

**FACTORS AFFECTING THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC
PLANS IN PARASTATALS IN MALAWI:**

THE CASE OF MALAWI POSTS CORPORATION

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DISSERTATION

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UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

THE POLYTECHNIC

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by

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DECLARATION

I the undersigned hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used acknowledgements have been made.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandmother, Isabel Chikaunga (Gogo Nabanda), who stressed the importance of education in my life. She had a great vision of my future.

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I would like to extend my warm appreciation to my supervisors, course lecturers, colleagues and all those who either directly or indirectly contributed tremendous inputs towards the completion of this research work. Firstly, special thanks to my supervisors, Professor James Kamwachale Khomba and Mr. Eric Chimpesa for their relentless assistance and support during supervision and their experience and initiative which guided me throughout the whole process. Secondly, I am grateful to my course colleagues whose assistance in class discussions cannot be overlooked.

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ABSTRACT

The growing importance of successful implementation of strategic plans by public organisations cannot be underestimated. The main objective of this area of study was to assess the factors that affect successful implementation of strategic plans in parastatal organisations in Malawi. The study involved one organisation, the Malawi Posts Corporation, a parastatal involved in Postal and Financial Services. The research study adopted a descriptive survey approach. Data was collected from secondary and primary sources. Secondary data was useful for generating additional information for the study from already documented data or available reports especially from websites. Secondary data was also collected for this study. Primary data was collected from a target population of 136 senior managers. A sample of 102 staff was drawn representing 75% of the target population. This was to ensure that the sample size is large enough to represent the views of the total population targeted. This sample covered Northern, Central and Southern Regional Offices because this is where these senior managers are working. The data was analyzed by use of tables, graphs and charts. The study revealed that successful implementation requires that top management must demonstrate willingness to give energy and loyalty to the implementation process and the involvement of the middle managers who are responsible to increase commitment with involvement and integration of employees from the lower level. It is important for any organisation to have a vision and mission in place and MPC has it in place. But much as the mission and vision are in place, the study revealed that MPC is very hesitant to make some strategic decisions in fear of prospective risks. The study concludes that top level management does not always facilitate employee participation in decision making. It also concludes that for implementation of strategy to be a success, management must ensure that only suitable people are given key positions. Suitable people mean those people with prerequisite skills and understanding of the set strategic goals. The study suggests that further studies be carried out on external factors like organizational environment and type of industry to give a better aspect of these factors. It also recommends that similar studies be carried out on other parastatals within the country.

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ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

Abbreviation	Meaning
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ERP	Enterprise Resource Plan
GOM	Government of Malawi
KBV	Knowledge Based View
LGMA	Local Government Modernization Agency
MACRA	Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MPC	Malawi Posts Corporation
MPTC	Malawi Posts and Telecommunications
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
MTL	Malawi Telecommunications Limited
RBV	Resource Based View
UPU	Universal Postal Union
USO	Universal Service Obligation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

1.1 Introduction

It is of paramount importance for each and every organization, be it profit making or nonprofit Making; public or private; to have a well thought, formulated strategic plan if it is to meet its set goals and objectives (Rothaemmel, 2012). Strategic plan is a *requirement for sustained competitive advantage* and competitive advantage is what keeps great organizations ahead of their competitors. Additionally, Rothaemmel (2012) pointed out that the company which has a competitive advantage performs financially much better than other companies in the industry or better than the industry average as such be able to deliver its services to the intended recipients. Some companies may achieve it without thorough strategic plan but for the most players out there it is vital to plan strategically, i.e. analyze, create, implement and monitor, and do this continuously. It is not guaranteed that companies will ever achieve competitive advantage by conducting strategic planning but it is an essential process if the company wants to sustain it. Strategic planning facilitates collaboration. David (2009) argued that nowadays, most companies involve middle managers of functional areas into the process of formulating a strategic plan. Middle managers are the people who implement the strategies set out in a plan and if they are not involved in making the plan, then they are not so committed to support it. Thus, strategic planning is used to achieve the competitive advantage and to integrate all the functional areas of the company by facilitating the communication between the managers of all levels.

Further, according to Rothaemmel (2012), strategic management can be defined as the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives. Strategic management has three stages namely; formulation, implementation and evaluation. This paper will concentrate on the implementation stage. Strategy implementation requires a firm to establish annual objectives, devise policies, motivate employees, and allocate resources so that formulated strategies can be executed. Strategy implementation includes developing a strategy-supportive culture, creating an effective organizational structure, redirecting marketing efforts, preparing budgets, developing and utilizing information systems, and linking employee compensation to organizational performance. Strategy implementation often is

called the "action stage" of strategic management (David, 2009). Implementing strategy means mobilizing employees and managers to put formulated strategies into action. Often considered to be the most difficult stage in strategic management, strategy implementation requires personal discipline, commitment and sacrifice. Therefore, this study will dwell much on strategic plan by looking at the factors that affect its successful implementation.

Most organizations find it a very difficult task to formulate a consistent strategy for their management teams. It is even tougher when it comes to making that strategy work, implementing it throughout the organization is even more difficult (Hrebiniak, 2006). Innumerable factors can potentially affect the process by which strategic plans are turned into organizational action. Unlike strategy formulation, strategy implementation is often seen as something of a craft, rather than a science, and its research history has previously been described as fragmented and eclectic (Noble, 1999a). It is thus not surprising that, after a comprehensive strategy or single strategic decision has been formulated, significant difficulties usually arise during the subsequent implementation process.

The best-formulated strategies may fail to produce superior performance for the organization if they are not successfully implemented, as Noble (1999b) notes. Results from several surveys have confirmed this view: An *Economist* survey found that a discouraging 57 percent of firms were unsuccessful at executing strategic initiatives according to a survey of 276 senior operating executives in 2004 (Allio, 2005). According to the White Paper of Strategy Implementation of Chinese Corporations in 2006, strategy implementation has become "the most significant management challenge which all kinds of corporations face." The survey reported in that white paper indicates that 83 percent of the surveyed companies failed to implement their strategies smoothly, and only 17 percent felt that they had a consistent strategy implementation process. It is thus obvious that strategy implementation is a key challenge for today's organizations. It is important to get an understanding of these issues and their importance for successful strategy implementation.

While many people believe that formulating an innovative and unique strategy is critical and by itself is sufficient to lead a firm to success in today's business world, ensuring that such a strategy works is equally as important. Executives should pay careful attention to the implementation of

strategies to avoid common pitfalls that result in failure. A number of approaches that greatly enhance the effectiveness of strategy implementation can be employed. Indeed, good strategic management is a function of people actively considering strategy as they make day-to-day decisions in an ever-changing world.

1.2 Lessons from abroad

The public sector is charged with the responsibility of offering effective and efficient service to the public of any given economy or country. In recent times, many public sector organizations have been engaging in activities that will improve their service delivery to their clients. One such activity is the development of strategic plans and successfully implementing it.

According to Kimuyu (2013), Kenya's current development agenda is guided by Vision 2030, which is the official government long-term development strategy. In the case of Malawi, it is the Vision 2020. The Kenyan vision is anchored on three key pillars namely; Economic, Social and Political and aims to transform Kenya into a newly industrializing, middle-income country providing a high quality of life to all citizens in a clean and secure environment. Simultaneously the vision aspires to meet the millennium development goals (MDGs) for Kenyans by 2015. Public sector organizations are guided by the Vision 2030 in developing their strategic plans. However in spite of the public sector organizations having elaborated and well developed and designed strategic plans, their performance has not exponentially improved as expected (Kimuyu 2013).

1.3 Scenario in Malawi

The Government of Malawi has embarked on Public Service Reforms through which all parastatals have been advised to critically review their strategic plans and come up with strategies that are in line with Government reforms. The Government of Malawi has been implementing Public Service reforms since the dawn of independence in 1964. These reforms yielded varying results. Some of the reforms failed because of a lack of political will, shared vision, clear strategic direction, ownership of the reform process and capacity to implement the reforms, (Malawi Public Service Reforms Report, 2015). In this regard, the Public Service Reform Commission (herein referred to as the Commission) was established on 23 June 2014. The mandate of the Commission is to provide strategic leadership in the implementation of Public Service Reforms, which would result in the

provision of dynamic and high quality services to the public at all times. (Malawi Public Service Reforms Report, 2015)

For these reforms to be achieved it will be a collective effort of all parastatals as well as the Government departments to ensure that the set strategies are effectively implemented. This indicates that previously, the strategic plans were drawn but were not being effectively implemented as reflected in the poor performance of public firms and government departments.

The study sought to determine the challenges facing strategic plan implementation in parastatals. Similar study was conducted in Kenya at the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, whose strategy implementation is not only the key to the Bureau itself but also to the entire public service in the country for its not only representative of the public sector but a measure of its effectiveness. (Kimuyu, 2013).

1.4 Mandate and Duties of Malawi Posts Corporation

Malawi Posts Corporation (MPC) is a statutory corporation that was established on 1st June, 2000 by an Act of Parliament, the Communications Act No. 41 of 1998. This followed the decision by Government of Malawi (GoM) to split the Malawi Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (MPTC) into two entities, namely; Malawi Posts Corporation and Malawi Telecommunications Limited (MTL).

MPC was established with the aim of providing all reasonable facilities for the transmission of postal articles throughout the Republic of Malawi, and between Malawi and other countries, and that it should conduct its affairs according to commercial principles. As provided for in section 76 of the Communications Act of 1998, MPC has a mandate to: provide postal services and to perform other services incidental to transmission of postal articles; establish and operate post offices; and provide financial services.

MPC is regulated by Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) nationally and by the Universal Postal Union (UPU) on the international scene. MPC like any other public postal operator worldwide has a mandate known as '*universal service obligation*' (USO). This is where it is supposed to provide postal solutions to all inhabitants of Malawi. MPC is known of having the widest retail network in Malawi as it has 181 post offices and had 154 post agencies most of which

are not operational. The later were being run by the local assemblies. Out of 181 post offices, it is only 10 percent that are able to breakeven. MPC has permanent employees of 1000 plus.

1.5 Problem Statement

One of the fundamental questions in strategic management and entrepreneurship research is why some firms, in this case parastatals, fail and others do succeed. The vast majority of organizational researches have concentrated on successful enterprises. Yet, despite evidence that failure on service delivery is a more likely fate than successful provision of services by parastatals, failures remain an understudied population (Thornhill & Amit, 2003). In Malawi the unsuccessful implementation of strategic plans in most parastatals is evident by the increasing substandard service delivery to the public (Malawi Public Service Reform policy document, 2015). Most reports such as the GEMINI report, (2000), Malawi Poverty and Growth Strategy Paper (2003), and Malawi Growth and Development Strategy Paper (2006 and 2011), by Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, just indicate that the public service delivery by parastatals is not improving culminating from the unsuccessful implementation of strategic plans. However, there has been little empirical assessment of factors affecting the successful implementation of strategic plans by parastatals in Malawi. MPC has always made losses and its performance rated below standard despite having well-crafted strategic plans. The strategic plans could show how MPC can successfully perform if the plans are well implemented. Lack of knowledge as to what leads to poor performance under such unsuccessful implementation of strategic plans is what this thesis seeks to find out. As such, this research attempts to fill this vacuum by carrying out an assessment of organisational structure, cultural, individual and managerial factors amongst the other factors affecting the successful implementation of strategic plans.

1.6 Research Objectives

The main objective of the study was to assess the factors that affect successful implementation of strategic plans in MPC in Malawi. Specifically, the study pursued the following objectives:

1.6.1 To assess the effects of top management commitment on strategy implementation in MPC

1.6.2 To establish the effects of coordination of activities on strategy implementation in MPC

1.6.3 To explore the effects of organisational culture on strategy implementation in MPC

1.7 Research Questions

The main question was what factors majorly affect the successful implementation of strategic plan in the parastatals? To achieve the objectives outlined above, the study was guided by the following questions:

- 1.7.1 To what extent does top management commitment affect strategy implementation in MPC?
- 1.7.2 How does coordination of activities affect strategy implementation in MPC?
- 1.7.3 To what extent does organisational culture affect strategy implementation in MPC?

1.8 Significance of the study

The topic for study was chosen after realizing that strategy implementation has attracted less attention in strategic and organizational research than strategy formulation or strategic planning. Alexander (2011) suggests several reasons for this, strategy implementation is less glamorous than strategy formulation, people overlook it because of a belief that anyone can do it, people are not exactly sure what it includes and where it begins and ends. Furthermore, there are only a limited number of conceptual models of strategy implementation. Organizations seem to have difficulties in implementing their strategies however, researchers have revealed a number of problems in strategy implementation which include weak management roles in implementation, a lack of communication, lacking a commitment to the strategy, unawareness or misunderstanding of the strategy, unaligned organizational systems and resources, poor coordination and sharing of responsibilities, inadequate capabilities, competing activities, and uncontrollable environmental factors (Beer & Eisenstat,2000).

Strategy which is a fundamental management tool in any organization is a multidimensional concept that various authors have defined in different ways. It is the match between an organization's resources and skills and the environmental opportunities as well as the risks it faces and the purposes it wishes to accomplish. Organizations seem to have difficulties in implementing their strategies. The study is important not only to MPC managers but also other managers in other parastatals and even private firms. It would help them understand the strategy implementation policies and help different firms achieve success better than others. The information on this study can be used to sensitize the government and other stakeholders of MPC on the challenges facing parastatals in the implementation of their strategic plans and thus put in place policies that will guide firms within or without their industries in implementing their strategies to ensure quality

services and improved performance in government firms in Malawi. The study will be a source of reference material for future researchers on other related topics and it will also help other academicians who undertake the same topic in their studies.

1.9 Thesis Outline

This thesis comprises five chapters, references and appendices. In chapter one, the topic of the thesis is introduced; ‘assessment of factors affecting the successful implementation of the strategic plans in most parastatals in Malawi – the case of Malawi Posts Corporation. Further to that, the background to the factors affecting the successful implementation of strategic plans and the mandate of MPC has also been discussed. Finally, the chapter outlines the problem statement, the research objectives, research questions and significance of the study.

In chapter two, the author highlights and presents various views of different authors on the factors affecting successful implementation of strategic plan in general. The literature shows that there are a number of factors affect the successful implementation of the strategic plans in various organizations and parastatals world over and Malawi is not an exception. Relevant literature relating to the thesis topic has been reviewed.

Chapter three of the thesis describes the methodology that was used when carrying out this study. It outlines a discussion of research design, approach and philosophy; and the research methods used in data collection, analysis and interpretation. Further to that, the research limitations and the study ethics were outlined.

In chapter four the study results are presented and discussed. Factors that affect strategy implementation in MPC were analysed and through the analysis it was found that a top management that links well with its middle managers and have an absolute command of the activities being carried out in the process of implementing a strategy will succeed.

Chapter five provides the conclusion and recommendations from the study findings. The chapter has concluded that indeed there are factors that are negatively affecting the successful

implementation of strategic plans in MPC as a parastatal. From these conclusions, the author derived the recommendations which have been outlined.

Finally, the thesis has sections on references and the appendices that outline all the citations and the appendices applied in this study.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This dissertation focuses on the assessment of factors affecting the successful implementation of strategic plan in most parastatals in Malawi. Background to the organisational, cultural, individual and managerial factors affecting the successful implementation of strategic plan in parastatals have been highlighted. The chapter has also highlighted the mandate and duties of the Malawi Posts Corporation one of the parastatals in Malawi and indeed the one that this study zeros in. The chapter further outlines the problem statement which is looking at why most of the parastatals fail to perform with the well crafted strategic plan at hand. This chapter is considering the factors to be analysed which are; management commitment' coordination of activities and organisational culture among many other factors that may be analysed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, a review of literature is presented which covers research work based on Strategic Plan Implementation and the Strategic Plan Implementation Matrix. Literature has been reviewed on strategic plan implementation and the strategic plan implementation matrix as well as the background and definition of strategic plan, its perspectives, countries in which it has been tested, factors that affect implementation and its impact on firm's performance. The chapter reviews the existing literature, information and publication on the topic related to the research problem by accredited scholars and researchers. This section will examine what various scholars and authors have said about the factors affecting strategy implementation.

2.1 Background of Strategic Plan

A strategic plan is a document that describes a program's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and outlines strategies and directions for the five years of the cooperative agreement. It is a program planning tool that provides a blueprint to strengthen program activities, address areas for improvement, and move the program forward to new accomplishments. Strategic management can be defined as the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives. As this definition implies, strategic management focuses on integrating management, marketing, finance/accounting, production/operations, research and development, and information systems to achieve organizational success. The term strategic management in this text is used synonymously with the term strategic planning. The latter term is more often used in the business world, whereas the former is often used in academia. Sometimes the term strategic management is used to refer to strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, with strategic planning referring only to strategy formulation. The purpose of strategic management is to exploit and create new and different opportunities for tomorrow; Long-range planning, in contrast, tries to optimize for tomorrow the trends of today.

Strategic management has three stages namely; formulation, implementation and evaluation. This paper will concentrate on the implementation stage. Strategy implementation requires a firm to establish annual objectives, devise policies, motivate employees, and allocate resources so that

formulated strategies can be executed. Strategy implementation includes developing a strategy-supportive culture, creating an effective organizational structure, redirecting marketing efforts, preparing budgets, developing and utilizing information systems, and linking employee compensation to organizational performance. Strategy implementation often is called the "action stage" of strategic management. Implementing strategy means mobilizing employees and managers to put formulated strategies into action. Often considered to be the most difficult stage in strategic management, strategy implementation requires personal discipline, commitment and sacrifice. Therefore, this study will dwell much on strategic plan by looking at the factors that affect its successful implementation.

Historically, numerous researchers in strategic management bestowed great significance to the strategic formulation process and considered strategy implementation as a mere byproduct or invariable consequence of planning (Wind & Robertson, 2003). Fortunately, insights in this area have been made recently which temper our knowledge of developing strategy with the reality of executing that which is crafted (Olson, Slater, Cooper & Reddy, 2005). Strategy implementation is both a multifaceted and complex organizational process, it is only by taking a broad view that a wide span of potentially valuable insights is generated. The fatal problem with strategy implementation is the de facto success rate of intended strategies. In research studies, it is as low as 10% (Judson, 2001). Despite this abysmal record, strategy implementation does not seem to be a popular topic at all. In fact, some managers mistake implementation as a strategic afterthought and a pure top-down approach. Instead, management spends most of its attention on strategy formulation. Research emphasizing strategy implementation is classified by Bourgeois and Brodwin (2004) as part of a first wave of studies proposing structural views as important facilitators for strategy implementation success. Beyond the preoccupation of many authors with firm structure, a second wave of investigations advocated interpersonal processes and issues as crucial to any marketing strategy implementation effort (Noble & Mokwa, 2009). Conflicting empirical results founded upon contrasting theoretical premises indicate that strategy implementation is a complex phenomenon. In response, generalizations have been advanced in the form of encouraging early involvement in the strategy process by firm members (Hambrick & Cannella, 2009) fluid processes for adaptation and adjustment (Drazin & Howard, 2004) and, leadership style and structure (Bourgeois & Brodwin, 2004).

2.1.1 Strategy Implementation Obstacles

Unfortunately, most managers know more about developing strategy than they know about executing it. Formulating strategy is difficult. Making strategy work, executing or implementing throughout the organization, is even more difficult. “Without effective implementation, no business strategy can succeed.” (Hrebiniak, 2006, p. 12). The strategy implementation function consists in seeing what it will take to make the strategy work and to reach the targeted performance. It should be noted that in the strategic management literature there are more contributions on strategy making than strategy execution. In this chapter it will be discussed which are the potential implementation obstacles. Authors often in their research repeated factors or call them with different names but intend very similar thing. For example, Alexander (1985) mentioned 15 problems, Miller (1997) mentioned 10 critical factors, Al- Ghamdi (1998) 10 problems, Beer and Eisenstat (2000) identified six killers of strategy implementation, Kalali, Avari Pourezzat and Dastjerdi., (2011) mentioned 16 factors in four categories, while other authors have suggested more general categories. For example, some authors mention organizational structure as a critical factor while others mention communication, coordination, motivational and reward system separately.

2.2 Strategic Plan Implementation Perspectives

2.2.1 Resource-Based View Theory

The resource-based view (RBV) of Wernerfelt (1984) suggests that competitiveness can be achieved by innovatively delivering superior value to customers. The extant literature focuses on the strategic identification and use of resources by a firm for developing a sustained competitive advantage (Borg & Gall, 2009). International business theorists also explain the success and failures of firms across boundaries by considering the competitiveness of their subsidiaries or local alliances in emerging markets (Ben-Dak, 1999). Local knowledge provided by a subsidiary or local alliance becomes an important resource for conceptualizing value as per the local requirements (Gupta & Govindarajan 2011). According to Resource Based Theory resources are inputs into a firm's production process and can be classified into three categories as; physical capital, human capital and organizational capital (Currie, 2009). A capability is a capacity for a set of resources to perform a stretch task of an activity. Each organization is a collection of unique resources and capabilities that provides the basis for its strategy and the primary source of its returns. In the 21st-century hyper-competitive landscape, a firm is a collection of evolving capabilities that is managed dynamically in pursuit of above-average returns. Thus, differences in firm's performances across

time are driven primarily by their unique resources and capabilities rather than by an industry's structural characteristics (Currie, 2009). This theory tries to explain the effects of management commitment on strategy implementation.

2.2.2 Knowledge-Based View Theory

The KBV of the firm is an extension of the RBV. The main tenet of the approach is that a firm is an institution for generating and applying various types of knowledge (Grant, 2002). While incorporating much of the content of the RBV, the KBV pays more attention to the process or path by which specific firm capabilities evolve and develop over time. This kind of development of knowledge through learning could be seen as a key element in achieving competitive advantage and superior performance (Moorman & Miner, 2008). Although the emphasis on knowledge and capabilities has strengthened during the last decade it seems that empirical research has still not reached maturity, and there are no universally accepted guidelines for studying capabilities (Moorman & Miner, 2008). It could be concluded from a review of the extant literature that there are many ways of defining knowledge and capabilities. Knowledge in particular is an ambiguous phenomenon, but the same applies to capabilities, regardless of the many efforts to reframe and simplify the two concepts (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). For the purposes of this paper, the following working definitions are sufficient. First, knowledge could be seen as a distinctive production factor that has a huge impact on productivity, innovation, and product development (Webster, 2002). It is also important to note that organizational capabilities such as marketing and technical capabilities are not the only things that matter, as often it is the nature of the knowledge that has an effect on the sustainability of the competitive advantage, and accordingly of the potential growth strategies (Galpin, 2008). The theory of knowledge based view tries to explain the effects of coordination of activities on strategy implementation.

2.2.3 Theory of Strategic Balancing

Strategic balancing is based on the principle that the strategy of a company is partly equivalent to the strategy of an individual. Indeed, the performance of companies is influenced by the actors' behavior, including the system of leaders' values (Casley & Krishna 2007). An alliance wavers between multiple antagonistic poles that represent cooperation and competition. This gives room to various configurations of alliances, which disappear only if the alliance swings towards a majority of poles of confrontation. The strategic balancing gathers three models, namely the relational, symbiotic and deployment models. Competition proves to be part of the relational model

and the model of deployment. It can be subject to alternation between the two antagonistic strategies, the one being predominantly cooperative as described by the relational model and the other being predominantly competing as characterized by the model of deployment. The company can then take turns at adopting the two strategies in order to keep their alliance balanced. Owing to the fact that specific developments in the business environment need to be closely monitored, it is imperative that senior corporate intelligence professionals think in terms of integrating competitive intelligence work with marketing intelligence work. Corporate intelligence staffs, therefore, need to work closely with marketing staff in order that intelligence activity occurs within a strategic marketing context. The focus of attention may remain the analysis and interpretation of potential risk and counterintelligence that protects blind spots, but intelligence is evolving and can be reinterpreted from a theory building perspective and a problem-solving perspective. Initiatives in corporate intelligence will result in intelligent staff being at the center of the change process within the organization. Competitive intelligence programmes are mainly located in one of three functions within an organization: marketing, planning and research and development (Corboy & Corrbui, 2009). Hammer and Champy's (1993) approach is useful because it allows corporate intelligence staff to identify strategic issues and as a result senior management can ensure that actionable intelligence results. Individual capabilities will be of great importance in the process of strategy implementation, thus individual as regarded as resource in the process of strategy implementation; this theory tries to explain the effects of individual responsibility on strategy implementation.

2.2.4 Organization Theory

Organization theory can seem somewhat distant from the territory of personnel specialists, especially when their work is represented in terms of administering or developing systems of recruitment, training, appraisal, among others. Organization theory and organizing is framed by the meaning attributed to the particular concepts such as structure, role, process which are invoked to describe and analyses what they purport to represent (Ouchi, 2001). This observation is important because it draws our attention to the otherwise easily overlooked way in which our experience of the world is communicated through the (selective) medium of the particular concepts that we use. In organization theory (and other domains of the social sciences), there has been a strong tendency, that lingers on today, to think and act as if established concepts, such as structure, role, provide us with unmediated access to the world (Morgan, 2009).

However, a moment's reflection serves to remind us of how communicated knowledge about the world relies on the "language game" through which such knowledge is constituted, articulated and realized. The forgetting of this knowledge process has perhaps been most complete among theorists who suppose that some version of systems theory presents a credible means of modeling and mapping the world. In contemporary organization analysis, the shift from old objectivist to new reflexive ways of thinking about organization was most clearly signaled and promoted by Silverman (2004). Organization theory tries to explain the effects of organizational culture on strategy implementation.

2.2.5 Empirical Review of Strategic Plan Implementation

McAdam, Walker and Hazlett (2011) used an interpretive multiple case approach to investigate the links and relationships between strategy and operations in local government improvement efforts under the umbrella of the Local Government Modernization Agenda (LGMA) in England. They explored the implementation of structured change methods and performance measurement and management initiatives that have a linked strategic and operational focus through to stakeholder impact. They found that the structured integration of strategic level policy-setting and its associated operational level activity in local authorities is often obscure and lacking in cohesiveness. McAdam et al. (2011) found that performance measurement and management at the strategic level is, for the most part, driven by emerging legislation and the need for compliance rather than improving service effectiveness. According to McAdam, et al. (2011), this led to discontinuity, delays in implementing policy, and criticism of performance measures from service delivery staff. McAdam et al. (2011) used a case study of local authority and concentrated on aspects of integration of strategy in operations. This study set out to have a holistic approach to the effect of strategy implementation on organizational performance rather than focusing on fragmented elements of the whole such as integration and operations.

Sterling (2003) in his paper used analytical approach to examine seven key reasons for strategy failure. They include unanticipated market changes, effective competitor responses to strategy, application of insufficient resources, failures of buy-in, understanding, communication, timeliness and distinctiveness, lack of focus, and bad strategy. Sterling (2003) argues that the real reasons why strategies fail are varied and the causes can often be anticipated and the pitfalls avoided. However, Sterling (2003) looks at strategy implementation with the notion of a business organization only and market in mind. Sterling (2003) generalizes the reasons for strategy failure

as well as how to avoid the pitfalls. However, this might not be the case in reality. Although some of the reasons he gives for strategy failure may apply in the public sector, much of the public sector's operating environment and goals have not been captured in his study. This study looked at strategy implementation in a specific organization in public sector. This explored specific issues that are only found in this sector that otherwise could not have been highlighted.

Peng and Litteljohn (2001) focused on organizational communication within multi-unit organizations in order to understand better the strategy implementation process from a communication perspective. They investigated hotel chains in the United Kingdom with diversified business portfolios that were in the process of implementing a strategic initiative. They found that effective communication is a primary requirement of effective implementation but it does not guarantee the effectiveness of the implementation.

The study by Peng and Litteljohn (2001) took place in the United Kingdom and involved hotels in the private sector. United Kingdom is a developed country with a different operating environment from Kenya. This study sought to investigate the situation in a developing country context like Kenya focusing on the public sector. Implementation is widely recognized as one of the greatest points of weakness for all strategy initiatives. According to Meldrum and Atkinson (2003), there is a need to focus on the fundamental managerial attributes which they refer as meta-abilities. Meldrum and Atkinson (2003) noted that many organizations have tried to overcome this problem through building the management competencies of their managers. They also noted that what tends to be absent from the development programmes designed to do this is attention to any higher order or enabling competencies. They used a case study approach to illustrate the sort of pitfalls involved and some implications for using management development in this way. They argue that without greater attention to these more fundamental managerial attributes, most management development programmes will lose their strategic effect. Meldrum and Atkinson (2003) observed that using management development to improve strategy implementation demands a more sophisticated approach than tends to be used currently. They recommended that organizations should break out of the vicious circle of unsophisticated usage and to challenge their current practices in order to succeed in strategy implementation. Meldrum and Atkinson (2003) focused on the managerial attributes with the assumption that all the other factors affecting strategy implementation can be streamlined by managerial abilities. However, in reality, this might not be the case. There is a

myriad of factors that influence strategy implementation that include individual and organizational factors. Equally, the study by Meldrum and Atkinson (2003) has not adequately linked fundamental managerial attributes to organization performance. The current study sought to solve this problem by focusing on effects of strategy implementation and organizational performance with an aim of developing an implementation framework. Again, Okumus (2009) conducted a critical review of previous research and identified ten implementation variables. These variables were used to construct a conceptual framework. Okumus (2009) investigated the implementation process of a strategic decision in two international hotel groups via in-depth, semi-structured interviews, observations and documentation analysis. Okumus (2009) found initial conceptual framework to be useful as it grouped key variables together and illustrated their roles when implementing strategic decisions. However, three new variables emerged from Okumus (2009) findings. The three variables were multiple project implementation, organizational learning and working with external organizations. Okumus (2009) proposed a revised framework to include these variables. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of contextual variables in implementation and dispelled the strategic management notion of “fit”. The study by Okumus (2009) is in line with this study in regard to emphasizing contextual variables. However, Okumus’ (2009) study concentrates on business organizations and therefore ignore the public sector. Okumus (2009) also assumes that a proper implementation framework will result to better organizational performance. This study focused on establishing the effect of strategy implementation on organizational performance in the public sector context. Sakyi and Bawole (2009) did a study on challenges in implementing code of conduct within the public sector in Anglophone West African countries. They used perspectives from public managers to report on barriers to the implementation of code of conduct in the public sector. They adopted a qualitative research strategy using focused group interviews for 35 serving senior, middle and junior level managers drawn from Ghana (8), Nigeria (9), Gambia (7), Liberia (6) and Sierra Leone (5). Sakyi and Bawole (2009) found that all the countries were making frantic efforts at improving the ethical conduct of public sector managers through the introduction of various reforms, measures including code of conduct as key components. However, the practical application of the code of conduct in public administration was found to be limited. The reasons given for this included; deficiencies in code implementation, lack of exemplary leadership, ineffective reward and punishment system and unsupportive public service organizational culture. Sakyi and Bawole (2009) recommended remedial actions as establishing a strong leadership, rigorous application of a reward and punishment system and supporting organizational culture.

Although the study by Sakyi and Bawole (2009) focused on the public sector, it only concentrated on barriers to implementation without linking it to performance of public organizations. This study not only looked at the challenges of strategy implementation but also moved further to establish their effect on organizational performance. Chiou (2011), drawing from the governance and relationship perspectives, did an empirical analysis on the reformation of organizations. He sought to establish the factors that will enhance the government's administrative efficiency and effectiveness and how to improve organizational performance in Taiwan. Chiou found that some factors that enhance government's administrative efficiency include organizational structure, management mechanism, resources and ability as well as partnerships. Chiou also found that some factors that will enhance organization performance include compatibility, complementarily, collaboration, knowledge sharing, information technology and effective governance. Chiou (2011) does not however explain the extent to which each of the factors affects organizational performance.

Equally, this study was conducted in Taiwan which is a different context from Kenya. A study focusing on the effect of strategy implementation on organizational performance in Kenya would therefore be more meaningful given variations in the environment of governance between the two nations. Sorooshian, Norzima, Yusof and Rosna (2010) examined the structural relationships between strategy implementation and performance within the small and medium manufacturing firms in Malaysia. They identified three fundamental factors in strategy implementation namely the structure, leadership style and resources. Sorooshian et al. (2010) then came up with a structural equation model on the relationship among drivers of strategy implementation and organization performance and also sensitivity analysis on the drivers. The main focus of this study was in private sector and small as well as medium manufacturing firms in particular. The results of the study cannot therefore be generalized to cover all the other sectors. Since the strategy implementation is believed to be a dynamic activity within the strategic management process, it is imperative that its effect on organizational performance should be measured across all sectors and at different levels.

2.3 Factors Affecting Successful Implementation of the Strategic Plan

The body of knowledge in this area is rich with surveys and industry-based studies. Factors that affect strategy implementation can be categorized as leadership style, information availability and accuracy, uncertainty, organizational structure, organizational culture, human resources, and technology. Although most authors agree that these factors affect strategy implementation, each

factor's impact is at a different level and carries a different force. Lorange (1998) stated that human resources are becoming the key focus of strategy implementation and reiterated that people, not financial resources, are the key strategic resources in strategy implementation. In a study involving 172 Slovenian companies, Cater and Pucko (2010) demonstrated that managers mostly rely on planning and organizing activities when implementing strategies, while the biggest obstacle to strategy implementation and execution is poor leadership. Their results showed that adapting the organizational structure to serve the execution of strategy has a positive influence on performance. Fulmer (1990) mentioned that human resources management plays an important role in the effective implementation of strategic plans. It is important for both organization departments and employees to be enthusiastic about the strategy implementation. Getting people involved and having a motivating reward system will have a positive influence on the implementation of strategy. In addition, technological advancement in terms of speedy processes and procedures, as well as design, will also make a positive contribution to the successful implementation of strategies.

2.4 The Role of Leadership, Coordination of Activities and Organisational Culture in Strategic Implementation

According to Cater and Pucko (2010), while a well-formulated strategy, a strong and effective pool of skills, and human capital are extremely important resources for strategy success, poor leadership is one of the main obstacles in successful strategy implementation. Lorange (1998) argued that the chief executive officer (CEO) and top management must emphasize the various interfaces within the organization. One key challenge in successful strategy implementation is ensuring employees' buy-in and directing their capabilities and business understanding toward the new strategy. Therefore, the need for effective leadership outweighs any other factor. Beer and Eisenstat (2000) addressed this issue from a different perspective; they suggested that in the absence of effective leadership, conflicting priorities will result in poor coordination because employees will suspect that top management prefers to avoid potentially threatening and embarrassing circumstances.

Another aspect of leadership involves enhancing communication within the organization. According to Beer and Eisenstat (2000), blocked vertical communication has a particularly pernicious effect on a business's ability to implement and refine its strategy. Similarly, Janis and Paul (2005) studied the link between a company's corporate communication function and its implementation of strategy and found that CEOs focus on branding and reputation and prioritize internal communication.

Coordination of activities, streamlining of processes, aligning the organizational structure, and keeping employees motivated and committed to strategy implementation are key responsibilities of the leadership. Brauer and Schmidt (2008) identified the role of the board, which is to ensure consistency among resource allocation, processes, and the firm's intended strategy. Beer and Eisenstat (2000) referred to poor coordination across functions and inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development as killers of strategy implementation. Zaribaf and Bayrami (2010) categorized the leadership's importance into three key roles: managing the strategic process, managing relationships, and managing manager training. Similarly, Ansari's (1986) study on just-in-time purchasing concluded that the commitment and leadership of top-level management is essential in strategy implementation.

Researchers have also examined the influence of hierarchical leadership in implementing strategies. O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, Lapiz, Self, and William's (2010) study concluded that it was only when leaders' effectiveness at different levels (hierarchies) was considered in the aggregate that significant performance improvement occurred while implementing strategies. Implementation incorporates a number of aspects, some of which can be changed directly and some of which can only be changed indirectly. The latter aspects are more difficult for strategic leadership to control and change. While studying how implementation of competitive strategies affects business units' performance, Menguc, Auh, and Shih (2007) argued that managers' use of transformational leadership skills results in the best competitive strategies, including innovation differentiation, marketing differentiation, and low cost of the product. The leadership style in a given organization influences how the chosen strategies will be implemented. Organizational structure, delegation of responsibilities, freedom of managers to make decisions, and the incentives and rewards systems will all be influenced by the leadership style in a particular organization. The most important point to note here is that all of the above parameters are essential in the successful implementation of strategies in any given organization.

Further, researchers have also studied the influence of top management commitment to strategy implementation. One researcher says top management commitment to strategy implementation through availing of resources, fund for the process and providing the right leadership will enhance strategy implementation in the organization (Madegwa, 2014). Madegwa (2014) further says

increase in commitment of top management will aid in strategy implementation. Coordination of activities during strategy implementation enhances the process of strategy implementation in an organization. Increased coordination of activities during the strategy implementation process increases the speed of strategy implementation. Individual responsibilities during strategy implementation process greatly affect the strategy implementation process. Assigning each individual his /her own responsibilities in the strategy implementation process enhance the process of strategy implementation. Organization culture greatly influence strategy implementation, the culture of resistance to change in an organization should be properly

2.5 Research Gap

Crafting and formulating a strategy represents just but the easy part, implementing it does pose tremendous challenges. Implementation of strategy implies at times changing the way things are done and may evoke sensitivities as new changes brought about by strategy implementation disrupt the status quo (Madegwa, 2014). The apathy to strategy implementation can be ascribed to several reasons, among them: greater likelihood of failures in implementing strategies; higher complexity in the process of strategy implementation; strategy implementation being considered to be less glamorous than formulation; and practical difficulties in research involving middle-level managers (Alexander, 1985). Strikingly, organizations fail to implement about 70 per cent of their new strategies, (Miller, 2002). Another recent study is a bit less alarming; it says 40 per cent of the value anticipated in strategic plan is never realized. Evidence keeps piling of how barriers to strategy implementation make it so difficult for organizations to achieve sustained success. Bridging the gap between strategy formulation and implementation has since long been experienced as challenging. Several studies have been done on the strategies that the organizations have employed over time (Aaltonen & Ikåvalko, 2002).

The researcher opted for this study after realizing that Strategy implementation has attracted less attention in strategic and organizational research than strategy formulation or strategic planning. Alexander (2011) suggests several reasons for this, strategy implementation is less glamorous than strategy formulation, people overlook it because of a belief that anyone can do it, people are not exactly sure what it includes and where it begins and ends. Furthermore, there are only a limited number of conceptual models of strategy implementation. Organizations seem to have difficulties in implementing their strategies however, researchers have revealed a number of problems in strategy implementation which include weak management roles in implementation, a lack of

communication, lacking a commitment to the strategy, unawareness or misunderstanding of the strategy, unaligned organizational systems and resources, poor coordination and sharing of responsibilities, inadequate capabilities, competing activities, and uncontrollable environmental factors (Beer and Eisenstat,2000).

However, no known study has been done to investigate factors affecting strategy implementation in Malawi Posts Corporation as a parastatal and all parastatals in general.

2.6 The Role of Culture in Strategy Implementation

Bushardt, Glascoff, and Doty (2011) studied the relationship between organizational culture and organizational reward structure and found that they are positively correlated. Ahmadi, Salamzadeh, Daraei, and Akbari (2012) studied the impact of organizational culture while implementing strategies in Iranian banks and concluded that a meaningful relationship exists between organizational culture and strategy implementation. Results of their study showed that all types of organizational cultures have significant relationships with the implementation process, but the extent of the culture's influence varies from the most effective (clan culture) to the least effective (hierarchy culture).

In 1996, Alpander and Lee investigated how the organizational development program and its application influence a company to change its culture, structure, and operating procedures and concluded that a flexible structure and adaptable employees who are willing to initiate process and procedure changes are necessary to produce high-quality products or services at the lowest possible cost. In 2006, Ke and Wei investigated the relationship between enterprise resource planning (ERP) implementation and organizational culture and found that the success of ERP implementation is positively related to organizational culture along the dimensions of learning and development, participative decision making, power sharing, support and collaboration, and tolerance for risk and conflicts, which all form part of an organization's cultural environment. In a study of work-life strategies in the Australian construction industry, Lingard, Francis, and Turner (2012) found the need for effective communication methods about work-life intervention and strategies within the organization during strategy implementation.

Hrebiniak (2006) conducted a study on obstacles to effective strategy implementation and found that poor or inadequate information sharing, unclear responsibility and accountability, and working against the organizational power structure – all part of organizational structure – results in failed implementation processes. Likewise, Lorange (1998) investigated the importance of human resources in implementing strategies in organizations and found that if a strategy implementation needs to succeed, then top management must be heavily involved in monitoring and reviewing the progress of each strategic program created by the company. In a similar study, Carlopio and Harvey (2012) focused on social-psychological principles and their influence in successful strategy implementation and found that if an organization's structure and culture are not aligned with a proposed strategy and the new behaviors required, the strategy implementation process will certainly be defeated. In a study involving Latin American firms, Brenes and Mena (2008) concluded that organizational culture supportive of principles and values in the new strategy resulted in successful strategy implementation in the sampled firms. They also revealed that 86 percent of the most successful companies see culture aligned to strategy as highly significant, against only 55percent of less successful companies.

2.7 The Role of Organisational Structure in Strategy Implementation

Feurer and Chaharbaghi's (1995) article investigated the strategic implementation process at leading computer giant Hewlett-Packard and proposed that support structures in the form of formal organizational structures are necessary for employees to act readily on the knowledge developed to craft and implement strategy. The organizational structure provides a visual explanation of two main things: the decision-making process and resource allocation.

In a strategy structure study, Chandler (1962) suggested that organizational structure has been influenced by the organization's strategies (structure follows strategy). Concurring with Chandler's (1962) study, Zaribaf and Bayrami (2010) revealed that strategy is formulated by top management exclusively and middle-level managers only implement the strategy unless a wide range of changes is required before implementation (structure alignment with strategy). In contrast, Lorange (1998) presented a concern with business restructuring and proposed that it has to be outweighed by the anticipated gains of the new strategy. He said that too often the restructuring / right-sizing efforts lead to the unintentional discarding of know-how that could have been used for future growth in another context. Many studies have addressed the link between organizational strategy and structure by pointing out that one of the challenges in strategy implementation is weak coordination

of activities. Similarly, Miller, Wilson, and Hickson (2004) proposed turning poor coordination into teamwork by realigning roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities with strategy. In contrast, Brache (1992) proposed that from an implementation perspective, it is more valuable for an organization to apply cross-functional processes to enforce strategy implementation than to change the organizational structure. Bhimani and Langfield-Smith (2007) focused their study on how organizational structure influences strategy implementation and found the process of strategy implementation to be structured and formal. They also concluded that during the strategy development process greater emphasis is placed on financial information, but during the implementation phase both financial and non-financial information are emphasized. In an exploratory study involving corporate communication and strategy implementation, Forman and Argenti (2005) found that the internal communication within a company has an overarching hand not only in making strategy, but also in successfully implementing strategy.

Funk (1993) explored the process of product development and implementation strategies in large Japanese and American companies and concluded that Japanese firms, in contrast to American firms, implement strategies using a combination of organic and mechanistic structures. Similarly, Markiewicz's (2011) study also reflected the importance of processes and structures in the successful implementation of strategies and proposed that creativity, innovation, and perception of an organization as processes are very important in implementing strategies.

In addition to the research described above, Matanda and Ewing (2012) studied multinational personal healthcare company Kimberly-Clark's implementation strategies and found that brand planning processes, global branding and marketing capabilities, and processes contributed to the company's success. In line with the above studies, Slater, Olson, and Hult (2010) investigated six types of generic strategies and their implementation and concluded that the most influential perspective needed for business success requires a fit between strategy and organizational architecture. Organizational structure and design are important as they entail decisions related to resource allocation for various units and activities within the business ecosystem (Brenes, Mena & Molina, 2008).

2.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter highlighted and presented various views of different authors on the factors affecting successful implementation of strategic plan in general. The literature shows that there are a number

of factors affect the successful implementation of the strategic plans in various organizations and parastatals world over and Malawi is not an exception.

The focus of this study is on the factors relating to the unsuccessful implementation of strategic plans as such the literature reviewed has shown that most managers know more about developing strategy than they know about executing it. Formulating a strategy is difficult and making the strategy work, executing or implementing throughout the organization, is even more difficult. Without effective implementation, no business strategy can succeed (Hrebiniak, 2006,). Implementation is widely recognized as one of the greatest points of weakness for all strategy initiatives. Therefore, according to the reviewed literature there is need to focus on the fundamental managerial attributes that have a bearing on the successful implementation of the strategic plans and it has further been argued that without greater attention to these more fundamental managerial attributes, most management development programmes will lose their strategic effect.

In a nut shell, the literature has shown that there is a myriad of factors that influence strategy implementation that include individual and organizational factors.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that was used when carrying out this study. It outlines a discussion of research design, approach and philosophy; and the research methods used in data collection, analysis and interpretation. The research methods included sampling, questionnaire design and administration. The chapter also outlines the limitations to data collection and the ethical issues. The choice of the methodology was very important because it determined the reliability and validity of the findings.

3.1 Research Philosophy

A **research philosophy** is a belief about the way in which data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analysed and used. The term epistemology (what is known to be true) as opposed to doxology (what is believed to be true) encompasses the various **philosophies** of **research** approach.

Research philosophy, refers to the development of knowledge adopted by the researchers in their research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). In other words, it is the theory that used to direct the researcher for conducting the procedure of research design, research strategy, questionnaire design and sampling (Malhotra, 2009). It is very important to have a clear understanding of the research philosophy so that we could examine the assumptions about the way we view the world, which are contained in the research philosophy we choose, knowing that whether they are appropriate or not (Saunders et al. 2009). According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), three major ways of thinking about research philosophy are examined: ontology, epistemology and axiology. Each of them carries significant differences which will have an impact on the way we consider the research procedures. Ontology, “is concerned with nature of reality”, while epistemology “concerns what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study and axiology “studies judgements about value” (Saunders et al. 2009, p110, p112, p116). This study is intent on creating some “facts” from objective evaluations which are made by the subjects. Therefore, epistemology will be chosen for this study as the way of thinking about the research philosophy. More specifically, epistemology also contains three philosophical positions: positivism, realism and interpretivism (Saunders et al. 2009). Positivism stance usually supports investigating or studying an observable social reality and the final production could be “law-like generalisations

similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists” (Remenyi et al. cited in Saunders et al. 2009, p113). It is effective to generate a research strategy to collect the credible data which comes from observable reality therefore contributing to developing hypotheses (Saunders et al. 2009). In this study, we aim at exploring the credible and measurable results from individuals in order to understand the influence of surprise on viral marketing via social media in perspectives of message characteristics. Thus, the philosophy of positivism will be adopted in this study for collecting credible data from the subjects to produce some “law-like generalisations”.

Axiology- researchers’ view of the role of values in research

The research was undertaken in a value-free way, and the researcher was independent of the data and maintains an objective stance.

3.2 Research Approach

The study adopted an inductive approach because it wanted to assess in general terms the effects of organisational, cultural and management factors on the successful implementation of strategic plan. Both qualitative and quantitative data were sourced in order to effectively assess the factors that affect the successful implementation of strategic plans by a parastatal in Malawi, thus, achieve the study objective. According to Saunders, et al., (ibid), in small sample subjects, an inductive approach is appropriate. As shown in the preceding chapter, the study on the factors affecting the successful implementation of strategic plans by parastatals is not widely done (Thornhill and Amit, 2003) as such an inductive approach was viewed to be appropriate.

3.3 Research Design

The study design adopted was a cross-sectional survey method with three main modalities that sought to assess the factors that affect the successful implementation of strategic plans in Malawi Posts Corporation. The cross-sectional survey was chosen because of the wide network of postal offices across the country so that the views of the top management were collected. The modalities included reviews, contacts and field activities. The review was conducted through desk research of online resources, research papers, working documents, conference documents, policy documents and other publications. The contacts were made through one on one discussion, by visiting the respondents in their work places. A questionnaire was also used for the field exercise which was administered to the MPC executive managers and middle managers. This design was appropriate in testing the relationship between the different components and variables of strategic management phenomena (Saunders et al. 2009). The survey method is a common design in business and

management research because it allows researchers to collect large amounts of data from a sizeable population in an economic way (Saunders et al. *ibid*). As such, the researcher adopted this design because the study focuses on organisational and management factors with the objective of assessing the effects of those factors on strategic plan implementation.

3.4 Research Strategy

Survey was used to collect primary data because surveys are popular as they allow the collection of a large amount of data from a sizeable population in a highly economical way.

3.5 Research Instrument

Collection of data was primarily done through the administration of a well-structured questionnaire to MPC Executive and middle managers. The questionnaire focussed on the three specific objectives of the study (management commitment, effects of coordination of strategic activities, and effects of organisational culture) and briefly looked at the educational back ground of the respondents. It was made short and direct to the specific areas of interest to the study. However, the respondents were given enough time, one month, to complete the questionnaire, the researcher was also at their disposal in case of clarification on some issues relating to the questionnaire, follow ups were made by the researcher to ensure that all the questionnaires are responded to and all this was done in order to ensure that quality data is collected.

3.6 Location of study

The research study was conducted in Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu. This is because; Blantyre is the head office of MPC where most senior management team of MPC is located, while Lilongwe and Mzuzu are regional offices with some senior management team. The senior management was the targeted sample of the study.

3.7 Data Collection

According to Saunders et al. (2009), there are three ways of collecting data when conducting a study namely, through observation, through semi-structured and in-depth interviews and through the use of questionnaires. However, in this study, two forms of data were collected namely, primary data and secondary data. Primary data was collected specifically for this study by using a well-structured questionnaire which was administered to MPC senior managers and also through one on one discussion with selected respondents. Considering that this study was aimed at assessing the factors that affect the successful implementation of strategic plan by parastatals in Malawi, both qualitative and quantitative data were used.

3.8 Sample and Sampling Methods

Sampling is defined by Bajpai (2011) as the process by which inference is made to the whole by only examining only a part. It has been generally commented by different researchers that studying the entire population is not possible due to various factors such as time, budget and the size of the population.

3.8.1 Sampling Method

The main source of data for this study was obtained from managers who responded to the questionnaire. This data was collected specifically for this study.

Stratified random sampling is a **method of sampling** that involves the division of a population into smaller sub-groups known as strata. In **stratified random sampling** or **stratification**, the strata are formed based on members' shared attributes or characteristics such as income or educational attainment.

Stratified random sampling method was used to draw the sample for the study. Among all the employees of MPC only the managers were chosen to participate in this survey and among these managers, only those in Regional Offices were picked to be the respondents. This is because the method is accurate and enables easy accessibility of the sample. This method is also cost effective as the relative cost was minimal because a sizeable number of respondents were targeted unlike using the whole MPC staff.

Secondary data was the data that have been already collected for some other purposes and was collected and reanalysed to complement the primary data in this study. This secondary data emanated from published books, postal journals, research papers, academic journals, publications and MPC Statistical data and reports. This was collected to support the arguments arrived at from the primary data.

3.8.2 Sample Size

From a population of 136 senior managers of MPC, 102 were sampled for the administration of the questionnaire. As argued by Saunders et al. (2009) that the sample size must be large enough to represent the views of the total population targeted. This sample covered all three geographical regions of Malawi because this is where these senior managers are working. The questionnaires

were systematically administered to senior managers in the selected post offices for a period of four weeks.

3.8.3 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame comprised the total number of MPC senior managers which was obtained from MPC human resource data for the selected offices thus, from Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu. The researcher targeted the senior managers only as opposed to the rest of the MPC staff for the following reasons; it is the senior managers who are the framers and formulators of the strategic plan while at the same time they are the guides in implementation of the same, therefore have good understanding of it. They are also tasked to communicate and coordinate its implementation hence they play a vital role in the implementation of the strategic plan. In addition to that, the senior management was targeted because they are the ones who are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the execution of the strategic plan. For these reasons the researcher found it fit to solely involve the senior managers.

3.8.4 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was Malawi Posts Corporation as a whole since strategic plan implementation takes a holistic approach and it is the only job that is done by everyone in an organisation. Further to that, due to the financial and time constraints the researcher was limited to one parastatal.

3.9 Pilot Study/Testing Review of Questionnaires

A pilot test was done on the questionnaire in order to detect mistakes so that ambiguities and embarrassments should be avoided; these could attract unnecessary costs once the main data collection phase had been entered. Secondly, the pre-test helped to yield reasonably unbiased data and of course it avoided the second chance of data collection. The conditions for the pilot test were as close as possible to the intended conditions for the real study. This pilot study was done at MPC Head Office where the questionnaires were trial-tested by the interviewer. Data collected in this exercise was not reported but was used to rephrase and reorganize the format of the questionnaire. The necessary corrections were done on the questionnaire and this made it interviewee friendly.

3.10 Data Validity and Reliability

Reliability, according to Burns and Grove (2007), is concerned with the consistency of the measurement technique, thus, a measure of the amount of random error in the measurement technique. The researcher ensured that the study was reliable by the use of approved technique,

namely, questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. Validity is concerned with how well an instrument reflects the abstract concept being tested, like how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure (Burns and Grove, 2007). This was achieved by prior test of the data collection tool developed.

3.11 Research Ethics

These are norms and standards of behaviour that guided choices about the behaviour and relationship with respondents in this study as highlighted by (Saunders et al., 2009). The author followed ethical concerns, that is, the author considered societal concerns so that the respondents should not be socially impinged. The author was also mandated to avoid any fraudulent activities such as duplicating other writers work in full or part thereof. However, all citations have been acknowledged and referenced accordingly. The author provided the potential participants to the study with information that enabled them to make an informed decision as to whether to take part in the study or not. This type of consent was obtained in the written form. Any kind of misleading information to the participants which withholds information from them was not entertained. Participants were advised to exercise their freedom and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without any penalty. The author was expected to explain and indicate any harm whatsoever, the participant might encounter in taking part in the study. Finally, the author, as mandated by National Research Council of Malawi, was not to reveal or share any information of the study with third parties.

3.12 Study Limitations

The study did not go without limitations and that is why it was limited to Malawi Posts Corporation as a parastatal where only the head Office and regional offices were targeted for data collection (Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu). The study could have been better enough if it also involved the juniors who are the actual implementers of the tasks driving strategy success. The application of the results of the project to the entire staff of MPC will be subjected to particular reservations.

3.12.1 Geographical

The study was limited to MPC head office and regional offices (Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu) for convenience purposes on the part of the researcher, MPC has a total of 181 postal offices countrywide so it would have been very difficult to visit most of these offices to collect data due to accessibility but also considering the time frame for this study.

3.13 Chapter Summary

Chapter three outlined research design, approach, philosophy, strategy, and location of study, data collection, sampling method, sample size, sampling frame, and unit of analysis, pilot testing of the questionnaire, research ethics and research constraints. This helped to come up with meaningful data specific to this study where the research questions were attempted and answered. Subsequently, generalisation of the analysis did not therefore pose a challenge. Finally, the chapter has also highlighted the study limitations as being time constraint, financial constraint and geographical constraint.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the responses from the respondents that formed the sample of the study whose main objective was to assess the factors that affect effective implementation of strategic plans in Malawi Postal Corporation (MPC). The data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and presented using tables, charts and in prose using qualitative content analysis. The study also made valid replicable inferences on the data in various contexts. At the end of every variable described, analysis was conducted to statistically determine whether the independent variables affect or influence the dependent variable.

4.1 Demographics of the Respondents

Table 4.1: Qualifications of the respondents.

Highest Education level	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
MSCE	24	22%	22%
Diploma	22	20%	42%
Bachelor's Degree	46	42%	84%
Master's Degree	18	16%	100%
PhD	0	0	100%
Total	<i>110</i>	100	100%

Source: Author, 2018

As indicated in Table 4.1, the majority of the management staff (42%) had attained a first degree followed by Malawi School Certificate of Education (22%), then diploma holders (20%) and lastly Master's Degree (16%). None of the managers had a doctoral degree. Surprisingly 22% of the managers had never been at a college. According to Senior and Flemming (2006) and Mulube (2009) leadership is not based on level of education. However, there is need to have employees

with high qualifications in all levels of management. Strategic plans are normally very complex (Pearce & Robinson, 2004) and require people with high level logistical skills.

4.2 Number of Years at Management Position

The study established that the majority of the respondents (55%) had worked for 1-5 years, 32% had worked for 6-10 years, and 13% had worked for over 10 years Table 4.2 refers. Robinson and Pearce (2004) emphasized the need to retain employees that will have enough experience for all stages of implementation to be effective. Other scholars including Aosa (1992), Korten (1990), Mulube (2009) and Arasa (2008) have also emphasized the need to have staff for implementation of strategic plans. This study found that majority of respondents been in the management position for 1-5 years indicating they are fairly experienced to effectively implement strategic plans.

Table 4.2: Number of Years at Management Position

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
1 – 5 Years	60	55%	55%
6 – 10 Years	35	32%	87%
Over 10 Years	15	13%	100%
Total	110	100%	100%

Source: Author, 2018

4.3 Respondents' Gender

The results of gender distribution established that majority (53%) of the respondents were male and minorities (47%) were female. Robinson and Pearce (2004) have singled out gender as one of the cultural issues that can affect strategy implementation. Mintzberg (2004) highlight the need to involve both gender for effective implementation of strategic plans and in MPC gender is somehow balanced.

4.4 Descriptive Analysis for Study Variables

The main objective of this area of study was to assess the factors that affect successful implementation of strategic plans in MPC. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To assess the effects of top management's commitment on strategy implementation in MPC
2. To establish the effects of coordination of activities on strategy implementation in MPC
3. To explore the effects of organizational culture on strategy implementation in MPC

4.4.1 Analysis of the First Objective

The first specific objective of the study was to assess the effects of top management's commitment on strategic implementation. There were a series of questions that the respondents were asked to achieve the objective. Firstly, the respondents were asked to rate the top management's commitment towards strategy implementation. The responses were presented in the Figure 4.4.1A

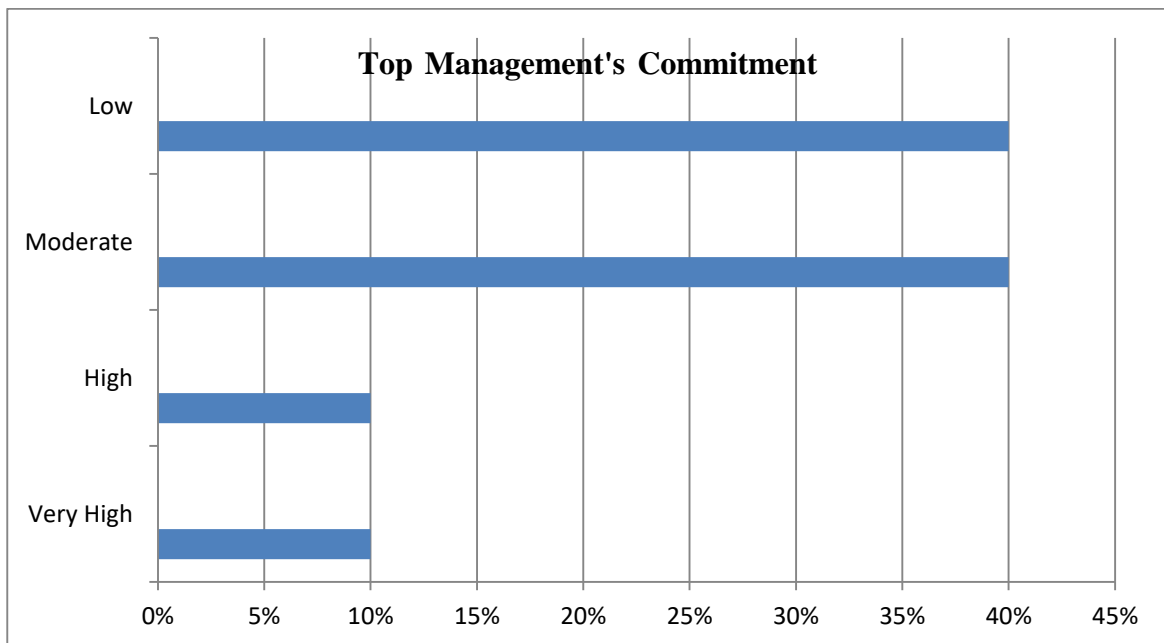


Figure 4.4.1: The Commitment of Top Management.

Results in Chart 4.4.1 showed a majority (43%) of the respondents indicated the top management's commitment to strategy implementation is very low while 37% showed that the commitment of the

top management is moderate. Only 20% indicated that the top management is either highly or just committed to strategy implementation.

Aaltonen and Ikåvalko (2002) assert in their study that lack of top management commitment is one of the main inhibiting factors to effective strategy implementation. The study went on to examine how specific elements of top management’s commitment affect successful implementation. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with a number of statements on a Likert Scale. To establish the opinion of the respondents the scale was merged to two points – agree and disagree, with those who scored 3 (neutral) were considered as disagreeing with the statement. The results are summarized in Table 4.4.1.

4.4.1: Top level management analysis

STATEMENT	RESPONDENTS AGREEING
Top managers must demonstrate their willingness to give energy and loyalty to the implementation process	73%
Demonstrable management’s commitment is a positive signal for organisation to enhance strategy implementation	76%
Current organisation top level management does not allow employee participation in decision making	35%
There is clear commitment of top level management that give MPC members certainty during an implementation effort	21%
To enhance strategic implementation success, MPC selects the people for key positions	12%

From Table 4.4.1, 73% of the respondents indicated that top managers must demonstrate willingness to give energy and loyalty to the implementation process. The role of management is important if an organization wants to implement a new strategy. According to O'Reilly, et al., (2010) leaders often have a substantial impact on performance to influence a group to achieve organizational goals. Another important aspect in strategy implementation is the involvement of employees in decision making. However, only 35% of the respondents indicated that employees

are allowed to take part in decision making and only 12% of the respondents believed that MPC selects suitable people for key positions.

4.4.2 Analysis of the Second Objective

The second objective aimed at establishing the effects of coordination of activities on strategy implementation in MPC. The researcher sought to understand different aspects of coordination activities affecting strategy implementation. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which these aspects of coordination activities affected strategy implementation in a scale of 1-5 where 1 was 'strongly agree' and 5 was to 'strongly disagree'.

The study established that 80% of the respondents agree that successful implementation of strategy requires involvement from middle managers. According to Beer and Eisenstat (2000) managers can increase commitment with involvement and integration of employees from lower levels. The involvement will create a kind of ownership in the new strategy, which increases commitment enormously.

Table 4.4.2: Coordinating Activities

Variables	Responses					Total	Percentage of agreeing
	Strongly disagree	Just disagree	Neutral	Just agree	Strongly agree		
Lack of coordination activities in MPC leads to more time before a strategy is implemented	20	21	8	17	44	110	55%
Silent killers of strategy implementation comprise of unclear strategic intentions and conflicting priorities and weak coordination across functions	30	15	6	24	35	110	59%
Coordination of activities required to maintain and monitor progress towards strategy implementation	15	19	2	23	51	110	67%
MPC is faced with influence that arise from decentralization and imperfect monitoring of coordination of activities in strategy implementation	26	24	6	24	30	110	49%
MPC does not have sufficient policies in solving challenges of coordination of activities on strategy implementation	26	16	8	23	37	110	54%

Author, 2018

It was also found that only 40% of the respondents think that top management give clear direction in strategy implementation. The role of the leader is important if an organization wants to implement a new strategy. Research shows that leaders often have a substantial impact on strategy implementation according to O'Reilly et al. (2010).

The study also sought the opinion of the respondents on their views whether the top management command absolute followership in executing strategic plans. The response was as follows:

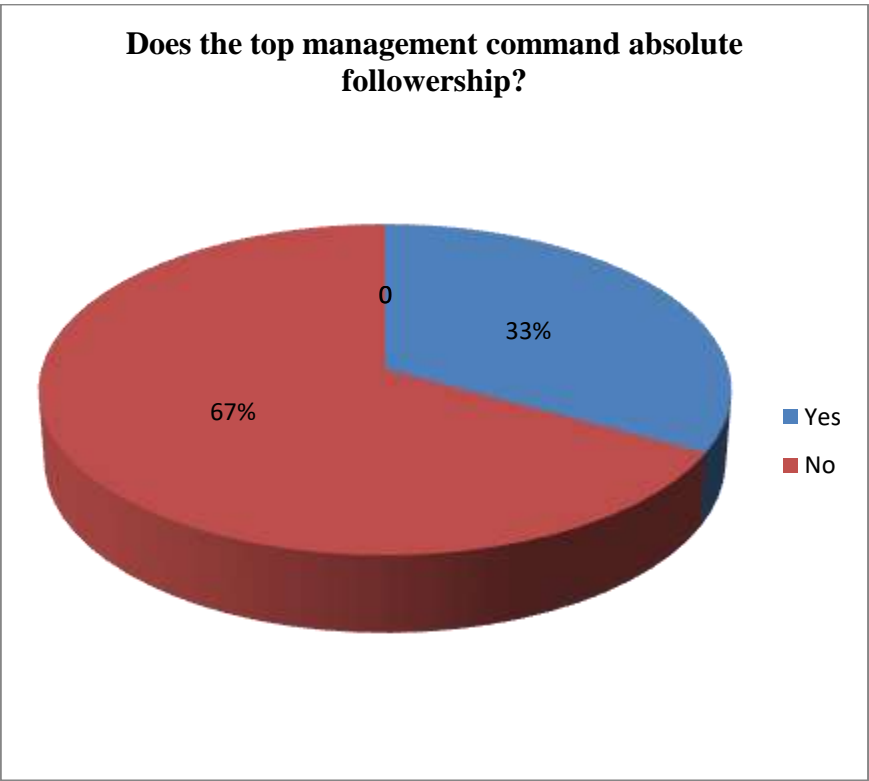


Figure 4.4.2 Analysis of Top management followership

Another important factor in connection with strategy implementation is leadership. The role of the leader is important if an organization wants to implement a new strategy. Research shows that leaders often have a substantial impact on performance according to O'Reilly et al. (2010). They define leaderships as “a person’s ability, in a formally assigned hierarchical role, to influence a group to achieve organizational goals”. Thus in the implementation process the leader can play an important role. He has to assure that the rest of the organization is committed to the strategy, by convincing the employees that a new strategy is important and also create a meaning of strategy, so that the employees support this strategy. According to the study results in Chart 4.4.2 this kind of leadership is lacking in MPC hence resulting in failure to convince the lower employees to effectively execute the strategic plan. The leader has to deal with resistance, allocate resources and create consensus. This consensus is especially important, so that leaders at subordinate levels reinforce the strategy and the whole workforce of the organization has a compelling direction. Despite O’Reilley et al. (2010) stress that consistency of leadership gives employees a backing and

support. Noble (1999) describes the abilities needed by managers as a combination of technical skills, interpersonal skills and sensitivity to the needs of other functions. Thereby the manager needs to find a balance between powerful charismatic leadership and sufficient autonomy for the employees. Crittenden and Crittenden. (2008) want to see a capable, contributing, competent, effective and executive leader when it comes to strategy implementation.

4.4.3 Analysis of the Third Objective

The researcher wanted to establish how organisational culture affects the implementation of strategic plan in MPC. The respondents were asked to indicate their rating on factors of organisational culture that affected the implementation of strategic plans using key (1= Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree). These factors were statements applied to their organisation in regard to strategy implementation and these statements had themes on norms and values of the organisation, communication channels, diversity and creativity in strategy implementation.

Table 4.3: Analysis of organisational culture

Variables	Responses					Total	Percentage of agreeing
	Strongly disagree	Just disagree	Neutral	Just agree	Strongly agree		
MPC has Vision and Mission statements	30			7	73	110	73%
MPC has culture of tolerating risks	14	22	26	19	29	110	44%
MPC tolerates new ideas	7	7	48	26	22	110	44%
MPC management relates well with juniors	23	37	29	14	7	110	19%
There is customer friendly environment	19	29	44	4	14	110	16%
There is alignment of altitude goals and objectives among employees in MPC	37	22	21	11	19	110	27%
MPC sticks to its mission and values	40	26	26	7	11	110	16%

Author, 2018

73% of the correspondents agreed that MPC had a vision and mission in place. The vision and mission statements are a guiding tool that is very essential in strategy implementation. This is in line with what the other researchers found out. The expected role and significance of vision and mission statements have been observed carefully for over thirty years in the literature of strategic management (Powers, 2012). Vision and mission statements have been strongly considered as a necessary aspect of the process of strategic management for various types of organizations; whether private or public sector, profit or non-profit, multinational or a small, medium and large scale enterprise (Darbi, 2012). The impact of Vision and mission statements on strategy cannot be overemphasized in the aspects of the performance of organization. Almost all firms have vision and mission statements. In his study, Bart, Bontis, & Tagger, . (2001) posited that mission statements had been regularly shown as the high-rated management instrument unfolded by senior level managers during each year of one decade before his study. Mullane (2002), in his research, gave empirical support that vision and mission statements are important for day-to-day activities about vision and mission.

The second variable was to establish whether MPC has a culture of tolerating risks. 44% of the respondents agreed that MPC has a culture of tolerating risks while 32 % were in disagreement with that statement. 24% were neutral or rather not sure whether such culture existed in MPC or not. This shows that MPC much as it may have the vision and mission but is very hesitant to make some strategic decisions in fear of prospective risks.

The third variable was to establish whether MPC tolerates new ideas that emerge in an effort to implement strategic plans. 44% of the respondents agreed that new ideas are tolerated while 44 % were neutral. Only 12% were in disagreement with this statement. This means that MPC is somehow tolerant when it comes to incorporating new ideas that in turn may improve on the implementation of the strategic plan in question. This also agrees to the fact that there is low involvement of lower employees to the implementation of the strategic plan.

Forth variable was to assess the existing relationships within MPC between management and the juniors. 19% of the respondents felt that the relationship between management and juniors was good while 56% was in disagreement with this statement. This simply means coordination as

required in strategic management is not effectively executed by the top management in MPC therefore affecting strategic plan implementation.

The fifth variable was to establish whether there exists a customer friendly environment in MPC. 16% agreed to this statement while 44% was in disagreement. 40% of the respondents could neither agree nor disagree with this statement. The strategic plan implementation is all about achieving set objectives and goals and MPC is a service delivery entity as such customer friendly environment is the key for its service delivery. However, this is so minimal in MPC

The sixth variable was to assess whether there was an alignment of attitudes, goals and objectives among employees in MPC. 54% of the respondents disagreed with this statement while 26% were in agreement that such an alignment exists in MPC. There must be a positive attitude to achieving goals and objectives if the strategic plan implementation is to be successful. This kind of alignment is very low in MPC as such negatively affecting the successful implementation of the strategic plan.

The last variable sought to find out if MPC really stick to its mission and objectives. The analysis showed that 60% of the respondents do not agree that MPC sticks to its mission and objectives while 16% agree. Mission and objectives go together so this has to be maintained if an organisation is to successfully implement its strategic plan, so according the research results this kind of relationship seems to be on lower side in MPC hence affecting the successful implementation of the strategic plan.

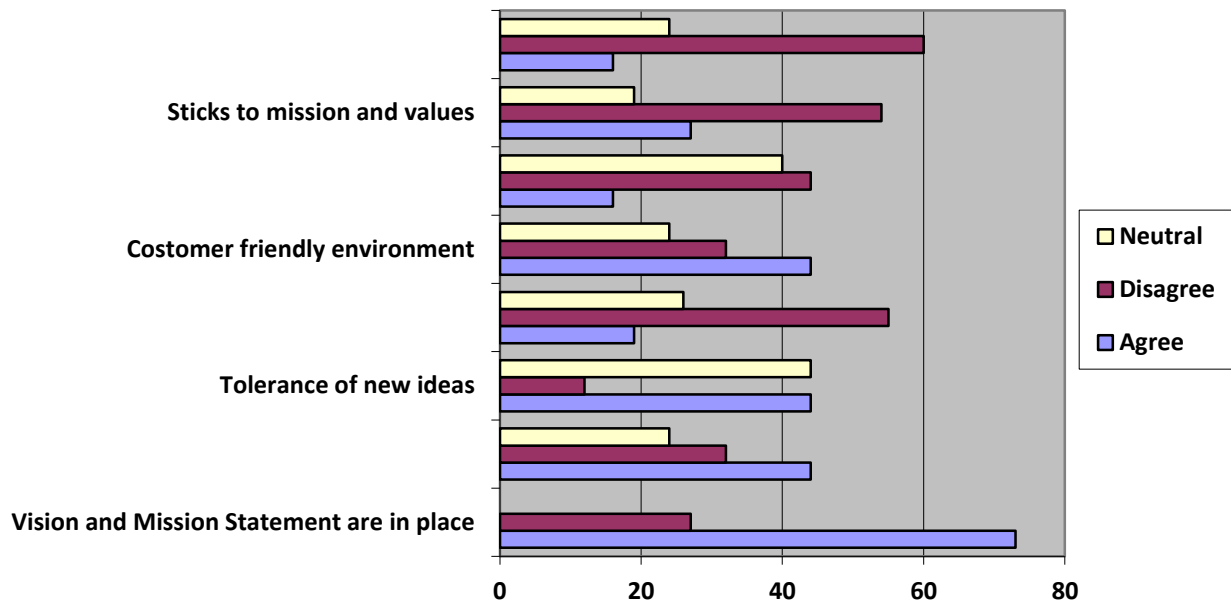


Figure 4.3. Organisation culture

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented an analysis of the factors that affect strategy implementation in MPC and through the analysis it was found that a top management that links well with its middle managers and have an absolute command of the activities being carried out in the process of implementing a strategy will succeed. Besides management must be able to ably coordinate the activities being carried out and allocate people with necessary skills to tasks to achieve a successful strategy implementation. It was also found through the analysis that organisation culture influences adherence to organizational vision, mission and values thus driving the implementation of organizational strategy. The study revealed that MPC does not stick to its mission and values and is to a larger extent not customer friendly despite the fact that it has vision and mission statements in place.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the research findings and discusses the broader implications of the findings for theory, practice, policy and further research in the parastatals in Malawi. The study sought to investigate the factors affecting the effective implementation of strategic plans in parastatals in Malawi. Specifically, the study looked at management commitment, coordination of activities and organizational culture in effective implementation of strategic plans. This chapter summarizes the findings of the study and the statistical analysis. The presentation is organized around specific objectives and research questions to assess the results by evaluating and interpreting them. The conclusions are in tandem with the specific objectives and research questions. The recommendations refer to suggestions for further study or proposal for change. Each recommendation relates to each conclusion.

5.1 Summary of the Major Findings

This chapter presents the conclusion, summary and recommendations. It also recommends areas for further studies.

5.1.1 Top Management Commitment

The study revealed that top management must demonstrate willingness to give energy and loyalty to the implementation process. Leaders must have substantial impact on performance to influence a group to achieve organizational strategy. The study established that commitment of top level management influence strategy implementation in parastatals. Middle level managers are the essential factor in strategy implementation since they have a crucial role in strategic communication and the most important thing when implementing a strategy is the top level management's commitment to the strategic direction.

The study also revealed that employees must be involved in decision making in order for the implementation of a strategy to be a success. It was revealed that in MPC employees are left out when decisions are being made which later affects implementation because they do not own the made decision for a better understanding of the decisions' relationship to successful strategy implementation. The study findings revealed that while management's commitment is a positive signal for organization to enhance strategy implementation, there are still hindrances to strategy

implementation. It was established top level management do not always facilitate employee participation in decision making, some parastatals lack top level management that give organizational members certainty during an implementation effort.

The study revealed that for implementation of a strategy to be a success, management must ensure that only suitable people are given key positions. Suitable people mean those people with prerequisite skills and understanding of the set strategic goals must be given key positions to ensure that they lead effective implementation of the strategy. To the contrary MPC does not apply this principle as it was revealed that most key positions are filled with unsuitable people hence resulting into unsuccessful strategy implementation

Top managers must demonstrate their willingness to give energy and loyalty to the implementation process. Top level managers always determine the degrees of authority needed to manage each organizational unit during strategy implementation. Enhancing commitment of the current top level management would in turn improve strategic implementation.

The study findings are in tandem with previous studies by Raps (2005) that commitment of top level management is undoubtedly a prerequisite for strategy implementation.

5.1.2 Coordination of Activities

The study revealed that successful implementation of a strategy requires involvement of the middle managers. The middle managers are in close contact with the employees in lower levels hence involving them in strategy implementation will increase commitment and integration of the employees from lower levels. This involvement will create ownership of the strategy resulting in devoted commitment.

The study revealed that allocation of the right people to their most useful tasks as well as coordinating and integration activities of participating employees and functions lead to successful strategy implementation.

The study revealed that the role of the leaders in coordination of activities cannot be left out. Leaders often have substantial impact on performance as they have a duty to influence teams to

achieve organizational strategy. A leader must ensure that the rest of the organization is committed to the achievement of the strategy by convincing employees about the importance and benefits of the set strategy. A leader has to be in a position to manage resource allocation, eliminate or minimize resistance and create consensus.

It follows that efficient operational management is very important to ensure that an organization meet its strategies. Coordination of activities maintains and monitors progress towards strategy implementation. Lack of coordination of activities leads to more time before a strategy is implemented. Firms in the postal and communication industry should ensure efficient co-ordination of activities and have sufficient policies in solving the challenges of co-ordination of activities.

Previous studies by Beer and Eisenstat's (2000) also lay emphasis on the role of coordination of activities on strategy implementation. Beer and Eisenstat's (2000) assert that strategy implementation is hindered by unclear strategic intentions and conflicting priorities and weak co-ordination across functions.

5.1.3 Organizational Culture

The study revealed that organization culture influence strategy implementation in the postal and communication industry. Organisation culture influences adherence to organizational vision, mission and values thus driving the implementation of organizational strategy. For an organization culture to have a positive influence on strategy implementation, the following should be observed: respect for a diverse range of opinions, ideas and people (allows employee participation in decision making), tolerance to new ideas employee motivation, creation of a fun and friendly customer-centered environment, ensuring clarity of vision, mission and values among employees throughout the enterprise and, the organization should sticks to its mission vision and values all the time.

The employees at all levels must firmly understand their individual and inter-dependent roles in attaining the corporate vision. Strategy implementation requires a strong alignment between employee attitudes and strategic goals and objectives. Creation of power distance between the upper and lower cadres in the organization is a hindrance to strategy implementation and must not be tolerated in an organization.

The study findings are in tandem with the previous studies by Aaltonen and Ikåvalko (2002) that established relationships between organization culture and strategy implementation. Aaltonen and Ikåvalko (2002) argue that one of the major challenges in strategy implementation appears to be more cultural and behavioural in nature, including the impact of poor integration of activities and diminished feelings of ownership and commitment. Marginson, (2002) contend that strategy implementation is a result of complete coalitional involvement of implementation staff through a strong corporate culture.

5.1.4 Strategy Implementation

Additionally, the study established that MPC had a strategic plan and that all management levels worked towards its achievement. The study also established that majority of the managers have attended education up to and above the First Degree level which gives confidences that they have a better understanding of the importance of strategic plan and especially on implementation of the same. But despite having such a good caliber of management makeup, it was also revealed through the study that MPC has not moved a significant step as far as strategy implementation is concerned.

The study established that a majority of those in managerial position have been with the organization for less than 5 years. This also is another challenge that may affect the implementation of the strategic plans because strategy implementation requires a better understanding of the complexity on the organization and appreciate its styles and culture. It is said that an organization must be able retain its employees that will have enough experience for all stages of strategy implementation to be effective. MPC has fairly experienced managers to guarantee effective strategy implementation.

5.2 Conclusion

From the findings the study revealed that top management commitment positively affects strategy implementation at Malawi Posts Corporation. The study established that manager's commitment to performing their roles lead to the juniors having support and guidance through the strategy implementation process, thus the study concludes that top management commitment positively affect strategy implementation at Malawi Posts Corporation.

The study found that proper coordination of activities during the implementation process influence the strategy implementation at Malawi Posts Corporation, as it was found that co-ordination of

activities during the implementation process is essential to ensure that those involved understand their roles and ensure that they stay focused on strategy implementation thus the study concludes that proper coordination of activities positively influence on strategy implementation at Malawi Posts Corporation.

The study revealed that organizational culture affects strategy implementation at Malawi Posts Corporation. The study also found that organization should embrace freedom of expression and staff involvement during strategy implementation process, this will help in the acceptance of strategy among the employee and will enhance its implementation process, and thus the study concludes that organizational culture affects strategy implementation at Malawi Posts Corporation.

5.3 Recommendations of the Study

This study has discussed several factors which have a direct negative impact on the successful implementation of strategic plans by the parastatals in Malawi. The recommendations in this section are made for the strategic plan implementers in parastatals to take note and focus on the key factors that lead to the unsuccessful implementation of the strategic plans in parastatals if they are to witness a turnaround in this exercise. The recommendations are also made for other stakeholders like the Malawi Government to advise the parastatals that are under its jurisdiction to seriously give attention to the factors leading to unsuccessful implementation of strategic plans once they notice their negative impact.

5.3.1. Top management to remain fully committed throughout strategy implementation process

The study recommends that the top management of Malawi Posts Corporation should remain fully committed throughout strategy implementation process. This will help to ensure clear and focused oversight of the implementation process ensuring time deadline are met within the stipulated time frame. This will ultimately increase the success of strategy implementation.

5.3.2. Clarity of roles on every management level have to ensured

The study also recommends that the Malawi Posts Corporation management should work to ensure clarity of roles on every management level. This will ensure that all workers and departments know what they need to achieve and this will enable free work flows from one department to another without obstruction.

5.3.3. The organisational culture must be fully aligned to the MPC strategy

The study recommends that for a strategy to be developed and be implemented successfully, it must fully align with the Malawi Posts Corporation organizational culture. Organizational culture is the backbone of how the organizational factors operate within and outside the organization. It gives the organization a foundation of how it interacts with itself and with other stakeholders and may lead to the growth or downfall of the organization. This study has revealed that Malawi Posts Corporation has ignored this crucial factor and thus recommends that the policy makers and managers pay attention to the organizational culture by ensuring that they develop a culture that fits with the company goals that should be driven towards implementation of strategic plans.

5.3.4. Parastatals must take note of the assessed factors to pave way for the public reforms achievement.

This follows that if the reforms are to be a success, the parastatals must be able to take note of the assessed factors to ensure that the reforms achieve its intended goals.

5.4 Scope for Further Studies

This study has focused on factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans in parastatals with a focus on Malawi Posts Corporation. It has explored the impact of top management, coordination of activities and organisational culture. It thus suggests that further studies be carried out on external factors like the organizational environment and type of industry to give a better aspect of these factors. The study also recommends that similar studies be carried out on other parastatals within the country.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides the conclusion and recommendations from the study findings. The chapter has concluded that indeed there are factors that are negatively affecting the successful implementation of strategic plans in MPC as a parastatal. Therefore, the chapter has outlined the following as notable ones; top management commitment, coordination of activities and organisational culture.

The chapter has also recommended that there should be total commitment by the MPC top management towards strategic plan implementation, there should be clarity of roles on every level of management and that there should be proper alignment of the formulated strategic plan with the

MPC organisational culture. Finally, a recommendation for further study on MPC's external environment and the industry to which the MPC operates has been made

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APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE

Study Questionnaire – Presented by Eluby Masauli

A study in partial completion of Master of Business Administration, University of Malawi – the Polytechnic.

This questionnaire seeks to assess the factors affecting the successful implementation of strategic plan in parastatals in Malawi: case of Malawi posts corporation. This study is an academic study and the information obtained through this questionnaire will be treated confidentially and will not be used for any other purpose other than academic research.

1. Position/ designation of respondent.....
.....
 2. Gender: (tick one) Female Male
 3. Number of years you have been in this organization.....
 4. Number of years in current position
 - a. 1-5 years
 - b. 6-10 years
 - c. More than ten years
 5. What is the highest level of Education?
 - a. MSCE ()
 - b. DIPLOMA ()
 - c. DEGREE ()
 - d. MASTERS ()
 - e. PHD ()
 6. Does MPC develop strategic plans?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 7. Over what period of time has MPC been implementing strategic plans?
 - a. Past five years
 - b. Past 10 years
 - c. Since inception
 - d. Never
 8. Time frame (planning horizon) for your organization's strategic plan:
 - a. Short-term
 - b. Medium term
 - c. Long term
 9. Does the implementation happen within the anticipated timeframe?
 - a. Yes b. No
- If No, what factors hinder the implementation process?
.....

.....
 How often are these plans reviewed?

- a. Quarterly
 - b. Half yearly
 - c. Yearly
 - d. Other (Specify)
-

TOP MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

10. How do you rate the top management’s commitment towards strategy implementation?

- b. Very high
- c. High
- d. Moderate
- e. Low
- f. Very low

Kindly state reasons This was not a better was to rate commitment. You would have rated commitment by assessing perceptions of respondents on management performance in areas that demonstrate commitment to strategy implementation

.....

11. In your view does the top management command absolute followership in executing strategic plans.

- a. Yes
- b. No

12. What is your level of agreement with the following statements regarding commitment of Top Level management and strategy implementation? Use a scale of 1-5 where 1 = to strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree

	1	2	3	4	5
Middle level managers are the “key actors” in strategy implementation since they have a pivotal role in strategic communication					
The most important thing when implementing a strategy in the top level management’s commitment to the strategic direction					
Top managers must demonstrate their willingness to give energy and loyalty to the implementation process					
Demonstrable management’s commitment is a positive signal for organization to enhance strategy implementation					
Current organization top level management does not allow employee participation in decision making					
There is clear commitment of top level management that give MPC members certainty during an implementation effort					

To enhance strategic implementation success, MPC selects the right people for key positions					
The top level managers always determine the degrees of authority needed to manage each organizational unit during strategy implementation					

The highlighted statements would have been improved to assess performance of management on commitment to strategy implementation plus adding other attribute statements on commitment.

13. In your opinion what would you recommend be done towards commitment of the current top level management in your company to improve strategic implementation?

EFFECTS OF COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES

14. In your opinion to what extent do you think coordination of activities influence strategy implementation?
 a. Not at all ()
 b. Little extent ()
 c. Moderate extent ()
 d. Great extent ()
 e. To a very great extent ()

15. What is your level of agreement with the following statements regarding coordination of activities and strategy implementation? Use scale of 1-5 where 1 = to strongly disagree and 5 = to strongly agree;

	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of coordination of activities in MPC leads to more time before a strategy is implemented					
Silent killers of strategy implementation comprise of unclear strategic intentions and conflicting priorities and weak coordination across functions					
Coordination of activities required to maintain and monitor progress towards strategy implementation					
MPC is faced with influence that arise from decentralization and imperfect monitoring of coordination of activities in strategy implementation					
MPC does not have sufficient policies in solving challenges of coordination of activities on strategy implementation					

EFFECTS OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

16. In your opinion, to what extent do you think organizational culture influence strategy implementation?

- a. Not at all ()
- b. Little extent ()
- c. Moderate extent ()
- d. Great extent ()
- e. To a very great extent ()

17. What is your level of agreement with the following statements regarding culture and strategy implementation? Use a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = to strongly disagree and 5 = to strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
MPC has mission and vision statements					
MPC shows respect for a diverse range of opinions, ideas and people (allows employee participation in decision making)					
MPC has a culture of tolerating risks					
There is considerable power distance between the upper and lower cadres in MPC					
MPC tolerates new ideas					
Risk tolerance helps in strategy implementation in MPC					
The power distance in MPC is a hindrance to strategy implementation					
The tolerance of new ideas enhances strategy implementation					
The management relates well with juniors in MPC					
MPC provides a fun and friendly customer centered environment					
There is clarity of vision, mission and values among employees throughout the organisation					
Employees at all levels firmly understand their individual and interdependent roles in attaining the corporate vision					
There is strong alignment between employees attitudes and strategic goals and objectives					
The organisation sticks to its mission, vision and values all the time					

18. In your opinion, in what ways do you think organization’s culture influences strategy implementation

.....

“I would like to appreciate your time and effort to respond to this questionnaire. Stay Blessed”