

ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS INFLUENCING IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLANS IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA, A CASE OF MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY.

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Abstract

Strategic leadership indicates that many strategic plans are poorly developed and with relatively little success in their implementation. The research in this project sought to assess the factors that influence implementation of strategic plans in Private universities in Kenya, a case study of Mount Kenya University. The independent variables were institutional leadership factors while the dependent variable was development and implementation of strategic plans in Mount Kenya University. The study was anchored on Path Goal, Transformational Leadership and Open Systems theories. Being guided by Tromp and Ruben's (2010) Strategic Planning in Higher Education Framework, the study was used a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative in data collection, analysis and interpretation. Stratified random and purposive sampling techniques were used to arrive at the 56 participants from Mount Kenya University. A questionnaire was used in data collection for primary data and content analysis of the strategic plans in Mount Kenya universities captured the secondary data. A pilot test was conducted to pretest the questionnaire at Zetech University to get feedback on whether the questions captured the expected data, and whether there was any ambiguity in the questions. The questionnaires were coded to ensure accountability of the number of questionnaires that were issued. They were edited for completeness, accuracy and consistency and the data inputted using SPSS version 24. Data analysis was done quantitatively using regression analysis to guide the testing of the hypotheses. Some aspects of the questionnaire that were open ended questions were categorized according to the thematic areas as they had been captured by the questionnaire at the collection stage. The results showed that institutional leadership factors have a strong positive correlation ($r = .846$, $p < 0.01$) with the development and implementation of strategic plans. This suggests that as institutional leadership factors have a strong positive correlation with the development and implementation of strategic plans. The study recommends

that for universities to achieve a competitive advantage a good quality strategic plan development and implementation is important guided by institutional leadership that is effective and efficient and engaging all the key stakeholders at all stages of development of the strategic plan to the implementation process of the strategic plan.

Key words: Institutional leadership, strategy implementation

1.1 Background to the Study

Globally, the leaders of today – be they political leaders, corporate leaders or civil society leaders – have to act within the context of a dynamic system of global pressures and trends (University of Cambridge Institute of Sustainable Leadership (UCISL), 2021). As such, the 21st-century leaders need to anticipate change, and be agile enough to deal with the challenges that are coming at them from all angles. UCISL (2021) observes that leaders have been dealing with volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity for decades, but now with ever-evolving technology and new processes, leaders and organizations are facing even stronger headwinds than before. If they do not adapt they may not survive. The challenge of leadership is to turn these risks into opportunities, which may even pre-empt or prevent the risks. This calls for leaders to be strategic and to plan for their organizations with foresight and clarity if they are to remain competitive in the market. But what exactly is leadership.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Universities play a critical role in building a country's economy through providing the appropriate technical skills required in job market (GOK, 2016). While most of the Universities and other higher learning institutions majorly focus on managerial and administration skills, Higher learning institutions provide the actual technical skills that promote innovation and self-employment (Wanyonyi & Muturi, 2015). Despite their role in the economy, the institutions have experienced minimal growth with declined intake levels and low rated of completions with inadequate infrastructure and skills to offer the required training (Gakungu et al., 2012). While strategic planning was found to be a key missing factor, most of these institutions have come up with the appropriate strategic plans but little or no change has been observed. It still remains clear that the higher learning institutions have a long way to go as far as meeting their mandate is concerned. Empirical studies have proposed that learning institutions ought to embrace strategic planning as a way of promoting their performance and growth (Ndegwa, 2014). While at this, following the government's directive for the educational institutions to have strategic plans, it implies that most of these institutions have embraced strategic planning and little change can be observed. The question therefore remains; are the strategic plans implemented in the higher learning institutions? This study seeks to answer this by assessing the factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans in higher learning institutions focusing on Private Universities in Kenya, case of Mount Kenya University.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main objective of the study was to determine the influence of institutional leadership, on the development and implementation of strategic plans in Mount Kenya University

1.3.1 General Objective

The main objective of this study, was to determine the influence of institutional- leadership on the development and implementation of strategic plans in Mount Kenya University.

The study was based on the following specific objective

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To examine institutional leadership factors, influence development and the implementation of strategic plans in Mount Kenya University

1.4 Research Questions

- i. Does an institutional leadership factor influence development and the implementation of strategic plans in Mount Kenya University.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Literature

The study adopts an eclectic approach in the use of theories. The research falls within the general area of leadership and specifically in the branch of strategic leadership. It also addresses an aspect of strategic management and especially because of its focus on the strategic plan, a tool that is used in both management and leadership of an organization to rally the team round a certain goal. Thus the research is underpinned within leadership theories of leadership (Path Goal Theory (House, 1974) and Transformational Theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985)); a management theory, (Open System theory, (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Bogdanov, 1980; Lazlo, 1996; Meadows, 2008)) and a strategic planning theoretical framework (Strategic Planning in Higher Education Framework (Tromp and Ruben, 2010). Below is a review of these theories

2.1.1 The path goal theory

Path-Goal Theory (House, 1974) states that a leader's behavior is contingent to the satisfaction, motivation and performance of his or her team. The theory argues that the leader engages in behaviors that complement subordinate's abilities and compensate for deficiencies. The manager's job is viewed as guiding workers to choose the best paths to reach both their goals as well as the corporation's goals. The theory based on specifying a leader's style or behaviour that best fits the employee and work environment in order to achieve a goal. The goal is to

increase an employee's motivation, empowerment, and satisfaction so they become a productive member of the organization.

2.2 Empirical Literature

2.2.1 Transformational Leadership

Burns introduced the concept of transformational leadership in his 1978 book, "Leadership." He defined transformational leadership as a process where leaders and their followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation. According to Bass (2015), transformational leadership comprises four dimensions. First, idealized influence is the degree to which followers realize leaders' value, confidence, belief, power, and ethical or moral orientation; their willingness to identify with these attributes; and a diversion from self-interest to higher collective goals (Antonakis & House, 2013; 2014). Second, inspirational motivation describes how leaders articulate visions to inspire and motivate subordinates to reach desired goals (Antonakis & House, 2012; 2014).

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The available literature in strategic planning process (Malunga, 2019; Mintzberg *et al.*, 2015; Saffold, 2014; Tromp & Ruben, 2019) highlight many factors that influence strategic planning in organizations. For manageability of scope, the present study, however, focused on independent variable: institutional leadership factors. Dependent variables were two, namely, the development and the implementation of strategic plans in mount Kenya university focused on in the study, as illustrated in the figure below.

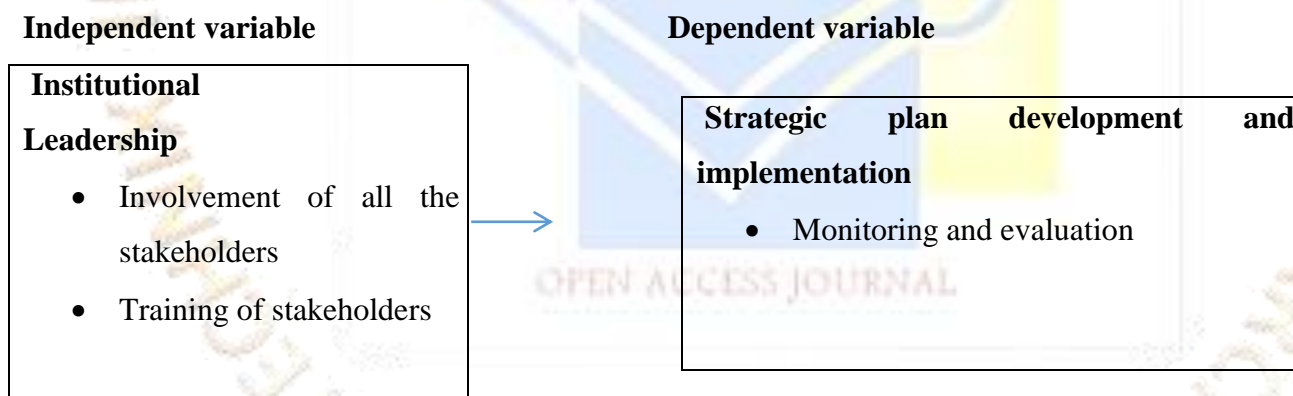


Figure 1: conceptual framework (source own conceptualization, 2023)

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design, target population, sample size as well as sampling technique.

Methods of data collection and proposed data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

In terms of research methods, the present study adopted a mixed method (qualitative and quantitative), but largely falls within the broad area of quantitative approach. It specifically adopts the descriptive survey and explanatory research design in data collection and analysis. As Kothari (2009) rightly observes, the function of research design is to provide for the collection of relevant evidence with minimal expenditure of effort, time and money and a descriptive survey and explanatory design does exactly that. The purpose of descriptive and explanatory methods in research is to describe, explain and validate the research findings and the chosen research design guided the present study in achieving this goal. The rationale of the choice of descriptive survey and explanatory research is further based on the fact that the design makes it possible to identify any causal links among the factors or variables that pertain to the research problem. In the case of the present study, these links are the factors that influence the development and implementation of strategic plans in higher education. The study surveyed the strategic planning process in two selected universities, assessed the factors that influence the development and implementation of their strategic plans, described these factors, then described and interpreted the emergent patterns. Quantitative methods of data analysis were adopted. The researcher used questionnaire as a tool of data collection for primary data and literature review, and analyzed the content in the strategic plans in the two universities, for secondary data.

3.4 Sampling and Sample Size

Selection of the participants was based on the assumed role that the staff/faculty members and students play in the development of strategic planning. The sample comprised of respondents in Mount Kenya university, totaling to 124 participants (see table below). Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques will be used to arrive at the 124 participants that formed the sample of the study. The use of stratified sampling was ideal because the sample frame comprised participants drawn from different strata in the university structure. The rationale of the use of purposive sampling is based on the fact that the researcher needed to choose and approach eligible participants who fitted the sample frame.

3.6 Piloting of research instruments

To pre-test the research instruments, and generally determine whether the whole research would ‘take off’, the data collection tool was needed to be pre-tested to get feedback on whether it captured the expected data, and whether there was any ambiguity in the questions. Any ambiguity noted needed to be corrected before embarking on actual data collection for the present study. To be able to do the pre-test, permission was sought from the leadership of the Zetech University, for the questionnaires to be administered among the staff and students involved in strategic planning process in the University for the sole purpose of pre-testing research instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis methods.

3.9 Data Analysis Techniques & Procedures

Data analysis refers to examining what has been collected and making inferences and deductions. Both qualitative and quantitative data analytical techniques were adopted in the study. Being guided by the thematic areas that form the imperatives in the theoretical framework, data will be analyzed as per each of the five objectives using SPSS to consider how leadership factors, stakeholder involvement, as well as how availability of finances influenced the development and implementation of strategic plans in Mount Kenya university.

The questionnaires were coded to ensure accountability of the number of questionnaires that were issued. These questionnaires were edited for completeness, accuracy and consistency and the data inputted using SPSS. Data analysis was done quantitatively using regression analysis to guide the testing of the hypotheses.

DATA ANALYSIS RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a summary of data analysis, research findings and discussions.

4.2 Response Rate of the Study

The goal of the study was determining the influence of institutional- leadership, stakeholder involvement and availability of resources on the development and implementation of strategic plans in Mount Kenya University. The study response rate and non-response rate was examined in order to appreciate this study.

4.4 Institutional leadership factors on development of strategic plan

The research findings in table 5 revealed the following in relation to institutional leadership development of strategic plan. The results on university CEO being the chief strategist on the development of strategic plan showed a mean of 3.19 with a standard deviation of 1.31. On University top leadership offering leadership in drafting, reviewing and refining mission, vision, core values. The research findings revealed a mean of 3.23 with a standard deviation of 1.39. The results on university’s leadership ensuring that the leadership was inclusive

and diverse perspectives was sought showed a mean of 3.54 with a standard deviation of 1.19. The results on university's leadership ensuring mechanisms of listening to all stakeholders were in place showed a mean of 2.81 with a standard deviation of 1.45. The results on university's leadership offering leadership in conducting the environmental scanning showed a mean of 3.31 with a standard deviation of 1.40.

The results on the university's leadership offering leadership to ensure that the goals were clear, coherent, appropriate and measurable scored a mean of 3.18 with a standard deviation of 1.28. The results on university's leadership overseeing the entire goal setting process to be certain that the goals clearly advanced the organization's desired directions, addressed critical needs and had been established with appropriate input from colleagues scored a mean of 2.71 with a standard deviation of 1.41. The results on university's leadership facilitating and guiding the development of the strategic plan scored a mean 3.13 of with a standard deviation of 1.34. The highest mean score was 3.54 and the lowest was 2.71 therefore a range 0.83. This shows that institutional leadership is important in the development of strategic plans where different stakeholders are involved a4.7 Inferential Analysis

4.7.1 Correlations

Institutional leadership factors have a strong positive correlation ($r = .846$, $p < 0.01$) with the development and implementation of strategic plans This suggests that as institutional leadership factors have a strong positive correlation with the development and implementation of strategic plans and consulted with the guidance of the university leadership.

4.7.2 Regression Analysis Results

The relationship between the factors influencing implementation of strategic plans in private universities in was established using multiple regression models after the diagnostic tests indicated that, the assumptions of multiple regression models would not be violated. Regression analysis involved the analysis of coefficient of determination, model significance and model coefficients. Coefficient of determination indicates the percentage changes in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables in a regression model.

4.7.2 Regression Coefficients

Regression analysis was used to define relationships among the variables, the overall model fit and how well the dependent variables predict the independent variable, (Makau, 2017). In order to undertake the above, test for the appropriateness of the regression model was done by undertaking the tests as elaborated below. Multiple Regressions was used to determine how independent variables predicted the dependent variable.

Table 1 presents the regression coefficients and the significance of the regressions (p-value). From the regression result, the coefficient of Institutional leadership 0.273. This implies that one unit change in Institutional leadership, led to a change in 0. 273 in strategy implementation. Therefore, there is a statistically significant influence on in strategy implementation ($\beta = 0.656$; $t = 3.542$; $p < 0.05$).

Table 1: Multiple Regression (Coefficients)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	3.48	.536		6.513	.000
Institutional leadership	.273	.021	.656	3.542	.000

$$Y = a + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + b_3 X_3 + \epsilon_{it}$$

$$Y = 3.48 + 0.273 X_1 - 0.233 X_2 + 0.211 X_3 + \epsilon_{it}$$

Where:

Y = Strategy implementation

a = Constant

X₁ = Institutional leadership

e_i = Stochastic term

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a summary of the project. This chapter provides a summary of the research findings reported in this study. This section also provides a discussion for the study and its implications. This section also gives the conclusion of the study and also the recommendations of the study and areas for further research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The research aimed at assessing the factors influencing the development and implementation of strategic plans in private Kenya universities case of Mount Kenya University. The research was guided by the Tromp and Ruben's (2020) Strategic Planning in Higher Education Framework. This research used a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative approach to collect data, analysis and interpretation.

The research looked at three independent variables influencing development and implementation of strategic plans in Mount Kenya University.

The objective on institutional leadership factors showed that it has a positive significant on development and implementation in Mount Kenya University. The university considered both the use of quantitative and qualitative findings in relation to institutional leadership factors influence on the development and implementation of strategic plans in Mount Kenya University.

5.3 Conclusions

Basing the research findings reported in this study and the theoretical reviewed bases of the study as well as discussion of the study in chapter four the study makes the following. One, the university leadership especially the chief executive officer who is the chief strategist key for the success of the development and implementation strategic planning process, from the initial development stage of the strategic plan to its implementation stage. The commitment and guidance of the university leadership is very important. They should provide direction of the strategic development and implementation the process to ensure its success.

5.4 Recommendations

The research findings, its implications and its conclusions of the study, emerges the following recommendations on the development and the implementation of strategic plans in private universities in this case Mount Kenya University: Private Universities leadership should be the lead in the strategic planning development and implementation process. They should provide guidance and show commitment from the initial stage of development and implementation to the end of the strategic planning process.

5.5 Areas for Further Research

This study only focused on three factors that influenced development and implementation of strategic plan in private universities in Kenya. These factors were institutional leadership factors, stakeholder involvement and financial resources availability. There are other factors apart from the three that also influence development and implementation of strategic plan in private universities in Kenya which were not looked at in this study. Therefore, this study recommends that more factors should be looked at to widen the scope of the scope. Other studies can look at other factors mentioned in the theories (Tromp & Ruben, 2019) such as organizational culture, communication and assessment factors.

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