

Role of Change Management Strategies in Effective Devolution in the County Government of Taita Taveta

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Abstract: *Change management is critical to the success of devolution. However, studies on change management strategies in county governments are scanty and, as such, it remains unclear how change management strategies impact on the devolution process. Therefore, the general objective of the study was to determine the role of change management strategies in effective devolution in Kenya focusing on Taita Taveta County Government. It specifically sought to determine how change management through directive, educative, participative and expert strategies influence effective devolution in the County. The study employed the case study research design targeting the management and staff of Taita Taveta County Government. Stratified random sampling was used to obtain a sample size of 86 respondents. Instrumentation consisted of structured questionnaires and the data obtained was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21.0. The findings revealed that the directive strategy as a change management strategy had a weak influence on devolution in Taita Taveta County Government ($\beta = 0.174$). However, it was also revealed that the educative strategy ($\beta = 0.277$) and the participative strategy ($\beta = 0.733$) as a change management strategies were very influential in the devolution process in the county. It was also established that expert strategy though not playing a prominent role as a change management strategy still had a significant influence on effective devolution in the county ($\beta = 0.268$). Therefore, it was recommended that the county's top management needs to be more consultative when initiating change so as to help reduce resistance to change and enlist the cooperation of the stakeholders. The county also needs to engage the services of external consultants to help manage change and to allocate adequate resources and engage all persons likely to be affected by proposed changes so as to cushion them from the effects of the changes.*

Keywords: *Change Management, Effective Devolution, County Government*

I. Introduction

Throughout history, there has been a tendency for governments to centralize power. However, a growing number of countries both in the developed and lately developing world have in the last three decades been keen on decentralising the administrative, fiscal and political functions of the central government to sub-national governments and other agencies in order to improve service delivery. These countries include the United Kingdom, the United States, India, the former USSR, Italy, Spain and Australia (Calamai, 2009). Some African countries such as Nigeria and Kenya have also entrenched devolution in their governance structures. In many cases, the quest for devolution has been driven by the need to bring government services closer to the people in response to the growing pressure on public sector reforms and the need for more representation and inputs in the management of public affairs by the citizens and fairness in the distribution of political and economic resources (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007). Consequently, the global arena is full of illustrations of successful and not so successful experiments in decentralization.

It is worth observing from the outset that there are various forms of decentralization. Most importantly, it should be understood that the differences among the frameworks for decentralization of public functions are, however, not clear cut and as such provide breeding grounds for such issues as role conflict which slow down the devolution process (Davies, 2012). Instead, the frameworks comprise of a continuum-ranging from a centralized framework to the federal system. Devolution is one form of decentralization that lies within the continuum. Devolution itself has many definitions depending on the approach taken by the state actors in the process (Grindlemere, 2009). However, generally devolution is defined as a process of transfer of political, administrative and fiscal management powers between central government and lower levels of government, primarily operating at the city and regional levels (Chand, 2011). It is not just a linear process of power transfer from national to sub-national level but also involves some degree of cooperation between different levels of government. The concept of devolved governments has grown in its usage and diversity. It has enabled the delivery of better services by government to meet citizen needs. It is consistent with the approach taken by the Government of 'no ideological preference' for mode of service delivery endemic in many African countries where provision of public services has been skewed on the basis of political affiliation (Kauzya, 2007). However, despite the devolution initiative, problems still arise, and they tend to highlight the issue of effective

oversight by governments and public administrations of devolved government arrangements. Building the capacity to decide when to use devolved government arrangements and to administer them effectively is a major task for any public administration (Helling, Serrano & Warren, 2005).

The Promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 on 27th August 2010 brought in a new system of Government. The nation saw a change of governance structure from central Government system to devolved system of government entrenched in law. The new devolved units created through these laws were county governments county governments are to devolve further into smaller units, sub counties, wards and villages. Therefore, devolution is a process of decentralization, and puts power closer to the citizen so that local factors are better recognized in decision making and service delivery enhanced (Kiwanuka, 2009). According to Article 10(2) (a) of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, devolution and sharing of power were identified as values and principles that would guide our governance system. This meant that Kenyans settled for a multi-dimensional approach to the organization and management of governance and state power, implying a devolved system of Government. Presently, devolved Governments face many challenges especially due to the change in Governance structure that comes with it and little is currently known about ramification of the devolution of policy making power by an upper level of government (authorizes) to a lower level of government (The recipient). This problem is even worse because there is little that is known particularly with regard to second order devolution which is the transfer of power from the County Government to sub county and other lower levels (Nyanjom, 2011; Davies, 2012). The aspiration of devolution can only be achieved when strategic change management is applied in the implementation process.

Change management is the practice of successfully changing an organization. It typically involves changes to processes, technology, roles and organizational culture and structures. When change management is carried out well, people feel engaged in the change process and work collectively towards a common objective. Based upon the literature reviewed by Mento et al. (2002), there exists a number of change models intended to guide and instruct the implementation of major change in organizations. Kotter's (1995) strategic eight-step model for transforming organizations and General Electric's seven-step change acceleration process model based on Lewin, (1951) are examples of the more commonly referred to within change management practice and literature (Nograšek, 2011). The workforce today is increasingly mobile, has higher career aspirations, seeks greater job satisfaction and more personal development opportunities, and wants a balanced lifestyle.

Change may be incremental or radical and transformative as the case of devolution in Kenya (Davies, 2012). In the United Kingdom the Memorandum of Understanding between the UK Government and the devolved administrations commits them all to the principle of good communication with each other, especially where one administration's work may have some bearing on the responsibilities of another, regardless of whether the issue is devolved or not. This emanated from the devolution guidance notes which were set to guide day to day activities. Nayahangan et al., (2011) approach transitional change as a process and not as an event. According to them, there is a definite sequencing of time, strategy, understanding, acceptance and adoption of new systems, workflow, or ideas. They argue that change happens to individuals and is highly personal, guided by feelings of personal mastery, adequacy, sense of loss, entitlement and personal gain. They also observe that successful leaders must consider the differing priorities of the organization and filter those issues through the change process. Failing to engage stakeholders and to inform them of the reasons, processes and expected benefits of major organizational changes can lead to lack of acceptance of the changes and, ultimately, failure of these initiatives. This can affect not only the organization and relations within the organization, but also clients and the organization's reputation. Change management leaders must therefore promote awareness and understanding of the change initiative to influence stakeholders' willingness to embrace the change (Amanda, 2007).

According to Johansson and Heide (2008), change is an ever-present feature of organizational life, both at an operational and strategic level. Change is a constant feature in public sector organizations in Kenya as they seek to improve on their service delivery. Common changes include but are not limited to changes in personnel, changes in technology and changes in the regulatory environment. All these changes undoubtedly affect the performance of the public sector organizations which is plays a critical role in service delivery in public sector organizations. For example, changes in personnel such as transfers of key personnel may affect the overall personnel competency and may disrupt work teams. Finding suitable replacement may also take time and come at a cost. Changes in technology are ideal in increasing the efficiency of the procurement system, however, these changes often require additional staff training and migration into the new systems may at times take quite long and impede service delivery. If not properly managed, changes in technology may not be fully adopted and the status quo can be maintained for a long time. Overall change comes at a cost and will necessarily lead to changes in the budget. Changes in the organization budget may affect the resourcing of departments and considerably slow down the implementation of some of their plans and ultimately affect their performance and as in the case of the present study, the effectiveness of devolution. This underscores the need for strategic change management initiatives.

Change management is a structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organizations from the current state to the desired future state. It is an organizational process aimed at empowering employees to accept and embrace changes in their current business environment (Hiatt, 2010). Change management has received considerable research attention mainly with regards to the business sector. A lot has been said on the change implementation process and strategies. However, there has been no effort as yet to link them to organizational attributed such as management styles. As such, it remains unclear how change management through directive, educative, participative and expert strategies impact on the performance of organizations. Further, while the existing studies on change management in public sector focus on the system as a whole, a clear focus on a single public organization is needed since change is unique and generalizations may at times not suffice to describe the change process. Therefore, the general objective of the study was to determine the role of change management strategies in effective devolution in Kenya focusing on Taita Taveta County Government. This was achieved by examining the roles of directive, educative, participative and expert strategies as change management strategies on effective devolution in Taita Taveta County Government.

II. Research Methodology

This study used the case study research design. The target population comprised the management and staff of Taita Taveta County Government employed on permanent or contract basis. A sample of 81 respondents was determined using the formula proposed by Nassiuma (2000). Data was obtained from primary sources using copies of a questionnaire with open ended questions. Reliability of the research instrument was calculated using the test retest method of administering the instrument twice to the pilot population. This yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.8106$ which was above the recommended minimum value of 0.70. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to measure the strength and direction of relationship between variables. The researchers also used multiple regression analysis to establish whether the independent variables predicted the dependent variables.

III. Results And Discussions

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics used were mainly means, modes, medians and standard deviations. The descriptive statistics helped to develop the basic features of the study and form the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of the data. These results are arranged and presented as per the objectives of the study

3.1.1: Directive strategy as a change management strategy in devolution process

Table 1: Directive strategy as a change management strategy in devolution process

Statements	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Totals
Our top management often spearheads changes without consulting widely among the staff	1	5	3.75	0.981	81
The management often use the powers vested in their positions to carry out any desired change	1	5	3.48	1.062	81
All top management decisions are well communicated in advance to all members	1	5	2.79	1.087	81
The management demands that all staff members perceive and embrace change	1	5	3.61	1.137	81
Any necessary changes in our organization are at times carried out at short notice without need for consultation	1	5	3.56	1.084	81
The management sensitizes staff members about of the need to overcome tendency towards predictability	1	5	3.03	1.045	81
Structural changes are often carried out at the discretion of the management	1	5	3.92	0.908	81
We do often encounter a lot of resistance from various quarters when we use this approach to change in our organization	2	5	4.08	0.501	81

The results in Table 1 indicate that there was a general agreement with all the statements in the posed to the respondents with all means above 2.5. It is evident that the county's management approach to change often encountered a lot of resistance from various quarters organization (mean = 4.08) as all top management decisions appeared not to be well communicated in advance to all members as indicated by a small majority (mean = 2.79). This was suggested by the finding that the county's top management often spearheaded changes without consulting widely among the staff (mean = 3.75). Some necessary changes in county government, it emerged, were at times carried out at short notice without need for consultation (mean = 3.56) probably as a need to communicate to the staff members about of the need to overcome tendency towards predictability (mean

= 3.03). These findings in essence imply that the directive strategy though common was bound to be least effective in managing change in the area.

3.1.2: Educative strategy as a change management strategy in devolution process

Table 2: Educative strategy as a change management strategy in devolution process

Statements	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Totals
The vision-building process used by the management involves all the relevant stakeholders	1	5	3.74	0.985	81
The strategic vision is communicated in a way that is realistic, honest and genuine to all members by the top management	1	5	3.88	1.154	81
Communication comes to employees early in the change process to develop confidence, commitment and willingness to participate	1	5	3.42	0.934	81
The management adequately allocates budget money and personnel to the change initiatives	1	5	3.11	1.273	81
Employees are encouraged to modify their behavior in order to deliver the change initiatives	1	5	3.81	1.001	81
Employees are trained to increase their capacity for change implementation	1	5	3.4	1.001	81
Visible successes on change are built on to keep up the momentum toward the larger vision	2	5	3.72	0.729	81
The County management provides workers with opportunities to influence change	1	5	3.43	0.999	81

The results in Table 2 suggest that there was a general agreement on all statements regarding educative strategy as a change management strategy in the devolution process. It is evident from the findings that the top management made effort to communicate the county’s strategic vision in a way that was realistic, honest and genuine to all members (mean = 3.88). This encouraged the employees to modify their behavior in order to deliver the change initiatives (mean = 3.81). However, it also emerged that not all respondents were certain that the management adequately allocated budget money and personnel to the change initiatives (mean = 3.11). Thus, it was evident that the response to the educative strategy in change management was quite favorable although there was need for more resource allocation towards this end for capacity building.

3.1.3: Participative strategy as a change management strategy in devolution

Table 3: Participative strategy as a change management strategy in devolution

Statements	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Totals
Our management engages all employees in change initiatives	1	5	3.52	1.205	81
Team building is encouraged by the management to effect change	2	5	3.67	0.962	81
The input of other stakeholders in the community is also encouraged	2	5	3.69	0.861	81
High involvement in participation of the community in the devolution process affected its implementation	1	5	3.78	0.922	81
Short-term goals are created that can be tracked to show the change progress	1	5	3.81	0.843	81
Open communication on issues is encouraged by our management to enhance better cooperation	2	5	3.81	0.713	81
Our management has assigned certain persons to monitor the initiated changes	1	4	2.95	0.835	81
We engage external consultants to help manage change	1	4	2.75	0.799	81

It is evident from the findings in Table 3 that there was a general agreement among respondents with all statements regarding this variable save for two which had means below 3.0. The findings suggest that the county government management encouraged open communication on issues to enhance better cooperation among the members while at the same time created short-term goals that can be tracked to show the change progress (mean = 3.81). The county management engaged all employees on change initiatives (mean = 3.52) and used tactics, such as, team building to effect change (mean = 3.67) while also encouraging the input of other stakeholders in the community (mean = 3.69). However, the findings also suggest that the county management were not keen on assigning persons to monitor the initiated changes (mean = 2.95) and also seldom engaged external consultants to help manage change (mean = 2.75). The high means in most of the constructs of this variable is suggestive of the appealing nature of this strategy in change management. In essence, it underscores what devolution is all about, that is, more involvement of people in the management of their affairs.

3.1.4: Expert strategy as a change management strategy in devolution

Table 4: Expert strategy as a change management strategy in devolution

Statements	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Totals
All changes being done by the management are well planned ahead of time	2	5	3.35	1.097	81
The management makes effort to engage all persons likely to be affected by proposed changes so as to cushion them from the effects of the changes	1	5	3.12	1.122	81
Our management allocates adequate resources for the management of structural changes	1	5	2.6	0.847	81
Adequate settlement is made to all those affected considerably by changes so as to encourage the change process to continue	1	5	2.07	1.058	81
Other incentives are given to those dissenting to changes in order to win them over to the change process	1	4	3.01	0.733	81
Time allowances are made to allow the stakeholders to adjust to the changes	1	5	3.31	1.032	81
The change programs are flexible enough to accommodate further modifications where necessary	1	5	3.39	0.921	81

The study findings reported varied opinions on the use of expert strategy was used as a change management strategy in effective devolution of Taita Taveta County. According to the findings in Table 4, all changes being done by the management were well planned ahead of time (mean = 3.35). Most (mean = 3.12) of the respondents also said that the management makes effort to engage all persons likely to be affected by proposed changes so as to cushion them from the effects of the changes. However, there appeared to be uncertainty (mean = 2.6) over whether the county management allocates adequate resources for the management of structural changes. Consequently, adequate settlement were not made to all those affected considerably by changes so as to encourage the change process to continue (mean = 2.07). Other incentives were instead given to those dissenting to changes in order to win them over to the change process (mean = 3.01). These incentives included time allowances to allow the stakeholders to adjust to the changes (mean = 3.31). Nevertheless, the change programs were flexible enough to accommodate further modifications where necessary (mean = 3.39). The findings on this variable imply that the expert strategy was not being extensively used in the county change management strategies. This was attributed to the feeling that the county government was still too young to warrant the intervention of external actors in its management.

3.1.5: Correlation and Regression Analysis

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

		Directive Strategy	Educative Strategy	Participative Strategy	Expert Strategy	Effective Devolution
Effective Devolution	Pearson Correlation	0.168	0.226	.562**	.253*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.009	0.015	0.000	0.024	
	N	81	81	81	81	81
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

The findings in Table 5 indicate that all the change management strategies in the correlation matrix positively influenced the devolution process in the county ($p < 0.05$), though the degrees varied considerably along a continuum from weak association to strong association.

Multiple regression analysis was also used to determine how much the predictor variables could explain the variation in the dependent variable. The results show that Directive Strategy, Educative Strategy, Participative Strategy and Expert Strategy explained 56% of the variations in effective devolution in the area. This means that other factors not included in the regression model accounted for 44%. The results of the ANOVA performed on the independent and dependent variables and summarized in Table 6 indicate that there was a significant difference between means of the change management strategies and effective devolution in Taita Taveta County. ($F_o = 20.497 > F_c = 2.49$; $df = 4, 80$; $p < 0.05$). This finding confirms the finding suggested by regression model and suggests that the regression model was indeed valid.

Table 6. Multiple regression results

	Unstandardized coefficients	Std. error	Standardized coefficients		
	B		Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-4.647	4.69		-0.991	0.005
Directive Strategy	0.218	0.106	0.174	2.061	0.013
Educative Strategy	0.231	0.086	0.277	2.671	0.01
Participative Strategy	0.897	0.109	0.733	8.238	0
Expert Strategy	0.355	0.128	0.268	2.782	0.007
Model summary and ANOVA statistics					
R Square	0.558				
Adjusted R Square	0.531				
F	20.497				
Sig.	0				
a. Dependent Variable: Effective Devolution					

IV. Discussions

The results on directive strategy agreed with Johansson and Heide (2008) whose study found evidence that the radical programmes of restructuring, that managers initiate, often lead to turmoil with up to 70% of change initiatives failure due to shortcomings in the internal communication. According to Stanleigh (2008), the disadvantage of this approach is that it does not take into consideration the views, or feelings, of those involved in, or affected by, the imposed change. This approach may lead to valuable information and ideas being missed and there is usually strong resentment from staff when changes are imposed rather than discussed and agreed. The findings on educative strategy concur with Leboo (2013) who found that change preparation through education or more precisely sensitization significantly influenced successful implementation of change in institutions. According to Balogun and Hailey (2004), winning hearts and minds is a complex process that involves a mixture of activities, such as: communication, persuasion, education, training and selection. In relation to the participative strategy which incidentally was the most significant of the variables under investigation in the present study, the findings reflected the views of Thornhill, Lewis, Millmore and Saunders (2000) who pointed out that people should be fully considered in the change process. Kotter (1996) emphasized the need consolidate gains and produce more change, that is, create momentum for change by building on successes in the change, invigorate people through the changes, develop people as change agents; and also anchor new approaches in the corporate culture as this was critical to long-term success and institutionalizing the changes. Finally, the findings on the expert strategy were consistent with Amanda (2007) that transition especially during devolution of state requires organizations to have a clear vision of the changes they want to implement and a technically and structurally sound foundation for making these changes though this may be quite difficult to achieve when they do not have change management experts.

V. Conclusions And Recommendations

The foregoing findings have revealed important aspects concerning the role of change management strategies in effective devolution in Taita Taveta County Government. First, directive strategy as a change management strategy had a weak influence on devolution in Taita Taveta County Government as the county's top management often spearheaded changes without consulting widely among the staff. Second, the response to the educative strategy in change management was quite favorable although there was need for more resource allocation towards this end for capacity building. It was also established that the participative strategy as a change management strategy was the most effective change management strategy in the devolution process in the county. The appealing nature of this strategy in change management underscored the essence of devolution, that is, more involvement of people in the management of their affairs. Lastly, expert strategy though not playing a prominent role as a change management strategy still had a significant influence on effective devolution in the county. Thus, it is recommended that the county's top management to reduce the levels of directive strategy and be more consultative when initiating change. The county's management needs to avail more resources when sensitizing people on change. It is important that the county also engage the services of external consultants to help manage change. Finally, the county management ought to make every effort to allocate adequate resources for the management of structural change and engage all persons likely to be affected by proposed changes so as to cushion them from the effects of the changes.

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