CHALLENGES OF STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AT
THE ELGEIYO MARAKWET COUNTY OF KENYA

BY

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A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, SCHOOL OF
BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

NOVEMBER 2015
DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this project is my original work and that it has not been presented in any other university.

Signature.................................................... Date........................................

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D61/79306/2012

The research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as university supervisor.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To God be the glory and honour for the guidance and wisdom provided throughout the whole course.

Gratitude goes to my Supervisor Prof. Martin Ogutu for his insightful inputs and support in the whole process. His availability even when he was sick was really encouraging.

Thanks also to my Moderator Prof. Zack Awino for his critique and guidance in the development of this project.

Finally, my sincere appreciation goes to the Elgeiyo Marakwet County staff for their contribution in availing the data required for the success of this research.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my family members; beloved wife Eunice, my sons Brian and Brandon, and my daughters Brenda and Belinda for their patience and moral support during this period.
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# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<table>
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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CIDP</td>
<td>County Integrated Development Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>Member of County Assembly</td>
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<td>CEC</td>
<td>County Executive Committee</td>
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<td>RBV</td>
<td>Resource Based View</td>
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ABSTRACT

The success of any strategy is hinged on its implementation. Though, most Organizations come up with elaborate strategic plans, implementing them may be a challenge. Strategy implementation is the process of putting plans and strategies into action to achieve intended organizational goals. The promulgation of the constitution of Kenya 2010 created a devolved system of governance and provided for mandatory planning before budgeting. The County Government Act 2012 specifies key plans that each County is expected to generate which are; County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), County Sectoral Plans, County Spatial Plans, County Urban Areas and Cities Plans, and County Performance Management Plans. Elgeiyo Marakwet County is no exception and has been striving to achieve its goals through various strategies. However, it has managed to achieve some while others have been challenging and out of target. The objective of this study therefore, was to establish the challenges of strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County Government of Kenya. Three theories of strategic management were reviewed to form the conceptual framework for this study; Institutional theory, Resource Based View Theory and Stakeholders Theory. This study utilized a case study approach and used both secondary and primary data, for data collection. Primary data was collected through the use of an interview guide with open ended questions and being qualitative in nature, conceptual content analysis was used. The study revealed that the challenges faced by the County during strategy implementation were lack of support from the top management, politicization of the process, slow budget approval, lack of clear individual role, lack of alignment with the organization strategic plan as executives try to please MCAs, lack of employee roles and functions harmonization, poor staffing level, ineffective communication and poor coordination of activities during strategy implementation. This study recommends that the County Government of Elgeiyo Marakwet should enhance policies that guide the relationships between the MCAs and the County Executives as well as strengthen the individual roles played by each group in the implementation process. In addition, there is need to improve policies on resource allocation to avoid interference by the MCAs and other political machination. The interview guide used as a tool for data collection was not exhaustive hence could not bring out all the aspects anticipated by the research. A Research on strategy and performance of the County Governments of Kenya will be of great value to researchers in future.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

A strategy is as good as its implementation. This is to say that the success of a strategy is hinged on its implementation. According to Hrebiniak (2006), formulating a consistent strategy is a difficult task for any management team and making that strategy work, implementing it throughout the organization is even more difficult. Bryson (1996) defines strategy as a pattern of purposes, policies, programs, actions, decisions, or resource allocations that define what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it. On the other hand, strategy implementation involves allocation of sufficient resources, assigning responsibilities and managing the process. Olson (2005) argues that strategy formulation and implementation is an ongoing, never ending process that needs continuous evaluation and reformation. Though, most Organizations come up with elaborate strategic plans, the implementation of the same may become a challenge. Strategy implementation in other words is the process of putting plans and strategies into action to achieve intended organizational goals.

Various theories inform this study. From the institutional theory point of view, Zucker (1977) argues that participants become used to working in alignment within situational forces present in their home environment and begin to take them for granted leading to development of internalized and institutionalized practices. In other words certain patterns and norms developed by organizations are internalized and becomes part and parcel of the organizational culture. On the other hand Resource Based View theorists, argues that resources are inputs into an organization’s production process and are
needed for strategy implementation (Currie 2009). This is to say that the process has costs which need to be met by use of resources. The implementation phase of any strategy matters a lot as it is the phase at which its intended objectives are explicitly demonstrated. Black and Boal (1994), says that strategic analysis should make clear why firms are able to get into advantageous positions and how they are able to sustain this positions.

There is a common saying that Kenyans are very good at coming up with nice blue print documentations on any issue, but actualizing it is a problem. In other words when it comes to getting well written and documented plans, Kenyans are the best, but implementing those plans is a problem. Devolution is a new governance system in Kenya and as a management student, it is very interesting to look into how this governance system is overcoming the challenges especially when it comes to the actualization of the various strategic plans. It is this premise that motivated the study especially to try and see whether the above saying is true or false when it comes to Counties.

The promulgation of the constitution of Kenya 2010 created a devolved system of governance. This system brought in two levels of governance and each is expected to set up plans for its expenditure in order to access funds. This puts in focus management teams for these levels at a challenging position in coming up with strategies and implementing them effectively or otherwise they may fail to perform as expected by the citizens. Elgeiyo Marakwet of Kenya is one such county and is endowed with various agricultural and mineral resources which if properly planned will make it have competitive advantage over other counties.
1.1.1 Strategy implementation

Pearce and Robinson (2009), explains strategy implementation as a process through which a set of agreed work philosophies is translated into functional and operational targets. Kotter and Best (2006) on the hand, supports this notion by explaining that implementation addresses the, who, where, when and how, hence the tactic that drives the strategy of the organization. Noble (1999) notes that the best formulated strategies may fail to produce superior performance for the firm if they are not successfully implemented.

Harrington (2006) looks at strategy implementation as an iterative process of implementing strategies, policies, programs and action plans that allows a firm to utilize its resources to take advantage of opportunities in the competitive environment. It is therefore important to note that implementation process is a critical phase in the achievement of strategic goals. Strategy implementation addresses both planning and how the strategy can be put into effect. Hussey (2000) puts into perspective the subject of successful implementation by introducing the concept of soft and hard aspects of implementation. He argues that the soft elements comprise the behavioural dimensions while the hard elements comprise the analytical dimensions to the process of making and the subsequent implementation of strategy. He contends that the issue then becomes one of creating a strategic fit between the soft and hard elements and the organizational variables. Pearce and Robinson (2007) places emphasis on adequate leadership to ensure that all the organizational effort is united and directed towards achievement of the organizations goals.
The organizational culture plays a major role in strategy implementation. According to Roy (1994), corporate culture is one of the important attributes of excellent organizations. This allows an organization to achieve a fit between their strategies and culture hence reduced resistance to strategy implementation. This is to say that if certain culture is positively in resonance with the organizational strategy implementation process then it will be successful.

Various challenges facing strategy implementation have been identified by various writers. The main challenges include; communication channels and modes from top to bottom, competing activities that distract attention from implementation, employee roles not clearly defined pertaining to implementation, formulators of strategy failing to guide process to capture intended goals, delays in communication on challenges needing intervention by top management, clear road map on implementation sequence, resource allocation, matching structures with strategies and linking performance and pay to goal achievement.

It is therefore evident that strategy implementation process is the key to success. However, key implementers need to put in place mechanisms that help monitor the process so as any challenge is immediately mitigated. This may include putting in place functional tactics to deal with each aspect for example reactivating human resource effectiveness, financial resource mobilization, research and innovation speeds amongst others.

1.1.2 The County Governments in Kenya

The County Governments in Kenya came into existence after the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 on 27 August 2010. Kenyans voted overwhelmingly to have a devolved system of governance. This form of governance advances that though
there are two levels of government which are distinct, they remain inter-dependent. These two levels of government, exercise delegated authority from the people of Kenya. By devolving power and functions of government, Kenyans made a firm commitment towards a more democratic and accountable society. They expect that there will be better representation of their voice in decision making, resources will be equitably shared and that service delivery will be greatly improved. Kenyans expect a governance system that will value and promote their interests. Their aspirations have to be achieved through the institutions mandated to carry out various obligations to plan and implement public programs effectively.

The constitution of Kenya 2010 assigns to the national and county governments various functions. Specifically, both levels of government have a planning mandate. The national government has an obligation for National Economic Policy and Planning. It is also mandated to handle the general principles of land planning and the co-ordination of planning by counties among other functions. The counties are obligated with county planning and development. The constitution provides for mandatory planning before budgeting in Article 220. The County Government Act 2012 specifies key plans that each County is expected to generate and these are; County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), County Sectoral Plans, County Spatial Plans, County Urban Areas and Cities Plans, and County Performance Management Plans. These plans are interrelated as they deal with different aspects of development and it is that Annual budgets are to be based on these approved plans.
The county government consists of a county assembly and a county executive. Every county government is required to decentralize its functions and the provision of its services to the extent that it is efficient and practicable to do so. The County assembly constitutes the legislative organ of government while the County executive is representative of the Executive arm of government within the County government.

According to section 5 of the County Government Act, County Governments shall be responsible for any function assigned to them under the Constitution or by an Act of Parliament. In addition, they shall be responsible for; County legislation in accordance with article 185 of the Constitution, exercising executive functions in accordance with article 183 of the Constitution, functions provided for in article 186 and assigned in the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution, any other function that may be transferred to county governments from the national government under article 187 of the Constitution, any functions agreed upon with other county governments under article 189 (2) of the Constitution, and Establishment and staffing of its public service as contemplated under article 235 of the Constitution.

1.1.3 Elgeiyo Marakwet County of Kenya

Elgeiyo Marakwet County is one of Kenya’s 47 County Governments. It covers a total land mass area of 3,029.9 km2 and borders West Pokot County to the North, Baringo County to the East, Trans Nzoia County to the Northwest and Uasin Gishu County to the West. The county’s landscape is divided into three topographic zones namely; the Highlands, Kerio Valley and The Escarpment. The Highlands constitutes 49 percent of the county’s land mass and is densely populated due to its endowment with fertile soils and reliable rainfall. The Escarpment and the Kerio Valley make up 11 percent and 40 percent respectively.
These three regions have a wide range in amount of rainfall they receive. The Highlands receive between 1200mm and 1500mm per annum while The Escarpment and the Kerio Valley receives rainfall ranging between 1000mm to 1400mm per annum. In terms of altitude, the Highland plateau rises from an altitude of 2700 meters above sea level on the Metkei Ridges in the South to 3350 metres above sea level on the Cherangany Hills to the North. Administratively, the county is divided into four sub-counties; Marakwet East, Marakwet West, Keiyo South and Keiyo North each with several Divisions, Locations and Sub-locations. Politically, the county is divided into four constituencies; Marakwet East, Marakwet West, Keiyo South and Keiyo North.

The county’s total population was 370,712 according to 2009 National Population and Housing Census. The inter-census population growth rate for the county is 2.7 percent per annum. Keiyo North has the highest population density of 148 persons per square kilometre, while Marakwet East has the lowest with 109 persons per square kilometre. On poverty levels, human development indicators show that the county has 57 percent of residents living below the poverty line compared to the national poverty level of 46 percent.

The County’s mixed productivity in terms of the three zones, calls for proper planning in order to address the various needs within these areas. It is also true that each zone produces different products for the county and beyond. The Highlands supplies Potatoes to neighbouring counties while the Valley supplies Mangoes and other fruits to the same. With such endowment, proper planning can create competitive advantage for the county.
1.2 Research problem

Formulating a strategy is sometimes the easy part especially with the right experts and professionals, but the implementation part may pose tremendous challenge. Implementation of strategy implies the changing of the way things are done, hence the new changes brought about by strategy implementation may disrupt the status quo. According to Miller (2000), 40% of the value anticipated in strategic plan is never realised.

He argues that there are four major causes of strategy failures which include; leadership traps, monolithic cultures and skills, power and politics and structural memories. This therefore calls for understanding of different scenarios to enable the organization address these challenges.

County Governments and devolution in itself is a new concept in Kenya. It is just some few years ago that the concept was accepted as a governance system in the country hence the need to learn and appreciate its successes and challenges. Elgeiyo Marakwet County is no exception and has been striving to achieve its goals through various strategies. However, it has managed to achieve some while others have been challenging and out of target. Most counties including Elgeiyo Marakwet inherited managerial and resource problems from former municipalities, town councils and county councils which form part of the county governments. Strategies that were used by various local authorities then differ from the devolved system currently in place. This is because the governance challenges then were few as most of the functions were carried out by the National government. The counties’ independence in terms of operations as well as increased functions devolved to it, puts the county in a strategic position to adapt and adopt measures that can project it to have competitive advantage over other counties.
Currently, there is little research done on the challenges faced by counties while implementing their respective strategies. However various studies have been done on challenges of strategy implementation in other organizations. Example of these researches done include the following in the International arena; Yii (2004), who carried out research on the Barriers to Strategy Implementation at the Air New Zealand and found out that leadership and power, play a major role in implementation as well as do middle level managers perceptions, Nicholas (2014), did on Key factors and Challenges of Strategy Implementation where he highlighted communication and information exchange as one such factors. Salem (2005) researched on the obstacles to Successful Implementation of Strategy of strategic decision and found out that human element in the process of implementation is important as well as presence of effective management support systems, while Tomi, Ville, and Lauri (2014), looked at the Strategy Implementation in the Finland Public Universities where they concluded that social structures of the Organization plays a major role and so do middle management teams.

On the local arena, Karimi (2007), carried out a research on challenges of strategic implementation in Mathare 4a slum upgrading in Nairobi, while Kung’u (2007), carried out a survey on strategy implementation challenges in the mainstream churches in Kenya. Kinyoe (2012), did on the challenges of strategy implementation at the Christian Health Association of Kenya where she found out that insufficient funding, staff motivation and retention plays important role in the implementation process. In addition, Wanjiru (2011), carried out on the Challenges of Strategy Implementation at the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation, and she concluded that Government policies, resistance to change and traditional public sector culture play key role in the process.
The above studies bring out different aspects of challenges faced by different entities in their strategy implementation processes. Counties by law are expected to have various plans to guide their spending hence a critical component of expenditure. It is also important to note that counties are non-profit making entities hence need to understand how strategies put in place help mitigate the challenges of resource allocation and utilization.

In view of the above, it is evident that strategy implementation is key for any institution to succeed. The Elgeiyo Marakwet county of Kenya is no exception of such institution especially that there are new structures and governance systems being established in the process of the implementing the constitution as far as devolution is concerned, hence the need to study the processes that guide the successes of these governance systems. Many counties have put in place various strategies to gear them towards achieving competitive advantage and the county of study is one such counties. This study seeks to answer the following question: What key challenges do Elgeiyo Marakwet County Government face in the process of implementation of its strategies?

1.3 Research objectives

The objective of the study was to determine the strategy implementation challenges faced by Elgeiyo Marakwet County.

1.4 Value of the study

Strategy is a fundamental management tool in any organization, and is a multi-dimensional concept. It helps match the organization’s resources with the environmental opportunities that exist and assist to dampen any turbulence to achieve organizational goals. Organizations seem to have difficulties in implementing their strategies especially public institutions.
The study on the challenges faced by the county in focus will give more hindsight on the main challenges faced by various organizations and especially the non-profit making organizations and the mitigations used, may apply to other counties.

To academicians the study will form a basis for further research on challenges of strategy implementation in other Counties and responses adopted to cope up with environmental turbulence. It will help in reinforcing and appreciating the theories by various management scholars.

The study will also be valuable to leaders and top management of Elgeiyo Marakwet County as well as other counties as it will highlight some of the challenges faced while implementing strategies. This will encourage county governments to adopt strategy approaches that will give them competitive advantage.

County governments are new creations of the constitution and with a lot of challenges especial lack of benchmarking in terms of management of both capital and human resource. This study will therefore be able to bring out specific issues that affect the implementation of strategies in the county in focus which in one way or another may be used to address the same challenges in other counties. This is to say that it may help in coming up with policies that can be able to reduce these said challenges hence the success of strategy implementation.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes ideas from other authors and researchers who have carried out research in the same field of study. The main areas covered within this chapter include; Theoretical foundation, factors in strategy implementation and the challenges of strategy implementation. It will also be looking at the knowledge gap that exists in the field of study.

2.2 Theoretical foundation

Three theories of strategic management will be reviewed to form the conceptual framework for this study. They include Institutional theory, Resource Based View Theory and Stakeholders Theory. Institutional theory looks at the organization from the perspective of norms, systems and behaviours that are repetitive, while Resource Based View looks at the advantages of endowment which facilitates implementation process. On the other hand, Stakeholders Theory espouses the role played by various key stakeholders.

2.2.1 Institutional Theory

According to Scott (2004), Institutional theory focuses on the deeper and more resilient aspects that lead to the development of formal structures in an organization. It considers the processes by which structures, including; schemes, rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour. In addition, Powell and DiMaggio (1991), looks at a new institutionalism and argues that in order to survive, organizations must conform to the rules and belief systems
prevailing in the environment because, both structural and procedural isomorphism, will earn the organization legitimacy. They also argue that institutional isomorphism is increased when firms are highly dependent on the institutional environment. Furthermore, Zucker (1977), argues that participants become used to working in alignment within situational forces present in their home environments and begin to take them for granted. This then leads to the development of internalized and institutionalized practices that are difficult to change.

Firms are thus likely to develop structures and policies that align with the institutional pressures they face, since such practices lead to legitimacy and a competitive advantage in their home environments. Institutional theory identifies three categories of institutions namely; regulative, normative, and cognitive or value based. This therefore implies that in case of conflict in management, it takes three forms; conflicts due to differences in rules or regulative institutions, differing institutional norms, and differing institutional values. Knetter, (1989), argues that Firms in different types of economies react differently to similar challenges. Businesses tend to perform more efficiently if they receive the institutional support. It is also argued that the formal structures of legitimacy reduce efficiency and hinder the organization's competitive position in their technical environment. This therefore follows that strategy implementation may be hindered or accelerated by institutional practices.

2.2.2 Resource Based View Theory
The Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory espouses that certain assets with certain characteristics will lead to sustainable advantage and therefore high strategic returns in terms of market share or profits. This is to say the differences in firm resources and their degree of immobility determine the firm’s course. Barney (1991) argues that resources are all assets, capabilities, organisational processes, firm attributes,
information, knowledge, controlled by a firm to enable the firm to conceive and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness. In other words, resources are the strengths that enable firms to implement their strategies. Resource heterogeneity can be long lasting and therefore produce sustainable advantage since these resources may not be perfectly mobile across firms. Black and Boal (1994), adds that Strategic analysis should make clear why firms are able to get into advantageous positions and how they are able to sustain these positions.

Amit and Schoemaker (1993), points out that the managers need to make resource deployment decisions in advance, therefore the need to have to face biases and errors arising from uncertainty, complexity, and organisational conflicts. Resource-based models support strategy design by providing operative tools that make it possible to trace consequences of different strategies. Collis (1991) says that strategy is dependent on and constrained by the controlled resources, and on the other hand, strategy coordinates the development and protection of existing resources and the acquisition of new resources, taking into account the competitive environment. Stalk & Hout (1990), argue that the increasing rate of change has put increasing pressure on firms to react more quickly, as time is often seen as source of competitive advantage. All these reasons suggest that firms may look inwardly for strategic opportunities, while, at the same time, must reconceptualise how they think of industries and define competitors.

Leonard and Barton (1995), adds that not only must firms be able to create knowledge within their boundaries, but they must also expose themselves to a bombardment of new ideas from their external environment in order to prevent rigidity, to encourage innovative behaviour, and to check their technological developments against those of competitors.
Teece (1997), did put forward the dynamic capabilities framework, which refer to the firm’s ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments. It argues that, coordination or integration, learning and transformation are the fundamental dynamic capabilities that serve as the mechanisms through which available stocks of resources like marketing, financial and technological assets can be combined and transformed to produce new and innovative forms of competitive advantage.

2.2.3 Stakeholder Theory

Freeman (1984) defines a stakeholder as any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives. He further states that the organization itself should be thought of as grouping of stakeholders and the purpose of the organization should be to manage their interests, needs and viewpoints. This stakeholder management is thought to be fulfilled by the managers of a firm. The managers should on the one hand manage the corporation for the benefit of its stakeholders in order to ensure their rights and the participation in decision making and on the other hand the management must act as the stockholder’s agent to ensure the survival of the firm to safeguard the long term stakes of each group.

Clarkson (1995) defines primary stakeholders as those without whose continuing Participation, the corporation cannot survive as a going concern. This suggests that these relationships are mutually interdependent. These include shareholders or owners, employees, customers, and suppliers, as well as government and communities. Ford (1980) suggests that companies pursue relationships with other companies to obtain the benefits associated with reducing their costs or increasing their revenues.
Donaldson and Preston (1995), argue that stakeholder theory can be used in three different ways; the descriptive or empirical when it is used to describe, and explain some corporate characteristics, instrumental when it is used to identify the connections, or lack of connections, between stakeholder management and the achievement of traditional corporate objectives, and normative when it is used to interpret the function of companies and identify the moral or philosophical guidelines that should be followed with regard to their operation and management. In addition, the normative approach to stakeholder theory views stakeholders as an end, while the instrumental approach regards stakeholders as a means.

2.3 Factors in Strategy Implementation

The main critical phase of strategic process is translating the strategies into actions. According to Wheeler and Hunger (2008), strategy implementation is the process by which strategies and policies are put into action through the development of programs, budgets and procedures. In other words implementation sees through the anticipated strategic programs.

Management in any organization is always eager to see that whatever strategies they have put in place are fully implemented. However this is not always the case as various factors come to play hence the targets may fail to be achieved. These factors may be internal or external to the organization. It involves the design and management of systems to achieve the best integration of people, structure, processes and resources in achieving organizational objectives. According to Pearce and Robinson (1997), Strategy implementation involves allocating sufficient resources, establishing chains of command and reporting structure, assigning responsibility of specific tasks and processes to specific individuals or groups and managing the process. The following explanations highlight some of the key factors that influence strategy implementation.
Organizational structure is the environment where all actions of employees take place and Managers can create this structure to their visualization and which fits into their options and the business environment that the organization is operating in. It includes matching of different departments in an organization, communication among each other and their relationships. When implementing a new strategy it is necessary that the separate functions of an organization work together and not against each other. Nobel (1999) argues that the different functions needs to be coordinated and motivated to speak a common language, share common goals and put aside their natural territorialism. Beer and Eisenstat (2000), suggest using cross functional systems to better coordinate the different functions and improve their cooperation.

Organizational cultures are the influences by the people in the organization, by history, circumstances, management and even by common understanding. Managers can try to develop culture through various communication channels and forums to redirect the thinking, perceptions and attitudes of the people within the organization. According to Crittenden (2008), organizational culture is a system of shared values of the employees, while Pryor (2007), argues that it sets the tone, pace and character of the organization and adds that certain characteristics can foster strategy implementation others may be considered as barriers.

Resource allocation is another key factor and includes both tangible and non-tangible resources. It is therefore upon the management to allocate these resources to their most useful utilization points as well as coordinating and integrating activities of the participating employees and their functions. Lorange (1998) argues that it is important not to throw away important knowledge by wrongly allocating tasks through connections or special attachment to some employees. He adds that a certain degree of
freedom is necessary to leave room for experiments by the employees and develop creativity to solve challenges. Sometimes adjustments of some resources to improve the process are necessary, therefore the management should monitor the process closely to intervene at the right time.

Communication helps in building consensus and everybody in the organization need to know the direction the organization is going, the organizational objectives and vision. Management’s task is therefore to ensure that communication takes place between themselves and other levels of management as well as between different functions and other important connections in the organization. According to Rapert (2002), poor vertical communication inhibits effective strategy implementation and do not promote open dialog within the organization. He adds that there is need for vertical communication through the organization as well as frequent communication as a major method to reach shared perceptions, values and beliefs among the workforce and eventually reach a stage of higher performance of the organization. In addition, Beer et al. (2000) see a major challenge in the lack of honest upward conversations from employees about barriers and underlying causes, which are caused by a strict top-down management style.

Management Leadership is another important factor in strategy implementation as leaders often have a substantial impact on performance. According to O'Reilly (2010), leadership is a person’s ability, in a formally assigned hierarchical role, to influence a group to achieve organizational goals. The leader has to assure that the rest of the organization is committed to the strategy, by convincing the employees that a new strategy is important and also create a meaning of the strategy, so that the employees support it.
It deals with resistance, allocates resources and create consensus so that the leaders at subordinate levels reinforce the strategy and the whole workforce of the organization has a compelling direction. Crittenden et al. (2008), argues that here is need for a capable, contributing, competent, effective and executive leader when it comes to strategy implementation.

2.4 Challenges of Strategy implementation

Having looked at factors that influence Strategy implementation, it is clear that these factors need to be considered to avoid failure. This therefore leads to the fact that there is need to address those aspects that are likely to contribute to these factors impacting negatively on the process. These can be said to be challenges and do arise from both internal and external sources to the organization. The particular challenges that are faced by strategy implementers largely depend on the type of strategy, type of organization and prevailing circumstances.

According to Harvey (1998), the various activities necessary to implement any particular strategy should be defined in terms of each type of resource required. The operating level must have the resources needed to carry out each part of the strategic plan. This means that as long as strategy implementation is not supported by sufficient budgeting in terms of human, material and technological resources the intended target will not be achieved. David (2003) argues that organizations have at least four types of resources that can be used to achieve desired objectives, namely financial, physical, human and technological resources. Copeland (2000) adds that it is common practice to reduce this specification of resource requirements to monetary terms. This is to say that quantification of resources is possible, hence can be budgeted for and approximate costs may be achieved.
Individual function to be looked at in terms of costs in order to be able to operationalize the strategy. It means that inadequacy of any form of resources, such as funds, equipment and facilities, human resources which include skills and experience, is often a big challenge during strategy implementation.

Kangoro (1998) suggests that lack of commitment to strategic management practices by top management and other employees of the organizations results in poor implementation. In this respect also, Swartz (1985) argues that the challenge to management is that it might need to recruit, select, train, discipline, transfer, promote and possibly even lay off employees to achieve the organizational strategic objectives. This is because strategy is about commitment and monitoring each step so as in case of challenges, remedial actions are taken instantly to avoid failures.

The processes of strategy implementation need to be guided and this calls for committed staff with leadership qualities to ensure success. Leadership also helps in overcoming barriers, such as conflicting objectives, organizational dominance, political rivalries and organizational apathy. Sometimes things may not work out as planned and may come crushing down around the leader hence impeding strategy implementation process.

The organization culture needs to be in resonance with the new strategic changes for it to be implemented effectively. According to Aosa (1992), it is important that the culture of an organization be compatible with the strategy being implemented because where there is incompatibility between strategy and culture, it can lead to a high organizational resistance to change and de-motivation, which in turn can frustrate the strategy implementation effort.
However, when the culture influences the actions of the employees positively to support the strategy, implementation is strengthened. Pearce and Robinson (2001) notes that there is need to manage strategy-culture relationships in various situations in order to reinforce and reformulate a new organization culture. The tendency by employees to view everything in terms of how things are done normally within the organization is a great challenge to the implementation process. This is because any new thing or way of doing the business will gain resistance.

Organizational structure is another challenge to strategy implementation. Byars (1996) says that while the strategy should be chosen in a way that it fits the organization structure, the process of matching structure to strategy is complex. Walker and Ruekert (1987), argues that corporate-business unit relationships, inter functional structures and processes, marketing policies and processes may all significantly influence business strategy implementation. They also added that aspects of the corporate-business unit relationship are especially likely to affect a unit’s success in implementing a particular strategy like business unit autonomy, sharing programs and synergies across departments, as well as control and reward systems. In addition, functional competencies, allocation of resources, decision making participation and influence, inter functional conflict and coordination may have vastly different effects on the implementation of different kinds of strategies. Gupta (1978), on the other hand finds that mutual coordination, incentive systems and the level of decentralization between unit general manager and his or her superior influence departmental effectiveness in strategy implementation.

Operating environment dynamics are also a challenge to strategy implementation. This is because such situations need to be anticipated and strategies adjusted to match these dynamics. These challenges emanate from the changes in the macro-environment
context, namely Economic, Political, legal, social, technological and environmental. According to Pearce and Robinson (2003), the rapidly changing social environment of the highly interdependent world, businesses feel great pressure to respond to the expectations of society more effectively. Therefore, any changes in social values, behaviours and altitudes regarding lifestyle, work ethics, sex roles, racial equality, and social responsibilities among others will have effects on firms’ development. In addition, unanticipated changes in the government policies regarding taxation, industry cooperation, environmental protection, education policies, among other factors will impact on strategy implementation. Johnson and Scholes (2002), notes that efforts to implement a strategy can be greatly impaired by challenges arising from the industry forces, which include powerful buyers, powerful suppliers and stiff rivalry from the competitors.

2.5 Empirical studies and Research gaps

Though there are no much studies done on strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County, there are various research work done on other organizations. Some of the empirical studies include Allio (2005), which found that a discouraging 57 percent of firms were unsuccessful at executing strategic initiatives over a period of three years, according to a survey of 276 senior operating executives in 2004.

On the same breath, according to the White Paper of Strategy Implementation of Chinese Corporations in 2006, strategy implementation was the most significant management challenge which all kinds of corporations faced at the time. It reported that 83 percent of the surveyed companies failed to implement their strategy smoothly, and only 17 percent felt that they had a consistent strategy implementation process. It is thus obvious that strategy implementation is a key challenge for today’s organizations.
Locally, Obiga (2014) did a research on Challenges of strategy Implementation at the Nairobi County government and found that the level of management skills influences the strategy implementation to great extent. It also established that innovativeness is a key success factor in strategy implementation and so do organizational structure. It also revealed that the challenges faced during strategy implementation were lack of support from the top management, slow budget approval, lack of clear individual role, lack of alignment with the organization strategic plan, lack of employee involvement, poor staffing level, ineffective communication during strategy implementation and lack of coordination of activities during strategy implementation.

The above study suggests that there is need to study the effects of strategy implementation on performance of county governments. In addition, Nicholas (2014) suggests that further research on key factors and challenges of strategy implementation, may lead to a detailed step-by-step procedure to address these over time. This therefore creates the need to look into different aspects of strategy implementation in order to gain more understanding on the issue. This study is important in that it will highlight some of the challenges that are common amongst county Governments as well as those that are unique to this particular case study.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at various aspects of the research methodology used in meeting the study objectives. It highlights the key areas of research design, Data collection as well as the Analysis techniques utilised.

3.2 Research design

According to Bromley (1986), Research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to purpose with the economy in procedure. This study utilized a case study approach with the aim of determining the strategy implementation practices and establishing the challenges of strategy implementation in the Elgeiyo Marakwet County. According to Kothari (2004), a case study is a popular form of qualitative analysis which involves a careful and complete observation of a social unit such as a person, a family, an institution, a cultural group or a community. It is effective in situations where an in depth understanding of a subject concerning a particular unit is required.

This approach is most appropriate since only the Elgeiyo Marakwet County Government was used for the study. It is also appropriate as the objective of the study required a detailed analysis of the strategic challenges faced by this particular County Government. The case study method offers the researcher an opportunity to learn complex issues and events through extensive description and contextual analysis. In this case, it was aimed at getting detailed information regarding the challenges affecting strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County.
3.3 Data collection

The study used both secondary and primary data, for data collection. Primary data was collected through the use of an interview guide with open ended questions.

Paton (1990) argues that the use of an open ended interview strategy enables better exposure of the interviewees’ personal perspectives, their deeper thoughts, emotions and ambitions. The data collection targeted the members of County Executives, County Assembly, Ward representatives and the Political leadership at the County. The interview guide was administered on a face to face basis to five key people in the County. These were two County Executives (Minister for Finance and Economic Planning, and Minister for Roads, public works and Transport), a Member of County Assembly (Kapyego ward), a Member of National Assembly (Keiyo South constituency), and a Sub-County Administrator (Moiben/Kuserwo Ward) amongst others. The studies targeted these groups as they are the senior personnel at the County and are involved in the strategy formulation and implementation hence they are conversant with the strategy challenges faced by the County strategy implementers.

The interview guide was pretested before administering it to the interviewees to identify any ambiguous questions. The data collected was qualitative rather than quantitative in nature. The secondary data came majorly from documented materials such as the County strategic plans and annual reports as well as Government documents relating to devolution amongst other resources.
3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data being qualitative in nature, conceptual content analysis was used. According to Bryman and Bell (2003), this is a technique used to make inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specific characteristics and messages.

The breadth of content analysis makes it flexible and wide ranging tool that may be used as a methodology or as a specific technique. This analysis technique was used because it guards against selective perception of the content, provides for the rigorous application of reliability. The content of the detailed information obtained from the interviewees was thoroughly analysed to understand the challenges faced by the Elgeiyo Marakwet County in the implementation of its strategies.

The use of elaborate research design and the data collection being done personally, the data collected was accurate. This therefore gives the study credence as the analysis was based on credible information obtained by the researcher in person. This eliminates suggestions and opinions that are biased.
CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis of the research findings. The data collection was done through an interview guide as the research instrument. The interview guide was designed in line with the objectives of the study which was to find out challenges the Elgeiyo Marakwet County faces while implementing its strategies. The data was qualitative in nature hence content analysis was used.

4.2 Basic information

The targeted interviewees were two County Executives (Minister for Finance and Economic Planning, and Minister for Roads, public works and Transport), a Member of County Assembly (Kapyego ward), a Member of National Assembly (Keiyo South constituency), and a Sub-County Administrator (Moiben/Kuserwo Ward) and the Governor. However, only the Governor’s interview was not successful. This means that five interviewees out of the six targeted was achieved making it 83% success. The study requested the interviewees to indicate the challenges faced by the Elgeiyo Marakwet county of Kenya in the implementation of its strategies. The data collected was analysed using content analysis by assembling similar themes.
4.3 Challenges of strategy implementation

The interviewees were asked whether they were aware if the County had a mission and vision statement of which they were unanimous that there was one. They were also aware that the County had various strategic plans which included the County Integrated development Plan (CIDP) which was the main one. This is a consolidation of strategies that were prioritised by each ward from the nine devolved functions within the County government of Elgeiyo Marakwet according to the interviewees.

The study sought to determine how the top management contribute to the strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County. The interviewees reiterated that the top management contribute a lot in the process especially toning down politicization of the process, guiding lower level management teams, overseeing policies that guide the process and helping in monitoring the implementation process.

On the issue of politics, the interviewees were asked if politics affected strategy implementation at the county and the responds was that there was a lot of interference by the Members of the County Assembly (MCAs). They singled out the resource allocation to specific programs which the MCAs may change midway and divert them to other areas not prioritized by the plans. They sometimes put self interest first hence may approve or disapprove depending on how they are to benefit and not for the common good of the population.

From the findings on how the communication process contributes to strategy implementation, the interviewees were unanimous that it plays a vital role. They agreed that efficient and effective information flow allows for fast implementation of strategies and gives the implementers better view and understanding of what they are suppose to do to facilitate the implementation process. They cited the fact that monthly
returns from wards and sub-counties allow the executive to react to any changes in strategy direction in order to take remedial measures. The interviewees agreed that poor communication procedures and practices with too much bureaucracy may lead to disruption of decisions made at different levels regarding strategies to be implemented and this may hamper the County’s goal and mission.

The interviewees were in accord on what are some of the management practices that contribute to strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County. They highlighted; coordinated public participation in the formulation process as from ward level upwards, constant and continued communication on the status of the implementation process as well as monitoring and evaluation and the use of social media platform to update stakeholders on progress.

Asked their opinion on how coordination of activities contributes to successful implementation of strategy at the County, the responds was that it promotes cohesion of ideas and a sign of belonging, allows for scrutiny and avoids duplication of duties and resource allocation. They also added that it creates efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation process.

The interviewees response to the question of organizational culture contribution to strategy implementation was that attitude towards change or rather people refusing to change with times, with language such as ‘This is how we do things around here’” play a big role on the implementation of strategy and may fail if the attitude is negative and succeed if the attitude is positive. Other aspects of organizational culture that contribute to strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County include team work, transparency, respect among for one another, delegation and use of all levels of personnel in implementing the programs.
The interviewees on being asked on some of the challenges that surface during the strategy implementation process that had not been anticipated, they indicated as; under-budgeting of projects, political interference by MCAs, emergencies and natural calamities like landslides which consume unplanned resources, delayed disbursement of funds from the National government and the use e-procurement process, supplementary budgets divert intended resources hence inhibit progress of implementation. They also added that some of the strategies put in place were with the expectation of support from International donors which sometimes may not materialize.

On the findings on whether organisations structure affects strategy implementation at Elgeiyo Marakwet county government, the interviewees indicated that the organisational structure do affect strategy implementation at the County. This was through bureaucratic challenges, individual role, and co-ordination of activities. Supervisors delegate duties and functions during strategy implementation and management organizes meetings to discuss issues on strategy implementation of which may take time to coordinate the two groups.

The interviewees were requested to indicate whether the transition from former County Councils and Town Councils status to County government affected the implementation process. The response was resounding yes and examples are that most projects initiated in the former system were not completed and the new regime is reluctant to complete due to the nature of resource allocation to these projects. In addition, asset identification was a problem as most former leadership did not put proper records hence facing a lot of legal huddles and the process of transferring these assets also is another cost to the County government of Elgeiyo Marakwet.
They also revealed that the former County Councils and Town Councils had their strategic plans done and sponsored by the central government then, but the County Government has to come up with its strategies and implement them using its resources.

The interviewees were requested to indicate whether the staff in the county government are well skilled and equipped to implement strategies. The findings were that the Elgeiyo Marakwet County government has a well established County Public Service Board which competitively recruits staff for various posts. They also have training and development programmes for the staff hence improving their competencies in handling the implementation processes effectively.

On whether there are some forces opposed to the County’s strategic intent, the interviewees indicated that unhealthy politics of competition, insecurity in parts of the County and occupation of the forests by squatters creating destruction of natural resources are some of these negative forces. In addition, legislation, lack of top management support and the issue of equitable distribution of resources within the County play part.

The interviewees were asked to give some of the possible solutions to the challenges to strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County and they were unanimous on various issues which include; reduced participation of MCAs in the implementation process but tasked to do more of oversight, monitoring and evaluation, increased capacity building of staff, increased coordinated collaboration between the two levels of Government, strengthening collaboration with neighbouring counties to develop competitive advantage.
4.4 Discussion of findings

From the results, it is identified that the most significant challenge during strategy implementation is political interference by the political leadership. In addition, proper coordination within rank and file of the county structure is another challenge. This is in concurrence with Kangoro (1998) who notes that lack of commitment to strategic management practices by top management and other employees of the organizations results in poor implementation. Further, the findings from the study support those of Okumus (2003) who found that the main barriers to the implementation of strategies include lack of coordination and support from other levels of management and resistance from lower levels including lack of or poor planning of activities. Strategies if not well communicated and well administered to employees to facilitate ease in adoption can be a challenge during strategy implementation.

The bureaucratic tendencies of the County Governments seem to be a bottleneck to strategy implementation as it reduces efficiency amongst employees. According to Snow and Hrebiniax (1980), the way to effective strategic planning is full of potholes. They argue that the longer the time for execution of plans the more the chances of failure of plans. Further, execution involves change of responsibilities, objectives, structures, which is considered as a threat and ultimately is resisted. Furthermore, Zucker (1977), argues that participants become used to working in alignment within situational forces present in their home environments and begin to take them for granted. This then leads to the development of internalized and institutionalized practices that are difficult to change.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the summaries, discussions and conclusions of the results of the research, limitations, recommendations and areas of further research stemming from this study. The conclusions and recommendations drawn were in quest of addressing the research question or achieving the research objective which is the challenges of strategy implementation faced by the Elgeiyo Marakwet County Government.

5.2 Summary of findings

The study revealed that most of the Elgeiyo Marakwet County staffs are aware of the existence of various strategic plans which included the County Integrated development Plan (CIDP). This is because the County has a website that highlights key events and programs at the County. This is also because the process of establishing strategic plan is through a thorough consultation, which starts from the grassroots level. Every ward is given a chance through public participation to prioritize any projects that are part of devolved functions of the County Government. These are then consolidated at the Sub-County and finally at County level to develop the CIDP. The County has come up with strategies on how to go about achieving its set goals. These strategies include Public Private Partnership (PPP), stakeholder networking and collaboration, and Monitoring and Evaluation approach.

The study revealed that the top management contribute a lot to the strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County. This revealed that the Governor and Deputy Governor are always trying to bring together the County Executives and the
MCAs in toning down politicization of the process, guiding lower level management teams, overseeing policies that guide the process and help in monitoring the implementation process. However, in some situations the MCAs do have their way through blackmail of the executive especially conditional passage of certain legislations hence politicization of the process of resource allocation to projects.

The research also revealed that communication process contributes immensely to strategy implementation, process. The County has set up upward and downward reporting systems where the Ward administrators do forward daily, weekly and monthly reports to the County headquarters on progress of projects and from headquarter to Wards hence creating efficient and effective information flow. This allows for fast implementation of strategies and gives the implementers a better view and understanding of what they are suppose to do to facilitate the implementation process. However, too much bureaucracy especially on government systems has led to disruption of decisions made at different levels regarding strategies to be implemented and this has hampered the achievement of County’s goals.

The organizational culture at the County, according to the findings, contributes to strategy implementation process especially due to the fact that most of the County employees were former civil Servants and County Council employees who had their way of doing the business, hence resistance to change. Other aspects of organizational culture that contribute to strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County include team work, transparency, respect among for one another, delegation and use of all levels of personnel in implementing the programs.

Unplanned emergencies and external factors are other challenging factors to strategy implementation. The County is also prone to Landslides especially along the
escarpments during raining season, cattle rustling in some parts of the county which consume unplanned resources, delayed disbursement of funds from the National government and the use e-procurement process, supplementary budgets divert intended resources hence inhibit progress of implementation.

The study revealed that transition affected strategy implementation as most projects initiated in the former system of governance were not completed and the new regime is reluctant to complete due to the nature of resource allocation to these projects. In addition, asset identification was a problem as most former leadership did not put proper records hence facing a lot of legal huddles and the process of transferring these assets also is another cost to the County government of Elgeiyo Marakwet.

The challenges of inheriting staff from the National government through the devolved functions were great. This is because the County Public Service Board which competitively recruits staff for various posts gives higher salaries compared to the inherited staff from devolved functions from the National Government performing the same functions.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, though most of the challenges of strategy implementation faced by the Elgeiyo Marakwet County of Kenya had been identified in the literature review, there are some that were not identified especially due to the fact that the County Governments receives their funding from the National government hence lacks its own resources to plan for. This is because the current National Government policy on money disbursement to the Counties is pegged on at least 15% of total National annual revenue. This means that fluctuations or being unsure of how much is to be disbursed within a particular period, affects the way planning is done at the County.
The study revealed that the challenges faced during strategy implementation were that sometimes there is lack of support from the top management and politicization of the process, slow budget approval, lack of clear individual role, lack of alignment with the organization strategic plan as executives try to please MCAs, lack of employee functions harmonization, poor staffing level, ineffective communication and coordination of activities during strategy implementation. Some of the management practices that contribute to better strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County Government include the daily, weekly and monthly planning meetings, benchmarking within and outside the country, creating awareness among the staff especially through social media, continuous monitoring and evaluation and the culture of trust and transparency amongst leaders.

5.4 Recommendations

The study findings gave empirical evidence that have implications for management policy and practice as well as contribution to knowledge. This study recommends that the County Government of Elgeiyo Marakwet should enhance policies that guide the relationships between the MCAs and the County Executives as well as strengthen the individual roles played by each group in the implementation process. In addition, there is need to improve policies on resource allocation to avoid interference by the MCAs and other political machination.
The study also recommends that a policy on recruitment for the County be in place as there is great duplication of functions and roles due to the inherited staff from devolved functions to the county by National government. In addition, a policy on harmonization of salaries for recruited staff to the County and those inherited from the National Government to help motivate both categories of staff hence reduce apathy in the implementation process.

The study recommends that there should be continuous monitoring of the strategic plan implementation to ensure evaluation of performance of the staff, organizational objectives and strategy direction which should be done quarterly, annually and mid-term to ensure better performance. Continuous monitoring ensures that any issues that arise at any stage of implementation are mitigated in good time. Bureaucratic tendencies should be minimized by allowing employees to have sound understanding of any intended changes and of the new way of understanding. Employees should be told what the county government expects from them and their role in the implementation of the county’s strategic plans.

The study will go a long way in adding knowledge on actions that ought to be taken to make strategy implementation process successful. This means that there is need to learn more and more about various Counties in order to gain hindsight on some of the key aspects that play vital role in strategy implementation in the County Governments.
5.5 Limitations of the study

The study had both time and financial limitations. Most of the targeted persons were very busy due to the nature of their assignments hence minimal time to give comprehensive information. In addition, some of the interviewees were met outside their Counties as it was the only available time for the interview hence financial implication. The interview guide used as a tool for data collection was not exhaustive hence could not bring out all the aspects anticipated by the research.

5.6 Suggestion for further study

The study recommends that further research should be done on the challenges of strategy implementation facing other County Governments in Kenya. This will create more knowledge on the topic and may lead to generalization of challenges of strategy implementation facing Counties in Kenya.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

Interview Guide

PART I: Personal Details

What is your Current Position at the County?

Which Department do you work in?

What is your Highest Level of education : (PHD, Masters, Bachelors, Diploma, Other)

How long have you been working at the County? (Years)

PART II: Key Issues

1. Does Elgeiyo Marakwet County have a mission or vision statement?

2. Do Elgeiyo Marakwet County have Strategic Plans? Elaborate

3. How does top management contribute to strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County?

4. Does politics affect strategy implementation in the Elgeiyo Marakwet County? Elaborate
5. How does communication process contribute to the strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County?

6. What are some of the management practices that contribute to better strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County?

7. In your own opinion, how does coordination of activities contribute to successful strategy implementation at Elgeiyo Marakwet County?

8. In your own view, how does organizational culture contribute to strategy implementation at the Elgeiyo Marakwet County? Elaborate please

9. What are some of the challenges that surface during strategy implementation that had not been anticipated?

10. Does the organisations structure affect strategy implementation at Elgeiyo Marakwet County? Please Elaborate

11. Has the transition from County Councils systems to County Government affected strategy implementation at the County? Elaborate
12. Do you think, the staff in the County Government, are well skilled and equipped to implement strategies? Elaborate

13. Are there other forces that are hindrance to Elgeiyo Marakwet County strategic intent? Elaborate

14. What are the possible solutions to the challenges of strategy implementation at the County?