RESEARCH ARTICLE

MANAGEMENT OF STRATEGIC CHANGE AT COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF VIHIGA, KENYA

Victor Munyasi Obenzi and Oluoch Mercy Florah

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Manuscript Info	*Abstract*
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	The County Government of Vihiga, Kenya aligns its governance with a resonating change management strategy geared towards progressive socio-economic development. With the advent of devolution and county governments in Kenya in 2013, the efficient management of strategic changes has been a key area of focus.Implementing strategic change management at the County Government of Vihiga is vital for better performance in economic, health, education, and other sectors. It ensures flexibility and adaptability to continually changing circumstances, simultaneously maintaining transparency, accountability, and improved service delivery. However, as with any evolving system, strategic change management faces challenges in this county. This comprises resistance to change among employees, inadequate resources, and unstable political environment. The County Government of Vihiga must be committed to change leadership, capacity building, resource allocation, managing resistance to change, and creating an environment that facilitates continuous improvement.Reviewed studies have focused mainly on strategic change management in private institutions hence there is little empirical data on the application of strategic change management in public institutions, a gap this research aims to bridge. The specific objectives of the study are to establish change management practices adopted by Vihiga County Government,to determine challenges faced by Vihiga County Government in managing strategic change and to ascertain the measures Vihiga County Government has put in place to mitigate challenges of management of strategic change. The research was anchored on open systems theory, chaos and complexity theory and contingency theory. Primary data was collected by use of interview schedule and analysed through content analysis. The results revealed that the county uses various strategies for strategic change management which include employee participation, effective communication active leadership and training. Similarly, it was discovered that the notable challenges encountered in managing strategic change included employee resistance, middle management resistance due to perceived loss of power and poor resource allocation. The main mitigation measures that the county management used to mitigate these drawbacks encompassed the creation of strong synergy and management monitoring of the change implementation process. The study concludes thatCurrently Vihiga County Government has successfully navigated through the change management. It recommends that,there is need to

Corresponding Author:- Victor Munyasi Obenzi

introduce change in a humane way, and if need be, set a guiding and counselling office to enable employees to cope with the change.

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Background of the Study:-

Organizations that incorporate strategies for managing change in their approach generally outperform those that do not,' as stated by Wheelen & Hunger (2008). By implementing strategic change management, a harmonious integration of the impacts of change is achieved, with a consideration for all affected processes, people, and systems. This strategy also includes the gathering and incorporation of their feedback into the change plan. As Sambo (2014) highlights, assigning responsibilities that align with an individual's skills and experience encourages active participation in the change process, reducing resistance and improving the rate of adoption. This, in turn, leads to a greater realization of the intended benefits. Experts in strategic management have argued that the success of any organization hinges greatly on their strategic change management practices, thus making it a critical necessity (Naghibi&Baban, 2011).

The theories of open systems (Ludwig, 1956), contingency (Fiedler, 1964), and chaos and complexity (Lorenz, 1963) influence the understanding of strategic change management. Open systems theory suggests that the organization's environment dictates its operation, whereby any changes in the environment prompt changes within the organization itself, which require effective management (Bastedo, 2004). The contingency theory provides another fundamental basis for the study by positing that a single management approach is not universally successful. Rather, the efficacy of a management strategy can vary depending on the context (Flinsch-Rodriguez, 2010). Chaos and Complexity theory emphasize the significance of the organization as a whole,rather than distinct components. They illustrate how all the elements collaborate to generate comprehensive designs that reflect the system's ongoing learning, evolution, and adaptation processes (Dann & Barclay, 2006).

The county government of Vihiga embarked on a strategy focusing on rationalization of staffs, functions and structures of departments; wage bill management; pay and benefits reforms; initiatives aimed at enhancing performance and training and capacity Building (Vihiga County Strategic Plan, 2017). In order to achieve these objectives, the leadership of Vihiga County has to manage this strategic change efficiently and effectively. Therefore, Vihiga County Government provides an appropriate context to undertake a study on management with respect to strategic change.

Concept of Strategic Change

Throughout its existence, an organization must navigate various types of changes. Notably, Naghibi and Baban (2011) have remarked on the extensive impact caused by strategic change, an event that permeates the entire organization. According to Hofer & Schendel (1978), strategic change takes place when changes occur in how a firm's strategy interacts with its scope, resources, synergy, and competitive advantages. Similarly, Caselli & Negri (2018) elucidate upon strategic change, discovering that it involves the implementation of innovative plans that dramatically alter the usual business operations of a company.

Expanding further on the subject, Mossop (2013) suggests that organizations routinely experience instances of strategic change as a continuous requirement to modify their direction and momentum in order to better serve their clients. In essence, this process concentrates more on 'realignment' and 'refocusing' rather than 'redirection', though it can encompass all of these actions.

However, the process of strategic change is a complex one, and as Caselli and Negri (2018) remark, only a few organizations manage to execute it successfully by integrating novel plans and structures to achieve an effective, revamped value proposition. Leadership within an organization undertaking strategic change must first understand and appreciate the necessity for evidence-based change (Crumpton, 2015). Efficient planning is crucial to successful strategic change, requiring a phased approach and determination of the necessary steps for success. Despite this, the potential for failure remains significant during this process and can impact the overall success of implementing change (Crumpton, 2016).

Concept of Management of Strategic Change
Strategic change management involves the structured and deliberate process of implementing changes with the goal of achieving an organization's purposes, goals and mission (Bethany & Yvette, 2015). This type of management gives organizations the ability to implement necessary changes in a careful and accountable manner (Hashim, 2013). This process requires the cooperation from all stakeholders involved, as they are essential in the acceptance of new work practices (Battilana et al., 2009; Battilana & Casciaro, 2012). Notably, it is senior management who typically possess the formal authority to initiate change (Clark & Soulsby, 2007; Williamson & Cable, 2003). Kotter (2012) has identified eight crucial steps for successful change management, which include creating urgency, assembling a guidance team, and devising an appropriate vision and strategy.

Boyne and Meier (2009)portends that a change in management forms is a catalyst for a shift in strategies of the organization's (Boyne and Meier, 2009). Barker, Patterson and Mueller, (2001) further posits that there is bidirectional causality between these two elements. Ballinger and Marcel (2010) argue managerial succession often brings new practices and philosophies into the institution. Melnyk et al. (2010) argues that it may also trounce resistance and comprehension of the other components constituting strategic change.

There are some issues that managers who are responsible for strategic change should keep in mind. First of all they have to consider the culture and behaviors of employees (Naghibi and Baban, 2011). It obvious that changing something that people used to for a long time is not very easy. In addition, when handling strategic change consideration must be given to context compatibility between the change itself and organization. The usual mistake in this case is to replicate successful solutions from other situationsto a current organizational problem which in most cases do not succeed. The last issue is to consider that change is about changing people. Organization will change by changing the attitude of managers and employees of the way them do their business (Naghibi and Baban, 2011.

Research Problem
In order to grow and realise intended objectives, organizations must quickly conform to changes that are part of their surroundings. If firms cannot change, they lack ability to compete (Yu, 2009). For strategic change to achieve its intended objectives, management of strategic change must be carefully thought out. There exist myriad schools of thought that have shaped the practice of management of strategic change. According to society for human resource management (2007), strategic change management is a systematic process; while change management team at Lambeth (2007) consider it as a means of transitioning people; and finally, Kudray and Kleiner (1997) portends that management of change is a competitive tactic. Extant literature (Kitsios&Kamariotou, 2017; Crumpton, 2015) portends that there is no one best way to manage strategic change in any organization, which is the reason that informs this study.

In 2017 the county government of Vihiga embarked on strategic change and the leadership of Vihiga County were to manage this strategic change efficiently and effectively so as to achieve the change objectives. Even though these changes can be observed and are documented, what is missing is how this change was managed at the county government. According to Oribu (2020) institutional challenges such as weak and uncoordinated planning and execution of plans, inadequate capacity at the county level to effectively and efficiently manage change, inadequate financial resources among otherscontinue to be a challenge to the county government management. Since management of strategic change is important for the success of change in relation to strategy, the study seeks to document the strategies employed to manage this change at the county government of Vihiga.

The research on strategic change management has garnered substantial attention from scholars both nationally and internationally. Globally, specific studies include one by Kitsios and Kamariotou (2017), which explored the role of middle managers in Greece in managing strategic change. They discovered a lack of administrative support, clear vision, training, and commitment in the strategic change process.

Crumpton (2015) also stressed the critical role of leadership in managing strategic change. Kotter (1995) went further to suggest that the decision of whether to manage change effectively and systematically differentiates successful organizations from those that fail. He indicated that this applies to companies as a whole, not just specific change initiatives.

However, numerous past studies consistently depict a pattern of failure in myriad change management initiatives. As per Kotter's (1995) study, only about 30% of significant change initiatives achieve success. This low success rate was confirmed later in 2009 by Keller and Aiken in an edition of the McKinsey Quarterly.

Nonetheless, the utilization of change management methodologies rose from 34% in 2003 to 72% in 2011 (Change Management History, 2013). Axel Uhl (2012) revealed similar outcomes in his recent research. He suggested that about 60% of planned changes fail because of resistance exhibited by both employees and managers.

Locally, Muteti (2013) conducted research at Telcom Kenya Limited and identified the organization's utilization of various strategic change management methods. Similarly, Miceka (2014) conducted research at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) Kenya, and discovered that the institute employed Kotter's eight step and Lewin's change management models to manage change. It's important to note that these research works mainly laid their concentration on private institutions, hence there is little empirical data on the application of strategic change management in public institutions, a gap this research aims to bridge. Most of the surveys have focused intensively on the challenges impeding the management of strategic change with less attention given to the practices employed in the management of strategic change. This study therefore seeks to elucidate the following inquiry: "What methods does Vihiga County Government employ in the management of strategic change?"

Research Objective
1. To establish change management practices adopted by Vihiga County Government
2. To determine challenges faced by Vihiga County Government in managing strategic change.
3. To ascertain the measures Vihiga County Government has put in place to mitigate challenges of management of strategic change.

Value of the Study
The findings of this study will fill in the knowledge gap by providing empirical evidence to the emerging literature on management of strategic change practices at public organization. In addition, this research will provide evidence on motivations that determine the adoption of such practices and recommend more innovative ways of handling strategic change.

The study will also be usefull to the government and policy makers in different institutions in formulating policies on areas that necessitate effective management of strategic change. The government and policy makers will leverage on this study because it avails pertinentunderstandingthat is integral in designingrelevant policy on management of change at county governments.

To scholars, this study will provide a reference point to inform further research on how best to manage strategic change in public organizations. In addition, the findings of this study will contribute to the theories of management of strategic change. Scholars will therefore benefit from the enriched literature provided by this study.

Literature Revie
Introduction
This chapter brings to fore theoretical, conceptual, and empirical literature review informing the study's conceptualization and research objective. It covers theoretical foundation of the study, organizational strategic change, approaches to strategic change and measures to mitigate the challenges. This chapter ends with a presentation of the summary of knowledge gaps.

Theoretical foundation of the Study
Management of change strategy is anchored in open systems theory (Ludwig, 1956), contingency theory (Fiedler, 1964) as well as chaos and complexity theory. The theory open systems hypothesizes that organizations are enormously affected by the surroundings in which they operate and therefore any change that takes place in its environment acts to stimulate change in the organization (Bastedo, 2004) and this change must be effectively managed. Contingency theory provides additional key foundation to anchor this study by advancing a postulation that there is no one best management approach that fits all contexts in that what is effective in one situation may not be successful in other situations (Flinsch-Rodriguez, 2010).

Open Systems theory
This theory is a brainchild of Ludwig von Bertanlanffy (1956), a biologist, but it was immediately applicable across all fields (Mele, et al., 2010). It is basically the idea that organizations are strongly influenced by their surroundings. The surrounding avails crucial resources that occasion change. According to Campbell and Craig (2005), systems theorists posits that the most universal view is to see an organization in the light of a complete system taking into account the most holistic context both within and without the organization. Opens systems can evolve towards a dynamic state and be capable of reacting to external environment changes through changing the structure and the process of internal components (Perry, 2005).

The theory holds the assumption that every organization is made up of subsystems, and the subsystems exist in a symbiotic manner. Moreover, this theory holds the assumption that there are subsystems that are more important than the other.These subsystems are not necessarily departments, but patterns of activities carried out in an organization. An open system of any sort has three stages: inputs, conversions and outputs. The model accepts inputs from the environment, the conversion of inputs into products and the outputs of those products into the environment (Muendo, 2013).

Despite its wide acknowledgement, open systems theory suffers multiple drawbacks. For instance, it is observed that,open systems theory in certain instances is never practical and for this limitation, it takes time to make a decision when confronted with problems in an organization. Nature of inter-dependence between the organization and the environment in which it operates is not clearly defined. Moreover, classification of the inter relationships has to be done properly otherwise it could be counterproductive. Finally, the theory fails to cater for contingencies or particular style of functioning in the organisation.

Chaos and Complexity Theory
Chaos theory (Lorenz, 1963) studies the behavior of organizations that are dynamic and very sensitive to change. Any slight changes made within these organizations ofttem yield very wide divergent for chaotic systems, these make future prediction to changes more difficult. Lipakshi (2018) noted that unpredictability of future consequences happens despite these systems being deterministic, implying that any future behaviour is determined by current, with no random elements involved.

To understand the relevance of chaos theory to strategy, organizations have been conceptualized as multifaceted, vibrant, nonlinear systems (Levy, 1994). The dynamic nature of organizations stems from the fact that organizations interrelate with other organizations in the environment in which they operate.Any action taken by one organization must put into consideration the reaction of the other organizations in the same industry and therefore these interrelations are strategic in nature. This theory therefore will be used to anchor this study to understand management of strategic change practices employed at Vihiga County Government.

Contingency Theory
This theory was put forth by Fielder (1964) in his land mark article- contingency model of leadership effectiveness. Fielder portends that, there is no better mechanism to manage or lead an organization or of making firm resolutions since organizations depend on their internal and external environments.

Contingency Theory has been very popular because of its ability to take into account unique conditions, though in a way that is more general. In addition, the theory is an intuitive world scope to those being enlightened with respect to context and system dynamics are integral aspects of a leader-led initiative. Moreover, contingency theories inspire thinking about a particular aspect of a leader-led scenario that requires more intense focus. On the contrary, it is fraught with several limitations. Contingency theory lacks applicative value that is particular, singling out the elements of a situation can be highly subjective and may not capture the true aspect of a leader-led scenario and also any approval and validation of a system that is modelled is difficult.

Contingency theories are such that there is no one leadership style and that the traits of those down the command, the qualities of the leader and the tasks facing a group are distinct. Every single circumstance is peculiar, and the gold standard leader-led situation will be unique, as well. Contingency theory provides additional key foundation to anchor this study by advancing a postulation that there is no one best management approach that fits all contexts in that what is effective in one situation may not be successful in other situations (Flinch-Rodriguez, 2010).

Management of Strategic Change
Muteti (2013) undertook research at Telkom Kenya to assess the organization's approach to strategic change management and identify the associated challenges. The research deployed a case study design, targeting managerial staff as the sample population. Interviews were held to collect primary data, which was processed through content analysis. The study established different change management strategies including systematic change implementation, diagnosis and evaluation, status quo disruption and change immobilization, and systematic data collection and evaluation for strategic action choice.

In the subsequent year, Miceka investigated change management and sustainability strategies at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in Kenya. This study, conducted through a case study approach, utilized qualitative data collected via interview guides. Analysis of the data illustrated that ILRI had integrated a partnership strategy and a management system into its change management approach. The institute was seen to employ both Kotter's and Lewin's change management models.

Arimavičiūtė and Raišienė(2015)explored the application of the strategic change management model in Lithuanian municipalities. The findings revealed that the hierarchical structural design was the adopted model, allowing for analysis and evaluation of strategic change management.

Another study by Sambo (2014), analysed the ICRAF's change management model, specifically in relation to the One Corporate System. The results pointed out the adoption of the ADKAR Model, aiding in the initial phase of transitioning to the One Corporate System.

Furthermore, in 2015, Mulwa pioneered research to discover the strategic change management strategies incorporated in Nairobi's Vihiga County Government. The study unearthed the utilization of Kotter's Two-Step model (1995), with the organization reacting to environmental threats and opportunities to evoke a sense of urgency and consequent organizational change.

Kitsios and Kamariotou (2017), investigated the role of middle-level managers in Greece in the administration of strategic change. The study, based on a postal survey with data from 150 executives, suggested that although several changes have been experienced in the public sector, there is need for augmenting management support, vision clarity, training, and commitment.

Most recently, Makina andKeng'ara (2018) sought to unveil how strategies are formulated, implemented, and controlled at Nzoia Sugar Company in Kenya, as well as identify drivers of resistance to change. While their study revealed that line managers take charge of strategy formulation, implementation, and control, they overlooked strategy management practices.

Challenges to Strategic Change Management
A study by Gichohi (2007) on the challenges of change management faced by Unga group Limited Kenya found out that decreased morale of the staff, resistance by the employees, and job security risk and retrenchment that occasioned loss of vital skills more so in production and distribution function are some of the challenges that faced management of strategic change.

A study by Naghibi and Baban (2011) on the challenges organizations face in managing strategic change found out the following challenges. Organizations face time constraints required to develop and implement strategies. In addition, organizations also face a lot of challenges when deciding which strategy management practice to adopt since there are several.

A study by Setyanto, Ikhwan, Amin, Shabir and Suharo (2019) on the challenges of the management in relation to change for managing people and organizational culture established that since change influences everybody, regardless of whether it's a minor staff rebuilding or a business merger. Change can bring out feelings like vulnerability and dread, leaving staffs to take their disappointments out on one another which create conflict among employees of the organization.

Clear and consistent strategy formulation is a conundrum for firms, which is written down Brenes, Mena & Molina (2007). They posit that if internal partners' degree of involvement is low, then strategic change will face challenges of acceptability.

Feldberg (2014) studied strategic change challenges, approaches, and solutions: evidence from German SMEs. It was revealed from the study findings that for management, goal setting during strategy formulation; putting up an effective communication and engaging employees in management of strategic change are the foremost challenges facing organizations when managing change.

Johnson et al (2011) stated that leadership is the process of influencing an organization in its efforts towards achieving an aim. Additionally, leadership of change needs to happen at different levels of an organization (Johnson et al, 2011). This point is also echoed by O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, Lapiz & Self (2010), who state that leadership from different levels of the organization need to be consistent to support change. This is a big challenge companies are facing when managing new strategies.

Managing strategic change also means empowering those responsible for implementing various strategic actions (Brenes, Mena & Molina, 2007). This is to say that personnel, finally implementing strategy, needs to gain power and influence like for example the ability to allocate resources, communicate effectively and so forth. Due to political interests, inability to form coalitions and gain the support of influential people in the organization immensely hinders the execution of formulated plans.

Heide et al (2002) define culture as a cognitive systems and behavioural patterns that exist in all organizations. A company's culture can act as a kind of organizational glue. Hilman & Siam (2014) explain that culture is concerned with shared values, norms and behaviour, which determine the way people act within an organization and enable strategy implementation. In order to successfully manage strategy change, culture needs to be clear and consistent (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2008). An atmosphere of mistrust, which does not go in hand with improving communication (Hilman & Siam, 2014) will negatively influence management of strategic change.

A lot of companies suffer from insufficient vertical communication. Heide et al (2002) even say, that "the major implementation barriers are related to various types of communication problems". 70 % of the firms they investigated in their study suffered from vertical communication problems hampering strategy implementation, Beer & Eisenstat (2000) in their research paper investigate a number of companies and find out that most of them "failed to communicate downward a coherent story showing why the changing world outside the organization demanded new ways of working. Employees never heard how the strategy affected priorities nor received any guidelines".

Additionally, many employees think that top management is not well informed about what happens at lower levels of companies (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000). This illustrates the distance between top and low level staff that exists in a lot of companies and results in information transfer problems. A consequence of upward communication problems can be that companies lose their early warning systems (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000) as lower level staff is not able to inform top management about problems in time. So, companies can just correct their actions as projects have already failed. Finally, these problems with communication will result in a lack of trust (Dobni, 2003).

Resource allocation is of vital importance for strategy implementation as missing resources hinder strategy implementation. According to Johnson, Whittington & Scholes (2011) and Heide et al (2002), the most critical resources are financial and human resources. Financial resources enable strategic change and also affect the allocation of human resources (Heide et al, 2002). Human resources like managers need to be allocated according to their skills and the firms' need for these skills.

Organizational structure, according to Hilman & Siam (2014), is defined by three constructs, namely formalization or the degree to which decisions and working relationships are governed by formal rules and procedures, centralization or the degree to which decision authority is closely held by top managers or is delegated to middle and lower level managers, and specialization or the extent to which the organization employs experts or generalists. Consequently, a challenge for business is to align organizational structure to the circumstances it faces, in order to support strategic change.

Measures to Mitigate the Challenges
There are several measures that are put in place to mitigate challenges to strategic management. In a study by Feldberg (2014), the researcher found out that organizations break down the laborious strategy into manageable parts, including concrete and measurable short-term goals. In this way managers can easily address strategy. It also helps in measuring progress and adjusting strategy to with a view of avoiding errors.

Feldberg (2014) noted that successful management of strategic change requires leadership from a lot of different people in organizations and it is important to involve these people in change management. As different people are specialists in different parts of the company, and there cannot be one person who knows it all, their views are important to include and align to each other. A final point Brenes, Mena & Molina (2007) make is that firms have to set priorities. As a company will not be able to do all aspects of change at once, it is important to rank the actions to be taken according to their importance.

In his paper, Hrebiniak (2006) stated that formulation and implementation are interdependent and planning affects management of strategic change. The management of strategic change, in turn, affects changes to strategy and planning over time. Therefore, Hrebiniak (2006) proposes that managers have to think about concrete ways to manage the strategic change while formulating the strategic change itself.

A study by Gichohi (2007) on measures to mitigate challenges of management of strategic change found out that concerning vertical communication problems, organization put up several solutions to the problem. Top down communication was adopted as well as bottom-up approach. For instance, the organization had regular information meetings in addition, employees were provided with a platform where they could generate feedback and publish their ideas.

A study by Naghibi and Baban (2011) on strategic change management: the challenges faced by organizations established that demotivated staff was one of the challenges in management of strategic change. To address this challenge, managers who participated in the study confirmed to involve workers when the company is about to undergo a strategic change, which goes hand in hand with enhancing communication. Therefore, the researcher recommends that managers should consider employees as an incredible source of ideas and feedback and consequently managers are challenged to listen to their employees and utilize optimally the company's human resources.

Research Methodology:-
Introductions
The chapter aims to explicate, justify and reflect on the methods to be used, upon which the analytical design of this proposed project is based. The research methods selected for this study is informed by the objective of the study.

Research Design
This study used a case study research design. A case study research design attempts to describe or define a subject, often by creating a profile of a group of problems, people, or events, through the collection of data and tabulation of the frequencies on research variables or their interaction (Schindler, 2003). In this case, the research problem is the management of strategic change at the Vihiga County Government, Kenya. This research employed a case study research design which refers to a detailed analysis of a phenomenon on a case by case basis given that the researcher obtained information of the phenomena by intensively examining the Vihiga case.

Case studies seek to provide a detailed understanding of an issue pertinent to a researcher but at the same time help the researcher develop theoretical statements that can be generalized concerning particular phenomena(Becker, 1970).According to Kothari (2004) a case study research design is considered appropriate when analysing a single unit to obtain focused and valued understanding of the phenomenon under the study.

Data Collection
The process of data collection was primarily carried out with the help of an interview guide. Essentially, an interview guide is a list comprised of broad topics that are expected to be delved into during the interview, as well as the key questions that fall within each topic which the interviewer seeks to find answers to (Bird, 2016). The use of interviews is often apparent in seeking comprehensive information about the beliefs and viewpoints of a select group

of respondents (Miceka, 2014). The interview guide was formulated with a combination of both closed-ended and open-ended questions.

The questions included in the guide pertained to strategic change management practices; issues encountered in managing strategic change and the adopted measures to mitigate these challenges. The process of administering the interview was personally carried out by the researcher through direct, face-to-face interaction. These interviews were conducted with county executive officers, department heads, and directors who play a role in the management of strategic change.

Data Analysis
The collected data was examined using content analysis. This type of analysis acts as a research tool, helping to identify the existence of specific words, themes, or concepts in certain qualitative data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). In the context of this study, content analysis was the ideal method because the researcher was able to quantify and analyse the existence, significance and correlations of certain words, themes, or concepts (Bengtsson, 2015), in connection to the implementation of strategic change. Notably, content analysis is a distinctive method because it incorporates both quantitative (Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002) and qualitative approaches (Berg, 2001), and can be utilized in both an inductive and deductive manner. The compiled data was represented in terms of words and themes, hence facilitating the interpretation of the findings. In accordance with Zhang &Wildemuth's method (2009), through meticulous data preparation, coding, and interpretation, the results of this qualitative content analysis provided insight into the implementation of strategic change.

Data Analysis, Findings And Discussion:-
This Chapter presents' data analysis, results and discussion of the data collected from the field. Discussions and findings of the study with reference to the research methodology are presented in this chapter. Findings on management of strategic change practices adopted at the Vihiga County Government at Mbale are presented. Data was collected from 25 interviewees working in different capacities through use of interview guides as per the instrument of research.

Strategic Change Management Practices at Vihiga County Government
This study sought to find out the strategic changes which have taken place at Vihiga County Government over the recent past. The interviewees clearly brought out that many of the changes and transformation had taken place in the last five years and some of the changes are still taking place even now. From the study findings, the interviewees revealed a variety of emerging practices within the system which were geared to changing how the organizationoperates. In specific areas, in particular for operational activities for development, progress towards consistency and harmonization of planning processes has been made over the last few years.

Previously, different duty stations would have their different working plans and hence this resulted to inconsistencies within the organization because of working in isolation. The research revealed that currently there is an existence of a formal network, within the County Government set up for regular communication and joint brainstorming around common issues of interest and challenges in their respective organizations with the aim of strengthening planning methods, tools and impact across the system.

As part of the ongoing County Government reform, the interviewees cited the team set up by the Governor, Change Management Team (CMT) to identify strategies to strengthen, inter alia, effectiveness and efficiency in delivering the five-year agenda of the governor. The change plan prepared by the team emphasizes the need for coherent strategic planning as follows "Transforming Vihiga into a county with optimum socio-economic and political sustainability and an equitable and secure society."

The interviewees cited the CMT recommendations of a consultative process to design the next set of strategic priorities for the County Government common system to be initiated in alignment with the comprehensive policy review 2013. This by far shows the commitment the Vihiga County Government management team has towards the strategic change management and the aspects in which they base their agendas on. The interviewees' assertions on the whole idea of synergy highlights the direct involvement of the organization in managing change for better. The duration of the overall cycle varies depending on the type of mandate of the organization. The interviewees confirmed existence of this cycle on which normative mandates easily function with longer-term planning change cycles, since their activities do not evolve at the same pace as those of operational mandates.

Challenges Faced by Vihiga County Government in Managing Strategic Change
Responding to the second objective of the study, the researcher sought to find out the challenges faced by Vihiga county government in managing strategic change. From the study findings, the majority of the respondents attested that the organization encountered challenges in managing strategic change. The challenges in managing strategic change were employee resistance, middle management resistance due to perceived loss of power.

During implementation of strategies, Vihiga County Government experienced resistance from some staff who were not in support of the change process. This killed the morale of staff who wanted to learn the new system. This was caused majorly by perceived loss of jobs as highlighted earlier. There was an introduction of new technology, and the fear was that the system will not require a lot of staff to perform one particular task. The fear caused delays when staff never showed for training. The difficulties with the system were often communicated and staff developed phobia around the systems for fear of failure.

Another challenge presented when implementing change was lack of proper infrastructure to handle the systems. According to the study the capacity was not there. Vihiga County Government houses over 3000 staff so there were no adequate training areas for this system. The respondents felt that more office space could have been created in anticipation. Another major challenge was lack of enough trainers who will be able to educate the staff on the new system. This ended up overworked the already tired trainers hence not being able to deliver as required. Only a few trainers had a way through the system which meant that huge classes given to one trainer. The finding indicated that staff did not get much out of the trainings.

Measures Adopted by Vihiga County Government to Mitigate the Challenges of Strategic Change Management

In order to respond to the third objective of the study, the researcher sought to find out the measures adopted to mitigate the various challenges to strategic change management within the organization. Data obtained from the respondents revealed Vihiga County Government tried to mitigate the various challenges of managing strategic change by responding to the threats and opportunities from the environment to create a sense of urgency hence engaging the participants within the organization around change through creation of a strong synergy. From the senior managers to the subordinates, the changes had to be inculcated. The managers have by far facilitated the changes and monitored the implementation process.

The study established that changes introduced at the county were in line with the recommendations of the Ministry of Devolution. A key problematic area had been on enhancing trust and confidence towards stakeholders and client orientated organizational culture. There was unanimous agreement that that a key driver of mistrust was lack of relevant and usable information on key issues to take informed decisions.

The findings established that there is renewed engagement of staff with a view of drawing them to a common vision. Management understood the importance of the confidence between staff and senior management since employees are the most valuable asset of the county government. Biennial staff survey had been instituted to rebuild trust and confidence among staff with management being encouraged to respond constructively to the results of the survey. This has greatly aided the management to track changes in staff attitudes and hence enabling them to work with them and plan for changes.

The interviewees noted that, in line with the governor's directive, the management had highlighted the need to lead a process of continuous change and innovation through facilitating regular consultations with staff. This was aimed at changing organizations culture towards the desirable culture with staff leading the change. According to the findings of the research, it was noted that constantly the chief officers regularly discuss with other staff members with the aim of knowing what issues they are facing. This has enhanced a good working environment.

A key area of focus was the change of working system within the organization. According to the findings the organization is now implementing a new enterprise resource planning tool that ensures seamless communication between staff members. It is a tool that helped in providing the staff with information that they require in real time to make key decisions. The interviewees indicated that the tool previously used was not able to generate reports which impeded efficient decision making. As a result, the county government has embarked on training staff on how to use the system to enable them work smoothly.

Discussion:-

From the findings, the Vihiga County Government in Kenya uses various strategic change management practices which are in line with Newton et al (2003) who stated that approaches directing change need to differ according to context. Supporting collaboration between sections through group meeting, restructuring and intentional employment practices was found to be common practice used before change. The findings indicated that generally, Vihiga County Government researches on best practices in managing strategic change. This is done through benchmarking with the best companies or organizations being considered.

Several measures were noted on the commitment the top management pays on management of strategic change. Seminars are organized depending on programs, provision of financial support and devising and supporting policies on strategy implementation. More so, communicating the changes to all staff as well as appointing highly qualified and competent staff showed that top management highly support and are committed to the process. Bhambri and Sonnenfeld (1988), notes that for change management to be successful, the organization and its culture must move from this sense of loss to one of commitment to the new behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs.

The findings established that depending on the type of change, every concerned employee and sections heads are involved in the change, with clearly defined leadership and scope. Bolman and Deal, (1999) affirms that if managers and change agents utilize a well-orchestrated, integrated design that responds to needs for learning, realignment, negotiation and grieving, they might find themselves in the fast lane toward success and improvement. The need for a powerful organization member for realizing change is raised by Quinn (2000) with his call for a change leader.

There is constant feedback on strategy management process in Vihiga County Government. The organization continuously reviews what is working as well as acknowledging the strategic management process. There are programs put in place to enable employees implement strategies while managers of various sections manage the processes. The manner in which the strategies are presented to the staff makes them acceptable to them. This ensures an all-inclusive approach, which incorporates views from everyone in the organization.

Generally, most change efforts were found to meet targeted objectives mostly doing away with systems which were not working. Some sections were found to hold to the view that some changes were hurriedly introduced without considering the need for proper planning and failed to meet desired goals. This is in line with Pederit (2000) assertion that that successful organizational adaptation is increasingly reliant on generating employee support and enthusiasm for proposed changes, rather than merely overcoming resistance.

In attempt to respond to the researcher's objective, the researcher sought to establish various approaches as adopted by the Vihiga County Government. As an open system, it can be noted that, like any other entity, too the organization interacted with several stakeholders in the external environment. Partly, the interaction presented the driving forces that subsequently responded to the second objective which was to establish factors that influence strategic change management at Vihiga County Government. This concurs with Dunphy's (1996) theoretical framework that argues that organization as an open system actively interacts with its external environment in the context of the wider prevailing economic, political and social forces.

The fact that there is not one overarching theory in change management, the uniqueness of Vihiga County Government has seen it adopting several approaches and models. Vihiga County Government embraced Kotter's model, rational and strategic approaches as proposed by Brewer. Other practices at Vihiga County Government were consistent with some steps suggested by Cummings and Worley model and Victor and Franckeiss model. Common among all these approaches and models were the aspects of communication, leadership, strategic direction and performance management as embraced at Vihiga County Government.

Internal training such as e-learning programs and exchange programs within organizations were found to be a key area while managing strategic change with Vihiga County Government. Certifications for various disciplines were fully supported by HR partners. These were aimed at enabling proficiency at entry level and also before or during introduction of new technology were found to be the pre-strategic change management training carried by Vihiga County Government. Peters and Waterman (1982) concur that training is the cornerstone for building knowledge about the change and the required skills. Managers need to develop training requirements based on the skills, knowledge and behaviours necessary to implement change.

In Kenya several studies have focused on strategic change management. Kiptoo's (2008) study on strategic change management at the University of Nairobi found that external environment in the tertiary education sector presents both opportunities and threat in implementing strategic policies at the University of Nairobi. He further notes that the maintenance of status quo among senior teaching staff and non-staff as the primary restraining force to change management at the University of Nairobi. Maingi's (2005) on management of strategic change at Municipal Council of Kiambu established the organizational culture; failure to embrace information technology and corruption negatively affected the implementation of key strategies.

Change was found to be mostly influenced by top management teams but also it was found that external factors influenced the change. In relation to this, Balogun and Hailey (2008) stated that change leader or change agent can be realized by the chief executive, or even a team of people who are responsible for managing the change process. Kanter (1983) adds that not only change agents, but also ideal champions are necessary to promote new ideas.

Summary, Conclusion And Recommendations:-
Introduction
This chapter presents the summary of the study findings on approaches adopted in strategic change management at the Vihiga County Government and factors that influence change process at Vihiga County Government. The summary is followed by conclusions and recommendations. The chapter concludes with the limitation to the study and suggestions for further study.

Summary
The first objective the study sought to establish was strategic change management approaches at Vihiga County Government. In order to achieve this objective, the researcher interviewed Vihiga County Government's management team and conducted focus group discussions with representatives of selected stakeholders. The main aspects of strategic change management investigated included the changes initiated, change management practices, and challenges faced in managing change at Vihiga County Government.

The research findings indicated that change process at Vihiga County Government was done in participatory process. There were adequate consultations among the staff through meetings and other modes of internal communication. This facilitated change process and minimized factors that negatively affected change management. The study established that Vihiga County Government embraced Kotter's model, rational strategic approaches as proposed by Brewer. In addition, some steps as proposed by Cummings and Worley model and Victor and Franckeiss model were factored.

The second objective the study sought to establish was the challenges that faced Vihiga county in managing change. The study established that the county government experienced resistance both internally and externally. But because of the change management practices adopted that included staff involvement at all levels, active leadership and continuous training, they county government was able to overcome these challenges.

The study established that use of formal communication channels also worked well in favour of change management. Once the management was clear on the change programmes service chiefs received communication through meetings. The use of information technology at the organization radically changed many aspects of communications at Vihiga County Government.

Conclusion:-
Currently Vihiga County Government stands atthe County Government headquarters in Mbale Town and has successfully navigated through the change management transition through adoption of various strategies necessary to its effectiveness. However various factors have militated against the implementations of change at Vihiga County Government. Resistance by staff and community what was referred to as political interference, lack of autonomy and coordination together with high bureaucracy have been limiting to the successful implementation of strategic changes. It is against this backdrop that the study recommends the following.

Recommendations:-

The researcher recommends the following which is divided into three major areas namely implications of the findings, recommendation on managers at Vihiga County Government and recommendations on Managerial practice.

Recommendations for Practice

According to the interviewees, this transformation was for the better and has yielded a lot of positive fruits. However, all the interviewees seemed to agree in that the way the change was introduced into the organization was rather abrupt, there is need to have a human face when introducing change as change in itself is a process. In the future should more changes be introduced in this institution there is need to do it in a humane way, and if need be set a guiding and counselling office to enable employees to cope with the change.

In the course of all these transformations, most of the changes adopted and change programs having succeeded, no rewarding was done especially for the staff who were on the front line to see the changes come to be. In the future, Vihiga County Government should develop a reward system; this goes a long way in motivating the employees and boosting their work morale.

Recommendations for policy:-

The study recommends that leaders must exhibit and encourage others without bias for action. Even though management of strategic change was recognized and supported and celebrated within Vihiga County Government, some employees felt that only top managers took credit for the successful management of change. The study therefore recommends individual and group recognition as a necessary component of change management in order to cement and reinforce the change in the organization

The study recommends that changes anchored on corporate strategy be communicated properly. Other challenges such as lack of support on needed capabilities to carry change through from the management should be enhanced. There should be continued commitment and identification of change agents from the management team to help steer the change management train and to completion. This will enable the organization to avoid the existence of commitment gap, lack of compelling figures hence ensuring a smooth adoption process for strategic changes in order to gain a competitive edge within the arena in which it operates.

There should be increased involvement in strategic change agents who will act as consultants to different companies and organizations hence filling in the gap that is there whenever organizations are faced with change challenges. Environment threats have necessitated turnaround strategies and these threats have forced some of organizations out of operation. They have no capacity to deal with the changes therefore the need for more practitioners.

Suggestions for Further Research:-

This study focused on strategic change management at the County Government and challenges encountered. This study was done when changes were still taking place. Changes continue to be experienced even now, there is need to carry a further study on which other changes have taken place and different strategic change management practices adopted. There is also need to carry out a study to find out if the change momentum has been sustained. According to the interviewees, maintaining the change momentum was one of the threats to this great transformation.

The study sought to establish strategic management practices adopted by Vihiga County Government. Further research is recommended based on the on the strategic management practices and the challenges in other County governments in Kenya. This will allow for generalization of the results and pave way for new policies. This will bring in the views of all the key players in the County Government which would be beneficial to the County Governments and the stakeholders hence improvement on the relationships among them.

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