USE OF INTERNAL CORPORATE COMMUNICATION (ICC) STRATEGIES IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF PERFORMANCE CONTRACTING IN KENYA

JOHN OLUOCH*
HENRY KINYA**
SALOME OKONG'O***

*Director PSSP & Senior Lecturer, School of Information, Communication and Media Studies, Rongo University College, Rongo, Kenya
**Lecturer, School of Information, Communication and Media Studies, Rongo University College, Rongo, Kenya
***School of Information, Communication and Media Studies, Rongo University College, Rongo, Kenya

ABSTRACT

The paper analyses the Internal Corporate Communication (hereafter, ICC) strategies used in the implementation of performance contracts in one large public corporation in Kenya. ICC is an Organizational function that involves managing all communications within institutions. ICC has core tenets that if managed professionally would promote amicable and successful institutionalization of corporate programmes. However, there is increasing concern among communications professionals and scholars that ICC continues to be generally done haphazardly in most organizations resulting in varied levels of success in implementation of important corporate policies and programmes such as performance contracting. On the other hand, literature reviewed so far reveals that currently, there is relatively very minimal research that has examined the use of ICC in the implementation of performance contracts in public organizations. The paper is based on the findings of a study in Kenya. The study adopted the qualitative case study design and was conducted in the Western region of Kenya involving all relevant officers of the organization with a total of 42 participants. Data was generated using interviews and document analysis and was analyzed thematically. Some of the ICC strategies highlighted and discussed in the paper are: communicating corporate ownership of PCs, instituting consistency in communicating about PCs and using change as a strategy in communicating about PCs. The paper highlights the need to educate the internal publics of organizations on the meaning and significance of ICC in deciding the nature of strategies to be used in implementing performance contracts.

KEYWORDS: Communication Strategy, Corporate Communication, Corporate Policy/Programme, Internal Corporate Communication

INTRODUCTION

Corporate communication is the management function that has come to fruition in this stakeholder era, and caters for the need to build and manage relationships with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is economically and socially dependent (Cornelissen, 2004).

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The concept of corporate communication is not a new phenomenon in Kenya because strides towards the promotion of effective communication in organizations with both their internal and external publics have been put in place in the recent past. The progress has culminated in the enactment of organizational policies and programmes related to employee and general organizational performance. However, commitment to the effective communication of these policy changes and implementations has not come forth fully. In recent years, organizations globally have gone through dramatic changes, including less tight structures and downsizing to ensure effective information flow. On one hand these changes are due to the rapid technological developments, global competition and the changing nature of the workforce. On the other hand these organizational transformations and innovations are triggered by interventions such as Total Quality Management (TQM) business processes, re-engineering and performance contracting for high productivity and organizational performance (Holtz, 2003).

By the early 1990s, several organizations realized, albeit at first rather reluctantly, that they had to engage into communications with a number of groups in their environments, including the general public and consumer markets, to remain economically afloat (Cornelissen, 2004). Communication has always assumed critical importance in the success of companies and growing numbers of top organizations are reassessing their communication budgets, moving away from traditional, functional approaches to public relations and public affairs and pursuing internal and external corporate communication strategies. The task of managing corporate communication between an organization on one hand, and the general public and consumers on the other, was for the majority of the twentieth century defined by the public relations and marketing functions. Through socio-economic developments, and the practical need to coordinate and draw communications disciplines together, disciplines previously falling under marketing and public relations have increasingly been integrated into the corporate communications function. Many organizations around the globe have experienced a shift from being in markets characterized by rigid systems of mass production and consumption to more flexible and increasingly competitive market places. This, together with a greater call from society for 'corporate citizenship', has pushed many organizations into corporate communication strategies (Cornelissen, 2004).

The corporate world is highly broad and dynamic. There are international / multi-national corporate organizations focusing on different programmes with various levels of success. Some of these are Proctor & Gamble, Coca Cola, Price Waterhouse Coopers and International Business Machines Ltd (PCSC-Kenya, 2005).

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Obong'o (2009), states that, in Kenya, like in many countries, there are non-governmental organizations such as International Red Cross Society and state corporations such as Rift Valley Railways, including international corporations such as IBM which have implemented organizational programs such as PCs and succeeded due to the efficient ICC strategies they have used. The corporations referred to as State corporations are established by law and given specific roles to meet so that the economy balances at all levels. The major corporate institutions in Kenya include Kenya Revenue Authority, Postal Corporation of Kenya, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, Rift Valley Railways etc.

In Africa, many state corporations have attempted to adapt an employee friendly approach when it comes to organizational performance. They have taken cognizance of the socio-cultural peculiarities of the organizations. Consequently, the attention on the corporate communication strategies necessary for the implementation of organizational policies gained impetus in 2003 when the government introduced the signing of performance contracts in all state corporations. Progress towards realization of this has seen the ratification of PCs as a policy in organizations (GoK 2005).

According to Argenti (2012), a large population in organizations was living without access to the necessary corporate information yet they were stakeholders in organizational performance and programme implementation. To evaluate such performance, organizations required detailed financial and nonfinancial information. This information was available in various forms e.g. hard copies, published media, broker and investment consultants and corporate websites. Stakeholders required detailed financial and nonfinancial information to evaluate investments. Corporate institutions have the potential to be both a one-stop-shop for investor needs and an efficient cost-effective medium for organizations to communicate with its employees.

Cornelissen (2004) argues that Corporate Communications practitioners can at this corporate level also bring identity questions and a stakeholder perspective into the strategic communication management process, representing the likely reaction of stakeholders to alternative strategy options, and thereby giving senior management a more balanced consideration of the attractiveness and feasibility of the strategic communication options open to them. They of course may also implement the corporate communication strategies by helping to communicate the organization's strategic intentions to both internal and external publics, which may help avoid misunderstandings that might otherwise get in the way of the smooth implementation of the organizational policies and programs. With such intricate

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involvement in the corporate and business unit levels, internal corporate communications strategy is also more substantial – in being linked to the corporate vision and objectives – instead of being just a tactical ploy, and can be neatly built around the analysis of stakeholder relationships and key issues that are identified at the corporate and business unit or market levels and which form the basis for formulating specific organizational programs and policies.ICC was thus regarded as a critical factor in the initiation and implementation of performance transformations in organizations and meant the communication within a particular company. Some of the commonly used tools for ICC included business meetings, conferences, interviews, presentations or print media like brochures, newsletters, memos, or business letters.

Rather than a management function ICC was identified as one of the keys to effective performance of both the individuals and the organization as a whole. ICC was seen as the power to inspire and motivate the ability to imbue employees with the desire to change the organization and be the best in performance. Organizational communicators created the vision and strategies and presented them in such a way that employees felt enthusiastic and fulfilled in their performance. (Holtz, 2003) My study focused on a corporate organization in Kenya, which is one of the state corporations that collect taxes and duties in the country.

Kenya Revenue Authority (hereafter, KRA) is one of the main corporations in Kenya which was formed by an Act of Parliament, Chapter 469 of the Laws of Kenya in 1995. Its main objective is to enhance tax collection on behalf of the Government of Kenya (hereafter GOK) and its core functions being to collect revenue and duties which ought to help the GOK in providing the much needed services to its citizenry. This is to assist in maximizing revenue collection at the least possible cost for socio-economic well-being of Kenyans and also to ensure that the GOK can sustain itself from internal revenue sources. Its headquarters is in Nairobi with several branches distributed all over the republic to help in revenue collection and ease operational costs .KRA is one of the largest state corporations in Kenya, in terms of employee numbers and is in the limelight because of the role it plays in revenue collection in the country. (www.kraonline.go.ke). KRA operates in five administrative units referred to as regions. These are: Rift Valley, Western, Southern, Northern and Central regions. In terms of revenue collection and other support functions at every KRA branch, there exist five divisions namely: Customs Services, Domestic Taxes, Road Transport, Support Services and Investigations and Enforcement with each one of them headed by a commissioner (www.kraonline.go.ke).

The administrative structure of the organization is in such a way that in addition to the five main divisions there are seven service departments that enhance its operational efficiency at both the national and regional level. These are: Human Resources, Finance, Corporate services and Administration, Internal Audit, Information and Communication Technology, Research and Corporate Planning and finally Marketing and Communication. The Western region which the study focused on has five branches, namely: Kisumu, Isebania, Kisii, Busia and Kakamega. Each of these branches is headed by a supervisor with each of the 5 divisions in the regional offices (Customs Services, Domestic Taxes, Road Transport, Support Services, Investigations and Enforcement) headed by a commissioner. At the regional headquarters in Kisumu there are seven service departments which are managed by the supervisors. It is inevitable that the management have to use some ICC strategies to handle this large corporation in order to implement the corporate policies and programmes effectively.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To begin with, generally, as already indicated in the previous subsection appropriate and effective communication at different levels in an organization is one of the main requirements for the successful implementation of corporate policies and programmes (Cohen, 2001). This could be in terms of enhancing access to reliable, valuable and accurate information with regard to organizational issues such as performance contracting. Appropriate communication between the various levels in organizations could lead to a significant reduction of cases of miscommunication and misconception of policies and programmes. However, there was a lack of evidence that appropriate communication strategies were being used maximally in the implementation of policies and programmes in Kenyan corporations. This was a problem that called for an insight (through research) into the ICC strategies used in such organizations (Obong'o, 2009; Gatere et al. 2013).

Secondly, many organizations in the world and in Kenya in particular were seen to be experiencing a lot of challenges while seeking to meet the performance standards required in remaining afloat within competitive national and global environments. There were also increased demands by clients and other stakeholders for more accountability and transparency. Many corporations are also currently faced with a workforce that is increasingly aware of their rights, especially the right to information on policies and programmes they may be expected to implement. The need for appropriate ICC strategies

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within such organizations has therefore become very critical and urgent. ICC is increasingly being seen as vital to the success of businesses from both the economic and social dimensions (Gatere et al. 2013; Cornelissen, 2004).

More specifically, performance contracting is one of the policy issues that have become a requirement in most corporate organizations all over the world. Inevitably, therefore, the internal publics in corporations who are required to implement PCs have to be communicated to, regarding PCs. In other words, some ICC strategies must be used in implementation of PCs in corporations, consciously or unconsciously. Yet, there are no known empirical bases or foundations on the use of ICC for implementation of PCs specifically of organizational policies in general. Academically, therefore, there was very minimal research in Kenya that had been identified to guide ICC in the state corporations; hence there was need to conduct research that might reveal effective strategies for implementation of corporate programmes (Kimia, 2007).

The socio-economic aspect of the problem was that there were varied levels of performance and (in relation to this), various levels of implementation of PCs in different corporations in Kenya in general (Mandago 2008; Kimia, 2007). As such, it could be argued that state corporations were using different ICC strategies in their implementation of organizational policies resulting in varied success levels in performance during and after the implementation of important policies and programmes (Cornelissen, 2004). On PCs in particular, many corporations such as universities, Teachers Service Commission, Ministries, Universities and others have reported a lot of resistance by internal publics while some organizations such as KRA seem to have implemented PCs relatively successfully. Nonetheless, even in the context of KRA (from preliminary studies) there were reports of varied uptake of PCs by the different branches in the Western region. These scenarios called for a study on the ICC strategies used in implementation of PCs as a major corporate programme, so as to broadly investigate the use of ICC in implementation of corporate programmes in general.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In terms of content, an identifiable limitation is that the study was only focused on ICC. It is obvious that in corporations, there were inevitable overlaps between internal and external aspects of communication. Indeed, they are at times complementary. It would therefore be more enriching to cover both internal and external corporate communication.

The main limitation of this study was with regard to the contextual scope; that it covered only one organization (KRA). It would perhaps have been more illuminating to get insights into the use of ICC strategies in implementation of policies and programmes in other corporations. Still in terms of context, this study was clearly only limited to the Western region administrative unit of KRA. Again, it would have been more informative to cover more KRA branches in the country.

Furthermore, the limitations pointed out above were also related to the qualitative approach chosen for this study. Qualitative research by its nature highly limited the breadth of my study in terms of content and context. However, the limitations in breadth were compensated by the in-depth nature of qualitative research, which made it possible to get more detailed data from the participants' point of view in their natural settings. The limitations pointed above notwithstanding, the study was still quite worthwhile as it yielded data that definitely gave in-depth highlights into the ICC strategies used in implementation of PCs in Kenya. Such a study was justified as explained below.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

I believe this study is of great help to policy makers in government and other organizations in designing ICC strategies that would be used in policy and program implementation in various contexts. The results of this study would be useful to the managers in KRA and other state corporations in assessing the effectiveness of ICC in communicating PC issues and its implementation. This will enable the managers and employees who are involved in programme implementation (or may be required to do so in future) to have a clear focus on how to effectively solve the problem of communication of PC issues to their internal publics.

The results could also lead to improved ICC and enhance the relationships between managers and their internal publics when approaching performance contracting issues and indeed any similar policy matters. As indicated in the previous section, the study also provides future researchers with empirical literature on ICC strategies used in implementation of organizational programmes. Such literature would be useful in informing further research on other areas of Corporate Communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Corporate communication strategies are conceptualized as functional mechanisms (plans of action) intended to provide directions to corporations in execution of communication

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functions aimed at achieving specific corporate objectives. Accordingly, ICC strategies are defined in this study as those mechanisms for execution of targeted communication functions within particular organization; that is, involving a corporation's internal publics. Corporate communication strategies are seen to be the outcome of concerted thinking processes by scholars and experienced practitioners in Communication and corporate managers (Steyn 2000). Steyn further states that the concept of strategy is well-known in management theory and practice. However, the concept of ICC strategy has received little attention in the corporate communication body of knowledge. There is mention of a strategic role for the corporate communication practitioner, but minimal explanations of what corporate communication strategy means in organizational context.

Although the corporate communication industry acknowledges that strategy should be an integral part of its communication programs, few practitioners seem to understand the meaning of strategy, as Tibble (1997: pp 63) states:

Strategy and the communications world, and particularly the ICC part of that world, seem to go together and thus gives room for development and policy implementation. It is certainly unusual to come across a memorable, cogent, sustained, and effective corporate communications strategy.

A study on the professional views of corporate communication practitioners in the Netherlands (Van Ruler, 1997) concluded that practitioners are not able to cope with abstract strategic planning practices. The key problem seems to lie in the application of 'strategy' to corporate communication issues (Halal, 2000).

Roebuck (2006), clusters strategy definitions into three groups: the *linear strategy* which is sometimes referred to as the emergent strategy. It focuses on planning, and consists of integrated decisions, actions, or plans that will set and achieve viable organizational goals. This model assumes that organizations are structured hierarchically, that they are operating in stable environments, and that managers act rationally. (Lynch 1997) a supporter of this approach, views strategy as a linear and rational process, starting with 'where-we-are-now' and then developing new strategies for the future. Objectives have been defined in advance and main elements developed before the strategy commences. The objective may be adjusted if circumstances change significantly.

Argenti (2009), one of the biggest critics of the prescriptive approach, developed the emergent approach to strategy formulation. In this view, the final objective of the strategy is unclear and elements still develop as the strategy proceeds, continuously adapting to human

and organizational needs – the emergent strategy are evolving, incremental and continuous. More recent approaches to emergent strategy emphasize that people, politics and culture of organizations all need to be taken into account.

The *adaptive strategy* on the other hand is concerned with the development of a viable match between the opportunities and risks present in the external environment and the organization's capabilities and resources for exploiting these opportunities. It is also referred to as the prescriptive strategy by some scholars. The environment is seen to consist of trends, events, competitors and stakeholders to which the organization must adapt. According to Moss & Warnaby (1997), this view of strategy assumes that the environment is much more dynamic and less susceptible to prediction. Strategists such as (Argenti 2009) emphasize the learning approach to strategy, i.e. encouraging managers to undertake a process of trial and error to devise the optimal strategy.

In summary, prescriptive strategies anticipate how the environment would change in order to meet future needs ahead of competing organizations. Emergent strategies are content with an understanding of the environment (Lynch 1997). Furthermore, whereas the prescriptive approach takes the view that the three core areas (process, content and context) are linked together sequentially; the emergent approach regards the three core areas as being interrelated. The fundamental truth regarding strategy is that an organization cannot be all things to all people. Strategy requires choices - deciding what particular kind of value an organization wants to deliver to whom (Gibson 1997).

The *interpretive strategy* views the organization as a collection of co-operative agreements entered into by individuals with free will. The organization's existence relies on its ability to attract enough individuals to co-operate in mutually beneficial exchange. The focus here is on desired relationships, symbolic actions and communication, and emphasizes attitudinal and cognitive complexity among diverse stakeholders in the organization. This strategy corresponds to the 'stakeholder approach' to strategic management. Various authors see strategy as a pattern, namely: a pattern in the organization's important decisions and actions, consisting of a few key areas or things by which the organization seeks to distinguish itself; a pattern in a stream of actions—this pattern being the result of strategic decisions made by the organization; a pattern of major objectives, purposes, essential policies and plans for achieving those goals - stated in such a way as to define what business the company is in or is to be in and the kind of company it is or is to be (Jain 1997).

Although effective ICC may not bring about all of these results for all organizations, it can go a long way towards building an organizational culture where people work together effectively towards a common goal. Unlike with external communication, organizations often fail to strategically plan their internal corporate communication. In other words, ICC is usually either arbitrary or incomplete and if planned, tends to be planned only in reaction to specific events such as programme implementation and downsizing (Argenti, 2009).

METHODOLOGY

In consistency with the qualitative approach, the case study method was used in this study. A case study according to Creswell (2007) is a piece of research which involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (p.73).He further says that a case study can be viewed as a method within the qualitative approach. Ong'ondo (2010) concurs that a case study is a process of inquiry (p.79).

Jwan & Ong'ondo (2011) concur that a case study is "a process of inquiry" (p.32). The Case study method allows for an in-depth understanding of different perspectives of an issue using multiple techniques of data generation and involving participants within their real life contexts within the boundary of the case. Accordingly, the case study method gave us the chance to analyze the experiences of the participants in depth using multiple techniques (triangulation) to generate data. This study was a case of Kenya Revenue Authority – specifically the Western Region. Accordingly, this gave us the chance to analyze the ICC strategies used in the implementation on PCs in KRA in- depth, using multiple techniques to generate experiences from the commissioners, heads of department, supervisors and other employees.

Going by this, we would like to point out that this study was an instrumental case study. The aim was to study the ICC strategies used in the implementation of PCs in KRA. Accordingly, the issue on focus in this study was the ICC strategies; hence KRA was just a research instrument to help understand the issue. Similarly performance contracting was the programme chosen within KRA as an instrument of understanding the ICC strategies. Cases for study are all selected because they hold large sums of information and are illuminative (Gillham, 2005). With reference to the background information on the factors that contribute to the choice of the case (KRA) is that it holds the in-depth data that hopefully led to a better understanding of the issue under study.

STUDY AREA

As already stated, this study was conducted in KRA, Western region of Kenya in five regional offices with five departments each and the headquarters in Kisumu which has seven service departments. We specifically went to the two border offices- Isebania and Busia and two internal offices- Kisii, Kakamega and Kisumu which is the headquarters of the western region. The study was done in KRA since it is one of the state corporations that have successfully implemented a key organizational programme (PCs) (Muraya, 2012). It would be of interest to scholars in Communications Studies and the relevant stakeholders to know the ICC strategies that have been employed in the implementation of the programme and the views of the internal publics on the strategies. The Western region of Kenya has the highest number of branches of all the regions in KRA, which made it a potentially rich study area with regard to the issue under study.

STUDY POPULATION AND SAMPLING

A research population entails the entire group of persons or objects that are of interest to the researcher. According to Somekh and Lewin (2005), a study population refers to all the people or phenomena under study, from whom a sample will be selected for research. In this study the sample population comprised of five regional office commissioners from all the selected five departments, heads of the seven service departments, and two other members from each of the selected regional offices of KRA, in the Western region of Kenya. This gave me a total population of 42 participants for my study.

Non - probability sampling suited this study because as Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) assert, the focus was on in-depth information on a particular issue and not on making inferences or generalizations. Hence, the study targeted participants who were known to have the information that served the purpose of this study, by virtue of their stations and duties (Kombo and Tromp, 2006).

The major aim of sampling in qualitative research is to identify the participants who are likely to give rich and in depth information on the issue being studied so that we learn the most about it (Dörnyei, 2007). Creswell (2007) adds what we consider important aspects of sampling in qualitative case study. In this study, we selected three categories of participants: Commissioners, Supervisors and selected department members because I believe that they provided various perspectives on ICC strategies used in the implementation of PCs .Hence, we sampled the supervisors in each of the 7 service departments in the regional headquarters

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in Kisumu (7), the 5 departmental commissioners in all the 5 regional offices (25) and a purposively sampled group of 10 employees (2 in each of the 5 regional offices) across the Western region giving me a total of 42 participants for my study sample.

DATA GENERATION

We mainly used two techniques of data generation which were interviews and document analysis. Interviews as a technique of generating data involve direct verbal interaction between individuals. It is intended to get to what a participant in the research thinks the attitudes of that person and/or to explore a person's reasons for thinking in a certain way or for carrying particular perceptions or attitudes (Cohen et al, 2007). Interviews are one of the most important sources of data in qualitative research (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999) and are advantageous in that they provided in-depth data which was not possible to get using questionnaires. Interviews made it possible to obtain data necessary to meet specific objectives of the study and also guard against confusing the questions since the interviewer can clarify the questions thereby helping the respondent give relevant responses.

The interviews enabled us develop a rapport with the participants and facilitated free exchange of information. As Gillham (2005) states, "...the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is responsive or interactive, allowing for a degree of adjustment, clarification and exploration" (P.3).

Interviews suited this study in terms of the factors noted by Gillham (2005) who says that interviews are suitable when:

Small numbers are involved, they are accessible, they are key and you can't afford to lose any, your questions...are mainly open and require an extended response with prompts and probes...to clarify answers, if the material is sensitive in character so that trust is involved: people will disclose things in a face-to-face interview that they will not disclose in any anonymous questionnaire (pp.3-4).

The interviews were conducted at the participants' places of work. They were conducted in the language the participants were comfortable in using, that is, English or Kiswahili. English is the official language in Kenya and Kiswahili the national language. Since these are the two languages the participants used, we allowed for flexibility so that the information was delivered appropriately. Interviews were more flexible because we were able to adapt to the situation and get as much information as possible. Very sensitive and personal information

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can be extracted from the respondent by honest and personal interaction between the respondent and the interviewer. The interviewer can clarify and elaborate the purpose of the research because respondents give more complete and honest information. Interviewers are however, able to get such information through interaction and genuine conversation. Interviews yield high response rates mainly because it is difficult for a subject to completely refuse to answer questions or ignore the interviewer (Gillham, 2005).

The use of document analysis as a data generation technique was also important to me as a researcher. Yin (2009) asserts that documentary information is likely to be very relevant to every case study topic. He further advises that this type of information can take many forms and should be the object of explicit data collection plans and that document are usually the value in corroborating data from other sources. However, he cautions that it should not be assumed that all the information in documents is absolutely factual. Jwan & Ong'ondo (2011) contend that documents are also an important source of data in case study research but cautions that using already printed documents is likely to be a tedious process. They further caution that there is a difference between using documents as a source of data and suggest that as far as possible a researcher ought to use only the raw documents as data since secondary documents could be used as background information or as part of the literature review. One advantage of document analysis as a source of data in qualitative research is that they enhance the credibility of the study, an important aspect of trustworthiness (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011).

FINDINGS

ICC strategies used in implementation of PCs

During the data analysis, it emerged that three main ICC strategies were used in implementation of PCs: communicating corporate ownership of PCs, Instituting consistency in communicating about PCs and using change as a strategy in communicating about PCs as presented below.

Communicating corporate ownership of PCs

 The main ICC strategy that emerged from the data which was adopted seemed to be communicating PCs as being corporately owned - that is - by all the internal publics of the organization. This strategy was in turn realized through building employee awareness about and acceptance of PCs as a new development, building awareness and acceptance of PCs as

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a management tool, promoting PCs as intended to improve productivity and communicating the PCs as requiring the involvement and support of all internal publics Findings on these sub- strategies are presented below.

Building employee awareness about - and acceptance of - PCs

One of the concerns in this study in relation to the research issue was what strategies were used to make the internal publics aware about PCs and promote their acceptance of PCs. From the data, it emerged that the employees were informed about PCs as a new phenomenon, encouraged to accept and support it as an important tool of management that was meant to counter under performance and which required the support of all the internal publics. The following specific issues emerged from the data with regard to the strategy of building employees awareness and acceptance of PCs.

The study revealed that PCs were explained as a new aspect of development in the organization that needed to be embraced fully as it could help improve on the organizational and individual performance. With regard to this, PCs were projected as a new initiative that would effectively guide employees on the roles and expectations of the organization. It was intended to measure performance and guides the management on upgrading, promotions, transfers and suitability of employees for various roles. In relation to the newness of PCs, the study revealed that many employees were aware that PCs had not reached the ideal state at which it would be expected to help in rating the organization as being successful. The following excerpt captures the awareness (and by extension acceptance of employees about the PCs:

However, on this strategy of building awareness and acceptance, it also emerged that while most employees who were interviewed indicated having seen the contracts, very few indicated knowing what they were meant for. For example, one participant, a 59 year old employee who is almost retiring, acknowledged knowing that PCs are a new phenomenon geared towards developing the employee and organizational performance but said it is not a good thing as it is used quite vindictively by the management. Most employees who were interviewed shared in these sentiments.

Still on the issue of awareness and acceptance, ten years, after the introduction of PCs (since 2003), most of the internal publics said that it was still communicated variously depending on the officers talking about it; making it achieve varied levels of understanding and acceptance .It emerged that it was a new policy in the organization and all employees were

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sensitized when it was introduced while the management asserted that it was not really new because the organization had always had some form of PCs even before the government "re-introduced" it in 2003.

The study also established that one common ICC strategy was to project PC as a management tool that ought to be accepted to help in maintaining the employee and management standards that have always led to its success. Employees were encouraged to be aware of and accept a number of specific management functions. First was acceptance of PCs as enhancing the clarity in job descriptions. Nonetheless, it emerged that this was more acceptable to the more senior employees   in higher job groups who had attained high level of training and sensitization on PCs than their counterparts who were in lower job groups. The second management function associated with PCs was guidance of employees on their roles in ensuring achievement of objectives and strategic goals of the organization.

Thirdly, in terms of acceptance of PCs as a management tool, the participants stated that one strategy was to communicate PCs as a commitment between the employer and the employee in the organization with the employer stating rules, expectations and the employee undertaking to meet those expectations. Accordingly, the management set targets and employees had Balance Score Cards which were used in gauging the percentage of the set targets achieved

The fourth strategy within this theme emerged as promoting acceptance of PCs as being important to all internal publics in assessing organizational and employee performance towards achieving the organizational goals. The Management interviewed particularly accepted PCs as providing good appraisal and measurement tools that could help motivate staff to achieve their individual and organizational goals. The following excerpt from one of the participants captures the strategy of communicating PCs as a management tool.

It is also clear that another part of the strategy of communicating PCs as a management tool was to get employees to be aware of and possibly accept the possible consequences of not meeting the agreed targets in the PCs. Another strategy was to encourage ownership of PCs as being intended to boost performance by individuals and the organization as a whole.

Employees at all levels in the organization are required to perform at a certain level which is set by the organization's management based on the organizational goals and targets. One of the findings was that, ownership of PCs would help improve their productivity. The employees were convinced that PCs were introduced when there was permissiveness and laxity among employees. People would not do their work adequately hence the introduction

of PCs to counter underperformance and to make employees efficient and proficient in their jobs. The introduction of PCs was therefore conveyed as inevitable as it was geared towards enhancing performance.

PCs need involvement and support of all internal publics

Another ICC strategy that emerged with respect to advocating corporate ownership was encouraging and demonstrating the fact that PCs required to be supported and implemented by all internal publics t various levels of the organization. Interviews with the management indicated that the National Treasury all the way down to the subordinate staff in the organization were involved in the implementation of PCs and that despite the challenges faced, all employees felt that their performance had improved with time.

Instituting consistency in communicating about PCs

It also emerged from the data that consistency in communicating PCs was a vital aspect of its success. The management sought to ensure that in as much as there may exist hiccups, consistency enhanced the implementation of organizational programmes and that there was thus the need to involve each and every one at all levels for uniformity.

Within the ICC strategy of communicating corporate ownership of PCs, the first sub - strategy, as presented above, was building employee awareness about (and acceptance of) PCs. The second sub-strategy was instituting consistency in communicating about PCs. This involved instituting communication about PCs from the headquarters, instituting a downward hierarchical communication about PCs and Instituting specific communication about PCs to different regions.

Instituting communication about PCs from the headquarters (HQs)

Interviews with the regional managers and some of the employees indicated that PCs were designed by the Organizational Management in Nairobi, specifically by the Human Resource office. The interviews revealed that administration of the entire performance contracting process was under the docket of the Chief Administration Officers who are the Deputy Commissioners and the Senior Deputy Commissioner based in the headquarters in Nairobi. These were the officers responsible for instituting communication about PCs. This was intended to ensure that there would be consistency in terms of the Communication emanating from the headquarters about PCs.

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Instituting a downward hierarchical communication about PCs

It also emerged that the communication about PCs was communicated downwards through the ranks. The communication moved from the Chief Administration Officer to the Senior Deputy Commissioner , then the Deputy Commissioner – to the Regional Manager – then the Deputy Regional Manager and ultimately to the Station Managers to the Deputy Station Managers and staff. Communication about PCs through this chain of command would give details of the activities employees could be involved in for effective implementation of PCs. Interviews with some of the officers in the hierarchy described above captured this strategy: PC is done and often communicated from the HQs down to the supervisors through the ranks. Communication moves from the Chief Administration Officers Senior Deputy Commissioner then to the Deputy Commissioner and the Supervisors at the regions

Instituting specific communication about PCs for different regions

The data also revealed that much as the issues regarding PCs were generally communicated downwards from the top management to all the regions uniformly, the management also agreed on the fact that PCs were tailor - made for the different regions being that there were different roles associated with the different regions and regional offices.

Change as a strategy in communicating about   PCs

The interviewees explained further that the specific communication strategies for different regions were meant to address the varying roles of these regions and the job descriptions of the employees in various departments. The managers and employees confirmed that there were difficulties with the communication as some areas are too remote to be accessed easily and may not be open to the technology used in communication for other regions.

From the data, it emerged that *change* was used as a strategy in communicating internally about PCs. This involved reviewing the messages and strategies (such as the ones presented above) on the issue of performance contracting generally. Two main changes that emerged from the data were change in pattern of communication about PCs and change to accommodate views on improvement of PCs.

Change to accommodate views on improvement of PCs

It also emerged that changes were introduced in the process of communication about PCs in order to accommodate the views of the employees for improvement. To begin with, most of

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participants admitted that in 2003 and earlier, stages of the introduction of PCs and signing was done unwillingly and that only a few people played a role in the target setting and implementation process. Some participants actually stated that the Commissioner General and the regional Managers in the organization needed to take responsibility for any failures since they were the ones who agreed to the signing of some unreasonable targets given by Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance.

It also emerged that there had been a change in handling grievances relevant to PCs. The respondents confirmed that an employee was now free to reject the appraisal results and seek a re-appraisal, which had not been the case during the initial five years of introduction of PCs. This change, most participants concurred had contributed more to the acceptance of PCs by the internal publics.

DISCUSSION

In answering the research question, this study identified that most employees did not know the ICC strategies used in the implementation of PCs despite the numerous sensitization and training often done

ICC strategies are a complex phenomenon that is not easy to categorically identify, describe or even quantify (Cornelissen, 2004; Argenti, 2009).Cornelissen acknowledges that in the organizational policy context, the issue of ICC strategies becomes even more complicated because the key feature of ICC is acceptance, which in itself is equally complex.

Even after the implementation of the PCS in organizations, more and more critics were not satisfied. The management bent to the internal public's pressure and introduced brief explanations of why a particular strategy worked. With this new system, known as the linear management strategy, the management believed would go a long way in helping employees know a little bit more about a strategy's content, form and structure before signing their contracts (Argenti, 2009).

This study confirms initial reports that linear strategies are far more superior to the non-linear strategies as they provide information about the policies and give an insight into how the strategies are applied in policy implementation. This also assumed that the organizations were structured in hierarchically and that they were operating in a stable environment where managers acted rationally.

It also revealed that managers and employees in organizations that often discussed the strategies in use were more conversant with PCs as a policy that was required by the government as compared to those ones from organizations that depended on the adaptive/ prescriptive strategy of communication. ICC strategies' knowledgeable employees credited their knowledge to sensitization and effective communication thus proving that use of ICC strategies in implementation of PCs are better when the internal publics are allowed to discuss the targets prior to signing of the contracts. This is attributed to the use of the interpretive strategy by Jain (1997) which believes that the organization is a collection of cooperative agreements entered into willingly.

Internationally, concern has arisen about some ICC strategies used in implementing PCs leading to a misconstrued idea that the only way to succeed in performance is by using the prescriptive strategy. This concern centers mostly on the availability of room for negotiation of targets as well as erosion of the traditional belief that PCs are bad (Obong'o, 2009). However, the study while answering the first research question established that most employees are more worried about the results of the appraisals than they are about the strategies used.

Previously documented studies have revealed that negative aspects of ICC have been of great concern to the management worldwide (Cornelissen, 2004; Argenti, 2009,2012; Gatere et.al ,2013; Holtz, 2003). Argenti (2009) while referring to the linear strategy states that three out of five employees say that they are very concerned that the ICC strategies used are being exposed to too much inconsistency that they believe their involvement would be a stepping stone to success of the strategies in use. Management on the other hand are concerned that employees learn the content and structures of PCs through the communication strategies.

Employees have every reason to worry about the ICC strategies used in implementing PCs since they may not be what they believe has led to the acceptance of PCs. Previous studies have indicated the ICC strategies' use effects on employee beliefs about the reasons behind the policy by influencing employees' acceptance of PCs as an organizational policy. This is achieved through shaping employee views and perceptions of the ICC strategies. Just as Steyn's Educational model suggests that corporate communication strategy entails clearly formulating what should be communicated to strategic stakeholders to solve the problems created by the implications of a strategic issue or capitalize on the opportunities presented; some managers in my study saw this form of communication as a functional strategy

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providing direction to the ICC strategies used and providing a focus on them as a premise of interaction between the lower- level strategies and the higher level strategies.

The communication (whether oral or written) employed in implementing PCs and especially the ICC strategies used was of much concern to management and employees in this study. These findings are in line with research showing that management worry about the implementation and success of the ICC strategies and PCs. Although not much has been documented about ICC strategies used in implementation of PCs, this study has shed some light in that area.

Previously documented research shows that there is an inverse relation between employee performance and knowledge of the ICC strategies used in implementing PCs. However, my study revealed that a manager's highest level of performance was directly related to his/her knowledge of the ICC strategies he/she used in implementing PCs.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study aimed at finding out what ICC strategies were used in the implementation of PCs, how the ICC strategies were used in the implementation of PCs, and the perceptions of the management and employees on the success of the ICC strategies used in implementation of PCs. Interviews and documents were used for data collection.

The study contributes to knowledge in the field of Communication Studies and specifically the area of Internal Corporate Communication by revealing that most employees and managers in the organization view PCs as a new phenomenon which has led to the high level of employee and organizational performance by communicating corporate ownership of PCs, documentation of PCs as a key process and the varied perceptions on the ICC strategies used. This existence of ICC strategies has led most employees to perceive PCs as quite autocratic and vindictive with regard to the 'consequences syndrome'. Employees' attitude towards ICC strategies used in implementing PCs impacts on their perceptions of the same and is often influenced by already existing organizational cultures, and the level of performance with regard to the job descriptions.

The main argument in this paper is therefore that while ICC strategies are very important in Communication Studies, they could only influence employee perceptions of ICC strategies in the desired manner if management is knowledgeable about them and if they implement them appropriately and consistently. In view of this paper, it is our view that the main contribution of this study to the field of Communication Studies is that it provides a case for focus on ICC

strategies away from the concentration on external corporate communication, CSR and corporate branding which over the years have received much attention.

This study has revealed that ICC strategies play a significant role in organizations especially in creating employee awareness and acceptance of PCs. In relation to this, we recommend that Management at various levels in organizations, need to ensure consistency in implementation of PCs to avert the thought that the whole process is meant for the management to curb underperformance and monitor employee performance.

In relation to findings that there is need for involvement of all in the negotiation of contracts, we recommend that the government through its appropriate functions should come up with a way of ensuring that the set targets are open for negotiation by both the management and the employees as this would stand as a genuine system for safeguarding and protecting the place of the employee in the organization as a stakeholder. This new system should be developed by people/groups that understand the Kenyan employment context.

In relation to findings that training and sensitization of employees on the implementation of PCs, we recommend employee knowledge of these strategies as it would improve on their perceptions and eventual success of the strategies. Employees have a right to precise knowledge of the ICC strategies used in the implementation of PCs as regards to the acceptance and ownership of PCs. The government using various forms of media and platforms should for a very long time run sensitization programmes and trainings for the employees and management so as to ensure efficiency, effectualness and effectiveness of the ICC strategies that are used in implementing PCs. Additionally, the management should have an up-to-date website with this information throughout for employees who have questions or those seeking clarification on the contracting process.

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