IMPACT OF HUMAN RESOURCES ON STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION IN STATE CORPORATIONS IN KENYA

Anne Wanjiru Kiboi  
School of Business  
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University  

Corresponding Author email: anekiboi@yahoo.com

Professor. S. Perks  
School of Business  
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Professor. E.E Smith  
School of Business  
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University


ABSTRACT

Changes have been taking place in the Kenyan state corporations since 2003 and this has been as a result of corporate strategy implementation. However it is not enough to develop a good strategy, good strategies can fail during implementation. The state corporations in Kenya, like in most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, have been characterized by slow and bureaucratic processes that retard corporation’s performance. Kenyan state corporations are important to the economy of the country. They provide social and essential services to the Kenyan population. However their poor performance needs a relook at determinants of success in strategy implementation in state corporations in Kenya. Kenyan public enterprises face challenges in the areas of labour and capital. As far as labour is concerned, the challenges appear to be in governance, the fostering of innovation, and the changing of employee attitudes towards effective service delivery that low levels of productivity measured in output and innovation, are damaging the much-needed growth in organisations as well as in the public sector. These challenges in state corporations corporate governance led to this study to focus on the impact of human resources on strategy implementation. A survey was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire distributed to 485 managers in state corporations in Kenya. Correlation and exploratory factor analysis, the KMO measure of sample adequacy, Bartlett’s test of sphericity, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality, multi-Collinearity diagnostic and regressions were the main statistical procedures used to test the appropriateness of data, correlation and significance of the relationships hypothesized between the various independent and dependent variables. Human resources provides sufficient evidence of statistically significant relationships between human resources and strategy implementation. This shows that the managers of state corporations in Kenya agree that human resources affect strategy implementation positively. Kenyan state corporation managers further agree that there is enough staff to implement their chosen strategies and that all staff are involved in decision-making. In addition, managers of Kenyan state corporations consider their staff to have the required skills to implement strategies by being flexible in adapting to new developments. They also consider their staff as committed to strategy implementation and regard them as champions who drive the strategic implementation process.

Key Words: Human Resources, Strategy Implementation, State Corporations in Kenya
Introduction
There is relatively low discipline in management of state corporations in Kenya and some of the state corporations that were previously successful went into liquidation such as, for example, the Kenya National Assurance and the Kenya Taxis Company, KENATCO (Republic of Kenya, 2005:15). In 2003, reform programmes were instituted to change the situation. State corporations were now expected to finance their operations without reliance on the state to bail them out. The rising demand and expectation of improved services by the taxpayers prompted more changes in the management of the state corporations (Flynn, 2007:87; Henry, 2001:65).

Strategic planning and performance contracts were instituted, which improved the management of state corporations (Kenya Institute of Management, 2008:10). Although a changing environment in itself necessitates changes, state corporations appear to have inherently less ability to act as freely as private sector organisations (Henry, 2001:87).

Kenyan public enterprises face challenges in the areas of labour and capital. As far as labour is concerned, the challenges appear to be in governance, the fostering of innovation, and the changing of employee attitudes towards effective service delivery (Minister of State for Public Service, 2010:10). On the capital input side, the embracing and the effective use of technology appear to be challenging (Minister of State for Public Service, 2010:12). The Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) reports that low levels of productivity measured in output and innovation, are damaging the much-needed growth in organisations as well as in the public sector (World Bank, 2010:8). Continuous efforts are therefore required to improve the output of employees in order to improve the effectiveness of public enterprises in delivering services to the public. The individual outputs of employees are dependent on their individual job performance. The job performance of an employee involves various job behaviours and attitudes, such as work quality, work quantity, learning ability, interpersonal relations, job interest, initiative, conduct, perseverance, attendance and appearance of employees (Adjibolosoo, 2011:92-93; Mulz, 2010:5). An improvement in productivity at the individual employee’s level will result in better productivity of the organisation itself (Mohammadian, Arayest, Mohammadian, Azizpour & Zanganeh, 2011:761).

Statement of the Problem
According to Government of Kenya (2006a:44), the external business environment in Kenya has witnessed dynamic changes. These changes include: accelerated formulations of economic reforms by the government, the liberation of the economy and markets, discontinuation of price controls, privatisations and commercialization of the public sector and increased competition. In this changing environment, state corporations and private sector organisations operating in the Kenyan environment have to constantly adapt to these changes through effective strategy formulation and implementation in order to remain competitive. Most state corporations in Kenya have proven to be largely ineffective and inefficient in achieving their strategic objectives. Some of the reasons cited by the World Bank (2005:66) for this outcome included: lack of clear vision and poor articulation of objectives; absence of teamwork among the staff; lack of proper strategy formulation and implementation measures and lack of long term political commitment and goodwill to reform public institution. Some of the policies in state corporations were predominantly focused on achieving specific targets. In most cases, these efforts failed to provide enough room or sufficient time to
implement a complex framework based on institutional development and capacity building.

The government has attempted to streamline state corporations through the introduction of reforms as contained in policy documents such as (Government of Kenya, 2007:38); are the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (2003-2007); Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) (2002); the Investment Programme for Economic Recovery Strategy IP-ERS(2004), and the Kenya Vision 2030. Although formulating a consistent strategy is a difficult task for any management team, making that strategy work, in other words, implementing it throughout the organization is even more difficult (Hrebiniak & Joyce, 2006:56). A study by David (2007:98) has shown that a considerable proportion (more than 65%) of organisational strategies fail to get implemented effectively. Previous studies (see for example Awino, 2001:86; Macmillan & Tampoe, 2001:39; Musyoki, 2003:98; Warsame, 2002:67) have attempted to explore the different aspects of organisational management such as strategy and policy formulation, development of a mission and vision and development of strategic goals and objectives. However, no study has been done in Kenya to establish the impact of human resources on strategy implementation in Kenyan state corporations. Yet, Kenyan public enterprises face challenges in the areas of labour and capital. As far as labour is concerned, the challenges appear to be in governance, the fostering of innovation, and the changing of employee attitudes towards effective service delivery that low levels of productivity measured in output and innovation, are damaging the much-needed growth in organisations as well as in the public sector. There was therefore a need to conduct this study.

Research Objective

The main research objective was to establish the impact of human resources on strategy implementation in state corporations in Kenya

Theoretical Review

In order to have a better understanding of the problem statement linked to this research it was useful to explore conceptual models which can support this study. The study was supported by the planning context environmental scan model and Zaribaf and Hamid’s drivers for strategy implementation model.

The Planning Context Environmental Scan Model

Figure 1 outlines the planning context environmental scan model (Public Safety Canada, 2010). This model indicates the internal- and external environmental variables that impact strategy formulation which in turn impact strategy implementation. To ensure successful strategy implementation, the organisation needs to first determine the impact of these variables on the organisation.
Figure 1: The planning context environmental scan model
Adapted from: Public Safety Canada (2010:1)

An environmental scan involves being aware of the context in which an organisation is operating so as to understand how it could be affected. During an environmental scan, the organisation defines the internal- and external parameters to be taken into consideration when formulating- and implementing strategies. It outlines the time, scope, scale and risks affecting the achievement of its objectives. The main variables in the internal environment which impact on strategy formulation and implementation as depicted in Figure 1 are: the capabilities, understood in terms of resources and knowledge (e.g., capital, time, people, processes, systems, technologies), including results from the capability improvement process; the organisation activities, policies, goals, objectives and strategies in terms of its strategic intent; perceptions, values and culture of the organisation; the nature and quality of leadership within the organisational functions and decision making processes, and structures (government, roles and accountabilities). On the other hand, the key elements of the external environment as can be seen in Figure 1, includes the cultural, political, legal, technological, economic, natural and international (global) environment. These environments influence the key drivers and trends that impact the organization’s objectives (strategy formulation) and ultimately drive the strategy implementation process. It also includes the perceptions and value expectations of external stakeholders.

The Concept of Human Resources
Akhtar et al. (2008:20) refer to HR as assets that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate and supported by the organisation, which can provide a sustained competitive advantage. In the context of a transitional economy such as Kenya, these resources include experienced and talented managers, qualified technocrats and competent professionals who strive to implement the organisational strategy successfully. Organisations have been challenged to improve technical expertise and knowledge of high-end technology so as to find and use the opportunities in the competitive environment (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2004:63)
Aswathappa (2010:7) refers to Human Resource Management (HRM) as the application of management principles to the management of employees in an organisation. Rao (2010:2-3) concurs that HRM means employing and developing people and maintaining and compensating them for their services commensurate with the job and organisational requirements. People with the relevant knowledge, skills, abilities and creativity can be used by the organisation to correctly deal with specific challenges faced by organisations, thereby increasing chances of successfully implementing strategies.

HRM makes a difference in terms of productivity, profitability and turnover. The services that the HR will yield depend on the capacities of the people using them, but the development of capacities of people is partly shaped by the resources that people deal with (Darrock, 2005:102). The proper management of HR requires questioning the skills-base of the organisation in terms of (David 2007:65): what skills the organisation already possesses; whether the skills-base is sufficient to meet the needs of the chosen strategy; whether the skills-base can be flexed or stretched to meet the new requirements. Wang and Shyu (2009:1791) believe that highly trained, skilled and motivated employees are likely to impact positively on strategy implementation. For organisations to make the best use of the available HR it is necessary to have HR practices in place which are aimed at tapping into the human potential to enhance successful strategy implementation.

**Human Resource Practices**

Waseem (2010:3267) defines HR practices as the set of practices adopted by an organisation to use its human capital and social capital by developing their knowledge and skills, increasing their motivation and nurturing effective social interactions. According to Chow and Liu (2007:51), HR practices form a set of distinct but interrelated activities that are directed at attracting, developing and motivating an organisation’s human assets and include staffing, training and development, performance appraisal, performance-based pay (reward), information sharing and participation. HR practices can influence employee behaviour in a desired direction towards innovation, an indicator of successful strategy implementation (Lopez-Cabrales et al., 2009:488) which can lead to a sustainable competitive advantage.

**Employee Involvement**

Rapert et al. (2004:221) claim that involvement of all employees in decision-making in an organisation is an essential part of the strategic management process. Rapert et al. (2006:209) suggest that to ensure successful employee involvement, a systematic approach must be designed in which all steps are clearly defined and communicated to all parties. Robinson and Ginder (2005:3) add that total involvement of an organisation’s employees generates pride and job satisfaction as well as financial gains for the organisation. On the other hand, Olson et al. (2006:1237) disagree with this view of employee involvement and argue that involving employees in the strategic process does not mean that all decisions are made by individual workers or small groups of employees. Top management must play the key and leading role in the decision-making process. Kotter and Schlesinger (2009:108) in their turn assert that using the input from employees helps to ensure that the organisation is maximising the use of its HR. Johnson (2005:98) posits that many employees will think of a better way to do things, but will keep it to themselves if they think it is useless to bring up the idea. This includes how they manage financial resources.
Research Methodology

This study adopted the positivistic research paradigm also known as the quantitative, objectivist, scientific, experimentalist or traditionalist research paradigm (Collis & Hussey 2003:47). The positivism research paradigm means that knowledge can be revealed or discovered through the use of a scientific method. In quantitative research the aim is to describe trends and it is a useful approach when making comparisons and testing relationships/hypothesis. The study adopted the descriptive research approach as it determines and reports the ways things are at present (Kothari, 2004:10). This approach is also appropriate because the study involved fact-finding and enquiries of different kinds to determine impact of market forces on strategy implementation in state corporations in Kenya. Orodio (2002:47) further observes that descriptive research is designed to obtain information concerning the current phenomena and wherever possible to draw valid general conclusions from facts discussed. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003:55) suggest that a descriptive study can be used to explain or explore status of two or more variables at a given point in time. The population of interest for this research and units of analysis was all top- and middle management of the 104 state Corporations in Kenya. The probability sampling technique was adopted by the study where a total of 31 (30%) state corporations were drawn randomly from the 104 state corporations in Kenya. The sampling frame was obtained from the only available database of state corporations in Kenya namely, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics.

Using the systematic sampling technique, the first state corporations from the list were identified thereafter every third state corporation were selected until the required sample of 31 state corporations was obtained. The criterion for inclusion of individual respondents in the sample was based on the position held in the state corporation, that is, any individual in top- and middle management levels was targeted in the study since they are the decision makers and implementers in the state corporations. The state corporations were contacted to obtain a data basis (organisational chart) of the top- and middle managers. These managers were selected using simple random sampling technique and based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. A total of 485 questionnaires were distributed. The study used primary data collected from the top- and middle managers within the state corporations using the survey method. The quantitative study entailed the distribution of a self-administered structured questionnaire to the targeted respondents, as already described. The questionnaires were personally delivered or sent via email to the identified top- and middle managers. The computer programme STATISTICA10 (2011) was used to analyse the data. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality was used to examine the data for normality. To measure sampling adequacy, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO test) and Barlett’s sphericity tests ensure that the data set did not conform to an identity matrix. In this study both face and content validity were utilized as validity tests. The questionnaire was given to experts in the fields of management and statistics as well as the study supervisors to appraise the items’ suitability in obtaining information according to research objectives and study variables. Exploratory factor analysis was also performed to reduce the number of variables to a small number of factors (constructs) and to confirm the hypothesized constructs to validate the research instrument. A cut-off point of 0.3 and above was used for significant factor loadings.

This analysis assesses the convergent and discriminant validity of the measuring instrument. This study utilized the internal consistency method which requires the average correlation among the items and the length of the test by computing Cronbach’s Alpha values to assess the internal reliability of the data collected. A cut-
off point of 0.7 was regarded as reliable. Descriptive as well as correlation and regression analysis was adopted for the study.

**Results**

The study obtained responses from a total of 30 of 104 possible state corporations in Kenya. A total of 485 questionnaires were administered to the respondents, resulting in a 86.6% final response rate. Out of these, 65 questionnaires representing 13.4% were disqualified due to incompletion, not being returned, or from those unwilling to participate in the study. The analysis of the results is thus based on 420 questionnaires. Sekaran (2003:244) is of the opinion that a minimum sample size of 30 to a maximum of 500 is sufficient and acceptable for a scientific investigation.

**Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for Normality**

The data for this study was screened for influential outliers which are linked to normality or non-normality of data. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. According to Hair et al. (2006:132), data screening also includes assessing distributional characteristics of the data. An assessment for distributional characteristics which included examining the data for normality was conducted by performing the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality. This is important because many model estimation methods are based on an assumption of normality since non-normal data may result in inflated statistics and underestimated standard errors (Lei & Lomax, 2005:15). According to Norusis (2007:54), for a data set to be normally distributed, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (Z-Statistic) significance level should be greater than 0.05 (p>0.05). The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for Normality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of the test</th>
<th>Strategy implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample (N)</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolmogorov-Smirnov (Z-Statistic)</td>
<td>4.421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (p-value)</td>
<td>0.328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 1, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (Z-Statistic) for the dependent variable, that is, strategy implementation was significant since the p-values were greater that 0.05 (Norusis, 2007:54). This shows that the data set had a normal distribution.

**Factor Analysis of Strategy Implementation Factor**

Table 2 shows the results of the factor analysis in terms of factor loadings, Cronbach’s alpha values for each item as well as Eigenvalue and variance explained by the strategy implementation factor.
Table 2: Results of the factor analysis of strategy implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
<th>Item correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha after deletion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SI1</td>
<td>Is focused on implementing all strategies</td>
<td>0.852</td>
<td>0.727</td>
<td>0.9443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI2</td>
<td>Has developed plans of action for strategy execution</td>
<td>0.918</td>
<td>0.842</td>
<td>0.9323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI3</td>
<td>Has a champion driving the strategic implementation process</td>
<td>0.795</td>
<td>0.632</td>
<td>0.9632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI4</td>
<td>Has committed staff that strive to implement all strategies</td>
<td>0.806</td>
<td>0.650</td>
<td>0.9565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI5</td>
<td>Monitors the progress of implemented strategies</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td>0.895</td>
<td>0.9654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI6</td>
<td>Has allocated specific time frames for strategy implementation</td>
<td>0.938</td>
<td>0.880</td>
<td>0.9434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI7</td>
<td>Has policies and procedures in place for effective strategy execution</td>
<td>0.922</td>
<td>0.851</td>
<td>0.9397</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that strategy implementation has an Eigenvalue of 5.45 which is greater than 1, and all factor loadings are greater than 0.30 which are above the cut-off point. Strategy implementation explains 78.23% of the variance in the data. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for strategy implementation is 0.953, suggesting that the instrument used to measure this factor is internally reliable. According to Robbins (2003:204), strategy implementation involves the application of the management process to obtain the desired results, such as designing the organisation's structure, allocating resources, developing information and decision process, managing human resources and rewards, approaches to leadership, and staffing. Adjibolosoo (2011:92) asserts that no social, economic or political organisation can function or implement strategies effectively without a network of committed staff. Such staff must strongly believe in and continually affirm the ideals of the society. Strategy implementation must be driven by a strategy champion, someone other than the CEO (Irwin, 2011:1). The strategy champion does not necessarily have to implement plans, but must oversee that intended strategic plans get implemented.

Factor Analysis of Human Resources

Table 3 shows the results of the factor analysis in terms of factor loadings, Cronbach’s alpha values for each item as well as Eigenvalue and variance explained by the human resource factor.

Table 3: Results of the factor analysis of human resources
The construct human resources explains 48.63% of the variance in the data. Table 3 depicts that human resources has an Eigenvalue of more than 1 (3.34) and all loadings are above the cut-off point of 0.3. The Cronbach’s-alpha coefficient for human resources is 0.646, suggesting that the instrument used to measure this construct is regarded as reliable. According to Nel, Van Dyk, Haasbroek, Schultz, Sono and Werner (2004:522), there is a critical relation between an organisation’s human resources and its contribution to the achievement of the organisation’s objectives and subsequent strategy implementation. Organisations need employees with the relevant knowledge, skills, abilities and creativity to implement the chosen strategies (Adjibolosoo, 2011:92). Additionally, Bosch et al. (2006:28) emphasise that human resources must be managed and aligned with strategies to ensure successful strategy implementation.

### Correlation Analysis

This section presents the testing of the hypotheses formulated in the study. Kerlinger (2004:15) maintains that although the Chi-square test is also known as a goodness of fit test, it tests the statistical relationships between two variables. It has limitations in that it does not show the direction and the strength of the association of the variables. Due to this shortcoming of the Chi-square test, Kothari (2004:87) and Norusis (2007:55) recommend the Spearman's Rho correlations test to assess the relationships and to measure the level of association between two or more variables since it overcomes the limitations of Chi-square test and shows the direction (whether positive or negative) and strength of the relationship between variables. A correlation analysis measures ranges between -1 and 1. The strength of the correlation values is guided by the following measures: strong relationship exists if \( r \geq 0.7 \); fairly strong relationship exists if \( 0.5 \leq r < 0.69 \); average relationship exists if \( 0.3 \leq r < 0.49 \); weak relationship exists if \( 0.1 \leq r < 0.29 \), and slight relationship exists if \( r < 0.09 \).

In addition, a positive correlation value denotes direct linear relationships while negative correlation denotes inverse relationships. The results of the correlations analysis are discussed in table 4.

### Table 4: Correlation Analysis
As can be seen in Table 4, strategy implementation has a strong relationship with human resources. Fugazzotto (2009:288) warns managers to take into account organisational culture, the environment, resources and distinctive competencies if strategic decisions are to be translated into actions. Sward (2006:48) is the opinion that managers are usually charged with the task of communicating values to all employees.

**Regression Analysis**

Evidence was found of statistical significant relationships (p<0.001) between the independent variable human resources and strategy implementation in the state corporations. A unit improvement in human resources, leads to a 0.011 improvement in the success of strategy implementation among the state corporations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable: Strategy implementation</th>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T-value</th>
<th>Sig. (p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>0.510</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy Implementation</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>-2.574</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions**

Human resources provides sufficient evidence of statistically significant relationships between human resources and strategy implementation. This shows that the managers of state corporations in Kenya agree that human resources affect strategy implementation positively. Kenyan state corporation managers further agree that there is enough staff to implement their chosen strategies and that all staff are involved in decision-making. In addition, managers of Kenyan state corporations consider their staff to have the required skills to implement strategies by being flexible in adapting to new developments. They also consider their staff as committed to strategy implementation and regard them as champions who drive the strategic implementation process. According to Nel et al. (2004:522), organisations have realised that there is a critical relationship between HR and its contribution to the achievement of the organisation’s objectives and subsequent strategy implementation. As Adjibolosoo (2010:12) rightly cautioned, organisations will only accomplish strategy implementation when scarce financial, effort, energy and time resources are channelled to improve the quality of the human factor.

**Recommendations**

It is suggested that managers of state corporations in Kenya: improve HR’s technical expertise and knowledge to find and utilise the opportunities in the competitive environment; ensure that staff have all the resources needed to implement the planned strategy. In a transitional economy such as Kenya, there are experienced and talented managers, qualified technocrats and competent professionals who strive to implement their corporations’ strategy effectively; bear in mind that it should be possible to implement the chosen strategy with the HR available as it is impossible to implement a strategy which exceeds resource availability; effectively manage HR so that
employees perform at optimal level. Informal and formal networking is key in mobilising HR. For strategy implementation to succeed, a team-based approach is advisable, which will require investment in staff team-building activities; strive to recruit and retain HR with the relevant knowledge, skills, abilities and creativity to face strategy implementation challenges; make optimal use of the available HR by having the right HR practices in places such as staffing, training and development, performance appraisal, performance-based pay (reward), information sharing and participation to tap into their human potential as it will enhance strategy implementation; encourage employees towards continuous learning to obtain high levels of knowledge to become multi-skilled. With limited employment opportunities in Kenya, it is absolutely essential that employees be multiskilled, as highly trained, skilled and motivated employees are likely to impact strategy implementation positively; find new ways of executing tasks and encourage staff to be flexible to adapt to changes necessary to affect new ways of executing tasks. Staff should also be involved into decision-making, as they are after all the people who need to implement strategies.

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References


