



Strategic Planning Practice and Service Delivery of Trans Nzoia County Government, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Strategic planning has always been used as an important management tool in organizations across the world. The use of strategic planning necessitates decisions to be made in order to achieve the intended objectives and ensure continuity and relevance. Organizations may have good strategic planning practices, but the extent to which they are successfully implemented influence service delivery. The aim of the study was to establish the influence of strategic planning practice on service delivery by Trans Nzoia County government. The study was guided by Survival-Based Theory which explains how organizations can come up with ways to ensure that they achieve their objectives. The target population included management staff, employees and citizens of Trans Nzoia County. Semi structured questionnaires and Interview guides were used for data collection. The instruments were checked for both reliability and validity by use of Cronbach's alpha and construct validity index respectively. Descriptive, quantitative and qualitative designs were used to find out the relationship between the variables. Multiple Linear Regression model was used to explain how strategic planning practice influences service delivery of Trans Nzoia County government. With the values of the beta coefficients for the model $\beta_1 = 3.648$ and $\beta_2 = 0.412$ respectively. Setting of vision and mission statement had the most influence on service delivery and identification of objectives had the least influence. The findings are crucial especially to the management of the County government of Trans Nzoia and can also be emulated by other Counties.

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Introduction

Strategic planning has always been used as a very important management tool in many organizations across the world. The fast changing environment necessitates organizations to make decisions in order to ensure continuity and relevance. Strategic planning as a practice is very important in striving to meet organizational goals and also gives an overall direction to the organizations in areas such as financial management, marketing, human resource management among others, in order to realize meaningful success of the organizations (Ansoff & McDonnell, 2001: Tampoe & Macmillan, 2004: Robert & Duncan, 2007).

Thompson and Strickland (2004) define strategic planning as a process of making decisions that will ensure proper allocation of resources to pursue certain aims or objectives. It is a process of coordinating activities to achieve the organization's both short-term and long-term objectives. Hence the process of putting together the action plans for the purpose of running business and conducting operations by measuring the results against the expectations through organized feedback. Therefore strategic planning is an attempt to prepare future contingencies and account for environmental dynamics and complexities and can be used as a determinant to show where an organization is headed (Kraus, Reische & Reschke, 2007: Hough, Gamble, Strickland, & Thompson, 2008: Kaplan & Norton, 2009: McNamara, 2009).

Studies have been conducted on the importance of strategic planning in organizations that include setting of objectives and implementation. Therefore, there is need to

understand the strategic planning practice by organizations (Hough, Gamble, Strickland, & Thompson, 2008: Murega, 2011). More studies have been conducted to show how strategic planning influences service delivery in organizations. Johnsen (2014) conducted a study in Norway and found out that strategic planning is used extensively in the public sector and has improved service delivery.

Africa has also had both success and failures as a result of strategic planning (Majama & Magang, 2017). In South African region, Botswana is among the countries that have experimented on strategic planning in small and medium enterprises which have had a resounding success in service delivery. The findings of the study reveal that managers without sufficient knowledge on strategic planning can face challenges during implementation.

The notion of service delivery has been in existence for quite some time with scholars approaching it from various perspectives. But one key important aspect that should always be borne in mind is the model that is associated with service delivery in organizations that is referred to as SERVQUAL. According to Parasuraman, Ziethamal and Berry (1993), the model is founded on five key principles that define service quality from the customers' perspective. The key pillars of SERVQUAL include tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance as well as empathy. It is therefore important to note that service delivery within Trans Nzoia County government need to conform to the SERVQUAL model of service delivery.

Trans Nzoia County government has progressively and steadfastly tried to embrace strategic planning practice such

as setting of Vision, Mission Statement and Quality Objectives both short term and long term, in an effort to improve their services to the citizens. The study therefore was endeavored to find out how strategic planning practice in Trans Nzoia County government influences service delivery.

Statement of the Problem

Organizations can be in a position to realize improved and even superior performance by establishing a competitive edge over their competitors and adopt a way of using strategic planning in order to improve their service delivery. Strategic planning can be used to get competitive advantage over rivals and guide organizations to improve their services (Porter, 2003; Johnson & Scholes, 2010).

Organizations need to adapt to fast changing environment in order to remain relevant and competitive. Ansoff and McDonnell (2004), hold that strategic planning practice is necessary for organizations to be able to adapt to the immediate changing environment in order to ensure good service delivery. Thompson and Strickland (2004) believe that it is important for organizations to get a sense of direction and this can happen through strategic planning practices.

Studies have been conducted on strategic planning and how they influence service delivery of organizations. Murega (2011) conducted a study on the importance of applying strategic planning in organizations in order to achieve the organizational vision, mission and goals. Arasa (2008) carried out a study on strategic planning, employee participation and firm performance in Kenya's Insurance industry. Ong'ayo (2012) conducted a study on employee perception of the influence of strategic planning on organization performance at the ministry of Foreign affairs, Kenya. Therefore, there is need to understand role played by strategic planning practice and how they influence service delivery in Trans Nzoia County government, Kenya.

However literature remains scanty on how strategic planning practice influences service delivery in organizations and more specifically in Trans Nzoia County government, Kenya.

Objective of the Study

The main objective was to establish how strategic planning practice influences service delivery of Trans Nzoia County government, Kenya

Study Hypothesis

Study used a null hypothesis which stated that strategic planning practice has no influence on service delivery of Trans Nzoia County government, Kenya

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

Theoretical review for the current study was anchored on the notion that strategic planning practices play a very critical role as they influence delivery of services to the clients in any given organization. Therefore Survival Based Theory was found to be important in understanding the strategic planning practice in organizations.

Survival-Based Theory

The Theory was developed by Herbert Spencer (Miesing & Preble, 1985). However the theory is rooted in Darwinism theory of natural selection whereby, ruthless business rivalry and unprincipled politics is acceptable under this assumption. According to Khairuddin (2005), this Theory finds a lot of relevance in strategic planning practice due to the fact that organizations have to deploy strategies that should be focused on running very efficient operations and are in a position to rapidly respond to the fast changing competitive environment.

Therefore in an attempt to explain how strategic planning practice is carried out in Trans Nzoia County government, the study made use of survival based theory to bring out the notion that there needs to be a competitive environment within the County leadership to ensure that setting of vision, mission statement and quality objectives are achieved efficiently and effectively.

Empirical Review

Brown and Yoshioka (2003) conducted a study in Japan to find out the relationship between employee attitudes towards the organizational mission statement and their intention to remain with that particular organization. The findings reveal that mission statement is more effective towards attracting new employees to join the organization but not necessarily effective in terms of maintaining the already existing employees. However, the current study was endeavored to find out how strategic planning practice influenced service delivery in Trans Nzoia County government.

In Scotland a study was conducted in 58 banks on strategic planning and service delivery and the results indicate that proper and efficient strategic planning practices have an influence on service delivery (Moutinho & Phillips, 2002).

Majama and Magang (2017) contend that a number of African countries have had both success and failures in regard to strategic planning and performance of organizations. Such as in South African region, Botswana is among the countries that have experimented on strategic planning in small and medium enterprises which have a resounding success in service delivery. By use of semi-structured interviews of 36 small and medium firms selected across sectors, the findings indicate that the SMEs practice strategic planning to a limited extent.

In Kenya, Arasa (2008) carried out a study on strategic planning, employee participation and firm performance in Kenya's Insurance industry. Ong'ayo (2012) also conducted a study on employee perception of the influence of strategic planning on organization performance at the ministry of Foreign affairs, Kenya. The findings show that strategic planning is crucial in any successful implementation.

Setting of Vision and Mission Statements and Quality Objectives

Setting of Vision, Mission and Objectives that would be carried out by institutions is an important step towards the implementation process. Vision and Mission are established based on where the institutions want to go, why they exist, what the institutions can do and how they can achieve performance. Drucker (2004) argues that asking the question 'What is our business?' is the same as asking the question 'What is our mission?' A business is defined by its mission. Only a clear definition of the mission of the organization makes possible clear and realistic business objectives, because the mission defines the purpose of the firm in terms of its enduring sense of its reason for being.

The mission defines the vision of an organization in terms of what it wants to be and whom it wants to serve. A firm's mission should be clear and concise and distinguish it from any other firm. The mission statement has to be backed up with specific objectives. Objectives can easily be identified based on the needs of both the organizations and the customers and can be laid down using a number of strategic analysis tools such as PESTEL and SWOT analysis. The practice creates a linkage with performance since the results are seen in terms of sustainability of socio-economic development of the societies.

Determination of quality objectives that would be carried out by organizations is an important step towards service delivery. Objectives can easily be laid down using a number of strategic management tools such as the balanced scorecard (BSC). The BSC encompasses five key delivery areas. The proponents of this model, Kaplan and Norton (2009) believe that the BSC aims to achieve the objectives in a balanced manner focusing on both financial and non-financial benefits in the organization. The aspect creates a linkage with service delivery because at the end of the day the services are rendered to the clients.

It is clear that a poor or vague strategic planning practice can limit implementation efforts and good execution cannot overcome the shortcomings of a poor strategic planning effort (Hrebiniak, 2006). Several studies mention the fact that the kind of strategic planning that is developed will influence the effect of implementation (Allio, 2005). Therefore there is need to start with a formulated strategy that involves a good idea that will help in promoting successful implementation. Good implementation naturally starts with good strategic input: the soup is only as good as the ingredients (Allio, 2005; Cook, 2005).

Strategic Planning and Service Delivery

Strategic planning provides managers with not only a means of control, which specifies the gap between what is expected and what is achieved, but also support for developing actions and questioning their perceptions and assumptions about their organizations. Arasa and K'Obonyo (2012) assert that firms that practice strategic planning, record better performance compared to non-planners. The existing literature on strategic planning used customer satisfaction based performance measures, such as quality of services and products and timeliness as proxies for firm performance. Strategic planning has an influence on service delivery. This is crucial because it provides an early warning to the organization to realize the challenges that may occur and provides information on the direction and act as a guide. Therefore organizations need to come up with ways of strategically planning for the systems that will help in achieving their objectives (Abdullah, 2004; Engela & Ajim, 2010; Mackay, 2006).

Study Gap

The studies were conducted in Japan, Scotland and South African region which have different geographical, economic and social features. The methodology used was also different and therefore the findings cannot be generalized with Kenya and more specifically Trans Nzoia County Government. Arasa (2008) carried out a study on strategic planning, employee participation and firm performance in Kenya's Insurance industry. Ong'ayo (2012) also conducted a study on employee perception of the influence of strategic planning on organization performance at the ministry of Foreign affairs, Kenya. However scanty literature was available on strategic planning practice and service delivery by Trans Nzoia County Government, Kenya, which the current study was endeavored to address.

Methodology

Study Area

The study was conducted in Trans Nzoia County Government and data was collected from the administrative staff, employees and citizens of the County.

Study Design

The study made use of descriptive case and cross-sectional designs, because it was only conducted at one given point. However quantitative and qualitative designs were also employed.

Target Population

The study targeted 400 respondents, who comprised of 30 administrative staff, 85 employees and 285 citizens of Trans Nzoia County Government, Kenya.

Sampling and Sample Size

Both purposive and simple random stratified sampling techniques were used. The total sample size was computed using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. The sample size for the study was 196 respondents which were drawn from 400 respondents. The sample size included 16 administrative staff, 40 employees and 150 citizens of Trans Nzoia County government.

Study Instruments, Reliability and Validity

Structured questionnaires and interview schedules were used in data collection. Prior to use of these instruments, they were tested for both reliability and validity using Cronbach's alpha which was 0.75 and above that met the threshold and Content Validity Index respectively.

Data Analysis

In conducting the data analysis, normality tests were first conducted in order to ensure that the data met the conditions for normality prior to using the main model of the study which was the multiple linear regression model.

Test of normality

Normality test was conducted by use of Shapiro Wilks test in order to establish the normal distribution of the qualitative data from the respondents. This approach was used by Beldüz Kara, Kanyilmaz, Çankaya and Kara (2018).

To establish the relationship between independent and dependent variables, Multiple Linear Regression Model was used. The approach was used in a study on Syrian Barley crops by Rihan and Abdullah (2018) who established that model is critical when studying the effect of number of independent variables, on one dependent variable.

In utilizing the model for the study, the predictors of the model comprised of writing vision and mission statements and quality objectives, while service delivery was the criterion variable in Trans Nzoia County Government. More importantly, the value of coefficient of determination from the model was used to establish the percentage of variations in service delivery that were caused by variations in various strategic planning practices in Trans Nzoia County government. Therefore Analysis of Variance table (ANOVA) was used to show the extent to which the variations were caused by both the regression line as well as the errors (residuals). The null hypothesis was tested using 5% level of significance.

Ethical Considerations

To this end, the study ensured that anonymity and privacy of the respondents were assured at all times and more specifically the study served the respondents with a letter of introduction showing the purpose and intent of conducting the study.

Results and Interpretations

SPSS software was used to carry out data analysis. The findings were tabulated and summarized in tables. The tables include the model summary table, table of regression coefficients which also indicates the tests for multi-collinearity that gives an idea about inter correlations among the independent variables of the study. The interpretation of statistical significance is given by a case where the p-value is less than the level of significance. It is also interpreted that the higher the value of the regression coefficient, the higher the influence that the independent variable has on the dependent variable.

Regression analysis of strategic planning practices and service delivery

Normality Tests Showing Shapiro-Wilk test

The essence of carrying out normality test is to ensure that data is normally distributed before relevant statistical tests are performed. The findings of Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that data was normally distributed and therefore it was proper to use multiple linear regression model in order to analyze the effect of strategic planning practices on service delivery.

Model summary

The main purpose of the model summary for the regression is to list down the key statistics with regard to variation of the dependent variable. The value of the r squared in the table shows the percentage of variation in the dependent variable that is caused by variation in the independent variable. With $r^2 = 0.668$, this implies that 66.8% of variations in the dependent variable which is service delivery is caused by variations in the various strategic planning practices (explained variation) and 33.2% is caused by other factors (unexplained variation).

Table 1 . Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.817	0.668	.	.

Source: Study, (2017).

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The essence of analysis of variance (ANOVA) table in regression analysis is to explain the variations that were caused by the residuals (errors) and also those that are attributed to the regression model. From the table below it can be shown that these variations were not statistically significant and hence the model was good for the study.

Table 2. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

	Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3039.200	4	759.800	.	.
	Residual	.000	0	.		
	Total	3039.200	4			

Source: Study, (2017).

Regression Coefficients

Regression coefficients serve the purpose of explaining which amongst the predictor variables has more influence on the criterion or dependent variable and hence the larger the value of the regression coefficient the more the influence that the variable has on the dependent variable.

From the results, it can clearly be seen that developing vision and mission statements had the strongest influence on service delivery with the coefficient value of 3.648, and the lowest was identification of objectives with a value of 0.412.

Conclusions and Recommendations

These were made on the basis of the objective of the study which focused on how strategic planning practice influence service delivery in Trans Nzoia County government.

Conclusions

1)It was concluded that developing vision and mission statements of Trans Nzoia County government strongly influences service delivery.

2) Identification of objectives is not necessarily a recipe for success but what is important is to ensure that each and every employee is aligned towards ensuring that the identified objectives are met.

Recommendations

1)Trans Nzoia County government needs to maintain the setting of vision and mission as well as put more emphasis on identification of objectives because they determine good service delivery.

2)The County government can also put more emphasis on implementation of the planned strategies in order to realize its vision and mission.

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Table 3. Multiple Linear Regressions.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	23.790	1.1	21.627	-	-		
Writing vision and mission statement	3.648	2	1.824	-	-	.021	47.000
Identification of objectives	0.412	1.4	0.294	-	-	.086	11.563

Source: Study, (2017).

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