

## **Organizational Structure and Competitiveness of Institutions of higher learning in Kenya**

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**ABSTRACT:** Many of these factors are from the environment where traditional view commonly divided into internal and external factors. The various dimensions of organizational structure can either enhance or reduce effective organizational performance resulting in either accuracy of performance forecasting or deviations between forecasts and actual outcomes. Competitiveness is the quality that makes organizations display a cutting edge. The study sought to find out the influence of organization structure on competitiveness of public universities in Kenya. The study findings indicate that public universities should adopt more flat organizational structures and communicate with the employees on matters of change.

**Key Words:** Organizational Structure, Competitiveness

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### **I. BACKGROUND**

Organizational structure can be viewed as the way responsibility and power are allocated inside the organization and work procedures are carried out by organizational members (Teixeria et al., 2012). According to Akinyele (2011) the organizational structure and strategies adopted by oil and gas marketing companies affect market share positively. Lavie's (2006) gave evidence that the level of organizational structure and strategies is positively related to company effectiveness. Mansoor et al. (2012) reportedly assert that performance effect of OS is moderated by changes in the environment and hence, conclude that to attain desired superior performance by an organization adequate attention is required to have OS that can match the prevailing environment dynamism in place. These structures are characterized with different attributes such as control, communication, organizational knowledge, task, prestige, governance and values. Hajipour, Mohammad & Arash (2011) studied on relationship between industry structure, strategy type and organizational characteristics. Results indicate industry structure determines organizational characteristics. Mansoor et al. (2012) contend that ideal organizational structure is a recipe for superior performance. Organizational structures are discussed in the extant literature with reference to two key factors; formalization and centralization.

Qingmin, Helmut & Juergen (2012) study in Austria and China found that organizational structure influence performance directly and indirectly. Senior and Swailes (2010) explain the concept of span of control as the number of people reporting to one manager. In the flatter organizations span of control consists of a larger number of people. One reason for changing the structure to a flatter one is that it will shorten response time to the markets changes; it will happen because of reduced number of hierarchical levels within the organization (Senior & Swailes, 2010). Bloisi et al. (2007) suggest that one way to flatten an organization's structure is to widen the span of control, especially when the organization is large; it will maintain flexibility without becoming too hierarchical.

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Organizational effectiveness requires that we take a more holistic view. "Effectiveness" means different things to different organizations, but we can agree that it means survival and a competitive edge in the 21st Century (Mihaicz, 2012). The university can also utilize its heritage as a collaborator to transfer regional study results and innovative research from the university to the community. The transfer may take one of three forms: teaching students, sparking business ventures, and conducting policy-relevant research. (Swain, 2010) Universities must ensure that their curricula and programs are such that they are training students in innovative techniques relevant to the region. Universities should become active in the development of business ventures, either sparking new ventures or working with existing small businesses to support their innovation needs and to

transfer technologies out of the academic realm and into the commercial realm. Universities can work with existing small businesses to implement, develop, or market new technologies. Initiatives that link faculty expertise to the needs of entrepreneurs are mechanisms that can be utilized to transfer faculty knowledge into the community. Other similar university-industry linkages can have major impacts on the economic development of a region (Swain, 2010). The above can be achieved through strategic organizational structure which is gap of this paper.

## **II. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Every organization can be seen as an enclosed system of people and processes that work together towards achieving some defined goal (Senior & Swailes, 2010). However, there are many components that are making an organization. Among these components Senior & Swailes (2010) name formal subsystems, such as management, strategy, goals, structure, operations, and technology; and informal subsystems, such as leadership, politics, and culture. For example, Santra & Giri (2008) state that organizational structure is not only crucial for every successful organization; it is also directly related to the efficiency of this organization. Wang et al. (2013), in turn, point our attention to the changing pattern of leadership: emerging concepts of shared leadership are becoming more and more popular. Moreover, changes have been spotted in the field of communication: interesting transition from face-to-face communication towards electronic channels has been acknowledged by Kupritz & Cowell (2011). The organization structure should be accommodating and changing to meet the needs of employees and stakeholders as well meet the global market.

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

The research adopted descriptive survey and correlation designs in seeking to determine the factors that affected competitiveness of public universities in Kenya. The target population was all the staff of public universities totaling 17955. All the seven public universities were included in the study. Stratified sampling was adopted to obtain a representative sample of the study which was 384 in number. Non-proportionate sampling was used to select the actual number of teaching and non-teaching members of staff from each university while proportionate sampling was used in selecting the sample from the different universities. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire comprised closed ended questions.

## **IV. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Organizational structures and competitiveness**

Stroh, Northcraft, & Neale (2002) emphasized that organizational structure represents the relationships among different roles played by units within an organization. These diverse points of views of definitions indicate that the term —organizational structure is not necessarily concentrated on any univocal characteristic, but rather, more likely to contain various dimensions.

Employees are a reliable source of business information under some circumstances when they directly communicate with external publics and get feedback. For modern organizations, information is so important that some have specifically set department of user experience to analyze the needs of their customers (Fallman & Waterworth, 2010).

According to Vineburgh (2010) higher levels of empowerment, higher levels of support for innovation, and lower levels of interpersonal conflict were associated with higher levels of organizational trust. Lewis (2011) conducted a study in order to examine the effects a bureaucratic organization on communication capacity of management information system. The results identified traditional organizational structures create vertical and horizontal boundaries impeding communication. The findings determined the critical aspects to improve communication through the reduction of boundaries was direct leadership support for a centralized management information system team with clear responsibility, accountability and authority to facilitate organizational communication. Veisi (2012) in an investigation which conducted in Bank found out that the positive relationship is between organic structure and participatory culture. Also there is significant relationship between mechanical structure and bureaucratic culture. Powley & Nissen (2012) examined the effect of trust levels and organizational design on performance. The results have shown that trust and organizational design have strong interactions and that hierarchical organizations experience performance levels well below flexible organizational structures.

Aghajani et al (2013) found the significant relationship between organizational structure and employee creativity in Saveh Pars Company. Also the results have shown the significant relationship between the level of formalization, complexity, centralization and creativity of employee. Shaemiet al (2013) determined organization's structure dimensions' effect on organizational trust. They found that formalization, standardization, hierarchy of authority, centralization and professionalism dimensions had affected organizational trust and complexity, specialization, employee ratio and management ratio dimensions didn't affect organizational trust in this company.

Competitiveness also depends on how well the organization is structured. A number of processes have been identified as drivers behind the changing ideals or values that institutional leaders are supposed to sustain (Bleiklie & Byrkjeflot, 2002). The rise of mass education during the 1980s and 1990s has made higher education and its costs more visible and contributed to a more intense focus on how higher education institutions are organized and structured. New ideas about university management and funding have altered the political rhetoric and discourse about higher education issues (Neave, 2002). The idea that universities ought to be organized and structured as business enterprises and become “entrepreneurial” universities (Clark, 1998) has deeply influenced the debate about organization structure and leadership in higher education. Thus enthusiasts who envisage new alliances and forms of cooperation between economic enterprise, public authority and knowledge institutions as necessary and with desirable consequences for academic institutions and knowledge production have had a strong influence on the public debate on these issues (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1997).

## V. MODELS

### Martins (1989) organizational systems model

The model developed by Martins (1989) to describe organizational culture was based on the work of Edgar Schein and draws on open systems theory and adapted by several authors like (Kast and James, 1985). The systems approach offers a holistic approach, but also emphasizes the interdependence between the different subsystems and elements in an organization (French & Bell, 1995). The organizational systems model explains the interaction between organizational subsystems (goals, structure, management, technology and psycho-sociological).

The complex interaction which takes place on different levels between individuals and groups, and also with other organizations and the external environment, can be seen as the primary determinants of behavior in the work place. Based on the dimensions that describe organizational culture Martins (2000) identified and synthesized the determinants of organizational culture that influence creativity and innovation as found in the literature. The purpose of Martins’s (2000) research was to determine empirically through quantitative research, the determinants that influence creativity and innovation from a cultural perspective, and to compare the findings with the model based on the literature study.

## VI. FINDINGS

### Factor analysis of organizational structure

On organization structure one item had a loading factor of less than 0.4 and was eliminated as shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Factor analysis on organization structure**

Component Matrix	Component
Employee position role are well defined in the structure	.808
Roles of various positions are well defined	.789
There is a clear chain of command in the organization	.788
The structure has grouped employees in the best way to achieve organisational goals	.785
The organisation structure of the university facilitates employees evaluation by the supervisors	.745
The University's structure allows smooth running by departments towards a common goal	.741
The Universities organization's structure is hierarchical in nature	.622
The structure affects flow of information positively in the university	.560
Decision making in the organisation is centralized	.532
Information passed from one person to another is rarely distorted	.525
The organization's structure is diplomatic in nature	.480
The organisation's structure is very rigid to allow positive change in the university	.114*

\*Item dropped

### Descriptive statistics of Organizational Structure

The third objective of this study was to find out whether Organisational Structure as a human resource management factor has any influence on the competitiveness of public universities in Kenya. The objective was assessed per variable by use of statements on the questionnaire that respondents were required to state their position on the basis of likert scales that were provided. The questionnaire employed a likert scale and values were attached to each response where 1 = Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly agree. Key issues were examined to measure how organizational structures influence public universities’ competitiveness in Kenya. The items are discussed below and summarized in a table form.

Majority (48.9%) of the respondents agreed that the universities organization's structure is hierarchical in nature while (31.2%) suggested that they are not. The findings contradict those of Caruana, Ewing, & Ramaseshan, (2002) who examined the effects of certain environmental variables and centralization on entrepreneurship and ultimately on performance in public sector entities found that public sector entities which

seek to deliver better performance must consider their organizational structures. They must be willing to move away from centralised systems that involve higher levels of formality to organisational systems that facilitate higher levels of discretion. Bush (2007) suggests that in a hierarchical organizational structure, employees and leaders are given clearly defined roles and although it has some disadvantages, the structure comes with several advantages that make it worth considering. The findings point to the fact that the type of organizational structures adopted by Universities may be a hindrance to their performance.

The findings on information flow and organization structures showed that (34.0%) of the respondents agreed that the universities organization's structure affects flow of information positively in the university while (32.6%) disagreed. This is in agreement with the findings by Miller (2000) who established that all the way through the organization, communication flows through vertical and highly structured channels. The implication of the findings is that the organisational structure adopted should be one that facilitates positive flow of information in the organisation.

Roles were found to be well defined in the structures as noted by (56.4%) of the respondents while (27.2%) disagreed. The findings are in agreement with those of Bush (2007) who found that in a hierarchical organizational structure, the business has vertical levels leading to a top authority figure and employees are given clearly defined roles and leaders. This implies that the current structures by the universities are achieving an important purpose of having employees' roles clearly defined.

On flexibility of the organization structure (45.4%) of the respondents agreed that the universities organization's structure is very rigid to allow positive change in the university while (26.2%) suggested that they are not. The findings agree with those of Harvard Business School professor Kotter (2011) who suggested that hierarchical organizations inhibit timely transformations, which are essential if a business is to survive in a rapidly changing environment. He suggests that hierarchies work for standardized processes but they are not useful in dynamic environments. They are slow to react to new opportunities, which often require transformative change. This implies that the kind of organizations structures adopted by Universities may inhibit transformation which is essential for survival in the fast changing environment.

Majority of the respondents (45.4%) suggested that the universities organization's structure is diplomatic in nature while (26.2%) suggested that they are not. A study by Kothari & Handscombe (2007) on structure, culture, enterprise and universities recommended visible policy statements and a flatter, less risk adverse structure that allows enterprise to flourish in an environment where systems and procedures are kept. A flat line structure is one where there are few layers of management. Each manager has a wide span of control. This means a manager has responsibility for many people or tasks. Delegation is necessary for tasks to be carried out effectively. This structure gives employees more responsibility for their work. Communication is also faster up and down the layers. This enables problems to be solved more quickly.

In response to the chain of command (58.8%) of the respondents disagreed that there is a clear chain of command in the organisation while (23.7%) indicated that it is clear. The findings contrast with those of Lyon, Lumpkin, & Dess, (2000) who noted that the chain of command is important because it allows the people in charge to stick to their assigned duties. This creates efficiency and speed. The chain of command is also important because everyone knows who to turn to if a new problem occurs. If a person breaks the chain of command someone in charge might lose track of their assigned duty and fail in a task. The findings point to the fact that lack of clear chain of command in Universities is bound to affect employees negatively in undertaking their duties.

The structure was found to have grouped employees in the best way to achieve organisational goals as suggested by (31.6%) while (11.0%) indicated it does not. These findings are in agreement with those of Martone, (2003) who established that organisation structure allocates authority and responsibility. It specifies who is to direct whom and who is accountable for what results. The structure helps an organization member to know what his role is and how it relates to other roles. The implications are that the current organizational structures in the universities have a positive influence on employees in terms of understanding their roles.

The study found out that the structures are centralized as noted by (53.9%) while (24.1%) indicated that they are not. Russell (2001) also claims that reacting to changes in the environment requires moving the decision making authority away from centralised structure towards a decentralised authority. The results agree with a study by Olayo (2005), who found that low level of participation in decision making among staff in selected universities in Kenya reduced employee work performance with regard to efficiency and effectiveness.

These findings support the arguments of Caruana, Ewing & Ramaseshan (2002) who argue that in order to perform better, organisations need to move away from centralized systems to organisational systems that facilitate higher levels of discretion. Anuska & Mondal (2012) noted that decentralisation has been seen and advocated into health systems as a measure of better administration to improving the quality and access of services. Apart from improving services it has been found to bring in an element of social accountability. This implies that the structures do not allow effective decision making.

In general (46%) of the respondents suggested that the institutions have supportive organisation structures while (27.64% disagreed. According to Lyon, Lumpkin, and Dess, (2000) business units displaying highly mechanistic tendencies scored lower in overall satisfaction terms. Change is predominantly top down and gets a lot of resentment and resistance. On the other hand the more organic business units are more involved in the actual change initiatives. Employees are empowered to make changes and the flatter business unit structure encourage a more challenging environment for stimulating and delivering change. The structures in the Kenyan Public Universities are supportive of change. However they need to be decentralized if they will help in employee empowerment and increase job satisfaction.

This information is summarized in the table below

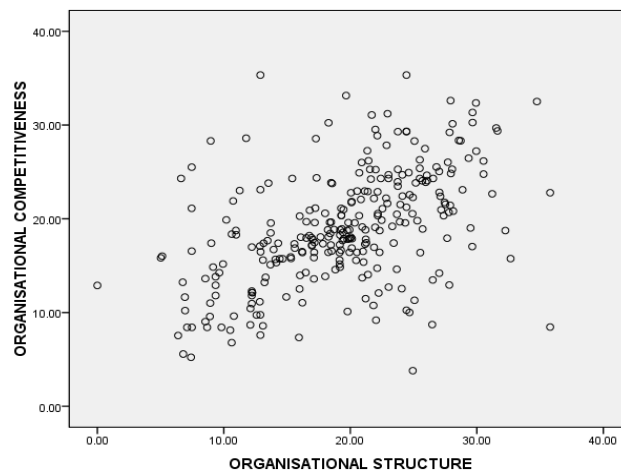
**Table 2: Organizational Structure**

**Key:** 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Total
1 The organization's structure is diplomatic in nature.	6.0	20.2	28.4	35.5	9.9	100
2 The organizations' structure is hierarchical in nature	10.6	20.6	19.9	29.8	19.1	100
3 The structure affects flow of information positively in the university	11.3	21.3	23.4	33.7	10.3	100
4 Roles of various positions are well defined	8.5	19.1	16.0	40.1	16.3	100
5 Information passed from one person to another is rarely distorted	13.1	33.7	23.4	22.7	7.1	100
6 Employee position role are well defined in the structure	8.5	18.1	17.7	37.9	17.7	100
7 The organisation structure of the university facilitates employees evaluation by the supervisors	8.9	19.5	19.9	40.4	11.3	100
8 There is a clear chain of command in the organisation	6.0	17.7	17.4	41.1	17.7	100
9 The structure has grouped employees in the best way to achieve organisational goals	7.8	23.8	18.8	38.7	11.0	100
10 Decision making in the organisation is centralised	5.0	19.1	22.0	41.1	12.8	100
11 The university's structure allows smooth running by departments towards a common goal	7.8	22.0	20.9	32.3	17.0	100
<b>Average</b>	<b>7.88</b>	<b>19.76</b>	<b>19.23</b>	<b>33.11</b>	<b>12.93</b>	<b>100</b>

**Correlation analysis of Organisational Structure and competitiveness**

The objective of the study sought to determine whether organisational structure as HRM factor influenced the competitiveness of the Universities in Kenya. From fig.1, it is clear that there is a positive linear relationship between the organisational structure and competitiveness of public Universities in Kenya



**Figure 1: Scatter plot of the relationship between organizational structure and universities' competitiveness**

The findings in table 2 show a positive correlation of 0.497 between organisational structure and competitiveness. This implies that an increase in the effectiveness of the organizational structures will lead to an increase in the Universities competitiveness.

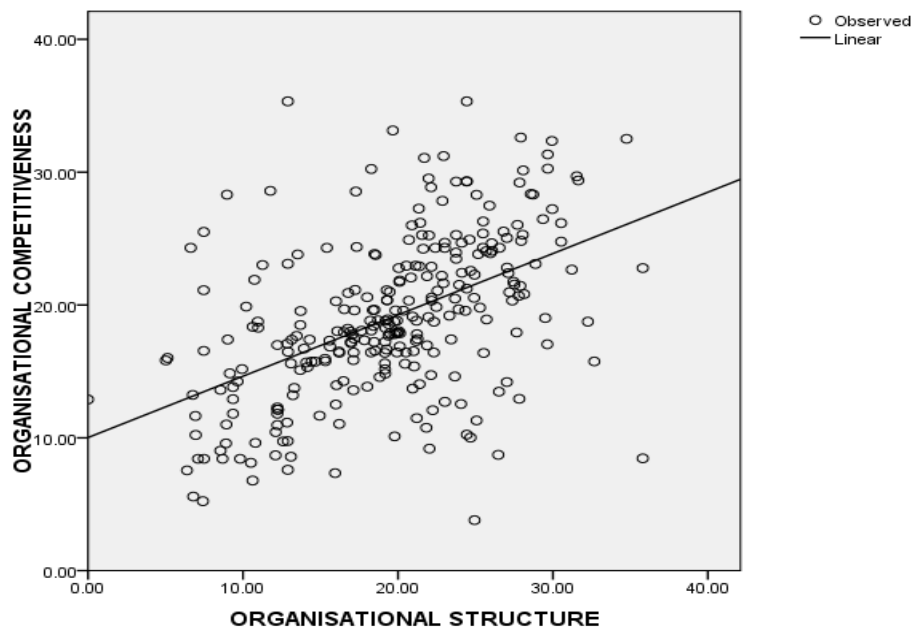
**Table 2: Correlations between organizational structure and competitiveness**

	Organisational competitiveness	Organisational structure
Organisational Competitiveness Pearson Correlation	1	.497**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	282
Organisational structure Pearson Correlation	.497**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	282

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Regression analysis of Organisational Structure on the competitiveness of the University**

A graphical illustration of the relationship between organisational structure and competitiveness was presented in shows a positive relationship. This agrees with findings by Henderson, Zhao, & Liden (2005) who asserted that employees are empowered to make changes and the flatter business unit structure encourage a more challenging environment stimulating change for improved effectiveness



**Figure 2: Relationship between organizational structure and competitiveness**

Table 4.28 provides the R and R<sup>2</sup> values. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.247 indicates how much of the variations in dependent variable, "Competitiveness", can be explained by the independent variable, "organizational structure". In this case, 24.7% can be explained by organizational structure while the remaining 75.3% can be explained by the other variables of the study. The R<sup>2</sup> in linear regression also tells how the regression line fits the data.

**Table 3: Model Summary of Organizational Structure**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.497 <sup>a</sup>	.247	.245	5.29746

a. Predictors: (Constant), Organisational Structure

ANOVA results in Table 4 indicate that the regression model predicts the outcome variable significantly well. This indicates the statistical significance of the regression model that was applied. An F statistic of 92.041 indicated that the model was significant. This was supported by a probability value of 0.000. This is less than the conventional probability of 0.0005, which is less than 0.05, and indicates that; overall, the model applied can statistically significantly predict the outcome variable.

**Table 4: ANOVA for Organizational Structure and Competitiveness**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2582.952	1	2582.952	92.041	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	7857.650	280	28.063		
	Total	10440.602	281			

Table 5 provides the information needed to predict competitiveness from Organisational Structure. Both the constant and organizational Structure contributes significantly to the model. The regression equation is presented as follows; Competitiveness = 10.021 + 0.462 (Organisational Structure)

**Table 5: Determination of Organizational Structure and competitiveness**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.021	.987		10.153	.000
	Organisational structure	.462	.048	.497	9.594	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organisational Competitiveness

## VII. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The study established a positive linear relationship between organizational structure and competitiveness. This agrees with findings by Henderson, Zhao, & Liden, (2005) who asserted that employees are empowered to make changes and the flatter business unit structure encourages a more challenging environment stimulating change for improved effectiveness

Generally, the respondents indicated that the universities had supportive organizational structures. This was supported by a positive flow of information through the structure, well defined roles in the structures, clear chain of command within the structures and grouping employees in way that helped them achieve organizational objectives.

However, respondents also noted that the institutional structures were too rigid to allow change and they were mostly centralized denying employees at lower levels the authority needed for decision making. This is expected to lower the quality of decisions made and thereby affect the competitiveness of the universities. These findings imply that the universities organizational structures contribute to their competitiveness.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The study also established that the institutions are concerned about talent management. This is achieved by creating an environment where employees can develop themselves through acquisition of skills and being recognized as the most important assets in the organization. As such the employees are bound to receive good support from the top management of the institutions.

However, the study also established that good performance is not rewarded while employees who lack competence are not helped to improve but are left unattended. The outcome of this will be low morale of such employees. Proper talent management is a good strategy to give the institutions a competitive advantage since they will have effective human resources that cannot be imitated by competitors.

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

The institutions should adopt more flat structures that will be flexible and allow employees to participate in decision making. The management should improve on talent management through rewarding good performers and assist employees learn through their mistakes other than leave them alone.

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