Effective electronic strategies on cross border migration control adopted by immigration authority in Kenya

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In the recent past, many countries have begun to assess and evaluate their cross border procedures and modern innovations in information and communications technology (ICT) that have significant potentials in enhancing this cross border procedures. For nations that have established their own regional cooperation they have been able to embark on harmonizing their cross border policies and strategies so as to have secure and efficient movement of people and goods. The study sought to evaluate the important role of ICT strategies in harmonizing and standardizing cross border procedures and thereby improving the immigration systems. The study evaluated the determinants of effective electronic systems that have been put in place by the government through the MRIP on cross-border migration. The target population of this study was 500 employees from the Ministry of State for Immigration and Registration of Person, Head Office in Nairobi. Stratified random sampling was used, based on the current departments of the Ministry the strata was formed. Respondents were identified by simple random sampling and a questionnaire was issued to them. The sample size was 100 forming 20% of the target population. One of the key findings was that employees at immigration department were concerned with the cross border migration controls. The findings indicated that the department had electronic methods of verification of visa; electronic methods of visa processing were more reliable than semi manual or fully manual processes. Results showed that e-verification systems influenced cross border migration control in Kenya. The study concluded that Electronic visa application is a key determinant of cross border migration control at Kenya immigration authority and e-verification systems influenced cross border migration controls in Kenya. It was possible to conclude that all departments had E-verification systems and systems were capable of verifying all passports, the entry and exit recording systems influenced cross border migration controls and that there were effective strategies put in place at entry and exit points of cross border to curb movement of persons to and from the country. The study recommended to the immigration department management to ensure that all the electronic visa application system is upgraded with the technological changes taking place in the whole world. It is also recommended that the management conducts a market survey of the technological facilities in use in other public institutions so as to minimize corruption and fraudulent activities.

Key words: Cross border migration control, electronic visa, e-verification system

INTRODUCTION

Background and research gap

According to the International Organization for Migration (2000) causes of cross border migration range from differences in employment opportunities, living standards between countries; increased education broader access to information abroad, changing demographics, poor socio-economic living conditions, government systems that are rigid, drops in real income, currency devaluation, war and corruption.

Migrants have been feared to cause various problems; the rise in crime, spread of diseases, taking away jobs from locals or driving down the wages of local workers. The number of persons living outside their country of birth for the last 42 years has more than doubled from an
estimated 75 million in 1960 to nearly 215 million (UN, 2009) representing 3% of World population. About 30 Million Africans are living outside their home country. These figures clearly indicate how crucial the management of border migration is. ICT plays a major role in the implementation of effective cross border systems in order to ensure management of migration.

This has led to the demand for effective cross border controls in developed and developing countries. In Kenya (IOM, 2011) over 350,000 refugees are being hosted with a growing influx from South-Central Somalia. Kenya is also documented as a hub for human trafficking and smuggling. The management of Kenya’s long porous borders has become a challenge to the government; this has led to the realization of the government the importance of effectively securing its borders and improving its capacity for service delivery in the immigration sector.

The recurrent civil strife in Africa has generated mass refugee movements and new kinds of asylum seekers to and within the region (Ommundsen et al. 2010). The upward surge has occurred during a period in which both public opinion and immigration policy in most developed countries have grown increasingly restrictive. With undocumented or “illegal” entry growing faster than any other type of immigration, policy experts are no longer confident that total immigration is still subject to the effective control of national policy (Neil and Jackson 2006).

According to Anasi (2004), there are over 800 immigrants that enter Kenya illegally every month. With terrorism now being a reality that is globally pervasive, and thus making Kenya susceptible. It therefore gives rise to the need for governments to implement immigration security policies. According to the report by Global Commission of International Migrations (2005) this is one of the most controversial areas of policy and practice facing virtually all countries. For example, the implementation of strategic border controls has increasingly reduced apprehensions within United States, well documented policies, stable funding, improved technology and skilled labor force has led to this success, Haddal (2010).

In Kenya, the Ministry of the state for immigration and registration of persons in its strategic plan (2009) offers strategies towards harnessing human resource for optimal development by building and maintaining a comprehensive and responsive population data management system that is capable of providing fully automated and integrated population information. The process would enable the country achieve the implementation of effective citizen identification and manage border controls. The lack of use of electronic strategies has been long overdue and the current level of insecurities due to lack of electronic systems on cross border migration has become alarming nationally; manual systems still in place has led to the urgency of developing immigration and registration
electronic strategies and policies MRIP (2008). This study seeks to evaluate effective e-strategies on cross- border migration in Kenya.

**Research objectives**

1). To find out whether the Kenya Immigration Authority offers electronic visa application as an e-strategy on migration control.
2). To investigate whether the Kenya Immigration Authority has e-verification systems as an e-strategy on migration control.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted an exploratory research design. According to Earl, (1989) exploratory research design purposes in identifying potential causes of a problem, establishing priorities or direction for a research program, clarifying concepts and assisting in new product developments. Shields and Tajalli, (2006) link exploratory research with the conceptual framework. Exploratory research is flexible and can address research questions of all types (what, why, how). The study population consisted of an estimate of 500 employees of the Ministry of State for Immigration and Registration of Person, Nairobi. The sampling frame came from a list of top and middle level employees in the departments of Ministry of State for Immigration and Registration of Persons namely; Immigration Department, National Registration Bureau, Civil Registration, Refugee Affairs and Population Registration Services. The sample size was 100 forming 20% of the target population. The sample was composed of several strata picked from a Stratified random sampling technique. Depablo (2000) states that if a researcher wants to reduce a risk of missing to discover a perception to a minimal 1% then a sample size of 50 is needed hence the size of 100 was very sufficient.

The data used for the purpose of the study was primary data collected by the researcher, through questionnaires and interviews. A questionnaire technique since it is suited for exploratory research. Descriptive studies enable one to document the nature of existing variable, how they change overtime. It provides a basis for classifying data and allows for further questions, since data is recorded in the narrative. Descriptive statistics and qualitative findings are often presented together Mercurio (1979). Qualitative data analysis method were used to analyze qualitative data gathered using the open-end questionnaires. The process entailed the following; gathering of all the questionnaires issued to respondents, checking for completeness on questionnaires, entering coded numerical data in templates so as to calculate the response percentages, mean and variance and checking data for errors.

The multiple regression model was used so as to develop an equation showing how the variables are related. Anderson, Sweeney, Williams (2011) define
multiple regression analysis as the study of how a dependent variable y is related to two or more independent variables. Using multiple linear regression equation of the following form was developed:

\[ Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \mu \]

Where
- \( Y \) = cross border migration control
- \( X_1 \) = Electronic visa
- \( X_2 \) = E-verification systems

In the model, \( \beta_0 \) = the constant term while the coefficient \( \beta_i = 1 \ldots 2 \) was used to measure the sensitivity of the dependent variables (Y) to unit change in the predictor variables. \( \mu \) is the error term which captures the unexplained variations in the model.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software was used to present descriptive statistics in form of pie charts, tables and bar charts.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The first objective of the study was to find out whether the Kenya Immigration Authority offers electronic visa application as an e-strategy on migration control. Table 1 show that 74% of the respondents agreed that their department had electronic methods of verification of visa and 23% disagreed with the statement. The findings imply that the departments in immigration have upgraded their systems according to technological changes taking place in the whole world. The findings agree with those in Rosenblum (2011) who notes that the creation of an effective electronic eligibility verification system has united the disparate sides of the United States immigration debate by giving employers greater certainty of whether an employee is authorized to work in the United States.

The study sought to find out if electronic methods of visa processing are more reliable than semi manual or fully manual processes. Results show that 82% of the respondents agreed that electronic methods of visa processing are more reliable than semi manual or fully manual processes and 13% disagreed with the statement. The findings imply that electronic methods are more reliable and efficient than manual processes. The findings concur with those in Harty (2005) who asserted that eVisa has led to a significant process improvement to the immigration departments in Australia and United States, by addressing two conflicting imperatives that is the tourism and education industries who wanted the entry barriers reduced to encourage tourism and fee-paying students whilst there is a security requirement to retain the border integrity.

The respondents were asked if it is easy to track passport and visa utilization using electronic means as compared to manual methods. Figure 1 indicates a majority (53.2%) strongly agreed while another 35.1% agreed bringing to a total of (88.3%) of those who agreed. The findings agree with those in NACTS (2011) which confirmed that available and emerging e-strategies can enhance border security operations and infrastructure in a cost-effective manner. The findings imply that the immigration department had put in place
Table 2: Tracking passport ways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The department has a way of tracking passports which are invalid for whatever reason</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Scanning of visitors at immigration offices

passport and visa tracking systems which were easier and faster to use that the traditional methods.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether Visa and passport data is highly integrated in order to control all manner of misuse. Results reveal that majority (96%) agreed, while 2.6% were neutral and 1.3% strongly disagreed. The findings concur with those in NACTS (2011) which asserted that these technologies (visa verification) can detect a plethora of clandestine activities and they also observed that the key components that provide for secure cross border controls are staffing, technology and infrastructure. The findings imply that the immigration department has integrated the visa and passport data to control misuse and embrace the technological changes taking place all over the world.

The respondents were asked to indicate if the Government should integrate registration of person and the passport and visa processing departments. Results indicate that 68.9% of the respondents agreed while 27.3% disagreed and 3.9% were neutral. The findings imply that the immigration employees were for the idea that the Government to integrate registration of persons and the passport and Visa processing departments to curb forging of important documents.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether the department had a way of tracking passports which are invalid for whatever reason. Table 2 shows that 80.5% of the respondents agreed, while 15.6% disagreed and 3.9% were neutral. The findings agree with those in Harty (2005) who asserted that introduction of electronic visas has increased the level of data sharing among the State Department and other federal agencies and has served to enhance border security and facilitated legitimate visitors travel. The findings imply that the Government has ensured proper sharing of information in all departments regarding registration of people, tracking and facilitation of security.

The second objective of the study was to investigate whether the Kenya Immigration Authority has e-verification systems as an e-strategy on migration control. The respondents were asked to indicate whether all documents processed at the department of immigration are scanned for verification purposes. Results indicate that 83.2% of the respondents agreed, 10.2% disagreed and 6.4% were neutral. The findings imply that at immigration department all documents are well screened for verification purposes to ensure that all documents are original and held by the correct and right owners.

The respondents were asked to indicate if visitors who enter immigration offices have to pass through scanners for security verification. Results indicate that majority (46.8%) agreed and 23.4% strongly agreed bringing to a total of 70.2% of those who agreed. The findings agree with those in Westat (2009) who estimated that the e-verification system allowed employers to screen over 166,000 unauthorized workers in 2009. The system’s ability to successfully identify a large number of unauthorized immigrants has strengthened the ability to ensure legal workforce and is a major step toward reducing the job magnet that motivates most illegal immigration. The findings imply that the government is on the lookout of all illegal people in the country and to ensure security all visitors are scanned and their documents verified with the data in the systems (figure 2).
The respondents were asked to indicate whether it is not possible to produce a fake passport in Kenya because the department has high level security inscriptions which are not easy replicate by fraudsters. The study findings show that majority (59.8%) of the respondents agreed, while 19.4% disagreed and 13% disagreed. The findings imply that the Government is blocking all the open doors for corruption and fake document publications through issuance of electronic visas. The study sought to establish if the systems are capable of verifying foreign passports. Results in table 3 show that majority (80.6%) of the respondents agreed that their systems were capable of verifying foreign passports and 14.2% disagreed with the statement. The findings imply that the Government has enhanced that all departments have invested in upgrading the systems to ensure that they are up to date and are capable of verifying all kinds of passport. The findings agree with those in Harty, (2005) who asserted that introduction of electronic visas has increased the level of data sharing among the State Department and other federal agencies and has served to enhance border security and facilitated legitimate visitors travel.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether the verification systems in their departments are meant to detect and control fraud. Results show that 70.2% of the respondents agreed, 26% disagreed and 3.8% were neutral. The findings imply that at immigration department the management had put in place verification systems and strategies to detect and control fraud. The findings agree with those in Dulo, (2009) who summarized that the main challenges facing secure cross border migrations is that Kenya has a huge and porous border, transnational communities, lack of a common visa that would reduce bureaucracy at border points and corruption.

Regression results indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between Electronic visa, E-verification systems and cross border migration control. This was supported by pearson correlation coefficient of (b1=0.769, p value, 0.002) and (b1=0.933, p value, 0.000). This implies that an increase in the effectiveness of electronic visa by 1 unit leads to an increase in effectiveness of cross border migration control by 0.769 units and an increase in the effectiveness of e-verification systems by 1 unit leads to an increase in effectiveness of cross border migration control by 0.933 units. This means that electronic visa and E-verification systems are statistically significant in explaining cross border migration control.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the objectives and the findings of the study the following conclusion can be made. Electronic visa application is a key determinant of cross border migration control at Kenya immigration authority. The findings indicated that the department had electronic methods of verification of visa; Electronic methods of visa processing were more reliable than semi manual or fully manual processes. The findings also revealed that it is easier to track passports and visa utilization. This kind of finding is a familiar as it has been supported by other scholars and hence highlighting the intensity of technology change in determining cross border immigration controls.

E-verification systems influenced cross border migration controls in Kenya. It was possible to conclude that all departments had e-verification systems and the systems were capable of verifying all passports. The correlation between e-verification systems and cross border migration controls was found to be statistically significant and positive.

It is recommended to the immigration department management to ensure that all the electronic visa application system is upgraded with the technological changes taking place in the whole world. It is recommended that the management conducts a market survey of the technological facilities in use in other public institutions so as to minimize corruption and fraudulent activities.

It is recommended to the management that they ensure the staff are competent enough and have the technical knowledge on the use of verification systems and machines. It is also recommended that all employees should have a sense of urgency in attending to visitors who enter immigration offices and ensure they pass through scanners for security verification. The study also recommends that the management ensures that the employees are well paid and remunerated to curb corruption and fraud cases.

REFERENCES
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>5.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>30</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
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<td>41.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Verifying foreign passports
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Rey Koslowski (2011). The Evaluation of Border Controls as a Mechanism to Prevent Illegal Immigration

