

Perceptions on Application of Internal Corporate Communication Strategies Used in Implementation of Organizational Programmes: a Study of One State Corporation in Kenya

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Abstract

In this paper, we discuss the application of Internal Corporate Communication (ICC) in organizations to implement corporate programmes, specifically performance contracting in one large state corporation in Kenya. The paper is a product of a postgraduate study by one of us (Okong'o, 2015), which was motivated by the fact that performance contracting was heavily resisted by many organizations in the country, yet the corporation under review successfully implemented it, citing the effective use of Corporate communication strategies. The literature reviewed also revealed that there is relatively scanty research on this subject, especially in developing countries. The qualitative approach to was applied in this research, taking the case study method in the Western region of Kenya involving 42 participants. Data was generated using interviews and document analysis and was analysed thematically. Some of the perceptions highlighted in the paper are: perceptions on the merits of the ICC strategies used, perceptions on the demerits of the strategies and the perceptions on what can be done differently. 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: Corporate Communication, Internal Corporate Communication, Communication strategies, Performance Contracting.

1. Introduction

ICC is defined as the sharing of messages within a corporation; that is, involving mainly its internal publics. ICC could take place between individuals, individual and group or between groups, departments or branches. This form of communication is a vital aspect of corporate management (Cornelisen, 2013). In fact, success of any organization depends upon a vivid communications system used in-house by an organization in order to keep in touch with its internal publics (Goodman & Hirsch, 2012). Similarly organizational programmes may not thrive without effective ICC as it serves to inform, instruct, develop, motivate and control people in an organization. Knowledge, goal orientation and sharing of corporate concerns, review and monitoring, performance appraisal and training are the main issues that ICC addresses. Effective and efficient ICC helps in the creation of a better working atmosphere and increased productivity and when poorly done it can have adverse effects on the organization (Namara, 2006).

ICC has gained prominence in the recent past; globally and in Kenya because of enactment of organizational policies and programmes related to employee and general organizational performance. 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).

In pursuit of the goal of performance improvement within organizations, New Public Management (hereafter NPM) emphasizes the adoption of private sector practices in public institutions. NPM models have therefore been invariably seen through the corporate organizations reform initiatives in many developing countries as the solution to reversing falling service delivery and organizational performance (Bolagun, 2003).

In the quest of this same goal, Kenya introduced performance contracting not only to improve service delivery but also to refocus the mindset of public service away from a culture of inward looking towards a culture of business, focused on clients and results. The push factor for introduction of performance contracting in Kenya underlies the assumption that institution of performance measurements, clarification of corporate objectives, customer orientation and an increased focus towards incremental productivity and cost reduction can lead to improvements in service delivery (GoK, 2003).

The objective of performance contracting (PC) in Kenya is generally to ensure that individual employees take control of and are accountable for the performance of their roles. This move was necessary especially after the Kenyan government acknowledged that over the years there had been poor performance in the public sector, especially in the management of public resources, which has hindered the realization of sustainable economic growth (GoK, 2005).

According to Gatere et al., (2013), implementation of PC in Kenya has its origin on the assumption that the performance of the public service is falling below the expectations of the public; thus, loss of confidence in the government supported programs. This drop in performance resulted to poor service delivery, waste of the available resources and increased brain drain to the private sector. For these reasons, the government was faced with the challenge of improving service delivery, performance levels and restoring the public's confidence of the public sector by ensuring customer satisfaction and results oriented service. This need to address the performance gaps and customer satisfaction in the public sector led the government into opting for implementation of PC in the public service and other state owned corporations. He further observes that during the initiation stage in Kenya, PC was introduced on a pilot basis between the years 2004-2005. At the evaluation stage, an increase was recorded in pre-tax profits thus justifying the adoption of the management tool. The push factor for the introduction of PCs in Kenya underlies the assumption that institutions are aware of performance measurements, clarification of corporate objectives, customer orientation and the increased focus towards incremental productivity and cost reduction can lead to improvements in service delivery (GoK, 2003).

The study was based on one corporate organization in Kenya - Kenya Revenue Authority (hereafter, KRA). 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 function 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.

The paper focuses on internal corporate communication (ICC) in KRA, particularly within the Western Region, particularly on the perceptions on the success of Internal Corporate Communication strategies used in implementation of Performance Contracting. Next, we state the problem that prompted this study.

2. Statement of the problem

Appropriate and effective ICC is one of the main requirements for the successful implementation of corporate policies and programmes (Cornelissen, 2004). 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 PCs. This problem calls for research into the ICC strategies used in such organizations (Obong'o, 2009; Gatere et al. 2013).

More specifically to this paper, performance contracting has become a requirement in most corporate organizations all over the world. Inevitably, therefore, the perceptions of internal publics in corporations who are required to implement PCs and other stakeholders have to be considered, regarding PCs. Yet, there are no known empirical studies that have investigated stakeholder perceptions on PCs. Academically, therefore, there was a need to conduct research that might reveal important perceptions on successful implementation of corporate programmes generally and PCs, specifically (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 PCs with varied success levels (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 further necessitated a study on the perceptions of stakeholders on the success of Internal Corporate Communication strategies used in implementation of Performance Contracting.

3. Research question and scope of the study

The study had three research questions: 1) What Internal Corporate Communications strategies are used in the implementation of performance contracting in the organization? 2) How are the Internal Corporate Communications strategies used in the implementation of performance contracting in the organization? 3) What

are the perceptions of the Management and employees on the success of the ICC strategies used in implementation of Performance Contracting in the organization? In this paper, we address the Third research question:

In terms of the scope of the study relevant to this paper, the third research question covered what the management and employees identified as the strengths and weaknesses of the ICC strategies in relation to implementation of PCs, and why they thought so. This question also investigated their views on what could have been done differently (e.g. in terms of timing, personnel involved, details etc. of the ICC on PCs), why it should have been done differently. Through this research question, the study also explored perceptions on the effect of successful implementation of PCs or lack of it on the performance of the organization in terms of its core objectives.

In terms of limitations, clearly this study was restricted in terms of content since it 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. Secondly, 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. It is important to explain that the limitations raised in this study were inevitable in an academic research which by its nature was limited in terms of time and resources. This scenario definitely called for a limited scope in terms of content, context and methodology. However, the rigour put into the execution of the selected scope was thorough enough to ensure the findings were still significant.

4. Rationale for the study

The rationale for this study lies in the fact that no prior empirical studies had been conducted that examined perceptions of the management and employees on the success of the ICC strategies used in the implementation of PCs both globally, in Africa and in Kenya, particularly. Secondly, performance contracting as a corporate programme is generally a new phenomenon in the developing world, particularly in Kenya. While there is quite some literature on performance contracting parse (e.g. Obong'o, (2009), OECD (1999), Muraya, (2012), there is very minimal research literature on the Communication of PCs. It is justified to do research on ICC within corporations.

Thirdly, we believe this study will be 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.

5. Research Methodology

The study was grounded within the relativist – interpretivist paradigm; hence adopted a qualitative case study design. The qualitative approach is flexible and made it possible to generate and analyze holistic data using sufficiently rigorous, trustworthy and ethical methods and techniques (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011). The intent of qualitative research was to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction; in this study the ICC strategies used in implementation of PCs, (Creswell, 2007). 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. Creswell 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. This study was therefore an instrumental case study of the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA).

5.1. Sampling

The study focused on Western region of Kenya in five regional offices of KRA 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. KRA is one of the state corporations that have successfully implemented PC (Muraya, 2012). 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.

In this study the sample comprised five regional office commissioners from all the selected 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 a total sample of 42 participants for the study. In determining the sample for this study, we adopted the non - probability sampling (particularly purposive sampling) strategy in consistency with the qualitative approach and case study method. Purposive sampling suited this study because

as Dornyei (2007) asserts: 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.

In this study, we selected three categories of participants: Commissioners, Supervisors and members of various departments so as to elicit 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 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 a total of 42 participants.

5.2. 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 (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Interviews are one of the most important sources of data in qualitative research 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 (Litchman, 2006).

The use of document analysis as a data generation technique was also important. Yin (2009) asserts that documentary information is likely to be very relevant to every case study topic. 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). We used document analysis in the study since participants sign performance contracts and getting to see the documents enabled us to relate information to the data from the interviews. We targeted documents that contained any communication within KRA on ICC and/or PCs.

5.3. Data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations

Data was analysed thematically in five main states: transcription, familiarization with the data, open coding, axial coding and selective (Creswell (2007). Trustworthiness is the degree or extent of certainty that the research process is truthful, careful and rigorous enough to qualify to make claims that it does (Creswell, 2007; Litchman, 2006). In qualitative research, trustworthiness involves credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. We ensured the trustworthiness of the study by giving a detailed account of the research process, excerpts from the field notes, quotes from interviews and ensuring reflexivity (Jwan, 2010) by acknowledging researcher's role in the research process and admitting any possible influences. The study also heavily utilized triangulation of participants, research sites and data generation techniques.

In terms of ethics, we sought permission from the relevant organizational authorities to gain access to the geographical sites and participants before data collection. We also developed an informed consent form for participants to sign before engaging them in the research Creswell (2009), acknowledging that their rights would be protected during data collection, elements of which included: identification of the researcher, the institution, how the participants were selected, the purpose of the research, the benefits for participating in the research, the level and type of participant involvement, guarantee of confidentiality, provision of names and persons to contact if questions arise. We ensured anonymity of the participants and kept their names secret so that any other person was unable to identify who gave information. This helped us keep the information for the intended purpose and thus within the boundaries of the shared consent.

Findings

During the data analysis, it emerged that there were three main perceptions on the ICC strategies used in implementation of PCs: Some participants perceived the ICC strategies as being quite successful, leading to acceptance of the PCs. On the other hand, there are those who said that the demerits outweighed the merits and that there was need for change to improve on its levels of success in implementation as presented below.

6. Perceptions on merits of ICC strategies

In terms of merits, some of the participants stated that the ICC strategies served to guide employees on their roles and the expectations by their employers. They said that the ICC strategies made the issue of PCs clearer as a Management tool intended to improve performance of employees and the entire organization. The general perception was that the ICC strategies enhanced the acceptance of PCs and eventually led to the improvement of organizational performance. Specifically, the participants indicated that there were suspicions about the documents such as appraisal forms, Balance score cards and the PCs themselves but with sustained ICC, these had become accepted as essential tools, which were not intended to "catch" or "victimize" any employees. The following excerpt captured the general perception.

Of course initially the policy was met with suspicion, people thought the whole PC process was intended

to catch or victimize some targeted individuals, even communities, ... but with induction and explanation, now we accept the appraisals, contracts and even branch ratings as good to check underperformance (COM-C).

The ICC intended for monitoring of the implementation of PCs was isolated as being quite successful. The participants concurred that though every region and/or department had their unique ICC strategies with varying merits, generally the appraisal forms and Balance Score Cards contributed to the success witnessed in the implementation of PCs as can be seen in the statements below:

I would say the monitoring tools are successful because you feel the heat when you are messing or when your targets are going down especially for the management and the deputy station manager because you are constantly being asked from above “how far are you?” and it’s because they know the targets that we undertook mean something (SUP-D). Targets are rising and there is still more to be done for effective communication and implementation of the whole policy as an organizational requirement. This region from what I know as an employee of this organization over the years has done exceptionally well because of the score cards and appraisals and should be encouraged to do better (MEB-B).

The interviews confirmed that at the regional level, logistics had often led to hitches during implementation but communicating about PCs as collectively owned had improved the success of PCs. They said, through the ICC, one got to know when they had not met their targets. Employee efficiency, proficiency and productivity had gone up since the re-introduction of PCs due to the strategies used in communicating and implementing them and that impunity had been eradicated. They said that with the strategies used everyone had been made to take responsibility for their actions whether good or bad.

It’s a contract between one and the employer laying down their expectations and the undertaking to meet those expectations. I don’t think it’s a choice but it’s an obligation as one sets out to do what is stated in the contract failure to which one takes responsibility to explain why they did not meet those targets then. With regard to this one should face disciplinary action with reference to reasons as to why you didn’t meet the expectations in the contract. Personal responsibility in meeting the targets is vital and one is expected to always be at par with the organizational expectations with the constant communication which is done. At times when signing these contracts we do it with heavy hearts and cross our fingers hoping for better days to come especially with the merger being discussed lately. It seems to be working in favour of the government and a few people who supposedly play a role in the target setting and implementation process. I think the Commissioner General and the regional Managers should always take responsibility since they are the ones who agree to some unreasonable targets given by Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance (SUP-D)

6.1. Perceptions on the demerits of ICC strategies used

There were a number of perceived demerits of the ICC strategies used in implementation of PCs. The findings on these are presented below.

6.1.1. ICC over emphasized consequences of PCs

One of the demerits cited was that the consequences of not meeting the targets in the PCs were over-emphasized – especially in the verbal communication about them. They indicated that PCs were communicated as an obligation that an employee had no choice but to meet what he had undertaken to do. On the other hand they confirmed that if one failed to meet the expected targets they were tasked to answer why and subsequent disciplinary action taken if they failed to justify the reason for that failure.

The main information communicated was that if there was evidence of negligence anything from a warning letter, to more punitive measures can be taken (MEB-B) I don’t think it’s a choice but it’s an obligation one sets out to do what is stated in the contract and if you fail to meet those targets then you should answer why there is a failure. With regard to this one should face disciplinary action with reference to reasons as to why you didn’t meet the expectations in the contract (SUP-D).

For Example, SUP-A and MEB-B said that PCs were still a new phenomenon in the organization and in the region and that there had been sensitization of staff. They said that so far the uptake had been good but with the vindictive aspect of PCs not completely demystified. They believed that there was still need for more sensitization because PC’s went hand in hand with promotions after the period.

I think the issue is with informal communication that people get from various aspects of implementation. For example, some people are being promoted based on PCs, Management cannot understand that not everyone can perform at the same level. The problem also comes in when those who have achieved expect pay rises or promotions or at least recognition but fail to get them then they fail to understand why they should perform at their best. Those who do not perform also do not receive any sanctions hence they don’t really understand the whole reasoning behind performance contracting. The issues are many but I will sum them all into one which is performance with regard to the set targets. There is no two way about it meaning the employees have to work extra hard to meet their targets (MEB-B).

SUP-A's view was that the staff still had an issue with PCs and did not quite understand performance contracting. Those who had excelled expected more in return in terms of pay rise, recognition, promotions and even favours while those who failed did not understand the motive of the policy and its whole process of implementation as they failed to understand it was an obligation. It further emerged that there was a change in terms of the seriousness and on how critical the implications of the whole process of PCs was at the time of the interview than before when one would sign it without much emphasis being put on it and how it worked. To him that meant there were more implications when you failed to meet your set targets.

PC is a policy so compliance is non-negotiable. Salaries can be stopped if deadlines are not met. Targets really do not play a role when exceeded and a policy should be put in place that would embrace this. Once signed it is upon the supervisors and managers making it an affair of the management to monitor both the failures and successes. However, many employees bear the brunt of the failures since there are different measures used in handling underperformance (SUP-C). I am saying this and citing the recent statement by one leader that those who refuse to sign or fail to meet their targets would be sacked. PC cannot work when imposed and followed with threats. All employees have a right to participate in the target setting and without this it will always fail to meet its expectations (SUP-D).

The employees also felt that although there had been an attempt to institute specific ICC strategies for specific regions, there were still blanket consequences without attention to the unique circumstances of the regions and departments. Participants observed that some stations were quite big and the set targets could not be met compared to the smaller stations. Participants cited the Domestic Taxes and Customs departments where the target revenue collection was always higher with higher consequences in terms of failure.

A unique finding that emerged as a demerit in the ICC was also associated with informal communication. This was the issue of bias and use of threats in the process of communicating about PCs to subordinates in some departments. Some participants reported bias in form of some undeserving employees having very good appraisals made even when they had not met their set targets, while others were always reported as having failed even when they had surpassed their targets. Some of the interviewees reported that some managers considered the appraisals as a way of catching employees they wanted disciplined and always communicated that any perceived lack of loyalty by some employees would lead to poor appraisal and recommendations for various sorts of punishment. The excerpts below capture some of these sentiments.

There is improved proficiency on the jobs, healthy competition and generally an improvement in the organization's performance. On the other hand it has also led to cases of biasness due to the fact that some employees can be favoured openly by the managers (COM-C) Mmmmmh...on competencies, the supervisors still have a lee way and can always rate an employee with lots of biasness. Some can say, "Huyu ataniona" and this could demoralize the employees (SUP-A).

These things do not relate at all to our core values. I see it as a grave being dug for most of us. Probably they even want to get rid of us before our retirement looking at the way they keep threatening us with the sack. At times when signing these contracts we do it with heavy hearts and cross our fingers hoping for better days to come especially with the merger being discussed lately (MEB-D).

6.1.2. ICC strategies perceived as top-down

One demerit constantly featuring during the interviews was that all communications about PCs emanated from the HQs, downwards with very little strategy for obtaining the views of the subordinates on the implementation of PCs. The employees felt that there was not a conducive room to explain any inevitable causes of failure to meet the targets. Instead, they were also expected to answer why certain disciplinary action should not be taken against them. They indicated further that there would be very rare instances where the lack of success (in meeting targets set in PCs) were accepted as justifiable, hence where it was understood and there would be no punishment.

For example, SUP-B and COM-D had the same view that PCs were still very subjective with employees having very little to say on the targets they signed for. For instance, one could not change the target without going through the management but on the other hand the management could revise the targets without consulting the appraisee. This made it difficult for employees to play a participatory role in the whole process because once signed it was upon the supervisors and managers to monitor both the failures and successes.

6.1.3. Perceived lack of consistency in ICC about PCs

The study revealed that several participants perceived the ICC about PCs as lacking in consistency. While the participants acknowledged the need to vary targets according to the departments: domestic taxes, road licensing, customs etc. they thought it was necessary for consistency in the way communication was made regarding the need for PCs, the responsibilities for implementation of PCs and the consequences of the failures of PCs for individuals and the organization.

For example, it emerged that in some branches the supervisors in various departments signed the PCs with employees in their jurisdictions while in some branches; all employees signed the contracts with their Human Resource officers. The relevance of this to the study was that the supervisors and HROs communicated

differently about the need, implementation and consequences of PCs, leading to different levels of acceptance of PCs and therefore different results in organizational performance.

Similarly, in some departments, supervisors were said to have the mandate to promote pending confirmation by the management based on their perceived success of the PCs, while in some departments, this mandate was communicated as being strictly the preserve of the Management. Still, in some branches the supervisors agreed with their employees on the PCs and signed them before forwarding to the regional offices and finally the HQs. On the other hand in some cases, the management had the room to amend the PCs signed at Departmental level without consultation with the employees and the supervisors.

Generally, it emerged that the lack of consistency in ICC about PCs was evident across regions and Departments. The participants agreed; nonetheless that, this lack of consistency was sometimes inevitable due to logistics, the job descriptions and unique geographical locations of some departments although they noted that the management should have been prepared for it. For instance, in some regions, logistics appeared to have led to hiccups. For instance, Lokichogio and Namanga were quite far and communication was also a problem due to poor networking. The communication could not be uniform across the border offices, airports and high-way weigh bridges due to the various unique assignments and the need for high level confidentiality (due to security concerns) in some departments. Even within similar locations such as border points, dynamics were quite different in stations and departments. Examples included border ports like Muhuru bay, Kopanga, Nyamtiro, Lwahaha and Isebania. Participants expressed the need for ICC to address the unique circumstances in such stations.

6.1.4. Some employees don't understand PCs

Closely related to the perceived demerit of a lack of consistency in the ICC strategies above, the study also revealed that more than a decade since the introduction of PCs, several internal publics still did not understand the need, ethos and consequences of PCs. During the interviews it emerged that PCs are still considered a new phenomenon in some regions. The employees attributed this to the lack of involvement of all in its conceptualization and implementation. Hence, many employees said they signed it without knowing the repercussions. The following statement by one of the interviewees summarized the perceptions of many interviewees.

Many of these people... who fail to understand the motive of the [performance contracting] policy and its whole process of implementation have completely failed to understand it is an obligation (SUP-A).

They all seemed to agree that there was still need for more sensitization because PCs went hand in hand with promotions and had other far reaching consequences. The interviews revealed that while the management seemed to be serious with performance contracting, the lower levels signed PCs for the sake of it being a requirement. At the time of the interview they said they could not castigate the whole process as it still had teething problems. This was because some employees and even managers still did not understand why there was a performance contract when they had been working for years and delivering their services successfully.

Actually, one manager who was interviewed owned up to the fact that he simply facilitated implementation of PCs without much attention to its necessity. He stated that some of them (Managers) just believed that PCs were for the good of the organization, hence required to be supported. He said during the interview:

There are some policies you don't worry understanding because whether you like it or not, they are here to stay. It [performance contracting] has been going on and no one has raised an issue with it. I would therefore say that I take it as it is (MEB-B).

The following excerpts reveal further that part of the management and employees seemed not to understand the essence of performance contracting, especially the roles of the various documents involved such as Balance Score Cards and appraisal forms.

Why can't we just have one? (CE-C) It is quite a general process and it's therefore not easy to know the actual issues involved (DSM-B). This is because some employees still do not understand it even with the intensive sensitization and training that was done during its introduction to the organization as a policy (SUP-A).

Is there any documentation? Well...I am not so sure about that but I believe they could be there though with the management. I have never seen any myself but at the end of it all there is an appraisal report for me. If there are any documents I think we should be made aware of their existence before they are put to use by the management (COM-C)

6.2. Perceptions on what could be done differently

Finally, it was of interest in this study to find out what the internal publics perceived as aspects of the ICC about PCs that could be improved. Both the management and employees interviewed suggested that some of the issues that accompany the implementation of PCs could be curbed through frequent trainings and sensitization, involvement of employees in the negotiation of targets and by finding alternative measures of handling cases of

targets which are not met.

Generally, the Management and employees reported that there was need for training and sensitization of employee as had been done when PCs were re-introduced by the government as a policy in 2003.

It's a policy in the organization and all employees were sensitized when it was introduced. However, KRA already had PC even before the government re-introduced it in 2003. ...all employees were sensitized when it was introduced. The same should be done again to involving all employees in the organization (SUP-A)

This was because (as already presented in the previous section) some employees still did not understand it even with the intensive sensitization and training that was done during its introduction to the organization as a policy. The Human Resource office was tasked to communicate the guidelines on the process of performance contracting and appraisal.

There is need for sensitization of staff on the benefits of performance contracting both to the authority and to the individual employees, training of managers on the appraisal process and follow up processes and documentation of the whole appraisal and contracting period (COM-C).

Looking at the government regulations on the same, we still have a long way to go and I believe a lot of discussions and more sensitization need to be done. Very few employees have embraced it fully as it appears to have been forced on employees (SUP-D).

Another perceived point of improvement of a more focused communication about PCs targeting specific departments as they had different targets yet at the end of it all there was the overall appraisal pegged on the generally set targets.

The government has also come up with ways of ensuring all stakeholders are a part and parcel of the decisions made before, during and after the implementation of the whole process of PC. COM-B and COM-C believe it has helped in coming up with corrective measures where there are issues to be addressed. They concurred that performance contracting has been devolved further. For instance, up to the level of junior employees who are now allowed to sit on the table with the management for target setting. PCs are now not just made and left for the bosses to give returns. This helps in the reduction of farfetched information with regard to the final appraisal.

One key participant held a uniquely extreme perception; he felt that the whole process of performance contracting was baseless and was yet to get anywhere as captured in the statement below:

[Do you think it will even succeed?] For me, never. This is a dream yet to come true. Looking at the government regulations on the same and the way they keep talking about underperformance, we still have a long way to go and I believe a lot of discussions and more sensitization need to be done (SUP-D).

Participants also expressed the view that the communication about PCs ought to stop threatening employees with sacking and other consequences. Other informal communications that amounted to subjectivity, bias and victimization should also be eradicated for smooth implementation of PCs. Another aspect of PC as a management tool that emerged was that it has not achieved its ideal levels as far as its practice and implementation is concerned but that there is improved proficiency on the jobs, healthy competition and generally an improvement in the organization's performance.

On the other hand they also said that it had led to cases of biasness due to the fact that some employees can be favoured openly by the managers. The target is set such that it falls within realization of organizational goals and that since it is done at the end of the year steps should be taken boldly to mitigate all prevalent issues that have often caused discomfort, biasness and favouritism during the appraisal process since some of the appraisal parameters are still too open giving room for manipulation and unfairness.

7. Discussion

The third research question (as pointed out earlier) was concerned with the perceptions of the Management and employees on the success of the ICC strategies used in the implementation of PCs. The complexity of addressing this research question was that most participants mixed up their perceptions on the ICC strategies with perceptions on PCs. Nevertheless, it was possible to discern perceptions that could be said to be on ICC strategies.

In summary the main merits of the ICC strategies are that they have contributed to acceptance of PCs and overall improvement in organizational performance. The main demerit is perceived to be that there are several facets of inconsistency in the ICC across regions and departments. Improvement of the ICC strategies could mostly be done by providing training and sensitization opportunities for the employees. As stated earlier, the research question was concerned with the perceptions of the Management and employees on the success of the ICC strategies used in the implementation of PCs. The study revealed that there were various perceptions on the ICC strategies used for implementation of PCs and how these strategies were actually put into practice. Some participants perceived the ICC strategies as being quite successful, leading to acceptance of the PCs. On the other hand, there are those who said that the demerits outweighed the merits and that there was need for

change to improve on its levels of success in implementation. The participants also made several suggestions on the improvements that could be made on the ICC strategies for more effectiveness.

Overall, the study reveals clearly that there were more perceptions on demerits of the ICC strategies used than merits. The demerits reported included: ICC emphasized on negative consequences of not embracing PCs, the inconsistency in ICC across regions, branches and departments, the ICC being perceived as top down and the fact that there were many employees who did not understand PCs regardless of the ICC strategies in place. Therefore, arguably, the ICC strategies in place were perceived as being unsuccessful. This is an important revelation in this study that has not featured in literature before.

Previous studies that have delved into ICC tended to concentrate on the process of implementation (Cornelissen, 2004, Argenti 2012). This study therefore adds an important concern that while the overall objective of any ICC endeavor may be fairly successful, the internal publics may not be satisfied with the communication process. This would call for attention to Steyn's (2000) Educational Model According to this model, as stated earlier (see Introduction) 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 to capitalize on the opportunities presented. Steyn's model focuses the activities of the communication function on using communication to solve key strategic and key communication issues in the relationships with stakeholders and to align communication with organizational goals - making a contribution towards organizational effectiveness.

The finding on largely negative perceptions on the success of ICC strategies used in implementation of PCs also calls for attention to the Adaptive strategy (Moss and Warnaby, 1997), which is an implementation strategy largely. The adaptive strategy, according to Argenti (2009), among other tenets, emphasizes the need for negotiation, discussion, trial, repeated experimentation and small steps forward as an integral part of implementation of any communication strategy. This is indeed what the study revealed on the question of what the internal publics perceived could be done differently in terms of ICC strategies used for implementation of PCs.

The need to pay attention to perceptions of internal publics in the course of using ICC strategies (and perhaps corporate communication strategies in general) in implementation of any corporate programmes has also been emphasized in other contexts (e.g. Gatere, 2013, Cornelissen, 2004 and Opiyo, 2009). For example, Previous studies; for example by Opiyo, (2009), says that this concern centers on the perceived role of involvement of employees in the negotiation of targets as well as eroding the belief and notion that PCs are vindictive.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper raises pertinent issues on the use of ICC in implementation of PCs in particular and corporate programmes generally. It underscores the overall goal of any ICC endeavor as promotion of the acceptance of corporate ownership of a policy or programme, but reiterates the need for a well conceptualized and professional implementation process that builds upon existing models and strategies but which, more importantly, takes cognizance of the perceptions of the relevant stakeholders.

9. Recommendations

This paper provides a case for focus on ICC strategies in addition to external corporate communication, CSR and corporate branding which over the years have received much attention in the field of Communication Studies. 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. The organizations should also constantly monitor the functionality of the ICC strategies with a view to instituting change whenever necessary.

10. Further Research

There is thus the need for more research on different aspects of ICC in relation to implementation of other corporate programmes besides PCs so as to build a powerful cumulative repertoire of knowledge that would provide a powerful empirical basis for institutionalization of ICC in the corporate world and the academic realm.

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