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Strategic Management Practices among Technical Training Institutions in Kenya: A Case Study of Technical Training Institutions in Nairobi

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ABSTRACT

This research was designed to investigate strategic management practices among technical training institutions in Nairobi. The study sought to achieve two objectives. The first objective was to establish the strategic management practices adopted by technical training institutions in Nairobi, and the second was to determine the factors influencing the strategic management practices among the institutions. To achieve these objectives, the study adopted a census survey and focused on six technical training institutions in Nairobi all of which were served with questionnaires. Responses were received from all of them giving a response rate of 100%.The findings of the study showed that all the managerial tasks that characterize strategic management were present in all the institutions except a lack of situational analysis in one institution. It was established that all the institutions studied had written down vision and mission statements, objectives and strategies, action plans and strategic plans, and strategy evaluation and control mechanisms. The findings further showed that of the 83.3% of the institutions that undertake situational analysis, such an analysis is the responsibility of selected members of the institution in 50% of these institutions and of management in 16.7% of them. Overall, the study established that 66.7% of the institutions practice purely formal strategic planning while 33.3% adopt both formal and informal planning process, with the planning horizon ranging from 4 to 5 years in all the institutions.The study findings, however, revealed that a number of internal organizational factors surface to influence the strategic management practices among the institutions. Key among them were management skills, financial resources, leadership style and organizational culture and politics which were very highly rated by respondents; and current organizational structure, existing organizational policies, human resources, and employee training which were highly rated. Reward system and political interference were rated as having medium and low influence respectively.

Keywords: Strategy, Strategic Management, Strategy Implementation, evaluation and control, Technical Training Institutions

INTRODUCTION

Strategic Management

In today's market place, there exists intense competition at the international, national and local levels. The implication is that those organizations that are prepared to face the competition are the ones most likely to survive. Strategic management is one of the approaches that many organizations have selected to ensure their survival. Strategic management enables managers to give direction and scope of the organization over the long-term thereby achieving advantages for the organization through its reconfiguration of resources within a changing environment (Johnson & Scholes, 2002).

Organizations, whether for profit or non-profit, private or public have found it necessary in recent years to engage in strategic management in order to achieve their corporate goals. The environment in which they operate have become not only increasingly uncertain but also more tightly interconnected. This requires a threefold response from these organizations. They are required to think strategically as never before, need to translate their insight into effective strategies to cope with their changed circumstances and lastly, to develop rationales necessary to lay the groundwork for adopting and implementing strategies in this ever-changing environment (Bryson, 1995). According to Pearce and Robinson (1997), in order to achieve their goals and objectives, it is necessary for them to adjust to their environment.

Strategic management refers to the managerial process of forming a strategic vision, setting objectives, crafting a strategy, implementing and executing the strategy, and then over time initiating whatever corrective adjustments in the vision, objectives, strategy, and execution that are appropriate. In crafting a strategy, management is saying, in effect, "among all the paths and actions we could have chosen, we have decided to move in this direction, focus on these markets and customer needs, compete in this fashion, allocate our resources and energies in these ways and rely on these particular approaches to doing business". A strategy thus entails managerial choices among alternatives and signals organizational commitment to specific markets, competitive approaches and ways of operating (Thompson & Strickland, 2003).

Strategic management is a process in the sense that strategies are the outcomes of careful objective analysis and planning (Lynch, 2000). It has been considered by Hofer (1984) as a process which deals with fundamental organizational renewal and growth with development of strategies, structures and systems necessary to effectively manage the strategy formulation and implementation process. Harrison and St. Johns (1998) see strategic management as a process through which organizations analyze and learn their internal and external environments, establish strategic direction, create strategies and execute these strategies.

As a process, strategic management consists of different planes which are sequential in nature (Kazmi, 2002). These phases include: establishing the hierarchy of strategic intent, formulation of strategies, implementation of strategies, and performing strategic evaluation and control. It should be noted here that the division of strategic management into different phases is for purposes of orderly study. In real life, the formulation and implementation processes are intertwined (Andrews, 1971).

Formal strategic planning has its roots in the USA in the 1950's. Remarkable contributors include Drucker (1954), Chandler (1962), Ansoff (1965), and Andrews (1971). Even though strategic planning fell out of fashion in the 1970's and 1980's due to its inability to deliver the promises it claimed majorly because of the changes in environment, the "rethinking" and " re-casting" that was recommended revived strategic planning. As an invaluable tool, it is still a dominating concern in strategic management and continues to be widely practiced to date.

The result of a strategic planning process is strategy, which is at the heart of strategic management for it helps an organization to formulate and implement various tasks in its attempts to prosper (Hussey, 1991). Strategy is a link between an organization and its external environment and must be consistent with an organization's goals and values, with its resources and capabilities, with its organizational structure and systems (Ansoff, 1990). An organization's strategy defines its unique image and provides a central purpose and direction to its activities and to the people within and outside the organization strategies. Proper strategies help to shape an organization's future (Grant, 1998).

The essence of strategic management is developing strategic plans and keeping them current as changes occur in internal and external environment. Strategy formulation and implementation is an ongoing, never-ending, integrated process requiring continuous reassessment and reformation. The strategic planning determines: what an organization's wants to achieve, usually expressed as strategic objectives, and how to direct the organization and its resources towards achieving these objectives over the next several years, usually expressed as strategic action.

Such planning usually requires that decisions have been or are taken about an organization's vision and mission, target beneficiary/customer or client group, the kind of programmes to develop and offer, the resources needed to deliver successfully – people, money, expertise, relationships, facilities, etc- and a realistic assessment of how much resources will be available over time. For Technical Training Institutions, this often requires an understanding of the various training needs and the relevance of the training to the labour market requirements. With the introduction of performance contracts in public institutions many of them have prepared strategic plans as one the requirements for the preparation of the performance contract.

Technical Training Institutions in Kenya

Following recommendations of the Ominde Report (1964), the government converted the then trade schools into technical secondary schools. The objective was to prepare its graduates to enter into technician training at the end of the secondary cycle. Both the Gachathi (1976) and the Mackay (1981) reports had recommended the expansion of middle level training facilities which culminated in the conversion of technical secondary schools into technical training institutions.

The tertiary institutions, also referred to as middle level colleges, serve a vital role as the major national institutions for technically skilled middle level human resource development. With an increase in the number of secondary school leavers who possess requisite entry qualifications for career training at middle-level grade in various occupations, Kenya has great human capital potential for industrial take-off (Republic of Kenya, 1999).

Technical education refers to a range of programmes that impart skills, knowledge and attitudes to individuals preparing to take middle level professional positions in the world of work particularly in engineering and scientific disciplines while vocational education refers to those programmes that impart specific occupational skills and knowledge required in the world of work particularly in engineering and scientific disciplines. The difference between technical and vocational education lies in the amount of analytical knowledge and practical skills that are imparted in each; vocational educational programmes generally composed of more practical skills than technical education programmes which are more analytical (Republic of Kenya, 1999).

Technical Training Institutions in Nairobi

With regard to skills training, the country has 2 polytechnic university colleges, 2 national polytechnics, 1 technical teachers' college, 21 technical training institutes and 17 institutes of technology. In addition, there are over 600 youth polytechnics distributed throughout the country. However, only 350 of the youth polytechnics receive Government assistance. The private sector operates close to 1,000 commercial colleges that offer courses in computers and non-technical areas of training.

In addition to the institutions above, that fall under the auspices of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MoHEST), other government ministries operate institutions that provide specialized technical training. These include institutions run by the Ministries of Home affairs, Office of the President, Agriculture, Health, Water Resources Management and Development, among others. Overall, the management of Technical, Industrial, vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TIVET) institutions is spread across 10 ministries. This makes co-ordination of their activities and maintenance of training standards difficult as the supervision of most of these institutions is left to individual ministries and private sector that often lack the capacity to assure quality and high standards of training.

One of these institutions is The Kenya Polytechnic University College which was recently upgraded from a national polytechnic to a degree offering status. This was necessary to provide an alternative path for TIVET graduates to access higher education and training up to degree level. There was also need for the creation of opportunities for national polytechnics to offer degree level qualifications while retaining their present mandate. (Sessional Paper No. 1 on A Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research, 2005). The mandate of the institution is contained in the legal notice order dated 23rd August 2007. The institution became a constituent college of the University of Nairobi. The institution currently offers technical and business related courses at certificate, diploma and higher diploma levels.

The Kenya Technical Teachers College is a unique institution specializing in training of technical teachers for the country. The institution was developed through a College project agreement which was a memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Kenya and the Government of Canada for co-operation in the field of technical teachers' training. The University of New Brunswick and the Canadian International Development Agency entered into an agreement whereby the University would, on behalf of the government of Canada, provide professional and technical services to the college (Education Act, Cap 211, 1980).

Kabete, Nairobi and Kinyanjui TTIs also offer technical and business courses at various levels. Karen Technical Training Institute caters for students who are challenged in terms of hearing and speech. All the TTIs are managed by the Board of Governors.

Statement of the Problem

There is no doubt about the usefulness of strategic management to all kinds of organizations and mainly in developed economies (Karemu, 1993). There is also evidence of strategic management practices in Kenya in both Public and Private sector organizations. Several researchers have focused on various aspects of strategic management practices as discussed below.

Kiruthi (2001) researched on the state of strategic management practices in not-for-profit organizations with special reference to membership clubs in Nairobi. Bukusi (2003) investigated on strategic management practices in reproductive health NGO's operating in Kenya. Shumpusho (1983), Aosa (1992), Karemu (1993) and Shimba (1993) have provided valuable insights on strategic management practices in the private sector. Kang'oro (1998) went further to investigate on the strategic management practices in public sector organizations. Odero's (2000) investigation was on a TQM approach to examination performance in Diploma courses in technical training institutions. In his suggestions for further research, Aosa (1992) indicates that an investigation of strategic management practices in public sector organizations would increase the understanding of strategic management practices in organizations in Kenya.

Though studies focusing on different sectors have been conducted, none has specifically focused on TTIs. TTIs are characterized by challenges such as inadequate facilities and capacities to cater for those who complete primary and secondary education and wish to undertake TIVET. Managing TIVET under various government departments has also posed a challenge to the sector, leading to disparities in the training standards due to lack of effective capacities. Lack of effective co-ordination of training and the disproportionate duplication in the production of skilled personnel across the entire economy has resulted in: mismanagement of scarce resources; unnecessary duplication of efforts; conflict of jurisdiction; under-utilization of available training facilities; wasteful and unnecessary competition; and costly and irrelevant training programmes. The immediate task is, therefore, to undertake the development of a National Skills Training Strategy and to implement the necessary reforms along with a legislative framework for a comprehensive TIVET system (Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005).

According to the Sessional Paper No. 1 of (2005), the current TIVET curriculum is inflexible and not responsive enough to the changing needs of the labour market. Therefore, first, there is a mismatch between the skills learned in training institutions and skill demands from industry. Second, some of the teachers are inadequately trained and the mechanisms for quality assurance are weak due to lack of adequate support to inspection and supervision services. Third, equipment and physical facilities used for training are inadequate, old and outdated. Fourth, most of the training and reference materials and textbooks are sourced from overseas, which makes them costly hence unaffordable. In addition, there is a general feeling that private sector is not adequately represented in the curriculum design and development process.

To grapple with the above and other challenges, the TTIs in Kenya have found it necessary to practice strategic management in order for them to be relevant in the changing environment. However, little is known about the strategic management practices in these TTIs. The focus of this study is on the strategic management practices among the TTIs within Nairobi, Kenya. Hence, the study sought to answer the questions:

i. What strategic management practices are adopted by Technical Training Institutions within Nairobi?
ii. What are the factors influencing strategic management practices among technical Training Institutions in Nairobi?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

i. To determine the strategic management practices among Technical Training Institutions in Nairobi.
ii. To establish factors influencing strategic management practices among Technical Training Institutions in Nairobi.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Strategic Management

As noted in the background, Thompson and Strickland (2003) define strategic management as the managerial process of forming a strategic vision, setting objectives, creating a strategy, implementing and executing the strategy, and then over time initiating whatever corrective adjustments in the vision, objectives, strategy, and execution that are appropriate. According to Pearce and Robinson (1997), strategic management is a set of decisions and actions that result in the formulation and implementation of plans designed to achieve a company's objectives. According to Ansoff and McDonnell (1990), strategic management is a systematic approach of managing strategic change which consists of positioning of the firm through strategy and capability planning, real-time strategic response through issue management and systematic management of resistance during strategic implementation.

Johnson and Scholes (2002) look at strategic management from the perspective of what it includes. According to them, strategic management includes strategic analysis, strategic choice, and strategy implementation. Strategic analysis is concerned with understanding the strategic position of the organization in terms of its external environment, internal resources and competencies, and expectations and influence of stakeholders. Strategic choice involves understanding the underlying basis guiding future strategy, generating strategic options for evaluation and selecting from among them. Strategic implementation is concerned with translation of strategy into organizational action through organizational structure and design, resource planning and management of strategic change.

Strategic management is concerned with strengthening the long-term viability and effectiveness of an organization in terms of both substantive strategy and management capacity. It integrates, all other management processes to provide a systematic, coherent, and effective approach to establishing, attaining, monitoring and updating an organization's strategic objectives. It is integrative in the sense of focusing attention across functional divisions and throughout various organizational levels on common goals, themes, and issues; tying internal management processes and program initiatives to desired outcomes in the external environment; and linking operational, tactical, day-to-day decisions to longer run strategic objectives (Poister and Streib, 1999).

The essence of strategic management is the crafting of an organization's strategy. In crafting a strategy, management is saying, in effect, "among all the paths and actions we could have chosen, we have decided to move in this direction, focus on these markets and customer needs, compete in this fashion, allocate our resources and energies in these ways, and rely on these particular approaches to doing business". A strategy thus entails managerial choices among alternatives and signals organizational commitment to specific markets, competitive approaches, and ways of operating (Thompson and Strickland, 2003).

Evolution of Strategic Management

The evolution of the field of strategic management since its inception has been impressive. From its "humble" beginnings as the limited content of a capstone general management course in the business school curriculum, strategic management is now a firmly established field in the study of business and organizations. During a relatively short period of time, this field has witnessed a significant growth in the diversity of topics and variety of research methods employed (Hoskisson et al., 1999).

Strategic management as a way of managing organizations is recent phenomenon. Its origin can be traced to the 1950s in the United States of America. Since its origin, to date, significant developments have taken place. Central to strategic management is the concept of strategy. Johnson and Scholes (1999) define strategy as the direction and scope of an organization over the long-term: which achieves advantage for the organization through its configuration of resources within a changing environment, to meet the needs of markets and to fulfill stakeholder expectations,

Formal strategic planning seems to have its beginnings in the early 1950s in USA. Drucker (1954) appears to be one of the first to address the issue of strategy and strategy formulation as an approach to managing organizations. His concern was primarily with identifying the business of a company. Strategy had to do with defining the business domain of a company. Little attention was given to this concept of strategy until 1962 when Chandler defined it and outlined the processes by which it could be formulated. He discussed the relationship between the external environment, structure and strategy. The ideas of Chandler were then further developed by Ansoff (1965) and Andrews (1971). These early writings served to document strategic planning thereby paving way for its adoption by organizations (Aosa, 2000). From the late 1960s, survey carried out showed that corporate planning was practiced in USA and abroad. However, not all companies did so (Aosa, 1992).

In the mid-1970s, attitudes towards strategic management started to change. Taylor (1986) attributed this to the increasingly turbulent business environment. In the face of rising turbulence, managers expressed disenchantment and dissatisfaction with strategic planning. Various writers criticized planning and made recommendations for its improvement. These include Mumford and Pettigrew (1975), Mintzberg and Waters (1985), Porter (1987), Whittington (1993), among others. From the various criticisms and recommendations made, several features emerged that characterized good strategic planning. Such planning had to be flexible and adaptable; should address implementation issues; should be focused; should be instrumental in developing competitive edge; and should enhance creativity and strategic thinking. These features are still the dominating concerns in strategic management today (Aosa, 1992).

The Role and Benefits of Strategic Management

Strategic management does not occur when top executives micromanage operations to ensure fundamental strategies or policies are strongly endorsed as being critical for improving an organization's performance over the long run. A strategically managed organization is one in which budgeting, performance management, human resource development, program management, and other management processes are guided by a strategic agenda that has been developed with a buy-in from key actors and communicated widely within the organization and among external constituencies. Strategic management is concerned with implementing strategies and measuring performance as well as monitoring trends and identifying emerging issues that might require strategic responses (Poister and Streib, 1999).

According to Poister and Streib (1999), strategic management is not a linear process of planning, implementation, and evaluation. Rather, it entails managing an organization from a strategic perspective on an ongoing basis to ensure that strategic plans are kept current and that they are effectively driving other management processes. Strategic management requires the following: continual monitoring of the "fit" between the organization and its environment and tracking external trends and forces that are likely to affect the organizations; shaping and communicating to both internal and external audiences a clear vision of the type of organization the entity wants to become; creating strategic agenda at various levels and in all parts of the organization and ensuring that they become the driving force in all other decision making; and guiding all other management processes in an integrated manner to support and enhance these strategic agendas.

The overall purpose of strategic management is to develop a continuing commitment to the mission and vision of the organization (both internally and externally), nurture a culture that identifies with and supports the mission and vision, and maintains a clear focus on the organization's strategic agenda throughout all its decision making processes and activities.

Pearce and Robinson (1997) attribute the following benefits to strategic management: strategy formulation activities enhance the firm's ability to prevent problems. Managers who encourage subordinates attention to planning are aided in their monitoring and forecasting responsibilities by subordinates who are aware of the needs of strategic planning; Group based strategic decisions are likely to be drawn from the best available alternatives. The strategic management process results in better decisions because group interaction generates a greater variety of strategies and because forecast based on the specialized perspectives of group members improve the screening of options; the involvement of employees in strategy formulation improves their understanding of productivity-reward relationship in every strategic plan and thus heightens their motivation; Gaps and overlaps in activities among individuals and groups are reduced as participation in strategy formulation clarifies differences in roles; and resistance to change is reduced. Though the participants in strategy formulation may not be no more pleased with their own decisions than they would be with authoritarian decisions, their greater awareness of the parameters that limit the available options makes them more likely to accept those decisions.

Strategic Management Practices

Strategic management is a process of determining the long-run direction and performance of an organization by ensuring careful formulation, proper implementation, and continuous evaluation of the strategic plan (Byars and Rue, 2005; Pearce and Robinson, 1997). It is a way of considering; deciding and realizing already formulated strategies. Strategies management can also be seen as "… the ongoing process of ensuring a competitively superior fit between the organization and its ever-changing environment" (Teece, 1984).

The development and refinement of strategy is achieved through the constant interplay between planning, doing and evaluation. The organization has to act, has to go beyond whatever is given and has to try new ways of giving effect to its vision and of impacting on its context. It has to monitor its actions, learn from its successes and failures, and even learn what is meant by success and failure. These things are not given at the outset. It has both to see what works and what does not work well as to reflect in depth about what it means by its discernable impact, and what, perhaps unforeseen consequences this impact releases (Kaplan, 1998). Given such evaluation it has to rethink, re-plan, re-strategize, improve and adapt its methodology as well as its understanding of its context, its vision, and its relationships with others.

Strategic management consists of strategic planning, capability planning and management of change (Ansoff and McDonnell, 1990). It is also a combination of intuition, experience, and analysis as well as power and politics (Karemu, 1993). The goal of strategic management is to build and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage (Porter, 1980). Practicing strategic management does not ensure that an organization meets all change successfully, but it increases the chance. While there is no single prescriptive way to do planning, most successful ways share several common components and similar sequence. Strategic management process is composed of three major phases: Formulation, Implementation and Evaluation. It is within these phases that strategic management practices are manifested.

Formulation

Strategy formulation is the entire management function of establishing organization direction, setting objectives, and devising a managerial game plan for the organization to pursue (Thompson and Strickland, 1989). According to Bowman (1987), strategy formulation is a decision making process which is primarily concerned with: the development of organization's objective, the commitment of its resources, and environmental constraints; so as to achieve its objectives. Hunger and Wheelen (1995), view it as the development of long-range plans for the effective management of environmental opportunities and threats in light of corporate strengths and weaknesses, up to and including defining the corporate mission, specifying achievable objectives, deciding strategies, and setting policy guidelines.

There are various views of strategy. The rational analytical view regards strategy formulation as a formal and disciplined process leading to a well defined organizational wide effort aimed at the complete specification of

organizational strategies (Hax and Majluf, 1991). This view (also called design school) has been supported by other authors like Ansoff (1984) and Porter (1980), where strategy is regarded as a deliberate effort, which is formalized with the objective of defining the long-term direction of an organization.
The emergent view of strategy (also called the process school) considers strategies as emerging from the environmental conditions and circumstances and thus strategy is constantly adjusted with time in what Mintzberg and Waters (1985) refer to as "strategic learning".
Mintzberg et al. (1998) draw a distinction between planned or deliberate strategies and emergent ones. They argue that deliberate strategy focuses on control, making sure that managerial intentions are realized in action while emergent strategy emphasizes on learning; coming to understand through the taking of actions. Thus, the process of emergent strategy can continue until the organization converges on the pattern that becomes its strategy.
Strategy formulation process has been viewed by Hofer and Schendel (1978), as a special kind of problem solving process for defining an organization's strategy. Their review of major prescriptive strategy formulation models indicates that they all include, either explicitly, the following steps: environmental analysis, resource analysis, gap analysis, strategic alternatives, strategy identification, strategy evaluation, and finally strategic choice. Formulating strategy is not just a one-task event. It is a process that is carried out through the tasks of: developing a strategic vision, establishing objectives, and finally crafting a strategy.
Developing a Strategic Vision: A strategic vision is a roadmap of an organization's future; providing specifics about technology and customer focus, the geographic and product markets to be pursued, the capabilities it plans to develop, and the kind of organization that management is trying to create. It thus reflects management's aspirations for the organization and its business, providing a panoramic view of "where we are going" and giving specifics about its future business plans. Drawing a carefully reasoned conclusion about what the organization's long-term direction should be pushes managers to take a hard look at the organization's external and internal environment and form a clear sense of whether and how its present business needs will change over the next five years and beyond. After the Vision Statement, management should come up with the organization's **Mission Statement;** that which broadly describes an organization's present capabilities, customer focus, activities and business makeup (Thompson & Strickland, 2003).
Situational Analysis: This seeks to understand an organization's current strategic position. Managers must monitor both the societal and task environment and task environment to detect strategic forces that are likely to have a strong impact on their organizations' success or failure (Wheelen & Hunger, 1995). Situational analysis comprises the external analysis and internal analysis of an organization (Johnson and Scholes, 2002). The simplest way to conduct environmental scanning is by SWOT analysis (Wheelen & Hunger, 1998). SWOT analysis is the process of carefully inspecting the business and its environment through the various dimensions of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.
According to Pearce and Robinson (1997), strengths are key competitive distinctions that would give an organization an edge over other organizations with the same producer lines, while weaknesses are considered to be a lack of or limits to resources that are necessary to accomplish the objective at hand. Opportunities are "grossly favourable situations" upon which a firm could capitalize and improve their standing. Threats are situations that can be detrimental to the organization. SWOT analysis should result in the identification of an organization's distinctive competencies, and of opportunities that the company is unable to take advantage of due to a lack of, or insufficient, current resources (Wheelen & Hunger, 1998).
Another tool for situational analysis is the PEST analysis. It is a tool to understand the environment in which an organization operates. PEST (Political, Economic, Social, and Technological) analysis enables managers to summarize the most important influence of the business environment and to evaluate the potential impact of these influences on the organization. The five forces Analysis established by Porter (1980) is also used in situational analysis. It identifies the forces that affect the level of competition in an organization's industry. According to Porter (1980), whether an industry produces a commodity or a service, or whether it is global or domestic, competition depends on five forces namely: the threat of new entrants; the existence of substitute products or services; the bargaining power of suppliers; the bargaining power of customers or buyers; and existing rivalry within the industry. Out of the situational analysis, the managers identify key strategic issues facing the organization around which objectives are established.
Establishing Objectives: Objectives are an organization's performance targets - the results and outcomes it wants to achieve. They function as yardsticks for tracking an organization's performance and progress. The purpose of setting objectives is to convert managerial statements of strategic vision and mission into specific performance targets. Objectives represent a managerial commitment to achieving specific performance targets

within a specific time frame; they are a call for results that connect directly to the organization's strategic vision and core values. Managers of best performing organizations tend to set objectives that require stretch and disciplined effort. The challenge of trying to achieve bold, aggressive performance targets pushes an organization to be more inventive, to exhibit some urgency in improving both its financial performance and its business position, and to be more intentional and focused in its actions (Thompson & Strickland, 2003).

Objective setting is required of all managers. Every unit in an organization needs concrete, measurable performance targets that contribute meaningfully toward achieving organizational objectives. When organization-wide objectives are broken down into specific targets for each organizational unit and lower-level managers are held accountable for achieving them, a results-oriented climate builds throughout the organization. Organizations require two very distinct types of performance yardsticks: those relating to financial performance and those relating to strategic performance. Financial objectives relate to financial performance targets management has established for the organization to achieve while strategic objectives relate to outcomes that strengthen an organization's overall business position and competitive vitality (Hax & Majluf, 1996; Johnson & Scholes, 2002).

Thompson and Strickland (2003) posit that objective setting need to be more of a top-down than a bottom-up process in order to guide lower level managers and organizational units toward outcomes that support the achievement of overall business and organizational objectives.

Crafting Strategy: According to Thompson and Strickland (2003), an organization's strategy deals with how to make management's strategic vision for the organization a reality. It represents the game plan for moving the organization into an attractive business position and building a sustainable competitive advantage. A strategy thus reflects managerial choices among alternatives and signals organizational commitment to particular products, markets, competitive approaches, and ways of operating the organization.

Strategy making brings into play the critical managerial issue of how to achieve the targeted results in light of the organization's situation and prospects. Objectives are the "ends" and strategies are the "means" of achieving them. The "how's" of an organization's strategy are typically a blend of (1) deliberate and purposeful actions, (2) as needed reactions to unanticipated developments and fresh market conditions and competitive pressures, and (3) the collective learning of the organization over time; not just insights gained from its experiences but, more important, the internal activities it has learned to perform quite well and the competitive capabilities it has developed. The strategy making task thus involves developing an intended strategy; adapting it as events unfold (adaptive/reactive strategy); and linking the firm's business approaches, actions, and competitive initiatives closely to its competencies and capabilities. (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Hamel and Prahalad, 1990).

Therefore, an organization's strategy evolves over time, emerging from the pattern of actions already initiated, the plans managers have for fresh moves, and the ongoing need to react to new or unforeseen developments. An organization's actual strategy usually turns out to be both more or less than the planned strategy as new strategy features are added and others are deleted in response to newly emerging conditions (Thompson & Strickland, 2003).

Implementation

Pearce and Robinson (2003) look at strategy implementation as a set of decisions and actions that result in the translation of the strategic thought into organizational action where an organization moves from planning its work to working its plan in order to achieve the set objectives. It is viewed by Thompson and Strickland (1989), as acting on what has to be done internally to put the chosen (formulated) strategy into place and achieve the targeted results. Hunger and Wheelen (1995), see it as the process by which management translates strategies and policies into action through the development of programs, budgets, and procedures. This process might involve changes within the overall culture, structure, and/or the management system of the organization. Its purpose is to complete the transition from strategic planning to strategic management by incorporating adopted strategies throughout the relevant system (Bryson, 1995).

Strategy implementation includes considerations of who will be responsible for strategy implementation; the most suitable organizational structure that would support the implementation of strategy (Pettigrew, 1988; Lynch, 2000); the need to adapt the systems used to manage the organization (Johnson and Scholes, 2002); the key tasks to be carried out and desirable changes in the resource mix of the organization as well as the mandate of each department in the organization and the information systems to be put in place to monitor progress and resource planning (Pearce & Robinson, 1997). Implementation may also take into account the need for retraining the workforce and management of change (Johnson & Scholes, 2002).

Implementing strategy is largely an administrative activity and successful implementation depends on working through others, organizing, motivating, culture building, and creating strong fits between strategy and how the organization does things (Thompson & Strickland, 2003). It calls for alteration of existing procedures and policies. In most organizations, strategy implementation requires a shift in responsibility from strategists to divisional and functional managers (Kazmi, 2002). It is therefore important to ensure successful implementation. The implementers of strategy should therefore be fully involved in strategy formulation so that they can own the process.

Pearce and Robinson (1997) observe that the transition from strategy formulation to strategy implementation gives rise to four interrelated concerns. These concerns include identifying action plans and short-term objectives; initiating specific functional tactics; communicating policies that empower people in the organization; and committing to continuous improvement.

Action plans and short-term objectives translate long-range aspirations into current year's actions. If well developed, these objectives provide clarity, a powerful motivator and facilitator of effective strategy implementation. Functional tactics translate organizational strategy into daily activities people need to execute. Functional managers participate in the development of these tactics, and their participation in turn, helps clarify what their units are expected to do in implementing the organization's strategy. Policies are empowerment tools that simplify decision making by empowering operating managers and their subordinates. Policies can empower the "doers" in an organization by reducing the time required to decide and act. Finally, continuous improvement is a quality-oriented issue where functional managers seek best practices in each area's activities which keeps organizations current, competitive, and value oriented (Pearce & Robinson, 2005).

In as much as managers' approaches need to be tailor-made for the situation, Thompson and Strickland (2003) point out that there are certain bases that have to be covered no matter what the organization's circumstances: building an organization capable to carry out the strategy successfully; developing budgets to steer ample resources into those value chain activities critical to strategic success; establishing strategy supportive policies and procedures; instituting best practices and pushing for continuous improvement in how value chain activities are performed; installing information, communication, e-commerce, and operating systems that enable company personnel to carry out their strategic roles successfully day in day out; tying rewards and incentives to the achievement of performance objectives and good strategy execution; creating a strategy-supporting work environment and corporate culture; and exerting the internal leadership needed to drive implementation forward and keep improving on how the strategy is being executed.

Evaluation and Control

This is the process by which an organization's activities and performance results are monitored and actual performance compared with desired performance. Control and evaluation processes help to monitor continuously the organization's progress towards its long-range objectives and mission. Control and evaluation enable an organization to examine how its strategy has been implemented as well as the outcomes of the strategy (Coulter, 2005). The strategic management process should also be examined; its strengths and weaknesses noted, and modifications suggested to improve the next round of strategic planning (Bryson, 1995).

Control is needed to assure that performance is as expected. Control involves the periodic review of the inputs, activities, and outputs undertaken throughout the strategic management process. If change in the strategic plan is needed or redeployment of resources is necessary, change should be made as quickly as possible, even to reworking the entire strategic plan (Johnson, 2003). Strategic control is concerned with tracking strategy during implementation, detecting problems or changes and making necessary adjustments (Pearce and Robinson, 2005). It is a crucial phase for purposes of attaining a successful organizational goal.

Evaluation is judgment on the effectiveness of an organization's strategy. It concerns itself with such questions as: did the strategy meet the objectives or should revision be made? Where are problems likely to occur? There is need for constant surveillance by the intelligence unit and feedback to the interested parties (Johnson, 2003). This is important so that corrective action can be taken. Ultimately, if there is a gap between the actual and the desired objectives, it should be closed according to the strategy. Continuous evaluation and responding to internal and external environmental changes is what strategic management is all about.

The Need for Strategic Management

Theoretical as well as empirical studies have pointed out the usefulness of strategic management to many organizations; a management approach and tool, which is invaluable for any organization to ignore (Porter, 1980). Various reasons have been advanced why strategic planning is of vital importance to organizations. They include the following:

Focus**:** It is easy to lose all sense of organizational purpose and direction in the pre-occupation of day-to-day management. Good strategic planning forces future thinking and can refocus and reenergize a disoriented organization (Grant, 1998). An organization's strategy provides a central purpose and direction (vision, mission, objectives) to the activities of the organization, to the people who work in it, and often to the world outside.

Enhanced Organizational Responsiveness, Improved Performance and Confidence**:** thinking about the future, setting of objectives and planning and monitoring accordingly can positively influence organizational performance and can contribute to a greater sense of purpose, progress and accountability (Bryson, 1995). Organizations engaging in strategic management are encouraged to clarify and address major organizational issues, respond wisely to internal and external demands and pressures, and deal effectively with rapidly changing circumstances (Johnson and Scholes, 2002). Indeed, strategic management is a crucial part of an organization's performance improvement process that helps organizations create the conditions of high employee productivity. Lande (2002) says thus that in a well-run organization, there is alignment of structure, goals, and strategies with the processes through which work gets done and the performance of staff members.

Promotion of Thought and Action**:** This leads to more systematic information gathering about the organization's external and internal environment (Grant, 1998). Strategic management is fundamental for organizational success as it is a link between the organization and its environment. This link provides the foundation for further learning about how to formulate winning strategies and establish organizational priorities for action.

Improved Decision-Making**:** An organization is able to focus attention on the crucial issues and challenges it faces. Key decision makers are able to figure out what they should do about such challenges. Organizations can formulate and clearly communicate their strategic intention and make today's decisions in light of their future consequences (Napier, Sidle and Snaghan, 1998). It can help them develop a coherent and defensible basis for decision making and then coordinate the resulting decision across levels and functions.

Enhancement of Teamwork**:** The strategic planning exercise involves people throughout the organization. Strategic management provides an excellent opportunity to build a sense of teamwork and allows people to work in collaborative and time efficient ways, to promote learning, to motivate employees and to build commitment across the organization (Burnes, 2004). As a clear direction develops for the organization, people usually become committed to this direction if they have contributed significantly in forming it. Gaps and overlaps in activities among individuals and groups are reduced as participation in strategy formulation clarifies differences in roles and resistance to change is reduced (Pearce and Robinson, 2005).

Effective Communication**:** Strategic management helps to improve communications and coordination in the organization. Board members, staff, funding agencies and other stakeholders are interested in where the organization is heading and how their contribution will fit (Bhattacharya, 1998).

Great Influence**:** Strategic management enables an organization to have greater influence over its circumstances and the environment in which it operates, rather than simply responding to an unending series of problems (Bryson, 1995).

Factors Influencing Strategic Management Practices

Different factors combine to influence the practice of strategic management in organizations. These factors are mainly internal to the organizations even though some of them may be external. Internal factors that influence strategic management practices include: current organizational structure, leadership style, organizational culture and politics, management skills, financial resources, employee training, reward system, existing organization policies, and organization's human resources (Thompson and Strickland, 2003).

Aosa (1992) observed that an organization's strategies are likely to be successfully implemented when congruence is achieved between several elements. Of particular importance include organization structure, culture (shared values), resources (budget) allocation, staff competencies and capabilities, support systems, rewards systems, policies and procedures, and leadership style (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Aosa, 1992; Hunder and Wheelen, 1994; Thompson and Strickland, 2003).

Organizational structure refers to the shape, division of labour, job duties and responsibilities, the distribution of power and decision-making procedures within the company (Okumus, 2003). It simply means the formal framework by which job tasks are divided, grouped, and coordinated (Robins and Coulter, 2002). Organizational structure is a major priority more especially during the implementation of strategy. It helps people pull together in their activities that promote effective strategy implementation. The structure of an organization should be compatible with the chosen strategy and if there is incongruence, adjustments will be necessary either for the structure or the strategy itself.

Organizational culture refers to the set of assumptions (often unstated) that members of an organization share in common (Pearce and Robinson, 2002). Robins and Coulter (2002) define culture as a system of shared meaning and beliefs held by organizational members that determine, in large degree on how they act. An organization culture provides the social context in which an organization performs its work. It guides the organization's members in decision making, determining how time and energy are invested, in deciding which options are looked on favourably from the start and which types of people are selected to work for the organization, and in particular everything else that is done in the organization (Pearce and Robinson, 2002).

Culture affects not only the way managers behave within the organization but also the decisions they make about the organization's relationships with its environment and the strategy (McCarthy et al., 1996).

Culture can either be strength or a weakness. As strength, culture can facilitate communication, decision-making, and control and can create co-operation and commitment. As a weakness, culture may obstruct the smooth implementation of strategy by creating resistance to change (Pearce and Robinson, 2003). Aosa (1992) stated that it is important that the culture of an organization be compatible with the strategy being implemented because where there is incompatibility between strategy and culture, it can lead to a high organizational resistance to change and de-motivation which in turn can frustrate the strategy implementation effort. However, when culture influences the actions of the employees to support current strategy, implementation is strengthened.

Organizations have at least four of resources that can be used to achieve desired objectives, namely: financial resources, physical resources, human resources, and technological resources. (David, 2003). Resources (budgetary) allocation is the process of ensuring that all necessary time, financial, skills and knowledge are made available (Okumus, 2003). Once a strategic option has been settled upon (in the strategic selection stage), management attention turns to evaluating the resource implications of the strategy (Campbell et al., 2002). The operating level must have the resources needed to carry out each part of the strategic plan (Harvey, 1998). It should therefore be possible to implement a strategy with the resources available and it is not possible to implement a strategy which requires more resources than can be made available.

Recruitment and staff development strategies need to support the other factors. In addition, aspects of job design, reward packages and conditions of work have to be carefully considered to balance the needs of the organization with conditions of the labour market and the hopes and expectations of the people (Saunders, 1994). According to Okumus (2003), this involves recruiting new staff and providing training incentives for relevant employees. Gunnigle and Moore (1994) argue that organizations will experience severe problems in strategy implementation it is not effectively linked with appropriate personnel policy choices. A policy need to be in place that allows for recruitment of new staff as per requirements of the new business strategy implementation. Thompson and Strickland (2003) point out that staffing the organization i.e. putting together strong management team, and recruiting and retaining employees with the needed experience, technical skills, and intellectual capital assures successful strategy implementation.

It is important for both organizational subunits and individuals to be enthusiastically committed to executing strategy and achieving performance targets. Company managers typically try to enlist organization wide commitment to carrying out the strategic plan by motivating people and rewarding them for good performance. To get employees' sustained, energetic commitment, management has to be resourceful in designing and using motivational incentives – both monetary and otherwise. The role of the reward system is to align the well being of organization members with realizing the company's vision, so that organization members benefit by helping the company execute its strategy competently and fully satisfy customers.

Most importantly, leadership is needed for effective strategic management process, as this will ensure that the organization effort is united and directed towards achievement of its goals (Pearce and Robinson, 1988). According to Koske (2003), leadership is considered to be one of the most important elements affecting organizational performance. The leadership of the organization should be at the forefront in providing vision, initiative, motivation, and inspiration. The management should cultivate team spirit and act as a catalyst in the whole strategy implementation process. As much as possible, the leadership of the organization should fill relevant positions with qualified people committed to the change efforts (Bryson, 1995).

Selected Studies on Strategy Implementation Practices

The study of strategic management practices in Kenya has focused on different contexts ranging from for-profit private sector organizations, to not-for-profit public sector organizations up to and including non-governmental organizations.

Kangoro (1998) studied on the state of strategic management practices in public sector organizations in Kenya with the objective of investigating the state of strategy processes and the problems of strategy development among public sector organizations in Kenya. The findings of this study indicated that public sector organizations do engage in strategic management to varying degrees. They were found to have well-articulated missions, objectives, strategies and plans. However, a lack of commitment to the same by top management and other employees of the organizations resulted in poor implementation. As a result the benefits of the use of strategy were not enjoyed by these organizations.

Mittra (2001) studied strategic planning practices within hotels and restaurants in Nairobi and found out that different hotels and restaurants practiced strategic management to varying degrees. The study established that 87 per cent of the sampled hotels and restaurants have mission statements and 90 percent set objectives. In addition, 79 percent of the sampled hotels and restaurants develop strategies for their operations.

Mugambi (2003) looked at the strategic management practices of shipping companies in Kenya and found out that the shipping companies in Kenya practice formal strategic management in various forms, which include annual, developmental, and complete strategic management. The study established that strategies in the shipping companies are mainly developed through the deliberate managerial intent as well as imposed by agencies or forces external to the organizations.

Njenga (2006) designed his study on strategic management practices at the Mater Hospital and established that there is formulation of vision and mission statements, environmental scanning, formulation of annual business plans, objective setting and evaluation of strategies and objectives at the hospital. A related study was also done by Badebo (2006) on strategic management practices in health Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Southern Sudan and found out that the NGOs also practice strategic management, albeit at varying degrees.

The above studies exhibit empirical evidence that the practice of strategic management has been widely embraced by organizations of all sorts because of the need to reap the benefits that are promised by strategic management. The studies also underscore the fact that the environment in which organizations operate has become too dynamic, complex and fluid. The only way to survive in such an environment is to create a beneficial link between organizations and the environment, something which is only possible through strategic management.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study was carried out through a census survey. According to Cooper and Schindler (2003), a census survey is where data is collected from all members of the population. The Technical Training Institutions in Nairobi are few and hence this research design was deemed appropriate because it gave a complete picture of strategic management practices of all the six TTIs in Nairobi. The small number of these institutions did not warrant sampling.

Population of Study

The population of study was all Technical Training Institutes in Nairobi. According to Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology, there are six such institutes (appendix II). All these institutions were studied.

Data Collection Method

The data that were collected was mostly quantitative data. These data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire organized in three parts. Part A focused on the institutional profile; Part B focused on strategic management practices and Part C focused on factors affecting strategic management practices in Technical training Institutes. The questionnaire was administered through mail or the "drop and pick" method where applicable. The study targeted the principals and/or business development managers in the institutions. These were considered to be useful in availing sufficient information regarding the institution's strategic management practices and the factors affecting them. All the respondents participated in the study by filling and returning the questionnaires together with additional secondary data that were deemed as complementing the primary data. Therefore, the study attained 100% response rate and hence subjected the data to statistical analyses.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data was carried out on the basis of the objectives of the study. Because of the descriptive nature of the data that were collected, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. To achieve the first objective of establishing the strategic management practices among Technical Training Institutions, frequencies and percentages were used to describe the most predominant strategic management practices as perceived by the respondents. The frequencies and percentages were also used to point out the factors that affect strategic management practices among the institutions. This enabled the achievement of the second objective. Mean scores were used to depict the relative strength of particular factors affecting strategic management practices. The analyzed data were presented in tabular form for ease of interpretation and reporting.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondent and Organizational Bio Data

The study sought data on the key demographic aspects of the respondents who were targeted as well as informational profile. Seeking such information was considered necessary in laying the basis obtaining pertinent information on the practices of strategic management in the Technical Training Institutes. Data that were sought in these respects include the age of the institutions, their major areas of training, tenure of the respondents, and the size of the institution in terms of employees' and students' population.

From the findings of the study, it was established that all the six institutions that were surveyed have been in existence for a period of more than ten years with the youngest being eighteen years (established in 1990), while the oldest being eighty-four years (established in 1924). The findings indicate that these institutions have witnessed numerous changes that have occurred in their operating environment over the years they have been in existence and hence the changes have, in one way or another, had an impact in how they undertake their operations.

The study also established that by the very fact that the core training area is technical, the major areas of training offered by each of the institution was reflective of this fact. Major areas of training in any one of the institutions could include engineering (civil and structural, motor vehicle), business studies, computer studies, health and applied sciences, clothing and textile, food and beverage, ICT and entrepreneurship, audiology, sign language and gender studies, institutional management, graphic arts, and technical teacher training. The areas of training were deemed to have an impetus on the nature of objectives that each institution would set and strive to achieve.

Tenure was looked at in terms of years the respondent had worked with the institution. Data on respondents' tenure pointed to the view that the longer the period of one's tenure, the higher the likelihood of him/her understanding the dynamics of the institutions and the extent to which the institution practices strategic management. The findings of the study are presented in the tables below.

Table 1: Respondents' Tenure

Number of years worked	Frequency	Percent
Below 5 yrs	2	33.3
6-10 yrs	1	16.7
11-15 yrs	1	16.7
Over 20 yrs	2	33.3
Total	6	100.0

Source: Research Data

From the research findings in Table 1, the results indicate that the respondents have been in the respective institutions for varied periods of time ranging from a period of less than five years to that of over twenty years.

The study also set out to establish the size of the institutions under study and found out that majority of the institutions was of large size in terms of the number of employees and students. The study considered an institution to be large if it has more than 151 employees and more than 501 students. The findings of the study are presented in Table 2

Table 2: Organizational size

Number of employees			Number of students		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
51-100	2	33.3	201-400	1	16.7
101-150	1	16.7	401-500	1	16.7
Over 151	3	50.0	Over 501	4	66.7
Total	6	100.0	Total	6	100.0

Source: Research Data

According to the findings as presented in Table 2, 50% of the technical institutions had over 151 employees while 66.7% of them had over 501 students. These results imply that most technical training institutions are expanding and this phenomenon leads to complexity, which in turn determines how they do their business, hence need for strategic planning.

Strategic Management Practices among the Technical Training Institutions

The first objective of this study was to determine the strategic management practices among Technical Training Institutions in Nairobi. To achieve this objective a number of tasks characterizing strategic management process were presented to the respondents and were asked to state whether or not such tasks are present in their institutions. The tasks were based on Thompson and Strickland's (2003) description of the strategic management process as forming a strategic vision of where the organization is headed and the accompanying mission statement; setting objectives-converting the strategic vision into specific performance outcomes for the company to achieve; crafting a strategy to achieve the desired outcomes; implementing and executing the chosen strategy efficiently and effectively; evaluating performance and initiating corrective adjustments in the vision, long-term direction, objectives, strategy or executive in light of actual experience, changing conditions, new ideas, and new opportunities. The findings of the study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Strategic Management Practices in the Institutions

	Yes		**No**		**Total**	
Aspect	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Vision	6	100.0	00	00	6	100.0
Mission	6	100.0	00	00	6	100.0
Situational analysis	5	83.3	1	16.7	6	100.0
Objectives	6	100.0	00	00	6	100.0
Strategies	6	100.0	00	00	6	100.0
Action Plans	6	100.0	00	00	6	100.0
Strategic Plan	6	100.0	00	00	6	100.0
Strategy evaluation and control	6	100.0	100	00	6	100.0

Source: Research Data

The results in the research findings in Table 3 indicate that all the institutions that were studied had written down vision and mission statements, objectives, strategies, action plans, and they all undertake strategy evaluation and control. Out of the six institutions, five (83.3%) indicated that they undertake situational analysis to determine their strategic position before coming up with strategic objectives, while only one (16.7%) does not undertake situational analysis.

The above results were supported by the institutions providing extract copies of their vision and mission statements, objectives and strategies from their strategic plans. The results therefore indicate that the technical training institutions that were studied practice formal strategic planning with majority of them undertaking the above managerial tasks that characterize strategic management process.

The findings of the study also show that everyone in 83.3% of institutions was aware of the vision and mission statements while 16.7% indicated otherwise. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Everyone in the Institution aware of the vision and Mission

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	5	83.3
No	1	16.7
Total	6	100.0

Source: Research Data

The study findings underscore the fact that successful implementation of strategy in any organization requires that the vision and mission of the organization is shared by everyone in the organization so that to guarantee commitment and enthusiasm during implementation. A further investigation on how the vision and mission are communicated throughout the organization revealed that the institutions do this in different ways. The findings are as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: How Vision and Mission are communicated

	Frequency	Percent
Newsletter	2	33.3
Meetings	2	33.3
Work discussions	1	16.7
Total	5	83.3
Missing system	1	16.7
Total	6	100.0

Source: Research Data

The research findings presented in Table 5 indicate that 83.3% of the institutions communicate their vision and mission through different ways. Accordingly, 33.3% communicate through college newsletters, another 33.3% through meetings while 16.7% through work discussions. One institution (16.7%) did not respond to this question. These results therefore indicate that as a way of buying employee and student commitment of the vision and mission, majority of the institutions do this through awareness by ensuring effectives communications to all through different channels.

The study findings as shown in Table 3 indicate that 83.3% of the institutions undertake situational analysis which determines the nature of their strategic objectives. The study sought to establish who is charged with this particular responsibility in the institutions. Research findings on this aspect of strategic management are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Who conducts Situational Analysis

	Frequency	Percent
Selected members	3	50.0
Management of the institution	1	16.7
Total	4	66.7
Missing System	2	33.3
Total	6	100.0

Source: Research Data

The findings in Table 6 show that the conduct of situational analysis in order to understand environmental factors that influence the institutions' business is the responsibility of selected members of the institution in 50% of the institutions and management in 16.7% of the institutions. 33.3% of the institutions did not answer this question. The results therefore indicate that in as much as 83.3% of the institutions conduct situational analysis, one third of the institutions did not have an answer on who does it while in those institutions where the responsibility is defined, different groups of people are involved.

The reason for conducting situational analysis is to identify the key strategic issues which the institutions will set the objectives. The objectives that are set should be those which will enable the institutions attain their vision. The extent to which this is tenable is dependent upon clarity of the objectives and awareness of everybody in the organization about them so that there is understanding of each one's role in achieving them. The study findings on how the objectives are communicated to the employees and students among the institutions are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: How objectives are communicated

	Frequency	Percent
Newsletter	1	16.7%
Memorandum	1	16.7%
Meetings	4	66.7%
Total	6	100.0%

Source: Research Data

The study findings indicate that 66.7% of the institutions communicate their objectives by way of meetings while 16.7% each communicate through newsletters and memorandum respectively. A study of the sample objectives that were availed revealed that the nature of objectives that are set address the core training areas of the institutions in both specific and general terms. The setting of objectives is done by different participants including the management, board of governors, heads of departments, consultative committees and in some cases external consultants.

As pointed out earlier, secondary data obtained by way of extracts of strategic plans implied that the institutions practiced formal strategic planning. This observation was confirmed to a great extent when respondents were asked to indicate how the strategies to achieve the set objectives are developed. The findings on whether the strategies were out of a formal process or through both a formal and informal process are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: How Strategies are developed

	Frequency	Percent
Through a formal strategic planning process	4	66.7
Through both formal and informal process	2	33.3
Total	6	100.0

Source: Research Data

The findings in Table 8 show that 66.7% of the institutions develop their strategies through a formal strategic planning process while 33.3% adopt both formal and informal planning process. The results imply that all the technical training institutions that were studied at least go through a formal, analytical, step-by-step process that is consciously initiated to come up with a blue print that charts out their future direction. This, therefore, led to a further inquiry with respect to the planning horizons of the institutions. The study findings, as shown in Table 4.9, indicate that all the institutions develop plans covering a period of between four and five years.

Table 9: Planning Horizons

	Frequency	Percent
1-2 Yrs	0	0
3-4 Yrs	0	0
4-5 Yrs	6	100.0

Source: Research Data

It was within the first objective of the study that it was deemed necessary to establish whether the institutions studied have mechanism to determine and ensure that the crafted strategies are successfully implemented. Therefore, respondents were asked to state how they ensured that strategies are effectively implemented. A study of the answers provided by the respondents revealed that in most institutions, all departmental/sectional heads come up with action and/or tactical plans to ensure that their respective departments/sections play their role in implementing the institution's strategy. These were found to be complemented by monitoring and supervision by senior management to ensure each department/section is on the right track in implementing its work-plan within stipulated time and with agreed outputs/outcomes.

The study also established that all the institutions studied compare actual performance with desired performance to form the basis of instituting any corrective action to ensure implementation of strategies is on good track. Performance was also found to be measured on the overall rating in the performance of a particular institution in national examinations. In undertaking this exercise, different people are involved including departmental heads, strategic planning committees where applicable, senior management, lecturers, board members and ministry officials.

Overall, the study findings reveal that technical training institutions in Nairobi have embraced the practice of strategic management to a great extent as was demonstrated by the nature of managerial tasks performed, high degree of formality that was exhibited, and the planning horizon adopted.

Factors Influencing Strategic Management Practices Among Technical Training Institutions

The second objective of the study was to establish the factors that influence strategic management among the technical institutions in Nairobi. To accomplish the objective, a number of both internal and external factors were presented to the respondents and they were required to score in a 5-point likert scale the extent to which the factors affect the undertaking of the managerial tasks that characterize strategic management in the institutions. According to the 5-point likert scale, 1=not at all, 2=to a less extent, 3=to a moderate extent, 4=to a large extent, and 5=to a very great extent. To determine the relative potency of a factor, mean scores were used and a factor was considered to have a high influence if its mean score was above 3.5, a medium influence if its mean score was between 2.9 and 3.4, and a low influence if its mean score was below 2.9.

The factors that were presented to the respondents are those that were considered to have an impact mostly during the strategy formulation and strategy implementation phases of strategic management. However, the same factors were not ruled out to have any impact during strategy evaluation and control phase. The factors include current organizational structure, the leadership style, organizational culture and politics, management skills, financial resources, employee training, reward system, existing organizational policies, political interference, and human resources. Research findings on how these factors were rated to as influencing strategic management practices among technical training institutions in Nairobi are presented in Table 10.

The research findings as presented in Table 10 show that managerial skills was rated highly as influencing strategic management practices among technical training institutions in Nairobi with a mean score of 4,67. This was closely followed by financial resources with a mean score of 4.50, with leadership style and organizational culture and politics following each with a mean score of 4.17. Other factors that were rated as having high influence include current organizational structure, existing organizational policies, human resources, and employee training with mean scores of 3.83, 3.83, 3.83, and 3.5 respectively. The factors with medium and low influence on strategic management practices include reward system and political interference with mean scores of 3.00 and 1.67 respectively.

From the findings, it would appear that strategic management practices are greatly influenced by internal organizational factors. This could be explained by the fact that internal organizational efficiencies and effectiveness play a pivotal role in successful execution of an organization's strategy. The internal efficiencies and effectiveness are a function of a number of interrelated factors ranging from organizational structure up to and including the quality and quantity of the human resources. In turn, these will greatly influence how the organization interacts with its environment.

Table 10: Factors Influencing Strategic Management practices

Factor	**Responses**	**Mean Score**	**Std Dev**
Current organizational structure	Less extent	3.83	1.17
	Moderate extent		
	Large extent		
	Very great extent		
Leadership style	Less extent Moderate extent	4.17	1.33
	Very great extent		
Organizational Culture and Politics	Moderate extent	4.17	.75
	Large extent		
	Very great extent		
Management skills	Moderate extent	4.67	.82
	Very great extent		
Financial resources	Large extent	4.50	.55
	Very great extent		
Employee training	Less extent	3.50	1.64
	Very great extent		
Reward system	Not at all	3.00	1.55
	Less extent		
	Large extent		
	Very great extent		
Existing organizational policies	Moderate extent	3.83	.41
	Large extent		
	Very great extent		
Political interference	Not at all	1.67	.52
	Less extent		
Human resources	Moderate extent	3.83	.75
	Large extent		
	Very great extent		

Source: Research Data

It should however be noted that a case by case analysis of the responses in each of the above factors reveals different degrees to which different proportions of respondents indicated the influence of the factors in strategic management practices. This is evidenced by the different magnitudes of standard deviations which are the indications of variations among the respondents. For instance even though managerial skills, financial resources, leadership style, and organizational culture and politics were all highly rated as influencing strategic management practices, they show different degrees of variation with standard deviations of 0.82, 0.55, 1.33, and 0.75 respectively. This implies that even though various factors were rated highly, moderately, or lowly as influencing strategic management practices in the institutions, the same factors were deemed to have this influence to different degrees.

SUMMARY

Organizations of all sorts have found it necessary to practice strategic management in order to be both efficient and effective as they jostle for competitive positions within a changing environment. Technical training institutions have not been spared by the changes in the environment in which they operate. However, the nature of business in which these institutions are engaged in might be deemed not to require practicing strategic management. This study sought to establish the strategic management practices among these institutions within Nairobi and the factors that influence such practices.

The study established that almost all the managerial tasks that characterize strategic management were present in all the technical training institutions that were studied. It was established that all the institutions have written down vision and mission statements, documented objectives and strategies, action plans and strategic plans, and strategy evaluation and control mechanisms. The study established that 83.3% of the institutions undertake situational analysis before setting their objective and crafting strategies to achieve them.

It was further established that everyone in 83.3% of institutions was aware of the vision and mission statements and that the same proportion of the institutions communicate their vision and mission through different ways, that is through college newsletters (33.3%), meetings (33.3%) and work discussions (16.7%). It was also established that for the institutions that conduct situational analysis, 50% of them bestow such responsibility to selected members of the institutions while 16.7% of them bestow it on management. Further, the study established that 66.7% of the institutions develop their strategies through a formal strategic planning process while 33.3% adopt both formal and informal planning process.

With respect to the factors that influence the strategic management practices, it was established that managerial skills, financial resources, leadership style and organizational culture and politics were very highly rated as influencing strategic management practices in the technical training institutions. Other factors that were highly rated include current organizational structure, existing organizational policies, human resources, and employee training. Reward system and political interference were rated as having medium and low influence respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research have unearthed the key managerial tasks that characterize the conduct strategic management practices and the factors influencing such practices among technical training institutions in Nairobi. From the findings of the study it could be concluded that all the managerial tasks descriptive of the strategic management were presented in all the studied institutions except for one which does not undertake situational analysis. This implies that in as much as this task was not undertaken by one institution, the findings revealed formal strategic planning process was widespread among the institutions.

The study findings also revealed that whereas the institutions have adopted formal strategic planning, a lot of factors were found to influence the practice of strategic management in these institutions. Therefore, any conclusions that may be drawn and generalizations that may be made on the extent of success of the adoption of the strategic management among the institutions that were studied should not ignore the prevailing internal organizational factors that wedge a lot of influence on the practices. Generally, it could be concluded that technical training institutions in Nairobi have adopted formal strategic planning in coming up with their strategies and that such a process is mostly influenced by internal organizational factors.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study could only be limited within technical training institutions located in Nairobi. The findings could not be therefore confidently generalized to apply in all such institutions in Kenya.

There are limitations of measurement, which are common to social sciences researches. Respondents' perceptions may change over time and across different personalities. Also respondents may give biased or dishonest answers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Due to the above limitations strategic management practices and factors influencing them among other technical training institutions in Kenya were not investigated. Therefore, in connection with further research, a study of all technical training institutions in Kenya can be recommended.

Further, the majority of the institutions that were studied are those that are government sponsored. A comparative study on the strategic management practices and factors influencing them between public and private technical training institutions could be necessary in order to establish the unique features manifested by these institutions so as to form a strong ground for generalization purposes.

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