families, channel, and customer segments or in expense categories. Non-financial performance is measured to assess the activities that an

organization sees as important to the achievement of its strategic objectives. Typical non-financial measures include customer relationships, employees, operations, quality, cycle-time, and the organization's supply chain or its pipeline.

According to the County Government of Embu Fiscal Strategy Paper for the financial year 2014/2015, the county faced transitional challenges in the previous financial year (2013/2014), which was the initial year of the operation of County Governments in Kenya. The strategy paper cites, among other factors, late disbursement of funds by the national government and lack of capacity especially in the human resource as the key factors that hindered strategy implementation in the county. Since the Kenyan Government enacted a new constitution in 2010, which established a system of 47 lower level County governments, there has been tremendous decline in the performance of County Governments resulting to stagnation of development projects. The leadership of County Governments in Kenya is pegged on elected County governors, deputy governors, and other representatives. The 47 County Governments are now overseeing some functions such as the provision of pre-primary education, health care and maintenance of local roads. Initially, these functions were under the national government (CIC Report, 2014). Having these functions under County Governments, strategic plans have been developed to oversee the implementation of developed functions.

According to a Transparency International Report (2015), County Governments in Kenya are continuously recording low levels of strategy implementation due to lack of proper mechanisms of implementing the formulated strategies. Therefore, it's clear that there are critical factors affecting strategy implementation in County Governments in Kenya which pose several research questions which this study will investigate to fill the knowledge gaps. According to KIPPRA (2015), Embu County has been on the lime right for not performing effectively. A number of the ministries ranging from health, education, trade, agriculture transport among others have been performing underperforming due to inability of implementing strategies formulated to achieve long term objectives. Internal and external factors ranging from top leadership, politics, mismanagement of resources, lack of employee skills and rigid organizational are some of the factors attributed to deteriorating performance of County governments in Kenya (GoK, 2015).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Transparency International Report of (2016), county governments in Kenya have been experiencing declining performance due to issues associated with strategy implementation. Majority (72%) of the counties are still experiencing challenges when implementing the strategies formulated. A number of studies conducted locally and internationally failed to address the issues of strategy implementation on the performance of County Governments in Kenya. A study conducted by Machuki (2005) also revealed that effective strategy implementation in modern competitive firms was directly correlated with improved customer satisfaction, business diversification, change management, new product development, business process reengineering and employee motivation. However, the findings of the study were limited to manufacturing firms in Kenya.

KIPPRA (2015) also revealed that County Governments in Kenya failed to fulfill expectations of citizens due to political wrangles. Other studies by Mbui (2013); (Mweti (2009); Mbaka & Mugambi (2014) established that strategy implementation was the most critical process in private and public organizations overall performance. However, the findings of these studies were confined to different variables like resource allocation, staff policies, delegation but not training

as a variable of this study. The real issues in County Governments in Kenya which have been witnessed by the general public, the National Government and Public Benefit Organizations are: misappropriation of funds, political wrangles, inequitable distribution of resources and inability to implement key projects stipulated in strategic plans. Therefore, it is this background that this study will sought to establish the problem in this area and fill the knowledge gaps. The general objective of the paper was to establish the effect of training on the performance of Embu County Government in Kenya.

3. OBJECTIVE

The objective was to determine the effect of employee training on performance of Embu County Government.

4. RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question was: What is the effect of employee training on the performance of Embu County Government?

5. THEORETICAL REVIEW

The study was anchored on resource based view and holistic strategy implementation theory. Resource Based View theory was established by Barney in (1991). Resource Based View of the firm is one of the concepts applied by modern competitive firms in the dynamic business environment when formulating, implementing and monitoring strategies. According to Pearce and Robinson (2013), Resource Based View is a method of analyzing and identifying a firm's strategic advantages based on examining its distinct combination of assets, skills, capabilities and intangibles as an organization. Thompson, Gamble and Strickland (2012) argue that resources are stocks of available factors that are owned or controlled by the firm, which are converted into final products or services. Capabilities, in contrast, refer to a firm's capacity to deploy resources, usually in combination, using organizational processes, to produce a desired effect. Hence, the presence of capability enables resources to begin to be utilized, and the potential for the creation of output arises. While resources are the source of a firm's capabilities, capabilities are the main source of its competitive advantage.

Burgelman, Grove and Meza (2007) argue that resources possessed by a firm are the primary determinants of its performance, and these may contribute to a sustainable competitive advantage of the firm. Resources of an organization may range from; all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge, etc. controlled by a firm that enable the firm to conceive of and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness. Basically the resource based view states that a firm's internal resources and capabilities are the best source of competitive advantage over other firms. Gakii (2010) advocates that competencies can be kept unique to the firm used to develop a competitive advantage. According to Barney (1991), a firm has a competitive advantage when they have a relative advantage over another firm and when this advantage is not being implemented by any competitor. The theory informed the study on the premise that employees are key resources of the organization that influences performance of County governments

The holistic strategy implementation theory by Bourgeois and Brodwin (2004) established on a five-model system for strategy implementation shows different positions or viewpoints one might assume while implementing strategy. The commander model draws its influences from the military life, in the sense that the CEO wields absolute power. In this model the CEO is the

rational agent behind the strategy decisions and plays no role in implementation. The model is applicable with a powerful executive with few personal biases and accurate information about the situation. The change model is based on planned interventions in the organization's structure and systems, which will set off the desired behavioral outcomes among workers (Efendioglu & Karabulut, 2010). This model creates the ability to carry out more complicated strategic plans than the commander model, but also creates an additional inflexibility for unanticipated events and changes of plan. The collaborative model extends the power of strategic decision-making from the CEO to the organization's management team. This model helps to motivate the managers and also provides the strategic decision-making process with more information and cognitive capital. The problem of this model results from the fact that collaboration does not reach beyond top management. More decision making also means more politics and conflicts of interest, which may mean less rationality (Hill & Jones, 2010). The theory is applicable in study as it will shed more light on how County governments can perform well if strategy implementation practices are embraced such as employee training and organization structure.

6. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Obonyo and Arasa (2012) identified that 66% of the firms were challenged to achieve their goals due to lack of employee training. Organizations can only be successful in strategy implementation if they integrate appropriate training in the system. Well trained employees are likely to have a wide understanding of the business environment and adjust quickly to changes with minimal resistance to change. Organizations that invest in the intellectual capacity are likely to enhance creativity and innovation. Abok (2013) argues that employee training can facilitate motivation among workers thus giving them the drive to accomplish organizational goals. Mbaka and Mugambi (2014) carried out a study on the factors that influence strategy implementation in the Kenyan water sector. The study found out that the employees in the public sector lack the capabilities, skills, and enthusiasm to drive the process of implementation. There is also an information gap between the strategy formulators and the staff. The study further established that there is a relationship between employee training and strategy implementation among organizations. Employability skills are typically considered essential qualifications for many job positions and hence have become necessary for an individual's employment success at just about any level within a business environment. Konzi (2012) studied the relationship between strategic plan implementation and performance of manufacturing firms and identified employee skills has a factor that contributed to strategic plan implementation among manufacturing firms in Tanzania. Organizations should, therefore, seek to increase resources available for employee training to enable them to sustain and execute their policies.

Obonyo and Arasa (2012) established that employee training in organizations enhances appropriate internal controls that monitor the extent to which the organization is achieving what it is supposed to achieve. This requires the organizational management to periodically review and evaluate performance standards attained and performance trajectories, taking corrective action as appropriate where deviations from the desired standards are detected. On the other hand, extra-organizational performance management involve communication of performance for the purposes of governance and accountability to organizational stakeholders including Government, funding bodies, audit agencies and the wider public. Kinyanjui and Juma (2014) revealed that employers seek workers who can handle the workload without needing too much guidance or hand-holding during the workday. This skill includes solving problems, being flexible with project changes and taking feedback from other workers. Makori (2014) studied the influence of

formal training on performance of small medium enterprises in Kenya established that the ability of employees to share information and learn new skills facilitates effective implementation of strategy. Other aspects that improve employee ability to perform better include; recognition of employee efforts by managers, delegation, promotion, job design and salary increment. In any organization, Employee skills promote innovation and creativity, quality customer service delivery, good communication culture and high level of professionalism. Satisfied employees are likely to adapt to changes more easily compared to dissatisfied workers.

Efendioglu and Karabulut (2010) established that the purpose of training and management development programs is to improve employee capabilities and organizational capabilities to adapt in dynamic business environments. When the organization invests in improving the knowledge and skills of its employees, the investment is returned in the form of more productive and effective employees. Odongo and Owuor (2015) also noted that to maximize the effectiveness of training and development, organizations must constantly assess their employees' current training and development needs and identify training and development needs to prepare employees for their next position.

7. CRITIQUE OF LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies conducted by Mbaka and Mugambi, (2014); Abok; (2013); Konzi, (2012); Musyoka, (2011); Mweti, (2009); Nduko, (2008); Odhiambo, (2006); Machuki, (2005); Njau, (2000) reveals inconclusive findings on the link between strategy implementation practices such as employee training from context to context thus created the need of conducting the study to unfold issues in this area of study. Further, constraints of operationalizing and contextualizing the constructs of the theories from context to context created conceptual and theoretical gaps of conducting the study to uncover the issues in the area of study. Moreover, variation of methodologies of conducting data caused by adoption of different research designs, target population, sampling technique and size, instruments, and data analysis methods resulted to inconsistencies in the research findings thus created methodological gaps which the study addressed.

8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design to establish the effect of employee training on performance of Embu County Government. The descriptive study aimed at obtaining information that can be analyzed, patterns extracted and comparison made for the purpose of clarification and provision of basis for making decisions. The study adopted a census approach where information was collected from the top level management of Embu County Government. A census was preferred due to the limited number of cabinet secretaries, deputy cabinet secretaries and administrators in Embu County Government. Therefore, the population of the study comprised of 53 participants who were drawn from cabinet secretaries, deputy cabinet secretaries and administrators. Primary data was collected from respondents by the use of questionnaires using semi structured questions. Validity of the instrument was tested using experts in strategic management at School of Business, Kenyatta University. The reliability of the instrument was determined by using Cronbach Alpha coefficients of 0.7. Statistical Package for Social Sciences, (SPSS version 24) software was used. Regression method was conducted at 95% confidence level and 5% significance level to determine the statistical effect between variable. Qualitative data obtained from secondary sources was analyzed using content analysis method. Key themes

from public content and verbatim statements were reviewed and conclusions and recommendations were made.

The general regression model adopted was:

$$P = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ET + \varepsilon$$

Where; P represents performance of Embu County government,

β_1 represent regression coefficients,

ET represented Employee Training

ε represented the error term that accounts for the variability in performance of Embu County Government that cannot be explained by the linear effect of the predictor variable.

9. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study targeted a total of 53 participants who were drawn from cabinet secretaries, deputy cabinet secretaries and administrators of Embu County Government. Out of the 53 questionnaires administered to respondents, only 47 questionnaires were received from the field, 6 of them were not collected due to challenges of accessing the respondents and 4 of them were inappropriately filled and therefore they were not used in the analysis. A total of 43 questionnaires were used in the analysis, this represented 81 % response rate which was as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) who asserts that a response rate of 50% was adequate for analysis and reporting while a rate of 60% was good and that above 70% was excellent.

Table 1: Employee Training

Statements	N	Mean	S.D
Employees have team spirit during strategy implementation	43	4.36	.884
Employees have the ability to plan on how to implement strategic initiatives	43	4.33	.664
Employees have good communication during strategy implementation	43	4.26	.587
Employees are creative and innovative when implementing strategies	43	4.16	.673
Employees are provided with relevant skills during strategy implementation	43	4.11	.596
Employees share information during strategy implementation	43	4.09	.498
Overall Aggregate Mean	43	4.22	.413

The respondents of the study were asked to indicate the effect of employee training on performance of the Embu County Government. As shown in Table 1, the study revealed that employee training to a larger extent influenced performance of the Embu County Government with an aggregate mean of 4.22. Team spirit contributed to performance with a mean of 4.36, ability of employee planning with a mean of with a mean of 4.33, employee communication with a mean of 4.26, employee creativity with a mean of 4.16, employee skills with a mean of 4.11 and employee sharing information with a mean of 4.09. The high aggregate mean indicated an agreement between the respondents and a low standard is an indicated of a small divergent in their views. However, it was observed that despite the fact that employee training influenced

performance the study revealed that some employees were not conversant with the vision and mission and did not understand policies of the County. The findings are consistent with that of Musyoka (2011); Efendioglu and Karabulut (2010) and Mwet (2009) who established that to a larger extent employee training was one of the practices that contributed to performance of organizations. Similarly, Rajasekar (2014) acknowledge that training effectiveness can vary from one organization to another based on individual intellectual capacity.

Table 2: Measurement of Performance

Statements	N	Mean	SD
Strategy implementation enhances efficiency and effectiveness of the County Departments	43	4.31	.465
Strategy implementation promotes employee teamwork in the County	43	4.21	.458
Strategy implementation enhances change implementation	43	4.40	.597
Strategy implementation enhances stakeholder satisfaction	43	4.07	.421
Strategy implementation promote creativity of employees working in the County	43	4.11	.384
Strategy implementation enhances employee motivation	43	4.10	.443
Overall Aggregate Mean	43	4.02	.347

The study sought to establish parameters that were used to measure performance of Embu County government. As shown in Table 2, the study reveals that to larger extent performance of the County was measured by levels of efficiency and effectiveness with a mean of 4.31, employee teamwork with a mean of 4.21, change implementation with a mean of 4.40, stakeholder satisfaction with a mean of 4.07, employee creativity with a mean of 4.11, and motivation with a mean of 4.10. The high aggregate mean indicated an agreement between the respondents that strategy implementation had an effect on performance of Embu County Government. The results are consistent with that of Omboi and Mucai (2011) who contend that performance of organizations can vary from one organization to another but the most common metrics used to measure performance can range from customer satisfaction, profits, market share, employee motivation, reduction of costs and corporate image.

Table 3: Correlations Analysis

	Employee Training	Performance
	1	
Employee Training	.710 .001	
Performance	.398 .001	.371 .002

** $p < 0.05$

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 –tailed).

Pearson’s product moment correlation analysis was used to assess the strength of the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable. The strength of the relationship was measured by Product moment correlation ranges between -1 and +1. Table 3 shows the strength of the relationship. As shown in Table 3, there is a significant positive effect between strategy

implementation construct and performance of Embu County ($r = .398, p < 0.01$). Performance of Embu County Government had significant positive effect with constructs of strategy implementation whereby employee training is ($r = .710, p < 0.01$). As shown in Table 3, the results imply that strategy implementation constructs which is employee training influences performance of Embu County Government.

Table 4: Model Summary, ANOVA and Regression Coefficients

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate	
1	0.923	0.852	0.789	0.6273	
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	0.003	7	0.001	3.867	0.015
Residual	0.068	182	0.021		
Total	0.071	189			
Regression Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients B	T	Sig
	Beta	Standard Error			
Constant	1.234	1.2235	-	1.515	0.000
Employee Training (ET)	0.687	0.1032	0.152	4.223	0.000

As shown in Table 4, multiple regression analysis was conducted to test effect of strategy implementation construct (employee training) on performance of Embu County. Independent factors that were studied explained only 78.9% of strategy implementation on performance of Embu County Government. Performance of Embu County was represented by the adjusted R^2 . This therefore meant that other factors not included in this study contributed to 21.1% performance of Embu County Government. From Table 4, the processed data, the F statistics was 3.867 with p-values = 0.015 less or equal to 0.05 indicating the model was significant for further statistical analysis. As shown in Table 4, coefficient of determination explains the extent to which changes in the dependent variable can be explained by the change in the independent variables or the percentage of variation in the dependent variable (Performance of Embu County Government.) that is explained by all the independent variable (employee training).

Further, the final regression model that explained the effect between variables of the study was of the form:

$$P = 1.234 + 0.687ET.$$

According to the regression equation established, taking all factors into account (employee training) constant at zero, performance of Embu County government will be at 1.234 indicating that holding all factors constant, a unit increase in employee training will lead to performance of Embu County government by a magnitudes of 0.687 respectively. The findings reveals that at 5% level of significance and 95% level of confidence, the study concludes that there exist a

significant positive relationship between employee training and performance of Embu County government because all the significance values are less than the critical value of 0.05 as shown in Table 4 above. The findings were consistent with the study by Mbaka and Mugambi (2014) who established that lack of capabilities, skills and enthusiasm to drive strategy implementation led to poor strategy implementation in the Kenya water sector. A study by Konzi (2012) noted that lack of adequate funds training led to poor performance in the manufacturing firms in Tanzania.

10. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that employee training had a positive effect on performance of Embu County Government. The high aggregate mean indicated an agreement between the respondent and a low standard deviation indicated a small divergent of views between the respondent.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the leadership of the Embu County Government should allocate more funds to employee training as this will enhance employee capability to implement formulated strategies hence improving the overall county performance.

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