

# **Internal Corporate Communication Strategies Used in the Implementation of Performance Contracts: A Study of One Corporation in Kenya**

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## **Abstract**

This paper analyses the Internal Corporate Communication (hereafter, ICC) strategies used in the implementation of performance contracts in one large public corporation in Kenya. Internal Corporate Communication (hereafter ICC) is sharing of information, meaning and understanding within corporation. ICC has core tenets that if managed professionally would promote successful institutionalization of corporate programmes. However, there is increasing concern among communications professionals and scholars that ICC continues to be generally done haphazardly in most organizations resulting in varied levels of success in implementation of important corporate policies and programmes such as performance contracting. On the other hand, literature reviewed reveals that currently, there is relatively minimal research that has examined the use of ICC in the implementation of performance contracts in public organizations. The paper is based on the findings of a study submitted for a Masters degree in Communication Studies in one university in Kenya focusing on one of the research questions. The study adopted the qualitative case study design and was conducted in the Western region of Kenya involving 42 participants. Data was generated using interviews and document analysis and was analyzed thematically. Some of the ICC strategies highlighted in the paper are: communicating corporate ownership of PCs, instituting consistency in communicating about PCs and using change as a strategy in communicating about PCs. The paper highlights the need to educate the internal publics of organizations on the meaning and significance of ICC in deciding the nature of strategies to be used in implementing performance contracts.

**Keywords:** *Corporate communication, internal corporate communication, Communication strategies, performance contracting*

## **Introduction**

This paper analyses the Internal Corporate Communication (hereafter, ICC) strategies used in the implementation of performance contracts in one large public corporation in Kenya. The paper is divided into five main sections, namely: background to the study, methodology, findings, discussion and conclusions.

## **Background to the study**

In the background to the study, we briefly review literature on Internal Corporate Communication, performance contracting and present relevant information on the Kenyan context. Then we give a statement of the problem, research question, and scope of the study, limitations, justification and significance.

## **Defining internal corporate Communication**

Corporate communication (CC) can be defined as management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all means of communications with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favorable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent. It involves communication of management matters to employees (such as philosophy, policies, strategies and procedures) advertising, marketing, corporate branding and public relations. All these are often geared towards a satisfaction of all the stakeholders and organizational success (Hirsch & Goodman, 2012).

Corporate Communication could be broadly divided into two parts: external and internal. This study, hence the paper based on it focused on Internal

Corporate Communication (ICC). ICC takes place within the organization and could be individual to individual, individual to group and group to individual. This form of communication is a vital aspect of corporate management. In fact, success of any organization depends upon a vivid communications system used in-house by an organization in order to keep in touch with its internal publics. Similarly organizational programmes may not thrive without effective and meaningful ICC as it serves to inform, instruct, develop, motivate and control people in an organization. Knowledge, goal orientation and sharing of corporate concerns, review and monitoring, performance appraisal and training are the main issues that ICC addresses. This is necessary in communication of policy changes which play an important role in employee performance and organizational performance as a whole. Effective and efficient ICC helps in the creation of a better working atmosphere and increased productivity. ICC is a field drawn from the theory and practice of CC and related professions and when poorly done it can have adverse effects on the organization (Goodman & Hirsch, 2012).

### **The Kenyan context**

ICC is not a new phenomenon in Kenya because strides towards the promotion of effective communication in organizations with their internal publics have been put in place in the recent past. The progress has culminated in the enactment of organizational policies and programmes related to employee and general organizational performance. However, commitment to the effective communication of these policy changes and implementations has not come forth fully. In recent years, organizations globally have gone through dramatic changes, including less tight structures and downsizing to ensure effective information flow. On one hand these changes are due to the rapid technological developments, global competition and the changing nature of the workforce. On the other hand these organizational transformations and innovations are triggered by interventions such as Total Quality Management (TQM) business processes, re-engineering and performance contracting for high productivity and organizational performance (Holtz, 2003).

In pursuit of the goal of performance improvement within organizations, New Public Management (hereafter NPM) emphasizes on the adoption of private sector practices in public institutions. NPM models have therefore been invariably seen through the corporate organizations reform initiatives in many developing countries as the solution to reversing falling service delivery and organizational performance (Bolagun, 2003).

In the quest of this same goal, Kenya introduced performance contracting not only to improve service delivery but also to refocus the mind set of public service away from a culture of inward looking towards a culture of business as focused on customer and results. The push factor for introduction of performance contracting in Kenya underlies the assumption that institution of performance measurements, clarification of corporate objectives, customer orientation and an increased focus towards incremental productivity and cost reduction can lead to improvements in service delivery (GoK, 2003).

In 2003, after the NARC government took over, the president, Mwai Kibaki came up with the clarion call 'A Working Nation' this made it necessary for the country to come up with a National Performance Management Framework (NPMF) to institutionalize Result Based Management (RBM). The objective of this was to improve performance in the public service successful implementation of targets such as; Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) for wealth and employment creation that was expected to run from 2003-2007 and the Vision 2030. These were anchored in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). This brought about a paradigm shift from Process Based (PB) public service to a Result Based

(RB) public service to deliver services to the citizens in an efficient, effective and ethical manner (GoK 2007). The government then came up with several strategies, which included; the RBM, Strategic Management and Performance Contracts (PCs).

The objective of PC's is to ensure that individual employees take control of and are accountable for the performance of their roles. This move was necessary especially after the Kenyan government acknowledged that over the years there had been poor performance in the public sector, especially in the management of public resources, which has hindered the realization of sustainable economic growth (GoK, 2005).

According to Gatere et al., (2013), implementation of PCs in Kenya has its origin on the assumption that the performance of the public service is falling below the expectations of the public thus, loss of confidence in the government supported programs. This drop in performance resulted to poor service delivery, waste of the available resources and increased brain drain to the private sector. For these reasons, the government was faced with the challenge of improving service delivery, performance levels and restoring the public's confidence of the public sector by ensuring customer satisfaction and results oriented service. This need to address the performance gaps and customer satisfaction in the public sector led the government into opting for implementation of PC's in the public service and other state owned corporations. He further observes that during the initiation stage in Kenya, the PC's were introduced on a pilot basis between the years 2004-2005 which at the evaluation stage, an increase was recorded in pre-tax profits thus justifying the adoption of the management tool. The push factor for the introduction of PCs in Kenya underlies the assumption that institutions are aware of performance measurements, clarification of corporate objectives, customer orientation and the increased focus towards incremental productivity and cost reduction can lead to improvements in service delivery (GoK, 2003).

The study was based on one corporate organization in Kenya - Kenya Revenue Authority (hereafter, KRA). KRA is one of the main corporations in Kenya which was formed by an Act of Parliament, Chapter 469 of the Laws of Kenya in 1995. Its main objective is to enhance tax collection on behalf of the Government of Kenya (hereafter GOK) and its core functions being to collect revenue and duties which ought to help the GOK in providing the much needed services to its citizenry. This is to assist in maximizing revenue collection at the least possible cost for socio-economic well-being of Kenyans and also to ensure that the GOK can sustain itself from internal revenue sources. Its headquarters is in Nairobi with several branches distributed all over the republic to help in revenue collection and ease operational costs.

The paper focuses on internal corporate communication (ICC) in KRA, particularly within the Western Region, particularly on the ICC strategies used in implementation of PCs. Next, we state the problem that prompted this study.

### **Statement of the problem**

Appropriate and effective ICC is one of the main requirements for the successful implementation of corporate policies and programmes (Cornelissen, 2004). This could be in terms of enhancing access to reliable, valuable and accurate information with regard to organizational issues such as performance contracting. Appropriate communication between the various levels in organizations could lead to a significant reduction of cases of miscommunication and misconception of policies and programmes. However, there was a lack of evidence that appropriate communication strategies were being used maximally in the implementation of PCs. This problem calls for research into the ICC strategies used in such organizations (Obong'o, 2009; Gatere et al. 2013).

More specifically, performance contracting has become a requirement in most corporate organizations all over the world. Inevitably, therefore, the internal publics in corporations who are required to implement PCs have to be

communicated to, regarding PCs. In other words, some ICC strategies must be used in implementation of PCs in corporations, consciously or unconsciously. Yet, there are no known empirical bases or foundations on the use of ICC for implementation of PCs specifically of organizational policies in general. Academically, therefore, there was very minimal research in Kenya that had been identified to guide ICC in the state corporations; hence there was need to conduct research that might reveal effective strategies for implementation of corporate programmes (Kimia, 2007).

The socio-economic aspect of the problem was that there were varied levels of performance and (in relation to this), various levels of implementation of PCs in different corporations in Kenya in general (Mandago 2008; Kimia, 2007). As such, it could be argued that state corporations were using different ICC strategies in their implementation of organizational policies resulting in varied success levels in performance during and after the implementation of important policies and programmes (Cornelissen, 2004). On PCs in particular, many corporations such as universities, Teachers Service Commission, Ministries, Universities and others have reported a lot of resistance by internal publics while some organizations such as KRA seem to have implemented PCs relatively successfully. Nonetheless, even in the context of KRA (from preliminary studies) there were reports of varied uptake of PCs by the different branches in the Western region. These scenarios called for a study on the ICC strategies used in implementation of PCs as a major corporate programme, so as to broadly investigate the use of ICC in implementation of corporate programmes in general.

### **Research question and scope of the study**

In view of the problem stated above, in the study reported in this paper, we sought to address one research question: *What Internal Corporate Communications strategies are used in the implementation of performance contracting in the organization?* In terms of the scope of the study relevant to this paper, the study sought to identify how the employees got to know about the strategies in use, whether the strategies were uniform across all the regional offices to be studied, if the strategies used had changed over time and the reason for the change or lack of change and also find out whether these ICC strategies were documented and by who.

In terms of limitations, clearly this study was restricted in terms of content since it only focused on ICC. It is obvious that in corporations, there were inevitable overlaps between internal and external aspects of communication. Indeed, they are at times complementary. It would therefore be more enriching to cover both internal and external corporate communication. Secondly, it covered only one organization (KRA). It would perhaps have been more illuminating to get insights into the use of ICC strategies in implementation of policies and programmes in other corporations. Still in terms of context, this study was clearly only limited to the Western region administrative unit of KRA. Again, it would have been more informative to cover more KRA branches in the country. It is important to explain that the limitations raised in this study were inevitable in an academic research which by its nature was limited in terms of time and resources. This scenario definitely called for a limited scope in terms of content, context and methodology. However, the rigour put into the execution of the selected scope was thorough enough to ensure the findings were still significant.

### **Justification and significance of the study**

The justification of this study lies in the fact that no prior empirical studies had been conducted that examined ICC strategies used in the implementation of organizational programmes both globally, in Africa and in Kenya particularly. Also there are hardly any investigations into Kenyan organizations and how they use these ICC strategies in implementing PCs. Secondly, performance contracting as a corporate programme is generally a new phenomenon in the developing world, particularly in Kenya. While there is quite some literature on

performance contracting perse, there is very minimal research literature on the Communication of PCs (e.g. Obong'o, (2009), OECD (1999), Muraya, (2012). It is justified to do research on ICC within corporations.

In terms of significance, we believe this study will be of great help to policy makers in government and other organizations in designing ICC strategies that would be used in policy and program implementation in various contexts. The results of this study would be useful to the managers in KRA and other state corporations in assessing the effectiveness of ICC in communicating PC issues and its implementation. This will enable the managers and employees who are involved in programme implementation (or may be required to do so in future) to have a clear focus on how to effectively solve the problem of communication of PC issues to their internal publics.

## **Methodology**

The study was grounded within the relativist - interpretivist paradigm; hence adopted a qualitative case study design .The qualitative approach is flexible and made it possible to generate and analyze holistic data using sufficiently rigorous, trustworthy and ethical methods and techniques (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011). The intent of qualitative research was to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction; in this study the ICC strategies used in implementation of PCs, (Creswell, 2007). A case study according to Creswell (2007) is a piece of research which involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system. Creswell further says that a case study can be viewed as a method within the qualitative approach. Ong'ondo (2010) concurs that a case study is a process of inquiry

## **Study area and sampling**

As already stated, this study was conducted in KRA, Western region of Kenya in five regional offices with five departments each and the headquarters in Kisumu which has seven service departments. We specifically went to the two border offices- Isebania and Busia and two internal offices- Kisii, Kakamega and Kisumu which is the headquarters of the western region. The study was done in KRA since it is one of the state corporations that have successfully implemented a key organizational programme (PCs) (Muraya, 2012). The Western region of Kenya has the highest number of branches of all the regions in KRA, which made it a potentially rich study area with regard to the issue under study.

In this study the sample population comprised of five regional office commissioners from all the selected five departments, heads of the seven service departments, and two other members from each of the selected regional

offices of KRA, in the Western region of Kenya. This gave me a total population of 42 participants for my study. In determining the sample for this study, we adopted the non - probability sampling (particularly purposive sampling) strategy in consistency with the qualitative approach and case study method. Non - probability sampling suited this study because as Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) assert, the focus was on in-depth information on a particular issue and not on making inferences or generalizations. Hence, the study targeted participants who were known to have the information that served the purpose of this study, by virtue of their stations and duties (Kombo and Tromp, 2006).

In this study, we selected three categories of participants: Commissioners, Supervisors and selected department members because I believe that they provided various perspectives on ICC strategies used in the implementation of PCs .Hence, we sampled the supervisors in each of the 7 service departments in the regional headquarters in Kisumu (7), the 5 departmental commissioners in all the 5 regional offices (25) and a purposively sampled group of 10 employees (2 in each of the 5 regional offices) across the Western region giving me a total of 42 participants for my study sample.

## **Data generation**

We mainly used two techniques of data generation which were interviews and document analysis. Interviews as a technique of generating data involve direct verbal interaction between individuals. It is intended to get to what a participant in the research thinks the attitudes of that person and/or to explore a person's reasons for thinking in a certain way or for carrying particular

perceptions or attitudes (Cohen et al, 2007). Interviews are one of the most important sources of data in qualitative research (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999) and are advantageous in that they provided in-depth data which was not possible to get using questionnaires. Interviews made it possible to obtain data necessary to meet specific objectives of the study and also guard against confusing the questions since the interviewer can clarify the questions thereby helping the respondent give relevant responses.

The use of document analysis as a data generation technique was also important Yin (2009) asserts that documentary information is likely to be very relevant to every case study topic. One advantage of document analysis as a source of data in qualitative research is that they enhance the credibility of the study, an important aspect of trustworthiness (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011). We used document analysis in the study since participants sign performance contracts and getting to see the documents enabled us to relate information to the data from the interviews. We targeted documents that contained any communication within KRA on ICC and/or PCs.

### **Data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations**

Data was analysed thematically in five main states: transcription, familiarization with the data, open coding, axial coding and selective (Creswell (2007). Trustworthiness is the degree or extent of certainty that the research process is truthful, careful and rigorous enough to qualify to make claims that it does (Creswell, 2007; Litchman, 2006). In qualitative research, trustworthiness involves credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. We ensured the trustworthiness of my study by giving a detailed account of the research process, excerpts from the field notes, quotes from interviews and ensuring reflexivity (Jwan, 2010) by acknowledging my role in the research process and admitting any possible influences. The study also heavily utilized triangulation of participants, research sites and data generation techniques.

In terms of ethics, we sought permission from the relevant organizational authorities to gain access to the geographical sites and participants before data collection. We also developed an informed consent form for participants to sign before engaging them in the research Creswell (2009), acknowledging that their rights would be protected during data collection, elements of which included: identification of the researcher, the institution, how the participants were selected, the purpose of the research, the benefits for participating in the research, the level and type of participant involvement, guarantee of confidentiality, provision of names and persons to contact if questions arise. We ensured anonymity of my participants and kept their names secret so that any other person was unable to identify who gave information. This helped us keep the information for the intended purpose and thus within the boundaries of the shared consent.

### **Findings**

During the data analysis, it emerged that three main ICC strategies were used in implementation of PCs: communicating corporate ownership of PCs, instituting consistency in communicating about PCs and using change as a strategy in communicating about PCs as presented below.

#### **Communicating corporate awareness and acceptance of PCs**

From the data, it emerged that the employees were informed about PCs as a new phenomenon, encouraged to accept and support it as an important tool of management that was meant to counter under performance and which required the support of all the internal publics.

However, on this strategy of building awareness and acceptance, it also emerged that while most employees who were interviewed indicated having seen the contracts, very few indicated knowing what they were meant for. For example, one participant, a 59 year old employee who was almost retiring, acknowledged knowing that PCs are a new phenomenon geared towards developing the employee and organizational performance but said it is not a

good thing as it was used quite vindictively by the management. Most employees who were interviewed shared in these sentiments.

Still on the issue of awareness and acceptance, ten years, after the introduction of PCs (since 2003), most of the internal publics said that it was still communicated variously depending on the officers talking about it; making it achieve varied levels of understanding and acceptance. It emerged that it was a new policy in the organization and all employees were sensitized when it was introduced while the management asserted that it was not really new because the organization had always had some form of PCs even before the government "re-introduced" it in 2003.

It was introduced when there was permissiveness and laxity among employees. People would not do their work adequately and PC were thus introduced to counter underperformance and to make employees efficient and proficient in their jobs. The management uses it as a tool that enhances employee and organizational management and is geared towards assessing performance. PCs come in to streamline and shape the organizational goals to get the checks and balances in the management. There is also need for strict measures on the follow-up process to be put in place as the management process goes on since it would be unfair to punish the underperformers without finding the real causes. (FIN-A)

The study also established that one common ICC strategy was to project PC as a management tool that ought to be accepted to help in maintaining the employee and management standards that have always led to its success. Employees were encouraged to be aware of and accept a number of specific management functions. First was acceptance of PCs as enhancing the clarity in job descriptions. Nonetheless, it emerged that this was more acceptable to the more senior employees in higher job groups who had attained high level of training and sensitization on PCs than their counterparts who were in lower job groups.

Thirdly, in terms of acceptance of PCs as a management tool, the participants stated that one strategy was to communicate PCs as a commitment between the employer and the employee in the organization with the employer stating rules, expectations and the employee undertaking to meet those expectations. Accordingly, the management set targets and employees had Balance Score Cards which were used in gauging the percentage of the set targets achieved.

I think the implementation of PCs has been successful as it was already there so I cannot talk much about its initial implementation but the fact that it is signed annually in every new financial year. The whole process as I can say has been received well and most employees have taken it in with the belief that it will lead to the success of the organization. There is also a good uptake though the vindictive aspect of the policy has not been completely demystified. I would say it's successful because one feels the impact of not meeting the target and will always strive to engage the management in the process when there is a problem. This is because you are constantly being asked from above "how far are you?" and it's because they know the targets that we undertook mean something. (FIN-A)

The fourth strategy within this theme emerged as promoting acceptance of PCs as being important to all internal publics in assessing organizational and employee performance towards achieving the organizational goals. The Management interviewed particularly accepted PCs as providing good appraisal and measurement tools that could help motivate staff to achieve their individual and organizational goals. The following excerpt from one of the participants captures the strategy of communicating PCs as a management tool.

It is also clear that another part of the strategy of communicating PCs as a management tool was to get employees to be aware of and possibly accept the

possible consequences of not meeting the agreed targets in the PCs. Another strategy was to encourage ownership of PCs as being intended to boost performance by individuals and the organization as a whole.

Employees are taught that Performance Contracting is a contract between an individual employee and his or her employer laying down rules and expectations of management. That they ought to be accepted as undertakings to meet the specified management targets in the contract. It is an obligation and therefore an employee has no choice but to accept what he has undertaken and signed to do. If you fail to meet the expected targets you should be tasked to answer why and subsequent disciplinary action taken if you fail to justify the reason for that failure. If the lack of success is justifiable it would be understood and there will be no punishment for the same. If it is realized that it is a failure on your side as an employee then you must illustrate why the target was not met and if there is evidence of negligence anything from a warning letter, to more punitive measures can be taken. (DSM-B)

### **Instituting consistency in communicating about PCs**

It also emerged from the data that consistency in communicating PCs was a vital strategy to ensure its success. The management sought to ensure that in as much as there may exist hiccups, consistency was ensured to enhance the implementation of performance contracting at all levels in the organization

Interviews with the regional managers and some of the employees indicated that PCs were designed by the Organizational Management in Nairobi, specifically by the Human Resource office. The interviews revealed that administration of the entire performance contracting process was under the docket of the Chief Administration Officers who are the Deputy Commissioners and the Senior Deputy Commissioner based in the headquarters in Nairobi. These were the officers responsible for instituting communication about PCs. This was intended to ensure that there would be consistency in terms of the Communication emanating from the headquarters about PCs.

It also emerged that the communication about PCs was done hierarchically downwards. The communication moved from the Chief Administration Officer to the Senior Deputy Commissioner, then the Deputy Commissioner – to the Regional Manager – then the Deputy Regional Manager and ultimately to the Station Managers to the Deputy Station Managers and staff. Communication about PCs through this chain of command would give details of the activities employees could be involved in for effective implementation of PCs. Interviews with some of the officers in the hierarchy described above captured this strategy.

Performance Contracting is a policy which has to be adhered to by all employees from the Board of Directors at the headquarters in Nairobi all the way down to the subordinate staff at the different regional offices. There is no two way about it meaning the employees have to work extra hard to meet their targets which are escalated downwards from the top management. It is an obligation and therefore an employee has no choice but to meet what he has undertaken and signed to do. If you fail to meet the expected targets you should be tasked to answer why through the human resource at the HQs and subsequent disciplinary action taken if you fail to justify the reason for that failure. (DSM-B)

The data also revealed that much as the issues regarding PCs were generally communicated downwards from the top management to all the regions uniformly, the management also agreed on the fact that PCs were tailor - made for the different regions being that there were different roles associated with the different regions and regional offices. The interviewees explained further that the specific communication strategies for different regions were meant to address the varying roles of these regions and the job descriptions of the employees in various departments. The managers and employees confirmed that there were difficulties with the communication as some areas are too remote to be accessed easily and may not be open to the technology used in communication for other regions.



It is, however, tailor made for the different regions depending on what their main focus is such as: domestic taxes, road licensing, customs etc. It can also be changed by the supervisor to suit the prevailing conditions. (FIN-A)

### **Change as a strategy in communicating about PCs**

From the data, it emerged that *change* was used as a strategy in communicating internally about PCs. This involved reviewing the messages and strategies (such as the ones presented above) on the issue of performance contracting generally. Two main changes that emerged from the data were change in pattern of communication about PCs and change to accommodate views on improvement of PCs.

It emerged that there was realization among the management in the organization that due to the largely downward hierarchical communication, PCs were perceived mainly as a Management affair. Gradually, the Management therefore introduced changes that would involve the internal publics in perceiving PCs as a matter of concern to all. The main change that was reported was the introduction of the upward pattern of communication, where the subordinates were also given opportunities to talk to the Management and among themselves about PCs.

There is a change in terms of the manner of telling the people about PCs. Earlier, one would sign it without much emphasis being put on it and how it worked (FIN-D). Then members said the organization should start by making it a gradual process and ensure that all are involved in deciding what the target should be. (FIN-D) Mmmmmh.....there are changes yes and this can be seen in the introduction of countersigning by the HR and the workers in the department after it was realized that the contracts were initially signed only by the HRs. This change was implemented two years ago. (HR-A)

Generally, the management's views on the implementation process were that initially they found it quite difficult to facilitate active engagement of the employees in the process as expected by the government. Gradually though, there appeared to be an improvement in the acceptance and implementation of PCs. One of the changes instituted in the pattern of communication was getting reports from the employees. Changes have been there especially with the fact now information is regularly received by the HRs in the various departments and regions for dissemination to the necessary authorities. There are now documents to inform us employees how to do our appraisals. The registry receives this and it is immediately communicated back to HR. There are noticeable changes based on the objectives of the organization. There are now e- mails sent to all employees on the same so that they can send direct responses to the HQs on what they wanted changed.

Another change that emerged was that PCs were initially done yearly as per the organization's calendar but later appraisals were done quarterly (after every three months). At the end of the year, there would be one document that sums up the quarterly appraisals received. The end year appraisal is what determined the overall mark awarded at the end of the contracting period to indicate whether one had met the set target in the contract. The data also revealed that in the recent years, targets in the PCs were open for re-adjustments either upwards or downwards depending on the prevailing circumstances and in line with the various stations and regions expectations.

It also emerged that changes were introduced in the process of communication about PCs in order to accommodate the views of the employees for improvement. To begin with, most of participants admitted that in 2003 and an earlier stage of the introduction of PCs, signing was done unwillingly and that only a few people played a role in the target setting and implementation process. Some participants actually stated that the Commissioner General and the regional Managers in the organization needed to take responsibility for any failures since they were the ones who agreed to the signing of some unreasonable targets given by Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance.

It also emerged that there had been a change in handling grievances relevant to PCs. The respondents confirmed that an employee was now free to reject the appraisal results and seek a re-appraisal, which had not been the case during the initial five years of introduction of PCs. This change, most participants concurred had contributed more to the acceptance of PCs by the internal publics.

Changes have been there especially with the fact now information is regularly received by the HRs in the various departments and regions for dissemination to the necessary authorities. There are now documents to inform us employees how to do our appraisals. The registry receives this and it is immediately communicated back to HR (DSM-B). I could say that there are noticeable changes based on the objectives of the organization. There are now e-mails sent to all employees on the same so that they can send direct responses to the HQs on what they wanted changed (SM-B)

## **Discussion**

Overall, and based on the findings presented in the foregoing section, the study reveals that clearly there were discernible ICC strategies being used in the implementation of performance contracting. It is also clear that the ICC strategies were important in implementation of PCs, a rather new corporate policy in the studied organization and indeed similar organizations in the Kenyan context. However, most employees (including some in the Management) were not aware of the ICC strategies used in the implementation of PCs despite the numerous sensitization and training often done.

This revelation is not surprising, though considering the literature on ICC. The literature indicates that ICC strategies are a complex phenomenon that are not easy to categorically identify, describe or even quantify (Cornelissen, 2004; Argenti, 2009). Cornelissen acknowledges that in the organizational policy context, the issue of ICC strategies becomes even more complicated because the key feature of ICC is acceptance, which in itself is equally complex.

One of the key findings in the study is that even as the management emphasized awareness and acceptance about PCs as a key strategy, the communication was mainly downwards. This initially did not go down well with the publics who largely regarded PCs as a Management affair. This was the scenario in the organization until some conscious effort was made to change the ICC mainly to embrace upward patterns. This study therefore confirms previous studies that upward ICC strategies are far more superior to the downward strategies as they lead to better acceptance of new corporate programmes. (Argenti, 2009).

As reported in the findings, it also emerged that when employees were involved discussed the ICC strategies in use were more conversant with PCs than when Management merely gave policies without any meaningful engagement of employees. This finding concurs with the tenets of the interpretive strategy by Jain (1997) which postulates that the organization is a collection of cooperative agreements entered into willingly. The organization's existence relies on its ability to attract enough individuals to cooperate in mutually beneficial exchange. The focus here was on the desired relationships, symbolic actions and communication, and emphasized attitudinal and cognitive complexities among the diverse stakeholders in the organization.

Internationally, concern has arisen about some ICC strategies used in implementing PCs leading to a misconstrued idea that the only way to succeed in performance is by using the prescriptive strategy. This concern centers mostly on the availability of room for negotiation of targets as well as erosion

of the traditional belief that PCs are bad (Obong'o, 2009). However, the present study established that most employees are more worried about the results of the appraisals than they are about the strategies used. This is majorly due to the 'demonized' picture that has been created about PCs. Most managers felt that undesirable beliefs from rigid employees who were against PCs would threaten the success made so far in the use of the desired strategy.

Another key finding worth discussing further is the issue of consistency in ICC. This is a rather new aspect of ICC that featured in this study. Previously studies have tended to concentrate more on the pattern of ICC and the extent of involvement of internal publics (e.g. Cornelissen, 2004; Argenti, 2009, 2012; Gatere et.al. ,2013; Holtz, 2003). The present study reveals the need for consideration of consistency at different levels of Corporate Management as a key aspect of ICC. In the present study, while this was attempted, it did not factor the unique job assignments in different regions and branches. As argued by Argenti (2009), new corporate programmes are sometimes resisted due to inattention to technical aspects of Communication. Argenti was specifically referring to patterns of communication. This study reveals that consistency in ICC is another essential technical matter that ought to be considered in formulation of ICC strategies.

## **Conclusions**

Overall, this paper has analyzed the ICC strategies used in the implementation of PCs in one public corporation in Kenya. The study reveals communicating awareness and acceptance of PCs, instituting consistency in communication and adoption of change as the main strategies used. The study reveals mainly that ICC strategies are not well known to the internal publics including managers. That the corporations appear to implement policies without any clear conceptualizations of any ICC strategies.

Arguably, this lack of conceptualization of ICC strategies and the lack of consistency in communicating about/and implementation of PCs has contributed to the generally negative reception of PCs in Kenyan corporations and perhaps in other contexts, globally as we stated in the background to the study. While aspects of this have feature in previous studies in Corporate Communication, as we reported in the literature review, the studies were mainly concerned with communication with external publics, particularly in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility.

The main thesis in this paper is therefore that ICC is an essential aspect of Corporate communication as it is a core ingredient in the realization of corporate policies and programmes, in this case PCs. Based on the data generated and analyzed in this study, it is feasible to conclude that while ICC strategies are very important in Communication Studies, they could only influence employee perceptions of ICC strategies in the desired manner if Management is knowledgeable about them and if they implement them appropriately and consistently.

This paper therefore provides a case for focus on ICC strategies in addition to external corporate communication, CSR and corporate branding which over the

years have received much attention in the field of Communication Studies. There is thus the need for more research on different aspects of ICC in relation to implementation of other corporate programmes besides PCs so as to build a powerful cumulative repertoire of knowledge that would provide a powerful empirical basis for institutionalization of ICC in the corporate world and the academic realm.

In relation to this, we recommend that Management at various levels in organizations, need to ensure consistency in implementation of PCs to avert the thought that the whole process is meant for the management to curb underperformance and monitor employee performance. The organizations should also constantly monitor the functionality of the ICC strategies with a view to instituting change whenever necessary.

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