

# FACTORS AFFECTING EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLANS IN COUNTY GOVERNMENTS: THE CASE OF BUNGOMA COUNTY INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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**Abstract:** Studies have shown that strategies frequently fail not because of inadequate strategic planning/formulation, but because of inefficient implementation. This study reviews the factors affecting the effective implementation of Bungoma County Strategic Plan. The objectives of the study were to find out the impact of leadership; communication; resources; and organizational structure to the implementation of Bungoma County strategic plan. The study was significant in that it was a step forward towards proper management of County resources as per the Bungoma County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) as it identified key variables that deserve attention in the implementation process. The research was conducted through a case study design. Stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the respondents. A sample size of 47 respondents was chosen from a target population of 93 members whom comprised of the county executive, the county assembly, and the county and sub-county implementing strategic plan implementing units. Data was collected through administering written questionnaires. Data from the questionnaires was statistically analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques and presented through tables, charts and percentages. The study found that resources are the major factor affecting implementation of the Bungoma County strategic plan followed by leadership, organizational structure, and Communication. Human resources was identified as the most critical resource in the implementation process. However, middle and lower cadre employees lack the right skills and competencies to undertake implementation process and have not been trained on the components of the CIDP. Management allocates inadequate financial resources to the implementation process and the funds are further embezzled through corrupt tendering processes. Leadership lacks commitment as it does not allocate time to discuss the implementation process while the structure of the county government is not aligned to the county strategic plan, and lastly, Management does not clearly communicate employee responsibilities, tasks and duties. The study recommends that for the county Government to achieve its intended development objectives, the county management must adopt and embrace proper resource allocation and utilization mechanisms, participatory approaches to strategy execution, employee training and development, issue-based politics, and an effective organizational structure and communication procedures. This will help enhance coordination and control within the county government.

**Keywords:** Organisational performance, Efficiency, Strategic plan, Integrated Development plan.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Public sector is under increasing pressure worldwide to increase outcomes and improve output of their organizations, while simultaneously improving efficiencies and effectiveness. This is crucial in addressing global challenges facing the sector as McKinsey and Company suggest: governments must radically increase the productivity of public services;

change their relationship with constituents to address their ever increasing demands; redraw their organizational landscape to deliver better services; achieve a major cultural change that puts data at the heart of policy making and management practice; and find new ways to compete against the private sector to attract and retain scarce talent. The nature and scale of these trends make the coming decade a defining period for the public sector. Thus John Bryson (2004) argues that 'leaders and managers of the public sector organizations must become effective strategists if these organizations are to fulfill their missions, meet their mandates, satisfy their constituents, and create public value in the years ahead'. In Kenya, the Government has undertaken various reforms. First was to restructure the public service. The restructuring process culminated to the launching of the Civil Service Reform Programme of August 1993 (PSRDS, 2005). Secondly, the Government introduced Performance Appraisal System (PAS) through *The Draft Performance Appraisal System Policy for the Public Service in Kenya (2008)*. The objective of the programme was to improve efficiency and productivity of the public sector. Further, the Government embraced Strategic management through the adoption of the Kenya Vision 2030 as the country's new development blueprint covering the period 2008 to 2030 (GOK, 2007). The Vision 2030 aims to transform Kenya into a newly industrializing, 'middle-income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens by the year 2030'. The adoption of the vision by Kenya comes after successful implementation of the *Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERS)* which has seen the country's economy back on the path to rapid growth since 2002, when GDP grew from a low of 0.6% and rising gradually to 6.1% in 2006 (GOK, 2007). Above all, the enactment of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 further provided for devolved system of Government which created County Governments under article 176. To achieve the objects of devolution, County governments including Bungoma County government are required to adopt strategic management practices through preparation of County Integrated Development Plans. Consequently, the first Bungoma County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) was prepared within the framework of Article 220(2) (a) of the Constitution of Kenya and Section 104(1) of the County Government Act, 2012 (County Government of Bungoma - CGB, 2013). The overall objective of the plan is to provide a framework for ensuring integrated development across all sectors and regions of the county. The Bungoma CIDP is aligned to the Kenya vision 2030 which aims to transform Kenya into a modern, globally competitive, middle income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens (CGB, 2013). Though most executives understand that implementation of strategic plans is crucial for success, many organizations still fail to execute the formulated strategic plan. This study sought to establish the factors affecting effective implementation of the Bungoma County strategic plan. Specifically, the study sought to determine the impact of leadership; resources; communication; and organizational structure on the implementation of Bungoma County strategic plan. Langley (1998) identified four roles of strategic plans: the public role, the information role, the group therapy role, and the direction and control role. According to Langley, in the public role, formal strategic plans are intended to impress or influence outsiders. The information role provides input for management decisions. The group therapy role is intended to increase organizational commitment through the involvement of people at all levels of the organization. The direction and control roles on the other hand are fulfilled when plans serve to guide future decisions and activities toward some consistent end.

There must be a translation of strategic thought into strategic action. This process of translating formulated strategies into action to achieve the organization's targeted results is known as strategy implementation. The translation is much easier if managers and employees of the firm understand the business, feel a part of the company, and through involvement in strategy formulation activities have been committed to helping the organization succeed (Gopinadhan, [www.businessstrategy.m.com](http://www.businessstrategy.m.com) part).

The aim of the CIDP implementation is to achieve county development priorities which include: Supporting investments to ensure food security and value addition, supporting investments in pro-Youth, Women and disadvantaged groups, provision of adequate, affordable and accessible County Public services including; water and sanitation services, improving urban and rural road infrastructure and amenities, promoting local economic development (LED) and job creation, environmental protection and conservation, improving access to quality and affordable health care, improving access to quality and affordable Pre-Primary education, village polytechnics and supporting other levels of education and training, promoting value addition and agri-business, promote intergovernmental co-ordination and relations, support sub-counties, wards, urban areas and towns to offer sustainable services to citizens, and promotion of quality and adequate County integrated services in line with the Constitutional and legal mandate (CGB, 2013). To achieve the above outlined development priorities, the County Government put in place a resource mobilization and investment opportunities framework to deliver these initiatives on schedule and at minimal cost. The following strategies were put in place: revenue raising, asset management, financial management, capital financing and accountability (CGB, 2013). To be able to successfully implement the CIDP, there is need to anticipate the factors from both internal and external sources that are

likely to hinder the implementation process. This research examines the factors affecting effective implementation of Bungoma County strategic plan. Specifically, the research sought to find out the impact of leadership; resources; communication; and organizational structure on strategic plan implementation in Bungoma County.

## **2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

### **General Objective:**

The main objective of the study is to examine the factors affecting effective implementation of the Bungoma County strategic plan.

### **Specific Objective:**

The specific objectives of this study were:

- a. To examine the impact of leadership on implementation of Bungoma County strategic plan.
- b. To examine the impact of communication on implementation of Bungoma County strategic plan.
- c. To examine the impact resources on implementation of Bungoma County strategic plan.
- d. To examine the impact of organizational structure on implementation of Bungoma County strategic plan.

## **3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study was guided by the following Questions:

- a. How does Leadership impact on implementation of Bungoma County strategic plan?
- b. How does Communication impact on implementation of Bungoma County strategic plan?
- c. How do Resources impact on implementation of Bungoma County strategic plan?
- d. How does Organizational structure impact on implementation of Bungoma County strategic plan?

## **4. JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY**

Strategy implementation is one of the most difficult but most important phase in the strategic management process (USDA, 1998). An in-depth understanding of the concept of strategy and strategic plan implementation by various stakeholders and in particular the government of Bungoma County is a step forward towards proper management of county resources as per the county plan. The study helps to equip the county executive and managers with knowledge on key issues involved in strategic plan implementation. This is critical for successful implementation of any laid down strategic plan. Further, the study makes contributions to knowledge by expanding the frontiers of the already available knowledge in the area of strategy implementation. This is the only study that has investigated the factors affecting implementation of the strategic plan in the context of County Governments in Bungoma County. Hence, employees of Bungoma County Government, clients, managers, general readers, educators and researchers in the field of strategy implementation will find the study useful as an authoritative piece of reference.

## **5. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study is based on the following theories;

### **The Resource – Based view Theory:**

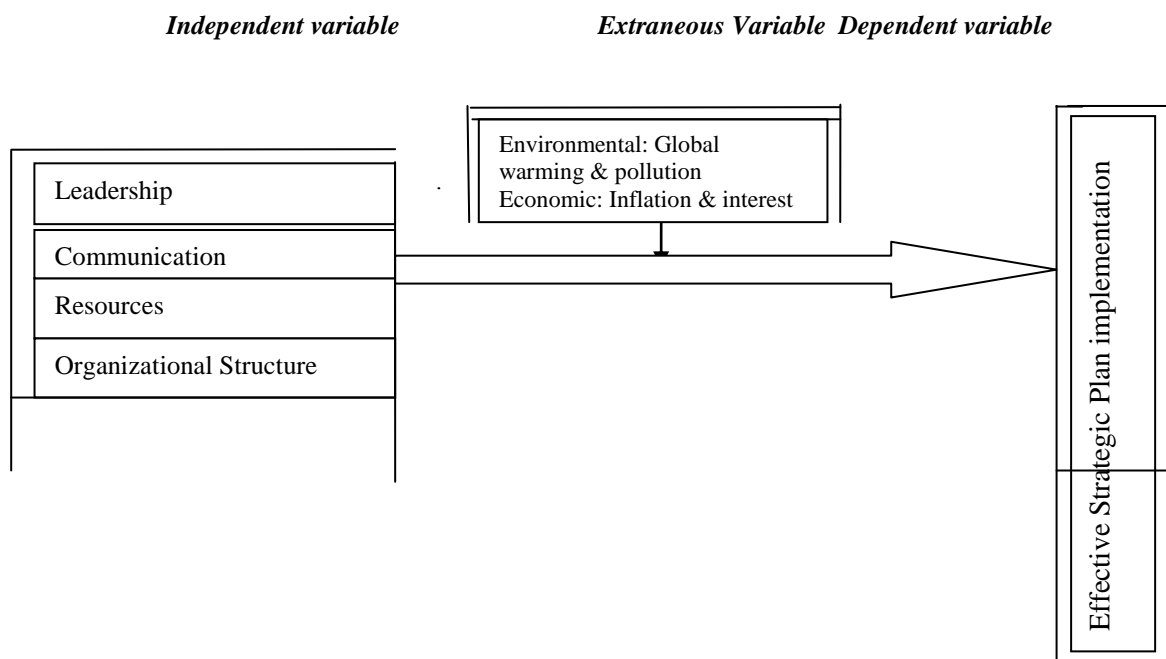
The Resource – Based View (RBV) theory has emerged as one of the substantial theories of strategic management (Rumelt, 1984). The theory suggests that the resources possessed by a firm are the primary determinants of its performance and these may contribute to a sustainable competitive advantage of a firm (Hoffer and Schendel, 1978). Resources are stocks of available factors that are owned or controlled by the firm, which are converted into final products or services (Amit and Schoemaker, 1993). They include all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, and knowledge controlled by a firm, that enable the firm to conceive of and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness (Barney, 1991).

Barney (1991) argues that in the RBV of the firm, a firm’s performance is affected by the firm – specific resources and capabilities. This implies that in the RBV, resources are allocated heterogeneously (unevenly) within an industry. Organizations therefore must be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, as they have to develop strategies on how to out-perform competitors within the given resources bundles and capabilities (Grant, 1991).

**Systems Theory:**

A system can be defined as an entity which is a coherent whole (Maul & Yip, 2009) avers that such a boundary is perceived around it in-order to distinguish internal and external elements and to identify input and output relating to and emerging from the entity. A systems theory is thus a theoretical perspective that analyzes a phenomenon seen as a whole and not as simply the sum of elementary parts (Mele et al., 2010). The focus is on the interactions and on the relationships between parts in-order to understand an entity’s organization functioning and outcomes. This perspective implies a dialogue between holism and reductionism. The systems theory tries to look at how organizations function and operate as a system that is a subsystem of a much bigger system. It is the process by which an organization receives feedback. The theory is based on the view that managers should focus on the role played by each part of an organization rather than dealing separately with the parts (Hannagan, 2002). The theory maintains that an organization does not exist in a vacuum. It does not only depend on its environment but it is also part of a larger system such as the society or the economic system to which it belongs. Bungoma County Government is a complex system consisting of staff, structures and numerous stakeholders. The systems theory will thus help understand the relationships among units within the County Government itself and between its internal and external environments..

**6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**



**Figure 2.2: Conceptual framework**

**7. REVIEW OF VARIABLES**

**Leadership:**

Organizational leadership plays a role when implementing a strategy (Pearce & Robinson, 2005). Not only the formulation of strategy but also top managers play a crucial part in the implementation (Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2000). This means that an organization needs managers who give direction to the implemented strategy and who provide staff with the necessary skills to comply with the outlined strategy.

According to Sorooshian et al. (2010) a successful strategy realization is identified by the coherence of decisions and actions of all employee resources at all levels of the organization and not simply by the people who originally described the strategy. Top executive's main role is to make sure the smooth procedure of the whole executive structure and furthermore to communicate successfully within that executive structure. The function of CEOs in strategy implementation has been investigated and it was demonstrated that, CEOs play various roles as commander, architect of implementing the planned strategy, co-coordinator, coach and prime-setter roles in strategy implementation (Heracleous, 2000).

#### **Communication:**

The word 'communication' is derived from the Latin word "communis", which means common (Saleemi, 2006). Thus communication means sharing ideas in common. It means a verbal or written message, an exchange of information, a system of communicating, and a process by which meanings are exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols. Communication is therefore an effective and an important tool of management. Once a strategy is formulated, it must be communicated to those people who would implement it. Strategy communication is the process of transferring the strategy information from the formulators to the implementers (Gopinadhan).

#### **Organizational Structure:**

The correct organizational structure is crucial to enable the organization to implement its strategy. To facilitate the achievement of the strategic and organizational objectives, organizational structure coordinates and integrates the tasks executed by all employees in the organization, i.e. employees at all levels, and across all divisions and functions (Hill et al, 2009). Organizational structure determines the departments and functions in an organization, it defines the hierarchy, span of control and reporting relationships, and includes the systems for communication, coordination and integration across these divisions and functions, both vertically and horizontally (Daft, 2001). Factors relating to the organizational structure are the second most important implementation barrier (Heide, Grønhaug & Johannessen, 2002). Drazin and Howard (1984) see a proper strategy-structure alignment as a necessary precursor to the successful implementation of new business strategies (Noble, 1999b). They point out that changes in the competitive environment require adjustments to the organizational structure. According to Pathfinder International, an effective structure facilitates management and clarifies relationships, roles and responsibilities, levels of authority, and supervisory or reporting lines.

#### **Resources:**

According to the new resource based view of the firm, resources are described as the set of assets and capacities, both tangible and intangible, which when competitively superior, scarce and appropriate, have the potential to generate value from diversification (Collis and Montgomery, 2004). Resources contribute to the competitive advantage of a business; they determine what a firm wants to do and also what it can do. The resource based approach to strategy implementation assumes human resource as a distinctive source of competitive advantage of the firm (Brown, 2007 and Dunford, Snell and Wright, 2001). Thus there should be a relationship between the firm's strategy and the use of its human resources.

## **8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design:**

The research was conducted through a case study design method. The method is appropriate as it involves an in-depth understanding of the area of study i.e. factors affecting effective implementation of strategic plans. The method is also appropriate as it involves a careful and complete observation of a social unit, a person, institution, family, cultural group, or an entire community and emphasizes depth rather than the breadth of study (Kothari, 1990). Thus the design is valuable for an in-depth contextual analysis. Finally, the case study method was used as it is appropriate for small areas of coverage regarding to one enterprise, institution, company or office which is applicable to this research.

#### **Target Population:**

The target population for this study comprised of 93 top managers of Bungoma County Government. These include the County Executive members, County assembly members and managers, county and Sub County implementing units. The target population was selected because it is involved in policy making and the day-to-day supervisory and managerial operations of the County.

### **Sample Size And Sampling Technique:**

Stratified sampling technique was used as the main method to select the respondents. The technique was used because the target population is classified according to job strata which are the domain of study; the method reduces sampling error; it is administratively easy to conduct the study; and lastly, different data collection methods can be used provided it is ensured that the data collected with different methods is comparable. However, in some instances, purposive sampling technique was as well used. The sample size was chosen from the target population to enable the researcher have a reasonable number for research work. The researcher selected a sample size of 47 respondents (51%) of the target population. This is consistent with Mugenda & Mugenda (1999) who asserts that a sample size should be at least 30% of the target population. Stratified sampling will ensure that each stratum is represented in the sample, and that the subgroup differences are accounted for. For each category of respondents, the sub-sample size will be determined as:

$$\text{Subgroup Sample Size} = \left( \frac{\text{Subgroup Population}}{\text{Total Population}} \right) \times \text{Required Sample size}$$

For example, the sample size for the County Executive Committee Members will be:

$$\text{Executive Committee Members Sample Size} = \left( \frac{12}{93} \right) \times 47 = 6$$

### **Data Collection Methods:**

Data was collected through administering written questionnaires. The questionnaires were hand delivered to the respondents by the researcher through a drop-wait-and-collect method. The questionnaire method was preferable because the population is literate, educated and can fill in a questionnaire competently with the aid of only the instructions given in the questionnaire. In addition, the method is less expensive and it eliminates bias due to phrasing questions differently with different respondents unlike in the interview method

### **Pilot Test:**

Reliability of a measure refers to the degree to which a measurement technique can be depended upon to secure consistent results upon repeated application (Weiner, J., 2007). Reliability measurement is in large part focused on reducing error in the measurement process. During the study, the researcher used pretesting or pilot testing method to determine the reliability of the research instrument. The method enabled the researcher to identify the sources of measurement error that would be detrimental to useful score interpretation. Instrument validation was done in several ways which include content analysis in which each item of the instrument was carefully analyzed and checked to ensure that it conveys the necessary message. The instrument was divided into several sections to ensure that each section reflects material for the specific objective. The researchers' supervisor further provided validity by making possible corrections on the questionnaire to meet the right standards.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the study, the researcher concludes that leadership, resources, communication, and organizational structure are all significant factors affecting effective implementation of Bungoma County strategic plan. Resources followed by leadership and organizational structure have the greatest impact on implementation of strategic plans while communication has the least effect. Given that resources contribute to the competitive advantage of an organization (Collis and Montgomery 2004), the county government must strive to understand and give solution to the resource variables which have a constraining effect on the implementation of the county strategic plan. Issues relating to resource allocation and utilization, employee training and development must be given due attention. Similarly, the county leadership must show commitment to the implementation process. Other than articulating the organizational strategy and setting a vision, the leadership must strive to allocate adequate resources and time for implementation process. The strategic plan has to be regularly reviewed for corrective action and timelines must be adhered to. This is critical in achieving strategic objectives. The study further concludes that a correct organizational structure is crucial to enabling an organization implement its strategic plan. Aligning organizational structure to the county strategic plan is critical not only in coordinating employee tasks but also understanding organizational hierarchy – as Hill et al, (2009) point out that organizational structure coordinates and integrates the tasks executed by all employees in an organization, i.e. employees at all levels, and across all divisions and functions. On the communication factor, the study concludes that effective

communication is a key requirement for effective implementation of strategic plans (Peng and Litteljohn, 2001). Organizational communication plays an important role in training, knowledge dissemination and learning during the process of implementation of strategic plans. Communicating strategic objectives and employees responsibilities, tasks and duties through the correct medium is crucial for employees to understand their role in the implementation process.

**The study recommends that:**

The study findings give empirical evidence that has implications for policy and practice in Bungoma County. To achieve the objects of devolution and the overall objective of the County Integrated Development Plan i.e. to provide a framework for ensuring integrated development across all sectors and regions of the county, there is need to address the above identified issues. It is upon this background that the following recommendations are hereby suggested:

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