

Challenges Affecting Implementation of Vision 2030 Strategic Decisions in the Public Sector in Laikipia County, Kenya

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Abstract

The Kenya Vision 2030 is one of the key development strategies and requires not only commitment and accountability from the implementing sectors but also political good will from the leadership. Strategic decisions in the Kenya Vision 2030 are the highest strategic choices geared towards guiding the country into the envisioned future and determine the success or failure in shaping the development course. This paper examined the challenges affecting the implementation of vision 2030 strategic decisions by public service heads of departments in Laikipia County. The research design was a descriptive survey involving a target population of 54 County heads of departments who were all included as respondents. The research instrument was a pre-tested questionnaire covering all the study parameters. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the resultant quantitative data. The response rate was 75.9 percent and the results suggest that the success of the implementation of Vision 2030 strategic decisions range from low to moderate. The implementation of the Vision 2030 strategic decisions in the County are significantly affected by; untimely management intervention on challenges, ineffective co-ordination of activities, competing interests affecting implementation, environment changes during implementation and employees' ownership of execution plans.

Keywords: Implementation of Strategic decisions, Kenya Vision 2030, Laikipia County, Vision 2030 Strategic Decisions

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1.0 Introduction

Strategic decisions are intentional choices or programmed responses about issues that materially affect the survival prospects, well-being and nature of an organization (Schoemaker, 1993). A strategic decision may be made in a flash by one person or may develop from a series of small incremental choices that overtime push the organization more in one direction rather than another (Hunger & Wheelen, 2007). Strategic decisions are the highest level of all decisions and guide the organization into the future and shape its course. They are concerned with the long run state of the whole organization and set the principal goals of the organization (Cole, 2006) and are distinguished by three main characteristics. They are *rare*, meaning they are unusual and have no precedent to follow. The second attribute is that they are *consequential*, meaning that they commit substantial resources and demand a great deal of commitment and finally they are *directive*, that is, they set precedent for lesser decisions and future actions throughout the organization (Wheelen, Hunger & Rangarajan, 2009). Strategic choices made by leaders and managers determine the success or failure of the organization (Brockmann & Anthony, 1998; Harris, 1998).

The Kenya Vision 2030 is one of the key development strategic decisions made in Kenya. The Vision 2030 is an incremental build up of the Economic Recovery Strategy for wealth and employment creation (ERS) which jump started growth of the country with many sectors of the economy recovering from collapse (Republic of Kenya, 2003). It is the current development blue print which envisions realizing a higher and sustainable economic growth in a more equitable environment leading to reduction of poverty. It focuses on „*transforming Kenya into a newly industrializing, middle – income country providing high quality life to all the citizens in a clean and secure environment by the year 2030*’ through a strategic approach anchored on the social, economic and political pillars (Republic of Kenya, 2008). As a strategic decision it is concerned with the long run future of the whole country and intends to push the country over time towards the envisioned development goal. The Vision sets the principal goals and objectives anchoring the government development agenda on the implementation of Vision 2030 projects as designed to be implemented through a series of five year Medium Term Plans, MTP (Republic of Kenya, 2009).

The first MTP of 2008 to 2012, implemented initial strategic decisions through the flagship projects earmarked for each pillar (Republic of Kenya, 2008) while the successive ones are to be implemented through the subsequent MTPs.

The National and County governments' strategic development decisions and policies should be based on this blue print as it sets the direction and precedent for future actions throughout the country. The development projects identified in the policy priorities of the second MTP, 2013 to 2017 (Republic of Kenya, 2013) and the first County Integrated Development Plan, CIDP, 2013 to 2017 (Laikipia County, 2013) are linked to the blue print. The development decisions commit substantial resources and require a great deal of commitment, efficiency, transparency and accountability from the implementing public sector departments and the political leaders. The public service is the engine of every government (Zhou, 2013). Therefore, the government departments are structured in accordance to the constitution and the relevant legislations. The constitutional dispensation provides for a public sector which plays a critical role in the implementation of the development agenda in an efficient, effective and economical use of resources with high standards of professionalism (Republic of Kenya, 2010). The public service is organized to follow procedures that have culminated in a management culture which emphasizes conformity to law and regulations in achieving the national broad goal of social, economic and political development. The heads of departments are middle level managers and their experience leads them to greater willingness to take risks whereas their personal factors contribute to the implementation effectiveness (Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008). They interpret and translate strategies and policies from the top management and provide the overall direction for the implementation to achieve the envisioned development.

1.1 Strategic Decisions in Vision 2030

Strategic decisions in the Kenya Vision 2030 are the highest level of development decisions geared towards guiding the country into the envisioned future and shaping its course. Some of them include the decision to enhance integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for managing and supporting efficient and effective service delivery. Embracing of ICT enables the country to increase productivity as a key driver of achieving Vision 2030. It lays a firm foundation to enhance economic competitiveness and development of a knowledge based society (Republic of Kenya, 2008) in the global environment.

Education is at the centre of the social pillar of Vision 2030. Quality education will enhance achievement of the development goals.

Therefore, the idea of “the standard one laptop project to the public primary schools” (Republic of Kenya, 2013) is a key strategic decision. Its implementation will revolutionize the economy and effectively lay the foundation for managing the intellectual resources and capabilities. The value of the human capital exists with the knowledge of the individuals, but can be institutionalized using technology as part of the country’s systems and structures for efficient service delivery.

The decision to address the unemployment challenges by incubating enterprise, catalyzing innovation and promoting the industry to employ and grow the economy is a government strategic initiative emanating from the Vision 2030. The empowerment of the youth and women in Kenya is to be realized through the Uwezo Fund among other strategies. Another strategic initiative is the idea of actualizing the devolution concept principles. These are mainly; demand for equitable distribution of resources, demand to empower the ordinary citizen by ensuring that expenditure reflects their needs and emphasizing citizen participation in the exercise of power and in decision making that affects them through prioritization of resources by ensuring provision of more resources above the minimum constitutional threshold (Republic of Kenya, 2010).

The move to seal all the loop holes that lead to plundering of public resources is another key strategic decision. This decision charges the office of the Controller of Budget with monitoring of national and county expenditures and submitting written report to each house of parliament on quarterly basis while the office of the Auditor – General, which belatedly carried out audit of government expenditure after one year, is tasked with auditing and reporting the expenditure of all public funds within six months after the end of the financial year (Republic of Kenya, 2010). This will consequently deal effectively with the level of corruption associated with the public sector and ensure compliance with law in any expenditure to enhance efficiency and accountability.

The constitutional requirement to cap the number of ministries and the deliberate strengthening of the public sector institutions is a governance strategic decision to enable effective implementation of the Vision 2030.

The clarion “*Najivunia Kuwa Mkenya*” is central to attitudinal change to inculcate a culture of positive competitiveness into the labor market, a culture of voluntary compliance and ultimate mentality change aimed at improving labor productivity and competitiveness. These changes are key ingredient in enhancing patriotism in the implementation of development strategic decisions.

1.2 Implementation of Strategic Decisions

Many research articles on strategic management have little emphasize on the implementation of strategic decisions (Blumenthal, 1994; Kargar & Blumenthal, 1994) which according to Lyriotaki & Papadakis (2011) is still in the „*fringe of research interest compared to strategic decision making.*” Implementation is the most important stage in the strategic decision making process. However, most studies have been directed towards the first stage of decision making process (Obeidet, 2011) while others provide different perspectives on strategic decision making. Little has been done on the challenges affecting the implementation of strategic decisions.

Nutt (2001) in his study on implementation of strategic decisions asserted that according to contingency theory a match of approaches to situation improves the prospects of success. The study found that the most successful implementation approach, intervention, is subject to contextual factors which include time constraints, importance, resource availability, source of pressure to change, the power and position of the implementing manager. The implementation approach used by managers has more impact on success than the situational constraints. The contextual factors are also presumed to include the people, the size of the organization, the difference among resources, crises situations, and managerial assumptions about employees and the environment among others. These factors create a contingency network that affects the implementation of strategic decisions but a good implementation plan leads to successful implementation of an appropriate strategic decision while redeeming less appropriate ones (Kargar & Blumenthal, 1994).

The ability to implement strategic decisions is one of the most valuable strategic assets and requires a keen knowledge of the critical aspects to affect change (Boyce, 1985). However, in organizations, the decision makers are often removed from the employees who are tasked to implement and be accountable for implementing the decisions (Brodhuehrer & Hagen, 2000). The implementation involves multiple actors, especially those decisions „*involving high stakes and future implications*” (Bhushan & Rai, 2004).

The strategic decision implementation can be considered from five perspectives; the process perspective which looks at the roles, responsibilities and work activities; the people perspective which addresses compensation and incentives; the culture perspective which deals with the decision authority and empowerment; the organization perspective which refers to the organization structure and lastly the physical systems perspective which addresses the issues of real assets (Brodfuehrer & Hagen, 2000).

Twenty one potential challenges to implementation of strategic decisions were identified from the literature review. These are ineffective co-ordination of activities, untimely management intervention on challenges, implementation taking more time than originally allocated, employees inadequate understanding of overall goals of strategy, changes in responsibilities of key employees not clearly defined, poor interaction between management and other employees, inadequate or unavailable resources, poor human resource utilization, insufficient financial resources, poor definition of key implementation activities, competing interests affecting implementation, ill defined action plans, environment changes during implementation, resurfacing of major problems not identified earlier, employees' low ownership of execution plans, key employees leaving organization during implementation, employees inadequately rewarded, key employees being inactive during implementation, poor monitoring and evaluation systems, employees' poor monitoring and evaluation skills and high level of deviation from original strategy objectives.

In the public sector, the success of implementation depends on the ability of the heads of departments to convert policy mandate into patterns of action. Effectiveness depends on their ability to align the organization's resources, outputs and tasks to the needs of the society (Reed, 2004). The government development agenda demands the public service employees to ensure successful implementation of the set strategies to achieve the Vision 2030 strategic decisions. The heads of departments continue to be constrained from all sides while being expected to deliver on the implementation of the targets on Vision 2030. Most of these constraints continue unabated though they can be overcome in the planning process or through provision of adequate resources in a timely manner (Alexander, 1985; Al -Ghamdi, 2005; Kilonzi & Kiama, 2013).

It is against this background that the researchers analyzed the challenges affecting the implementation of Vision 2030 strategic decisions by public service heads of departments in Laikipia County.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to identify the most critical challenges affecting implementation of Vision 2030 strategic decisions in Laikipia County and recommend solutions that may increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the public service in achieving Kenya vision 2030.

The study also provides highlights on the recurrent challenges the counties may be facing in the implementation of Vision 2030 and should trigger thoughts on new courses of action.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study was restricted to the public sector heads of departments in Laikipia County which is one of the 47 counties in Kenya. The counties have become the focal points of development in accordance to the constitutional dispensation (Republic of Kenya, 2010). Laikipia County covers an approximate area of 9,462 KM² and is subdivided into five administrative Sub Counties with government departments staffed with public service employees at the various levels. There are 54 County heads of departments who are in charge of the services, interpretation, translation and implementation of strategies and policies in their respective fields. They were chosen for the study as they are the most significant actors in the County development and in the implementation of Vision 2030 strategic decisions.

2.0 Materials and Methods

This paper builds on previous study on the implementation of strategic decisions in the public sector of Kenya, a survey of Laikipia County (Kilonzi & Kiama, 2013) and the study on obstacles to successful implementation of strategic decisions: The Saudi Case (Al –Ghamdi, 2005). The study examined the challenges affecting the implementation of Vision 2030 strategic decisions by heads of departments in Laikipia County with a view of identifying the most relevant.

The research design was descriptive survey which allows for measure of attitudes, opinions or achievements of variables in natural settings (Wiersma & Jurs, 2004).

A list of departmental heads was obtained from the County headquarters including those on leave. The 54 County HoDs formed the target population and because the number is modest, they were all included as respondents for the study. The implementation of Vision 2030 strategic decisions was measured with the variables; embracing of ICT to manage and support service delivery, institutionalizing technology to manage service delivery and capabilities, empowering the youth and women in Laikipia, actualizing of the devolution principles, sealing the loopholes that lead to plundering of public resources and attitudinal change strategies to inculcate a culture of positive competitiveness.

The respondents were asked to evaluate the level of success of the implementation of the above Vision 2030 strategic decisions and the overall success of the implementation of Vision 2030 strategic decisions in achieving the initial goals of the decision on a five-point Likert scale where 1=Very Low Success, 2 =Low Success, 3 = Moderate Success, 4 = Good Success and 5= Very Successful. The mean and standard deviation measured the success.

The primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire which covered background information on the respondents and their departments, the Vision 2030 strategic decisions and the 21 identified potential challenges. The questionnaire was pilot tested for reliability and validity before being administered to the respondents through drop and pick later method (Kothari, 2004). The respondents were asked to rate the influence of the potential challenges on the implementation of vision 2030 strategic decisions using scale of 1 to 5 where 1= Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = frequently and 5 = Always. The returned questionnaires were numbered and the responses coded. The resultant quantitative data obtained was analyzed using simple descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of SPSS. Frequencies and percentages were used to assess the background information of the respondents while mean and standard deviation descriptive statistics measured the level of success of the implementation of vision 2030 strategic decisions in Laikipia County.

The one-way ANOVA statistics was used to determine whether the results for each item were statistically significant and rejection was done when $p < 0.05$ at significance level of 0.05.

3.0 Results

The number of valid and acceptable questionnaires for analyses returned was 41 and hence the response rate for study was approximately 75.9 percent. The results of the analyses are as shown in the following tables 1 and 2 and the figures 1 and 2.

Table 1: Background Information

Attribute	Category	Frequency	Valid Percent
Gender	Male	30	73.2
	Female	11	26.8
Level of education	Below degree first level	6	14.6
	First degree level	17	41.5
	Masters degree level	16	39.0
	Above masters degree level	2	4.9
Number of employces in the department	Below 5	6	14.6
	6 – 10	10	24.4
	11 – 15	8	19.5
	16 – 20	7	17.1
Period served in the department in years	Above 21	10	24.4
	Below 5	4	9.7
	5 – 10	8	19.5
	11 – 15	10	24.4
	16 – 20	5	12.2
Period served as head of department in years	Over 20	14	34.2
	Below 5	9	22.0
	5 – 10	17	41.5
	11 – 15	7	17.1
	16 – 20	4	9.7
	Over 20	4	9.7

Source: Authors (2014)

Fig. 1: Implementation of Vision 2030 Strategic Decisions. Source: Authors (2014)

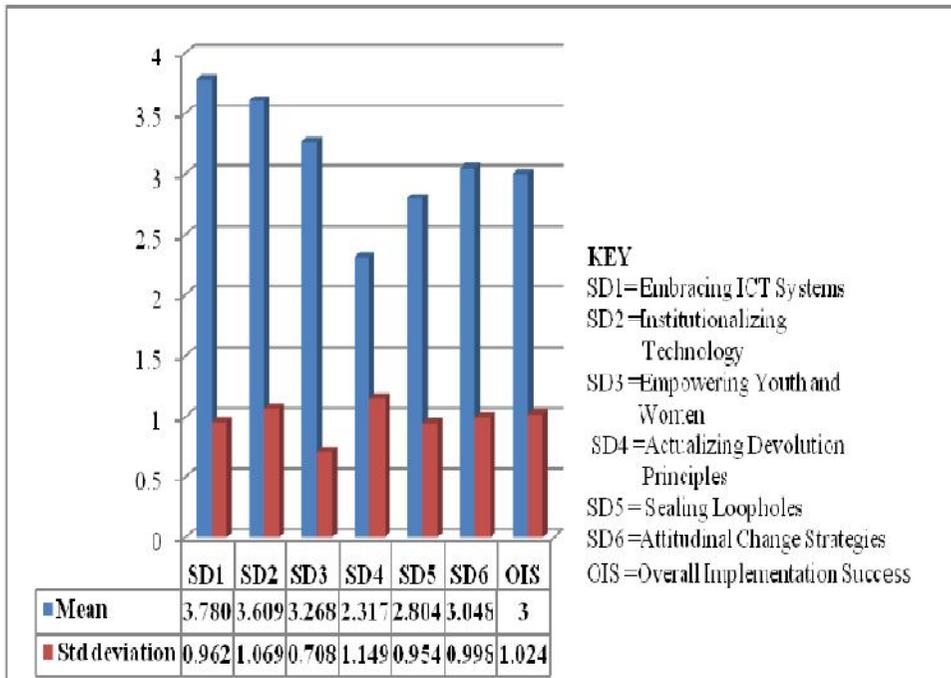


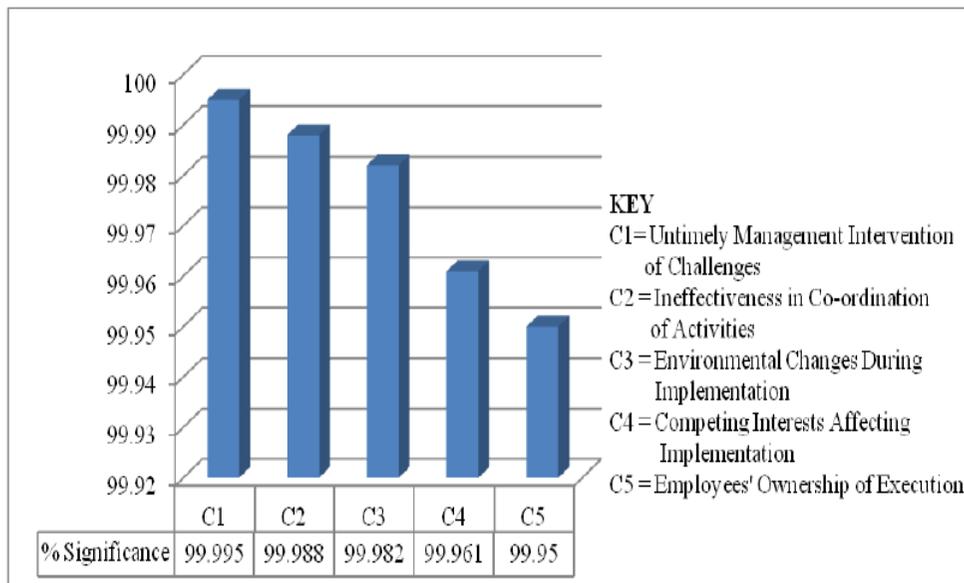
Table 2: List of ANOVA Statistics of the Challenges

Potential Challenges		df	Mean Square	F ratio	Sig.
Ineffective coordination of activities	Between Groups	4	3.992	3.730	0.012*
	Within Groups	36	1.070		
Untimely management intervention	Between Groups	4	2.281	4.537	0.005*
	Within Groups	36	0.503		
Implementation taking more time	Between Groups	4	0.366	0.656	0.627
	Within Groups	36	0.558		
Employees inadequate understanding of overall goals of strategy	Between Groups	4	2.609	2.057	0.107
	Within Groups	36	1.268		
Changes in responsibilities of key employees	Between Groups	4	0.568	0.531	0.714
	Within Groups	36	1.070		
Poor interaction of management and employees	Between Groups	4	0.324	0.305	0.873
	Within Groups	36	1.062		
Inadequate or unavailable resources	Between Groups	4	1.405	1.151	0.348
	Within Groups	36	1.221		
Poor human resource establishment	Between Groups	4	1.715	1.760	0.158
	Within Groups	36	0.975		
Insufficient financial resources	Between Groups	4	1.598	2.013	0.113
	Within Groups	36	0.794		
Poor definition of key implementation activities	Between Groups	4	0.718	0.470	0.758
	Within Groups	36	1.529		
Competing interests affecting implementation	Between Groups	4	2.148	2.827	0.039*
	Within Groups	36	0.760		
Ill defined action plans	Between Groups	4	3.459	2.266	0.081
	Within Groups	36	1.526		
Environmental changes during implementation	Between Groups	4	3.451	3.442	0.018*
	Within Groups	35	1.003		
Resurfacing of major problems not identified	Between Groups	4	2.295	2.074	.0105
	Within Groups	36	1.107		
Employees' low ownership of execution plans	Between Groups	4	2.877	2.637	0.050*
	Within Groups	36	1.091		
Key employees leaving during implementation	Between Groups	4	0.348	0.240	0.914
	Within Groups	36	1.552		
Employees inadequately rewarded	Between Groups	4	2.408	1.365	0.265
	Within Groups	36	1.764		
Employees being inactive during implementation	Between Groups	4	2.749	1.326	0.279
	Within Groups	36	1.319		
Poor monitoring and evaluation systems	Between Groups	4	3.575	2.508	0.059
	Between Groups	36	1.425		
Poor employee monitoring and evaluation skills	Between Groups	4	0.802	0.579	0.680
	Within Groups	36	1.384		
High level of deviation from original strategy objectives	Between Groups	4	4.331	2.551	0.056
	Within Groups	36	1.698		

*Statistically significant challenges at 0.05 significance level

Source: Authors (2014)

Fig.2: Level of Percentage Significance of Top Five Challenges. Source: Authors (2014)



4.0 Discussion

The results in table 1 show that 73.2 percent of the HoDs are males and this does not reflect the constitutional one third gender requirement (Republic of Kenya, 2010). On education level, 43.9 percent of the HoDs have at least masters degree while 41.5 percent have a first degree certificate. On the years of service, 70.7 percent have served in their respective departments for at least 10 years with 77.1 percent of them having served as head of department for at least 5 years. Therefore, the HoDs were conversant with the implementation of the Vision 2030 strategic decisions in their departments.

Figure 1 shows the level of the implementation of the Vision 2030 strategic decisions in Laikipia County. Embracing of ICT to manage and support service delivery has a mean of 3.7805 with standard deviation of 0.9621 while institutionalizing technology to manage service delivery and capabilities has a mean of 3.6098 with standard deviation of 1.0695. Hence, moderate to good success in embracing and institutionalizing of ICT to manage and support service delivery and capabilities in Laikipia County.

The county departments ICT performance can still be enhanced in line with the National ICT master plan of 2013 to 2018 which aims to double the ICT contribution to the GDP. Empowering the youth and women in Laikipia has a mean of 3.2683 with standard deviation of 0.7080 which shows a moderate success in the implementation. The level actualization of the devolution principles has a mean of 2.3171 and a standard deviation of 1.1498 which shows that the implementation is low and hence much needs to be done by the County administration. Sealing the loopholes that lead to plundering of public resources was rated to be moderately successful with a mean of 2.8049 and standard deviation of 0.9545. The level of implementation of attitudinal change strategies to inculcate a culture of positive competitiveness has a moderate level of successful with a mean of 3.0488 and a standard deviation of 0.9988. The overall success of the implementation of Vision 2030 strategic decisions in achieving the initial goals of the decision was rated as moderate with a mean of 3.0 and a standard deviation of 1.0247. Therefore, the success of implementation of the Vision 2030 strategic decisions range between low and moderate across the government departments in the County. Hence, there is need to address the disparities as they can derail the development initiative.

The list of ANOVA statistics in table 2 shows that only 5 of the 21 identified challenges are statistically significant, with F test statistics taken at 0.05 percent significance level. Therefore, the challenges that most critically affect the implementation of vision 2030 strategic decisions in Laikipia County are; untimely management intervention on challenges with least significance difference of 0.005, ineffectiveness co-ordination of activities which has least significance difference of 0.012, competing interests affecting implementation with least significance difference of 0.018, environment changes during implementation with least significance difference of 0.039 and employees' low ownership of execution plans with least significance difference of 0.050, in that order, as shown in figure 2. These results support the work of Brodfuehrer and Hagen (2000) on the five perspectives of strategic decisions implementation. Hence for successful implementation of Vision 2030 strategic decision in the County, these five challenges have to be addressed during the planning and the implementation stages by the leadership. This may signal a need to re-formulate national and county strategic plans to re – engineer the socio – economic development through facilitative mechanisms for improved implementation of Vision 2030 strategic decisions.

5.0 Conclusion

The departments in Laikipia County are involved in the implementation of the vision 2030 strategic decisions as shown by the results of the study. However, the success of implementation is low to moderate across the government departments. There is a disconnect between the ideals of Vision 2030 and implementation of devolution. The implementation of the Vision 2030 strategic decisions is affected by the twenty one potential challenges at different levels of significance. The most critical challenges affecting the implementation of Vision 2030 strategic decisions in Laikipia County are; untimely management intervention on challenges, ineffectiveness co-ordination of activities, competing interests affecting implementation, environment changes during implementation and employees' ownership of execution plans, in that order. Hence, there is need to address the disparities as they can derail the development initiative. For the County Government to achieve its social, economic and political development, then, it must address all these challenges. The government needs to keenly evaluate the implementation plans for each strategic decision.

5.1 Recommendations

In order to improve the efforts of the heads of departments in the implementation of Vision 2030 strategic decisions in Laikipia County, the following recommendation are suggested.

1. The untimely management intervention on challenges critically affects implementation of the Vision 2030 strategic decisions and may derail the implementation or make it take more time than originally planned. The management must keep track of the implementation process to ensure timely intervention on challenges encountered during implementation. This will require efficient vertical and horizontal monitoring and evaluation information systems that are self regulating. This will not only check on deviation from original strategy objectives but also provide for accountability and effective feedback mechanisms in the implementation process. The heads of departments should be empowered to provide quick response to emerging issues. The management should provide for smooth interaction between them and other employees involved in the implementation of the strategy initiatives.

2. To address the problem of ineffective co-ordination of activities, the government should develop functional committees for implementation of each strategic decision backed by effective and efficient facilitative mechanism.

A facilitative mechanism that allows for periodical reviews to ensure rhythmic and coordinated approach anchored on efficient and effective communication strategies. The communication strategies should focus on keeping all employees updated on progress and achievements of the implementation activities of the Vision 2030 strategic decisions. The leadership and management should be able to align the organizational structure to the strategy goal through a well defined and coordinated strategy implementation processes. This should be included in the activities planning stage before embarking on the implementation process. Effective coordination of activities leads to proper utilization of the human capital as a key pillar in re – engineering organizations.

3. The competing interests affecting implementation may be linked to the low actualization of devolution principles and sealing loopholes that lead to plundering of public resources. The government must ensure that the management in charge of implementation of the Vision 2030 strategic decisions effectively co-ordinate all the activities and the human capital involved. All the employees assigned to implement any specific activity must be empowered through training. There should be joint planning of the activities which allows for collaboration with a centralized coordination unit rather than competition. High standards of integrity for the management should be entrenched as part of the organization culture in all the departments.

4. The implementation of the Vision 2030 strategic decisions is directly related to the work environment. The environmental changes during the implementation process have a direct impact on the successful implementation of the strategic decisions. The changes may be political, economic, social, technological, ecological or even legal. This calls for continuous environmental scanning to identify any emerging challenges for timely activation of a contingency plan for the required intervention. This will enable the government to provide a work environment that is conducive to the heads of departments involved in the implementation of the Vision 2030 strategic decisions. The leadership should strive to provide a working environment that enables the employees to accommodate any environmental changes during the implementation process.

5. The implementation of strategic decisions depends on the extent to which the employees own the execution plans. This can be achieved by building synergy of employees involved in the implementation of strategic decisions.

The level of synergy of the human capital will directly impact on their ownership of the execution plans and motivate them to sustain their performance efficiency. In this regard, the leadership should link their strategy implementation to an effective communication system that can motivate the employees to identify with the strategic decision implementation process as their own project. The employees should adequately be involved in the designing of the implementation activities as per the constitutional requirements through an expanded participation of all the employees. The management should work on the voluntary ownership of the execution plans by the employees through ensuring a matching of variables, capabilities and the environment as it seeks to achieve implementation of the strategies. This will empower and motivate the employees to endeavor to understand the overall goals and benefits of the implementation of the strategic decisions, leading to proper utilization of the human capital.

6. In the overall, to ensure the successful implementation of the Vision 2030 strategic decisions, it is further recommended that there should be periodic County and National review meetings, every financial year. The meetings should be open for involving all the stakeholders and the members of public and chaired by the government chief executives, where a candid assessment of the annual achievements on all the strategic initiatives is done with a view of up scaling the implementation process or addressing the emerging challenges. There should be a seamless engagement between the two levels of governance. A County office should be established with adequate human capital specifically to oversee the implementation of the Vision 2030 activities at the County levels, and reporting to the national secretariat, which should ensure adequate publicity and accountability in the entire implementation process.

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