



# Journal of Community Positive Practices

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## JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY POSITIVE PRACTICES

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

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# ENVISIONING INCENTIVES FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF NORTHWEST KENYA

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David Kamar IMANA<sup>1</sup>  
Oscar S. MMBALI<sup>2</sup>

***Abstract:** Often times the discovery of oil and oil drilling comes with mixed outcomes. In many countries, this activity has far reaching implications beyond sharing oil revenues. The announcement of oil discovery in March, 2012 in Kenya led to lots of speculations, theories, ideas and revelations especially on what Kenya will be in the near future. This sets a base for the discourse on community participation in natural resource management. For Kenya, this is the first time experience coming at a time when the nation did not have a consistent and comprehensive agricultural, environmental, and mining policy. Recent studies have indicated that majority of the Northwest population believe that oil discovery in Turkana county will be a blessing and not a curse. In pursuit of strategies for mitigating natural resource related conflict and improve local governance. The study explores the following questions: (1) What factors are likely to contribute to natural resource related conflict in Northwest Kenya? (2) How do these factors impact the society? (3) What strategies can be used to mitigate natural resource related conflict and improve local governance in Northwest Kenya? This study recommends mechanism to create local avenues for accountability and fair resource distribution and management in order to combat inequality.*

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## 1. Introduction

To a large extent, conflicts and civil unrest witnessed in the past decade was related to poverty, increase in inequality, and unprecedented rise in food prices (Vos, 2015). The discovery of natural resources, oil finds included is frequently associated with a number of conflicts that require a well-established legal, conflict resolutions, and management frameworks. The new finding and announcement of any natural resources usually makes people's mind go crazy and the delirium formed in people's heads is beyond explanation

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(Shaxson, 2007). These challenges are likely to increase in the future if appropriate measures are not put into place to tackle these problems. Often times, these challenges emerge from policy and governance gaps or failures in a country. Policy and governance can to a great extent mitigate these challenges for instance: choices government makes or government inaction; regulations government imposes on the society; money government spends on development programs and delivery of services (Dye, 2011); resources government allocates to address issues local people view as critical; use or non-use of force in executing government policy; inspection; licensing; dispute resolution mechanisms used; setting standards and imposing sanctions when such standards are not met (Anderson, 2003).

Good governance is increasingly becoming core to the management of natural resources partly because population increase, and development activities, tend not only to alter the ecosystem, but also puts pressure on resource with further implications on climate change or unprecedented natural disasters (Stepanova & Bruckmeier, 2013). In India, natural resource conflict involving the Maoist movement was precipitated by two factors: (1) There was natural resource abundance which had been liberalized but local communities were not largely benefiting from the mining sector. (2) Local communities had cultural significance which they attached to the ecosystem, but which was not taken into account in the mining sector liberalization policies (Kennedy, 2015). Natural resource conflicts tend to turn into armed conflict when political institutions ignore or are unable to settle natural resource dispute hence creating historical grievances, and when economic institutions fail to or lack policies that enable communities living in resource abundance areas to benefit from the resources. These experiences are much identical to resource curse problem in over 50 countries around the world including Angola, Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Colombia, Congo, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, South Africa, Venezuela, Iraq, Malaysia, Philippines and Nigeria (Elbadawi & Soto, 2015).

In resource scarce areas, resource conflict emerge out of the quest by small scale farmers to access resources for livelihoods and rural economy, especially when institutions lack capacity to provide access to resources. In Tanzania for instance, irrigation schemes were unable to supply water to small scale farmers since water supply planning was not matched with the expansion of the economic sector (Lecoutere, 2011). Other challenges from Tanzania have been lack of comprehensive land tenure and land rights which has often fueled ethnic conflict leading to crop failure, food insecurity, and increased inequalities (Kajembe, et.al. 2003). While natural resources begin as genuine quest for resource benefit, they in the long run evolve into instruments of politics with capabilities to bring down governments and remain for a long time as a weapon to assert authority by different parties in the conflict for instance the case in Liberia and Somalia (Duyvesteyn, 2000).

Some of the good governance issues examined in the past experiences include failure to identify and prevent looting and over exploitation of natural resources, availability of black market networks to extract and smuggle resources from the community which are often unaccounted for despite, hostilities created by harmful extractive behaviors, and risk taking behaviors developed by small entrepreneurs and companies, when the government failures to regulate resource extraction effectively (Billon, 2005). Failure to

address natural resource conflict often builds up a complex web of collective negative emotions and grievances that serve as a hindrance in natural resource management (Kennedy and Vining, 2007). Experiences from Congo show that the value of the natural resources as perceived by the conflicting parties influence decision to press on with the conflict (Pizzy, 2014).

In Taiwan, marine and fishing policy failed partly because actors in the fishing industry often changed their strategies applying those that gave them optimal maximum gain and fueled resource competition in the long run. As a result, compliance with resource management policy was weakened (Chang, et. al., 2013). In Ghana forest management policies failed because of institutional failures which often gave forest adjacent communities to interfere with conservation efforts. This was partly because the legislative process did not involve all stakeholders hence forest conservation measures did not resonate with realities experienced among forest adjacent communities (Derkyi, 2014). In Indonesia, low fish productivity, the overall poverty among fishing communities and lack of policies to tackle these specific problems escalated the conflict (Muawana, et.al., 2012). While in Peru, the national government devolved mining resource benefits to local governments, the resources did not benefit local people, but rather fueled political contest among local politicians (Arellano-Yanguas, 2011). The problem is partly attributed to lack of recognizing indigenous identity and respectively responding to their demands through effective and need based policy mechanisms (Wright & Puig, 2012).

In Honduras, marine conservation was hindered by among other things, lack access to information, resource tenure, and the failure of the state to provide policy mechanism that linked natural resource use to policy regulations (Stanley, 1998). In Sweden, conflict over clearing the forest escalated with increase of forest clearing because the purpose of clearing of the forest was not known from the beginning but unfolded gradually through media and a series of meetings. As a result of the uncertainty participation in dispute resolution was hindered by the fact that all stakeholders did not know what to expect and how to respond to the clearing of the forest (Angman, et.al. 2011).

Kenya is not new to the issues of natural resource conflict. For decades, there have been natural resource conflicts over water, livestock and pasture, use of forest resources and forest encroachment. However, these conflicts attracted relatively less attention because they only involved a few resource adjacent communities, and were relatively seasonal. As a result, they were easily managed by local authorities even though they would emerge again some other time depending on the prevailing conditions of the time (Oba, 2011). Recent studies on oil discovery in Turkana suggest that natural resource tensions that were formerly mild would escalate into full scale conflict incase marginalization of the Turkana community and inequality will continue in the presence of oil mining (Johannes et. al., 2015). The escalation of conflict is based on among the things, the findings that land use policies governing dry lands where oil was discovered lack comprehensive tenure systems have often been treated as supplementary rather than main policies requiring efficiency and competency. This has in past fueled conflict which most of the time has been perceived as the problem of the communities affected by the conflict and land use problems (Burch & Reda, 2015). Government failures have

also been attributed by previous narratives built around the conflict for example the view of the conflict as a mere traditional bad practice that should be abandoned through modernization, While the conflict is historical, it does not mean it is backward hence there is need to re-examine the conflict and understand prevailing historical injustices that have not been addressed (Bond, 2016).

While a lot has been written regarding natural resource management and community participation; this study does not challenge this literature but rather seeks to add voice to this study by: (1) Framing the discourse in the context of Sustainable Development Goals for post 2015 era. This means examining community participation issues by integrating sustainable development environment principles with principles of mining industry, inequality reduction, environment conservation, and best practices in governance. (2) Framing the discourse characterized by contextual realities. In this case, indigenous knowledge, lived experiences, and voices become core to envisioning future community participation that has potential to realize sustainable livelihoods, inequality reduction, environment conservation and good governance at the local level.

**Conceptual Framework:** Sustainable Development Model for Local Governance



*Source:* Imana & Mmbali, 2016

This study seeks explore factors that need to be addressed in order to design strategies for mitigating natural resource related conflict and improve local governance. The study explores the following questions: (1) What factors are likely to contribute to natural resource related conflict in Northwest Kenya? (2) How do these factors impact the society? (3) What strategies can be used to mitigate natural resource related conflict and improve local governance in Northwest Kenya?

## 2. Methodology

We selected qualitative case study approach to inquiry for this study. Case study approach is good for studying phenomena in a context when the context and the phenomena are not mutually exclusive and when the intent of the researcher is to focus



on one thing and drill deeper, describing the complex relationship between multiple factors that account for the subject of study (Yin, 2014). The approach also suits studies that examine contemporary complex issues that are deeply rooted in contextual conditions (Yin, 2009). In case study inquiry, researchers focus on depth and details rather than statistical generalization, especially when the subject of study constitutes one case study. This is because the goal is to understand what goes on in a given area for example, how something happens or happened, or how something is done, and under what conditions (Thomas, 2010). In case study research, flexible methods are used to collect data from different sources, and to analyze such data in ways that ingrate various aspects of a subject matter so that a holistic picture with different perspectives can be created (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

Give that case study inquiry requires multiple sources of data (Yin, 2012), we used archival research and Key informant interviews to collect data from different sources taking into account things such as different perspectives people assigned to the subject of study (Henn, et.al., 2009). Key informants are individuals with specialized knowledge or experience in the subject matter one wants to study. Generally they are individuals holding administrative, expatriate, or specialized knowledge in the subject. Key informants include those who don't have the information at the time they encounter the researcher, but are ailing to get the information for the researcher (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Key Informants were Kenyan experts from the Turkana community with a range of expertise including law, social science, history, culture, education, politics and civic engagement. We combined email interviews, Skype interviews, and face-to face interviews to reach out to different informants.

Data gathering procedure was guided by the following ethical considerations: seeking consent; working with participants to verify the accuracy of what they shared during interviews; reporting different perspectives obtained from the study (Creswell, 2013); letting the informants know that research was being done, and that the researcher was the one doing it; letting participants know the purpose of the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2012); and ensuring the privacy; anonymity of the participants, and confidentiality (Boije,2010).

### **3. Findings of the Study**

#### ***3.1 The context***

Kenya's oil and gas drilling is located in the following areas: (1) Turkana West Block 11 A which has been allocated to CEPSPA oil company; (2) Turkana North Block 11B which has been allocated to Tullow oil company; (3) Turkana Central Blocks 10BA & 10 A which has been allocated to Tullow oil company; (4) Turkana East Block 10 BB and Turkana south Block 13T which have been allocated to Tullow respectively. Tullow oil is the dominant oil company in the region.

Studies show that before oil discovery, the Turkana community undertook the following economic activities: (1) Nomadic Pastoralism; (2) subsistence farming; (3) little trade – cattle/shoats selling; and (4) charcoal burning. An informant observed

that land is utilized not only for grazing and subsistence farming, but also for hunting; gathering wild berries; firewood collection; and extraction of live fences which are used to construct perimeter fence around the Kakuma refugee camp. Land is also used for mining quarry stone collections and other precious stones.

Land is central to the Turkana way of life. It is the most important and priceless asset that define life. For the Turkana, land is not only an economic property, but also a spiritual realm as well as a political territory. The value for land is well characterized by the Turkana's historical resistance to British colonization, prevailing border disputes, and the daily socio-economic activities undertaken in the region with profound resilience. When describing the Turkana's value for land, an informant observed:

*Just like the Kikuyu who resisted the Colonial regime from their lands, the Turkana similarly resisted the colonialists who wanted to convert their land for range management and private conservancies. Till now the Turkana have had border disputes with their neighbors both international and national such as: Mogila hill conflict with South Sudan; the Ilemi Triangle conflict with South Sudan and Ethiopia; the Uganda border conflict – UDFP; border conflict with the Pokots at Baringo, which led to the Silale/Nadome Massacre in 2015; and at Lorokon with West Pokot among others.*

Land is spiritual. There are sacred beliefs or values about natural resources like water, trees, stones, places, land, connections between spirits and land. A case in point includes: the Namorutunga human stones on your way to Kalokol outside Lodwar town; Moru Anayeche shrine in Turkana West Constituency; Ekitoe Angiliok in Lopur Ward and Emilait in Lokangae at Songot Ward. An informant observed that socio-cultural rituals of the Turkana for instance death, marriage, and reconciliation are not only done on the ancestral land, but also express the connection between the land as a physical property and the spiritual realm symbolized by other aspects of the universe. The informant observes:

*At the time of death the Turkana cosmology believes in living dead. The community believes in ancestors who should not be annoyed or offended rather should be treated with respect. Sacrifices are conducted to appease to them. Naming of children after their ancestors is conducted in honor of the life they lived and the lineage they reproduced. Ata Nayeche is the Turkana Ancestor though they all migrated from a place called Jie. All these things are done in the context of the land, the land of their ancestors. Likewise, Marriage in Turkana is as per the clan (emacar). The rule is that men must marry women from outside their own clan. Clan is a combination of lineage and territory. Marriage is conducted during the full moon and in a designated locality preferably at the low land during rainy season and not dry seasons. Socially, the Turkana are stratified in to two groups: the Ngicuro and Ngimonia. This social distinction is symbolized in terms of nature. The males are divided into mountains and leopards (Ngimor'u ka Ngirisae).*

The above explanation means that in the socialization of the Turkana, human entity as a social phenomenon finds its own identity in nature, for example, in the likeness of mountains and leopards, the social being is created to co-exist, find meaning in and

protect nature. Furthermore, community land is communally owned and protected. Depending on the settlement, one would opt to graze frequently in particular regions, or farm there if possible. This kind of occupier ownership is respected and recognized. Occupier ownership is not unique to the region. The Turkana community is purely nomadic pastoralist although some practice fishing and subsistence farming along Lake Turkana and River Turkwel respectively.

The family unit is very crucial in Turkana public life. It must be involved in decision making. Family heads, usually senior citizens are respected in the decision making process. In the absence of land tenure and title deeds which is largely the case in Northwest Kenya; elders are the trustees of community land. While different circumstances would call for different decision making processes, the core of the decision making process should take into account consulting with family heads for guidance, their preferences or interests. These principles apply to decisions on settlements and occupation of Turkana land. These principles dictate that, if in a particular season, a particular family occupying a particular homestead is not there as a result of migration; another household could as well farm or graze in that place. There are informal socio-political mechanisms to facilitate such consultative process. Therefore, an empty space does not necessarily mean that that particular land has no owner, even in the absence of a title deed.

The second principle in community decision making is that the decisions to be made should seek to balance between the interest of the user and the community. Value for community is the sole priority guiding the ethic of land use. The individual uses the land because he or she is part of the community and is held to account by the community. An informant for example observes, *“One cannot harvest crops and stock all the produce for self. The community shares in the benefit, at least by grazing in the farm after the harvest since nothing entirely individual.”*

The third principle is the principle of: (1) the rights of land user and (2) the rights of the community whose land is used by individuals. These principles guide how land is used, what one is allowed to do with the land, and what the user is not allowed to do with the land. The user is allowed to plant, fence and guard the crops against the predators. However, the user is not allowed to be selfish for example if one was needy or hungry during harvest and needed some help. At least those who farm on community land are socially obligated to provide some of their produce for needy people in the community or allow any one’s animals to graze on the farm after harvest.

The fourth principle is the property rights of the community. Community land is not leased, rented or sold. In case of disputes over occupation, the community judgment favors the one who occupied the land first, and the duration for which the land was occupied by that particular individual. Cases about land are taken to the customary court. Elders from the community, interested persons, and the wider community including passersby are allowed to attend and participate in the community tribunal where possible.

The fifth principle is the principle of punishment and justice. The Turkana community believes in the concept of restorative justice. The community has mechanisms to

administer fines, sanctions, and post crime and punishment support measures to both the offender and the victim. Judgment is not the end of the offender, but the beginning of a new journey where the community will accept back the punished individual under certain socio-cultural probation initiatives. Depending on the nature of the offence, the offender may be required to pay certain number of animals as may be determined by tribunal (*ekitoe angikilikok*) listening to the disputes. Other forms of punitive measures include warnings; rebukes; beatings; curses and ostracizations. To ensure that justice is enforced; the tribunal's decisions are implemented through social pressure and accountability initiatives. Family heads ensure that the offender is required to comply without which the offended should report back failures

The sixth principle is about community responsibility. It is the shared responsibility of the community to monitor the way land users use community land for socio-economic activities. Anyone in the community at large is free to report misuse of community land since each one is the other's keeper. However, this regulatory framework has been driven to the periphery after years of centralization of land management. Parliament has also been reluctant to enact a community land law that will ensure that the rights of the community to ownership, management, and benefit are secured. The existing laws largely ignore the role of the community in the management of natural resources while most of the oil resource reserves are on the community land. An informant observes that "The law is yet to be in place – Community law/ Act. It is still a bill in parliament and there are no regulations towards the same."

The announcement of oil discovery in March, 2012 made many Kenyans to come up with lots of speculations, theories, ideas and revelations especially on what Kenya will be in the near future. Oil discovery news was received with mix reactions in Turkana County, 'some broke into songs and dance, their hopes higher than ever before' (Imana, 2013; Hauser, 2012). According to the survey conducted in Turkana County in 2013 on the perception of Kenyans about oil discovery, 66.7% of the population trusted that oil discovery in Kenya will bring with it a "blessing" and not a "Curse" (Imana, 2013). An informant observes:

*The news about oil discovery was like relief. The community hopes that they may be compensated for the land lost to oil and gas mining. Those keeping livestock will no longer do so in the same place. Therefore, they need alternative feeding ground for their livestock. Local people without employment hope they may be given priorities on job placements. Local traders hope that they will get business tenders, while students hope they will get scholarships and bursaries, and that Corporate Social Responsibilities will be sufficient.*

These expectations were fueled not only by the oil prospects; but also by historical experiences. Northwest Kenya is a historically marginalized area. The region is inhabited by the Turkana, one of Kenya's minority groups with limited access to infrastructure, state welfare policy, as well as other public goods such as security. As a minority group, the Turkana do not have strong political influence over Kenya's policy hence, they rely on good governance mechanisms, institutions, and the constitution for the protection of their rights. These mechanisms are largely non-existent making the community most vulnerable, especially at a time when oil has been discovered in the area; attracting multiple economic interests. Local fears suggest that failure to channel

oil resource benefits into meaningful community development will definitely be a hope dashed and a recipe for unnecessary conflict. An informant observes:

*Marginalizing the community further might increase banditry and conflict with: the neighboring Pokot over natural resources; influx of other Kenyans coming to the region for employment and business opportunities; and competition within particularly with Internally Displaced People, especially returnees seeking to resettle in the area. Environmental destruction will increase like in the Ogoni case of Nigeria where Oil and Gas is seen as a curse and not a blessing.*

This sets a platform for framing the discourse on community participation in natural resource management, particularly for the purpose of improving the living conditions of the local people, reducing inequalities, improving the quality of local governance and enhancing sustainable development.

### **3.2. Natural Resource Conflict and Good Governance in North West Kenya**

With the discovery of oil, Kenya is expected to face a number of challenges such as; environment degradation, importation of foreign labor force, insecurities, human rights issues, land grabbing, displacement and immigration of the people (Imana, 2013). Oil exploration and extractions brings not only challenges to the economy but also has a prosperity to generate civil conflict (Collier & Hoeffler, 2000). The natural resources can encourage conflicts through the following three mechanisms: firstly, it provides a motive for conflict caused by disputes over the benefits of resource extractions; secondly, resource obtained through corrupt ways attracts or encourage violence and conflicts; and thirdly, indirect mechanism such weaken political institutions and lack of proper legal frameworks causes conflicts (Collier/Hoeffler 2004; Fearon/Laitin 2003; Le Billon 2001; Ross 2006). The following areas are identified a recipe for conflict if left undressed:

#### *The Quandary of Oil Communities*

Land ownership and Grabbing

Environment degradation (toxic wastes, noise, etc.)

Lack of participation and consultations

Lack of mechanism to tackle pollution

Threat of livelihood losses

Human rights violations

Lack of a framework on how oil revenues be managed and shared

### **Inter-communal and Devolution conflicts**

The inter-communal conflicts are normally due to scarcity of basic resources. In the north west of Kenya, communities who are generally pastoralist fight over water, pasture and livestock. The conflict involves communities from four countries and they are generally pastoralist. They are Turkana, Pokot and Samburu of Kenya, Karamoja of Uganda, Didinga and Toposa of South Sudan, and lastly, Bume (also known as Nyangatom) and Daasanech (also known as Galeb) of Ethiopia. The introduction of devolution system form of administration has brought not only a number of benefits especially to previously marginalized and neglected regions in Kenya but it has also brought conflicts. Some of these conflicts are related to: resource allocation and management; lack of clear roles between County and National governments; political wrangles and misappropriation of public funds. To be able to tackle these challenges, a multi-stakeholder approach is required. An informant observes that “There is need for integration of the roles of the national government, county governments, oil companies, and local communities.”

### **Environment Degradation and Pollution**

The entire oil exploration activities in Turkana County in Kenya from the start raised lots of concerns. Before the exploration began, the following challenges had been realized: (1) the local indigenous communities and local authorities were not well informed of it; (2) and the presence of National Environmental Management Authority was absent since there was no report on the assessment of impact of oil exploration in Turkana County. The oil exploration and extractions leads to degradation of environment for example: destruction of vegetation; displacements of people; and obliteration of grazing land. Oil explorations activities will bring noise pollution that will be as a result of big-trucks, loud seismic shooting and vibrations. At a later stage, it is expected that exploration and extractions will lead to accumulation of toxic substances that will definitely be deposited to surrounding environment (into rivers, open land and grazing land). Even though commercial viability of oil has already been confirmed with the first oil export expected in 2017; a comprehensive environmental plan for this region has not yet been put in place. Majority of the local population still fall behind on adequate information necessary for environmental protection. An informant for example observes:

*There are a lot of things to worry about such as: illiteracy; lack of technical know-how; oil and gas is a new thing in the country and region hence it is an experiment; Tullow is experimenting off show drilling in Turkana for the first time yet has been doing onshow in all other 22 countries it operates. This is a challenge to them as well.*

### **Land ownership and Grabbing**

The laws relating to land in Kenya are contained in The Land Act, The National Land Commission Act, Land Registration Act, and The Constitution of Kenya 2010. The exploration and eventually extraction of oil has led to high speculation of land prices

leading to enormous land grabbing near places where oil exploration occurred. Oil exploration and land grabbing not only displaces the right owners of the land but denies them right to benefit from their ancestral land particularly the right to compensation. **The population in Turkana County is already in a susceptible state and oil exploration is likely going to make their rustic way of life disappear due to decline of grazing lands if no better plans are put to include local indigenous communities' needs (E.M. Johannes et al, 2015).**

There is need to make public all activities and operations done by oil exploration companies and strategies of national government as far as oil exploration and extraction is concerned. Land rights have become a more sensitive issue in Kenya and the government needs to develop relevant policies, legal and institutional frameworks for better management of land and oil wealth. The indigenous communities do not view land as a commodity always available for commercial purposes, but rather has a resource to utilize, share, and guarded for future generations. The land to indigenous communities has more attachment which comprises of; spiritual attachment (the link between the dead-the living-dead and the living), communal and future generations attachment. Therefore, the land as a resource is being treated with lot of care, respect, shared equally (in both grazing and tilling) and generally it is not meant for sale. Even though the local indigenous communities know a little of the impacts of oil exploration and extraction ; one thing has become clear to them-their land is to be occupied and they can not only lose their ownership of ancestral and but also their grazing land for their animals.

### **Rule of law (Oil Legislation and regulations)**

The Petroleum Exploration and production Act 2013, is the law that generally explains the national benefits from oil. The law provides for the integration of social protection and benefits for local communities in ownership of oil producing areas. This Act only attracts serious investors and not so called opportunistic speculators (Senelwa, 2012). The new Act introduced a competitive bidding process for oil-exploration license, increased royalties and taxes, and the government takes up to 35% of shares. Also oil exploration firms are required to pay a down payment of one million US dollars according to the new Act (Senelwa, 2012; Oredein, 2013; E.M. Johannes et al, 2015). However, how these provisions will be implemented in order to bring actual benefits to the people remains work undone. An informant observes:

*The displacement of communities as a result of oil mining should be among the priorities for the national and country government to address. There must be mechanisms to combat oil spill over to the environment and water contamination. The government should also put in place resources and personnel to tackle challenges such as possibility of fires, poisoning, and destruction of ecosystem.*

### **Revenue Sharing Scheme and Resource Management**

Well established resource management frameworks in a nation with rich-resource-abundance helps to avoid resource-related conflicts (Halle, 2009). Establishment of revenue-sharing regimes to regulate the allocation of resources revenues amongst all

stakeholders such as central government, county government, and corporate groups is important and will help reduce or avoid resource conflicts (Bennet, 2002). In order for this to succeed, the government has to come up with a satisfactory resource revenue distribution scheme so as to increase social satisfaction and to buy both Indigenous communities and political loyalty. Prudently managed oil revenues can bring economic benefits nationally, regionally and locally especially if the proceeds are shared fairly with local Turkana Community. This in turn will reduce poverty, insecurity cases, unemployment and improve infrastructure in Turkana County (E.M. Johannes et al, 2015). There are also prevailing challenges and grey areas regarding the custody of community land which is a critical component of natural resource management, revenue allocation and distribution. An informant for instance observes that:

With all these merging changes, the devolved system of government has left lope holes in the management of land for instance, since the county land board is in charge of public land, who shall then be in charge of community and private land in Turkana? Who should be allocated land in Turkana-Is it the community, homesteads heads, or individuals?

### **Voice & accountability (Stakeholders Participation and Consultations)**

In order to avoid conflicts that may arise from misapprehension or discontented stakeholders, there is need for the oil exploration companies and national government to develop a forum whereby information is publically passed to all stakeholders including indigenous communities. They need for the indigenous and all stakeholders to get involved or be informed of the activities and operations. The government of Kenya needs to encourage the spirit of participation through involvement of the local communities especially on the benefits and challenges brought by oil exploration and ultimately extractions to avoid future conflicts.

A multi-stakeholder- dialogue and engagements should be encouraged to reduce tensions and conflicts. This study identifies four potential areas of tensions and conflicts that is tension between: (1) national and county governments; (2) members of parliament and county assemblies; (3) various private companies including subcontractors and oil firms; and (4) Indigenous population and other communities. An informant observed that these tensions are partly built around the following issues:

*Currently no compensation has been provided for, while many individuals have already lost their land to areas demarcated for oil mining. Only some fees has been provided to the county government and possibly national government and to some extent some prospectus who had illegally acquired the land titles and are already trading the land with oil companies. This occurs because of the secrecy involved in decision making process on oil mining.*

## **4. Implications for Practice**

Among other critical challenges experienced in natural resource management in Northwest Kenya; the question whether local communities will adequately benefit from oil revenues and whether these benefits will be challenged into developing other



economic and social sectors of the county remains largely unanswered. An informant for instance observes that:

*Currently, the oil resource sharing formula provides that the following parties will get the following shares of oil revenue: 75% National; 20% County and 5% Communities where oil exploration is done. The contentious issues around this formula are that the oil companies claim 60% of the total oil revenue. Does the national government, County and Communities share the remaining 40% at the ration of 75%, 20% and 5% or what is the rationale? Second, the oil revenue bill seems to propose that the sharing shall be at an equity basis. This means that at the moment there is no guarantee of 20% and 5% as constitutionally stipulated. Therefore, we will wait to see what will happen in the long run.*

This study recommends the following mechanism in order to improve local governance, realize sustainable management of natural resources, and reduce inequalities. The goal of the study shows that while oil resources represent the economic activity with the highest sources of income; oil resources is not a substitute for other economic activities such as livestock keeping and farming. Good governance mechanisms should therefore regulate the oil industry in ways that it contributes sustainable to the other sectors namely: rural livelihoods (agriculture and livestock keeping); urbanization (growth in business and enterprise sector); environment; and welfare (inequality reduction, education, health). To do so the following mechanisms have to be put into place.

1. Increase local voice and accountability in policy and corporate decision making.
2. Monitor and control conflict/violence
3. Ensure County government effectiveness in public service delivery
4. Improve County government regulatory quality
5. Enforce the rule of law
6. Control of corruption
7. Increase transparency in policy and corporate decision making.
8. Increase community representation in all areas of decision making
9. Restructure county government and local budgeting to reflect the diverse emerging demands of the local people.
10. Utilization of development assistance to address critical areas of development.

## **6. Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore factors that need to be addressed in order to design strategies for mitigating natural resource related conflict and improve local governance. The study explores the following questions: (1) What factors are likely to contribute to natural resource related conflict in Northwest Kenya? (2) How do these factors impact the society? (3) What strategies can be used to mitigate natural resource related conflict and improve local governance in Northwest Kenya? Studies show that

before oil discovery, the Turkana community undertook the following economic activities: (1) Nomadic Pastoralism; (2) subsistence farming; (3) little trade – cattle/shoats selling; and (4) charcoal burning. The announcement of oil discovery in March, 2012 in Kenya led to lots of speculations, theories, ideas and revelations especially on what Kenya will be in the near future. This sets a base for the discourse on community participation in natural resource management. For Kenya, this is the first time experience coming at a time when the nation did not have a consistent and comprehensive agricultural, environmental, and mining policy. A multi-stakeholder-dialogue and engagements should be encouraged to reduce tensions and conflicts. This study identifies four potential areas of tensions and conflicts that is tension between: (1) national and county governments; (2) members of parliament and county assemblies; (3) various private companies including subcontractors and oil firms; and (4) Indigenous population and other communities. Apart from the corporate strategy to conflict resolution; this study suggests that while oil resources represent the economic activity with the highest sources of income; oil resources is not a substitute for other economic activities such as livestock keeping and farming. Good governance mechanisms should therefore regulate the oil industry in ways that it contributes sustainably to the other sectors namely: rural livelihoods (agriculture and livestock keeping); urbanization (growth in business and enterprise sector); environment; and welfare (inequality reduction, education, health).

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# DIGITAL COMMUNITY STORYTELLING AS A SOCIOPOLITICAL CRITICAL DEVICE

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**Abstract:** *This article analyses 40 community digital stories drawing upon the principles of corpus-based critical discourse studies (Baker et al., 2008). The stories are analysed with the intention of testing if they may be classified as examples of socio-political digital stories. Socio-political digital stories are described here as a tool that individuals may use in order to bring forward issues that may concern and affect democracy (Couldry, 2008), social welfare and social stability; and may serve to ease the communication, interaction and exchange of information about conflictive social practices. The stories analysed can be considered timid examples of what socio-political individual digital storytelling might do for society, thus helping, at least potentially, to democratise the exchange of ideas between the members of our society.*

*Keywords: digital storytelling, socio-political, Corpus Assisted Discourse Analysis, appraisal.*

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## 1. Introduction

Narratives are self-reflection processes which serve to interrogate the social and cultural (Riessman, 2008). According to Bamberg (1997, p. 90) stories can be interpreted as an example of an individual experience or as a means to frame and situate the self and others in common/uncommon social practices. This may bring forward aspects that are used to explore the social meaning of one particular activity. With the advent of the Internet as the main channel of communication and information, storytelling is going through considerable changes and thus giving birth to new modes of telling a story, one such new mode is digital storytelling.

Digital storytelling has now been present on the World Wide Web since the 1990s when the Center for Digital Storytelling— an international, non-profit, training, project

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development, and research organisation dedicated to assisting people in using digital media to tell meaningful stories from their lives— started to use digital stories with the “focus on building partnerships with community, educational, and business institutions to develop large-scale initiatives in health, social services, education, historic and cultural preservation, community development, human rights, and environmental justice arenas, using methods and principles adapted from their original Digital Storytelling Workshop.”

Since then, its presence in many different fields such as education, marketing, and social services (Dunford and Rooke 2014) has been increasing lately (cf. Alcantud-Díaz et al. 2014; Gregori-Signes, 2014; Nguyen and Robin, 2014) and is now reaching its peak, especially in education where digital storytelling is used at all levels— from primary to secondary school and at university level (cf. Jamissen and Holte Haug, 2014; Ramírez-Loyola, 2014; Yukse et al., 2014; Londoño Monroy, 2012; Ramírez-Verdugo and Sotomayor-Sáez, 2012; Reyes et al, 2012) – with impressive final results and classified by some authors as one of the most rewarding and motivating new tasks included in their syllabi (Brígido-Corachán, 2009; Gregori-Signes 2014; Lee, 2014). In turn, numerous websites (cf. McWilliam, 2009) report on the success of digital storytelling as a personal/individual mode of communication in which one chooses to relay on a more personal experience (Herreros Navarro, 2012; Rodríguez-Illera, 2014) which may help, in one way or another, to bring to life to unheard voices and memories (Dunford and Rooke, 2014).

Despite the variety of digital storytelling forms, their growth and expansion in the world (Brígido-Corachán and Gregori-Signes, 2014), their different contexts and many different purposes, still, as argued by Hartley and McWilliam (2009, p. 5), “there has been little of substance to analyse and situate digital storytelling in the context of new media studies” and analyse their content. It is in this respect that the present article seeks to make a contribution. The present article analyses community stories with the intention of testing whether they can be classified as examples of socio-political digital stories. That is, a critical tool that individuals may use in order to bring forward issues that may concern and affect democracy (Couldry, 2008), social welfare and social stability.

For the description of the genre socio-political digital storytelling, we draw upon the principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA) – this being understood as an approach rather than a method (van Dijk, 2001; Baker et al., 2008) – and on the principles of sociopragmatics (Leech, 1983, p. 10). Since, we believe in the importance not only of studying communication within its sociocultural context, but also in the need to find out the different sociopragmatic rules that may apply when denouncing situations which affect or may have affected someone’s life. Moreover, a pragmatic dimension is present when describing the relationship held between story-author-audience and context since this relationship has been significantly altered by digital storytelling in general. Consequently, in this paper the critical sociological dimension prevails amongst others in as much as we consider the sociological interface of pragmatics as essential for understanding socio-political digital storytelling. This involves the study of the communication of speakers’ and hearers’ beliefs, built on relevant social and cultural values expressed.

The present study is exploratory. It analysed a sample of 40 *Community Stories about people* downloaded from the website of the Australian Centre of Moving Image. The study hoped to shed some light on the role of community digital stories understood as a “broad social phenomenon” which may have social consequences and “democratic potential” (Couldry, 2008, p. 41). We are aware of the fact that digital storytelling is a genre in which the process of production, concrete instructions and the style of the workshops may have an influence on the stories. However, as an external audience we only had access to the product and not to the process itself. Therefore, in judging these stories, we are outsiders who adopt a critical perspective in trying to find out what the stories gathered under the umbrella of community stories may share. We assume however, that, ultimately, it comes down to the individual to consider the content of such stories as critical.

The empirical study follows the principles of corpus assisted discourse studies outlined by Baker et al. (2008), thus combining qualitative with quantitative analysis and both computerised and ‘manual’ linguistic analysis for the analysis of the data. This combination will hopefully provide a more comprehensive view of the digital stories analysed here and, by extension, of the genre itself. Due to space limitations, the study focuses on the verbal rather than on the multimodal elements of the stories, although these are commented upon, if they are necessary to interpret the text of the stories themselves.

In view of the exposed above, this article is organised as follows. First, we present a brief overview of the genre digital storytelling. Secondly, we provide a working definition of socio-political storytelling, the main focus of this article. Thirdly, we present the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of 40 digital community stories adopting a Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) approach as described by Baker et al. (2008), thus combining different methods traditionally associated with corpus linguistics (CL) with others associated to critical discourse analysis (CDA). The two final sections correspond to the results, discussion and conclusion derived from the analysis.

## **2. Digital storytelling vs. More traditional means of narrative**

Digital storytelling (DS) is a versatile and flexible mode of communication, due, among other factors, to the simplicity of the software used to create it. In designing the story, the author personally selects the elements that will grow to be part of the narrative (old photographs, videos, graphics, animations and other multimedia elements that they may feel adapt to their message). The story can be generated by using basic tools/technology and one’s own voice. The final product can be instantly made available by publishing it on the World Wide Web.

Consequently, one of the main differences between traditional storytelling in the mass media and digital storytelling lies in the medium itself and the possibilities that its digital aesthetics offers, compared to other media. Handler-Miller (2004) affirms that while traditional personal oral stories are told via a single medium such as the spoken word,

or the printed page, digital storytelling encourages the use of a number of different media, all tied together, to serve the core story.

Digital storytelling allows a great variety of discursive practices, among those, the possibility of using storytelling with a critical spirit that aims toward transmitting political and social commitments, denouncing individual as well as group actions against a particular group, community or person. In this article, critical is used in a broad sense as argued by Krings et al. (1973, p. 808), denoting “the practical linking of ‘social and political engagement’ with ‘a sociologically informed construction of society’ (cited in Wodak and Meyer, 200, p. 2).

### 3. Towards a definition of socio-political digital storytelling

It has been long accepted, that as argued by Chandler (1999) “texts often exhibit the conventions of more than one genre and that “the same text can belong to different genres in different countries or times”. In this regard, socio-political DS is by no means a unique genre but shares characteristics with other kinds of narratives, and other types of digital stories. The model of personal DS promoted by the *Center for Digital Storytelling* which started in 1997 lists seven elements that have been accounted as common to all digital stories (cf. Lambert, 2010): a personal point of view, a dramatic question, emotional content, the gist of the author’s voice, the power of soundtrack, economy, and pacing. Prominent in the genre is the presence of the narrator’s voice (cf. Barret, 2006) since it is key to understanding their personal dimension. A personal digital story is a user-led media product created by ordinary people who include personal information, or at least their point of view, on a particular topic by mixing words with multimedia effects; all within a two to five-minute product. This allows an instant availability of personal socio-political statements unmonitored or censored by publishers, editors, company owners and governmental sources, amongst others. These characteristics differentiate personal digital stories from other genres. Socio-political storytelling is one of the many possible varieties of the genre itself. Following Swales (1990), this section provides a working definition of socio-political digital storytelling which may be used to create an initial characterisation of this genre for others to be able to use, modify or reject as they see fit (cf. Swales, 1990, p. 45). Thus, a socio-political digital story may be defined as:

- a) One that fits the generic conventions of a digital story, in which features from the most traditional expressions of written and spoken discourse combine with any available multimedia effect (sound, music, images, videos etc.). The final product is a digital movie told within 2-5 minutes, narrated by the same author/s.
- b) One that includes a critical point of view on their participation in a potentially conflictive social action or a social practice.
- c) One that may denounce injustice, abuse of power, domination and social inequality.



The above definition situates socio-political digital storytelling in a general theory of social structure, i.e., “a means to frame and situate the self and others in common or uncommon social practices that will bring forward aspects which may be used to explore the socio-political meaning of a particular theme” (Bamberg, 1997, p. 90) or issue which, in turn, may have affected the lives of the individuals who tell their story; and which may, somehow, influence social welfare. The underlying intention of using socio-political digital stories for that purpose is to inform the public and raise awareness on controversial issues and ultimately promote changes in society for the better.

#### 4. Data Description

The selection of stories analysed in this article were at the time of access (2011) gathered under *Community Stories about people* on the website of the Australian Centre of Moving Image. 40 community stories were randomly selected for the analysis, following primarily availability criteria. As described on the web site, these stories were completed during one workshop programme organised for people who belonged to the same community. Today, some of those stories have been moved to a website named *CultureVictoria* and thematically classified (sportlife, immigration, historical themes, immigration). This did not exist when the present research started.

The data collection process and analysis follows the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis and Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) where “data collection is a not a phase that must be finished before analysis starts but might be a permanently ongoing procedure” (Meyer, 2001, p. 18); thus the analysis is informed not only by the 40 stories analysed in detail but by a larger reference corpus which includes digital stories from *MAP Engaging men as partners*, *Sonke gender justice network*, *Queensland Digital Library and Engender Health Project*, among others.

#### 5. Analytical frameworks

The hypotheses operating in the analysis can be stated as follows: a) whilst it is probable that each story displays its own idiosyncrasies, the result of the quantitative analysis should shed some light on the genre itself and its characteristics; and on the other hand, b) it may also inform on which social issues are of interest to the members of certain communities, and by extension, to society in general. Even though the participants may not all fit the same pattern regarding age, time, and motivation to write the story and may not coincide in their physical, intellectual, linguistic, social, cultural and emotional development. The claim sustained here is that once instructed in the genre itself and immersed in the process the participants may produce stories that will somehow express the social representations (van Dijk, 2001, p.113), the knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values which are the product of the social order which they abide. If that were the case, these stories could be considered as examples of the same genre, in this case examples of socio-political storytelling.

The methodological approach is based on the principles established by Corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) (Baker et al., 2008) and critical discourse analysis (CDA).

CADS integrates methodologies traditionally associated with corpus linguistics (CL) and CDA. Consequently, the study of discourse will always be critical when interpreting the results obtained from using methodologies developed within corpus linguistics, since it involves compiling specialised corpora, analysing word-clusters frequency lists, comparative keyword lists and concordances, among others.

Accordingly, the study of community stories in this paper combines quantitative research (e.g. wordlists and concordance obtained from the 40 stories) with qualitative research, always bearing in mind a critical perspective. The analysis of the corpus will sometimes consider texts as individual items while others as one unique item, both are necessary and complementary in order to compare how similar topics are approached by individuals, and by all the stories, as examples of socio-political stories. Finally, due to the multimodal nature of the corpus itself; the analysis, although centred in the verbal elements of the story, takes into account the multimodal content of the stories only when is necessary to clarify the interpretation of the verbal component.

### 5.1. *Lexical choices*

White (2001) describes appraisal theory as the approach which analyses the way language is used to evaluate, to construct textual personas and to manage interpersonal positionings and relationships. Appraisal explores how attitudes, judgements and emotive responses are explicitly presented in texts and how they may be more indirectly implied, presupposed or assumed. Eggins and Slade (1997) propose to look at the different lexical items (adjectives, nouns, verbs and adverbs), identify those that indicate appraisal and classify each appraising item according to four semantic categories of appreciation, emotion, judgment and amplification. In turn, White (2001) proposes the category of *attitudinal positioning*, which expresses a positive or negative assessment of people, places, things, happenings and states of affairs through the use of nouns (... is a masterpiece), adjectives (high and good profit vs. greedy), verbs (“I would adore her as a friend”) and adverbs (“perfectly judged”) which are associated with either. The approach here takes ideas from both works in order to analyse evaluation in the corpus, since a key factor in a critical analysis of the digital stories is whether authors value their experience or the content of the story as a positive or negative experience.

As argued by White (2001) there are various ways to convey a positive or a negative attitude: “the most straightforward cases involve the use of individual words or phrases which overtly indicate the attitudinal position being taken by the writer or speaker”. In order to find out whether that was the case in the corpus selected, each of the 428 different items that resulted – after eliminating the non-function words from the 15.428- were manually and contextually classified as belonging to different parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives etc.). A manual check of the context in which the words appear was necessary in order to avoid confusions with certain items, e.g., *like*, as a discourse marker, preposition or as a verb. In some cases, only by looking at the context and the co-text could we find the real meaning and value (positive or negative of the word). The results comment in detail on the first ten to fifteen instances of the most frequent items in order to find out possible coincidences between the 40 stories.

Quantitative results were proved to be insufficient, since, as White (2001) comments, attitudinal position can also be conveyed by the interaction of multiple elements in the utterance, thus the meaning is not inferred by individual words but through word combinations (White 2001, p. 2; Stage 1 attitude). White (2001) describes this fact as an example of 'implicit' or 'evoked' attitude, which stands in contrast to 'explicit' or 'inscribed' attitude." White (2001, p. 3) concludes that attitudinal meanings are better seen as "carried by utterances, by complete propositions rather than individual lexical items." Consequently, he suggests the (contextualised) proposition/s as the unit of analysis. Thus, I propose an analysis of the topics and subtopics of each story as a way to complete the quantitative analysis of individual words.

### ***5.2. Topic analysis***

In his proposal of a theoretical framework to carry out multidisciplinary CDA, van Dijk (2001, p.100ff) lists as his two first analytical choices topics or semantic macrostructures and local meanings. As for semantic macrostructures, he argues that "for discursive, cognitive and social reasons, the topics of discourse [...] represent what a discourse "is about" globally speaking (cf. van Dijk, 1976 p. 57):

The analysis involved looking at the macrostructure of each story individually (see the results section below) and then elaborating a wordlist first, using Antconc, and analysing the results of tagging the corpora using the UCREL CLAWS7 to see if there were any significant patterns or coincidences in the topics dealt with. As stated by Pérez de Ayala (1996, p.174) apart from one main discourse topic, which covers the whole passage within it, one may find "more Local Topics, or Sub-topics, which are related to the Discourse Topic" (1996, p. 174). This notion of multi-topicality will be taken into account when analysing the data.

### ***5.3. Critical dimension***

Crucial to the concept of socio-political stories is the inclusion of criticism in the story itself. This may be expressed either through an implicit or explicit evaluation of the topics under discussion, thus adopting a sociopragmatic approach to criticism, since it implies the study of the many forms of indirect meaning which can be inferred from the text (implicatures) related to "underlying beliefs, [that] are not openly, directly, completely or precisely asserted" van Dijk (2001, p. 104) in the story (cf. Grice, 1975; Carlston, 2004)

## **6. Results**

The analysis of the topics and macrostructures of the 40 selected digital stories is summarised in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1.** Example of the analysis of topics/ macrostructures

<p><b>Story 1. Australia: Per Forza e Per Amore</b></p> <p>M1. Forced to emigrate to Australia</p> <p>M2. Painful separation from their family</p> <p>M3. Bad experiences on the way to Australia</p> <p>M4. Working to improve the situation of immigrants</p> <p>M5. Politics made him suffer: not allowing to visit his family</p> <p>M6. Suffering but doing the right thing</p> <p>M7. Getting a citizenship</p> <p>M8. Occupying a post in politics. Defending a multicultural society</p> <p>M9. Making a place for himself in the history of the country: Australia</p> <p>M10. Migrating to Australia- he didn't want to</p> <p>M11. Working to improve the situation of immigrants / society</p> <p>M12. Not forgetting his origins</p>	<p><b>Story 2. Dad I made it!</b></p> <p>M1. Immigrant. Leaving his country</p> <p>M2. Forced to leave his country</p> <p>M3. Parents (father) wish to leave their home.</p> <p>M4. Immigrant goes to university: family happy</p> <p>M5. Father dies</p> <p>M6. When they arrive in Australia. Poor.</p> <p>M7. People in Australia welcome them</p> <p>M8. First years in Australia. Homesick</p> <p>M9. They find a job</p> <p>M10. She studies and becomes a teacher</p> <p>M11. The family is still together</p>
<p><b>Story 3. Feeling the felt</b></p> <p>M1. This story is about women</p> <p>M2. Her life</p> <p>M3. Mother dies</p> <p>M4. Lila becomes her grandmother's favourite confident</p> <p>M5. A secret; her uncle is her brother</p> <p>M6. Her mother had been raped</p> <p>M7. Women who keep silent</p>	<p><b>Story 4. Jidi</b></p> <p>M1. Grandfather: Lung cancer</p> <p>M2. Finding out about their grandfather's life</p> <p>M3. Immigrant from Lebanon</p> <p>M4. Leaving his country. What was it like?</p> <p>M5. Losing memories about his country</p> <p>M6. Not forgetting their origins</p>

As the main premise for the analysis, we agree with van Dijk (1976, p. 61) in that a sentence may have a topical phrase which summarises the previous passage/sentences or of the story as a whole. As observed in the wordlist obtained from the 40 stories, the topics of the stories show a clear tendency of the narrators to focus on personal matters, since the majority of stories seem to focus on family members, friends or acquaintances. However, it is the implicit content of the stories what turns them into a criticism to social welfare and socio-political issues. Thus, for example, Story 1 and 2 both evaluate immigration as a somehow traumatic negative experience that will always be with them (separating from the rest of their family, finding a job, and coming to terms with their new life and their new identity). A parallelism can be established with those stories that are about illnesses or traumatic experiences (Story 4), since they also imply having to readapt to their new social status and new identity in a society that more often than not does not welcome illness.

Let us first discuss the quantitative results obtained from a wordlist elaborated using Wordsmith 6.0. This is the list of the most common 25 words.

**Table 1.** Frequency wordlist of the 40 digital stories

Word	Freq.	%
I	511	3.25
MY	316	2.01
IT	170	1.08
WE	167	1.06
HE	162	1.03
IS	108	0.69
ME	105	0.67
YOU	96	0.61
THEY	94	0.60
HIS	89	0.57
SHE	79	0.50
HER	73	0.46
OUR	67	0.43
LIFE	63	0.40
FAMILY	60	0.38
ALL	56	0.36
THEIR	52	0.33
TIME	45	0.29
YEARS	44	0.28
STORY	42	0.27
YOUR	42	0.27
THERE	40	0.25

The result in table 1 above indicates that individuals focus on themselves, their relatives or people close to them to start with. Afterwards, however, many stories relate those personal experiences with certain historical moments, facts, or even with the exact dates in which a social event influenced his/her life. A common denominator to all of them is that authors always provide an implicit or explicit evaluation of that social event, as illustrated in example 1 below in which he tells us how he stopped being an alien and became part of his new country, Australia.

Example 1.

It wasn't until 1973 after the elections of the White labour government that I was granted citizenship at the big ceremony at the corporate tenners hall. Nearly 70 I was one of the founders of FILEF, The Italian federation for Italian migrants and their families in Australia and the first president of community camps Victoria. (*Australia per forza*)

No doubt, stories are triggered by individual and personal experiences and this shows in the prevalence of personal pronouns and words which describe their personal environment "life, family, time and story." These results do confirm in fact, one of the characteristics of the genre itself: digital stories are always an example of the personal

point of view of the narrator of the story (Centre for Digital Storytelling 1997). They are the result of personal expression (*I, me, my, you they, she*).

A keyword analysis using the lists obtained using the British National Corpus, The Brown Corpus and the AM06 and Be06 the Brown<sup>1</sup> as reference corpora. Table 2 illustrates that they are, since the same words stood out as characteristic of the corpus analysed here.

**Table 2.** Keyword analysis

<b>AM06</b>	<b>BNC</b>	<b>BR06</b>	<b>BROWN</b>
my	my	my	my
i	i	i	i
australia	australia	australia	australia
	me	we	we
we	family	family	me
family	story		family
me	we	story	story
mum		me	melbourne
story	melbourne	melbourne	mum
melbourne	life	life	dad
life	stories	stories	
gareth	dad		life
	our		
		our	stories
		nursing	
		dad	

Undoubtedly, some of the titles themselves, anticipated these results, since 57.5% of those included references to human entities (e.g., *A Writers legacy, An Immigrant Filmmaker*, see appendix). The protagonists are introduced either by name or making reference to their profession, and the proliferation of pronouns (*his, her, our, their, your*) indicates that they are all relatives or people they feel or felt close to for positive or negative reasons.

<sup>1</sup> The Brown University Standard Corpus of Present-Day American English (or just Brown Corpus) was compiled in the 1960s by Henry Kucera and W. Nelson Francis at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island as a general corpus (text collection) in the field of corpus linguistics. It contains 500 samples of English-language text, totalling roughly one million words, compiled from works published in the United States in 1961.

The BE06 Corpus is a one million word corpus of published general written British English. It has the same sampling frame as the LOB and FLOB corpora. This consists of 500 files of 2000 word samples taken from 15 genres of writing. The AmE06 Corpus is a one million word corpus of published general written American English, also using the same sampling frame as the LOB and FLOB corpora. This consists of 500 files of 2000 word samples taken from 15 genres of writing. The vast majority of the texts were published in 2006. The corpus is also available via CQPweb, and the wordlist is available below.

The syntactic structures in the titles are mostly noun phrases and verbless structures, with the exception of 20% (8 stories) which include a verb form (curiously 5 of them appear in the therapeutic stories of recovery from people who were diagnosed with illnesses that changed their life forever). Example 2 below shows an extract of one of them.

#### Example 2

After helping so many people, it was frustrating for Margaret to find herself in such a helpless situation. [...] permanently attached to an oxygen concentrator. With the aid of her laptop, she continued to participate in nursing and health teleconferences. (*Margaret Living with LAM*)

Some of the stories are about difficult situations, sometimes illnesses, which change and in fact destroy their lives forever and most of them relate how the authors have come to terms with it (although some may implicitly denounce the lack of social support and their loneliness) and that they have a more positive attitude towards the whole situation now (*I have stability now, a place to be still*). Example 3, illustrates this fact.

#### Example 3

To most people Melbourne is a place of business, of busyness, but for me Melbourne is the first place I have found stillness in my life. A place to rest my head, a place of my own. [...]. Soon I will be able to handle someone being dependant on me. Lasting friendships are possible; I have stability now a place to be still. (*Running to a stand still*)

The rest of the stories include inanimate objects such as possessions (*My car, my place*) or places (*Australia, the airport*) or anticipate the genre itself (*Camping legends, bushfire stories*). Other stories are given titles which are more explicitly social but still their content revolves around individuals and their personal experiences and how they were affected by a particular social even or situation (e.g. *New life new country, Running to a stand still, Australila per forza e per amore*).

Quantitative analysis, however, needs to be complemented with qualitative analysis and a multimodal awareness of the elements that accompany the stories if we want to find out what is behind the literal meaning of texts (Dascal, 1987; Gibbs, 1989). As Lambert (2010) himself anticipates, very often the story is not about the object, not even about the place itself but about how the narrator felt about the events/s and how these affected the author. In some of them the socio-political references are more explicit than others, as in example 4 below.

#### Example 4

We escaped communist Hungary for Vienna, leaving behind my mother and two sisters. For me, to be able to be to represent him and also our family, to see like my sister is in Hungary and I sent it to her, she it was an experience for her to see all this. It was erm, it was such a good feeling I could do it for not only our family, but perhaps for the history of our land. (Agnes Karlik. *The Story of an Immigrant Filmmaker*)

Example 4 is part of a story by Agnes Karlik in which she tells us about her experience when they left the country and more importantly how proud she feels of having survived the experience. So much that she considers herself an example not only for her family but for her country.

The analysis of the lexical choices can give us more information about the attitude and feelings of the authors towards a situation that affected them. To this aim, each word was classified according to the eight parts of speech (noun, pronoun, adjective, determiner, verb, adverb, conjunction, preposition, and the interjection). The table below presents the ten most frequent words for adjective, lexical verb and adverbs, since nouns and pronouns as we have seen in the wordlist in table 1, usually refer to the topic or character/s that appear in the story itself.

**Table 3.** Wordlist of Adjectives in the corpus

Adjectives	
NEW	31
YOUNG	21
OLD	21
HAPPY	20
LITTLE	19
GREAT	16
BIG	15
LONG	13
PROUD	12
HARD	12
GOOD	12
NEXT	11

Quantitatively speaking, there seems to be a predominance of positive adjectives (*happy, proud, good, little, great*). However, the classification of most of the examples should be checked within the context (White 2001) and the co-text in which the adjective occurs, since the adjective may adopt positive or negative connotations in relation to the whole story.



The adjective *new* (31) is the most frequent because most authors chose new experiences as the topic for their story (e.g., from *Elderly Woman*. “... so Melbourne became our new home. I was lucky that I had so much support and help”). Nevertheless, one cannot be sure of the connotations of *new* until we look at the context. In the case of a new home, in many stories the connotations would be negative since “a new home” meant emigrating to a new country and leaving behind valuable things (e.g., “We were excited because we were going to a new country. We were sad because we were leaving our loved ones”). In *Australia per Forza*, for example, *new* seems to pick some of the negativeness of the word *censorship* and perpetuate it: “Because I was involved in politics the conservative government of the day refused me new censorship and re-entry visa”.

The next two most common adjectives also reflect a common characteristic of the stories: most of them focus on a certain period of their life “old (21) vs. young (21).” The same can be said of *little* (19), which in most of the cases is used as a diminutive, indicating something pleasant rather than small in size (“...it’s brought us all a little closer together and it was a hell of a lot of fun too I think which is really important”). The adjectives *proud* (12) and *hard* (12) are also somehow complementary in relation to the whole corpus. The stories are about something that may have been hard at a certain point but also makes them feel proud the fact that they have overcome it. That is why they introduce adjectives such as *big* (15), *great* (16) and *long* (13) to describe their feelings. Although it may have been *long* and *hard*, they are *happy* (20) now and they feel *great* (16) about their experience and the way they handled it.

As for the adverbs, *never* (33 examples) *now* (26) *always* (23) *down* (22) *here* (17) the three first adverbs of frequency and the two last ones of place. However, they also need a contextualised description. *Never*, for example, can be used to indicate a wish or a fact that never took place (e.g., *The Black Nun*. They never mentioned their names, never said who they were); but these facts may be negative if, as in the example, they indicate a lack of something basic: to know about the name and origins of those you share your life with. *Never* is also used with statements indicating a decision taken (...to the Atherton gardens one Wednesday afternoon and never looked back. *Running to a stand still*) or serves the purpose of reinforcing a wish (The road of your past will never be travelled again. From now on, you must plan a new direction. A new adventure awaits. *The Navigator*).

Finally, regarding verbs the most common are *go* (66), *move* (26), *come* (34) since most stories are about travelling or involve someone moving from one place to another, often for *work* (36) reasons. It was necessary to check the context in which they occurred so as to differentiate, for example, between the use of *go* as a lexical verb and as a future auxiliary form “going to”. *Love* is the next most common lexical verb. This result also reflects a common characteristic about digital storytelling: it is often the love we feel for others what makes us do things, acting as a prompter to tell stories.

## 7. Discussion

The question that remains now is whether these type of stories can really be considered as examples of socio-political digital stories, as defined above. To answer this question,

we should go back to the way in which stories were selected and to the results of the analysis.

The 40 stories were chosen at random, without knowing about their content, and with the intention of exploring if it was likely that people from the same community would choose to denounce or be critical about an aspect of their life or of society in general. It is certainly true that workshops following the model initiated by the Center for Digital Storytelling favour outcomes such as the one described here, in which participants are encouraged to reveal and make an almost therapeutic use of digital stories. Almost consistently, to start with most stories tell us about extreme circumstances (having to emigrate and leave everything behind), or no-choice and often painful situations. However, in the end, all the stories- without exception- show that they conform and that somehow they feel proud of being able to cope one way or another with their “new” situation (those who are ill have found a way to deal with their illness, those who emigrated are now happy in Australia, so judging from a sociological perspective, the stories give a positive vision of Australia. Australia gave most of them good opportunities that they would not have had otherwise: mainly studies and work opportunities).

The stories, no doubt, make explicit and/or implicit reference to social situations, and factors that have affected the storyteller: *Australia: per forza per amore*, explicitly outlines how the choice of a political career had negative consequences for the narrator, although the situation was solved and he finally reached a good position in politics. *Feeling the felt*, for example, is about rape and women’s silence and suffering as a result of social conventions. *The Black Nan* denounces how “the missionaries of Christianity destroyed our language and culture and identity” and *Sins of the father* condemns the negative consequences of taking active part in a war. Along the same lines, implicit and explicit evaluations are combined in *The Story of an Immigrant Filmmaker* (see example 4 above). Even those that describe illnesses felt obliged to leave their job, and start a new life- some of them died in the process.

A counter argument to their classification as socio-political stories may be the fact that the individual stories may contain too weak a form of criticism to be considered as examples of socio-political stories, since the criticism is not that explicit and not that strong either. One of the weakest points of the stories that may cause this impression is related to the use of multimodal elements, what we refer to as de-synchronisation between text and images, i.e., an imbalance between the text and the other multimodal elements, which are sometimes perceived as irrelevant or mere fillers accompanying the story while the audience listens to the spoken words (cf. Gregori-Signes, 2014). This de-synchronisation is the result of several factors. For example, in digital stories which try to reconstruct an event in the past coincide the author often lacks the pictures corresponding to those events in particular. If, for example, the story is about someone’s grandfather and how he fought in the war, the author probably includes some pictures of his grandfather (e.g. a close up, a picture with the whole family) but nothing that situates him in the scenario in which the war took place. Thus, the final digital story includes images and even sound that is mostly irrelevant for the story itself (cf. Gregori-Signes, 2014) except for the fact that the pictures are of the person/s or

places described or representative of the political situation at the time. Some authors try to compensate this by including pictures from the internet (e.g., pictures of those events or places in a different period of time, or other types of pictures which are abstract representations of the ideas s/he wants to transmit).

The results indicate that the stories do share a critical perspective on the situation described, which affected their lives (e.g., Nazis, the war). The criticism, however, is mild and not strong enough in most cases and that more explicit information and stronger claims would be necessary in order for them to be considered as an example of strong socio-political criticism.

## 8. Conclusions

This article has tried to provide and justify the existence of the genre socio-political digital storytelling. I have first provided a working definition which can be summarised as follows: socio-political storytelling exists as an emerging genre devoted to denounce social injustice with the intention of promoting changes for the better.

By applying a CADS approach to the analysis of the data, we have proved that the stories share common topics and even common views on how different events affected their life. Most of these events are rooted in social history and have affected directly or indirectly the author's life, thus justifying their classification as examples of socio-political digital stories. The perspective can be in the past, present or future and may be the result of scientific research, a historical perspective or a mere transmission of personal experiences. However, they all have in common that they are personal testimonies of those who have in actual fact participated in the social practice either as observers, victims, helpers, organisers, etc. Their stories can help to improve social relations and to promote a better understanding of the problems that other people may be going through.

These stories can therefore, at least potentially, help alter not only the relationship of author-audience when dealing with controversial issues, but also the relationship between the spread of socially critical discourse and society in general; thus helping to democratise the exchange of ideas between the members of our society.

Socio-political digital stories produce socially critical multimodal texts where several issues- whether from an individual, group perspective, or institutionally oriented point of view- reflect and transmit the struggle that there is between certain social practices and the individuals who experience them. This makes socio-political digital storytelling the ideal candidate to become a mediator and ease the communication, interaction and exchange of information about conflictive social practices. Examples such as the ones analysed are timid examples of what socio-political individual digital stories might do for society.

Socio-political stories could provide a new global form of discourse that would transmit unheard voices- since authors usually create theirs bearing in mind a wider audience than with more traditional forms of media, such as the printed word. By using this tool the cultural heritage of different cultures could add an alternative voice for the

development of education and individuals in general; since being critical and providing a universally accessible tool to do so is one of the possible ways to engage in “a sociologically informed construction of society” (Wodak, 2001, p. 2).

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## Appendix: List of stories (from <http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/>)

A Writers legacy; Alzheimer; An Immigrant Filmmaker; Australia per forza; Beautiful boy; Bushfire Stories; Busty; Camping legends; Carmel Storyteller; Dad I made it; Feeling the felt; Gillians's story; Gungarri Woman; Jidi; Life and learning; Margaret and living with LAM; Me do; My car my place; My grandfather the spy; My beautiful schwesters; New life country; Next generation; Passionate pursuits; Running to a stand still; Sins of the father; Space in between; Strong woman; That dreaded phone call; The airport; The Black Nan; The little Frenchman; The Navigator; The shoemaker; The old man; Time delay; To Sevek; Training for the last run; Western Cahnces; Whatever beame of Cahrлие; Yeni Hayat

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# ECONOMICS, ETHNICITY AND AUTONOMY MOVEMENT IN MEGHALAYA: AN ANALYSIS

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**Abstract:** *To the unfamiliar, two major ethnic communities – the Khasi and the Garo, living in Meghalaya appear to be homogenous ones. In reality, however, they are the heterogeneous groups socially, politically and culturally, defined by distinct tribal and clan markers. Each one of them ruled their own kingdoms until they were brought under the British rule in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Consequently, their territories merged with the undivided Assam, and lately, carved out as a full-fledged State of Meghalaya in 1972. Soon after attaining Statehood, tensions cropped up between the indigenous communities and migrants mainly control over economic opportunities. However, these days, the goal post has slowly shifted towards the internal feuds among the indigenous tribes and finally, started ethnicity-based autonomy movements within the State. With this background, the paper attempts to analyse rationale and practicability of autonomy demands asserted by different ethnic groups.*

**Keywords:** *Autonomy, Ethnic Conflict, Economy, the Garo, the Khasi, Meghalaya*

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## Introduction

‘Meghalaya’ meaning the ‘above of clouds’ is one of the sister States of India’s North Eastern Region (NER hereafter),<sup>3</sup> inhabited mainly by the two major ethnic communities (tribes/groups)– the *Khasi* and the *Garo*, besides many other smaller groups. Most of these tribes had ruled their own kingdoms until they were annexed by the British, one after another in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Das, 2007), e.g., the *Khasi* Hills in 1833, the *Jaintia* Hills in 1835 and the *Garo* Hills in 1872–73 (Haokip, 2013). In the post-independence period, as legacy of British indirect administration, these contiguous hills were given a fairly autonomy under the undivided Assam as Autonomous District

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<sup>3</sup> India’s NER consists of seven states– Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Later on, the state of Sikkim joined in the region’s fabric in 2002. At present, including Sikkim, NER consists of eight states.

Councils (ADCs). Within no time, following discontent over the Assamese administration and perceived deprivation of the plain people, these ADCs were carved out as a full-fledged State of Meghalaya in 1972.

Demographically, as per India's population Census 2011, the *Khasis* constitute 45 per cent of the State's population, followed by the *Garos* with 32.5 per cent, and the remaining 22.5 per cent composed of different communities like the *Jaintia*, the *Bengali*, the *Assamese*, the *Nepali/Gurkha* and the *Hindi* speaking population. The State covers a total area of 22,429 sq. km surrounded by Assam in the east and north; and in the west and south by Bangladesh. Of the total, about 37 per cent of area is covered by forest, owned mostly by the community.

To the unfamiliar, communities living in Meghalaya appear to be homogenous ones. In reality, however, they are very much heterogeneous groups socially, politically and culturally, defined by a distinct tribal and clan markers. Though the communities especially the *Khasis* and the *Jaintias* speak quite a similar language, they all speak their own dialects, different from each another; while the *Garos* speak a very different language and follow a custom different from any other communities in the State. Besides the *Khasi* and the *Garo* being the principal languages, English is used as official language. Uncommonly, the tribes of Meghalaya adopt matrilineal system.

During the colonial periods, even after the Statehood in 1972, besides the Bengalis (both Muslim and Hindu) from East Bengal (present Bangladesh), many migrants mainly the Bengalis from Assam, Nepalis (both from Nepal and mainland India) and Hindi speaking communities of mainland India migrated to Meghalaya. Slowly, the major business establishments and job markets came to be dominated by them. This trend was not welcomed by the first generation educated leaders of indigenous communities in Meghalaya. Consequently, the State witnessed three major riots between them (insiders) and migrants (outsiders). With the introduction of the state's protective policies, especially the land holding policy, trade licensing policy, job and educational reservation policy, etc., the very tensions subsided in the 2000s. Nevertheless, the conflict which was perpetuated between the insiders and the outsiders has now slowly shifted towards the internal feud among the indigenous tribes, primarily due to perceived economic deprivation by one another. Different ethnic schisms slowly developed, and the leaders and politicians played a major role in polarising different groups for their personal benefits (Baruah, 1989). In this process, in 2000s, alliance and re-alliance of ethnic communities intensified, caused infighting, and finally led to the movements for greater autonomy. With these backgrounds, using secondary data, historical antecedents and observed facts, the present paper attempts to analyse the processes and trends of ethnic conflicts in the State. Secondly, it analyses how and why has the goal post slowly shifted towards the internal feuds and ethnicity-based autonomy movements within the State? Further, rationale and practicability of the autonomy movements asserted by different ethnic groups within the State have also been discussed.



## Theoretical Background

While conceptualising internal conflict, in the modern parlance, construction of ethnic identities for a specific political purpose has been identified as a primary factor (Fearon and Laitin, 2000). Therefore, in the 1990s, most of the armed conflicts in the world were internal (around 68 per cent), mainly ethnically driven (Savage, 2005). Similarly, according to Weir (2012), ethnic conflict and autonomy movements are driven either by the relationship between economic factors (greed and grievance) or active manipulation of ethnic identities by the leaders for personal gains. Generally, in a geographically defined area where minorities are compactly settled, the creation of a separate State is preferred and territorial autonomy becomes a chief issue of conflict, albeit it is not a solution to the problem (Khorshidi, Fee and Soltani, 2010; Blagojevic, 2004; Cornell, 2002). While, in a multi-ethnic society, leaders of minority ethnic communities want accommodation of their demands in terms of jobs, economy, security, development and so on. When these do not materialise and are turned down by the dominant group(s), insurgency takes root, fuels ethno-nationalism, at the least, demands greater autonomy (Singh, 2011). These ethnicity-based autonomy movements of these smaller communities have become the most powerful bargaining chips to throw at the government when all attempts have failed (Yenning, 2013). However, such demands are less feasible and the state is generally reluctant to accede it. Primarily the state grants territorial autonomy to a minority group which means taking the first step towards eventual secession from the Union (Cornell, 2002).

Yet, according to Johnson (2010), ethnic conflicts are likely to recur in two conditions – (i) a homeland State (or elements within) seeks to “protect” its kin minority on the other side (s) of the boundary and (ii) when state becomes weak which creates several opportunities for violence to erupt. Johnson further elaborated that the terms and conditions used to demarcate separate territories into distinct States might resolve some key problems that bedevil the peace-building process, but unlikely to produce long term peace unless – (i) separate the warring ethnic groups demographically and (ii) maintain a balance of power between the post-war States. In the case of NER, including Meghalaya, according to Weiner (1989), weak modern political institutions and their inability to deal with the local religious pressures, linguistic differences and unequal power and resource-sharing led to ethnic conflicts. While, in the post-independence period, language, not the religion coupled with regional and tribal identity proved to be the most powerful instrument for political recognition as an ethno-national identity (Mohapatra, 2012). While trying to manage these conflicts, state has made considerable efforts, using tactics, ranging from coercive measures to negotiations and political dialogues to economic packages (Lacina, 2009; Inoue, 2005). Unfortunately, none of these measures has been able to address the internal conflict, rather complicated the situation in the region (Motiram and Sarma, 2014; Ravi, 2012; Madhab, 1999).

## Ethnicity and State Formation

In Meghalaya, the ‘*Khasi*’ is used as a generic term and it encompasses five sub-tribes—the *Khasi*, the *Jaintia*, the *Bhoi*, the *Ljngngam* and the *War*. They are mainly found in the four districts of eastern Meghalaya, namely— East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, Ri-

Bhoi and Jaintia Hills districts (Please refer Figure 1). The Jaintias are also known as ‘the *Pnars*’, settled in the eastern part of the State. The sub-tribe of Khasis who occupied the State’s northern lowlands and the foothills are generally called ‘*the Bhoi*’, and those who settled in the southern hill tracts are termed as ‘*the Wars*’, while ‘*the Lyngams*’ inhabit in the north-western part of the State. All the five sub-tribes are believed to have descended from the *Ki-Hynniew-Trep*<sup>1</sup> and are known by the generic name– the *Khasi-Pnars* or simply ‘*Khasi*’ or ‘*Hynniewtrep*’. On the western part of the State, the four Garo hills – East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills, South Garo Hills and North Garo Hills, are predominantly inhabited by the *Garo* groups (Please refer Figure 1). They belong to the *Bodo* family of the Tibeto-Burman race, settled in Garo hills after being ousted from the *Koch* territory of Cooch Behar (presently in West Bengal) (Sangma, 2008). The Garos are also known as the *Achiks* and the land they occupy is termed as the *Achik land* (Census of India, 2011).

During the colonial period under the Government of India 1935, the hill areas of the then undivided Assam were grouped into two– Excluded Areas (EA) and Partially Excluded Areas (PEA). The former (EA) encompasses the *Lushai (Mizo)* Hills (present Mizoram), the *Naga* hills (present Nagaland) and North Cachar Hills (NC Hills), while the latter (PEA) envelops the united *Khasi* and *Jaintia* hills districts with partial exception of Shillong town, which was the capital of Assam at that time, the *Garo* hills and the *Mikir (Karbi)* hills of present Assam (Nongbri, 2014; Prasad, 2004). In terms of administration, the government of Assam had no direct control over the EA, administered by the British Governor (Inoue, 2005; Hussain, 1987). Expenditure incurred in it was also not voted by the provincial legislature as no representative from these hill districts was included. Even, no federal or provincial legislation was extended to these districts automatically (Prasad, 2004). While the PEA were given some representations in the provincial assembly through nominated members and given partial responsibility for their own governance. Nevertheless, the lineage of these categories can be traced back to the Queen’s Proclamation in 1858 on cultural non-interference in general and to the Eastern Bengal Regulations 1873 and subsequent colonial legislations in particular. After the independence, they were given special administrative facilities, by providing each hill district an Autonomous District Council (ADC) with a fairly large autonomy under the Sixth Schedule of Indian Constitution (Hausing, 2014; Hussain, 1987). Consequently, the united Khasi-Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills ADCs came into existence in 1952 (Gassah, 1998 as cited in Kumar, 2008).

Following the assertion of Assamese identity, these tribal leaders felt deprived off their rights and raised voice against the ruling Assamese. Consequently, in the early 1960s, the All Party Hills Leaders’ Conference (APHLC) of the then undivided Assam was formed (Sarma, 2014). The Meghalaya State was created on 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1972, following a concerted effort made by the combined tribal leadership of the *Khasis*, the *Garos* and the *Jaintias* under the flagship of the APHLC party (Upadhyaya, Upadhyaya and Yadav, 2013). The people of North Cachar Hills (Dimasa) and Mikir Hills (Karbi) who were living closely with the *Khasis* and *Garos* decided not to join the new State–

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<sup>1</sup> ‘*Ki-Hynniew-Trep*’ refers to ‘Seven Huts’ or ‘Seven Families’, the first settlers on earth according to their (Khasis) legend.

Meghalaya, albeit an option was given to them (Hussain, 1987; The Assam Tribune, 2013; Gohain, 2014).

## Movement against the Outsiders

As mentioned above, in the pre-statehood period, the Assamese community developed a substantial holding in Shillong (present capital of Meghalaya) which was also the capital of the then British Assam. Bengalis, the first generation migrants from Assam and Bangladesh (mainly the Hindu Bengalis, after communal riots in Bangladesh) got employment opportunities in major government sectors. It was followed by the Hindi speaking people (especially the Biharis and Marwaris) and the Nepalese (both from India and Nepal). They slowly started controlling business establishments (Sharma, 2012; Lamare, 2012), and the steady rise of these non-locals resulted in loss of economic opportunities for the local communities. They continued to dominate business establishments, labour force and other employment opportunities. This trend caused an ever increasing insecurity of future of the educated youths of the indigenous tribes. As a result of which, the State witnessed three ethnic riots between the indigenous groups and the migrants (non-tribal/nonlocal/outsider). The first riot took place in 1979 when the Bengalis were identified as the principal adversaries, followed by the conflict with the Nepalese who were viewed as the new adversaries in 1987 and then the clashes with the Hindi speaking groups (Biharis and Marwaris) in 1992 (Haokip, 2013). Consequently, in the early 1980s, approximately 25,000 to 35,000 Bengalis permanently left Meghalaya. In 1981, there were 119,571 Bengalis living in Meghalaya, estimated at 8.13 per cent of the State's population had reduced to 5.97 per cent in 1991 (Baruah, 2004; Phukan, 2013).

On the other side, in the mining areas, since 1993, Nepalese have been dominating the workforce with around 61 per cent, followed by Bengalis with 35 per cent from Assam and the rest 4 per cent by the Bengalis from the West Bengal. Of course, local labourers do not like this nature of work or mining works (Lamare, 2012). In this process, the natural resources have slowly been transferred to non-locals. Despite the Sixth Schedule which is supposed to prevent non-locals from owning land in mining areas, the major portion of these lands have now been leased out to the outsiders (McDuié-Ra, 2008). The same holds true for the forest resources as well in the State. The nexus between local tribal leaders and the non-tribal exploiters from outside has made the forest resources a capitalistic business undertaking where local people have little or no say (Karlsson, 2004). The community land has been privatised in collusion with the local institutions, *dorbars*. Despite forest being traditionally owned by the community, people are no longer benefiting from it (Kumar, 2008), especially in the Khasi areas, and to quote the lines of McDuié-Ra (2008):

The major change in the Khasi Hills is an increased shift from common land, *ri-raid*, to private land, *ri-kyntbi*, jeopardising access for those who do not own land and increasing the power and influence of those who do. As a result a new class of land owners, many of them from urban areas, are becoming increasingly wealthy and powerful with close links to the *dorbars* (village councils) and district

councils, and a growing class of landless agricultural labourers and urban migrants are living ever more precarious lives.

The situation is not different in the Garo hills and the other parts of the State. In this context, to understand how the local land is transferred to the outsiders, we can quote the words of Karlsson (2004):

If we stay in Garo Hills, the rather typical story of the timber trade is that an outside merchants (from Assam, West Bengal or more distant places) with the help of a local contractor approach a headman (the *Nokma*) or a private landowner, and often for a rather nominal fee manage to secure the right to cut all the trees in a particular area (this could be in terms of a long-term lease agreement). The local timber contractor would then hire local labourers to cut the trees and also arrange with transportations down to the plains, from where the outside merchant takes over.

As a result of which, slowly, a colonial-like relationship developed between the locals and outsiders, in which the natural resources is said to be exploited by the latter, and hardly, a few locals get benefitted from it. This nexus between local elites and outsiders led to officiate the extraction of the resources (Karlsson, 2004). Consequently, to prevent exploitive activities of these outsiders, some local social organisations came up. With the rise of these organisations, especially the students' organisations like the Khasi Students' Union (KSU), led to the commission of many dreadful acts against non-tribal population, e.g., challenged the hitherto ascendancy of the Bengali speaking people who were often branded as *Bangladeshi nationals* of Bangladesh (Upadhyaya, *et al.*, 2013). The trend was more conspicuous in the *Khasi* hills where the *Khasis* took a dominant political position in the newly created State. In 2000, the KSU launched *Ksan rngien* movement. Though it was not a public agitation, an instrument to rejuvenate and awake the Khasi people against the outsiders were initiated (Haokip, 2009). As claimed by the KSU, the State's community-based agrarian economy lost much of its verve as a result of the unchecked privatisation of the community land, while the decline of agrarian resources made it extremely difficult for the members of the tribal population to maintain their livelihoods (Upadhyaya, *et al.*, 2013). In reality, besides numerous issues, like education, employment and cultural protection, the basic myopic protectionist vision caused panic for the outsiders in the State (Sirnate, 2009). However, in 2000s, the goal post slowly shifted towards the internal feuds among the indigenous tribes. Concerned with the land issue, state government set up a committee in August 2009 under the chairmanship of Deputy Chief Minister to assess and suggest ways to regulate any further alienation of indigenous land. Altogether eight civil society organisations, including the KSU and the Federation of Khasi Jaintia Garo People (FKJGP) were part of the committee (Haokip, 2009).

## **Insurgency, Internal Feuds and Autonomy Movements**

Initially, following a perceived loss of economic opportunities in the hands of outsiders, Meghalaya witnessed the first ever insurgency movement in the early 1980s with the birth of the *Hynnientrep Achik Liberation Council* (HALC), representing all indigenous communities of *Khasi-Jaintia* and *Garo*, to fight against the outsiders or *Dkhar*

(Rammohan, 2007). In the 1990s, following growth of internal squabbles, especially between the *Khasis* and the *Garos*, the HALC split into two groups— the *Achik Liberation Matrik Army* (ALMA) of the *Garos* in *Garo Hills* and the *Hynnientrep National Liberation Council* (HNLC) of the *Khasis* in *Khasi Hills* (Upadhyaya, *et al.*, 2013; Rahman, 2011). Later on, in 1995, the AMLA was renamed as the *Achik National Volunteers Council* (ANVC). When the HNLC aimed at converting Meghalaya as a province exclusively for the *Khasis*, fighting against the ‘outsiders’ including the *Garos*, the ANVC purportedly tried to carve out a homeland called ‘*Achik Land*’ exclusively for the *Garos* in *Garo Hills*, free from the *Khasi* domination.

The Shillong being the capital city, dominated by the *Khasis*, their movement for controlling the economy, polity and land became easier. The *Khasi* ethnic movement intensified in 2000s. Their hegemonic role had shrunk the democratic space for the other organisations within the State (Srikanth, 2005). As understood, the HNLC, after bifurcating from the erstwhile HALC, is now pushing economic and political agendas of the *Khasis* alone in the State. The *Khasis* felt that their youths are deprived of the fruits of development in the State. Besides the movement for “*Khasi land*”, they too started a movement for driving out the outsiders from the *Khasi-Jaintia* regions (Understanding Meghalaya, 2010). The outfit (HALC) was proscribed on November 16, 2000, and signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government of India on July 23, 2004. At the same time, the *Garos* also felt deprived of their rights by the *Khasis*, and became adversary of the *Khasi* tribe. Consequently, the ANVC intensified movement for a homeland called ‘*Achik Land*’ in *Garo Hills* and it comprises of the present districts of *Garo Hills* in Meghalaya and a large chunk of *Kamrup* and *Goalpara* districts of *Assam*, where a large number of *Garos* have settled<sup>1</sup>. Understandably, these two warring groups – *Khasis* and *Garos*, supported by their respective insurgent groups are at loggerheads with each other, blaming each other for exploitation and economic deprivation. Practically, the *Garo hills* are landlocked and isolated from the *Khasi* areas, especially the capital city *Shillong* and its adjoining areas of the *Jaintias*. Limited road connectivity between the districts has been the major cause of concern.

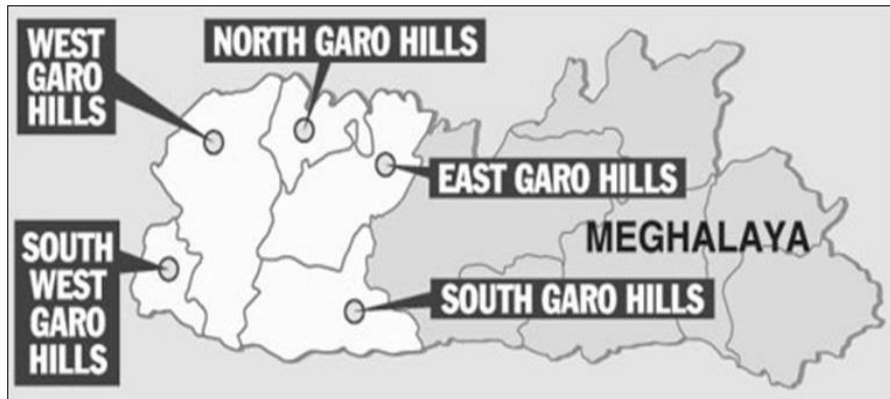
The *Garos* living in the western part of the State claimed that their region continued to remain ‘backward’ and there has been economic ‘disparity’ ever since the State was carved out of the then undivided *Assam* in 1972. They further claimed that the *Garo Hills*’ meagre infrastructure and essential services, scanty health and education facilities and poor connectivity accentuated the sense of relative deprivation (Upadhyaya, *et al.*, 2013). Consequently, it led to the demand for a separate State exclusively for the *Garos*, comprising of five *Garo hills* districts reflected in [Figure 1](#), by carving out from the *Khasis*. In this context, the *Garo National Council* (GNC) legislator Clifford R. Marak officially put up this issue in the 60 member Meghalaya Legislative Assembly on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014 (The Hindu, 2014a). Former speaker of Lok Sabha and *Garo* leader, P.A. Sangma justified the demand for ‘*Garo-land*’, citing the reason for development disparity in the State (Haokip, 2013). However, their claim was rejected by the then ruling Congress-led Meghalaya United Alliance (UMA) government stating that further

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<sup>1</sup> This section is excerpted from Understanding Meghalaya (2010).

division of the State would crop up more constraints on the resources and increase social and economic vulnerability (News, 2014).

**Figure 1:** Separate State Demand Sought by the Garos in Meghalaya



*Source: The Telegraph (August 2, 2013)*

With frustration of their failure and their internal squabble, most of the ALMA terrorists surrendered in 1994 and formed the People's Liberation Front of Meghalaya (PLF-M) in 2000, after the state's rehabilitation scheme failed. Their main objectives have been to achieve faster economic development of the Garo Hills, as well as better educational opportunities for the Garo tribes, besides a separate State for the Garos. In this regard, in March 2001, Chengku Momin, the Minister for Information and Publicity of the PLF-M had warned all the non-Garos, not to contest the State assembly and district council elections, held in 2003. In 2009, the Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) was formed under the leadership of a former Deputy Superintendent of Police of Meghalaya, P.R. Sangma alias Champion R. Sangma, after deserting the State Police Force. The cadre-base of the outfit was mainly formed by the deserters from ANVC, the Liberation of Achik Elite Force (LAEF) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). Since its formation, the GNLA has been involved in killing, abduction, extortion, bomb blasts and attacks on Security Forces (SFs). Consequently, the law and order situation in the Garo-dominated areas has deteriorated after the outfit was formed<sup>1</sup>.

In this manner, since the 1990s, number of militant groups, fielded by different ethnic groups, especially the Garos and the Khasis have emerged, and intensified in 2000s. Fractional conflicts have added oil to the fire and no two groups have got common objective. Within Garo community, the ANVC differed from the other Garo separatist

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from SATP: [[http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/Meghalaya/terrorist\\_outfits/GNLA.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/Meghalaya/terrorist_outfits/GNLA.htm)]

organisations. The GNC, aimed for a Garo State, comprising present districts of the Garo hills, while, the ANVC demanded the present districts of the Garo Hills in Meghalaya and a large chunk of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam (Understanding Meghalaya, 2010). When the ANVC and its splinter group, ANVC-B are officially under ceasefire with the Government of India, the United Achik Liberation Army (UALA) and the Achik National Liberation Army (ANLA) formed recently, in October 2013, are active in the interior areas of the Garo Hills and its adjoining areas of Assam and the West Khasi Hills (Das, 2013). Besides, in December 2010 and January 2011, the *Rabha* identity assertion has given rise to ethnic conflict between the Rabhas and the Garos in the East Garo Hills and the bordering areas of Assam where the Rabha Hasong group dominates.

While tracing the causes of present escalated tension between the communities – the Khasis and the Garos, leaving the Garos-Rabhas tussle aside, the implementation of the 1971 Reservation Bill<sup>1</sup> was figured out as one of the prime factors (Bang, 2008). The KSU now demands that the reservation policy be revised as per 2001 population census and the Khasis being a dominate group, the Khasi-Garo reservation should be at 60:30 ratios (Sangma, 2008). On the other, in 2005, the Garos felt extraneous in the State when the Meghalaya Board of School Education (MBSE), which had its head office in Tura (in West Garo Hills), agreed to reorganise itself in Shillong (Khasi area) along the lines demanded by the KSU (Haokip, 2013). Undoubtedly, these episodes added an embittered situation between the Khasis and the Garos, which further turned into violence. The agitations were further intensified by the Garo Hills State Movement Committee (GHSMC), a conglomeration of various pressure and political groups of the community. Their ultimate demand is that the Government of India should consider creation of two separate States – one each for Garos and Khasi-Jaintia, based on linguistic lines as envisaged in the States Re-organisation Act, 1956. In nutshell, the Garo National Council (GNC) and the Garo Students' Union (GSU) are also demanding a separate State for the Garos on linguistic lines, while the Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) is demanding a Khasi-Jaintia State. In the 2000s, it led to intensification of internal feuds in Meghalaya.

## Result and Discussion of the Study

Since the late 1990s, after getting assurance from the then Chief Minister, E.K. Mawlong, various fierce movements, especially by the KSU, against the outsiders has withdrawn in September 2001. Besides, the movements included the removal of the Nagas, Mizos and Kukis from the official list of indigenous tribes of Meghalaya (Haokip, 2013). Though Srikanth (2005) believed that the largest and the most influential community, the Khasis who were vehemently agitating against the outsiders are now becoming more matured and getting better than the situations in the 1980s and early 1990s, the situation has reached to a complicated one. The ethnic relation between indigenous tribes and migrant communities has improved significantly in 2000s, but

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<sup>1</sup> The 1971 Reservation Bill specified quotas of 40% for the Khasi and the Jaintia, 40% for the Garos, and 20% for the minorities in government jobs and educational institutions (Please refer: Bang, 2008; Sangma, 2008).

ethnic tensions among the indigenous tribes have increased significantly in the recent past (Haokip, 2013). This has been enthused primarily by the local elites through politicians-contractors-bureaucrats nexus (Nongbri, 2003 as quoted by Karlsson, 2004). The role of the state, however, has reduced merely to distributing centrally allocated development funds to different agencies, *dorbars*, and loyal civil societies (McDuié-Ra, 2008).

On the practicality side, when one looks closely, the State of Meghalaya is not comparable with other sister States of NER like Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram in terms of its historical, socio-political and demographic equations. Shillong, the capital city of Meghalaya was a British outpost and later the capital of the then undivided Assam. As a result, Shillong (the East Khasi Hills district) or Meghalaya in general had received a sizeable non-tribal population before the Statehood was conferred. Besides, the major portions of the Khasi region (including Jaintias and Ri-Bhoi) in its eastern and northern boundary shares border with Assam's four districts— Kamrup, Karbi-Anglong, N.C. Hills and Cachar. Similarly, in the western and north-western part, the Garo Hills districts share border with Bangladesh and Assam's districts of Goalpara and Dhubri. In the State, besides the Khasi and Garo, the communities of Rabha, Jaintia, Mikir, Karbi, Koch etc., have been living for generations. Therefore, in this context, Mukhim (2013) commented that the people of Meghalaya cannot just isolate themselves from the history and pretend to write on a clean slate that they are the lone indigenous community in the State. Seeing the new ethnic movements, Mukhim further raised few questions— “[w]hen we need a good doctor, do we check his tribe, caste, class or do we repose our faith on his expertise and his credentials? The same is the case with a good teacher or lawyer. So, if we are inter-dependent then is it not fair to share a slice of the cake with those who strive to build Meghalaya as much as the tribes of Meghalaya do?”

As of the internal feud, Khasi ethno-nationalist organisations blamed that the Garos had been given an undue advantage by the state, in employment, education and other development issues. On the other, the Garo civil organisations made a similar claim and initiated a strong movement in pursuit of a separate ‘Garo-land’ has grown (Malngiang, 2002 as cited by McDuié-Ra, 2008). The tug of war between these two groups has intensified in 2000s, over the perceived deprivation by one another. The fiasco over the transfer of MBSE office from Tura (West Garo hill) to Shillong (the Khasi dominated area) has been blamed as recent divide between the Khasi and the Garo in Meghalaya (Haokip, 2013). The Garos do not want to be dictated by the Khasis. On the other hand, the Khasis want to enjoy their privileges of dominance and do not want to sacrifice their legacy of movement against the outsiders in the hands of any other community, especially the Garos. One of the Khasis’ constituent groups, the Jaintias, led by the Jaintia Students’ Union (JSU) demanded all the three major indigenous groups – the Khasis, the Garos and the Jaintias be given 30 per cent each of the reservation policy and the remaining 10 per cent be left to other communities (Srikanth, 2005). But the key questions arose in this context are— who is being relatively deprived of and by whom? Which district or tribe is deprived of? To comprehend the allegations made on each other, one needs to do some number exercises.



Table 1 depicts district-wise literacy rate, density of population and decadal population growth rate, while Table 2 shows the percentage change in Below Poverty Line<sup>1</sup> (BPL) over the years. Considering a lesser growth rate of population and higher literacy rate as better development indicators, being an administrative district and State capital (Shillong) East Khasi hills performed well in these aspects. While the other districts, (whether the Garo Hills or Khasi Hills) were found to be performing more or less the same. Of course, the percentage change in rural BPL households in Khasi districts has improved considerably well vis-a-vis the Garo hills over the years from 1990s to 2000s. In terms of annual average sectoral growth rates across the districts (Table 3), as expected, the East Khasi Hills district registered a higher growth in all the three sectors— primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. The Ri-Bhoi district (the Khasi region) also performed equally well. The South Garo Hills district performed slightly better than that of any other Garo hills districts in this regard, but lesser than that of the Khasi Hills districts. While referring to the physical infrastructure index (Table 4), barring the West Khasi hill district, rest of the Khasi districts performed much better than the State average in terms of percentage of villages connected by *pucca* road and electricity connection in 1991 and 2001 respectively. Ironically, the socioeconomic indices as measured by Nayak and Ray (2010) depicted in Table 5, consisting of economic, health, education and Human Development Index (HDI) highlighted a different picture. For instances, overall socioeconomic indices of the South Garo Hills district revealed relatively a better performance, bypassing the East Khasi hills district which is considered to be the most developed district in the State. These findings convoluted to draw a conclusion that which region is deprived of. Conversely, one cannot infer whether the Khasis are better off in every socioeconomic indicator or the Garos. This caused to the movement for the internal autonomies of different groups. If the demand for a separate State of the Garos or the Khasis is considered, one can easily expect another demand or re-drawing of the present State boundary by amalgamating other smaller communities like, the Kochs, the Hajongs, the Rabhas, the Dimasa, the Mikirs, etc. who have been living for years along with the three major tribes in Meghalaya. Having thought these consequences, in response to the Garos' demand for a separate State raised by the GNC legislator C.R. Marak in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, the Deputy Chief Minister in-charge R.C. Lalloo replied that “there was economic disparity among the people of the State and also overall economic condition of the people of the State especially in rural areas. It is our duty to take necessary steps to ameliorate the economic hardship of our people and bring about all round economic improvement in the State and not to divide it” (The Hindu, 2014a). Had *the Karbis* (Mikir/Karbi hills) and *the Dimasa* (Dima Hasao/NC hills) of the present Assam joined the new State of Meghalaya at the time when they were given a chance in 1972, there could have been a different situation of the ethnic relation.

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<sup>1</sup> Below Poverty Line (BPL) is an economic benchmark and poverty threshold used by the government of India to indicate economic disadvantage and to identify individuals and households in need of government assistance and aid. According to Dandekar and Rath Committee, “an average calorie norm of 2,250 calories per capita per day for both rural and urban areas”, are defined as the poverty line.

As of the Rabha-Garo conflict, the problem started when the Rabha demanded 416 villages inhabited by the Garos which also formed a part of the proposed area demanded by the GNC as a separate Garo Autonomous Council in Assam. At the same time, the ANVC is fighting for amalgamation of the present districts of the Garo hills in Meghalaya and a large chunk of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam to form a new Garo land. In reality, the Rabhas are recognised as Scheduled Tribes (STs) category in Goalpara district of Assam and enjoy separate benefit under the “Development Council” given for the community, but the same is not given in the contiguous East Garo hills district of Meghalaya. The East Garo hills district has its own ADC under the Sixth Schedule. But the Rabha group is not categorised as ST in Meghalaya, and so, no representative of this group is elected in the ADC in Garo hills. For a quite some time, the Rabhas had been agitating in the Garo hills for ST status, but the Garos opposed to it. Therefore, the Rabhas resorted to call for road blockade in certain parts of Assam (Goalpara and Kamrup districts) that links the Garo hills with the other parts of Meghalaya. Practically, if one has to travel from Tura, headquarters of Garo hills to Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, one has to go through Assam’s Goalpara and Guwahati (Kamrup) districts. This made the *Rabha* community and its insurgent group – the Rabha Jatiya Mukti Bahini (RJMB) better bargaining power<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, the Garos’ demand for “Garo Land” was heavily opposed by the Rabhas and they are demanding their basic rights as their fellow members enjoy certain economic autonomy (Development Council) in Assam.

Still, the larger issue that hardly any scholar attempted is – how have these ethnic movements shifted towards internal feuds? Most of the community lands in the State have been grabbed by the elite land grabbers, coal baron for their vested interests. It is understood that the tribal lands cannot be easily transferred to outsiders without the hands of the tribal elites or local institutions like the *dobars*. Very systematically, in the pretext of tribal land ownership, the elite sections of the community (include coal barons, politicians, bureaucrats, policemen and even surrendered militants) with the tacit support of the village headmen converted the common forest land into individual lands and given to industrialists. Consequently, the poor villagers are becoming landless, their livelihoods are curtailed, environment is devastated and rivers are polluted. In this context, Mohrmen (2014) opined that unlike in the other States, the problem in Meghalaya is not because of the outsiders, but the threat is from the rich tribal elites who are themselves members of the community. The influential student body, KSU who had earlier opposed timber trade now supported to drop the forest cover area from 40 per cent at the time of State’s independence to 18 per cent in 1996 (Karlsson, 2004). Therefore, apprehension and infighting problems of the ethnic groups cannot be understood without taking into account the role of the Indian state in creating conditions for such intra and inter group conflicts. Politics and state functionaries have been polarised on ethnic line, and the community members are being used by their elites. Besides, one cannot easily ignore the control of the outside businessmen over the resources of the State which have created much tension. But, this cannot be solved by simply targeting them of being outsiders. Civil societies like, the

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<sup>1</sup> This section is heavily excerpted from [<http://www.claws.in/1082/the-rabha-garo-conundrum-jaikhlong-basumatry.html>]

non-governmental organisations, social activists and women groups have also been hijacked on the ethnic lines. Following the politicisation of the civil organisations, the ethnicity-based movements have intensified. The KSU formed political party and the leader, Paul Lyngdoh joined the then Chief Minister D.D. Lapang's cabinet as minister of sports and youth affairs in 2003. Interestingly, Lyngdoh himself found it difficult to deliver demands that he had initiated for. Still, the Khasis being the majority community, especially in the Shillong, the KSU played a decisive role in the State politics, influencing the government and the political parties. Against the Khasis, in the Garo hills, the Garos too called for different bandhs and protests for creation of Garo land, exclusively for them.

## Concluding Remarks

Meghalaya has experienced a series of communal riots between the outsiders and insiders since the late 1970s. However, in 2000s, the goal post has slowly shifted towards the indigenous tribes, emerged different ethnicity-based autonomy movements. Shillong was developed as an educational hub, added the North-Eastern Hill University in the post-statehood, led to growth of higher education in the State at the fast pace. The anxiety about the employment among the educated youth started when the employment opportunity growth in the State was proportionately lower than that of the growth of higher education, and the existing employment, business establishments had already been occupied by the outsiders. This was the major cause of conflicts between the outsiders and the insiders in 1980s, exacerbated in 1990s and witnessed three riots against the former.

Though perceived economic and political deprivation has been attributed as major factor for ethnic group infighting in 2000s, autonomy movements may not be the panacea for the unrest in Meghalaya. The inter district, intra district economic disparity and inter and intra ethnic deprivation within the State was not clearly evident from the figures provided in the annexures. Whatever the deprivation or exploitation debated in the State was made by their own people or the leaders of their own groups. The Khasis are blaming the Garos and vice-versa, for their perceived economic and political deprivation. If one thinks and analyses logically, there is no guarantee that the Garos will not demand for the integration of the Garos of Meghalaya with the Garos living in Assam or even with the *Bodo* community of Assam in the near future (as the Garo is a Bodo family and the GNLA cadres consisting of Bodo militant splinters of Assam). On the other side too, there is no guarantee that the Jaintias will not fight for their identity or separation from the Khasis in the near future (e.g., The JSU opposed KSU's reservation demand and the Jaintias also enjoy ADC status as Khasi enjoys). The same holds good for the communities like the *Bhois*, the *Wars* or any other sub-tribes of the larger Khasi identity/group. As we have seen the riots between the *Rabhas* and the *Garos* in 2010 and 2011, one cannot easily ignore the *Rabhas'* movement in Meghalaya, especially in Garo hills. Basic rights of the Garos in Assam and the *Rabhas* in Assam should be given. Merely politicising and polarising ethnic communities by their elite leaders for economic or personal vote stunt opportunities would only escalate the present crisis of Meghalaya. Rather, all the communities should work in unison for development of the State, physical infrastructure especially the road connectivity with

the support of the state/government. Inter community relation may be improved by linking inter-district road connectivity particularly the road networks between the two geographically isolated regions, the Garo hills, especially Tura and the Khasi hills, mainly Shillong. Otherwise, it makes very limited interaction between the two major communities (Khasi and Garo) and consequently develops distrust among them. Community leaders should be educated first, and of course, the role of Indian state should concentrate more on the physical infrastructural development, especially the road network, not on polarisation of ethnic groups for election stunt. If at all the ethnicity-based autonomy demand is expected, differences among the different organisations within the same ethnic group should be resolved first, and using ethnic card by the ethnic leaders for their personal gain should be avoided.

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## Tables

**Table 1:** District-wise Literacy and Population Growth Rate (in %)

Districts	Literacy Rate		Population Growth Rate		Density of Population
	2001	2011	1991-01	2001-11	
East Garo Hills	62	76	33	26	122
West Garo Hills	51	68	29	27	173
South Garo Hills	64	72	31	29	77
Jaintia Hills	53	63	36	31	103
Ri-Bhoi	55	77	51	34	109
East Khasi Hills	75	85	23	25	292
West Khasi Hills	66	79	34	30	73
<b>Meghalaya</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>132</b>

Source: Census (2011 provisional); Govt. of Meghalaya (2008); Govt. of Meghalaya (2006)

**Table 2:** District-wise Rural BPL Households in Meghalaya (in %)

Districts	1991	1998	2002
East Garo Hills	68.5	34.2	55.9
West Garo Hills	66.2	63.0	53.7
South Garo Hills	–	70.6	45.3
Jaintia Hills	56.1	44.2	39.5
Ri-Bhoi	–	41.8	49.9
East Khasi Hills	33.2	55.2	46.7
West Khasi Hills	29.2	64.9	47.7
<b>Meghalaya</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>54.5</b>	<b>48.9</b>

Source: Saxena (2002)

**Table 3:** District-wise Sectoral Average Annual Gr. Rate (1999-00 to 2007-08) at 1999-00 Constant Prices

Sector	Agriculture	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	NSDP
Jaintia Hills	2.65	7.32	8.98	5.68	6.97
East Khasi Hills	10.37	10.09	12.05	6.86	8.07
West Khasi Hills	4.64	5.49	7.53	4.76	5.51
Ri-Bhoi	6.41	6.35	27.03	6.36	9.25
East Garo Hills	1.71	2.21	19.15	5.07	5.8
West Garo Hills	4.11	4.23	10.69	6.18	6.1
South Garo Hills	6.91	8.15	11.61	5.17	7.51
<b>Meghalaya</b>	<b>5.52</b>	<b>6.53</b>	<b>12.42</b>	<b>6.27</b>	<b>7.19</b>

Source: Govt. of Meghalaya (2008)



**Table 4:** District-wise Road and Electricity Connectivity

Districts	% of Village Connected by Pucca Road (in 1991)	% of Electrified Villages (in 2001)
East Garo Hills	12.7	33.22
West Garo Hills	12.7	36.49
South Garo Hills	10.1	19.66
Jaintia Hills	27.1	62.31
Ri-Bhoi	19.3	66.11
East Khasi Hills	26.2	74.13
West Khasi Hills	11.9	35.28
<b>Meghalaya</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>44.93</b>

Source: Govt. of Meghalaya (2008)

**Table 5:** District-wise Bourguignon\* Socio-economic Indices (In order of Rank)

Districts	Economic	Education	Health	HDI
East Garo Hills	5	3	5	5
West Garo Hills	4	2	7	3
South Garo Hills	1	1	3	1
Jaintia Hills	7	7	1	6
Ri-Bhoi	3	4	4	4
East Khasi Hills	2	6	2	2
West Khasi Hills	6	5	6	7

Source: Nayak and Ray (2010)

\*Bourguignon Index is an inequality index, measured as:

$$S(X) = (\sum_{k=1}^k w_k x_{ik}^\beta)^{\alpha/\beta}$$

where  $\alpha$  is related to the degree of aversion of the society with respect to inequality and the degree of substitution is normally set to be  $\beta \leq 1$ .

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# KEY CAPABILITIES FOR STRATEGIC LEADERS IN LAO COMMERCIAL BANKING SECTOR TO MAXIMISE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

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***Abstract:** A commonly used approach in western countries, this paper considers the use of strategic leadership in Laos, in particular in the banking sector. The investigation looks at the understanding of banking leaders within Laos and finds many do not join the two terms of leadership and strategy together. The Laos bank leaders at senior level are aware that vision, core competencies and strategies are important to the development of their businesses in what is becoming a more competitive environment. Due to this more emphasis on developing vision and the people responsible must be implemented. Similarly leaders need to have both a short-term and long-term focus in their strategic leadership. The net result is that selection of the right person for the job is of vital importance.*

***Keywords:** leadership, competencies, strategies, capabilities, responsibility*

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## Introduction

The heart and soul of every strategy is to enhance its long-term competitive position and sustain competitive advantage over competitors. Strategic leadership is widely considered as the basic need for creating an effective strategy (Thompson Strickland, & Gamble, 2010). Today banking leaders need to have the right leadership style, especially strategic leadership, to lead their organisation to sustainable competitive advantage and an above-average profitability and financial performance (Alabduljader, 2012; Cherian & Farouq, 2013). This is because leaders are faced with extraordinary new challenges,

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for instance, the emergence of global financial crisis (McConnell, 2013). Modern leaders must learn to think strategically and differently about their roles, capabilities and how to improve them in order to lead their organisation to success over the long-term (Thompson, Strickland, & Gamble, 2010).

It has been identified that the key driver leading an organisation to success is strategic leadership (Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2013). Furthermore, strategic leadership is broadly recognised as one of the main drivers of effective strategy execution. Strategic leaders have a huge role in promoting sustainable competitive advantage of an organisation over the long term. Zoogah (2011) affirms that one factor that can help an organisation deal with the global economy is strategic leadership.

According to Daft (2011), success and competitive advantage of an organisation is mainly determined by selection of the top leader. Superior success is not a subject of luck (Grant, 2010; Hitt et al., 2013). The top leader and associated strategic leaders have responsibilities for understanding the environment of their organisation and to consider what may happen in the next five or ten years. This is because strategic leaders are key people who always look forward, set a direction for the future, and push employees to move in the same direction.

For the banking sector in Laos, leadership, especially strategic leadership, also plays a crucial part in providing a superior business performance. As Cherian and Farouq (2013) state, leadership style has a significant impact on the business and financial performance of a bank. This is supported in a study by Alabduljader (2012) who affirms that leadership acts as a process of influencing others' behavior and directing them to achieve goals.

The competition among commercial banks in Laos has recently increased significantly. This is because the government has created many incentives for supporting both domestic and foreign investors to run businesses in Laos in order to sustain the growth of Lao economy at around 8 percent and above. Those incentives have encouraged many new entities to be established in Laos, especially in the banking sector (Bank of Lao PDR, 2011; Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2011). This has inevitably increased the highly competitive environment among local and foreign commercial banks within the banking industry.

Although Laos is an under developed country with a small economy having a nominal GDP of US\$8,914 million in 2011, projected to be 10,411 million in 2013 (Keomanivone, Somneuk, & Genevieve, 2012), the growth of the banking sector and competition between banks has significantly increased. This caused Laos to have 33 commercial banks in 2013 (More foreign banks opened their doors in Laos in 2013). In addition, the rapid growth caused banking loans to increase around 85% in 2008 and 82.3% in March 2009 (Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2011). This rapid growth has challenged banking strategic leaders in Laos to create effective strategies to manage risks inherent in the growth in order to avoid the mistakes and ineffective strategies that leaders of six leading banks used to apply, such as some form of aggressive growth strategies. These banks include Bank of Scotland, Northern Rock, Royal Bank of

Scotland, Lehman Brothers, Washington Mutual, and Anglo Irish Bank (McConnell, 2013).

The high competition requires banks to have effective strategies that can increase their growth while managing their risks, leverage, and liquidity (McConnell, 2013). However, to have those effective strategies that can respond with challenges and capture opportunities both now and in the future, banks are required to have sufficient team members with effective strategic leadership that can foresee, anticipate and give the right pathway to a bank and encourage employees to change the status quo if necessary. To do that, it requires banks to have effective teams to create an effective strategic management process in order to promote and sustain competitive advantage to overtake their rivals. This research endeavours to shed light on the capabilities of the strategic leaders to maximise their competitive advantage.

## **Problem investigated**

To deal with the changes and high levels of competition, it requires commercial banks in Laos to have effective strategic leaders to promote and sustain competitive advantage for their banks, especially when Laos integrates into the regional and global markets. This becomes a business problem for the banks that raises the question: How can strategic leaders in the banking sector in Laos promote and sustain competitive advantage for their bank?

## **Research objectives**

The following objectives are designed to achieve the aims:

- To explore the understanding by strategic leaders in Lao commercial banking of the term “strategic leadership”;
- To examine the understanding by banking leaders of the role of strategic leadership;
- To investigate the real practices of strategic leadership in the Lao commercial banks;
- To analyse the difference between the understanding of the banking leaders and the real practices of their banks that are related to the role of strategic leadership;

## **Literature review**

### ***Concept of strategic leadership***

The term “strategic leadership” means “the ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others to create strategic change as necessary” (Hitt et al., 2013, p. 362). This definition complies with studies by Daft (2011), Hoskisson, Hitt, Ireland, and Harrison (2008) and Ireland and Hitt (2005) who refer to strategic leadership as the ability to predict and envisage the future, sustain flexibility, think strategically, and work with others to initiate changes that can create a competitive advantage for the future of an organization. Strategic leadership refers to individual

behaviours, styles, and skills used to influence others to achieve a successful strategy for an organisation (Zoogah, 2011). Thus, strategic leaders are important leaders in organisations.

Rowe (2001) argues that strategic leadership is an ability to influence people to be voluntary in making day-to-day decisions that can support the long-term viability of companies, while at the same time maintaining their short-term financial stability. The main aspects, which differ from definitions of Daft (2011), Hitt et al (2013) and Ireland and Hitt (2005), are that they focus on the concept of voluntary decision-making that influences staff to make voluntary decisions that will support their companies. Additionally, this definition considers both present and future.

Strategic leadership is about promoting the sustainable competitive advantage and influencing or turning a strategy of organisation into actions. Hughes and Beatty (2005) conclude that leading strategy is about discovery rather than determination. Strategic leaders need to foster strategic leadership in other people instead of only themselves. Strategic leaders have to blend the capabilities of thinking, acting, and influencing to drive strategies as a learning process in their companies.

### ***Strategic leadership and transformational leadership***

According to the characteristics and tasks of strategic leadership, Hitt et al. (2013) point out that the most suitable leadership style for effective strategic leadership is *transformational leadership*. This is because, firstly, transformational leadership encourages followers to perform beyond their expectations, keep extending their capabilities, and set the interests of companies above their own (Du Plessis & Frederick, 2010). Secondly, based on Hitt et al. (2013), transformational leaders evolve and communicate a vision for companies. They create a strategy to achieve vision, make employees aware of the need to reach excellent outcomes and motivate them to keep striving for higher levels of success. Thirdly, the existing literature on transformational leadership and strategic leadership is primarily based on studies with top management teams or high ranking executives.

Transformational leaders have emotional intelligence that includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. They understand themselves and have the ability to control their moods and think before acting. They are also good at motivating and empathising with others, and have strong interpersonal skills (Hitt et al., 2013). Daft (2011) and Du Plessis (2012) state that transformational leadership has a significant impact on subordinates and can potentially renovate an entire company. Transformational leadership relates to abilities to bring about necessary change to vision, strategies, and culture of a company and to enhance innovation in products and technologies. Therefore, strategic leadership and transformational leadership have similar characteristics and are modern leadership styles. Both leadership styles are important for modern leaders.

### ***The role of strategic leadership in promoting competitive advantage for an organisation***

Strategic leaders establish a direction for an organisation via vision and strategy (Daft, 2011). Abilities of strategic leaders to effectively make significant changes in aspect such as business processes, products, and services are crucial because decisions and actions of leaders, particularly in the top level, have a major impact on performances and business successes of banks (Guimaraes, Brandon, & Guimaraes, 2010).

Competitive advantage is the most important factor that influences the success or failure of organisations (Cristian-Liviu, 2013) in which strategic leadership is widely considered as one of the key factors to promote and sustain competitive advantage for an organisation over the long term. This is because it enables organisations, especially banks, to respond to several challenges such as financial scandal, high competition, loss of clients' trust and loyalty, and poor relationships with stakeholders (Wallace, Chernatony, & Buil, 2011). Strategic leadership has a vital influence on competitive advantage and long-term performance. This is because strategic leaders have a role in sharing their power as necessary and are people who encourage employees to work effectively in ambiguous and turbulent environments by providing a vision and pathway that facilitates employees to evolve and innovate.

Competitive advantage of an organisation can end whenever leaders have poor strategic leadership and its rivals have skills to duplicate the benefits of the company's value-creating strategy. Hitt et al. (2013) add that whenever strategic leaders unsuccessfully respond to changes in the complex global competitive environment, the abilities of an organisation to gain competitive advantage and achieve above-average returns is compromised.

### ***Key capabilities of effective strategic leaders***

There are many forces in the banking sector, including new technologies, globalisation, deregulation, and growing competition, that lead to challenging for leaders. These cause banks to have to diversify their businesses into interest and non-interest earning businesses to sustain competitive advantage, for instance, insurance, private banking and asset management. Thus, to succeed promoting competitive advantage for a bank, leaders need to have sufficient key capabilities to make necessary changes.

Capabilities significantly contribute to an effectiveness of strategic leadership. This requires leaders to have certain knowledge (at domestic and international level), skills and individual qualities to cope with both unambiguous and ambiguous situations. However, most of the literature has not yet identified capabilities detail, except in studies by Hitt (1998) and Ireland and Hitt (1999) (as cited in Hitt et al., 2010) who specifically determined the most important capabilities that effective strategic leaders should have in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

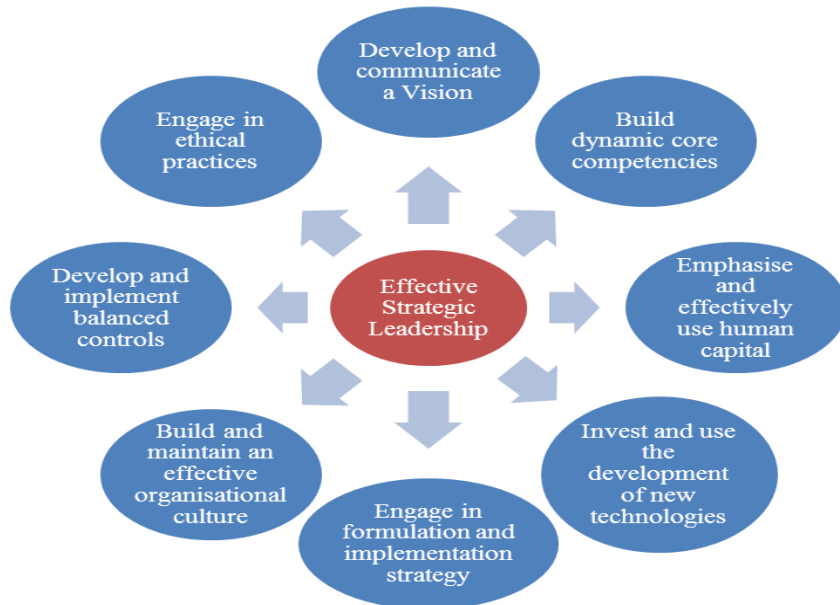
The study by Hitt et al. (2010) summaries almost all needed capabilities that many researchers have mentioned so far. In addition, this summary is consistent with a study by Boal and Hooijberg (2000) who had already researched studies of strategic

leadership by Hickman (1998), House and Aditya (1997), Hunt (1991), Ireland & Hitt (1999), Selznick (1984) and Zaccarro (1996), and then concluded actions and capabilities that strategic leaders should have are as follows:

- Strategic decision-making;
- Building and communicating a vision;
- Evolving essential competencies and capabilities;
- Developing a structure of an organisation include processes and controls;
- Managing multiple constituencies;
- Making the selection and development of the next generation leaders;
- Maintaining an effective organisational culture; and
- Emphasising ethical practices in an organisation's culture.

Based on Hitt et al (2010), the authors summarise the essential capabilities that effective strategic leaders, especially in the banking sector, should have to deal with challenges in the 21 century.

### Key Capabilities of Effective Strategic Leaders Model (KCS)



*Source: Adapted from Hitt, Haynes, and Serpa (2010).*

## Methodology

### *Research paradigms*

This study was based on interpretivism as a research paradigm. A research paradigm acts as a group of fundamental assumptions and beliefs that are about how the world phenomena are perceived. It then acts as a thinking pathway that guides researchers' behaviour (Jonker & Pennink, 2010). There are two major philosophical dimensions to distinguish research paradigms: *epistemology* and *ontology* (Du Plessis & Frederick, 2010; Wahyuni, 2012). Based on epistemology, the subjectivist believes that the reality has dependence on social actors. They presume that each actor contributes to social phenomena. In contrast, in terms of social research study, based on ontology, the objectivist believes that the reality and its interpretation are not dependent and internal on social actors.

The use of a qualitative approach in the study of strategic leadership for this research project is considered to be the most suitable, especially in terms of the Lao context, because:

- Qualitative approach focuses on subjective perspectives. As pointed by Bryman (2012), the qualitative approach helps researchers to understand actions associated with the subjective and values inherent realities.
- The nature of leadership is complex. Thus, by using the qualitative approach such as semi-structure interview, it can make participants feel comfortable when he or she is interviewed because the order of questions could be varied depending on the flow of the conversation.
- The target participants (managerial level) are very difficult to reach. Additionally, they are holding specific tasks related to strategies. Thus, by interviewing, the researcher can gain several benefits from interviews such as getting in depth information, developing insights about strategic leadership, gaining informants' priorities, having flexibility, high response rate, validity, and therapeutic.
- Semi-structured interviews will enable the researcher to have the validity and reliable data for answering the research questions.
- The list of questions was sent to all participants before conducting interviews, thus, participants had enough time to prepare themselves and to get data ready for the researchers.

### *Data collection*

This research project employed only a semi-structured interview method, as a data collection method because the nature of leadership is complex and the term 'strategic leadership' is not common in Laos, particularly in the banking sector. This method gives the researchers the opportunity to provide further information to participants who do not understand the questions and terms. This approach assists the researchers to collect reliable information and increases the validity of the results of this study. Taking part in this study are 11 participants who are considered as strategic leaders and working in the commercial banks in Laos.



The personnel departments of the four banks identified, on behalf of the researcher, invited and communicated with potential managers to participate in the project. The criteria for inviting and selecting potential participants were based on the purpose of the study and participants' tasks and positions. The personnel departments then sent all relevant information such as the information sheet, consent form and interview questions to all potential participants. If they agreed to participate in the study, they had to sign the consent forms, providing contact information and return them to a sealed box in the staffroom. The box was collected by the researchers. After collecting the sealed box, the researchers informed all participants by email or telephone to confirm and scheduled interviews with them. The researchers were then able to interview the participants at a time convenient to them.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted in July and August 2013. The interviews were undertaken bank by bank and person by person in order to make sure that the banks' and participants' names were confidential and could not be identified. The interview questions were sent to participants in both Lao and English version in order to enable them to become familiar with the questions. The duration for interviews was around thirty minutes to one hour. The interviews were conducted based on three main topics that were guided by questions.

## **Results**

This study divided the participants into two groups based on the type of shareholders of their banks, such as partly foreign shareholders and fully foreign shareholders. G1 represented the group of leaders who are working for the banks owned by partially foreign and local shareholders; G2 represented the group of leaders who are working for the banks that are sole investments by leading foreign banks. All interviews were related to the experience, role, understanding, and perceptions of strategic leaders associated with strategic leadership matters.

The interview questions were designed for participants who are holding strategic tasks and managerial positions in the commercial banks in Laos. These questions not only helped the researchers to answer the research questions but also to understand perspectives of strategic leaders within the Lao context.

## ***Discussion***

The issue of key capabilities of strategic leadership was considered as the first research objective. This is because key capabilities are the fundamentals of effective strategic leaders in leading their organisations to sustainable competitive advantage over the long term. Hence, without certain capabilities, leaders are ineffective.

From the research objectives above, research questions derived to cover these objectives of this research. They are discussed below:

The findings of nine key capabilities answered the research question: 'what key capabilities of strategic leadership should Lao commercial banking strategic leaders have in order to promote competitive advantage for their banks?' The findings showed that effective commercial banking strategic leaders in Laos should have at least nine key

capabilities to promote and sustain competitive advantage for their banks, including the capability to:

1. Develop and communicate a vision;
2. Build dynamic core competencies;
3. Develop and effectively use human capital;
4. Invest and use the development of new technologies;
5. Engage in a strategy;
6. Build and maintain an effective organisational culture;
7. Develop and implement balanced controls;
8. Engage in ethical practices;
9. Create an effective team.

The findings of this research project showed that competitive advantage stems from the effectiveness of strategic leaders. This is because an individual effective strategic leader is a crucial element of the top management team to create competitive advantage for an organisation. However, to be an effective strategic leader, it is necessary for leaders to have sufficient key capabilities.

The most interesting finding related to vision is that many participants could see the importance of vision. They said that leaders needed to have capabilities to determine, develop, and communicate vision to their employees to help them move in the same direction. In essence, vision should be suitable or achievable and give a clear pathway to employees. Vision can help an organisation succeed with a strategy. Communicating vision is also very significant because it can motivate and help employees understand the right direction and work actively in the same trend.

The capability to build dynamic core competencies was considered as the second key capability of effective strategic leaders. To compete with rivals, strategic leaders need to clearly determine what core competencies should be developed further or what new competencies should be created to make their banks the leader in targeted markets. It is important for leaders to know what resources, core competencies, strengths, weaknesses, and competitive advantage of their banks are. Then, they need to know how to build and promote those elements to sustain competitive advantage.

Leaders need to put the right person in the right job to maximise benefits to their banks. This capability can help leaders to retain talented staff. Leaders need to know how to manage, develop and nurture knowledge and abilities of their subordinates.

All participants affirmed that without the capability to engage in a strategy, strategic leaders could not play their roles well. Strategic leaders are people who should know strategies, strengths, weaknesses, environment, and direction of their banks. If not, they cannot effectively work and find opportunities for their banks. Without knowledge on strategy, leaders will fail to create effective strategies. In addition, strategic leaders need to know how to formulate and implement strategies in order for them to succeed. They should also know both the short and long-term plans as well. If not, their short and long-term plans may not be consistent.

There were six out of eleven strategic leaders that stated that they had not ever heard the term 'strategic leadership'. The term was not common in Laos. They added that were familiar with hearing separately either the term 'leadership' or 'strategy', but not the combined term such as 'strategic leadership' at the same time. However, five leaders, less than half of all participants, are familiar with and understand about strategic leadership in terms of promoting competitive advantage. The findings on those five research participants answered the research question: **'what is the understanding of Lao commercial banking strategic leaders on 'strategic leadership' in terms of promoting competitive advantage for their banks?'**

The research findings indicated that strategic leaders were expected to promote competitive advantage for their banks. Participants agreed and confirmed that leaders with strategic leadership play a significant role in formulating and implementing a strategy for a bank. Without this leadership style, the effectiveness of a strategic management process may be highly compromised. In essence, leaders in teams will find it difficult to work together to make strategic-decisions. Furthermore, leaders and managers at lower levels cannot support and provide the useful information to the top management team. The research findings indicated that several banking strategic leaders in Laos understand the important role of strategic leadership in terms of promoting competitive advantage for their banks.

Based on the findings of the three key roles associated with strategic leadership in an organisation, the researchers noted that success or superior performance stems from the competitive advantage of an organisation. This situation results from an effective strategic management process. It is from an effective strategic leadership team that a successful management process is directed. Therefore, the researchers developed a Competitive Advantage Model (CAM) as depicted below:

*Figure 2: Competitive Advantage Model (CAM)*



*Source: Developed by the authors*

All the objectives were met and the research questions answered in this study.

## Conclusions

This study concludes and recommends key aspects and models revealed by the research project and their relevance in the banking sector in Laos. The research study focused on investigating how commercial banks promote competitive advantage over the long term through practicing strategic leadership. Collecting data and studying the real practices related to strategic leadership in the commercial banks were carried out in order to develop the practical model. This is to help banking strategic leaders in Laos see the pathway in order to help their banks to promote competitive advantage. This study answered all the research questions with the strong support of the empirical evidence and literature review. At the end, please note some recommendations drafted for Human Resources Management from Laos: all managers should understand what strategic leadership is, pay more attention to the role of strategy in contributing to their banks, and see the crucial importance of the strategic decisions that their strategic leaders make. This would strengthen their contributions to the banks and help them build more of their capabilities as well as those of the banks to promote and sustain competitive advantage over the long term; strategic leaders need to pay more attention to vision, core competencies, and strategies of their banks. This is because they are key people who communicate vision, analyse core competencies, and interpret strategies to employees; strategic leaders should not focus only either in the short-term or long-term performances. They should establish a suitable balance between the short and long-term goals that are consistent to maintain competitive advantage.

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# POVERTY OF THE ROMANIAN ROMA MINORITY – CURRENT DIMENSIONS

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Victor NICOLAESCU<sup>1</sup>

***Abstract:** Roma people poverty is a topic analysed by the relevant national and European bodies, and attention is paid to the policies implemented with the purpose to reduce the risk of social exclusion. Within the context of a total European Roma population of 10-12 million people, the evaluations regarding the Roma people living in Romania focus on the aspects specific to the risk of poverty, and from this perspective, the aim is to develop and apply policies that are adapted, as much as possible, to the national situation. Thus, from the design and implementation of standardized directions of action, to the identification of the success results, and to the propagation and replication of the good practices, a more generous space should be created and used to capitalise on the positive experiences. This article is a new call to go on with the systematic approaches focalised on impact, with the purpose to improve the situation of the Roma people living in Romania.*

***Keywords:** Roma people, social inclusion, poverty, public policies, integration*

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## Introduction

The total Roma population living throughout Europe is considered to be the largest European minority, some 10 to 12 million people, who are frequent victims of racism, discrimination and social exclusion, living in extreme poverty, without access to decent healthcare and dwelling services (European Commission, 2012:2). However, many evidences show that the Roma population is actually larger than the official statistics, the discrepancy from the official records and research outputs being acknowledged both in Europe and in the national states.

Thus, regarding the statistics supplied by the Council of Europe, one can notice that 15 of the 27 EU member state didn't include the Roma people in the 2001 or 2002 censuses (Ionescu M., Stanescu S.M., 2014:81). The existence of differences is justified by the rather recent inclusion, within the methodologies of the national censuses, of questions regarding the national, ethnic, cultural or linguistic Roma identity, by the low level of self-

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identification of the Roma people during the censuses (and in polls, generally), as well as by the low level of self-identification as Roma minority due to the strong discrimination confronting these people (Ionescu M., Stanescu S.M., 2014:82-83).

At the regional level, according to UNICEF data (Gordon, A, 2012), an estimated 3.7 million Roma people live in South-Eastern Europe, about 1.7 million of them (46%) being children. While the majority populations display a decreasing trend in the surveyed countries, the Roma populations increase rapidly. Thus, in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia, the proportion of people up to 19 years old ranges between 22% and 29% of the general population, while this proportion reaches 41-47% for the Roma people.

Regarding the number of Roma people living in particular countries, there still is a methodological difficulty of accurately identifying their number, even though surveys and analyses have been performed, adding to the official data reported by the censuses of the past 25 years. It is thus obvious that additional investigations are necessary in order to determine the accurate number of Roma people, and to correlate the data collected by different analyses (below is a list of the main estimations and results, supplied by Ionescu M., 2013):

**Table 1**

Year	Source/ Organization	Estimated number	Proportion of majority population	Method
1998	ICCV study	1.5 million	6.7%	Hetero- identification
2002	INS census	535,140	2.46%	Self- identification
2003	2003 UNDP study (published in 2006)	Minimum 1.8 million, Maximum 2.8 million	10%	
2005	World Bank study	Minimal variant, 730.174 people; Medium variant, 851.048 people; Maximal variant, 970.000 people.		Self- identification
2011	European Commission, based on Council of Europe data (COM (2011) 173.	Medium variant: 1.850.000 people	8.32%	
2011	INS census	619,000	(3.2%)	Self- identification

*Source: Ionescu M., ANR, 2013*

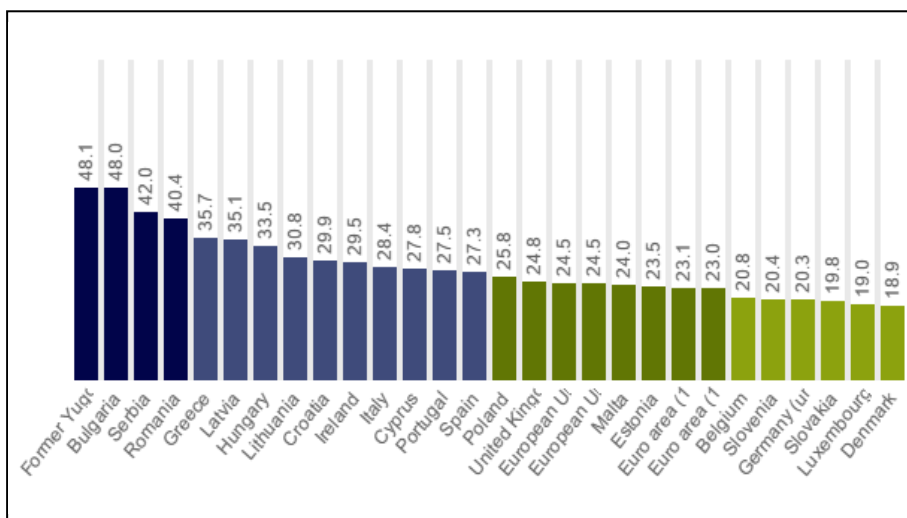
The different data on the size of the Roma populations across Europe and in the individual countries, reveal a specific characteristic regarding the territorial mobility,

particularly during the recent decades, within the “borderless” Europe under construction. The challenge of the migratory flows towards areas with a higher level of welfare can also be noticed within the Roma people, which calls for the establishment of more efficient mechanisms aiming to support the improvement of Roma people situation throughout Europe.

In Romania, a “gradual improvement of Roma people mobility after 1989 was noticed in Romania, as the costs and risks associated to travels abroad decreased” (Tarnovschi, D., 2011: 66), but the dimension of poverty and social exclusion of the Roma people persisted irrespective of the destination country of this process of migration.

## Poverty and social exclusion of the Roma within European and national context

In the period of 2008-2013, the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the 27 EU member states, increased from 117 million to 121 million, after a decrease to 114 million during the previous period, 2005-2009. A peak of 123 million poor people was recorded in 2012, and a decrease by about 2 million people in the next year, 2013. Most certainly, this trend is due to the economic crisis of 2008 and to the recessions that subsequently swept throughout most European countries. Presently, 40.4% of the Romanian population is at risk of poverty or of social exclusion.



Source: Eurostat

*From the perspective of poverty in Europe, in the list of the poorest 20 regions of Europe, Romania has 6 areas, which cover almost all the country (exception Bucharest-Ilfov area) (Stanciu, M., Mihăilescu, A., 2011: 9).*



Depending on the age of the people affected by poverty, compared to the European means by age category, one may notice that, in Romania, the highest difference for 2010-2013 period is for the population younger than 18, which shows that the young generation needs priority interventions to curb poverty and social exclusion.

**Table 2:** Proportion of the population affected by the risk of poverty and social exclusion, depending on the age category

Year Age	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	RO	EU27	RO	EU27	RO	EU27	RO	EU27
<18	28.6	13.0	25.0	13.5	31.2	12.7	-	11.8
18-24	18.8	12.1	21.2	12.0	16.1	13.2	-	13.1
25-49	16.2	8.3	14.9	8.7	17.0	9.1	-	7.8
50-64	12.2	7.8	13.2	8.4	13.5	9.1	-	8.0
> 65	17.3	11.6	13.2	11.0	13.5	10.8	-	8.1

Source: Eurostat

A new trend is noticed in terms of the number of people in a household, which shows a higher level of poverty in the households with 2 adult people and 3 or more children in their care, which is a worrying aspect if we consider the size of the Roma families.

**Table 3:** People at risk of poverty and social exclusion, depending on household size

Year Household type	2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	RO	EU27	RO	EU27	RO	EU27	RO	EU27	RO	EU27	RO	EU27	RO	EU27
1 adult and 1 child in care	42.5	33.1	39.9	35.2	35.3	34.0	31.9	36.9	40.0	34.7	39.8	33.5	31.3	31.9
2 adults and 1 child in care	14.9	11.9	14.1	11.3	14.9	11.4	16.4	11.6	18.2	12.6	39.8	12.9	31.3	12.7
2 adult and 2 children in care	22.4	14.0	24.0	14.1	24.3	14.5	26.7	14.9	26.7	15.4	27.2	15.0	22.8	14.1
2 adult and 3 or more children in care	54.8	26.1	57.3	26.6	56.3	26.7	60.4	26.4	54.7	25.1	59.8	25.6	59.8	26.5

Source: Eurostat

Another aspect regarding poverty and social exclusion reveals, for Romania, a higher proportion of people living in households whose members don't have a place of.

**Table 4:** Proportion of the population living in households whose members don't have a place of work

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>EU27</b>	9.4	9.3	10.2	10.7	10.9	11.2	11.3	10.9
<b>RO</b>	10.0	9.9	9.9	9.9	12.2	11.7	11.6	11.4

Source: Eurostat

Given the importance of employment in curbing poverty and social exclusion, the statistics show that, in Romania, irrespective of their statistical state – employed, inactive, unemployed, retired – the people are confronted with much more serious poverty problems than the average values registered in the other EU member states.

**Table 5:** Poverty and employment

Year	2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	RO	EU27	RO	EU27	RO	EU27	RO	EU27	RO	EU27	RO	EU27	RO	EU27
<b>Employed people</b>	18.3	8.4	17.5	8.6	17.6	8.4	17.2	8.3	18.9	8.8	19.1	9.0	18.0	8.9
<b>Inactive people</b>	33.1	27.3	31.8	27.2	30.7	26.7	29.8	26.7	32.9	26.9	34.9	27.4	36.0	26.8
<b>Jobless people</b>	27.9	23.9	24.7	23.5	22.3	23.1	20.5	22.7	20.8	23.1	22.0	23.0	22.7	22.7
<b>Unemployed people</b>	46.4	43.6	42.7	44.8	46.4	45.2	45.4	45.3	47.7	45.9	51.8	46.3	51.1	46.5
<b>Retired people</b>	22.9	16.6	19.0	16.3	15.7	15.6	12.8	13.8	11.1	14.0	11.2	13.2	12.0	12.6
<b>Population</b>	22.8	15.8	20.9	15.5	19.8	15.3	18.7	15.2	19.8	15.7	20.5	15.7	20.2	15.6

Source: Eurostat

The 2011 European Commission report (Bartlett, W., Benini, R. & Gordon, C., 2011:40), makes a dynamic analysis of the absolute poverty, taking the years 2000 and 2005 as references: in absolute terms, in 2000 more than two thirds from the Roma people living in Romania (about 68%) were living in poverty (at a PPC of 4.3\$/day), while in 2005, the poverty rate had decreased significantly (to 22%).

According to UNDP/World Bank/European commission data of 2011, 3 of 4 Roma people are in **relative poverty**, unlike 1 of 4 people belonging to the majority population. In Romania, in 2005 just 2 of 5 Roma people lived under conditions of relative poverty.

The reference document for the programming of the financial exercise 2014-2020 identified several aspects regarding the poverty and social exclusion of the Roma people living in Romania (Partnership agreement, 2014).

- Two thirds of the Roma people live in poverty, and half of them are exposed to extreme poverty, while just 619,000 of the general population (3.2%) live under similar conditions (Partnership agreement, 2014:51).

- The Roma children are the most affected by poverty: 27.3% poverty rate of the Roma children in the urban environment, compared to 2% of the general population, and 41.1% in the rural environment, compared to 10.6% of the general population (Partnership agreement, 2014:49)
- The poor schooling rate is regarded as the underlying cause of poverty among the Roma people (82.4% of the Roma children of school age attend school, 6.9% dropped out of school and 8.9% have never been enrolled within the educational system; the Roma girls run a higher risk of early school dropout and early motherhood (Partnership agreement, 2014:51-52).
- About 38% of the Roma population works as unskilled workers, 32 are skilled workers (workers, sellers, trade agents), 9% are agricultural workers and 13% perform traditional Roma activities (Partnership agreement, 2014:52)

Roma people are victims of the vicious poverty circle: the lack of jobs, or the low level of incomes prevent them investing in the education of their children, in health or to improve their living conditions, while the lack of these elements generates, in turn, poverty.

In order to solve these disparities, the deficiencies have to be mapped properly, while the priorities have to be set adequately.

The reference framework regarding the situation specific to the social exclusion of the Roma people living in Romania, is presented in an updated and synthetic form in the 2015-2020 Strategy of the Government of Romania for the inclusion of the Romanian people belonging to the Roma minority (Government decision 18/January 14, 2015).

## **Curbing the poverty and social exclusion of the Roma minority – European and national priorities**

Discrimination, poverty, social exclusion, the lack of education, the lack of access to basic healthcare, the lack of dwelling, etc., are just a few of the problems confronting, day by day, the Roma people throughout the entire European Union (CE, 2005)<sup>1</sup>.

Although antidiscrimination policies have been developed during the past decade, as well as various initiatives to improve the living conditions and promote the social integration of the Roma people, throughout Europe, this minority still is the most discriminated group compared to other minorities, also being the most exposed to social exclusion. According to EU the 2009 EU study on minorities and discrimination, in average, 50% of the Roma respondents have been victims of a situation of discrimination during the previous year, while 20% have been the victims of a racial attack (EU-MIDIS, 2009). Furthermore, the Roma people are also confronted with a social-economic exclusion: they are the largest, yet the poorest ethnic minority in

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<sup>1</sup> EC, 2005, DG Employment and Social Affairs, *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union*, Luxembourg.

Europe. The high unemployment rate, the low educational level and the precarious sanitary conditions are correlated to poverty, even severe poverty.

The Decade for Roma inclusion initiative (**“Decade of Roma inclusion 2005-2015”**, launched in 2005) is the positive reference example for improved cooperation between the supranational institutions, national governmental representatives and the civil society for the inclusion of the Roma people. The initiators of this multilateral project have been eight governments from Central and South-Eastern Europe, subsequently joined by other countries, which have drawn support from the World Bank, the Open Society Institute, the Council of Europe, the Council of the European Development Bank, United Nations Development Program, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Commission. The countries that presently support the project are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Yugoslav Republic of a Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Spain. The Decade is the first multinational project in Europe focusing on the present improvement of the socioeconomic status of the Roma community. The priority axes of the Decade focus on four major areas of intervention: *education, labour force employment, health and dwelling*. These areas are, of course, interconnected, so that the policies with satisfactory results in an area will necessarily have a positive influence on the others too.

*The 10 common basic principles on Roma inclusion*, which were set and presented in 2009, within the First Integrated European Roma Platform<sup>1</sup> (convened at Prague, on April 24<sup>th</sup>, under the Czech Presidency of the EU) are significant guiding lines for the design and implementation of cultural-sensitive and efficient policies supporting the successful integration of the disadvantaged group of European Roma.

The principles state explicitly that the Roma policies must:

- Be constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies
- Be explicit but not exclusive targeting
- Provide inter-cultural approach
- Aim for the mainstream
- Have awareness of the gender dimension
- Provide transfer of evidence-based policies

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<sup>1</sup> The Integrated European Roma Platform (established following the conclusions of the Council for General Affairs, on December 8, 2008) is constituted from the stakeholders representing EU institutions, international bodies, governments of the member states and actors of the civil society. The activities of the Platform focus on three basic functions: exchange of good practices and experience in the field of Roma inclusion between the member states; provision of analytical support; encouraging the cooperation between all stakeholders on all Roma matters.

- Make use of European Union instruments
- Involve the regional and local authorities
- Involve the civil society
- Provide for the active participation of the Roma

The above-mentioned principles have been annexed to the conclusions of the Council meeting from June 8, 2009. By adopting these principles, the European Council restated EU commitment to promote further cohesion and social inclusion.

*The Integrated European Platform for Roma Inclusion (or the Integrated European Roma Platform)* is explicitly mentioned by the „**European Commission announcement on the EU framework for national strategies for Roma integration by 2020**” as having „*a significant contribution to the accomplishment of European and national policies more sensitive to Roma needs.*” (Paragraph 7 „Empowering Civil Society: A Stronger Role for the European Platform for Roma Inclusion”). Thus, its role within the new framework is reinforced regarding the following general objectives:

- Providing assistance and support to the member states by facilitating the exchange of knowledge and good practices *within and outside the EU*;
- Providing feedback for the European Commission on the results of the national initiatives, through the voice of the Roma actors of the civil society.

EU-level objectives, formulated in the European Commission announcement on the framework for the national strategies for Roma integration, promote the *need for an integrated approach*, in order to keep under control the problem of Roma exclusion. These objectives are grouped around four main areas of socioeconomic inclusion<sup>1</sup>. First of all, they are domains of the national policies:

- Education: enhancing the efforts to include all Roma children with the elementary education and support them to graduate the primary education level;
- Workforce employment: enhancing the efforts to cancel the difference between the Roma and the other people in matters of employment;
- Healthcare: enhancing the efforts to reduce the difference in the health state between the Roma and the other people;
- Dwelling: enhancing the efforts to cancel the difference between the Roma and the other people in matters of access to dwelling and public utilities such as water and electricity.

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<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that the implementation of policies in a field should also have a visible positive impact in other fields, which means that the interventions should be harmonized and designed carefully, having permanently in mind the close connection between the four areas of national policy presented hereafter.

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the European Commission responded, by the announcement on the “EU framework for national strategies for Roma integration by 2020”, complete document on policies addressing the social inclusion of the marginalized Roma communities from Europe. According to the EU policy for the Roma community, the national strategies for Roma integration should be developed a) in agreement with the common basic principles on Roma inclusion; b) in agreement with the broader framework of the 2020 European Strategy (for economic development); c) in agreement with the NPRs<sup>1</sup>.

In a report for the World Bank, D. Sandu (2005:11) highlights the fact that there are three large categories of problems confronting the Roma communities: of accessibility, of income and of infrastructure. It is obvious that the Roma minority, being second after the Magyar minority as proportion of the general population, is confronted with multiple problems such as poverty, lack of education, healthcare, lack of identification papers, lack of dwelling, unemployment and discrimination (Micu, J., 2009:11).

With a large proportion of people affected by poverty, Romania undertook to develop, by 2020, several policies and programs which to:

- (a) Take out at least 580,000 people from the poverty caused by low incomes, by 2020 compared to 2008 (about 6.51% of the 2012 level);
- (b) Disrupt the poverty cycle that is inherited from generation to generation;
- (c) Provide the equal access to social work, money and services transfers, such as consolidation of the social cohesion.

Even though there has been significant progress in improving national policies targeting the Roma would be wise to capitalize recorded positive experiences on social inclusion and social economy (Cace S. et al, 2010; Cace S. et. al, 2011; Nicolaescu et. al., 2012).

## Conclusions

Performing researches and studies which allow knowing the factors that produce and support poverty is very important for the development and implementation of efficient prevention and controlling measures for this spreading phenomenon (Macarie, S., 2009:64). However, a certain duality exists in the theory and practice, the programmatic frameworks for the control of poverty and social exclusion and the reality of the initiatives implemented in the European and national area becoming gradually harmonized. From this point of view, it is recommended to concentrate the resources from structural funds (Cace C. et. al, 2009; Cace C. et. al, 2010; Cace C. et. al, 2011a) and to pass over the global crisis effects (Cace C. et. al, 2011b; Cace C. et. al, 2012).

For instanced, the vicious circle of poverty-precarious education of the Roma people, by which poverty is described as an important factor for the low school attendance, together with the acknowledgement of cultural patterns specific to the different types

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<sup>1</sup> National Programs of Reform.

of Roma communities, which has a high explanative power (Dobrică, P., Jderu, G., 2005) is very well designed by a concentric series of directions of action to enhance the educational level of the Roma. From the design and implementation of standardized directions of action, to the identification of the success outcomes, and to the propagation and replication of the good practices, a more generous space should be established for the use of the positive experiences. A certain lag has been identified in the survey of a particular social phenomenon and in the design of directions of action and of operational mechanisms, while the monitoring and evaluation of the initiatives should provide reorientations and adjustments determined by the actions that work and produce real outcomes in curbing the poverty and social exclusion of the Roma.

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# NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF PHYSICAL ABUSE OF ELDER PEOPLE ON THE PERPETRATORS – EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM ZAMBIA<sup>1</sup>

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Isaac KABELENGA<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** *The purpose of this article is to explore the negative consequences of physical abuse of elder people on the perpetrators by using the perceptions and conceptions of community leaders in rural and urban Zambia. On the basis of the qualitative research with community leaders involved in addressing the problem of elder abuse in Zambia, it is evident that physical abuse of elder people has serious negative consequences on perpetrators. These include arrests, fine, imprisonment, stigma, leaving the community and negative psychological effects such as fear. Since social gerontologists, social workers and public health workers are among the main frontline workers in addressing the problem of elder abuse, this article argues that these revelations have serious implications on social gerontology, social work and public health education, practice and research as well as on future research with regard to the global phenomenon of physical abuse of elder people. This is because the revelations made in this article suggest new ways of thinking about the problem of physical abuse of elder people. Thus the main field of application of this article is social gerontology, social work and public health.*

**Keywords:** *Physical abuse of elder people; negative consequences; perpetrators; Zambia*

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## Introduction

Elder abuse is a global problem with multiple perpetrators which include family and none-family members (World Report on Violence and Health, 2002; Jackson, 2014;

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<sup>1</sup> NOTE: There is no potential conflict of interest regarding this manuscript. However, the materials used in this article are part of my own going PhD thesis. Part of the materials have also already appeared in my other articles published in Journal of Community Positive Practices, XIV(2), 2014 and Journal of Postmodernism Problems, Vol.5, No.1 and Vol.5, No.3, 2015. In addition, for the sake of protecting the identity of the research participants, I have replaced the actual names of the participants with aliases.

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Kabelenga, 2014; Phelan, 2015; World Report on Ageing and Health, 2015). This means that many incidences of elder abuse involve at least two parties – the abused elder person and the perpetrators of the abuse (Kabelenga, 2015a; Kabelenga, 2015b). Notwithstanding this, there is a very surprising thing in the existing literature on the negative consequences of elder abuse. That is, there is very little information (to the best of my knowledge) that shows the negative consequences of elder abuse on the perpetrators of elder abuse. Negative consequences of elder abuse have always been talked about with bias to the abused elder person. These include psychological problems such as depression, emotional problems such as loss of trust and social support, physical injuries, restrictions on and elimination of autonomy, increased institutionalization, imposition of a guardianship, loss of assets, increased hospitalization and mortality. In a nutshell, it means that the negative consequences of elder abuse lead to a diminished quality of life for abused older adults (Hudson, 1991; Wolf, 2000; World Report on Violence and Health, 2002; Dong, Simon and Gorbien, 2007; Iborra, 2008; HelpAge International, 2011; Anetzberger, 2012; Phelan, 2013; World Report on Ageing and Health, 2015). With regard to the perpetrators, the only negative consequence talked about and also in brief is facing the law (World Report on Violence and Health, 2002; National Center on Elder Abuse Administration on Ageing, 2014).

The above grave gap in the existing literature has provided the picture which shows that when elder abuse takes place, it is only the abused elder person that feels the negative effects of the abuse and the perpetrators do not experience any negative consequences. In my own thinking this is a very misleading picture. Some readers of the available literature on elder abuse who are not able to think outside box are also misled into thinking that the negative consequences of elder abuse are only felt by the abused elder people. In the same vein the potential perpetrators of elder abuse are made to think that even if they abuse an elder person, they will not experience any negative consequences as all the existing literature on elder abuse have shown shown that the negative consequences of elder abuse are felt only by the abused elder people and not the perpetrators.

Thus, the aim of this article is to fill up the above gap in the existing literature. I focus specifically on the negative consequences of physical abuse of elder people on the perpetrators in rural and urban Zambia. I hope this will broaden thinking about elder abuse and spark public debates which are essential in the fight against elder abuse.

## **Definitions of elder abuse**

There is no universally agreed upon definition of elder abuse. This is because elder abuse is socially constructed which means different meanings to different people across the world (WHO, 2002; Phelan, 2013; Kabelenga, 2014). According to Wolf (2000) elder abuse is a term with broad meaning, including many forms and examples, always describing harm or loss to an older person. Payne (2005, p. 2) argues that ‘the term elder abuse captures virtually any possible harm inflicted on an older person by society, care setting, or individual. WHO has also defined the concept of elder abuse. This buzz organization defines elder abuse as a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action

occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or stress to an older person (WHO, 2012, p.1).

When I critically look at the above definitions, there are two important things which I am able to see. First, I can see that elder abuse takes in many forms. Second, I can see that the common denominator of all these definitions is that elder abuse is an act that hurts or painfully disturb the life of an elder person (Kabelenga, 2014; Kabelenga, 2015). In this article, the terms elder person and elder abuse are defined according to the way the study participants conceptualized them. This is because the main part of this article is written on the basis of the empirical evidence on elder abuse in Zambia. Participants defined an elder person as any person in their 50s and above or those with gray hair. On the other hand, elder abuse was used to refer to any intentional acts that involved hurting or painfully disturbing the life of any person who was in their 50s and above and/or who had gray hair. The above conceptions by the participants underscore the earlier arguments that the terms ‘elder person’ and ‘elder abuse’ are social constructs (WHO, 2002; Phelan, 2013; Kabelenga, 2014). For example, in Western societies, the onset of older age is usually considered to coincide with the age of retirement, at 60 or 65 years of age (World Report on Ageing and Health, 2015). Another old age definition that is increasingly becoming popular is that provided by the UN. The UN agreed cutoff is 60+ years to refer to the elder population (WHO, 2012; HelpAge International, 2015). Thus, when these definitions are reflected upon in connection with how the participants in Zambia conceptualized an elder person, it can be argued that what might be relevant in one context might not be relevant in another context (Fook, 2002; Mullaly, 2007; Gray and Webb, 2013; Kabelenga, 2014; Kabelenga, 2015). As can be seen, the conceptions held by the western countries and the UN about an elder person seems not to be relevant to the participants who participated in my study. Thus, the criteria commonly used in western countries and by the UN to construct an elder person are not used in this article. Rather what has been used is the criterion provided by the study participants in Zambia. This reflected reality of an elder person in Zambia from the participants’ perceptions and conceptions at that time of the study.

## **Review of available literature on negative consequences of elder abuse on the abused elder people and the perpetrators**

In international literature, a typology that has similarly gained ground in the study of abuse of elder persons identifies five categories of abuse that elder people suffer. These are physical abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, sexual abuse, verbal abuse and material abuse (Wolf, 2000; HelpAge International, 2011; Kabelenga, 2014; Kabelenga, 2015; World Report on Ageing and Health, 2015). In this article, the focus is on physical abuse of elder people. Physical abuse refers to the acts that cause physical harm to the body of an elder person. Examples of this type of abuse include use of restraints for instance, tie somebody to a bed by using ropes or chains or by other physical and medical means, slapping, shoving, beating, hitting, pushing, burning, kicking, throwing out of a house, not keeping the elder person safe from danger or injury, intentionally not removing danger and admissions for overdoses of prescribed

medication among others (Ibid; Cohen, 2007). Besides the negative consequences of physical abuse on the abused elder person mentioned in introduction, Bavel, Janssens, Schakenraad and Thurlings (2010) bring out the following to be additional negative consequences of physical abuse on the abused elder people: physical pain, bruises, withdrawal, sudden incontinence, lack of appetite, black eyes and anxiety.

To the contrary, there is scanty information regarding the negative consequences on the perpetrators of physical abuse. Thorough searches of on-line and hard copy literature both published and grey [at least to the best of my abilities] do not bring out detailed information about the negative consequences of physical abuse on the perpetrators. For example, Heisler (2000) and National Center on Elder Abuse Administration on Ageing (2014) notes that most states in the United States have penalties for those who victimize older adults. However, they have not provided any detailed information about how many perpetrators have been prosecuted and convicted for physical abuse of elder people. Perhaps scarcity of information on the negative consequences of elder abuse on the perpetrators indicates that previous studies have not paid attention to this sphere of elder abuse. Thus, this article aims to fill-up this void in the existing literature.

## **Objective**

The specific objective of this article is to explore the negative consequences of physical abuse of elder people on the perpetrators by using the perceptions and conceptions of community leaders in rural and urban Zambia. In this article, the word community is used to denote a group of people living together in one geographical area, and thus they understand their local environment better (Osei-Hwedie, Mwansa and Katembula, 1990; Kamwengo, 2004). On the other hand, community leaders referred to include ward councilors, chief's representatives, village headmen, youths and women leaders, church (religious) leaders, the police, court judges, community crime prevention units (CCPUs), area development community members, public health workers, elder people's representatives and social workers among others.

## **Methodology**

### ***Material and methods***

To achieve the above objective, a qualitative approach that included focus group discussions (FGDs) and one-on-one interviews with 31 community leaders [19 from rural Zambia and 12 from urban Zambia] who were purposively selected were conducted. This disparity in the number of participants was because they were more participants in rural Zambia who were readily available to participate in the study than those in urban Zambia. This approach allowed detailed and richer information about the negative consequences of physical abuse on the perpetrators to be captured using the voices of the people who had first hand information about elder abuse in their local communities (Creswell, 2007; Mason, 2013; Kabelenga, 2014; Kabelenga, 2015). I conducted 36 interviews [22 in rural Zambia and 14 in urban Zambia]. The number of interviews conducted surpassed the number of participants (31) who participated in the

study because some of the interviews were follow-up interviews with the same participants. On average each interview lasted between one hour and three hours. I conducted all the interviews myself because I wanted to make sure that I collect all the information that I needed to know about the negative consequences of physical abuse on the perpetrators in rural and urban Zambia.

### *Data Analysis*

Data was analyzed manually after transcribing all the 36 interviews using the qualitative data transcribing software called Express Scribe Transcription. I first read each of the 36 transcripts several times to get a sense of the data in its entirety. During initial reading of the transcripts, open coding procedures were employed, where codes were created from what was present in the data (Pope, Loeffler and Ferrell, 2014). After identifying initial codes in the transcripts, I moved to focused coding. This involved making decisions about what codes were most relevant to the research objective, discarding codes that were not relevant, and combining earlier codes that were similar. Constant comparison was used to look for similarities and differences in categories across the transcripts. Thus, the whole process was a back and forth process and as such it was very stressful (Creswell, 2007; Kabelenga, 2014; Kabelenga, 2015).

### *Confidentiality*

Because the participants were assured that their names would not be revealed anywhere, I have not mentioned the actual communities where the study took place. The names of the participants have also been changed with aliases. However, I have maintained the actual verbatim transcripts from the interviews.

## **Findings and discussions**

### *Demographic characteristics of the participants*

The participants were aged between 27 and 72 years. Of the total 31 informants, 23 were males and 8 were females. Of the 23 males, 16 were from rural Zambia and 7 were from urban Zambia. With regard to 8 females, 5 were from urban Zambia and 3 were from rural Zambia. In terms of educational attainments, 1 participant had primary school education, 3 had gone up to high school level, 18 had college [vocational] education and 9 were university graduates [maximum of masters degree]. In addition, all the participants had participated in addressing elder abuse in their communities. There were more males than females who participated in the study because the majority of the community leaders in Zambia who are involved in addressing elder abuse are men.

### ***Evidence of physical abuse of elder people in rural and urban Zambia***

In both rural and urban Zambia, participants acknowledged having witnessed incidences of physical abuse of elder people. By physical abuse, informants meant intentional acts that caused physical harm to the bodies of elder persons. In acknowledging the existence of physical abuse, participants cited specific examples in which physical abuse manifested in their communities. These included beating, setting ablaze and killing of elder persons. Some participants' remarks on physical abuse of elder people in their communities were as follows:

*"I would really say that it happens on the daily basis. Yes. In fact it is a pity that I didn't look up the old newspapers but every now and then you do see a story in press of an elderly person who has been assaulted because they are suspected of being sorcerers. If they are just assaulted they are very lucky because sometime they actually get killed. Yes."* **(Grandmum aged 72 years – Urban Zambia).**

*"Some have been beaten to death, as a hospital we have received some that have been brought in dead, and some come in badly injured so we take care of them. We do receive such cases. Yes."* **(FGD. 5 – Rural Zambia).**

The above result raises serious implications on the severity of the impacts of physical abuse of elder persons in rural and urban Zambia. It seems that from the participants' perceptions and conceptions physical abuse is the extreme form of elder abuse as it can result not only in body injuries of an elder person but also in instant loss of lives of some elder persons. This finding is also similar with results on physical abuse established by other researchers from other countries such as Baker (1975); Burston, (1975); Pillemer and Wolf (1986); Wolf (2000); WHO (2002); Iborra, (2008); HelpAge International, (2011); and Anetzberger (2012). This means that regardless of the differences in social contexts, similar types of elder abuse may produce similar negative consequences on the abused elder persons.

### ***Negative consequences of physical abuse on the perpetrators***

In light of the above revelations, I asked the participants this question: what are the negative consequences of physical abuse of elder people on the perpetrators? Interesting findings of this study is that physical abuse of elder people had serious negative consequences on the perpetrators. From the participants' perceptions and conceptions, common negative consequences on the perpetrators included arrests, fine and imprisonment; stigma; and leaving the community. Details on each of these consequences are provided below:

#### ***Arrests, fine and imprisonment***

The participants revealed that once physical abuse cases were reported to the law enforcement agencies such as the police, Zambian courts of law, village courts and CCPUs, the perpetrators of elder abuse were arrested, fined and imprisoned. That was

because elder abuse in Zambia was criminal offence. Typical stories on how the perpetrators were hard hit by the Zambian criminal laws were as follows:

*“The chaps who abused the older man to death were rounded up when the doctor wrote causes of death as having been bodily injuries causing death, bodily injuries, assault, and so on. Those chaps were rounded up by the police and they served sentences.” (FGD.1 – Rural Zambia).*

*“The negative effects, some have been jailed. The time I have stayed in this community, statistics, maybe I would say two to three have been jailed. They have been jailed I remember for ten, thirty years or something like that. Somewhere there.” (Brian in his 40s – Rural Zambia).*

*“The consequences which fall on such types of culprits are that the law takes its course. Once they are brought before book, such people are convicted, because the law will take its course. Already they have broken the law and the due process has to done. And many of those have ended up getting convicted either through a fine or even others even custodial sentence. They are serving. We have a quite a number of people that are already in prison. Those that may have failed to pay a fine if fined by subordinate court. I will talk of cases that are currently around. We have two people that have been convicted and three of them are serving a nine months jail sentence with simple imprisonment and another set was also sentenced to another nine months just within here.” (Wynter in his 50s – Rural Zambia).*

*“They arrested the sister who abused the brother. Yes we were told so by the police. And since then she was released I think on bail or bond, and then the police would be better placed to determine what type of justice.” (Eunice aged 34 – Urban Zambia).*

*“There are so many incidences of jails.” (David in his 50s – Urban Zambia).*

The above result implies that from the participants’ perceptions and conceptions, physical abuse in their communities and throughout Zambia was criminal offence liable to fine and imprisonment or both upon conviction by the courts of the law. Thus, from the participants’ perspectives if anyone in their communities thought that if they abused the elder person they would go scot free, they would not provided they would be brought before the law enforcement agencies. Interestingly, through this study some participants especially from law enforcement agencies even appealed to the elder people and the general public in Zambia to report any form of abuse against elder people especially to the magistrate courts where the penalties for elder abuse on the perpetrators were heavy: *“I will actually advise older people and the public through you to report those cases to us. For the perpetrators to receive heavy punishment, I encourage older people to be taking those cases to magistrate court and not local court. Because at magistrate courts, the punishment is heavy and perpetrators feel the effects for their actions.” (Court judge in his 40s).* Participants cited the Zambia Witchcraft Chapter 90, Defamation Act of 1964; Criminal Procedure Code Act of 1973 and Moral Justice Act of 1996 as some of the legal acts that backed arrests, fine and imprisonment of the perpetrators of elder abuse in their communities and the whole Zambia.

The above result implies that from the participants’ perceptions and conceptions, the legal consequences suffered by the perpetrators of physical abuse of elder people in their communities were in line with the Zambia national legal frameworks on violation of human rights. This means that participants perceived physical abuse of elder people in their communities as violation of elder people’s rights. Thus, the result is in line with

the on-going global discourses on elder abuse. In international human rights discourses, elder abuse is seen as violation of elder people's human rights (World Report on Violence and Health, 2002; Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002; HelpAge International, 2011; Phelan, 2013; World Report on Ageing and Health, 2015). The result also agrees with Heisler (2000) and National Center on Elder Abuse Administration on Ageing (2014) arguments that elder abuse is criminal offence in many states.

## ***Stigma***

Almost all participants disclosed that the perpetrators of physical abuse suffered serious stigma from other community members who did not support abuse of elder people. For example, because of their barbaric actions, other community members did not want to interact with the perpetrators as they were seen to be evil people not worthy to associate with. When describing the stigma associated with physical abuse of elder people, some informants described the perpetrators as 'black sheep' because everyone in the community recognized them as community savages. Representative expressions of the participants on this consequence were as follows:

*"They are feared in the community. People are not free with them. Because even when they say who carried it? – to mention him (laughs informants), and they learn you the one who (laughs informants). You can't even do it. Its, we can say, fear, you respect out fear. It's not a well meant respect. Its respect that comes out of fear. I don't know how you call that kind of respect that which comes out of fear, not because the person is just to be respected. There is respect that has savage character, burry, you know. Those are the black sheep."* (FGD.1 – Rural Zambia).

*"The negative effect is that they will walk along with their stigma; they will be guilt for the rest of their lives. And so, already that can have a telling psychological impact on the perpetrator. It is like you are an enemy to yourself."* (Father Isaiah aged 64 – Urban Zambia).

A critical reflection upon the above result implies that from the participants' perceptions and conceptions, perpetrators of physical abuse of elder people in their communities had ended up destroying their own community images, characters and conscious. It is seems that from the informants' perspectives stigma was a short-term and long-term negative consequence of abusing an elder person on the perpetrators. The result seems also to suggest that from the participants' perceptions and conceptions, physical abuse of elder people resulted into isolation of the perpetrators from the mainstream society. It also resulted into negative psychological impacts such as guilty and fear on the perpetrators. When these results are linked to the negative consequences of physical abuse on the abused elder people, it can be seen that they are similar with the negative consequences on the perpetrators. In the above literature on the consequences of physical abuse on the abused elder person, stigma, and isolation and negative psychological effects like fear have been brought out (Hudson, 1991; Wolf, 2000; World Report on Violence and Health, 2002; Dong, Simon and Gorbien, 2007; Iborra, 2008; HelpAge International, 2011; Anetzberger, 2012; Phelan, 2013; Draft Zambia National Ageing Policy, 2013; World Report on Ageing and Health, 2015). The same consequences were brought out by the participants to be the negative consequences on the perpetrators in their communities. Thus, this is a very interesting

finding, because it suggests that both the abused and the perpetrators of physical abuse in rural and urban Zambia suffered the similar negative consequences. Perhaps, the finding means that perpetrators of physical abuse in rural and urban Zambia did not know that even they would suffer negative consequences for the physical abuse of elder people.

### *Leaving the community*

Of great interest also was that the material gathered in this study revealed that some of the perpetrators of elder abuse ended up leaving the community after abusing the elder people. That was because they feared police arrests and vengeance from other community members. Others were deported from the community by the community leaders. From the participants' perceptions and conceptions, that was because it was against community norms and values in Zambia to abuse elder people and the perpetrators of elder abuse were perceived by the community leaders to be dangerous to the whole community. Thus, in order to discourage community members from violation of community norms and values, perpetrators were sometimes forced by community leaders to leave the community. Participants' testified of what they had seen for themselves as follows:

*"In this community, the number is big those that are on the run, they are also many. They fear to be arrested, because of the law that is coming in. You remember we started by saying that this law came with the white man and us as Africans, after independence we have not looked at this law, but we are changing these other laws, but with this one we have not changed it. So once they find themselves in such a situation, they remember this law, they say, if this law visits you, the end result is being into prison, they run away."* **(Moffat aged 61 – Rural Zambia).**

*"Sometimes the perpetrator and his family are made to leave the area. Even the family can be made to leave the area. Exactly. At times you find that that family is guilty of looking at whatever they went through."* **(Brian in his 40s – Rural Zambia).**

*"You find this character would look for another village somewhere else, would relocate."* **(Father Isaiah aged 64 – Urban Zambia).**

*"Some even relocate. In fact both the abused and the abuser relocate and the whole community suffer"* **(Lainess aged 67 – Urban Zambia).**

*It is also increasing the number of the people roaming the streets because they killed a person."* **(David in his 50s – Urban Zambia).**

By reflecting carefully on the above result, it implies that from the participants' perceptions and conceptions, the negative consequences of physical abuse of elder people in their communities backfired to the perpetrators. From the above testimonies, the result also implies that some perpetrators of physical abuse of elder people in rural and urban Zambia had ended up disturbing their own lives. That was because some of them ended up becoming vagabonds to avoid facing wrath of the law or community dissociation. This result entails also that from the participants' perceptions and conceptions, the above negative consequence should be seen to emanate from the



Zambia national laws and community norms and values that regulate criminal behavior such as physical abuse of elder people.

The above all are the negative consequences of physical abuse of elder people on the perpetrators in rural and urban Zambia from the perceptions and conceptions of the participants.

## Conclusions

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following are the conclusions:

To begin with, from the perceptions and conceptions of the participants the negative consequences of physical abuse in rural and urban Zambia do not only affect the abused elder persons. It also negatively affects the perpetrators. From the participants' revelations, the main ways in which the perpetrators are negatively affected in their communities include arrests, fine and imprisonments, stigma, leaving the community, destruction of family and community relationships and negative psychological effects such as fear and guilty.

Arriving from the above, it can also be concluded that from the participants' perceptions and conceptions physical abuse of elder people results in deterioration of the quality of life of the perpetrators and their families. This is evident in that once physical abuse cases are reported to law enforcement agencies, perpetrators get arrested, fined or imprisoned. If they don't, most of them run away from their communities for fear of suffering wrath of the law or community vengeance. Some of them become vagabonds. This means that physical abuse of elder people make the perpetrators in rural and urban Zambia to become restless. When these negative consequences arise, the perpetrators' family members also suffer. For example, the family may lose their family member through imprisonment or the family is also made to leave the community by the community leaders. Thus, it can be concluded that the negative consequences of physical abuses on the perpetrators are huge and have short term and long term negative consequences.

Interesting conclusions that arise from the results is that some of negative consequences of physical abuse on the perpetrators and the abused elder persons are the same. This is evident in that from the participants' revelations, the perpetrators of physical abuse in rural and urban Zambia suffered stigma, isolation and negative psychological effects such as fear and guilty. Using the available literature both in Zambia and outside Zambia, these are the same negative consequences that the abused elder persons suffer (see Wolf, 2000; World Report on Violence and Health, 2002; and Mupila, 2008; Draft Zambia National Ageing Policy, 2013).

It can also be concluded that from the participants' perceptions and conceptions, the above negative consequences on the perpetrators have come about because law enforcement agencies and community leaders in Zambia have come out strongly in punishing the perpetrators of physical abuse of the elder people. Thus, if they were no actual implementation of the Zambian criminal laws and community norms and values

that regulate criminal behavior such as physical abuse of elder people, perpetrators of physical abuse in Zambia would not have suffered much negative consequences.

## **Limitations**

This article has two limitations. First, the article is written on the basis of the qualitative data collected from 31 participants in Zambia. It should be noted that one of the main central aims of any qualitative research inquiry is to provide in-depth information about a particular phenomenon (Pope et al., 2014). Therefore, the revelations made in this article should be cautiously applied to other parts of Zambia and the whole world. For example, although the findings presented in this article are from 31 participants drawn from rural and urban Zambia, they should not be generalized to other parts of the world. This is because what may be true in one setting may not be true in other settings (Kabelenga, 2014; Kabelenga, 2015; Kabelenga, 2016). Second, the study did not get the views of the perpetrators of physical abuse who suffered the actual negative consequences for abusing elder people. Thus, their experiences might be different from the perceptions and conceptions of the community leaders who participated in this study. Given its limitations, however, few previous studies have specifically examined the negative consequences of physical abuse on the perpetrators, so this represents a major strength of this article.

## **Implications of the findings for social gerontology, social work, public health education, practice and research**

Critical reflections upon the above findings when narrowed down to social gerontology, social work and public health education, practice and research with regard to the phenomenon of physical abuse of elder people raise the following implications among others:

To begin with, Social Gerontologists, Social Workers and Public Health Workers should know that physical abuse of elder people does not only negatively affect the abused elder people. It also negatively affects the perpetrators of physical abuse. Thus, programmes aimed at helping the victims of physical abuse should not only be directed towards the abused elder people but should also be targeted to the perpetrators. For example reformatory and re-integration programmes should be targeted also at the perpetrators of physical abuse. As has been seen in this article, once reported to law enforcement agencies many perpetrators of physical abuse in rural and urban Zambia go through serious disorientation. For instance, they get arrested, fined, imprisonment, stigmatized, live in constant fear, they become vagabonds, they develop psychological problems and they destroy family and community relationships among other negative consequences. Those people need to be helped by Social Gerontologists, Social Workers and Public Health Workers in order for them to reform and get integrated back in their families and communities.

Arriving from the above, it implies further that elder abuse literature should be updated to include the negative consequences of physical abuse on the perpetrators. As already mentioned in introduction and literature review section the current social gerontology,

social work and public health education, practice and research with regard to the phenomenon of physical abuse of elder people focuses on the negative consequences of physical abuse on the abused elder people and not on the perpetrators. This is a narrow approach and limits the thinking of the students, practitioners and researchers. This barrier in educational knowledge needs to be broken to include the perpetrators. This is essential in the fight against elder abuse as potential perpetrators will be made to know the possible negative consequences to expect if they abused an elder person through academic knowledge and the literature that they read. For instance, through that knowledge, it is possible that some of the potential perpetrators would refrain from elder abuse.

Furthermore, from the findings of this study, it is clear that many negative consequences of physical abuse that the perpetrators have suffered in Zambia is due to strong laws and community norms and values against criminal behavior such as abuse of the elder people. The laws and community norms and values have been translated into reality by punishing the perpetrators of physical abuse both at community level and at national level. This implies that one possible way for Social Gerontologists, Social Workers and Public Health Workers to be pragmatic in the fight against physical abuse of the elder people is by fostering strong collaborations with community/traditional leaders and law enforcement agencies. At community level, Social Gerontologists, Social Workers and Public Health Workers should lobby traditional leaders to come up with strong community rules against elder abuse. At national level, Social Gerontologists, Social Workers and Public Health Workers should work hand in hand with law enforcement agencies such as the police and courts of law in punishing, reforming and re-integration of perpetrators of physical abuse of the elder people. Going by the recommendation made by the court judge in Zambia that in order to deter people from abusing elder people, cases of elder abuse should be taken to magistrate courts and not civil courts, it means that Social Gerontologists, Social Workers and Public Health Workers should lobby all countries across the world so that all cases of elder abuse should fall within the jurisdictions of magistrate courts, high courts and supreme courts. This has a potential to deter people from abusing elder people as they would fear the wrath of the courts of the law. This is because cases which get handled by these courts of law attract huge penalties once one is convicted (Heisler, 2000; Zambia Criminal Procedure Code Act, 1973; Zambia Moral Justice Act, 1996).

Lastly but not the least, the findings imply that Social Gerontologists, Social Workers and Public Health Workers should be constantly questioning and challenging the existing theoretical and empirical literature on elder abuse. In other words, it means that Social Gerontologists, Social Workers and Public Health Workers should be very critical about what they learn in classrooms or what they read in available literature on elder abuse. This requires them to be reflective of what is going on in different contexts, places, from their own experiences and experiences of other Social Gerontologists, Social Workers, Public Health Workers or other professional and non professionals dealing with elder abuse (Fook, 2002; Mullaly, 2007; Gray and Webb, 2013). As has been established in this study, physical abuses of elder people do not only negatively affect the abused elder people as widely shown in literature on elder abuse in academic institutions, journals and world reports. Rather it also negatively affects the perpetrators. Doing so may encourage undertaking further studies on elder abuse and

in so doing generate new knowledge which is essential in reconstruction and deconstruction of the existing knowledge by challenging and/ or expanding the literature on the negative consequences of physical abuse of the elder people. Policy and program directions on elder abuse can also be shaped according to the negative consequences of physical abuse taking place in that particular society (Kabelenga, 2014; Kabelenga, 2015).

## Directions for future research

This article suggests two areas for future research:

First, because this article is based on qualitative research which makes it difficult to be generalized to other parts of the world, future research should be encouraged to investigate further the negative consequences of physical abuse of the elder people on the perpetrators. Undertaking separate studies in different regions of the world, for example in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America among others can be a good approach. In this way, it will be clear to know the negative consequences of physical abuse of elder people on the perpetrators in different parts of the world. This may help in informing social gerontology, social work and public health education, practice and research as well as local and international policies on elder abuse.

Second, since this study did not get the views of the perpetrators of physical abuse, future studies should examine the negative consequences of physical abuse on the perpetrators using the experiences of the perpetrators. This may help in bringing about a better understanding of the negative consequences that perpetrators suffer for engaging in physical abuse of the elder people.

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# THE CONTRIBUTION OF POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND RULES FOR SUCCESSFUL SUGGESTION SYSTEMS IN ORGANISATIONS: SOME RESEARCH FINDINGS

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Andries J du PLESSIS<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *A Suggestion System consists of a formal procedure which encourages employees to think creatively about their work and work environment, to generate and to produce ideas which will benefit the organisation for which the employee will receive recognition, in one or another way, if the ideas are useful for the organisation.*

*The success of any Suggestion System depends on a number of factors of which a proper Suggestion System policy, specific procedures, definite rules and certain structures might be some of the most important ones.*

*This paper reports on research of Suggestion Systems more specifically on generation of ideas, the importance of policies, procedures, rules and certain structures that should be in place for successful Suggestion Systems. This research was executed through qualitative research with structured interviews in 21 organisations in New Zealand of which 90.48% are from the private sector and 9.52% from the public sector. A 100% response rate was achieved.*

**Keywords:** *Idea generation, Suggestion Systems, policies, procedures, rules, employees*

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## Introduction

Everything mankind has and will have in the future is and will be the result of people's ideas. What is more is that it does not only derive from people of above average intelligence, but also from those of average intelligence. Employees will always have ideas, why not using it. Henry Ford said: "With every pair of hands you get a brain free" (Stern, 2006:7). Seinworth adds to that when he said: "Idea power is the most tremendous human force in the world" (Seinworth, 1948:3). One way for management to utilise the "free brain" and this tremendous human force is by means of suggestion systems.

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New Zealand is constantly changing to keep up with global competition or rather supply and demand on the global market (Du Plessis, 2012). The most recent census in New Zealand revealed that many changes in the country's geo-demographic composition took place; the greatest concentration of change has been in and around Auckland, the area that our survey was executed in the last quarter of 2007. A further interesting fact is that the 65 year and older age group in Auckland is the fastest growing population segment (Mosaic, 2008:25).

These changes in age and demography are typically accompanied by a wealth of human capital i.e. skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of employees. They are working in some of the organisations in the surveyed areas. It is therefore surprising for the researchers and authors of this article that organisations are so slow or reluctant to make use of the human capital that's available in their organisations to their benefit, as was found in the survey and discussed later in the analysis of this article (Du Plessis, Paine, Botha, 2012). The employers could easily make their Suggestion Systems work for them to get "hold" of the wealth of human capital in their organisations.

A suggestion system can be defined as a formal procedure which encourages employees to think creatively about their work and work environment, and to produce ideas which will benefit the organisation and for which the employee will receive recognition, in one or another way, if the ideas are useful for the organisation (Du Plessis, Marx, Wilson. 2008).

To give stature and structure to a Suggestion System, proper policies, rules, regulations and procedures are necessary. This article reports on research regarding the role and contributions of policies, rules, regulations and procedures in the success of Suggestion Systems as it is applied in some New Zealand organisations. The literature review includes a flow chart of effective Suggestion Systems for Policies, Procedures and Rules, developed by the authors; in the analysis of the results the different responses of the respondents are discussed. Thereafter the implications for management are pointed out and the next section has some recommendations for management to implement for a successful system before the conclusions which forms the last part of this article.

## Literature review

One of the reasons behind the failure of Suggestion Systems is an over-reliance of a formal, ready made, "off the shelf" Suggestion System, which take little or no account of the organisation's context, its particular issues, the concerns of its employees or its communication infrastructure (Sweetman, 2005:44). Every organisation has its own culture and needs and therefore the Suggestion System should be moulded around that. Every organisation should set its own policies, rules, regulations, procedures and structures to fit its own needs and organisational culture.

According to The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English (2005: 1122) "policy is a plan of action agreed or chosen by a business, a principle you believe in that influences how you behave; a way in which you usually behave". A Suggestion System policy therefore is a general guide that expresses limits within which action should occur (Ivancevich, 2001:19). Policies act as general guidelines, while procedures and rules are specific to situations (Mathis & Jackson, 2003:529).

The policy should leave very little room for personal judgements and arguments, thereby reducing favouritism and dissatisfaction. Every aspect of the scheme should be clearly defined so that employees are left in no doubt as to what is expected of them and what they can expect from the organisation in return. It should be remembered that the policy is the guide to decision making where there is a choice among actions. This does not mean that a policy could not change, in fact it should and must change if the needs and culture of the organisation changes. An obsolete policy could result in poor choices and thus in poor decisions. The policy should also adapt to changes in technology and the needs of the employees that will definitely change over time.

Stone (2011) describes policies as general statements that serve to guide decision making. They could also direct the actions of the human resource management function towards achieving its strategic goals. Policies are normally in writing and communicated to all employees by the human resource department, management, and line managers. He also refers to procedures that detail precisely what action is to be taken in a particular situation. A good example is the steps to be followed when a pay increase is given or terminating of employment. Policies and procedures should be fair and equitable.

What, however, is important is that policies, procedures and rules should not smother creative behaviour and initiative. It should rather create the opportunity for the employees to use their imagination and initiative.

Policies are only a guide to help with decision making. In his research Marx (1992:80-84) found that some aspects that should be addressed in the Suggestion System policy are:

- The aim of the system
- The definition of a suggestion or idea
- Topics which are not eligible as suggestions
- The members of the suggestion committee
- Employees who are eligible to submit suggestions
- Suggestion awards and recognition
- Taxation on the suggestion awards
- Procedures related to the submission of suggestions
- The right to appeal
- The cession of suggestions
- Patentable suggestions

Mathis & Jackson, (2003:529) have their own view on procedures in contrast to policies, it provides for customary methods of handling suggestion system activities and are more specific than the suggestion system policy. For example, the policy may state that the Suggestion Committee will be responsible for the evaluation of ideas that have

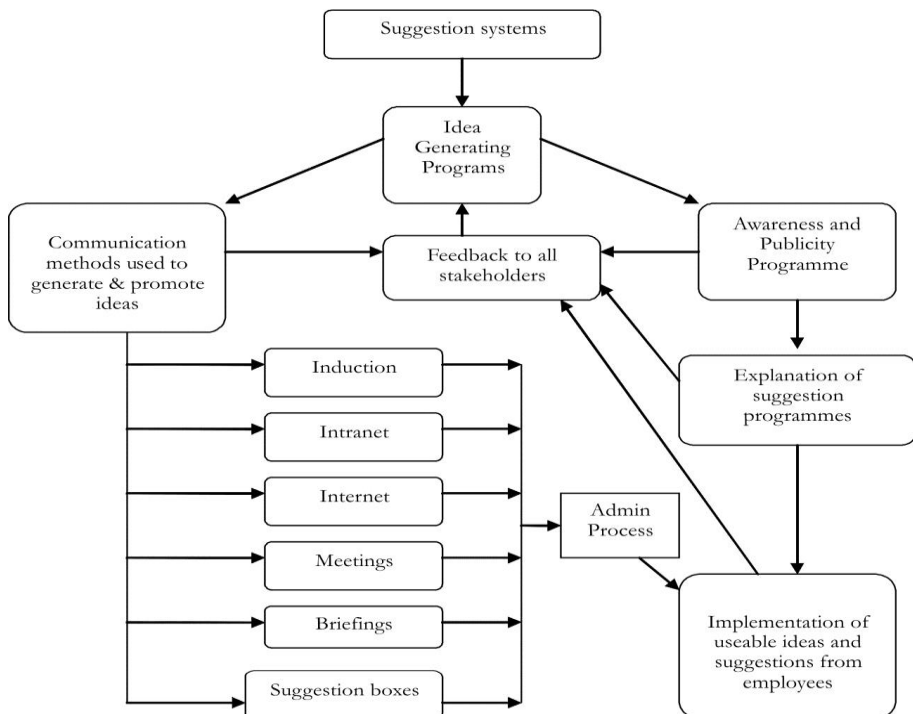


corporate wide implications. Procedures establish the specific method of evaluation and approval before implementation.

Some of the procedures that should be addressed are:

- How to promote the suggestion system
- How, where and to whom to submit suggestions
- How to register submitted suggestions
- How to evaluate suggestions
- How to appeal when a suggestion, which the suggestor feels really has merit, has been turned down
- How to recognise and award successful suggestors
- How to deal with taxation in case of financial awards
- How to handle patentable suggestions

*Figure 1: Flow Chart of the Idea Generation Process in Suggestion Systems*



Source: Developed by the authors

### *The use of the flow chart in Figure 1 above*

Line managers are often the most important link in the idea generation programme. Employees and line managers are the people with the most knowledge of the job and it came as a surprise that 66.66% of the respondents admitted that no explanation of the suggestion programme forms part of the induction programme in their organisations. In Figure 1, above, it is clear that the awareness and publicity programme follows the idea generating programme. The explanation could easily be done during the induction period.

There was consensus among all the organisations that the evaluation of suggestions is completed in less than 90 days after it was submitted. This is an indication that the management is open for suggestions and that they value the ideas of employees. The fact, however, that 71.43% of the respondents either disagree or do not know whether suggestors are getting feedback on a regular basis during the evaluation period places a question mark on the commitment of management. The flow chart (Figure 1) above explains the flow of feedback.

The question was put forward to the respondents whether software is used to submit and process suggestions. Only 4.76% of the respondents agreed that software is in use for administration and processing. Almost all (95.24%) of the respondents responded that they don't use any software for the said issues. It can be deduced that the organisations are too small to layout huge amounts of money on systems that they think could be managed manually.

More than three quarters (80.95%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they receive their ideas via email, intranet, internet or face to face. It can be deduced that the old fashioned way of meetings face to face still has its value. In Figure 1 above all the aforementioned methods are mentioned as a method to gather ideas.

Rules, on the other hand, are, according to Mathis and Jackson (2003:529) the specific guidelines that regulate and restrict the behaviour of the individuals. For example, employees of the Research and Development Department will not get any financial award for implemented ideas. Rules, thus, give specific direction for decision making and serve as control device in that they represent standards of behaviour that ensure a reasonable level of conformity throughout the organisation (Du Plessis, 2007:85; Wendell, 1994: 188). Therefore there will be a set of rules that will be applicable to the list of procedures that have been mentioned above.

Almost two decades ago Marx (1995:16) pointed out the following set of rules that will apply for any Suggestion System to qualify for a formal Suggestion System:

- The system should be approved and supported by top management.
- The suggestion must indicate a problem, potential problem or opportunity to improve an existing process or situation.
- The suggestion must present a solution to the problem, potential problem, process or situation.

- The suggestion must be in writing.
- The idea proposer must be identifiable, even if the system provides facilities for anonymous suggestions.
- The suggestion must be acknowledged on receipt.
- These rules are still applicable today according to our research project.

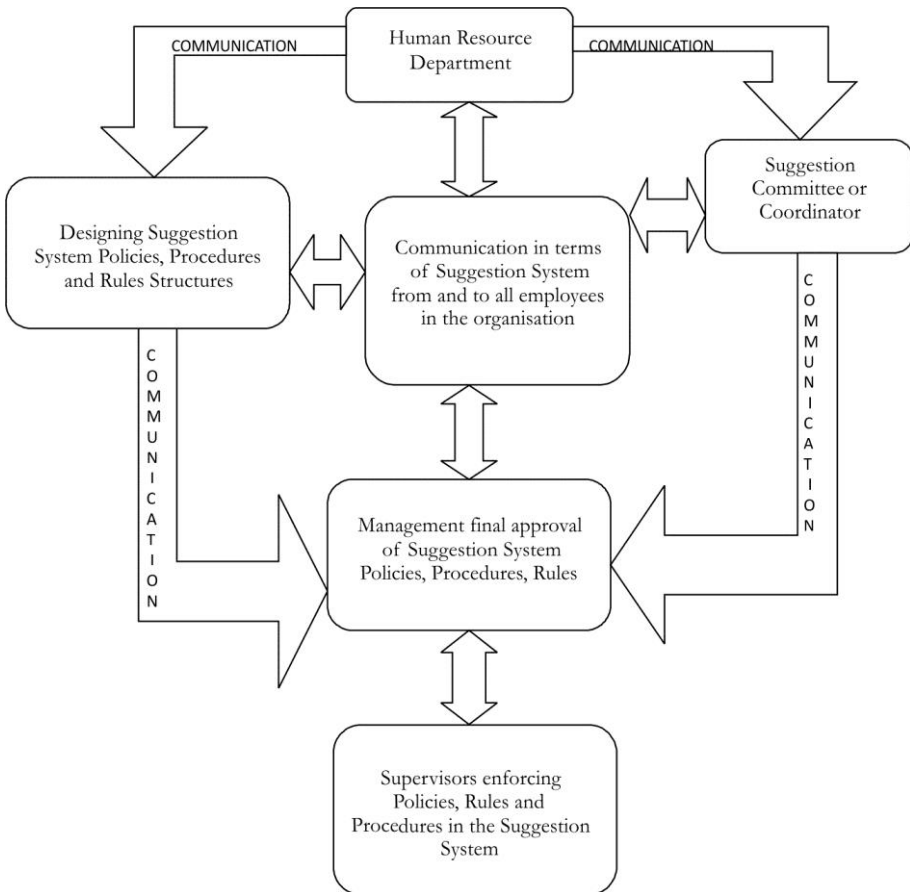
### *The use of the flow chart in Figure 2 below*

For the Suggestion System policies, procedures and rules to be effective, coordination between the Suggestion System Committee/Coordinator, other managers and supervisors are vital. The ideal flow of communication is shown in Figure 2 below. The human resource (HR) department who is primarily responsible for the designing of policies, procedures and rules in the organisation can delegate the Suggestion System issues to a committee or coordinator. HR can also delegate or just be part of the designing committee. It is also pointed out clearly in Figure 2 that policies, procedures and rules are downward communication; it flows from HR or top management, through the other levels of management to the rest of the organisation. The Suggestion System, on the other hand, is upward communication that enables employees, supervisors, middle management levels and top management to know about ideas that originates somewhere in the organisation as is explained in Figure 2 as well. Therefore, policies, procedures, rules and structures should be designed to smooth the way for suggestions rather to obstruct them (Robinson & Schroeder, 2006:97).

But who should be responsible for designing and setting the Suggestion System policies, procedures, rules and structures and who should be responsible for the execution thereof? The final approval of the policies, all procedures, rules and structures is the responsibility of top management. However, the drawing up of policies, working out of the procedures, setting the rules and creating the structures will usually, in bigger organisations, be delegated to the HR department. The latter in turn, will either commission a Suggestion Committee or a coordinator to do the job. In smaller organisations it is usually the responsibility of the human resources manager or some one specially dedicated to the task.

Enforcing the rules is the responsibility of the supervisors. The more the Suggestion System rules are supported by group attitudes and norms, the more enforcement becomes a responsibility shared by all employees. If management can engage supervisors and employees in problem solving by means of the Suggestion System rather than issue directives, it is more likely that the Suggestion System's and other work rules will be developed that are practical and have broad support (Wendell,1994:188).

**Figure 2:** Flow Chart of effective Suggestion Systems for Policies, Procedures and Rules in organisations showing the ideal flow of communication



Source: Developed by the authors (“COM” is communication)

Dessler, Griffiths and Lloyd-Walker (2007:449) are of the opinion that an organisation will put in place mechanisms that would allow employees to feel empowered to communicate upwards with managements. Therefore they support the idea that organisations should encourage feedback from their employees through upwards channels. The Suggestion System provides the ideal channels for feedback. Extensive communication is a key component in innovative organisations within the organisation upwards, downwards and laterally.

Take note that the best Suggestion System’s policies, procedures, rules and structures are useless if it is not communicated to everybody in the organisation. Therefore, it must be publicised as wide as possible, starting with the induction and orientation of

new employees, official functions, monthly internal newsletters and even employee booklets. A continuous publicity programme will also contribute to a more successful Suggestion System.

## Problem statement and objective of the article

It is expected that, due to the fact that most of the Suggestion Systems driven in New Zealand, are to a great extent of an informal nature, there will be a lack of a proper policy statement, well formulated procedures and a set of rules to guide the whole system.

The objective of this article is to report on empirical research undertaken by Unitec New Zealand and the University of Pretoria, (South Africa) on Suggestion Systems as applied in some New Zealand organisations.

## Methodology

A number of critical success factors for suggestion systems were identified from the literature. From these critical factors the ten most important once were identified. A questionnaire was compiled by the University of Pretoria (UP) to establish to what extent these critical factors are complied with in organisations. The same questionnaire was used with permission from UP after minor modifications for an identical survey in New Zealand. Minor modifications involved updating and scrapping of some questions for use during short interviews in New Zealand; the UP questionnaire was too long and not applicable for certain New Zealand organisations.

### *Data collection*

The questionnaire was used and completed during personal interviews which were conducted in four main business areas, namely Auckland CBD, Greater North, Manukau and Waitakere City. Table 1 below is a profile of the distribution of the respondents in the four business areas. A 100% response rate was achieved.

**Table 1:** Profile of respondents by business area

<b>Business Area</b>	<b>Number of organisations</b>	<b>Percentage of organisations</b>
Greater North	6	28.57%
Auckland	10	47.62%
Manukau	4	19.05%
Waitakere City	1	4.76%
<b>Total</b>	21	100.00%

The number of employees employed by the different organisations, varied from a minimum of six employees to a maximum of 110, as reflected in table 2.

**Table 2:** Profile of respondents by organisation size

Number of employees	Number of organisations	Percentage of organisations
6-29	8	38.10%
30-49	8	38.10%
50-110	5	23.80%
Total	21	100.00%

From the 21 organisations 19 (90.48%) are from the private sector while two (9.52%) are from the public sector. A total of 89.47% (17) of the private sector organisations are from industry. Due to the size of the study and the amount of different sections and the large amount of questions in the research, only section B regarding Policies, Procedures and Rules are covered in this article. The other sections are dealt with in other papers and articles

## Analysis of the results

### *Methods used in Idea Generation Programmes*

The fact that 85.71% of the respondents agree that the methods that they use to generate ideas are clear and straight forward confirms that they have either a formal or informal suggestion system in place. The methods are also open to all potential participants including teams and individuals. With this high percentage one could easily deduce that it was going well in designing of the idea generation programmes as well if the methods used are so good; but it's a total different result in the next section.

### *Employees involved in Idea Generation Programmes*

An alarming 38.10% of the respondents reported that their employees from all levels are not involved in the design of the idea generation system. A further 28.57% of the respondents were unsure; therefore two thirds (66.67%) of their organisation's employees are excluded in the basic design of what could be a possible cost saving or a possible labour turnover decrease. Only a third (33.33%) of the respondents is sure that their employees are involved and contribute positively to possible cost saving or attaining of their competitive advantage.

### *Policy as guide*

From the empirical study only 19.05% organisations claimed to have a formal Suggestion System. Only 28.57% of the respondents have official policies, certain structures and procedures in place. They claim that the suggestion policy is a clear general guideline that expresses the limits within which all suggestions activities must occur. That means that only two of the informal Suggestion Systems in use in the surveyed organisations are clear on this aspect. An alarming 71.43% of the respondents

either don't have or are not sure if they have official and clear policies in use as general guides.

### ***Aim of Suggestion System***

In spite of the above facts a mere 4.76% of the respondents strongly agree that the policy explains in full details the aim of the Suggestion System. This is really disappointing because a great number of employees are unaware of the system; it can be deduced that 95.24% organisations or rather management deprive their employees of participation if they knew the real value of the system, not only for the company but also for themselves. This is also clear evidence that the power of the system is not used to its full potential and that the aim of the Suggestion System is totally missed by the majority (95.24%) of the respondents.

### ***Suggestion Committee or Coordinator***

It is concluded from the survey that none of the organisations made use of suggestion committees to evaluate suggestions. A total of 100% of the respondents agree that they have no committees functioning at all and that it is not explained in any policy either. The flow chart in Figure 2 above explains the position of the committee or coordinator. Suggestion Committees could be very helpful with the evaluation of suggestions, especially in bigger organisations, where a specific suggestion will have a corporate wide influence. Members of such a committee will usually consist of representatives of all the departments, or at least of those departments that will be influenced by the suggestion. Although some managers might argue that it is just one more meeting added to a list of other meetings, it could really add value to the productivity of the organisation if the meeting is well managed. It is therefore absolutely necessary that policies, procedures and rules applicable to the Suggestion Committee should be clear to all employees so that there will be no confusion with regards to its function, responsibility and actions.

### ***Eligible employees to submit suggestions***

More than half (52.38%) of the organisations either don't know or disagree that the Suggestion System policies clearly indicate which employees are eligible to the submission of suggestions. Why would any employee submit suggestions if they are not sure that any one would pay any attention to such a suggestion? It might be just a waste of valuable time. It is therefore necessary that the policy clearly indicates which employee or department, for example the Research and Development Department, will not be allowed to submit suggestions that are related to their own department (they might or might not be allowed to submit suggestions outside their field of expertise, depending on the policy). It can be deduced that if only 47.62% of the organisations that participated in this study have policies in place it is time for New Zealand organisations to review their own structures, functions, management duties and even their job descriptions so that their policies are then also reviewed or amended for their employees to have the motivation or initiative to participate in suggestions. Employee

inputs or suggestions can add so much value to any organisation. Engaged employees are known to go the extra mile.

### *Recognition and awards*

Less than 10% of the organisations agreed that their suggestion system policy clearly explains how the recognition and rewards are working. That means that two of the organisations with formal systems are sure how it works; an enormous 90.47% don't know or are not sure that their policies explain to their employees what recognition or reward they could expect for suggestions that could have millions of dollars impact on the organisation. Everybody likes to be recognised and rewarded for something well done. When employees are recognised for what they do it demonstrates and confirms their achievements.

Recognition is very important for good relationships and a powerful way of recognition; most of the time it's an inexpensive tool for motivating employees. According to research conducted by North-Western University during 2005, it was found that 98.9% of the respondents placed employee recognition as the top motivation tactic (Potentials, 2005:6). Most employees know when they have done a good job, but when their managers acknowledge it they really believe it. Employees cannot be forced into participating in the Suggestion System. It is a purely voluntary activity. It is therefore unclear why some organisations are still against recognising and rewarding employees for suggesting improvements in their own jobs. Who knows the job and processes better than the employee (Darragh-Jeromos, 2005:18)? Any employee is likely to ask: "What does it mean for me?" (Sweetman, 2005:44). Employees will only participate if they have the will to do so, in other words, the motivation, and the opportunity to submit their ideas. What gets recognised gets done. This principle also applies to Suggestion Systems.

Awards can have a monetary or non-monetary value. Many organisations have healthy idea programmes with small or no financial awards. Some resort to awards that are imaginative and cost little but have high perceived value to the recipients. Beddows (2001:15) give examples of such non-financial awards such as car parkings and lunches with managers for the submitters of adopted ideas. Robbins (1997:387) confirms this when he said that it is a myth that most people are interested in absolute rewards. People are more sensitive to relative differences than to absolute differences. They compare what they get from the organisation with what others get. That is one of the reasons why policies, procedures and rules should be very clear with regards to recognition and awards.

### *Procedures*

With regards to the communication of the procedures related to the submission of suggestions to the employees, 95.24% of the respondents agreed that it is done. The other almost five percent were not sure, probably due to the fact that they only have informal systems and they are used to receive communication only from the top. Figure



2 above explains the ideal flow of communication which could influence all stakeholders.

### *Specific section suggestions*

A disappointing 19.05% of the respondents agreed that suggestions received in a specific section are authorised by the line manager and implemented immediately. It can be deduced that line managers either don't want to take responsibility or they don't have the authority or are not empowered to do it. If the line manager does not take the responsibility, who must? Surely, the suggestor cannot implement the suggestion without the approval of the line manager? If there is agreement on this, then it should be the responsibility of the line manager.

A total of 71.43% of the respondents were unsure what happens in their organisation. It is almost three quarters of the organisations in the main business areas in Auckland and the surrounding business areas that are not sure whose responsibility it is or who must record and implement suggestions. Recognition and rewards also fall under this heading with 80.95% of the respondents not knowing or disagreeing that line managers are responsible for it.

### *Right to appeal rule*

In only one case the employees know that they have the right to appeal against the non-acceptance of a suggestion and that the procedures for appeal are communicated to all staff members. In seven organisations the employees do not have the right to appeal to non-acceptance, while 61.90% of the respondents don't know whether they have the right to appeal.

In the comparing study of Marx (1992: 58), more than 75% of all suggestions are declined and as a result the suggestion strategy should cater for these eventualities. Whenever a suggestion is declined it should be dealt with in such a way so as not to alienate the employees from the Suggestion System. The suggestor should be given full reasons why the suggestion was declined. To be completely transparent the suggestor should be given the opportunity to appeal provided that they could provide additional information or material which will support the appeal. The rule should stipulate a period of time within which the appeal should be lodged and also the number of times appeals will be considered. Appeal opportunities will also reflect management's commitment to the system.

### *Policy in terms of patentable suggestions*

None of the respondent's Suggestion Systems' policies explains the ownership and rewards in cases of patentable suggestions. The reason for this might be two fold:

- That most of the respondents only have informal systems, and
- That there were no patentable suggestions in the past.

It could, however, become a serious problem if a suggestor came up with a suggestion that could generate a large amount of money. The question will be: “To whom does the intellectual capital belong to?” It will be therefore wise to include the following in the Suggestion System policy: “Due to the cession of rights, the accepted suggestions become the property of the organisation and if the idea/suggestion is patentable, the suggestor has no further claim on the organisation and any benefit resulting from the idea/suggestion. Management can, as a gesture of goodwill, make an ex gratia award to the suggestor”.

### *Corporate level implications*

With reference to the implementation of ideas and suggestions consensus (95.24%) was reached that it is the responsibility of the highest level in the organisation to approve recognition and rewards and the implication of any suggestions. If the line managers cannot take responsibility for rewards and the implementation of the suggestions it is understandable that not in one of the participating organisations implementation of suggestions form part of the line managers’ performance appraisal.

## **Implications for management**

In this article we described flow charts showing the usual downwards communication. It was also explained how the ideal communication flow should take place and who should be responsible for it. Specifically the flow chart depicts the flow of communication for the Suggestion System. In other words the upwards flow of communication (suggestions) in organisations and how to submit a suggestion through the right channels. The flow chart represents an important theoretical contribution to the understanding of how important communication is in any successful system in organisations and for management’s use to ensure successful submission of suggestions that could be vital for the survival of an organisation.

## **Recommendations for organisations not using any suggestion system**

Suggestion Committees should be functioning in organisations because it could really add value to the productivity of the organisation if the meeting is well managed. It is therefore absolutely necessary that policies, procedures and rules applicable to the Suggestion Committee should be clear to all employees so that there will be no confusion with regards to its function, responsibility and actions.

It is recommended that policies clearly indicate which employee or departments are eligible to submit suggestions and who will not be allowed to submit suggestions. Whenever a suggestion is declined the suggestor should be given full reasons why the suggestion was declined; the system should be completely transparent and the suggestor should be given the opportunity to appeal provided that they could provide additional information.

It should be included in the Suggestion System policy that an accepted suggestion becomes the property of the organisation especially in the case where it is patentable.

## Conclusion

From the results of the survey it is evident that the full power of Suggestion Systems in New Zealand is not used to its full potential. The absence of formal policy statement, well formulated procedures and a set of rules to guide the whole system might contribute to the problem. This could be as a result of a lack of knowledge and skills to apply a Suggestion System. It is therefore important that, first of all, **all** levels of management should be properly trained. The whole management team should know what a formal Suggestion System consists of, what the benefits are, not only for the organisation but also for the individual, work teams and the esprit de corps.

With this knowledge a formal policy could be formulated that will leave little room for personal judgements and arguments. From there on the procedures and the rules could be worked out. It is however important to communicate the policies, procedures and rules to **all** employees through out the whole organisation. It is important to remember that the policies, procedures and rules should not choke creativity and initiative. With clear policies, procedures and rules every aspect of the system will be clear so that employees are left in no doubt to what is expected of them and what they can expect from the organisation in return.

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