STRATEGIC DECISION MAKING AT JOMO KENYATTA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY KENYA

BY

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DECLARATION

This research project is my own original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree or diploma in any other university.

Presented by……………………………………………………Date……………………………

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D61/72349/2011

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University Supervisor.

Approved
by……………………………………………………Date………………………………

MR. JEREMIAH KAGWE
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DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my Mother Rahab Muthoni.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to appreciate all those who made this research project a success. God bless you all. Am indebted to my supervisor, for the professional guidance, cooperation, unlimited support, commitment and understanding throughout the period.

My heartfelt appreciation to Naomy Njeri for her unlimited support throughout the period. A lot of gratitude to Mr. David, Ian, Steve, Mark, Margaret, Dennis and Ciku for their support and guidance that has led to the completion of this research project.

To my colleagues, the Masters Degree in Business Administration class 2013 for their ideas, constructive criticism, contributions and experiences to this project. I acknowledge my family.

My parents for their financial, moral and spiritual support. My siblings for their understanding.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to find out the process of decision making in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and the factors affecting strategic decision making. This is important as time has proven that strategic decision making is paramount in institutions as it has been blamed to lead to damage of property, strikes and loss of lives witnessed in the recent past. Strategic decision making has the potential to influence the performance of organization and how it relates to both its external and internal stakeholders. The study sought to answer the following research questions: What is the strategic decision making process at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology? What are the factors that influence strategic decision making in the university? The research covered three major divisions of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology; Academic, Administration and Finance. The research design used in this study was a case study, data was collected through an interview guide from the respondents on various aspects of strategic decision making at the university. The data collected was analyzed through content analysis, the results of the study indicates that majority of staff are not involved in implementation of the decisions and that the Management Board makes key decisions. The Management Board then deliberates and decides on the solutions and makes decisions which are then passed on to the low level personnel for interpretation (supervisors) and implementation by other staff and student leaders. The research recommends that the university implements methods through which members of staff will be involved in decision making. The university should also make available information required for decisions making to enable their staff make generous contributions towards it.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Decision making in performing strategic tasks is an extremely difficult, complicated and at times intriguing and enigmatic process. In the process of strategic management the basic thrust of strategic decision making is to make a choice regarding the course of action to adopt. Thus, most aspects of strategy formulations rest on strategic decision making. The fundamental strategic decision relates to the choice of a mission. With regard to objectives setting, the senior management is faced with alternatives regarding the different yardsticks to measure performance (Dean, 1996)

At the level of choosing a strategy, the senior management chooses from among a number of strategic alternatives in order to adopt one specific course of action which will make the institution achieve its objectives and realize its mission. Apart from this fundamental decision choice, there are many other occasions when senior management has to make important strategic decisions. Thus strategic decision making forms the core of strategic management process and leads to formulation of strategies. Environmental threats and opportunities are abundant that the senior management focuses its attention to only a few of those. Likewise there are many company strengths and weaknesses of which the company senior management considers only a limited number at a given time. With regard to resource allocation the management faces a strategic choice from among a
number of alternatives. Thus strategic decision making forms the core of strategic management process and leads to formulation of strategies (Graham, 1971)

Quinn (1997) argues that being a manager means making critical decisions that cannot and must not be wrong or fail. One must trust one’s judgment and accept responsibility. There is a tendency to look for scapegoats or to shift responsibility. Decisions are at the heart of any organizations. At times there are critical moments when these decisions can be difficult, perplexing and nerve-wracking. Making decisions can be hard for a variety of structural, emotional and organizational reasons. Doubling the difficulties are factors such as uncertainties, having multiple objectives, interactive complexity and anxiety.

Decision making in public universities is very critical, when wrong decisions are made incidences like strikes, demonstrations and destruction of property are witnessed. This has also influenced tertiary colleges like polytechnics as well as high schools where the students use force to complain when they feel that their views were not considered during decision making and the management is more than often blamed for unilaterally making decisions. In the recent five years JKUAT has experienced three major strikes which have paralyzed the learning program and led to lose of property worth millions. This has been highly attributed to members feeling that they are not consulted during making of decisions. Therefore, there is need to determine what entails decision making Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (K’okul, 2010)
1.1.1 The concept of strategy

There has been different theorists’ trying to come with the definition of what strategy is. Chandler (1962) defines strategy as determination of basic long term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals. A strategy is a comprehensive master plan stating how corporation will achieve its mission and its objectives. It maximizes competitive advantage and minimizes competitive disadvantage. The typical business firm usually considers three types of strategy: corporate, business and functional.

Quinn (1997) also defines strategy as a pattern or plan that integrates an organization’s major goals, policies and action sequences into a cohesive goal. A strategy or general plan of action might be formulated for broad, long-term, corporate goals and objectives, for more specific business unit goals and objectives, or for a functional unit, even one as small as a cost center. Such goals address the nature of the organization, its culture, the kind of company its leadership wants it to be, the markets it will or won’t enter, the basis on which it will compete, or any other attribute, quality or characteristic of the organization.

1.1.2 The concept of strategic decision making

For the scope of this paper, strategic decisions were those fundamental decisions that shape the cause of an organization, in other words, the decisions which are "important, in terms of actions taken, the resources committed, or the precedents set" (Mintzberg et Alli, 1976). They are the infrequent decisions made by the top leaders of an organization that can affect its performance or even its survival.
Strategic decisions are purposeful actions. The future of any organization and the progress of your career might be profoundly affected by what you decide. Good decisions are made with less stress, and it is easier to explain the reasons for the decision that was made. Decisions should be made strategically. That is, one should make decisions skillfully in a way that is adapted to the end one wishes to achieve. To make strategic decisions requires that one takes a structured approach following a formal decision making process. Otherwise, it will be difficult to be sure that one has considered all the key aspects of the decision. Narayan, Corcoran, Perry (1997) define decision making as interaction between a problem that needs to be solved and a person wishes to solve it within specific environment.

The complexities of today’s business operations, aggressive competition and government controls have made the job of the manager increasingly difficult. It is no longer possible for one individual to be aware of the details of every characteristics of the firm or to make all decisions regarding its operation. As a result, effective decision – making often requires the availability of information analyzed and summarized in a timely fashion.

This also advocates strategic management which is an ongoing process that evaluates and controls the business and the industries in which the company is involved; assesses its competitors and sets goals and strategies to meet all existing and potential competitors; and then reassesses each strategy annually or quarterly (i.e. regularly) to determine how it has been implemented and whether it has succeeded or needs replacement by a new
strategy to meet changed circumstances, new technology, new competitors a new economic environment, or a new social, financial, or political environment (Lamb, 1984).

Decisions are at the heart of success of any organization. At times, there are critical moments when these decisions can be difficult, perplexing and nerve-wracking. Making decisions can be hard for a variety of structural, emotional, and organizational reasons. Adding to these, doubling the difficulties are factors such as uncertainties, having multiple objectives, interactive complexity and the anxiety.

Strategic decision making is the prominent task of senior managers. At the level of choosing a strategy, the senior management chooses from among a number of strategic alternatives in order to adopt one specific course of action which will make the organization achieve its objectives and realize its mission. Strategic decision making should take into account all the relevant environmental components having an impact to the organization. Stakeholders should be part of the decision making process. If the stakeholders are not part of the process, implementation of the decision may meet some obstacles.

### 1.1.3 Strategic decision making process

Most discussions on the decision making process break it down into a series of steps. for the most part, the logic can be traced to the ideas developed by Herbert, the well-known Nobel Prize Winning organization and decision theorist, who conceptualized three major phases in the decision making process. The intelligence activity, Borrowing from the
military meaning of “intelligence,” this initial phase as consisting of searching the
environment for conditions calling for decision making. Design activity, during the
second phase, inventing, developing and analyzing possible courses of action take place.
Choice activity, the third and final phase is the actual choice-selecting a particular course
among those available. Closely related to these phases, but with a more empirical basis
(that is, tracing actual decisions in organizations), are the stages of decision making of
Mintzberg and his colleagues (Lamb, 1984)

The identification phase at which, recognition of a problem or opportunity arises and a
diagnosis is made. Secondly the development phase in which there may be an existing
standard procedure or solutions already in place or the design of a new, tailor made
solutions, while the third phase which is the selection phase, the choice of a solution is to
be made. There are three ways of making this selection: by the judgment of the decision
maker, on the basis of experience or intuition rather than logical analysis, by analysis of
the alternatives on a logical, systematical basis and by bargaining when the selection
involves a group of decision makers and all the political maneuvering that this entails.
Once the decision is formally accepted, an authorization is made. In summary, strategic
decision making, focuses on how strategic decisions are made and implemented and
the factors which affect it. This research is important to management because it
provides them with some understanding of the impact of increasing strategic
decision making role.
1.1.4 Public Universities in Kenya

These Universities are established through institutional Acts of Parliament under the Universities Act, 2012 which provides for the development of university education, the establishment, accreditation and governance of universities. The rapid expansion of university education in the country was a spontaneous response to the increasing demand for higher education necessitated by the increasing flow of students from schools. Currently there are seven public universities in Kenya that have widely been spread all over the country through their constituent colleges and their branches.(Sifuna, 2010)

1.1.5 Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) is a public agency of the Kenyan Government. Under the Presidential Circular No.1/2008 of May 2008 on organization of government of the republic of Kenya, JKUAT among other universities are placed under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. JKUAT was founded in 1981 as a middle level college named Jomo Kenyatta College of Agriculture and Technology. Later in 1989 it became a constituent college of Kenyatta University and admitted its first group of students to the undergraduate degree programs. JKUAT attained its full-fledged University status in 1994. Throughout this period JKUAT was under a technical co-operation agreement between the Governments of Kenya and Japan, until the year 2001 when the program ended. It offers courses in Technology, Engineering, Science, Architecture, Business and Building sciences. The university has a strong research interest in the areas of biotechnology and engineering. (Olayo, 2005)
JKUAT is among the leading universities in Africa in terms of technology, this has further been boosted with the proposed laptop assembling plant that will become operational from October this year with a target of 1.4 million laptops assembled annually. This will lead to a realization of achieving a target of 1.1 ratio of computer to pupil in primary schools in the next ten years. This project with other partners is expected to create employment for about 12,600 people (Sifuna, 2010)

1.2 Research problem

Human performance in decision making terms has been the subject of active research from several perspectives. From a psychological perspective, it is necessary to examine individual decisions in the context of a set of needs, preferences an individual has and values they seek. From a cognitive perspective, the decision making process must be regarded as a continuous process integrated in the interaction with the environment. From a normative perspective, the analysis of individual decisions is concerned with the logic of decision making and rationality and the invariant choice it leads to, (Campbell 1974). In JKUAT there have been many strategic decision undertaken to position the university with the 2030 goal, leading to change in leadership and management. This is bound to raise different reactions from various areas, and thus the interest to understand better on what entails the process of strategic decision making.

A good number of studies have also established that management of public universities do not effectively involve their staff and students in decision. Sifuna (2010) States that Effective involvement of staff in decision making leads to ownership of the management
decisions and creates conducive environment for effective teaching and learning. Olayo (2005) has established low levels of participation in decision making among staff in selected universities in Kenya which reduces employee work performance with regard to efficiency and effectiveness. Thus, ineffective involvement of staff in decision making is interpreted as impacting negatively on the quality of services offered by the lecturers in both private and public universities. Similarly, students’ involvement in decision making is significantly different between private and public universities. It is believed that students’ involvement in decision making was better in private universities compared to public universities. This largely explains why there have been more student riots in public universities as compared to private universities. According to K’Okul (2010), the riots were attributed mainly to misunderstanding between the students and the university authority and poor management followed by poor decision making process and inadequate learning facilities and ineffective guidance and counselling services. Maina (2011) also found that colleges that keep students informed of the challenges that they face in providing services, candidly explaining any setbacks and how these are handled, give students an opportunity to experience management in action. Providing opportunities for students to manage their own affairs within the constraints of available resources offers useful experiences for personal development and self-discovery.

From this research, scholars and management may have a better understanding of the process strategic decisions and how to have a better performance of organizations. In reality the process of making strategic decisions is complex: it involves many conflicting interests, takes a long time, and faces many interruptions, delays and disruptions. It is
also shaped by environment, decision specific and decision makers factors. Important as the strategies (decisions) are, the process of making them is as important also, both content (decisions) and process categories complement each other and the content aspect can aid the process to be adopted. This research will serve to fill a gap in management literature with respect to the area of strategic decision making and best practices that are involved in decision making. To my knowledge there is no other research carried out on JKUAT about its strategic decision making process and therefore this research aims at answering the following research question; what is the strategic decision making process in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology?

1.3 Research objectives

(i) To determine the strategic decision making process at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.

(ii) To identify the factors that influence strategic decision making at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.

1.4 Value of the study

Strategic decision making is the prominent task of senior managers. At the level of choosing a strategy, the senior management chooses from among a number of strategic alternatives in order to adopt one specific course of action which will make the organization achieve its objectives and realize its mission. Strategic decision making should take into account all the relevant environmental components having an impact to the organization. Stakeholders should be part of the decision making process. If the
stakeholders are not part of the process, implementation of the decision may meet some obstacles. This study will benefit researchers and learning institutions, policy makers, top managers and other managers of various institutions engaging in strategic decision making process.

To the researchers the study sought to provide and add knowledge on strategic decision making process and the factors that affect it in institutions and in JKUAT, while to the institution it was to enable both the policy makers and top managers to be able to identify the kind of strategic decision process taking place. This will enable them amend any form of bureaucracy that may be existing in the strategic decision making structure. The study was also able to identify key factors that affect strategic decision making, this was very crucial and of assistance to the policy makers and managers both in JKUAT and other institutions. The study provided an insight on the factors affecting the strategic decision and thus provided solutions to Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction
This chapter reviewed the theoretical literature on strategic decision making and its effects on organizational performance. It also entailed empirical studies that had been done by other researchers on decision making in organizations.

2.2 Theoretical foundation
As organizations and communities conduct their business they influence and change their external environments, while at the same time being influenced by external changes in local and global environments. Organizations and communities are open systems: changing and influencing each other over time. Open system theory is a modern system-based change management theory that enables an organization to design and create healthy, innovative and resilient structures in an organizations and communities in today’s fast changing and unpredictable environments (Luthans, 2002).

The open system tends to explain behavior and in this concept it is composed of regularly interacting or interrelating groups of activities. This is different from conventional models that center on individuals, structures, departments and units separate in part from the whole, instead of recognizing the interdependence between groups or individuals, structures and processes that enable an organization to function. The systems approach to management takes into account total organization and efficiency. As it is put in place it works gradually, which is shown to give better and more efficient results.
People too are open systems. Through their actions they influence and change their external environment, and at the same time are constantly being influenced by changes in the external environment (Mathew, 1997). From an employee’s perspective, the organization itself is their immediate external environment and this is the theoretical foundation of my study.

2.3 Strategic decision making Process

The organizational decision making process involves proper and efficient implementation of strategic plans and methods to achieve desired business objective. Kartha (2009) argues decision makers, who are used to depending on their past experiences, must make decisions and take action in the rapidly changing world we face today. In this turbulent environment, the ability to successfully view the current situation through the traditional “good judgment” viewpoint is weakened through increasing external noises (a multitude of information sources on multiple topics) and changing paradigms of how we think about social, cultural, organizational and economic issues, creating internal noise within our prevailing mental models.

Most discussions on the decision making process break it down into a series of steps. for the most part, the logic can be traced to the ideas developed by Herbert, the well-known Nobel Prize Winning organization and decision theorist, who conceptualized three major phases in the decision making process. The intelligence activity, Borrowing from the military meaning of “intelligence,” this initial phase as consisting of searching the environment for conditions calling for decision making. Design activity, during the second phase, inventing, developing and analyzing possible courses of action take place.
Choice activity, the third and final phase is the actual choice-selecting a particular course among those available. Closely related to these phases, but with a more empirical basis (that is, tracing actual decisions in organizations), are the stages of decision making of Mintzberg and his colleagues. (Stacey, 1995)

The identification phase at which, recognition of a problem or opportunity arises and a diagnosis is made. Secondly the development phase in which there may be an existing standard procedure or solutions already in place or the design of a new, tailor made solutions, while the third phase which is the selection phase, the choice of a solution is to be made. There are three ways of making this selection: by the judgment of the decision maker, on the basis of experience or intuition rather than logical analysis, by analysis of the alternatives on a logical, systematical basis and by bargaining when the selection involves a group of decision makers and all the political maneuvering that this entails. Once the decision is formally accepted, an authorization is made. (Lutherans, 2002)

When they are expressed in Herberts or Mintzberg’s phases, there seem to be identifiable, preliminary steps leading to the choice activity in decision making. Also, it should be noted that decision making is a dynamic process, and there are many feedback loops in each of the phases. “Feedback loops can be caused by problems of timing, politic, disagreement among managers, inability to identify an appropriate alternative or to implement the solution, turnover of the managers, or the sudden appearance of a new alternative (Luthans, 2002).
The essential point is that decision making is a dynamic process. This dynamic process has both strategic and behavioral implications for organizations. Recent empirical research indicates that the decision process that involves making the right strategic choices does lead to successful decisions for the organization, but there are still many problems of managers making wrong decisions. To go beyond the recent dominance of the role that information technology plays in the analysis and practice of effective decision making, this relevance to the study and application of organizational behavior is what has become known as behavioral decision making.

How managers make decisions, rather than what the managers are like, has become a key area of study. Dean and Sharfman (1996) used interviews with senior managers to investigate process effectiveness. Their conclusion was that decision processes influence the strategic choices managers make, which in turn influence the outcomes affecting a firm. Stacey (1995) and Eisenhardt (1989) both ask how managers maintain rationality in decision making processes in the face of uncertainty and rapid, discontinuous change. Eisenhardt (1989) examined firms in a turbulent industry, and found that managers in successful firms used various tactics: they asked experienced counsellors for advice, sought many alternatives, speeded their cognition processes by evaluating many sorts of information frequently, tied strategic decisions into operating plans.

2.4 Factors that influence decision making

As with other psychological phenomena, physical, characteristic of individuals, finances, belief, sex and age among the variables that affect decision making or rather, that allow
one to establish individual differences. The fact is that our decisions are affected by our beliefs about the characteristics that differentiate the sexes, although these beliefs may be based on questionable criteria. Despite the fact that society is progressing towards social and labour equality between men and women, it is necessary to continue to examine from a psychological perspective whether there are sex differences in the importance that people allocate the factors that determine the decision process. Till now, the results of research are somewhat ambiguous because, although some significant differences have been identified, most of them are minimal (Crow, 1991). It seems that women are more affected by the environment; they look for more information and dedicate more time to the decision process (Gill, 1987). Men, on the contrary, are more dominant, assertive, objective, and realistic (Wood, 1990). However, these differences have been interpreted as the result of the Incidence of sex-related social norms and stereotypes that are transmitted in the form of values, traditions, and behavioral expectations. Together with some other educational factors, these probably maintain some of the differences associated with certain aspects of decisions (Bussey, 1999).

Therefore, although till now the findings have been somewhat limited, it is relevant to continue to investigate these differences and determine how they are formed. Regarding age, many studies within the naturalistic approach have been carried out with adult and to a lesser extent with youths and retired persons. Therefore, it would be interesting to analyze these three age groups conjointly. As with sex, researchers debate without much conviction, about whether there are differences in the quality of the processes used by youths, adults and retired persons. Despite this, the variable age should be taken into
account, especially when attempting to investigate from a naturalistic perspective because this focus is specifically based on subjects experience and competence which are normally acquired with age (Eurydice, 2008).

Characteristics of the individual decision maker may be very important in understanding the decisions ultimately made Millet (1985). Millet argues that certain conditions increase the probability that the personal characteristics of leaders will affect foreign policy. When the decision maker has wide decision latitude within the government system, when the situation is non-routine, ambiguous, or carries with it very high stakes, or when the policy under discussion is a long term policy or strategy. In addition to these situational variables, the personality of a leader may also be more influential, according to Hermann when the leader does not have formal diplomatic training or when the leader is not especially attentive or sensitive to changes in external circumstances.

Furthermore, the analyst must remain aware of the limitations and vulnerabilities of human beings both in a physical sense and a cognitive sense. Physically, human decision making can be affected by stress levels, lack of sleep, acute or chronic illness, mental pathologies, medications being used, age so forth. For example, psychologists have found that decision making tends to be of higher quality when moderate levels of stress are present. Too low a stress level or too high a stress level can be counterproductive. But there are also cognitive limitations inherent in being human. The human brain is so complex that human beings often rely on reasoning shortcuts or heuristics to make decisions. Errors of representation, the “gamblers fallacy” (where the gambler believes
that an outcome is more likely to occur if it has not occurred lately) and many other biases may affect choice. Furthermore, a person’s ability to handle complexity has an upper limit: psychologists tell us that even the most conceptually complex human reason can only hold seven things in mind simultaneously. (Robert, 1999) explores these factors in-depth in perception and misperception in international politics.

Humans are also a diverse lot in terms of their personal belief systems. At birth, each human being to develop beliefs about how the world works and what is to be valued. Margaret Hermann created a set of “foreign policy orientations” based on elements such as nationalism, belief in ability to control events, distrust of others and task-affect orientation, among others. Alexander George promulgated the tool of “operational code analysis, “wherein the analyst determines a leader’s reliefs with reference to how best to accomplish goals. David Winter has sought to typologies’ the motivating forces for individual leaders. Such frameworks of analysis often rely on the methodology of content analysis where a leader’s speeches and writing are analyzed thematically or quantitatively to provide insight into the specifics of his or her belief system.

It is impossible to comprehend the difficulties encountered in formulating and implementing Strategy if one ignores the fact that the concept of strategy and the process of making it a reality are inseparable in any organizational setting. Although a great deal of scholarly attention has been devoted to the methods of allocation resources rationality from the economic point of view, it is equally important to understanding that decisions are the product of organizational and political processes. In fact, strategy process research as applied to corporate settings has a long history dating back at least to Barnard (1938)
and Andrews (1971). Barnard sees the organization as a dynamic cooperative system, a process of continual readjustment to the physical, biological and social environment as a whole. The notion of decision as a formal, conscious, deliberate and logic formal process is the core of his thesis. Similarly, Andrews conceives the administrative process as a decisional process, stressing that processes of decision and the processes of action are the main concerns of the theory of administration.

Managers make strategic decisions also in response to both problems and opportunities, and when their organizations are performing poorly or in crisis. Many management scholars believe that the process used to make strategic decisions affect the quality of those decisions. However, some authors Bourgeois and Mintzberg have observed a lack of research on strategic decision making process. Organizational performance level, poor or excellent has also been posited to affect strategic decision making.

The most common challenge uncounted in decision-making is of too much attention being given to financial aspects. Lack of decision-maker preparedness and internal politics also scored highly. Ironically, in spite of the significant focus on financials when making decision, it was observed that that adverse impact of poor decisions was predominantly financial in nature. As might be expected, there were similarities between smaller and larger organizations, although resource-based concerns were more common in smaller and medium-sized businesses; while issues surrounding complexity (people, process) were more common in large organizations. The study identified a number of key areas for improvement in decision-making. From the above it is clear that process and
people failings are present in many organizations, and at all stages of the decision – making process. Areas of greatest concern are the post-implementation review, preparation and the ability to consider multiple scenarios.

Although actual organizational decisions may be made primarily in small groups, the policy positions of group members and the subsequent implementation of decisions made by small groups are only well understood when the analyst includes insights at the organizational and bureaucratic level of analysis (Graham, 1999) essence of decision making stage but also the subversion of rationality at the decision making stage but also the subversion of rationality at the implementation stage. Large organizations typically develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) that allow for quicker, more efficient responses than would otherwise be possible with collectivities numbering in the thousands or even millions of persons. Unfortunately, these sops are fairly insensitive to the external circumstances as well as to efforts by the leader to adapt or modify them. Indeed, leaders may not even comprehend that when they give an executive order it is first translated into a series of sequential SOP steps. This translation may leave much to be desired in terms of flexibility, creativity and appropriateness where they move closer to their own preferred bargaining positioning.

At the same time, many negative factors have been identified. Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) identify the importance of power and conflict, and propose a link between centralisation of power and the appearance of politics in an organisation. Conflict in team processes is discussed by many authors. Amason (1996) notes the importance of team
heterogeneity, and suggests both cognitive characteristics and team processes influence decision process. He also separates (dysfunctional) affective conflict and (functional) cognitive conflict, and notes that well managed team processes are likely to result in better decisions, with less affective conflict. Similarly, Eisenhardt, Kahwajy & Bourgeois (1997) equate “substantive”, “issue-oriented” and “cognitive” conflict, and describes the importance of conflict in extracting comprehensive and extensive decision processes. Dean and Sharfman (1996) also note that managers who collected information and used analytical techniques made decisions that were more effective than those who did not. Those who engaged in the use of power or pushed hidden agendas were less effective than those who did not.

Cognitive dissonance is an uncomfortable feeling caused by holding two contradictory ideas simultaneously. The “ideas” or “cognitions” in questions may include attitudes and beliefs the awareness of ones behaviour and facts. The theory of cognitive dissonance proposes that people have a motivational and drive to reduce dissonance by changing their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, or by justifying or rationalizing their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. Cognitive dissonance theory is one of the most influential and extensively studied theories in social psychology.

Dissonance normally occurs when a person perceives a logical inconsistency among his or her cognitions. This happens when one idea implies the opposite of another. For example, a belief in animal rights could be interpreted as inconsistent with eating meat or wearing fur. Noticing the contradiction would lead to dissonance, which could be experienced as anxiety, guilt, shame, anger embarrassment, stress and negative emotional
states. When people’s ideas are consistent with other, they are in a state of harmony, or harmony, or consonance. If cognitions are unrelated, they are categorized as irrelevant to other and do not lead to dissonance. A powerful of dissonance is an idea in conflict with a fundamental element of the self-concept, such as “I am a good person” or “I made the right decision.” The anxiety that comes with the possibility of having made a bad decision can lead to rationalization, the tendency to create additional reasons or justification to support one’s choices. A person who just spent too much on a new car might decide that the new vehicle is much less likely to break down than his or her old car. This belief may or may not be true, but it would likely reduce dissonance and make the person feel better. Dissonance can also lead to confirmation bias, the denial of disconfirming evidence, and other ego defence mechanisms. (Festinge, 1950).

Rational decision making theory “Rational” people make decisions in this theory based on the optimal choice of greatest benefit to them, rational decisions making models. Rational decision making models involve a cognitive process where each step follows in a logical order from the one before. Cognitive means it is based on thinking through and weighing up the alternatives to come up with the best potential result. There are different types of rational models and the number of steps involved, and even the steps themselves, will differ in different models. Some people assume that strategic decision making is equivalent to problem solving. The comparison is often performed by filling out forms or charts that have names. Decision matrix, pugh matrix, decision grid, selection matrix, criteria rating form, amongst others. A relative importance is given to each criterion and the highest ‘wins’.
A rational strategic decision making model presupposes that there is one best outcome. Because of this it is sometimes called an optimizing decision making model. The search for perfection is frequently a factor in actually delaying making model. The search for perfection is frequently a factor in actually delaying making a decision. Such a model also presupposes that it is possible to consider every option and also to know the future consequences of each. While many would like to think they know what will happen, the universe often has other plans. It is also limited by the cognitive abilities of the person making the decision; how good is their memory? How good is their imagination? The criteria themselves of course, will be subjective and may be difficult to compare. These models require a great deal of time and a great deal of information. And, of course, a rational decision making model attempts to negate the role of emotions in decision making.

2.3 Decision Communication methods

The standard methods of communication are speaking or writing by a sender and listening or reading the receiver. Most communication is oral, with one party speaking and others listening. However, some forms of communication do not directly involve spoken or written language. Nonverbal communication (body language) consists of actions, gestures and other aspects of physical appearance that, combined with facial expressions (such as smiling or frowning), can be powerful means of transmitting messages. At times, a person’s body may be “talking” even as he or she maintains silence. And when people do speak, their bodies may sometimes say different things than their words convey. A mixed message occurs when a person’s words communicate one message, while nonverbally; he or she is communicating something else.
Although technology such as e-mail has lessened the importance of nonverbal communication, the majority of organizational communication still takes place through face-to-face interaction. Every verbal message comes with a nonverbal component. Receivers interpret messages by taking in meaning from everything available. When nonverbal cues are consistent with verbal messages, they act to reinforce the messages. But when these verbal and nonverbal messages are inconsistent, they create confusion for the receiver. The actions of management are especially significant because subordinates place more confidence in what managers do than what they say. Unless actions are consistent with communication, a feeling of district will undermine the effectiveness of any future social exchange.

In general, managers prefer to rely on oral communication because communication tends to be more complete and through when talking in person. In face-to-face interactions, a person can judge how the other party is reacting, get immediate feedback, and answer questions. In general, people tend to assume that talking to someone directly is more credible than receiving a written message. Face-to-face communication permits not only the exchange of words, but also the opportunity to see the nonverbal communication. However, verbal communicating has its drawbacks. It can be inconsistent, unless all parties hear the same message. And although oral communication is useful for conveying the viewpoints of others and fostering an openness that encourages people to communicate, it is a weak tool for implementing a policy or issuing directives where many specifics are involved. Here are two of the most important abilities for effective oral communication.
Listening is making sense of what is heard and requires paying attention, implementing and remembering sound stimuli. Effective listening is active, requiring the hearer”’ to get inside the head “of the speaker so that he or she can understand the communication from the speakers point of view. Effective listeners do the following; make eye contact; schedule sufficient, uninterrupted time for meetings; genuinely seek information; avoid being emotional or attacking others; Paraphrase the message you heard, especially to clarify the speaker’s intentions; keep silent. Don’t talk to fill pauses, or respond to statements in a point –counterpoint fashion; Ask clarifying questions; avoid making distracting gestures.

Managers often do poor jobs of providing employees with performance feedback. When providing feedback, managers should do the following; Focus on specific behaviours rather than making general statements; Keep feedback impersonal and goal –oriented; Offer feedback as soon after the action as possible; Ask questions to ensure understanding of the feedback; direct negative feedback toward behaviour that the recipient can control.

Written communication has several advantages. First, it provides a record for the referral and follow –up. Second, written communication is an inexpensive means of providing identical messages to a large number of people. The major limitation of written communication is that the sender does not know how or if the communication is received unless a reply is required. Unfortunately, writing skills are often difficult to develop, and many individuals have problems writing simple, clear and direct documents. And believe
it or not, poorly written documents cost money. Managers must be able to write clearly. The ability to prepare letters, Memos, and other written documents may spell the difference between success and failure. The following are some guidelines for the effective written communication; Draft the message with the readers in mind; Give the message a concise title and use subheadings where appropriate; use simple words and short clear sentences and paragraphs; back up options with facts.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
This chapter discusses the methodology that the researcher employed in the study. The chapter includes a discussion on the research design that was to be adopted, data collection methods and data analysis techniques.

3.2 Research design
The study adopted a case study research design in establishing the influence of decision making process in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and also was important in enabling the research to obtain disruptive information about the concept in this study. The case study assisted in attaining an in-depth knowledge on the concept.

The research data was obtained from three administrative heads; The dean of students, the director of school of human resource and the finance director.

3.3 Data collection
Primary data was collected for the purpose of this study. Primary data is information gathered directly from the respondents (Kothari, 2004). The primary data was useful in a case study as it was to provide an in-depth view, and also only primary source of data could provide the information needed in this study.

The data was collected by use of an interview guide that was to guide the interviewer in administering questions to the respondent. The interview guide enabled the researcher to
prepare for an in-depth and well planned interview without being constrained to specific questions. This study was about the strategic decision making process and its influence, the study involved the part of the top administration of the university, that included the Dean, registrar and head of department.

3.4 Data analysis

The data obtained from the interview guide was analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is the systematic qualitative description of the composition of the objects or materials of the study. It involves observation and detailed description of objects, items or things that comprise the object study.

This approach was more appropriate for the study because it allowed for deep, sense detailed accounts in changing conditions, thus the qualitative method was suitable for this research because this research was conducted within the environment where implementation initiative occurred.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the strategic decision making process in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and also to identify the factors that influence strategic decision making in the University. Data was successfully collected from total of three respondents through an interview guide. This study was able to achieve a 75% response rate since the targeted number of respondent was 4.

4.2 Strategic decision making process

The study sought to find the key strategic decision making process adopted by Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. The study found out key areas among which strategic decision were made include; Student enrolment, Academic programs, number of graduates, staff establishment, infrastructure development, research and innovations, linkages and partnerships, community extension, technology transfer, institutional management and resource requirements.

The research also established that in order to the prevailing national development agenda, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology had to review her strategic plan (2004-2014) that ultimately impact the strategic decision made so as to align it to the medium – term rolling plan of the vision 2030 and other relevant national development policies. The review was subject to rigorous analysis by the deans’ committee, senate and university council. While as provided for under Clause 11 (1 and 2) of the JKUAT Act,
1994, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology is headed by a Chancellor. A University Council comprising distinguished leaders and professionals govern the University. The Vice Chancellor is the Chief Executive Officer of the University, and is assisted by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, (Academic Affairs), the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research, Production and Extension) and the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration Planning and Development). The organizational structure facilitates maximization of resources with training and research as core functions.

The study established that the process of strategic decision making presents a review detailing the fundamental statements of the vision, mission, mandate, core functions, and statement of principles, values proposition, policy priorities, current organisational structure, current funding and the achievements of university.

The study established that the vision of statement of Jomo Kenyatta university of agriculture and technology played a key part in the process of strategic decision making. The vision statement for JKUAT is “A university of global excellence in training, research and innovation for development”. The mission statement of Jomo Kenyatta university of agriculture and technology is “to offer accessible quality training, research and innovation in order to produce leaders in the fields of agriculture, engineering, technology, enterprise development, built environment, health sciences and other applied sciences to suit the needs of a dynamic world”. The mandate and core functions of Jomo Kenyatta University of agriculture and technology is to provide quality education and training and to stimulate intellectual participation of students and staff. The core values constitute the fundamental beliefs that drive the university, these beliefs are upheld because they define the expected standard of behaviour and culture. The values guide the
university to achieve the transformation of human conduct in governance and management practices.

The study established that the process of strategic decision making preliminary begin with briefing sessions held with the heads of departments, faculties, schools, directorates, centres, principles of campuses, deputy vice chancellors and the vice chancellor who provide the first opportunity for rapid situational as from each of the analysis to underscore the outstanding issues and determine the expected outcomes of the strategic decision making. To guide the review process a strategic plan review committee (SPRC) consisting of component and acknowledged practitioner from each of the three administrative divisions of the university and the directorate of performance is consulted in case of strategic plan.

The study also confirmed that strategic decision making process in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology remains committed to the core values of the university which include quality; which ensures adoption and adherence to systems and processes that meet and exceed customers’ expectations. Teamwork; to in calculate and practice a participatory approach in the conduct of all activities and operations of the university. Professionalism; to ensure and maintain high standards in the discharge of responsibility and delivery of services. Innovation; adapt and utilize latest and appropriate technology and practice in achieving efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. Dynamism; by demonstrating initialize and responsiveness to changing trends in service provision.
The study established that the process of strategic decision making essentially begins with thorough generating strategic direction through the identification of issues such as number and quality of students, increase in academic programmes offered, number and quality of graduates, institutional capacity enhancement, quality of distribution of infrastructure, number and quality of research and innovations, institutional management, institutional resources and linkages and partnerships. This initial phase was realised to be key in the determination of the change sought out, it also included quantifying of the benefits to be attained by the strategic decisions made. A more realistic approach and was set for any strategic decision to be undertaken with the element of time-stretch considered, while holding the knowledge that the outcome of such strategic decision may take years for its benefits to be realised.

The findings from the study revealed that the head of departments and directors were tasked with being in the front line as they were at the executive level to drive the convergence initiative. It was found out that the root for most strategic decision emanated from the response communicated by them. The directors and heads of different departments identified the areas and issues that needed change and that were beyond their level of decision making, once the areas and issues had been identified it was upon them to escalate this to the deans’ committee.

It was clear from the study that communication in strategic decision making played a key part, this was identified in the vast consultation that took place within and with key stakeholders. The communications were regular and updates were made during departmental meetings and board meetings as they were deemed appropriate for the business. The issues raised were analysed by the deans’ committee who forward them to
the senate and eventually end up with the university council. This form of communication did not stop here and through consultation was adopted depending on the issues raised, the university further sought to hire or find assistance from experts in the industry. The university also sought to benchmark itself with other institutions across the region, so as to have an overview of where or what direction to undertake on certain issues.

The study also revealed in more practical terms, that leadership and governance in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology highly influenced Strategic decision making process as the authority to make decisions about fundamental policies were bestowed to those in governance of the institution. Heads of institutions are normally vested with the largest degree of individual formal authority and responsibility within the universities. In Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, the instruments and articles of government or statutes stipulate that the leader is directly responsible for the day-to-day management of the university, which includes directing and leading the university and its staff, determining academic activities in consultation with the academic board or senate and managing the budget and resources. The head is also the academic leader of the university, being chair of the academic board or senate, and in addition is responsible for representing academic interests internally.

4.3 Factors that affect strategic decision

The study established that the government nominates most members of the university councils, while academic staff and students’ representatives to councils are usually elected by their respective constituencies, key members of the councils, such as the chairman, deputy, the minister for education, and permanent secretaries of ministries dealing with universities are nominated by the Chancellor. This system of university
council governance has seriously undermined public universities’ autonomy and academic freedom and thus interfering with strategic decision making. The government has on many occasions used the councils to order university closures, and to implement government directives in the number of students to be admitted, and terms and conditions of service for university staff, teaching and travel agendas. The Chancellor appoints and dismisses vice-chancellors who in a majority of cases are not necessarily the most administratively and academically able, but those deemed to be politically loyal to the establishment from within the ranks of academic staff. The Chancellor’s powers have extended to the appointment of other key university administrators, this has led to the greatly to undermining strategic decision making in the university.

The study also found out that the economic factor in the university tremendously influenced the strategic decision making process, for instance in 2007, the Kenyan economy grew by 6.3% from 0.6% in 2002. The growth rate has since dropped to 1.7% in 2012. On the other hand, the inflation rate has shot up from around 30% to 48% per annum over the same period. Used as economic indicators, these fluctuations impact negatively on the demand for education and government support extended to higher education. By extension, the high inflation rate affects the ability of the students to access basic needs, compromising their academic lives. At institutional level, the increase in the student enrolment has not been matched by the desired government expenditure on universities. JKUAT has increasingly been compelled to address its funding shortfall from alternative efforts; this in regard has led to difficulty in strategic decision making and thus has highly influence the process of strategic decision making in general.
The research also determined that environmental factors also had an impact and influence in strategic decision making. The study found out that with the anticipated population growth it is likely to impact adversely on environment besides demands for further exploitation of the natural resources. These natural resources are inclusive of utilization of expansive land resource. The dynamic environment that JKUAT was serving was under the adverse effects of climate change, and it being an agricultural centre this had impact on the research being carried out in the University. This further complicated the strategic decision process being undertaken in the institution by posing a question of how to deal with the issue of climate change together with the land issue.

The importance of technology, along with its key components of information and communication to Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture cannot be over emphasised. The University boast of being the leading in technological advancement in the country and even in the region. The study established that over the last years there have been major strategic decision made towards technological advancement that have been marked by rapid improvement in ICT infrastructure. Further efforts have been on development and implementation of national and regional policies and regulations aimed at effective governance of sectors as well as growing investor interest. Ultimately, the recognition that information is a resource -which must be generated, collected, organized, leveraged, secured and presented to enhance national prosperity - underscores the central role of the university. Under the Kenya Vision 2030, JKUAT ICT incubators have been identified to collaborate projects under which the Government intends to implement a project to assemble laptops for the national and regional market. This has greatly influenced the strategic decision being made in the institution for the last three years in regards to Information Technology department.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction
This chapter deals with the summary, conclusions, recommendations and areas for further research. This study set to achieve the objectives: To find out the decision making process in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and To determine the factors that influence decision making Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. The chapter further provides possible areas of further research in order to provide guidance to future researchers on Strategic decision making, based on the objectives an interview guide was developed and used to gather the data and the data collected was analysed using content analysis. In this chapter, the findings of research are summarized and conclusions drawn.

5.2 Summary of Findings
Most of the strategic decisions made at the institution were functional level decisions and which are mostly for implementation. It is clear then that the respondents were referring to their level of decision making. Given that majority of the respondents were not involved in strategic decision making, and that there were staff who felt they should be involved in decision making, autocratic leadership at the university was evident as a style.
This research project was aimed at investigating the role of strategic decision making in strategic management and various issues as related to strategic decision making process from the finding, from the findings, majority of the staff were not involved in decision making process. Most strategic decisions were made at deans’ committee and at the
council Board Level while some were made by directors and head of departments. While most strategic decisions made were moderately fast to address the issues at hand. Those who at least made decisions had faced dilemmas and personal preferences were the most in occurrence though the respondents felt that information for decision making was not fairly available or sometimes available.

From the findings, most of the staff members were not involved in strategic decision making but were aware of the consequences of those decisions. Most of the strategic decisions were fairly well received, the university communicates its information and decisions by memos and sometimes orally. The study found out that information for strategic decision making was not available but sometimes available, it goes without saying that the university only communicates information needed for implementation and the rest is lock and key. This information is communicated through memos to the relevant staff for implementation.

The study established once the council had come up with strategic decisions, the process of communicating the decisions began. The strategic decision made was first communicated to the deans committee who later transfer the strategic decision made to the respective head of department and school heads. The process of communicating the strategic decision was critical and thus formal letters and memos were the most convenient and desirable modes of communication. Once the strategic decision had been communicated to the heads, they were now able to communicate the decisions to other members of staff to the non-teaching and teaching. The study also established that the deans were to communicate such stage decision to the student leaders and other students through memos and newsletter.
5.3 Conclusion

Since the study revealed that the majority of staff is and other stakeholders are not involved in formulation of the decisions and that the Management Board makes key decisions, it is apparent that problems are reported by clerks to their supervisors who then pass them on to higher levels of management until they reach the Management Council. The management council then deliberates and decides on the solutions and makes decisions which are then passed on to the low level personnel for interpretation (directors) and implementation by the head of departments.

The institution prides itself of staff that has stayed with them for years and obviously has done whatever is possible to recruit, train them for that long. These staff members seemingly climb up the ladder to the level of making strategic decisions at the management board level. This in essence motivates them to stay on their respective jobs and make sure the strategic decisions of the management board are interpreted and implemented accordingly and efficiently, for these they hope to climb up the ladder and make such decisions. These two factors influence the strategic decision making at the institution.

5.4 Recommendations

From the study, the researcher recommends that the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture Managements involves its members of staff in making strategic decision, through this, the staff will feel part of the organization and will be in a position to provide their input towards decision making.
The university should also implement methods through which information towards strategic decision making will be provided to the employees and other stakeholders like students to avoid retaliation through aggressive tactics like strikes and go-slow. Through this, the members will be able to assess the information available in relation to the decisions in question.

Given that from the respondents most staff were aware of strategic decision making process at the institution, its goes without saying that the communication within the university was sufficient to allow good governance of the institution. Given too that the strategic decisions of management board were received fairly and that they always assessed the effects of the decisions during implementation, it is clear that the university community were aware of the consequences of the decisions.

5.5 Limitation of the study

This study was a case study and therefore it was concentrated on one institution it being JKUAT, this therefore limited the findings to one institution and not all aspects of strategic decision making was investigated.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

Therefore, in connection with further research, the researcher recommends that a similar study be undertaken which should include three or more institution for comparison purpose.

The researcher would also recommend that a study be done to investigate the comparison between strategic decision making in institutions of higher learning and other institutions.
REFERENCES


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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Letter of Introduction

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
MBA PROGRAMME

DATE: 14/8/13

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

KAGATHI KEVIN KIMANJII
Registration No. D61 179349/2011

is a bona fide continuing student in the Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree program in this University.

He/she is required to submit as part of his/her coursework assessment a research project report on a management problem. We would like the students to do their projects on real problems affecting firms in Kenya. We would, therefore, appreciate your assistance to enable him/her collect data in your organization.

The results of the report will be used solely for academic purposes and a copy of the same will be availed to the interviewed organizations on request.

Thank you.

PATRICK NYABUTO
MBA ADMINISTRATOR
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
Appendix II: Interview Guide

This interview guide is for the purpose of collecting information on strategic decision making at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. The interview guide will assist the researcher in accomplishing academic goals.

Part A: Respondent

1. Job title/Position

   Director [ ]  Manager/Dean [ ]

   Assistant manager/Dept Head [ ]  Officer [ ]

   Assistant officer [ ]  Clerk [ ]

   Other (specify) ........................................

2. Division

   Administration [ ]

   Finance, Planning & Development [ ]

   Academic [ ]

3. Duration in Department

   Less than one year [ ]  1 – 3 years [ ]

   4 – 7 years [ ]  8 – 10 years [ ]

   Over 10 years [ ]
Part B

**Strategic Decision making process**

1. Who makes key strategic decisions in the university?
2. What is the process of strategic decision making process?
3. At what levels are strategic decisions made?
4. What are the decisions making aids in the institution?
5. What is the speed of strategic decision making in the university?
6. What are the challenges faced in the decision making process?

Part C

**Factors influencing strategic decision making process**

1. What are the factors influencing strategic decision making?
2. How personalized are the strategic decision made?
3. What is the process of strategic decision implementation?
4. How involved are you in the implementation of strategic decision making?