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THE EFFECT OF ECONOMIC CHANGE AS A FACTOR OF TRIPARTITE CONSULTATION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF STATE CORPORATIONS IN KENYA

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Abstract

The study sought to establish the effect of economic changes such as globalization, privatization and inflation on the performance of state corporations in Kenya. The study was carried out in Nairobi County in Kenya. Data was obtained through a descriptive survey design. The study involved 279 unionized employees of state corporations in the County. A structured questionnaire with Likert scale questions and an interview guide were administered to collect data from study subjects. Data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively by use of Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). The study found that economic change had insignificant effect on the performance of state corporations. This effect was linked by the fact that though some state corporations had been privatized and high rates of inflation experienced, the government had cushioned the corporations from being negatively affected. The study recommends the following strategies to future economic challenges: collective negotiation and rational agreement on salary increase, concerted efforts by all parties to increase productivity, future negotiations should be informed by research that takes into account increase in production and agreement by partners on a national recovery programme like freeze in salary reviews until economic stability is realized. More importantly, the existing national income differentials should be addressed faithfully by all stakeholders. The study was concentrated in unionized corporations and therefore cannot be generalized in the private sector and non-unionized state corporations. The findings will help the social partners to collectively handle economic challenges which inevitably face them for their prosperity and industrial peace.

Keywords: Economic change, performance, social partners, tripartite consultation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The term economic change is used in its broad sense to mean approaches taken on the market and the actors in it. The economic aspect emphasizes decisions about issues as diverse as globalization, inflation, privatization, control measures, income distribution, unemployment and labour market participation of migrants and parents of young children [1]. The economic factors of the study were therefore drawn from the definition.

The study was motivated by the conviction that, economic challenges that face any public business can best be resolved through tripartite consultation. Tripartite Consultation relates to participation of workers' and employers' representatives and third party intervention of the government in policy making. It is a three way interaction among the three social actors in formulating and implementing labour, social and economic policy [2]. It should be appreciated that consultation promotes mutual understanding and good relations. More specifically, it aims at joint consideration by the three stakeholders on matters of mutual concern with a view of arriving to the fullest extent at agreed solutions.

It is worth noting that, the overall economic situation in a country which Kenya is not an exception clearly has a significant impact on tripartite dealings. Indeed, the economic doldrums and challenges of democratization in many parts of the world, and Kenya in particular have led to the International Labour Organization to appeal a new, for a revitalized process of social dialogue [3]. However, the deteriorating economic conditions tend to dampen the social partners' enthusiasm for tripartite cooperation , a shared sense of temporary crisis often has pushed them to return to consultation [4].

Economic competition and shareholder activism has motivated large firms to embrace the 'lean' and 'mean' conceptions of control thus, implementing downsizing. The 'lean' and 'mean' conception that drives globalization looks at managing competition using small size and simple structures to increase performance[5]. It also focuses on restructuring and re-bureaucratization and emphasizes on returning to core competences through de-conglomeration and de-diversification. [6].

These strategies threaten labour union interests which protect veteran members and would insist retention of status quo. Consequently, employees in such organizations have low control over the continuity of their employment when firms execute layoffs. Inflation in Kenya has affected consultation of the tripartite partners. A standoff of sorts had emerged in 2011 with Central Organization of Trade Unions demanding a 60 percent increase in minimum wage, the government offering 10 percent review and the Federation of Kenya Employers arguing that no increase was justified because investors as consumers of goods and services had been hit hard by higher prices of raw materials [7]. Therefore, this study sought to establish whether economic change had affected the performance of state corporations in Kenya.

H_o: Economic change has not affected the performance of state corporations

H_1: Economic change has affected the performance of state corporations.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was informed by several theories. The Comparative Employment Relations theory involves an explicit comparison of employment relations system across two or more countries. It has the intent of identifying common patterns and theoretical generalizations [8]. Globalization is considered to have interconnected the further corners of the earth in an international division of labour and market exchange [9]. The theory's task is to identify the variables that generate conflictive interests, institutions and practices designed by the three actors to ameliorate and resolve conflicts. The theory presents the explanatory variables of the conflicts as;the state's economic development, the strategies of the actors, cultural values and ideologies, the nation's political-economic structure, the power of actors, institutional structure of firms and employment relations organisations [8].

These explanatory variables had been viewed applicable in Kenyan economic change which had affected the performance of state corporations. The systems approach to Industrial Relations considers an organization as an open system, existing in a context called environment. The organization influences the environment as well as gets influenced by the environment [10]. The environment comprises social, political, technological factors and depends on organizations for essential supplies and to receive its outputs. The environment also influences the various processes of acquisition, transformation and delivery of outputs. [11]. Thus, the economic challenges inform of globalization, privatization and inflation were viewed as factors that had influenced the process of transformation an envisaged by Dunlop's System Model presented in Figure 1.

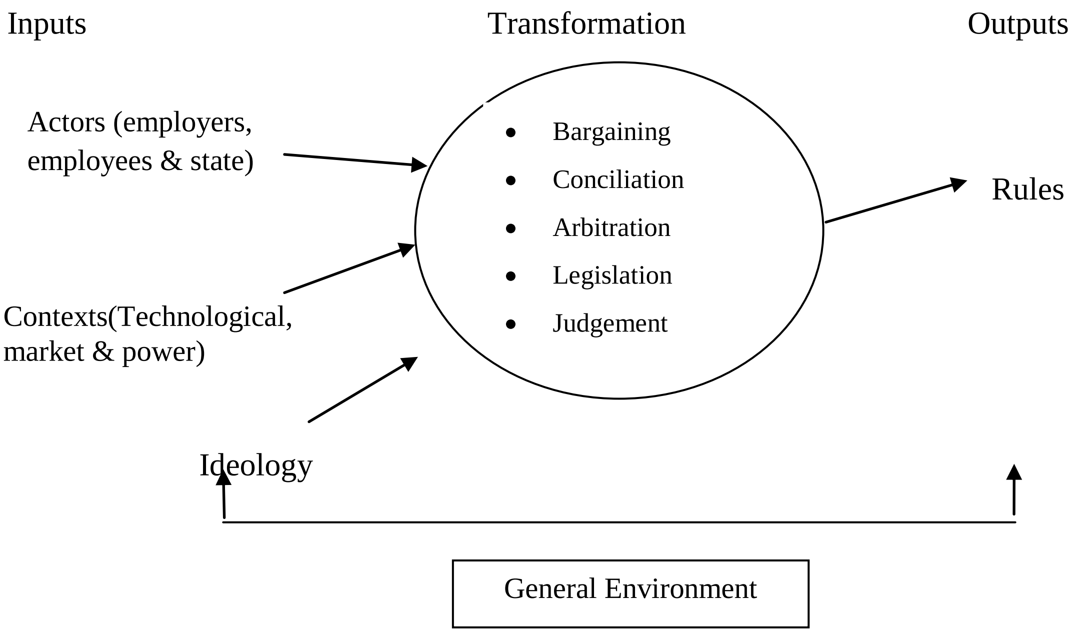

Figure 1: Dunlop's Systems Model

Source: Singh & Singh (2011).

III. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Past studies have reported globalization to have led to a different composition of workforce in organizations, ranging from part-time, temporary, freelance or independent contracts. Outsourcing has been embraced with the premise that if a firm does not specialize in a certain function, which it does not consider core, the work will be outsourced, resulting to better cost and quality. Initially, outsourcing was only done for the peripheral services such as janitorial services, but now it has been extended to core functions such as final product assembly, customer services and technological services[12]. This had been a common practice in many state corporation.

Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) in Kenya includes call centers, animation, software development, knowledge processing, data processing and transcription. A case in point is the Telkom Kenya which retrenched its more than 10,000 employees, with unique specialized skills in telecommunication. The retrenched staff were requested to form companies from which the corporation could outsource the services it needed [13]. Moreover, Safaricom, a mobile telephone service provider in Kenya, made a strategic decision to outsource its call centres and concentrate on the core business. This decision was made to cope with cut throat competition, an idea brought about by globalized economy [13].

The system of state enterprises was established to provide support for: consumers inform of better products and services at less costs; workers in form of rewarding and meaningful employment; and government in form of revenue. However, many state enterprises can no longer provide this support. Infact, they are in need of support themselves. They need support from: consumers who have to endure poor services and poor value; workers who have to toil for low wages and poor prospects, the government that has to provide endless subsidies and costly protection mechanisms [14]. This support has been provided by the Kenyan stakeholders and the government.

One of the most common fears associated with privatization worldwide is certainly job destruction. Given the size of the public sector in sub-Saharan Africa, and Kenya in particular, similar fears have and continue to be nurtured. Hence, employment has been adversely affected. Indeed, retrenchment packages have become a serious issue. Although a general trend is a continuous decline in employment trends overtime, there are few cases where employment increased following privatization, reflecting good performance and new business opportunities. In the process of privatization, expected pre-sale “cleaning up” of many parastatals, where overstaffing and redundant labour force existed is a major issue [15]. This is a common feature of Kenyan state corporations.

Kenya has continued to experience deterioration in performance of its corporations. This has triggered advocacy by policy makers of the need to implement privatization and divestiture of state corporations. The premise of such proposals has been the management problems afflicting parastatals leading to poor return on government investments, the existence of a larger pool of qualified manpower, and availability of more indigenous entrepreneurship to permit private sector led economy[ ].

Inflation in Kenya had affected the consultation of the tripartite partners leading to a standoff of sorts[7]. A case to note is the agitation for increase in minimum wage by the Central Organization of Trade Unions in 2011, which resulted to employers threatening to raise the prices of consumer goods and services and further moving workers on permanent and contract status to casual terms [16)].

It is worth noting that real wages are deemed a measure of inflation. Hence, adjusted pay remains a key indicator of employee welfare and that in many countries forms the basis of pay bargains between trade unions and employers. However, the concern should not be about inflation or the cost of living but on productivity. Hence, the social partners should appreciate that without productivity improvement there should be no money to be shared in form of increase in employee salary [17].

(A) Performance of State Corporations

Performance is a multi-dimensional construct whose measurement varies depending on a variety of factors and thus viewed differently. It is simply regarded as the record of outcomes accrued. Performance also means both behaviors and results. Behaviors emanate from the performer and transform performance from abstraction to action. Behaviors are not merely instruments for results, but also outcomes in their own right. Hence, the product of mental and physical effort applied to tasks can be judged from results. [8].

It is worth noting that while the economic impact on tripartite social dialogue cannot be easily measured, it can be emphasized that social dialogue ensures a degree of social peace and progress that can set the stage for healthy economic growth. Evidence has shown that social dialogue helped to revive countries economic performance in developed and developing countries, such as Ireland, Netherlands, Denmark and Australia. Social dialogue contributes to employment success through wage moderation, low incidence of industrial conflict and social partners' support for sometimes unpopular social security and labour market reforms [19].

In addition, high commitment strategies and work practices have been heralded as the panacea for success in organizational performance for decades. One approach of creating commitment is Employee Involvement (EI), which is closely linked to participation in decision making. Thus, it is believed that involving employees in factors that influence their work and decision making process, increases job satisfaction giving them a greater sense of fulfillment and control over their work. This leads to high performance [20].

Consultation and participation have been regarded as important processes, often linked to workforce performance. Hence, maximum available productivity and adaptation can only be achieved through a workforce that willingly and constantly commits itself to responsibility for production, quality control, innovation, growth, responsiveness to consumer requirements and a life-time of upgrading and broadening their skills. Then, companies can expect productivity gains, better-motivated and committed work force, lower absenteeism and turnover rates. Consequently, organizations performance would improve [21]. These variables are considered as indicators of good performance.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

B. Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design, a process of collecting data in order to test hypothesis or to answer questions concerning the current state of subjects under study [22]. The population of the study was 172 state corporations in Kenya. The target population consisted of the unionized sate corporations in Nairobi County. The study subjects were selected from fourteen (14) unionized state corporations out of thirty four (34) corporations in the County.

C. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size was 341 subjects which was representative of 25,809 employees of the state corporations in the County. The sample size was determined through the following statistical computation:

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2} = \frac{1.96^2(0.5)(0.5)}{0.05^2} = 341$$

$$nf = \frac{n}{1+\left(\frac{n-1}{N}\right)} = \frac{341}{1+\left(\frac{383}{25807}\right)} = 341$$

Stratified random sampling was applied to select subjects and ensure that existing sub-groups in the population were more or less reproduced in the sample [22]. Besides, purposive sampling was used to select subjects who in the opinion of researcher had relevant information in the study area.

D. Research Instruments

Questionnaire with open-ended and Likert scale close-ended questions were administered on the employees. An interview schedule was developed and conducted on human resource managers, shop floor union officials, officers of the Ministry of Labour, Federation of Kenya Employers and Central Organization of Trade Unions.

E. Data Analysis

Data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha was used to determine the reliability of instruments and validity of data [23]. Factors analysis was administered on data to establish factor thresholds and those with loading of .33 and above were considered for interpretation

[24]. Then, descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis were administered on the data.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

F. Effects of Globalization on State Corporations

The study sought to establish the effect of globalization on state corporations. The study gathered that globalization had led to engagement of more employees on part-time basis, extension of outsourcing to core functions to cope with competition, adaptation to 'lean' and 'mean' organizations structure, massive loss of jobs, increased unemployment and engagement of employees in the informal sector with low job security and poor pay (see Figure 2).

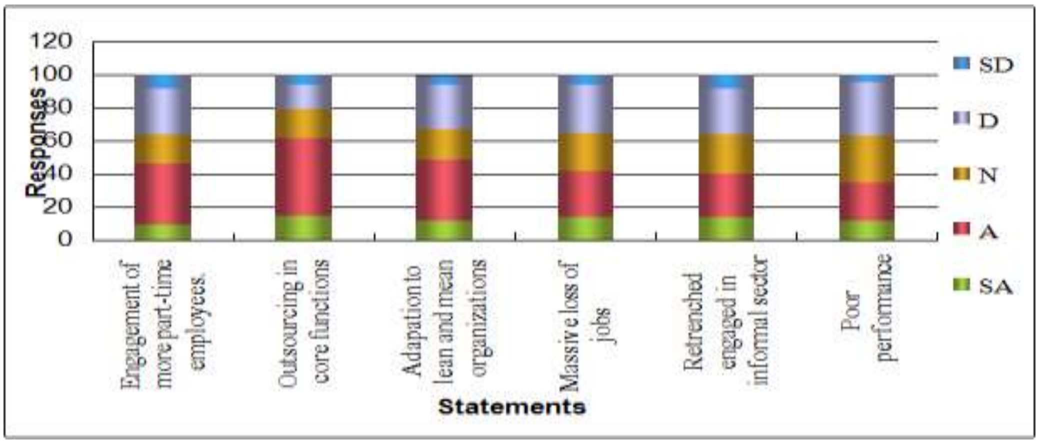

Fig 2 Effects of Globalization on State Corporations.

The study findings indicated that outsourcing had been embraced by many state corporations. This is a strategy of coping with cut throat competition, an idea brought by globalization [13]. In addition organizations had to establish ways of becoming competitive by reducing over staffing in the bloated bureaucracies, a feature evidenced in the Kenyan state corporation [25]. Hence, in this era of globalization organizations must establish strategies of remaining or being competitive.

G. Effects of Privatization on State Corporations

The finding of the study indicated that privatization had: led to mass redundancies, brought in new management, brought in new policies unions had to cope with, reduced union membership and consequently loss in union income and led to competition from rival companies (see Figure 3).

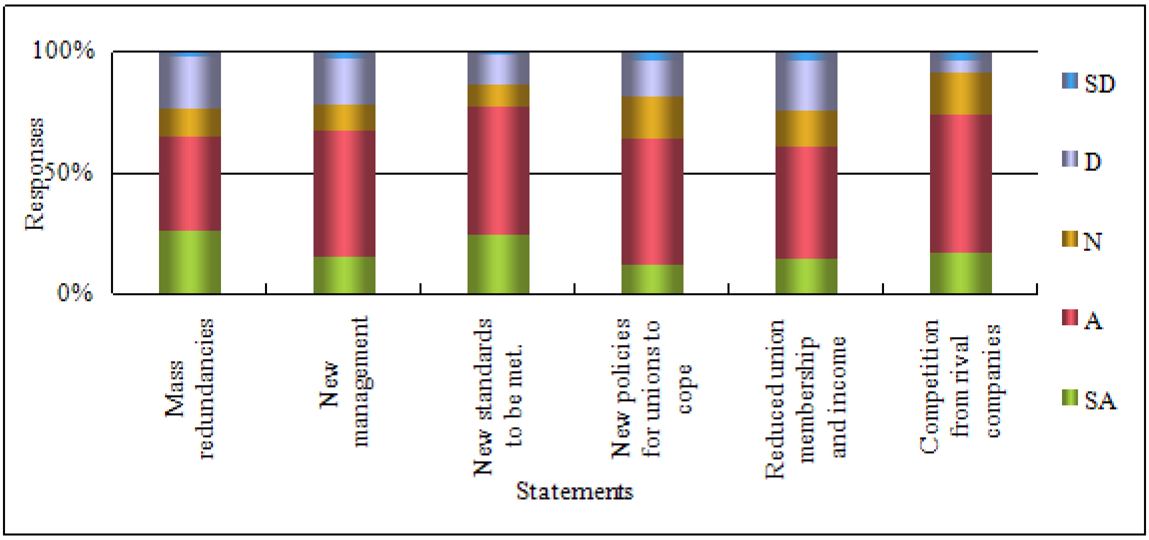

Fig 3 Effects of Privatization on State Corporations

The findings that privatization had led to mass redundancies had been earlier predicted that in 2009 and 2012, economic growth around the world would fall,translating into mass redundancies a feature experienced in Kenya. The finding further discloses that, privatization places management in relatively strong bargaining position and can force trade unions to accept concessions such as reduced employee numbers, a situation that had been experienced in privatized state corporations in Kenya [26].

H. Effects of Inflation on State Corporations

The study findings established that inflation had led: to disagreement in salary adjustments between employers, unions and the government, delayed conclusion of collective agreements due to disagreements, failure to review employees' wages to match with increase of commodity prizes, poor relations between employees and employers, employees' inability to meet the cost of living, increased strikes by workers seeking adjustment of wages to meet the cost of living and poor performance of organization due to demotivated staff (see Figure 4).

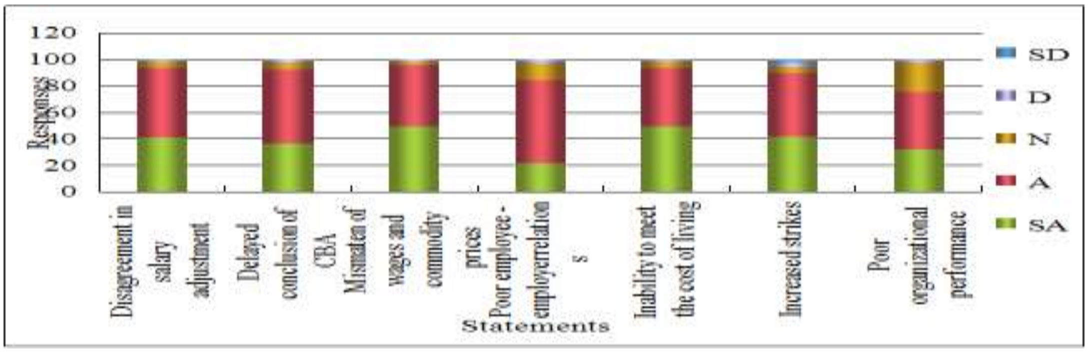

Fig 4 Effects of Inflation on State Corporations

The findings that inflation had affected consultation was justified since impasse had been experienced between partners [27]. Further, increase in minimum wages by the government in 2011 made Kenya Association of Manufacturers to threaten to transfer payroll costs to increase in prize commodity. Besides, the delayed conclusion of collective agreement is evidenced in the just conducted five week nationwide strike by teachers in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions who among other factors were agitating for conclusion of their collective agreement.

I. Strategies of Solving Future Economic Challenges

Generally, the findings of the study indicated that implementation of the following strategies in order of priority would address effects of economic change: future increase in salary should be negotiated and rationally agreed upon by unions, employees and the government; concerted efforts by all parties will increase productivity for the benefit of all; future negotiations should be informed by measures that takes into account increase in production; optimization on delocalization of production to developing countries to increase job opportunities; partners agreeing collectively on a national recovery programme like freezing of salary review during hard economic times and finally having a shared sense of temporary crisis during deteriorating economic conditions (see Figure 5).

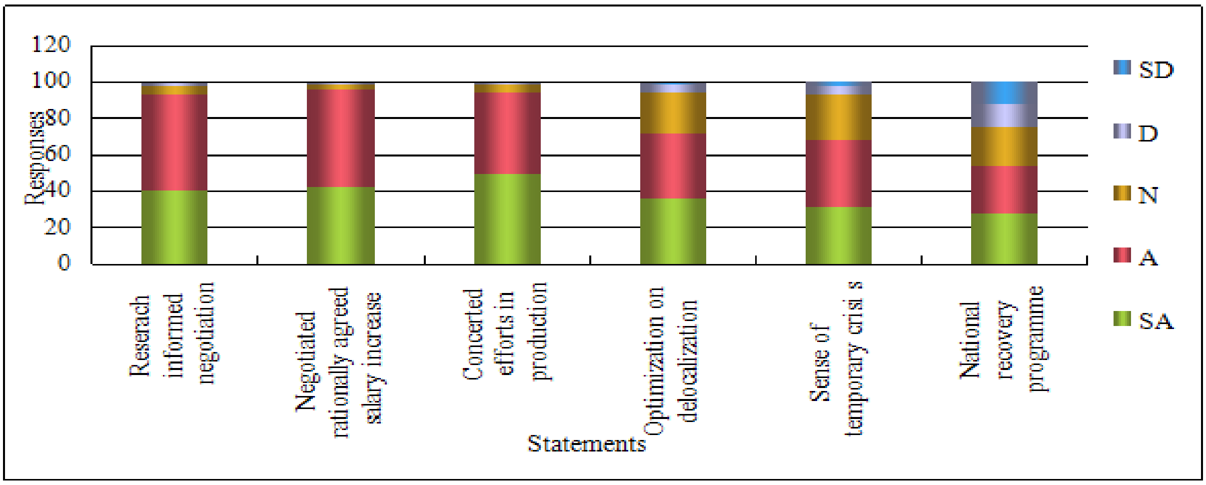

Fig 5 Strategies of handling Future Economic Challenges

The above findings are supported by the fact that the Kenyan government had attempted to reposition productivity at the centre of wage negotiations. Hence, what is produced can be shared and poor productivity leads to freezing of sharing until recovery is realized. [28]. Besides, optimization on delocalization of production to developing countries can and has acted as a strategy of solving unemployment caused by inflation. [80)]. However, the Export Processing Zones which are centres of production for exportation, have produced using "cheap" labour, and implemented labour laws with a lot of flexibility, such as restricting freedom of employees to associate. This has created a situation of dissatisfaction of employees, in such zones. [13].

J. Performance Indicators of State Corporations

The finding established that consultation had led to low absenteeism being recorded, staff had remained working in organizations namely,high retention had been realized, staff had become more committed and motivated and there was improvement in quality of services. However, respondents did not know whether consultation had contributed to improved performance (see Figure 6).

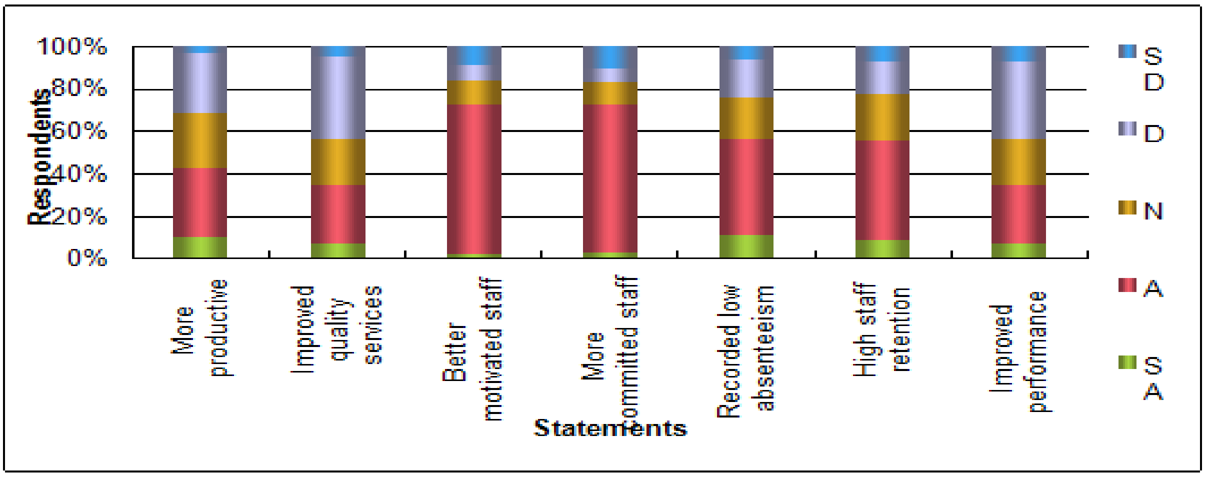

***Fig 6:* Performance Indicators of State Corporations**

The above finding supported a common understanding that low absenteeism, low rate of turnover, better motivated and committed staff are linked to improved workforce performance [29]. Indeed ,maximum available productivity can only be achieved through a workforce that willingly and constantly commits itself to responsibility for; production, growth and quality control. In addition, reconciliation of partners though diverse enables common action which improves performance [30].

K. Economic Change Versus Performance of State Corporations

A scatter plot presenting data collected on economic change versus performance of state corporations indicated a positive association between the two variables (see Figure 7).

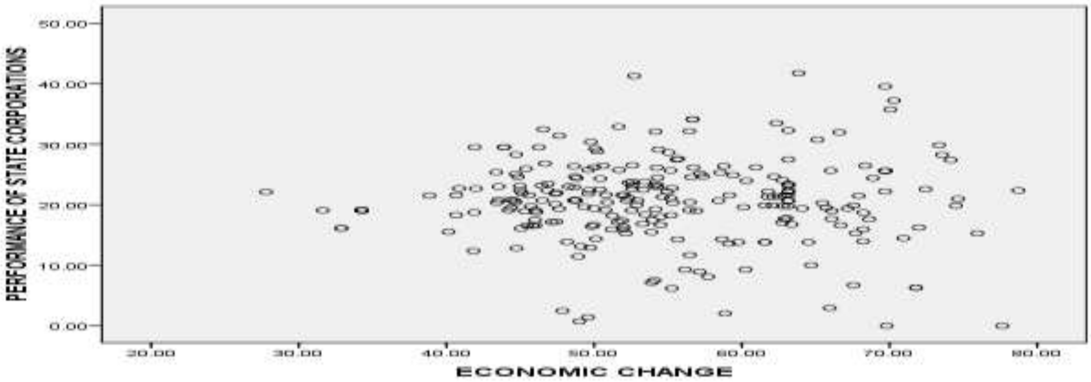

Fig. 7 Scatter Plot for Economic Change Versus Performance of State Corporations

Pearson correlation coefficient of economic change versus performance of state corporations was 0.23. Hence, there was a weak positive correlation between the two variables of study, since results belong to the weak category of 0.1-0.3 [31].

Hence, economic change insignificantly influences the performance of state corporations since the p-valve was .706 which is greater than 0.05 (see Table 1) Therefore, Null hypothesis was accepted that; economic change has not affected the performance of State Corporations. The findings are aligned with the existing arrangements that; state enterprises get support from the government in form of endless subsidies and costly protection mechanisms. Hence, they are cushioned during hard economic times.

Table 1 Correlation Coefficient for Economic Change Versus the Performance of State Corporations

		Performance of State Corporations	**Role of Social Partners**
Performance of State Corporations	Pearson Correlation	1	0.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.706
	N	279	279
Economic Change	Pearson Correlation	0.023	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.706	
	N	279	279

From Table (2) it is clear that economic change has a positive effect on performance of state corporations with a gradient of .014. This implies that a unit change in economic change increases performance of state corporations at the rate of 0.014.

Table 2 Coefficient of Economic Change Versus Performance of State Corporations

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	19.903	2.034		9.786	0.000
Economic Change Partners	0.014	0.037	0.023	0.378	0.706

Regression

Since Scatter plot in Figure 7 indicated a linear association between the two variables of study, then regression line could be fitted for the variables. This means that economic change predicts the performance of state corporations (see Figure 8).

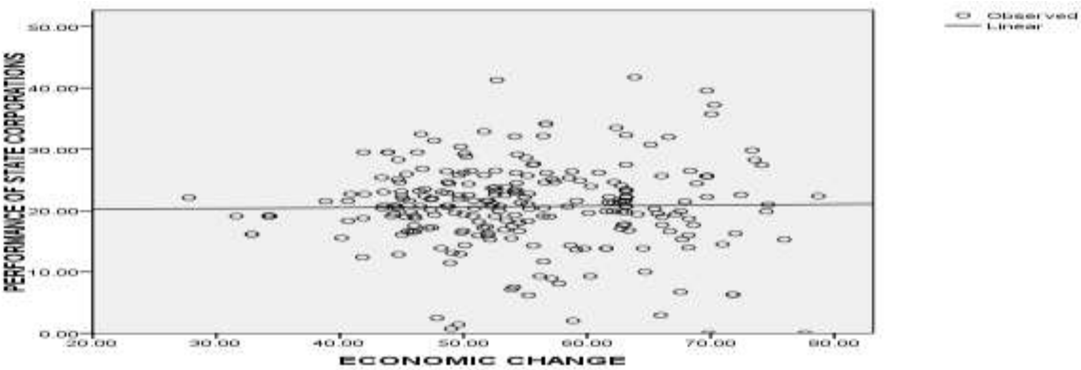

Fig. 8 Regression Line for Economic Change Versus Performance of State Corporations

Goodness-of-Fit for economic change versus performance of state corporations was computed. The R- Square was .001; meaning 0.1% of variation in performance was explained by economic change (see Table 3).

Table 3 Goodness of Fit for Economic Change Versus Performance of State Corporations

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.023	0.001	-0.003	6.42189742

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the finding of the study, it could be concluded that economic changes like globalization, inflation and privatization had insignificant effect on the performance of state corporations. Though some state corporations had been privatized and high rates of inflation had been experienced in the country, the government stepped in and cushioned state corporations from being negatively affected. Still privatization is a strategy of salvaging state corporations from poor management, consequential low productivity and loss of government revenue. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted; economic change has not affected the performance of state corporations.

The study recommends the incorporation and implementation of the following strategies by the partners in order to address challenges of economic challenges that inevitably confront them:

Future increase in salary should be negotiated and rationally agreed upon by unions, employers and the government.

The three partners should put concerted efforts to increase corporation's productivity for the benefit of all.

Future negotiations should be informed by research that takes into account increase in production.

The social actors should optimize on delocalization of production to the country to increase job opportunities; and collectively address the causes of employee dissatisfaction in the Export Processing Zones.

The partners should agree collectively on national recovery programme like freeze in salary review or any other strategy during hard economic times, in order to collectively contribute to fast economic recovery. Such deteriorating economic conditions should be collectively viewed as temporary crisis.

The findings will help the social partners to collectively consult on economic issues that they will face for industrial prosperity and peace.

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PUBLICATIONS:

i. Title;
Industrial Relations System as a Factor of Tripartite Consultation Influencing the Performance of State Corporations.
Publisher.
International Journal of Advances in Management and Economics.

ii. Title:
The Effect of the Role of Social Partners on the Performance of State Corporations in Kenya.
Publisher.
International Journal of Advances in Management and Economics.

iii. Title:
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iv. Title:
The Effect of Economic Change on the Performance of State Corporations in Kenya.
Submitted to: Asian Academic Research Journal Publishers - Awaiting Response.

v. In the process of preparing a fifth Journal for publication.
Currently preparing a Research Proposal.

Membership.

Member of Kenya Institute of Management.

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Reached the Apex Educational Hierarchy.