

Project Leadership as a Determinant of Project Implementation in Grass-root Support Non-Governmental Organisations in Kenya

Mbogoh, Elizabeth Wanjira

College of Human Resource Development
Department of Entrepreneurship, Technology, Leadership and Management
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
Nairobi, Kenya
mbogohelizabeth@gmail.com

DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.8.9.2018.p8120
<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.8.9.2018.p8120>

Abstract-Effective Project Management is entirely dependent on an individual with great leadership skills, because without a good leader, a project is unlikely to be completed successfully. The successful completion of projects is the primary responsibility and goal of the Project Manager, who will have a lot of weight on their shoulders when it comes to making the right decisions. While some people possess natural leadership qualities, other leadership skills must be learned and adapted to ensure that each individual's approach to leadership is tailored to suit their own individual style and personality.

Index Terms- Project Leadership, Project Manager, Project Team, Jack-of all-trades, traits, abilities, tasks.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the early project literature, the notion of project leadership mainly departed from a task oriented perspective. Leadership was often seen as a "soft" or "human" phenomenon that was needed in order to make the project team deliver according to plan (Nixon et al., 2012). At the same time, it was already acknowledged that the management of projects and temporary systems had its own specific problems and characteristics (Roselle et al, 2015).

The basis of project management is the need for the rational handling of temporary tasks, tasks that could not be handled through permanent organizational arrangements. This points at project leadership as mainly a task-oriented phenomenon where relations could (temporarily) be set aside for the efficient execution of the project plan (Lindgren & Packendroff, 2009). Both projects and the people in them belong to a surrounding permanent organizational context that must be handled. Consequently, the traditional project leadership literature has focused on leadership as the simultaneous task of project-internal team management of technical specialists and project-external management of business managers and clients, often in the structural setting of matrix organizations (Donald, 2006). This does not make project leadership a unique phenomenon as compared to other forms of leadership; it neither implies special practical tools or tricks, nor does it imply a special theoretical body clearly separated from general leadership theory. But it is still a special sub-field of leadership, not least because it is socially constructed as such through the general differentiation of project management from other managerial fields.

When presenting the new leader category - the project manager - to the world, Leyla (2001) depicted a boundary-crossing Jack-of-all-trades able to handle both advanced technological issues and complicated business matters. It was not expected from this individual to be the best engineer or the best businessman in the organization, but the double abilities and the double set of experiences was. In project leadership literature, this reasoning has been extended to a specific interest in the individuals that are actually able to perform such a role.

Among the traits, abilities and tasks mentioned (and often mixed with each other) is the ability to motivate and make people enthusiastic about the project, to lead through ideas and visions, participative leadership creating a good organizational climate, handling external contacts and stakeholders, coordination and facilitating internal communication), solving conflicts, being able to handle stress and searching for adequate information (Kerzner, 2013). The project manager shall be more tasks oriented than the average leader, but at the same time there are studies indicating that increased relation orientation is positively correlate with project effectiveness. All this while the traditional tasks to plan, make decisions, maintain discipline and control performance remains. A proactive "firelighter" is what is needed, not a reactive "firefighter" constantly preoccupied with handling chaotic situations (Buckle & Lines, 2012).

Behind this view of the project manager as a Jack-of-all-trades, as both generalist and specialist, as both strategist and technician with eye for details, we find a theoretical conception of project leadership that is equally wide, drawing from several sources of inspiration. This conception can be found in several of the leading textbooks and professional publications in the field (Lock,).

II. METHOD

Research Design

The study used the Cross Sectional Survey research design which collects data to make inferences about a population of interest at one point in time. It is described as snapshot of the populations about which they gather data and they may be repeated periodically. They can be conducted using any mode of data collection.

The target population of this study consisted of 500 employees of Grass-root Support NGOs based in Embu County. The sample was obtained from the Target Population using stratified sampling. The target population was stratified into five strata according to the type of projects they do, namely Education, Health, Microfinance, Agriculture and Nutrition. Simple random method was then used to obtain a 10 % sample of each stratum. A sample size of 50 NGO employees was therefore selected.

The sample size derived from stratification is denoted by $n = n_1 + n_2 + n_3 + n_4 + n_5$,

where; n = sample size

n_1 = Education NGOs

n_2 = Nutrition NGOs

n_3 = Health NGOs

n_4 = Agriculture NGOs

n_5 = Micro-finance NGOs

Triangulation was used to obtain better quality of data. The data collection tools used were: a questionnaire (which was the main tool), an interview guide and an observation form. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANOVA.

Data Management and Statistical Analysis

Quantitative data collected were analyzed by descriptive statistics and presented through tables and in prose. This was attained through frequency distributions, means, percentages, and standard deviations, simple and cross tabulations. Qualitative data was coded into the different factors and sectors, and analysed through Content Analysis. The analysis utilized SPSS version 23 software to facilitate all computations and output for interpretation by the researcher. Descriptive analyses of the study was done and expressed through frequency tables, percentages, charts means and standard deviations. The researcher used a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 for analyzing items that were in nominal scale. Inferential statistics was used to test variable relationships in which regression analysis showed how the variables are related while correlation analysis indicated the degree of relationship between the variables. For these tests, ANOVA, t-test and F-test were used. The Ordinary least squares regression analysis was done and interpreted to determine the influence that the independent variables had on the dependent variable; implementation of projects.

Statistical Model

The regression model used is presented in the equation below.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + e$$

Where:

Y is the dependent variable

β_0 is the constant term

$\beta [1, \dots, 5]$ is the regression coefficient of the independent variable

$X [1, \dots, 5]$ is the independent variable

e is the error term.

The study appreciates that there are other factors that may be affecting the implementation of projects in NGOS apart from the variables being investigated. These factors are represented by β_0 . The error term (e) represents "noise" or interference which denotes that there may be a non-linear relationship between the independent and dependent variable.

III. RESULTS

The research established that there was a strong relationship ($R=.663$) between predictor variable (project leadership) and the dependent variable (Project Implementation). The adjusted R-Square value is .596. This means that the predictor factor (project leadership) accounts for or explains 60% of the total variance in project implementation. The remaining 40% is explained by other variables which were not considered in this study.

Table 1: Model Summary for Project Leadership and Project Implementation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.663 ^a	.317	.596	.632

a. Predictors (Constant): Project Leadership

b. Dependent Variable: Project Implementation in Grass root Support NGOs in Kenya

From the ANOVA statistics, the study established that the regression model had a significance level of 3.4% which is an indication that the model is ideal for making future predictions since the value of significance (p-value) is less than 5%. The model derived is therefore fit for the study.

Table 2: ANOVA for Project Leadership

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.301	6	1.050	2.625	.034 ^a
	Residual	13.601	34	.400		
	Total	19.902	40			

a. Predictors (Constant): Project Leadership

b. Dependent Variable: Project Implementation in Grass root Support NGOs in Kenya

From the findings in the table above, $t=.579$ imply that project leadership style influences project implementation by Grassroot Support NGOs in Kenya. However, significance level being .026 which is less than 0.05 shows that the study was statistically significant. It was therefore concluded that project leadership style has a significant effect on project implementation.

The findings on the extent of accessibility of project leader for consultation of project issues yielded $t=.554$ implying that the factor influences project implementation significantly. Consequently, $p=.043$ shows that the effect is statistically significant.

The extent of accountability of project leadership for training resulted in $t=.363$ implying a big degree of influence as well. This was made statistically significant by $p=.019$.

The findings on extent of accountability of project leadership for effective project communications' influence in project implementation resulted in $t=.908$ showing a very large influence of the factor in project implementation. A p value of .370 was consequently reported meaning the effect was statistically significant.

The extent of accountability of project leadership for organizational resources was also a factor that proved to be of significant influence on project implementation with $t=2.427$ and $p=.021$. This proves the extent of influence to be statistically significant for the study.

Finally, Extent of accountability of project leadership for organizational culture was a factor that was of great influence in project implementation with $t=1.416$ and $p=.046$ showing significance statistically.

The findings of this study are in tandem with Aosa, (1992) who in his study concluded that management was the key factor that influenced strategic plans formulation and implementation.

Table 3: Coefficients for Project Leadership

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	

1	(Constant)	.901	.429		2.099	.043
	Most effective project leadership style for implementation in respondent's organization	-.071	.123	-.091	.579	.026
	Extent of accessibility of project leader for consultation on project issues	.099	.178	.103	.554	.043
	Extent of accountability of project leadership for training	.063	.173	.061	.363	.019
	Extent of accountability of project leadership for effective project communication	-.193	.212	.191	.908	.070
	Extent of accountability of project leadership for organizational resources	.496	.204	.466	2.427	.021
	Extent of accountability of project leadership for organizational culture	.218	.154	.235	1.416	.046

a. Dependent Variable: Project Implementation in grass root Support NGOs in Kenya

The stated hypothesis in this study was;

H₁: Project Leadership has a positive significant effect on project implementation in NGOs in Grassroot Support Kenya.

All other predictor variables were significant with p<0.05 except Extent of accountability of project leadership for effective project communication. Therefore, accept the hypothesis in this predictor variable (project leadership).

The regression equation from this output was:

$$Y = .901X_1 - .071X_2 + .099X_3 + .063X_4 - .193X_5 + .496X_6 + .219X_7$$

IV. DISCUSSION

The research through statistical calculations established that there was a strong positive relationship between the two variables, i.e. independent variable (project leadership) and the dependent variable (Project Implementation). Grassroots Support NGOs in Kenya were found to portray aspects of leadership in many of their projects to prove that the success of the projects they had undertaken could be attributed to their leadership. Team leadership of project teams was evident and documented in many grass root NGOs. Findings from the field indicated that NGOs with successful implementation of projects treated project leadership seriously. The importance of project leadership was also emphasized by the adjusted R-Square value which showed that project leadership accounts for a large percentage of the total variance in project implementation.

The findings also implied that project leadership style influenced project implementation by Grassroots NGOs in Kenya justifying the conclusion that project leadership style has a significant effect on project implementation by grass root NGOs in Kenya.

Accessibility of project leader for consultation of project issues was also found to influence project implementation significantly, just like extent of accountability of project leadership for training implied a big degree of influence as well.

Accountability of project leadership for effective project communications' influence in project implementation showed a very large influence of the factor in project implementation. The extent of accountability of project leadership for organizational resources was also a factor that proved to be of significant influence on project implementation.

Finally, Extent of accountability of project leadership for organizational culture was a factor that was of great influence in project implementation. The findings of this study are in tandem with Leting (2001) who conducted a case study on major factors that affect project management locally. He concluded that inexperienced project managers (project leadership), poor communication, poor monitoring and control systems negatively affected the project management efficiency.

V. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Project Leadership affects project implementation and that project leadership style influenced project implementation by Grassroot Support NGOs in Kenya. In particular, the study is of the view that Democratic Leadership influences project implementation by providing leadership which impacts positively on the project implementation. Other aspects such as Accessibility and Accountability equally affect project implementation.

It is therefore recommended that organizations ought to strive to engage competent Project Leadership personnel in project implementation to ensure successful project implementation.

REFERENCES

- [1] Aosa, E. (1992). *An empirical investigation of aspects of strategic formulation and implementation with large private manufacturing firms in Kenya*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Strathclyde University, California.
- [2] Buckle, L. & Lines, H. (2012). Systemic Team Coaching for Competitive Advantage. *Presentation to Academy of Executive Coaching (AoEC) Conference. July/August 2013 Case study – Heathrow Airport Terminal 2. Coaching at Work. 8(4), 27.*
- [3] Donald, R. (2006). The effect of management styles on the organizational commitment and job satisfaction of customer contact personnel. *Journal of organizational cultures and communication and conflict*, 11 (1), 77.
- [4] Kerzner, H., (2013) *Project Management: A system approach to planning, scheduling and controlling*. San Francisco: Wiley and Blackwell.
- [5] Leting, S. L. (2009). *Leadership in Strategic Management: A Theory of Corporate Governance Emergence*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Nairobi, Nairobi.
- [6] Leyla, R. (2001). Finding the right managers: Why Boards often make poor choices. *Sloan Management Review*, 43 (1), 91-95.
- [7] Lindgren, M., & Packendorff, J. (2009). Project Leadership Revisited: Towards Distributed Leadership Perspectives in Project Research. *International Journal of Project Organisation and Management*, 1 (3), 285-308.
- [8] Lock, D., *Project Management, (9th ed.)* Burlington, U.S.A.: Grower Publishing Company.
- [9] Nixon, P., Harrington, M. & Parker, D. (2012). Leadership performance is significant to project success or failure: a critical analysis. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management. 61 (2), 204–216.*
- [10] Roselle, L., Alister M., & Ben, O. "Strategic Narrative: A New Means to Understand Soft Power." *SAGE Journals 7.1 (2014): 70-84. 16 Feb. 2015. Web.*