

**THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN STRATEGY  
IMPLEMENTATION AT THE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION (ADC) IN KENYA**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and to the best of my knowledge has not been presented for award of a degree in any institution of higher learning. No part of this research shall be produced without my consent or that of the University of Nairobi.

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University of Nairobi supervisor.

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## **DEDICATION**

This research work is dedicated to my dear parents; the late Mr. Samuel Mutai and Mrs. Elizabeth Mutai for their hard work and sacrifice to give me an enduring inheritance and the life that I enjoy today.

## ABSTRACT

There is a growing recognition that the most important problems in strategic management are not related to strategy formulation, but rather strategy implementation. Putting the strategy into effect and getting the organization moving in the direction of strategy accomplishment is a critical phase of strategic management process. This is the **strategy implementation** stage. It is a process by which strategies and policies are put into action through development of programs, budgets, and procedures.

Leadership, and specifically strategic leadership has been identified as one of the key drivers of effective strategy implementation. The leadership's role is all important because its agenda for action and conclusion about how hard or fast to push for change are decisive in shaping the character of the implementation and moving the process along. Strategic leadership is the ability to influence a group towards the achievement of goals, and successful strategy implementation thus depends upon the leadership skills of working through others, organizing, motivating, culture building, establishing strategic controls, and creating strong fits between strategy and how the organization does things to ultimately achieve organizational goals.

The objective of this study was to investigate the role played by strategic leadership in strategy implementation at the Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC). ADC is government parastatal established in 1965 through an Act of parliament and whose functions were later redefined in Cap 444 Act of Parliament of 1986 to include promotion and execution of agricultural schemes, production of essential agricultural inputs, initiation and expansion of agricultural undertakings and enterprises, transfer of technology from research institution the Kenyan farmer, as well as training of farmers in specific areas of agricultural production. The corporation has a crucial role in contributing towards poverty alleviation efforts as well as national food security.

The study was conducted through a case study in which data was gathered from primary sources through interviews. The respondents were drawn from two key departments; the Finance and Technical (Strategy Implementation & Planning)

divisions which are very instrumental in strategy implementation at the corporation. The data collected was analysed and evaluated for usefulness, consistency, credibility and adequacy through content analysis. The findings obtained from the study showed that strategic leadership plays a very critical role in the effective implementation of strategy at the corporation. Its role stirs commitment among people within the organization to embrace change and implement strategies intended to achieve the strategic vision. Strategic leadership role in strategy implementation include determination of strategic direction, building an organization, shaping effective organizational culture, effective management of organization's resource portfolio, enforcement of ethical compliance, communicating strategy, development of short-term objectives and operational plans as well as establishment of balanced organizational controls, to mention a few.

The recommendations made by this study will be valuable to the organization under study, the government, scholars, academicians, and any other organization or individual who may want to use the information obtained from the study.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>DEDICATION .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of the Study .....	1
1.1.1 Strategy Implementation .....	2
1.1.2 Strategic Leadership.....	2
1.1.3 The Role of Strategic Leadership in Strategy Implementation.....	3
1.1.4 The Agricultural Sector in Kenya.....	4
1.1.5 The Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC) .....	6
1.2 Research Problem .....	8
1.3 Research Objectives .....	9
1.4 Value of the Study .....	9
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	11
2.2 Strategy Implementation.....	11
2.3 Strategic Leadership .....	16
2.4 The Role of Strategic Leadership in Strategy Implementation.....	19
<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>24</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	24
3.2 Research Design .....	24
3.3 Data Collection.....	24
3.4 Data Analysis .....	24
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS, &amp; DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>26</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	26
4.2 The Role of Strategic Leadership In Strategy Implementation at ADC .....	26
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY,CONCLUSION, &amp; RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>34</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	35
5.2 Summary of Findings .....	35
5.3 Conclusion .....	37
5.4 Recommendations with Policy Implications .....	38
5.5 Limitation of the Study.....	39
5.6 Recommendations for Further Research .....	3

<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
Appendix I: INTERVIEW GUIDE .....	I



# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Pearce and Robinson (2007) view strategic management as the set of decisions and actions that result in the formulation, implementation, and control of plans designed to achieve an organization's vision, mission, and strategic objectives. Although strategy implementation is usually considered after strategy has been formulated, implementation is a key part of strategic management process (Wheelen & Hunger, 2008). Daft (2009), states that even the most creative strategies have no value if they cannot be translated into action.

Leadership, and specifically strategic leadership has been identified as one of the key drivers of effective strategy implementation. Thompson, Strickland, and Gamble (2007) are emphatic that the leadership's role is all important because its agenda for action and conclusion about how hard or fast to push for change are decisive in shaping the character of the implementation and moving the process along. In the words of Chapman (2004), leadership is the common thread which runs through the entire process of translating strategy into results and is the key to engaging the hearts and minds of people.

The Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC), though has been in existence for years, seems to be struggling to discharge its mandate fully and remain competitive. Irrespective of its very elaborate and seemingly good strategic plans, its role in the agricultural sector is yet to be felt in the country. The corporation's apparent failure to

attain some of its core strategic objectives seems to be a pointer to strategic leadership problems in its strategy implementation efforts. Several identifiable strategic leadership actions that positively contribute to effective strategy implementation can play a vital role in strategy implementation at the ADC.

### **1.1.1 Strategy Implementation**

Once the course of strategy has been charted, the manager's priorities swing to converting the chosen strategic plan into actions and good results (Thompson et al., 2008). Putting the strategy into effect and getting the organization moving in the direction of strategy accomplishment is a critical phase of strategic management process. This is the **strategy implementation** stage.

Strategy implementation is a process by which strategies and policies are put into action through development of programs, budgets, and procedures. The process is sometimes referred to as operational planning and often involves day-to-day decisions in resource allocation (Wheelen & Hunger, 2008). Thompson et al. (2008) concur with this view that strategy implementation is an operations-oriented; make-things-happen activity aimed at performing core business activities in a strategy supportive manner. Daft (2009), states that strategy gives a company a competitive edge only if it is skilfully executed through the decisions and actions of front line managers and employees.

### **1.1.2 Strategic Leadership**

According to Pearce and Robinson (2007), strategic leadership is about coping with change; and more changes always demands more leadership. Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (2007) define strategic leadership as the leader's ability to anticipate, envision, and maintain flexibility to empower others to create strategic change as necessary; it involves managing through others. It is the process of allocating resources to support the chosen strategies. This process includes the various management activities that are necessary to put strategy in motion, institutes strategic controls that monitor progress, and ultimately achieve organizational goals (Barnat, 2007).

Capon (2008) defines strategic leadership as the ability to influence a group towards the achievement of goals. He further states that good leadership has strategic vision and is persuasive at implementing strategy to achieve tangible results. Lynch (2009) is of the view that strategic leadership typically involves communicating with and listening to those inside the organization with the aim of spreading knowledge, creating and innovating new areas and solutions to problems.

Indeed strategic leadership has been described as one of the key drivers of effective strategy implementation. Thompson et al. (2007) emphasizes that there can be no doubt that effective organizational leadership and the consistency of a strong organizational culture are two central ingredients in enabling successful execution of a firm's strategies and objectives. 'Weak leadership can wreck the soundest strategy; forceful execution of even a poor plan can often bring victory' (qtd. in Thompson et al., 2007)

### **1.1.3 The Role of Strategic Leadership in Strategy Implementation**

Strategic management involves long-term, future oriented, complex decision-making and requires considerable resources, and therefore top-management participation is essential (Pearce & Robinson, 2008). Wheelen and Hunger (2008), point out that poor strategy implementation has been blamed for a number of strategic failures and one of the most mentioned problems is lack of top management commitment.

The leadership challenge is to galvanize commitment among people within an organization as well as stakeholders outside the organization to embrace change and implement strategies intended to position the organization to succeed in a vastly different future. Leaders galvanize commitment to embrace change through three interrelated activities: clarifying strategic intent, building an organization, and shaping organizational culture (Pearce & Robinson, 2007). Good strategy execution requires a team effort (Wheelen & Hunger, 2008). Successful strategy implementation thus depends upon the leadership skills of working through others, organizing, motivating, culture building, and creating strong fits between strategy and how the organization does things (Thompson et al., 2008).

### **1.1.4 The Agricultural Sector in Kenya**

Agriculture remains the economic base for the majority of the poor in Africa as it constitutes a key economic sector in most African countries and its importance in poverty reduction and sustainable development cannot be overstressed. The European Union (2007), as cited by Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development (2008) states that agriculture accounts for about a third of Africa's GDP, while in

many countries the sector provides 60-90% of employment. According to the Kenyan Government, agriculture is still the backbone of the Kenyan economy as it directly contributes 26% of the GDP and 60 % of the export earnings. The sector also indirectly contributes a further 27% to the GDP through linkages with manufacturing, distribution and service related sectors. It accounts for 60% of total national employment, with women providing 75% of labour force. In Kenya, 80% of the population, whose majority is poor lives in the rural areas and derives their livelihood from agriculture (Republic of Kenya, 2004).

It is estimated that 50.6% of Kenyan population is food insecure and because the livelihoods of such large numbers of food insecure households in rural areas are based on agriculture, improving agricultural productivity and increasing farmers' incomes are key to achieving food security and improved nutritional status (Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development, 2008). Consequently, if investments in Kenya's agriculture can address blockages in key value chains from farm-level productivity, to improved access to markets, building sustainable business models, and creating a conducive enabling environment for the private sector, the country could grow its economy, address food insecurity and reduce poverty (US Government, 2011, June 8).

Despite the important role agriculture plays in economic development in Kenya and past efforts to steer it, it has continued to perform poorly due to various constraints. Factors that continue to constrain the growth of agriculture as detailed in the Strategy for Revitalizing Agriculture (SRA) policy paper include among others; unfavourable macro-economic environment, inappropriate legal and regulatory framework, lack of

capital and access to affordable credit to finance inputs and capital, reduced effectiveness of extension services, low absorption of modern technology, poor governance and corruption in key institutions supporting, inadequate markets and marketing infrastructure, high cost and increased adulteration of key inputs such as seed and especially fertilizers, pests and diseases, and poor infrastructure (Republic of Kenya, 2004)

In order to address the constraints highlighted above, the government developed the Strategy for Revitalizing Agriculture (SRA) in 2004 that proposed modernization and mechanization of the farm structures, improvement of the infrastructure, increase in agricultural services and the improvement of access to markets as strategies to revitalize the sector. In 2007, the government developed Vision 2030 as the successor of the ERS. Within this vision, agriculture and livestock are identified among the six priority sectors that promise to raise the country's GDP (Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development, 2008). Undoubtedly, the performance of the Kenyan economy is closely tied to the performance of the agricultural sector and for the country to grow its economy, address food insecurity and reduce poverty, strategic leadership is of paramount importance in the implementation of various strategies that have been drawn and geared towards leveraging the sector.

### **1.1.5 The Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC)**

The Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC) is government parastatal established in 1965 through an Act of parliament, Cap 346, to facilitate the land transfer programme from European settlers to locals following the country's independence. Its functions were later redefined in Cap 444 Act of Parliament of 1986

to include promotion and execution of agricultural schemes, production of essential agricultural inputs, initiation and expansion of agricultural undertakings and enterprises, transfer of technology from research institution the Kenyan farmer, as well as training of farmers in specific areas of agricultural production (Agricultural Development Corporation, 2010, April).

As detailed in its website (<http://www.adc.co.ke>), the corporation has a crucial role in contributing towards poverty alleviation efforts as well as national food security. As a provider of seed to the Kenyan farmer, its key function is to facilitate the multiplication of seed and ensure that sufficient quantities and good quality seed is available to the farmer. ADC is also the custodian of the national livestock studs, and ensures the continued existence of the breeds and the availability of quality stock to the Kenyan farmer at affordable prices. Its other important role is the transfer of technology and research findings to the farmer. It also plays a major role in supporting industries processing agricultural goods.

Unfortunately, over the years, farmers particularly in major maize growing areas have been left panicking over lack of maize seeds and delayed arrival of fertilizers. There also have been rampant cases of poor harvests or complete crop failure due to either unsuitable or adulterated seed varieties, application of old farming methods to new seeds, or pests and diseases causing high levels losses both to crops and livestock alike. This coupled with the high cost of fuel and transport has meant that farmers find it hard to invest in food production, and the net effect has been food deficit in the country (Kariuki, 2011, August, Obare, 2011, April 19, & Staff, 2012, February 23). In May 2008 for example, the government had to import 3 million bags of maize

through the NCPB to bridge the shortage. For ADC to attain its strategic objectives as outlined in its 2010-2015 Strategic Plan and better its performance in delivering its mandate, effective strategy implementation is paramount, hence the need to establish the role of strategic leadership in strategy implementation at the corporation.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

Implementing strategy poses the tougher more time-consuming management challenge and practitioners are emphatic in saying that it is a whole lot easier to develop a sound strategic plan than it is to ‘make it happen’ (Thompson & Strickland, 1989). Enormous time, energy, and resources go to strategy development, but many organizations have little to show for the effort, largely due to poor implementation. Wheelen and Hunger (2008), argue that poor implementation of strategy has been blamed for a number of strategic failures with lack of top management commitment being one of the most mentioned problems.

Strategic leadership has been widely described as one of the key drivers of effective strategy implementation that has a vital role in leading and key-noting the tone, pace, and style of strategy implementation. Effective strategic leadership actions enable organizations to successfully use strategic management processes which culminate in strategic competitiveness and above average returns (Hitt et al. 2007)

ADC has in the past and even now, faces enormous challenges including high prices of agricultural inputs, unpredictable weather patterns, diseases in crops and livestock, political unpredictability and high cost of finance (Agricultural Development Corporation, 2010, April). As the government’s body responsible for agricultural



development, the corporation has laid strategies in its current strategic plan of 2010 /2015 that seeks to address these challenges and also see the farmer embrace agriculture as a business endeavour.

Various scholars have carried out research on different aspects of strategy implementation, with many in the recent past focusing on the challenges of strategy implementation in state owned corporations. The scholars include; Ayabei (2010), Atandi (2010), Acholla (2010), and Kapto (2009), among others. However, no known recent study exists on the role of strategic leadership in effective strategy implementation at the ADC. Given its vital role in the agricultural sector, there is need for an in-depth study on the role of strategic leadership in effective strategy implementation at the corporation. The research question that will be addressed in this study is: What role does strategic leadership play in strategy implementation at the ADC?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The objective of this study is to investigate the role played by strategic leadership in strategy implementation at the ADC.

### **1.4 Value of the Study**

The study will be of great value to ADC as it will document the role of strategic leadership in strategy implementation at the corporation, and this will help the corporation to identify gaps in its strategic leadership that need to be improved for effective strategy implementation. Similarly, the Government of Kenya will benefit from the gathered information to enhance strategic leadership in its corporations for effective implementation of various strategies in such organizations.

The study will also contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of strategic management, particularly the subject of strategic leadership in strategy implementation. Thus it will provide reference for other researchers conducting similar studies.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews literature on the subject of study summarizing information from other researchers who have carried out research in the same field. The areas covered include the concepts of strategy implementation and strategic leadership, and the role of strategic leadership in strategy implementation.

### **2.2 Strategy Implementation**

Once corporate and business strategies have been agreed upon and long-term objectives set, the strategic management process moves into a critical new phase- ‘translating strategic thought into organizational action (Pearce & Robinson, 2005). Here, the managerial priority is one of converting the strategy into operationally effective action (Chapman, 2004). Wheelen and Hunger define strategy implementation as the sum total of the activities and choices required for the execution of a strategic plan. It is the process by which objectives, strategies and policies are put into action through the development of programs, budgets and procedures (Wheelen & Hunger, 2008). Chapman (2004) views strategy implementation as the process through which a chosen strategy is put into action. It involves design and management of systems to achieve the best integration of people, structure, processes, and resources in achieving organizational objectives.

The above definitions seem to agree with Strickland’s view. He views the process as an operations-driven activity revolving around the management of people and

business processes, and entails figuring out all the specific techniques, actions, and behaviours that are needed for a smooth strategy-supportive operation, and then following through to get things done and deliver results (Strickland et al., 2008). Chapman (2004) observes that many corporations struggle to translate the theory into action plans that will enable the strategy to be successfully implemented and sustained. He says that most organizations know their businesses, and the strategies required for success but many repeatedly fail to truly motivate their people to work with enthusiasm, all together, towards the corporate aims.

There is a growing recognition that the most important problems in strategic management are not related to strategy formulation, but rather strategy implementation. No scheme for implementing strategy can foresee all the events and problems that will arise in the course of the strategy implementation process. However, successful strategy implementation depends largely on some important factors considered key drivers of this critical process. Some of these factors are discussed below.

### **2.2.1 Organizational Structure**

Pearce and Robinson are emphatic that for effective strategy execution and success, there must be an effective organizational structure in place. Such structure must reflect an external focus, flexible interaction, interdependency, as well as a bottom-up approach. Structure helps to identify the firm's key activities and the manner in which they will be coordinated to achieve the firm's strategic purpose. Successful strategy implementation depends largely on the firm's primary organizational structure. A primary organizational structure comprises of the firm's major elements, components,

or differentiated units and such structure portrays how key tasks and activities have been divided to achieve efficiency and effectiveness (Pearce & Robinson, 1982, 2005). According to the authors, however, there is no one best organizational structure, but structural considerations should be guided by strategic priorities and initiatives, rather than the other way round.

### **2.2.2 Organizational Culture**

Organizational culture refers to the set of important assumptions (often unstated) that members of an organization share in common. It is an intangible, ever present theme that provides meaning, direction, and the basis for action (Pearce & Robinson, 2005). Organizational culture can also be defined as the character of a company's internal work climate and personality as shaped by its core values, beliefs, business principles, traditions, behaviours, work practices, and styles of operating. A culture grounded in strategy-supportive values, practices and behavioural norms adds significantly to the power and effectiveness of a company's strategy execution effort. When an organization's culture is out of sync with the actions and behaviours needed to execute the strategy successfully, the culture has to be changed as rapidly as can be managed (Strickland et al. 2005, 2008).

### **2.2.3 Resource Allocation in the organization**

A company's ability to marshal the resources needed to support new strategic initiatives has a major impact on the strategy implementation process. Firms have multiple resources that can be categorized as financial capital, human capital, social capital, as well as organizational capital. Organizational units must have budgets and

financial resources for executing their parts of the strategic plan effectively and efficiently. Too little funding slows progress and impedes the efforts of organizational units to execute their pieces of the strategic plan proficiently. Too much funding wastes organizational resources and reduces financial performance (Strickland et al., 2008).

According to Hitt, human capital, which refers to knowledge and skills of a firm's entire workforce, is an important resource to be maximized to facilitate the successful implementation of a firm's strategies. Top-level managers are particularly an important resource for firms seeking to formulate and implement plans effectively. The strategic decisions made by top-level managers, influence how the firm is designed and whether or not goals will be achieved. Thus, having a top-management team with superior managerial skills is a critical element in strategy implementation. Social capital is equally important in strategy implementation. It involves relationships inside and outside the firm that help the firm accomplish its tasks (Hitt et al. (2007).

#### **2.2.4 Policies and Procedures**

Pearce and Robinson (1982), points out that to ensure that decision-making is consistent with the mission, strategy, and tactics of the business while the at the same time allowing considerable latitude to operating personnel, there must be policies in place. He defines policies as directives designed to guide the thinking, decisions, and actions of managers and their subordinates in implementing a firm's strategy. A change in strategy or a push for better strategy implementation requires some changes in work practices and the behaviour of the company and personnel. To promote such

changes, instituting a select set of new policies and procedures aimed at steering the actions and behaviour in the direction more conducive to good strategy execution and operation excellence is key. Well conceived policies and procedures aid strategy execution (Strickland et al., 2008).

### **2.2.5 Information System of the Organization**

Information is the glue that holds strategy together (Rowe, Mason, Dickel, Mann, & Mocker, 1994). According to the authors, information systems are required to inform members of the strategies, policies, programs, and plans to be followed, to provide the data that members need to make decisions and take appropriate actions, and to track and measure performance. And if strategy is to be implemented successfully, the organization's information system must be designed and operated in such a way as to get the right information to the right person at the right time. A well-conceived, state-of-the-art information system not only enables better strategy execution but also strengthens organizational capabilities. Accurate and timely information about daily operations is essential if managers are to gauge how well the strategy execution process is proceeding. Real-time information systems permit managers to stay on top of implementation initiatives and intervene if things seem to be drifting off course (Strickland, et al., 2008)

### **2.2.6 Compensation/ Reward System**

One writer; in Pearce et al. (2011) states that companies can succeed by clarifying their business vision or strategy and aligning company pay programs with its strategic direction. Compensation serves as incentives for executives to reach the firms goals.

According to Strickland et al. (2008), to get employees' sustained, energetic commitment, management has to be resourceful in designing and using motivational incentives both monetary and non-monetary. They are emphatic that properly designed reward structure is management's most powerful tool for mobilizing organizational commitment to successful strategy execution. Financial incentives, valuing employees' ideas and suggestions, creating a positive work atmosphere, sharing strategic vision, and sharing information are all geared towards gaining whole-hearted employee commitment to good strategy execution and operating excellence.

### **2.2.7 Organizational Leadership/ Strategic Leadership**

Kotter (1990); in Pearce et al. (2005) distinguishes between management and leadership. In his view, management is about coping with complexity that comes with the emergence of large organizations. Leadership, by contrast, is about coping with change; and more changes always demand more leadership. Pearce et al. however, point out that leadership is about setting and not just reacting to agendas, identifying problems, and initiating change that makes for substantial improvement rather than managing change. Leadership challenge is to stir commitment among people within an organization to embrace change and implement strategies intended to position the organization to do so. Leaders galvanize commitment to embrace change and effective implementation of strategy through various interrelated strategic leadership roles which include clarifying strategic intent, building an organization, and shaping organizational culture to mention a few (Pearce & Robinson, 2005, 2008).

## **2.3 Strategic Leadership**



Strategic leadership is a complex balancing act between a number of factors. It involves coping with strategic pressures and changes in the environment outside the organization, at the same time entails managing the human resources inside the organization (Lynch, 2009). Rowe et al. (2001) defines strategic leadership as the ability to influence others to voluntarily make day- to-day decisions that enhance the long term viability of the organization while at the same time maintaining its short-term financial stability. He says strategic leadership presumes a shared vision of what an organization is to be, so that the day-to-day decision making or emergent strategy process is consistent with this vision. He points out that to be effective; the leader must be able to project her or his ideas into images that excite people in their work.

Davis (2004) defines strategic leaders as those who have organizational ability with strategic orientation; translate strategy into action; align people and organizations; determine effective strategic intervention points; and develop strategic competencies (Anti Essays, May 17, 2012). Zaleznick (1977), in Rowe et al. (2001) states that leaders make decisions that are systematic and pragmatic in marshalling resources, designing organizations, motivating workers, solving problems, and controlling activities. According to Hitt et al. (2007), the primary responsibility of effective strategic leadership in an organization rests at the top, in particular with the chief executive officer (CEO). But other commonly recognized strategic leaders include members of the board of directors (BOD), the top management team, and the divisional general managers. These strategic leaders have substantial decision-making responsibilities that cannot be delegated.

Strickland et al. however points out that a good strategy implementation requires a team effort and that all managers have strategy-execution responsibility in their areas of authority, and all employees are participants in the strategy execution process. Exerting take-charge leadership and achieving results thrusts a manager into a variety of leadership roles in managing the strategy execution process: resource acquirer and allocator, capabilities builder, motivator, policy-maker, and policy enforcer, to mention a few. If a company has a good strategy and the strategy execution effort is delivering the hoped-for results, the chances are excellent that the company has good strategic leadership (Strickland et al., 2007, 2008).

### **2.3.1 Strategic Leadership Actions that Shape the Strategy Implementation Process**

The task that shapes the outcome of efforts to execute a company's strategy is that of exerting the internal leadership needed to drive the implementation of strategic initiatives forward (Strickland et al., 2007). According to the authors, there are several identifiable strategic leadership actions that positively contribute to effective strategy implementation.

Staying on top of how well the strategy execution process is going and leading the process of making corrective adjustments is one of the crucial strategic leadership actions. To do this, a manager needs to develop a broad network of contacts and sources of information; and use the information gathered to confirm whether things are on track. Another leadership action is that of putting constructive pressure on the organization to achieve good results and operating excellence. Leaders must be out front in mobilizing organizational energy behind the drive for good strategy execution. Aside from leading efforts to strengthen existing competencies, development of new

competencies and capabilities is another key strategic leadership action. Leaders must also display ethical integrity and lead social responsibility initiatives. Managerial efforts to identify and adopt best practices are also an important and powerful tool for promoting operational excellence and better strategy execution (Strickland et al., 2007).

## **2.4 The Role of Strategic Leadership in Strategy Implementation**

Real leadership is required to compete effectively and deliver growth. People look to leaders to bring meaning, to make sense of the seemingly unquenchable demand for results and the need for individuals to find purpose and value (Chapman, 2004). Successful strategy implementation depends on doing a good job of working with and through others, building and strengthening competitive capabilities, motivating and rewarding people in a strategy supportive manner and instilling a discipline of getting things done (Strickland et al., 2008). The role of strategic leadership in strategy implementation is characterized by several identifiable functions discussed below, many of which interact with each other.

### **2.4.1 Determination of the Strategic Direction**

This involves developing a long-term vision of the firm's strategic intent. The envisioned future serves as a guide to many aspects of a firm's strategy implementation process including motivation, leadership, employee empowerment, and organizational design (Hitt et al., 2007). According to Pearce and Robinson (2005), the job of a good leader, in clarifying strategic intent is to paint a picture of that intent in future terms and in setting sound performance expectations. Chapman

(2004) says that the objective is for everyone in the organisation to understand the strategy and specifically how what they are doing will contribute to overall delivery.

### **2.4.2 Building an Organization**

Leaders build and rebuild their organization to align it with the ever-changing environment and needs of the strategy (Pearce & Robinson, 2005). They build an organization in many ways including; ensuring a common understanding about organizational priorities, clarifying responsibilities, empowering managers and pushing authority lower in the organization, uncovering and remedying problems in coordination and communication across the organization, and gaining personal commitment to shared vision from managers throughout the organization. According to Bhasin (2010, February 13), in the absence of integration of all these components of organization building, the outcome may be confusion, misdirection and splintered effort within the organization.

### **2.4.3 Shaping an Effective organizational Culture and Climate**

Strickland et al. (2008) is emphatic that senior executives have to take lead in promoting certain enabling culture drivers such as a strong sense of involvement on the part of company personnel, emphasis on individual initiatives and creativity, respect for the contribution of individuals and groups, and pride in doing things right. He points out that culture-building objective is to create a work climate and style of operating that mobilizes the energy and behaviour of company personnel squarely behind efforts to execute strategy competently.

Organizational climate refers to the characteristics of internal environment that conditions the co-operation, the development of the individuals, the extent of commitment and dedication of people in the organization, and the efficiency with which the purpose is translated into results (Bhasin 2010, February 13). Organizations whose strategy is implemented with conducive climate are more effective than those whose are not.

#### **2.4.4 Effective Management of the Firm's Resource Portfolio**

Strategic leaders manage the firm's portfolio of resources by organizing them into capabilities, structuring the firm to use the capabilities, and developing and implementing a strategy to leverage those resources to achieve a competitive advantage (Hitt et al, 2007). Strickland et al. (2008) observe that proficient strategy implementation depends heavily on competent personnel, adequate competitive capabilities, and effective internal organization. Putting together a strong management team with the needed experience, technical skills, and intellectual capital and building core competencies and competitive capabilities is a critical leadership task. Pearce and Robinson (2005) mention that recruiting and developing talented operational leaders is one of the critical strategic leadership functions that drives the effective implementation of strategy.

#### **2.4.5 Enforcement of Ethical Compliance**

The effectiveness of processes used to implement the firm's strategies increases when they are based on ethical practices. According to Hitt et al. (2007), strategic leaders

who consistently display these qualities of trust, honesty, and integrity, inspires employees to develop and support an organizational culture in which ethical practices are the expected behavioural norms. The CEO and other senior executives must set an excellent example in their own ethical behavior demonstrating character and personal integrity in their actions and decision. Strickland et al. (2008) emphasizes that leaders must be prepared to act as the final arbiters on hard calls of punishing ethical misconduct and reprimanding laxity on the part of those in charge of monitoring and enforcing ethical compliance.

#### **2.4.6 Communication and Institutionalization of Strategy**

When managers articulate a vivid and compelling case for where the company is headed, organization members will find it interesting and having a lot of merit, evoking positive support and excitement and a greater impact in terms of a committed organizational effort to make it happen (Strickland et al. 2008). According to Bhasin, the first basic action that is required for putting a strategy into operation is its institutionalization. There is an urgent need for leaders to institutionalize the strategy because without it, the strategy is subject to being undermined. It is the role of the strategic leaders to present the strategy to the members of the organization in a way that appeals to them. This brings their support and creates commitment so essential for making strategy successful (Bhasin, 2010, February 13).

#### **2.4.7 Development of Short-term Objectives and Operating Plans**

Short-term objectives and functional tactics translate long-range aspirations into year's targets for action and business strategy into daily activities respectively. Pearce

and Robinson (2005) state that if well developed; these objectives provide clarity, a powerful motivator and facilitator of effective strategy implementation. Functional managers participate in the development of these tactics, and their participation helps to clarify what their units are expected to do in implementing the business strategy. Bhasin (2010, February 13) adds that if these plans are made to reflect desired strategic results, they contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives by focusing attention on those factors, which are important.

#### **2.4.8 Establishing Balanced Organizational Strategic Controls**

Hitt defines organizational strategic controls as formal, information-based procedures used by managers to maintain or alter patterns in organizational activities. He states that organizational controls are important part of strategy implementation process as they help ensure that firms achieve their desired outcomes. Most critically, controls provide the parameters within which strategies are to be implemented, as well as corrective actions to be taken when implementation-related adjustments are required (Hitt et al., 2007). Strickland et al. (2007) states that it is the responsibility of the leader to push corrective action when a company's strategy execution effort is not delivering good results and making measurable progress toward operating excellence.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research methodology that was applied in carrying out the study. It describes the research design, data collection method, and the techniques that were used for data analysis.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The study was conducted through a case study. A case study according to Kothari (2004) is a method of study in depth rather than breadth, an intensive investigation of the particular unit under considerations with emphasis on the full analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their interrelations. Being an in-depth study, the design allowed for an exhaustive investigation of the role of strategic leadership in strategy implementation at the Agricultural Development Corporation.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

Data for this study was gathered from primary sources. In order to obtain a broader view of the subject under study, two heads of department were interviewed. They were drawn from three departments charged with the responsibility of spearheading strategy implementation at the corporation namely; Technical, Corporate Planning and Administration, and Finance divisions.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The data collected was analysed through content analysis since most responses were qualitative in nature. This involved analyzing and evaluating data for usefulness,



consistency, credibility and adequacy (Kothari, (2004). This technique of data analysis has been used successfully by other researchers such as Ayabei (2010), Atandi (2010), Acholla (2010), and Kapto (2009).

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the analysis of data obtained, the findings of the study and discussion of the same with regard to the objective of the study. The data was collected through interviews, summarized, and analyzed using content analysis.

### **4.2 The Role of Strategic Leadership in Strategy Implementation at ADC**

In order to obtain a broader view of the subject under study, three respondents were identified for interview. The respondents were departmental heads drawn from three key departments namely; Technical division (Strategy Implementation & Planning), Corporate Planning & Administration, and Finance divisions. The three departments are charged with the responsibility of spearheading strategy implementation at the corporation. However, only two respondents were interviewed as one of them was out of the country at the time of the interview. Each of the two respondents interviewed had worked with ADC for more than 20 years; with each having at least 8 years experience in strategy implementation process at the corporation.

The objective of this study was to investigate the role of strategic leadership in strategy implementation at the Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC). The researcher collected primary data from the two respondents using an interview guide. For clear interpretation and understanding of the results, the content of the data was analyzed as they appear on the interview guide.

#### **4.2.1 Determination and Clarification of the Strategic Direction**

According to the respondents, employees of ADC understand the strategy being pursued and what they need to do to contribute to the overall delivery. They explained that the corporation's strategic plan outlines the organization's strategic themes, objectives, strategies and the implementation matrix; enabling employees to understand what is being pursued and follow the actions through. The leadership of the corporation spearheads the building of a common understanding and a clear view of the organization's strategic purpose and direction through strategic discussions which are cascaded down through all levels of management. Through participation and dialogue, employees at ADC have been motivated to understand the necessity for change and the importance of their commitment and effort to deliver the desired outcomes. This is supported by Hitt et al. (2007), who says that the envisioned future motivates and encourages employees to stretch beyond the expectations of accomplishments and serves as a guide to many aspects of a firm's strategy implementation process including motivation, leadership, employee empowerment, and organizational design.

In regard to the question of how the leadership ensures that members of the organization embrace and support strategy implementation, the respondents explained that strategic planning is a participatory process at the corporation and that this has enhanced the understanding and ownership of the strategy by the employees. Supervisors ensure that every employee under them understand the strategy and their roles in delivering the expected output. Every member of staff has a written job description which details their day to day duties and responsibilities as well as the reporting and organizational structure. There is a clear understanding by employees of

how their activities fit into the total organization. The study found out that effective communication of strategy through departmental meetings, sensitization and training of all members of the organization on the importance of the strategy being pursued, feedback through routine reporting and addressing identified gaps and challenges, are some of the other ways in which the corporation has ensured that members of the organization embrace and support strategy implementation.

#### **4.2.2 Building an Organization**

According to the interviewees, the current organizational structure is very supportive of strategy implementation. In 2004, changes were made in the organizational structure to facilitate the implementation of the 2004-2009 strategic plan, which was the first ever strategic plan in the history of the organization. The changes resulted in a more decentralized structure that saw the formation of three regional offices in Kitale, Nakuru and Kilifi headed by regional managers. Within this structure every department and regional offices were equipped with adequate staff with specialized technical skills to carry out the activities geared towards the attainment of the desired objectives.

The respondents explained that the structure has also allowed for the pushing down of power to the lower level to facilitate efficiency and effectiveness through faster decision making. Managers have been empowered to make independent decisions over matters within their jurisdiction; such as resource allocation, authorization of financial resources, procurement of assets, tools and equipment, recruitment of some cadre of staff, staff appraisal to identify gaps and recognize performance and such other matters affecting their own dockets and the organization at large. The

organization gives room for flexibility in terms of further changes in the structure to accommodate emerging needs in the process of strategy implementation. According to Pearce et al. (2005), leaders build and rebuild their organization to align it with the ever-changing environment and needs of the strategy. He says leaders build an organization in many ways including; ensuring a common understanding about organizational priorities, clarifying responsibilities among managers and organizational units, empowering newer managers and pushing authority lower in the organization.

#### **4.2.3 Shaping an Effective organizational Culture and Climate**

In regard to the question as to whether the corporate culture is supportive of strategy implementation, the interviewee's response was that the organization's core values have helped build a positive culture which is supportive of strategy implementation. Strickland et al. (2008) points out that culture-building objective is to create a work climate and style of operating that mobilizes the energy and behaviour of company personnel squarely behind efforts to execute strategy competently. The respondents were emphatic that the corporation upholds professionalism and people holding key positions have the required professional competence and they carry out their duties and responsibilities professionally. The corporation also embraces teamwork in its commitment to discharge its mandate and maintain high standards of service delivery. According to the respondents, employees combine their diverse abilities, skills, and talents; with everyone pulling in one direction towards the attainment of the strategic objectives of the organization. ADC is also a learning organization and is open to continuous improvement of processes and personal development of individuals.

The leadership encourages and promotes individual initiatives, creativity, and involvement among employees. Initiatives are rewarded through recognition, financial rewards, commendations, and promotions. This rewarding and recognition of excellent performance helps to engage and motivate staff in building a commitment to the values of the organization and long-term ambition with a sense of direction. The leadership of ADC also reinforces these values through their personal commitment and emphasis on trainings, code of ethics, structure, and compliance enforcement.

#### **4.2.4 Effective Management of the Firm's Resource Portfolio**

According to the respondents, 90% of those in key positions have the necessary experience, technical skills, and intellectual capital to deliver in their duties and responsibilities. Strickland et al. (2008) observes that proficient strategy implementation depends heavily on competent personnel, adequate competitive capabilities, and effective internal organization. Pearce et al. (2005) concurs with this view and says that recruiting and developing talented operational leaders is one of the critical strategic leadership functions that drives the effective implementation of strategy. The respondents explained that the organization has an internal training programme that equips with the necessary skills for effective and efficient delivery of duties and responsibilities. Those who get promoted to higher position are required to work in an acting capacity for a period of not less than six months before confirmation. According to the interviewees, performance-contracting system has also made employees work harder and more effectively leading to better service delivery and improved results. The gaps identified are addressed and occasionally this may call for external sourcing of qualified personnel. Annual employee appraisal is part of the organizations efforts to build its capacity for effective strategy implementation.

On the question regarding the sufficiency of financial resources available for the organization to meet its objectives, the respondents were emphatic that financial resources are inadequate with the organization managing to raise only up to 70% of its budgetary requirement. These budgetary gaps has seen the organization opt for borrowed financing which has become increasingly expensive; forcing the organization to suspend or cancel some of its activities and projects. To build its financial capacity, ADC is venturing into diversification to other business lines and activities with good financial outcomes. Through the Public-Private Partnership initiative, the organization is also able to access resources from the private sector which has enhanced its performance. ADC, for instance has ably partnered with companies such as AMIRAN to provide affordable irrigation and greenhouses among other equipment that have led to more employment, better farm yields and increased incomes. The other strategies pursued by the organization to achieve a strong and sustainable financial resource base include improved cost management, optimised revenue generation, and improved debt to asset ratio position.

#### **4.2.5 Enforcement of Ethical Compliance**

In regards to the question as to whether the organization enforces ethical compliance among its members, the respondents affirmed that the organization embraces integrity, accountability and transparency as some of its core values and all members of the organization are expected to always act morally and ethically. The organization is committed to be always accountable to the stakeholders and the public for its actions, decisions, and policies. The leadership at the corporation is unequivocally supportive of the corporation's ethical code and always take uncompromising stand in punishing ethical misconduct. This is supported by Strickland et al. (2007) who emphasizes that

leaders must be prepared to act as the final arbiters on hard calls of punishing ethical misconduct and reprimanding laxity on the part of those in charge of monitoring and enforcing ethical compliance. According to the respondents, the organization has an elaborate system and laid down procedures of addressing non compliance to the ethical code of conduct which details various disciplinary actions including dismissal. However, a positive self-regulation of ethical behaviour is encouraged as an organizational norm in which people in the organization act ethically as a matter of self-discipline.

#### **4.2.6 Communication and Institutionalization of Strategy**

This study found out that the leadership of the corporation ensures an open and effective communication between the staff and the management regarding strategy and its implementation. Some of the modes of communications identified by the respondents include regular meetings and workshops meant for discussing and ironing out issues affecting staff across the board, internal memos, direct communication through telephones to inquire or clarify issues, emails, postings on the organizations website, periodic monitoring reports, and feedback from staff on any observations are encouraged. Notice boards are also used to display circulars and other general information. Suggestion boxes are another very effective mode of communication of encouraging personal views and suggestions and there is a committee that handles issues raised from the suggestions passed through suggestions boxes. This open communication according to the interviewees has enhanced support, excitement and committed organizational effort to achieve set objectives. This is echoed by Bhasin (2010, February 13), that it is the role of the strategic leaders to present the strategy to the members of the organization in a way that appeals to them and brings their support.



#### **4.2.7 Development of Short-term Objectives and Operating Plans**

The respondents felt that the leadership is committed to the mission, vision, goals and strategies contained in the strategic plan and takes lead in ensuring that the strategies are aligned to the objectives. Functional managers participate in the setting of short-term objectives and developing operational plans which include evaluation measures set on annual basis. The functional managers in their operational planning also address the costs and budgetary requirements for implementing the objectives. Every manager understands strategy and what their units are expected to do in implementing strategy. This is cascaded down to the supervisors who in turn that ensure that every employee under them understand the strategy and their roles in delivering the expected output. The functional managers review the operational plans as per recommendations of the evaluation reports to see that they are consistent with the requirements of the strategy. Bhasin (2010, February 13) emphasizes that if every manager understands strategy, he can certainly review the program recommendations of staff advisers and line subordinates to see that they are consistent with the requirements of the strategy.

#### **4.2.8 Establishing Balanced Organizational Controls**

On the question regarding the organizational controls that the organization use to monitor and evaluate its strategy implementation, the study found out that ADC employs both strategic and financial controls to assess its performance and make decisions regarding maintenance or review of the implementation of its organizational activities geared towards the attainment of the set goals. Financial control is concerned with the growth, risk, and profitability of the organization and thus focuses on the cash flow, return on equity and return on assets. The study found out that the

corporation's focus in its strategic control is on the assessment of its performance relative to learning and growth perspective. Its concern is with improvement in innovation and creativity, new products and diversification in business, and building the capacity of its human resources in terms of improving the skills of the employees. Hitt et al. (2007) states that an appropriate balance of strategic controls and financial controls, rather than an over emphasis on either, allows firms to effectively monitor their performance.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study as analysed in the previous chapter, conclusion, and recommendations of the research based on the findings obtained.

### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

The respondents interviewed were drawn from two key departments; the Finance and Technical (Strategy Implementation & Planning) divisions which are very instrumental in strategy implementation at the corporation. The two respondents had worked for the organization for more than twenty years and were directly involved in strategy implementation process for at least eight years each. Having overseen more than one strategic plan, the respondents had a lot of insight on the subject under study and their views based on hands on experience reflected a realistic position of the strategy implementation at the corporation.

This study found out that the leadership at ADC has ensured that there is a common understanding and a clear view of the organization's strategic purpose and direction among all members of the organization. Employees understand the strategy being pursued and what they need to do to contribute to the overall delivery. Through participation and dialogue, the employees have been motivated to understand the necessity for change and the importance of their commitment and effort to deliver the

desired outcomes. The organizational structure is supportive of strategy implementation and the changes made on the structure have resulted in the decentralization of functions and empowerment of managers. In addition, the organization's core values have helped build a positive culture which is supportive of strategy implementation. The organization upholds a culture of professionalism, teamwork, and learning and those holding key positions have the required professional competence and they carry out their duties and responsibilities professionally. The leadership encourages and promotes individual initiatives, creativity, and involvement among employees and the organization is committed to continuous capacity building of its human resources.

Financial inadequacy is one of the major challenges that the organization is grappling with. The corporation according to the respondents is able to finance only up to 70% of its budgetary requirement. These budgetary gaps has seen the organization opt for borrowed financing which has become increasingly expensive; forcing the organization to suspend or cancel some of its activities and projects. Many programmes such as irrigation and value-addition to agricultural products continue to suffer in neglect and under-development. In its effort to boost its financial capacity, ADC is venturing into diversification to other business lines and through the Public-Private Partnership initiative; the organization is also able to access resources to enhance its performance. The leadership is committed to the mission, vision, goals and strategies and open communication between staff and the management has enhanced support, excitement and committed organizational effort to achieve set objectives. Every manager understands strategy and what their units are expected to do in implementing strategy. The study found out that ADC employs both strategic

and financial controls to assess its performance with focus on its strategic control being assessment of performance relative to learning and growth perspective.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The findings obtained from the study have shown that strategic leadership plays a very critical role in the effective implementation of strategy at the corporation. It is clear that strategic leaders are responsible for effective strategy implementation and that their role stirs commitment among people within the organization to embrace change and implement strategies intended to achieve the desired outcomes. However, all employees of the organization from the CEO to employees on lower level are responsible for competently executing their roles in an effort to effectively implement the chosen strategy. Effective strategy implementation demands commitment and ownership of the process by every employee and moving in the same direction with a common understanding of the organization's strategic vision.

From the results of the study, the leadership at ADC are in the forefront of the strategy implementation process. It is the force that drives the process through various interrelated strategic leadership roles which the study has identified to include clarifying strategic intent, building an organization, shaping effective organizational culture, effective management of organization's resource portfolio, enforcement of ethical compliance, communicating strategy, development of short-term objectives and operational plans as well as establishment of balanced organizational controls. Strategic leadership is thus a key driver of effective strategy implementation without which, even the soundest strategy may not see the light of day.

## **5.4 Recommendations with Policy Implications**

One of the major challenges facing the agricultural sector in Kenya as found out in this study is under-funding. The sector has continually been allocated a meagre percentage of the national budgetary estimates resulting in under-funding of institutions such as the ADC and other initiatives that have the potential to harness and promote the sector. This study recommends that the governments should pay urgent attention to this sector by providing sufficient funding through an increased annual budgetary allocation to the sector. This will see the country have food security, sufficiently feed her people, and even have excess food for export. ADC and other agricultural institutions on the other hand should make maximum use of the reforms in the sector such as the Public-Private Partnerships to access resource, build their capacity and better their performance.

The study also recommends that the corporation establishes balanced organizational controls for a realistic and all-round assessment of its performance. From the findings, it is clear that the corporation emphasizes on financial performance, growth and learning in measuring its overall performance. The balanced scorecard framework is highly recommended in ensuring an appropriate balance of strategic controls and financial controls for effective monitoring of performance. According to Hitt et al., The balanced scorecard framework integrates four perspectives: financial, customer, internal business process, and learning and growth. Financial perspective is concerned with growth, profitability, and risk from the shareholder's perspective while customer perspective is concerned with the amount of value customers perceive was created by the firm's products. Business processes perspective on the other hand is concerned

with priorities for various business processes that create customer and shareholder satisfaction. Learning and growth perspective is concerned with the firm's efforts to create a climate that supports change, innovation, and growth. (Hitt et al., 2007). By so doing, the organization will achieve an appropriate balance of strategic controls allowing it to make appropriate investments and effectively monitor performance in its strategy implementation effort.

### **5.5 Limitation of the Study**

The limitation of this study is that the researcher was unable to interview one of the three respondents identified because the respondent was not available at the time of the interview. The input of the absent respondent would have broadened the view of the subject under study even more. However, the two respondents interviewed were full of insight on the subject of study and the researcher managed to get adequate and very useful information from the interviews.

### **5.6 Recommendation for Further Research**

This study focused on the role of strategic leadership in strategy implementation at ADC. It is recommended that future research focus on the effectiveness of strategy implementation efforts for purposes of establishing whether the formulated strategies are implemented to their full potential. Such a study will provide very useful information regarding how best organizations can approach strategy implementation for maximum effectiveness in achieving the strategic vision.

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## **APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Topic: The Role of Strategic Leadership in Strategy Implementation at the ADC**

### **PART A: RESPONDENT'S GENERAL INFORMATION**

1. Department/ Division.....
2. How long have you worked with ADC? .....
3. For how long have you been directly involved with the strategy implementation process? .....

### **PART B: THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

1. Does the leadership at ADC play any role in strategy implementation? Explain.
2. Do the employees understand the strategy being pursued and what they need to do to contribute to overall delivery?
3. How does the leadership ensure that members of the organization embrace and support strategy implementation?
4. Has there been any change in the organizational structure to facilitate effective strategy implementation?
5. Does the current organizational structure support strategy implementation?
6. Has authority been pushed down from the top to ensure that managers are empowered? If yes how?
7. Is the corporate culture supportive of strategy implementation?
8. How does the organization encourage /promote individual initiatives, creativity, and involvement among employees?
9. Do staff holding key positions have experience, technical skills, and intellectual capital to deliver in their duties and responsibilities?
10. How does the organization build its capacity for effective strategy implementation?
11. Are the organization's financial resources sufficient to meet its objectives?
12. Does the organization enforce ethical compliance among its members?
13. How does the organization ensure open and effective communication between the staff and the management regarding strategy and its implementation?
14. What organizational controls does the organization use to monitor and evaluate its strategy implementation?

**Thank you!**