The Forms of Organizational Structures in Public and Private Universiteis in Kenya

Stellah J Kereto Department of Curriculum and Instructional Management, Egerton University P.O. Box 536-20115 Egerton, Kenya stellahkereto@gmain.com

Prof. Mwangi Ndirangu Department of Curriculum and Instructional Management, Egerton University P.O. Box 536-20115 Egerton, Kenya mndirangu@egerton.ac.ke

Prof. Anthony K Sang Department of Curriculum and Instructional Management, Egerton University P.O. Box 536-20115 Egerton, Kenya kiplangatsang@kabarak ac.ke

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of managers on the forms of organizational structures that existed in public and private universities in Kenya. The study employed a descriptive survey research design with a target population of 705 senior managers which included the Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVC's), Deans and Directors, Heads of teaching and non-teaching departments (HOD's). Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting six universities out of seventeen which were fully fledged universities, on the basis of size and location. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to obtain a total of 248 representative sample from each category of managers. One questionnaire document was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was pilot tested and reliability coefficient was calculated from collected data and found to be 0.90 qualifying the research instrument as reliable and acceptable. Data from the research was analyzed using descriptive (percentages and means). Overall index score of six organizational structure dimensions was done and the findings was that bureaucratic features in public universities was manifested at 61.2% and 67.8% in private universities. This was not a very high degree of bureaucracy and therefore it was concluded that there was a mixture of both the mechanistic and organic organizational structures in the universities in Kenya. The study recommended that structural flexibility in the universities was achievable and management could strategize on the initiative. Universities could equip managerial staff with managerial competencies to endow them with skills to implement structural change in response to uncertainties in the environmental situations and conditions.

Keywords:Organizational Structures, organic organizational structure, Bureaucratic organizational structure, structurel flexibility.

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1.0 Introduction

Universities have transformed themselves from one organizational structure model to another especially beginning from the 1980's. The transformation has taken place in most universities in the United States of America (USA) and Europe where the universities were operating on traditional collegial models of organizational structure. Whatever changes have taken place in the organizational structures has been attributed to changes in the environment in which the universities operate in. This situation points to the fact that universities have over the years been able to adapt their organizational structures and some have responded and adjusted to changes in their environments while others have retained elements of traditional forms (Fumasoli & Stenskar, 2013; Musselin, 2006).

Martin (2016), noted that majority of universities in the United Kingdom (UK), Europe, North America, and Austral-Asia exhibited bureaucratic characteristics of patronization. Collegial model of organizational structure was a traditional model of organization where change was deliberate and slow. Collegial models still operate to varying degrees in major universities in Canada, U.S.A, and Europe where the management practices emphasized the achievement of performance targets regardless of the general tendency for preference for flatter organizational structure (Rabah, 2015). The flatter organizational structures are decentralized, flexible and have lean systems and processes.

Institutions of Higher Education in Africa have also been affected by the environmental dynamics and

resultant pressure to review their organizational structures that has happened elsewhere in the world (Simala, 2015).

Kenyan universities are equally facing environmental situations than demand changes because of advancement in technology, globalization of education, stakeholders demands and expectations, pressure from regulatory bodies, reduced government funding and expansion in the number of university that has created competition both locally and internationally, (Odhiambo, 2018). Studies have been undertaken to demonstrate the significance of organizational structures in Kenya. Gichuhi (2017), in his research, concluded that organizational structures contributed significantly to competitiveness of institutions of higher learning in Kenya and it was necessary, for universities to consider flexible structures for enhanced performance. This could be done by considering organizational elements such as flow of information, well defined roles and clear chain of command. Waswa, Ombuki, Migosi and Metet (2013), in their studies acknowledged the need for managers in the universities to continuously review organizational structure in order to achieve adaptive management systems in line with dynamic nature of their environments. These studies shows the significance of organizational structures and progressive research on various dimensions that affect organizational performance. This study focused on six dimensions of organizational structure in order to determine what forms of organizational existed in the Kenyan universities.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The organizational structure of an organization has been regarded as the foundation within which an institution operates and a tool for managers to coordinate tasks and activities to achieve organizational goals. An inappropriate structure can lead to the success or failure of the institution as it shapes employee behavior and determines the direction and flow of power and authority in the organization. Managers use the organizational structure to achieve institutional objectives efficiently and effectively. Universities in Kenya are facing enormous challenges brought about by reduced government funding, demands for quality from stakeholders, inadequate technologies, globalization occasioned by rapid advancement in information technology and competition from local and foreign universities. These environmental challenges faced by the institutions of higher learning, require organizational structures that enable them respond and overcome the environmental and situational challenges. There is therefore need for universities to adopt appropriate organizational structures that would enable them to be highly competitive and effectively execute their missions. The existing organizational structures may no longer be appropriate as the universities are now faced with the increasing encroachment of their catchments by international and local private universities. An investigation into of current organizational structure is necessary for universities to sustain superior performance in an environment that is dynamic. The extent to which the management of universities have organized the tasks and activities to respond to the changing environment and market conditions is not clear. Most studies on organizational structure have delved into areas of application, management processes and systems in Kenya. This study therefore sought to establish from the managers perspective the forms of organizational structures that exist in the public and private universities in Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Perspective

Organizational structures have been defined variously and are said to have a direct link with organizational performance. Ahmady, Mehrpour and Nikooravesh (2016), described organizational structure as the relationships between components of an organizational whole that constitute the set of methods of dividing and assigning the tasks to determine organizational duties and how they are coordinated. Organizational structure is a tool used by managers to create activities or tasks and to control the behavior of members of the organization, while an appropriate organizational structure can enhance superior performance (Muoki & Okibo, 2016). Organizational structures are regarded as an organizational framework that defines reporting and authority relationships within which the authority and power of the organization flows from top to bottom or vise versa (Bivir, 2003). All organizations therefore including universities have one form of structure or another that is used by managers to classify tasks and responsibilities to achievement of organizational goals.

This study adapted organizational structure theories developed by Burns and Stalker's in (1961) which placed organizational forms in a continuum with the mechanistic organization structures on one extreme and organic form on another end. Burns and Stalker subscribed to modern management theories on organizations and one of their fundamental assumptions was that organizations were basically formed to implement established objectives. They also believed that there is one best or appropriate structure for an organization based on its objectives, the environmental conditions surrounding it, the nature of products or services it provided and the technology in use by the organization. They further underscored the fact that most problems in an organization emanated from structural flaws. Organizational structure related challenges could be solved by managers by

adjusting the existing structure according to the existing environment demands (Onday, 2016).

Organizations with mechanistic organizational forms will exhibit many features in common with bureaucratic organizations. Universities have been classified as bureaucratic organizations with because of their size and management processes (Okioga, Onsongo & Nyaboga, 2012). Some of the features exhibited by universities is high formalization in organizational structures that are considered inappropriate for organizations facing turbulent times. The preferred organizational structures for unstable environment are the organic structures (McNamara, 2009). Bureaucratic structures tend to concentrate on efficiency in the system, fixed goal setting and administrative system that manages efficiency in the organization while paying minimal attention to issues that could be an impediment in achievement of the set goals. The Stable environment makes it possible to fully concentrate on efficiency and execution of strategic plans in a rational, efficient and clear manner without any concern for unanticipated changes in the operating environment. Embedded in this is the administrative process of planning, directing and controlling (McNamara, 2009). Management therefore concentrates on simply adhering to the written rules and procedures.

Mechanistic approach to organizational management is said to work well under conditions where the tasks to be performed are straight forward and where the environment is stable enough to ensure that products and services are the appropriate ones. Precision in task performance is the optimum goal and employees act in a machine like manner, are compliant and act in way they have been directed to do (McNamara, 2009). Currently the environment in which universities are operating is marked with intensive competition, frequent changes in government policies and technology. The frequent changes in way of doing things calls for greater structural flexibility in operations and in order for universities lay strategies of remaining competitive, viable, effective and efficient.

Owing to the environmental turbulence and unpredictability in the environments in which universities are operating, control oriented approach of mechanistic structures, create structural rigidity that insulates universities from issues that needs to be addressed. It would be desirable if management shifted focus from internal challenges, operating systems and procedures to evaluation of external environment in order to respond to external challenges more promptly and effectively. With mechanistic forms of organizational structure, there is a tendency for heavy administrative-overheads as a result of internal procedures that consume more time and resources at the expense of external customer focused operations. Mechanistic structures are considered slow to introduction of structures entrenches greater focus on internal administrative processes. Members of the organization tend to develop unhelpful, fixed mind sets on the perceptions of external and internal situations. Departmentalization, work-specialization although necessary for development of professionalism tends to create job boundaries that demarcate the different departments and sections. This can lead to rational–legal organization that is bogged down in a 'need-to-consult' behavioural practices that cause the tendency for preservation of status-quo, defensive attitude and mannerisms rather than integration, teamwork and development of shared values (McNamara, 2009).

Mechanistic forms of organizational structure consisted of four frequently used forms namely functional, geographic, product, service and customer form of organizational structure. This type of structure are characterized by a number of attributes which includes specialized differentiation of functional tasks, strict division of labor, clear delegation of authority and centralization of decision making. Other hallmarks of mechanistic forms of organizational structure are hierarchical control of authority and communication, short span of control and chain of command. The mechanistic organization is highly structured and members have well-defined, formal job descriptions/roles, and positions. Authority and directives flow from the top-down through the hierarchy and communication is similarly vertical (Koldakar, 2007). Most of these characteristics are manifested in modern day organizations including universities.

Organizations that pursue flexibility and dynamisms in its management practices adopt organic forms of organizational structure which were identified by Burns and Stalker (1961). Organic structures are not hierarchical in the same way as the mechanistic structures but emphasise lateral communication, reliance on individual discretion in decision making and participative decision making. Such characteristics are considered to be appropriate for organizational environment that are marked by frequent changes especially in technology, service markets and clientele (Onday, 2016). Matrix, project teams and virtual networks are examples of organic forms of organizational structure.

In organic structures authority is sufficiently delegated to other levels of the organization. Employees' commitment differs with regard to their willingness to be utilized as a resource for the betterment of the organization. This is attributed to the management system which is based on shared beliefs and values and continuous learning (Kessler, Nixon & Nord, 2017). The organic structure is seen to be a much more fluid and adaptive set of arrangements that is more appropriate for changing environmental conditions which necessitates the emergence of innovative responses to cope with environmental demands (Onday, 2016). Organic forms of organizational structure were considered to be a modification of the mechanistic form and examples of organic

structures are matrix, project team, virtual networks and adhocratic structure.

According to Onday, (2016), uniquely associated with organic structure is employee commitment which is said to be different from practices in mechanistic structures. Organic structures foster shared beliefs and values that replace the formal control that is inherent in the mechanistic type of structure. Organic structures are not hierarchical in the same way as mechanistic systems and within the organic structures are pockets of authority based on the capability and expertise of employee rather than seniority (Kessler, et., al., 2017).

2.2 Organizational Structures and Universities

Universities have been described as bureaucracies that are decentralized (Musselin, 2006). This view was held by Mintzberg who came up with the description for the universities as professional bureaucracies. He noted that most universities arose from tradition of vertically oriented organizational structures that were loosely connected or coupled and operated in 'silos' based on schools, colleges, business operations, and student support services. The units in the universities focused mainly on promotion of own internal goals and objectives much more than adherence to broader institutional purposes (Fielden, 2010).

Another description of universities was by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972), who described universities as 'organized anarchies', 'garbage can models' or 'loosely coupled systems' (Musselin 2006). The loose coupling form of structures refers to the organizational structures that enhanced low levels of cooperation and coordination between the teaching and research activities. In this description it was noted that organizational structures did not enhance a strong collaboration between various actors in the universities especially in teaching and research disciplines. The finding further noted that teamwork between various faculties was rare, and where it existed it was very low and poor and limited to small groups (Musselin, 2006). Most of the characteristics described above have persisted in most institutions of higher learning even with the widely acknowledged changes in the operating environments of the universities.

It has been noted that the organizational structures in the academic world largely follows Max Weber's bureaucratic model (Musselin, 2006). These features are depicted by the existence of units in the universities such as libraries, student accommodation services, the departments of finance and accounts. The collegiate like model is a common feature that is evident in the management structures such as university senate, university management and faculty boards.

The traditional organizational structures are gradually being impacted by new concepts emerging from the liberalization of higher education. The shift has emanated from provision of higher education from elite system to massification of higher education. Another source of pressure has come from government funding policies and the development of information technology. Such environmental factors have implications on the organizational structure and have consequently contributed to the need to review the appropriateness of the organizational structure with regard to environmental situations and challenges. New managerial concepts and managerial practices are emerging with businesslike management models prompted by knowledge economy which focuses on productivity, revenue gains, employment flexibility, market forces and outsourcing (Mainardes, & Raposo, 2011;Waswa, Migosi & Metet, 2013;Eckel & King, 2013). Increasingly, the universities are being influenced to adopt organizational structures that support market business models types and are entrepreneurial in nature.

With the proliferation of business management models and entrepreneurship, the traditional organizational structures of collegial models are gradually being eroded in the universities. The change from collegial to business management models may not have been the preferable choice for the universities but has largely been unavoidable. Universities are forced to strategize on ways and means of raising funds thus introducing a financial objective in their operations (Rabah, 2015). This new perspective has brought about the need to adopt corporate management and structural models. The institutions of higher education are becoming more and more of corporate entities than a collegial community of academics. Universities are driven to become more competitive, efficient, effective, flexible and sensitive to needs of stakeholders. Their survival amongst competing institutions is taking center stage. Performance management is critical to the universities which have become more concerned with financial results that are required to drive the academic processes gain in the new knowledge economy. The emerging corporate managerialism comes with structural consequences for universities which have to be managed as business entities while still engaged in core functions of academics.

Organizational structures that are supportive of corporate managerialism are likely to have a positive impact on the overall performance and effectiveness of the organization, (Douglas & Judge, 2001). Organizational structure can support appropriate management practices and sets high standards of work performance including change management that will realize and achieve intended organizational goals and objectives. Through the use of appropriate organizational structure, management functions defines what people do, actions and documents what will be used to carry out the tasks an objectives in a consistent manner (Zhang, Song & Song, 2014).

The organizational structure dimensions that were operationalized in this study in investigating the forms of organizational structure that existed in the public and private universities included work specialization, use of rules and regulations, delegation of authority, decision making, span of control, departmentalization and chain of

command. The extent to which these elements existed in the forms of organizational structure indicated whether the organization was mechanistic or organic.

2 Research Questions

In order to achieve the research objective, the research addressed itself to the following question;

(a) What is the perception of university managers on the forms of organizational structures that exist in the public and private universities in Kenya.

3.0 Research Methodologies

Descriptive survey research design was used in the study. A descriptive research design was used to investigate characteristics of a population or an existing phenomenon. It was used to establish the how, why, what and when of the prevailing situation, problems or attitudes of the managers and to obtain their opinion or attitude regarding the situation or phenomenon (Kumar, 2005). The descriptive survey method assumes that what is observed at one particular time can be observed in the future, given the same circumstances and therefore the findings would be applicable in similar situations.

At the time of taking the study 17 fully fledged universities were available for sampling and a6 were sampled for the study. Purposive sampling was used to ensure the selected institutions were representative of the others in terms of size and location.

4.0 Measurement of Variables

Six dimensions of organizational structure were analyzed using percentage and mean scores. An overall index score of the organizational structure was done. Index score was calculated by summing up the means of the six dimensions that were considered to be fundamental to the analysis of the organizational structure. The six dimensions were; work specialization (S1a), rules and regulations (S1b), decentralization of decision making (S1c), span of control (S1d), departmentalization (S1e), chain of command (S1e) and S1 (Structural Index Score).

5.0 Results

Table 1: Index Scores from Public and Private Universities Public Universities

Organizational Structure Dimensions		SD	D	NS	А	SA	Х	SD
S1a -work specialization		5.48	23.18	10.25	46.13	14.98	3.62	0.66
S2b-rules and regulations		2.20	11.93	10.63	58.90	16.30	3.75	0.65
S3c-decentralization		6.30	27.97	12.87	41.33	11.43	3.31	0.75
S4d-span of control		4.83	35.03	10.67	39.43	9.97	3.15	0.83
S5e-departmentalization		5.60	21.90	9.50	48.17	14.87	3.45	0.69
S6f-Chain of command		2.43	21.67	10.20	51.13	14.57	3.53	0.72
S1		4.47	23.61	10.69	47.52	13.69	2.86	0.41
Private Universities Organizational Structure Dimensions	SD	D	NS	А	Sz	4	Х	SD
S1a-work specialization	5.55	23.05	5.55	47.2	3 18	3.60	3.65	0.65
S2b-rules and regulation	-	12.60	3.70	57.03	3 26	5.63	3.97	0.64
S3c-decentralizzation	7.03	34.83	4.40	38.9	0 14	1.83	3.35	0.73
S4d-span of control	4.03	20.94	3.67	47.7′	7 16	5.27	3.44	0.82
S5e-departmentalization	5.17	20.77	5.17	47.0	3 21	.87	3.60	0.78
S6f-chain of command	2.20	22.97	3.70	49.2	7 21	.83	3.66	0.74
S1	4.00	22.53	3 4.3'	7 47.	.87	20.01	2.90	0.43

The results obtained from the research study indicated that organizational structure index for private universities (Mean = 2.90; SD=0.43) was slightly higher than that of public universities (Mean = 2.86;SD = 0.41). This showed that characteristics and features of bureaucratic structure were more pronounced in private universities than in public universities. Both public and the private universities are struggling with bureaucratic encumbrances. Despite the fact that bureaucratic characteristics are more pronounced in both universities, it is apparent that there has been an attempt to embrace some features of organic type of structures. The results also shows that the bureaucratic characteristics of both public and private universities were not very high given that the rating was based on a 5 point likert scale. The overall mean score ratings of the dimensions ranged from 3.15 to 3.97 with a moderate standard deviation ranging from .641 to .833. This implies that bureaucratic

characteristics in the universities were not very high.

Arising from the investigation of the six dimensions, the dimension on decentralization of decision was one that showed that the organizational structures were not bureaucratic. The results on decentralization of decision making indicated that the universities may have embraced a mixture of organizational structure characteristics that as a result of prevailing environmental situations. The results on the dimension of decentralization of decision making was 73% in the private universities and 62.7% in the public universities. **Table 2. Decentralization of Decision making**

Table 2. Decentralization of Decision making								
	University Type	Response (Percentages)						
Items		SD	D	NS	A SA			
As a manager, I have all the authority	Public							
to make the necessary decisions in the		2.9	24.1	5.8	51.8	15.3		
department								
	Private	1.1	31.1	4.4	46.7	16.7		
Decision making is done after	Public							
consultation at all levels		5.1	24.8	18.2	39.4	12.4		
	Private	6.7	27.8	4.4	45.6	15.6		
Managers are not allowed to use	Public							
discretion in making decisions		10.9	35.0	14.6	32.8	6.6		
_	Private	13.3	45.6	4.4	24.4	12.2		
Averages	Public	22.9	27.9	12.8	41.3	11.4		
	Private	7.0	34.8	4.4	38.9	14.8		

Dimension on Use of Rules and Regulations

The results from the overall structural index score showed that the characteristic with highest index score was (S2b), the use of rules and regulations at 83.66% in private universities and 75.20% in public universities. **Table 3 Use of Rules and Regulations**

Itoms	University		Responses (Percentages)				
Items	Туре	SD	D	NS	A S	A	
Tasks and responsibilities are clearly defined	Public	0.7	2.2	2.2	67.2	27.7	
	Private	-	3.3	1.1	62.2	33.3	
Staff work behavior is strictly regulated	Public	4.4	17.5	19.5	49.6	8.8	
	Private	-	16.7	3.3	57.8	22.2	
Every work procedure is performed through strict							
rules	Public	1.5	16.1	10.2	59.9	12.4	
	Private	-	17.8	6.7	51.1	24.4	
Averages	Public	2.2	25.0	10.6	58.9	16.3	
0	Private	-	12.6	3.7	57.0	26.6	

This implies that as the universities grew in size, the functions and activities became complex and the need for more control may have led to the use of more rules and regulations and standard operating procedures to coordinate the increased activities and number of employees. Alizadeh and Frizhendi, (2013) noted that in the use of rules and regulations and allocation of specific tasks, a bureaucratic structure was found to be more effective in such an organization. Rules and regulations makes it possible for large groups of people to work in a compatible and consistent manner. High use of rules and regulations can also cause a high level of impersonality in work performance which is caused by over compliance to rules governing work procedures. Work is performed in a predictable and automatic manner and can prevent scanning the environment to evaluate organizational performance.

The result on the dimension on span of control was not comparable in the public and private universities. The structural index score showed that 64.04% of managers in private universities agreed that the span of control was narrow wile 49.40% in public universities held a similar opinion. Public universities had wider spans of control while private universities had narrow spans of control. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Span of Control

	University		Response (Percentages)			
Items	Туре	SD	D	NS	A SA	1
I am answerable to only one supervisor	Public	2.9	29.2	10.9	46.0	10.9
	Private	3.3	25.6	4.4	44.4	22.2
I am supervising very few people	Public	8.0	38.7	10.2	34.3	8.8
	Private	4.4	24.4	4.4	52.2	14.4
I am answerable to the person I report to only	Public	3.6	37.2	10.9	38.0	10.2
	Private	4.4.	34.4	2.2	46.7	12.2
Averages	Public	4.8	35.0	10.6	39.4	9.9
-	Private	4.0	28.1	3.6	47.7	16.2

This could be attributed to the fact that public universities are large and complex institutions that have developed standard operating procedures and embraced information technology and therefore managers could supervise large number of employees with minimum supervision. Such a situation could easily lead to laxity in enforcement of performance standards and achievement of performance targets. Unity of purpose could be elusive as managers get overwhelmed by large numbers of employees to be supervised.

5.1 Conclusion and recommendation

The conclusions from this study on the forms of organizational structure is that the forms of organizational structure in the universities were mechanistic. The mechanistic tendencies however were moderate.

The achievement of higher performance through flexible structures could still be facing limitations caused characteristics such as the sstrict compliance to rules and regulations. Such bureaucratic dimensions enhance rigidity rather than flexibility in the operations of the universities.

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