



ROLE OF BENCHMARKING ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN KENYA: (A CASE OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT COURSE PARTICIPANTS OF KENYA SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT MOMBASA)

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to determine the role of benchmarking on employee performance in the public sector in Kenya. A sample of 24 respondents from SMC 99 and SMC 100 were selected using stratified random sampling method to respond to questionnaire items intended to gauge aspects of their performance based on training and development. Data obtained was analyzed descriptively using frequency, percentage, and mean analysis with the aid of statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software to determine the role of benchmarking on employee's performance. The findings indicated that the public institutions have tried to adopt different ways to train their employees to improve their performance, however they had not optimally utilized these methods to acquire employee's full potential and maximum benefits to the organization. From the findings the study concluded that Benchmarking is the most effective method of training that had been adopted and implemented in the public sector. However, with optimal utilization, other training methods can also be used to improve employee performance. Also, from the findings, it was concluded that training can be categorized in two types basing on whether it is conducted internally or externally. These included on job training and off job training. The research found that there is a strong positive relationship between training and employee performance.

Key Words: Benchmarking, Training and Development, Employee Performance

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INTRODUCTION

Training and development is the field which is concerned with organizational activity aimed at bettering the performance of Individuals and groups in organizational setting. It is a combined role often called human resources development (HRD) meaning the development of "Human" resources to remain competitive in the marketplace. Training focuses on doing activities today to develop employees for their current jobs and development is preparing employees for future roles and responsibilities (Vinesh, 2014). Training and development is any attempt to improve current or future employee performance by increasing an employee's ability to perform through learning, usually by changing the employee's attitude or increasing his or her skills or knowledge (Onyango, Wanyoike, 2015).

Training is a form of specialized education aimed at giving trainee a specialized knowledge, skill and attitude which he must possess to effectively perform in a given position. Training is the preparation for an occupation or for specific skills which is job or task oriented rather than personal. Training means to help employees apply compliance concepts to their jobs. Staff development as a process of employee's improving through approaches that emphasis self-realization, self-growth and growth of abilities, skills and knowledge of employee in an organization. This development includes those activities aimed to improve the growth of abilities, attitudes, skills and knowledge of employee in an organization. Training and development aimed at developing competence such as technical, human conceptual and managerial for furtherance of individual and organizational growth (Chidiebere, Iloanya, Tobechei, 2015).

Increasingly, training and development is playing an important and strategic role in the economic success of US organizations. US organizations recognize that they now operate in a new global economy, an economy which involves the use of

advanced technologies and increased responsiveness to customers' needs. It is becoming one that requires greater and greater innovation and flexibility in production, service delivery and market know-how. American firms realize more than ever that employee knowledge gained through training and development has become a strategic necessity and more and more the source of strategic advantage (Marquardt, Nissle Ozag, Taylor, 2002). In the United Arab Emirates (UAE) companies are very aware of best training and development practice as implemented in their foreign counterparts, and that they generally adopt similar methods and strategies (Wilkins, 2002).

Falola et al in their study on effectiveness of training and development on employees' performance and organization competitiveness in the Nigerian Banking industry recommend that training is important to enhance the capabilities of employees. The survival of any organization in the competitive society lies in its ability to train its human resource to be creative, innovative, inventive who will invariably enhance performance and increase competitive advantage. Training and development is an aspect of human resource practices that help in enhancing employees' skills, knowledge, and competence capable of improving employees' ability to perform more efficiently. Training and development play a vital role in the effectiveness of an organization. It is one of the most pervasive techniques for improving employees' performance enhancing organization productivity in the work place. Employees are the indispensable asset and key element of gaining competitive advantage of any organization and training is essential tool for its actualization (Falola, Osibanjo, Ojo, 2014).

Onyango and Wanyoike in their survey of the performance of health workers in Kenya found that the benefits of training can improves morale of employees, Training helps the employee to get

job security and job satisfaction. The more satisfied the employee is and the greater is his morale, the more he will contribute to organizational success and the lesser will be employee absenteeism and turnover. Less supervision, a well-trained employee will be well acquainted with the job and will need less of supervision. Thus, there will be less wastage of time and efforts. Fewer accidents, errors are likely to occur if the employees lack knowledge and skills required for doing a job. The more trained an employee is, the less are the chances of committing accidents in job and the more proficient the employee becomes. Chances of promotion, employees acquire skills and efficiency during training. They become more eligible for promotion. They become an asset for the organization. Increased productivity, Training improves efficiency and productivity of employees. Well trained employees show both quantity and quality performance. There is less wastage of time, money and resources if employees are properly trained.

Employee performance depends on many factors like job satisfaction, knowledge and management but there is relationship between training and performance. This shows that employee performance is important for the performance of the organization and training & development is beneficial for the employee to improve (Khan, Khan, Khan, 2011). Employee training is one of the vital tools that help to enhance effective organizational performance and at the same time helps to promote the stability index of the organization. It is very important for the organization to exert extra efforts and invest much in employee training if it wants to achieve its objectives in the most economical way. Training is a systematic process, which helps people to learn how to be more effective at work by modifying knowledge, skills or attitudes through learning experience to achieve effective performance (Samwel, 2018).

Training has the distinct role in the achievement of an organizational goal by incorporating the interests of organization and the workforce. The employee performance depends on various factors. But the most important factor of employee performance is training. (Khan, Khan, Khan, 2011).

Iqbal, Ijaz, Latif, Mushtaq, 2015 in their study of factors affecting the employee's performance: a case study of banking sector in Pakistan found that performance of employees is affected by different factors at work place. Job performance assesses whether a person performs a job well. Employee performance indicates the effectiveness of employee's specific actions that contribute to attain organizational goals. It is defined as the way to perform the job tasks according to the prescribed job description. Performance is the art to complete the task within the defined boundaries. There are lots of factors that affect the performance of employees.

The survival of any organization in the competitive society lies in its ability to train its human resource to be creative, innovative, inventive who will invariably enhance performance and increase competitive advantage. Training and development are an aspect of human resource practices that help in enhancing employees' skills, knowledge, and competence capable of improving employees' ability to perform more efficiently. Training and development play a vital role in the effectiveness of an organization. It is one of the most pervasive techniques for improving employees' performance enhancing organization productivity in the work place. Employees are the indispensable asset and key element of gaining competitive advantage of any organization and training is essential tool for its actualization (Falola, Osibanjo, Ojo, 2014).

Faraji in her study to find out employee performance in the public organization in

Tanzania confirms that to perform well employees need first to have the knowledge and skills that are required for the job. Then, they must understand what they are required to do and have the motivation to expand effort to do so. And last, employees need to work in an environment that allows carrying out the task, for example by allocating enough resources (Faraji, 2013)

Human Resource Managers most often fulfill their organizational goals through the work of employees. Therefore, managers need to have highly efficient and productive staff members. Although many factors contribute to productivity, job performance is viewed to be the most influential one. Job performance itself is a function of four variables: ability, understanding of the task, environment, and motivation. The human resources and their management staffs are the source of competitive advantage for the business, rather than access to capital or use of technology. It is therefore logical to suggest that, attention needs to be paid to the nature of this resource and how the management assures staff performance and consequently the performance of the organization (Faraji, 2013).

According to the World Bank –Independent Evaluation Group “The effectiveness and efficiency of a country’s public sector is vital to the success of development activities. Sound financial management, an efficient civil service and administrative policy, efficient and fair collection of taxes, and transparent operations that are relatively free of corruption all contribute to good delivery of public services”. Therefore, the public sector of Kenya comprises of the central government, local government, development partners and public corporations. The public sector provides basic goods or services that either are not or cannot be provided efficiently by the private sector. (Fortune of Africa, 2018).

The Government recognizes the need to have a competent, well skilled and motivated workforce in the public service. The human resource must always have its potential developed to the maximum through effective training and capacity building. This will in turn give the Public Service the impetus necessary for it to deliver improved services to its clients and provide an enabling environment for other sectors of the economy to operate.

The Government of Kenya through the Kenya School of Government has developed various programs for empowering the public service; it offers management training, research, consultancy and advisory services to the public sector. The Kenya School of Government (KSG) was established by the KSG Act (No. 9 of 2012). The School is the successor of the former Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA), Kenya Development and Learning Centre (KDLC) and the Government Training Institutes (GTIs) Mombasa, Matuga, Embu & Baringo. The role of KSG is to provide learning and development programmes that will inculcate public service values and ethics in the devolved government for the delivery of results to the Kenyan citizenry. KSG will also contribute to the transformation of the public service into functioning effectively, innovatively, and in a results-oriented and accountable manner. (KSG 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Public sector organizations engage in training of staff and have departments, units and sections in charge of learning and development. Training is necessary to ensure an adequate supply of staff that is technically and socially competent and capable of career development into specialist departments or management positions. There is therefore a continual need for the process of staff development, and training fulfils an important part of this process (Sultana et al. 2012).

One of the problems arising from organizational training is identifying the quality and relevance of the training being provided. Marchington and Wilkinson (2005) found that most organizations were only concerned with the quantitative aspects of training, like the cost and time invested resulting in workers who were overqualified for their jobs leading to poor motivation and low morale. Another disadvantage in relation to training is that these activities are often regarded as a significant cost rather than an investment by organizations.

According to Kamoche et al. (2004b), training in organizations in Kenya is mainly treated as a cost and with the volatile economic situation in Kenya, managers are finding it difficult to view training as an investment because of its uncertain value. Where training exists, it is usually limited to equipping the employees with narrowly-defined, firm-specific skills that facilitate the attainment of short-term objectives. This is consistent with traditional HRM whereby training is viewed as a 'burden' while training policies are unclear and vague (Kamoche, 2000b). Tessema and Soeters (2006) also report that public sector employees in most developing countries who have received training paid for by their governments have been unable to utilize their expertise due to unattractive compensation and therefore opt to move to the private sector or overseas. Therefore, in order for organizations to develop and raise the level of productivity, there is a need to transform the way they develop people by nurturing cultures that value contribution from their employees, undertake cost-effective training activities that are geared to enhancing labour productivity and product quality (Kamoche et al., 2004a). In the case of multicultural employees, training may also assist in understanding special rules and regulations that apply to the workplace. Diverse employees often feel neglected and do not perceive any career paths. Examining this proposition calls for in-depth knowledge about

the training and development practices at the public sector in Kenya.

The purpose of this study was to assess the role of benchmarking on employee performance in the public sector, a case study of Senior Management Course participants' class of 99 and 100/2018 at the Kenya school of government.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study was to determine the role of benchmarking on employee performance in the public sector in Kenya.

Research question

What is the role of benchmarking on employee performance in the public sector in Kenya?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical review is concerned with explaining phenomena on which a particular study is based on, by stating the constructs and laws that inter-relate these constructs to each other (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). There are various theories that relate to how people learn at different times; and drivers that motivate trainees to learn. Some of the theories include Reinforcement theory, Social learning theory and Goal setting theory. The theories were described as follows.

Reinforcement Theory

Skinner (2013) states that people are motivated to perform or avoid certain behaviors due to past experiences that arise from these behaviors. Positive reinforcement results from pleasurable behavior outcome. Positive reinforcement theory suggests that for trainees to acquire knowledge, competency, and modify skills, the trainer needs to identify what outcomes the learners finds most positive and negative, then link the outcomes to the training practices. Reinforcement theory suggests that trainees are likely to adopt a desired behavior, through training, if the changed

behavior will be of benefit to them (Matofari, 2015).

Negative reinforcement is the removal of pleasurable behavior outcome. When both the pleasurable and un-pleasurable behaviors are withdrawn the resultant behavior is extinction. Punishment is unpleasant outcome resulting from some behavior that may culminate in the decrease in that behavior. For instance, if a supervisor shouts at employees due to lateness, they will avoid the embarrassing shouting by cheating they are unwell or make telephone calls that they will come late or devise some mechanism to avoid the boss' shouting and to ensure the boss does not discover the trick (Noe, 2010). From a training perspective, reinforcement theory suggests that for learners to acquire knowledge, change behavior or modify skills, the trainer needs to conduct a training needs assessment to identify what outcomes the learner finds most appealing and which he or she finds negating.

Upon conducting the training needs assessment, trainers should therefore connect these outcomes to learners acquiring knowledge or skills or changing behavior. There are very many advantages that learners will encounter when they participate in training programs. The advantages include: acquiring knowledge to do work in much easier and interesting ways, and encountering other employees who can serve as resources when problems occur, thus increasing opportunities for promotion. Reinforcement theory maintains that trainers can withhold or provide these benefits to learners who get good understanding of program content. The effectiveness of learning depends on the pattern or schedule for providing these reinforcers or benefits (Mullins, 2010). Modifying behavior is a mode of training that is primarily based on reinforcement theory such as, showing employees safe and unsafe work practices in action. This will make employees appreciate practicing safe

behaviors at work. This actually promotes the employees wellbeing and positive feedback given to them. Reinforcement theory argues that behavior is strengthened and controlled by external events, for example Classical Conditioning proposed by Pavlov (2014), and Operant conditioning proposed by Skinner (2013). It is very important for trainers to employ positive reinforcement and feedback, to enable pleasant learning experiences during the trainings.

Studies by Ololube (2004), employed reinforcement theory in assessment of teachers' job effectiveness, in which he reveals two variables that promote reinforcement that is environment and observable laws that can be changed or predicted according to the situation available. Armstrong (2009) and Noe (2010), revealed the following variables which a learner must acquire; knowledge, change of behavior, modification of skills, positive feedback and progress achieved in steps leading to desired results.

Goal Setting Theory

Locke (2012) stated that behavior results from a person's conscious goals and intentions. People's behaviors are influenced by goals which direct energy and attention, sustaining effort over time and motivating them to develop strategies for goal attainment. Goal setting theory can be used in training program design (Noe, 2010).

It has been agreed that specific challenging goals result in better performance than vague unchallenging goals. The goals ought to be relatively difficult to enable the employees strive towards their attainment. Easy goals do not stir any incentive. Harder goals that push employees to new levels of performance will greatly benefit the employee by confirming to them that they are capable (Locke, 2012).

Goals usually lead to high performance especially when employees are committed to the goals.

Successful attainment of a goal depends on the level of commitment the individual places towards achievement of the goal. Locke & Lotham (2006) argued that goal commitment is the degree of determination one uses to achieve an accepted goal. The degree of determination is pegged on the importance the individual's places on the attainment of the goal as well, the belief that they can achieve the goal coupled with hard work.

Goal theory suggests that joint setting of objectives, feedback and involvement which are all part of managerial approach, can improve motivation (Locke and Lotham, 2006). When objectives are explained to employees their motivation increases. As such, goals must be specific, measurable, attainable and time bound (Lunenbergh, 2011).

Conceptual Framework

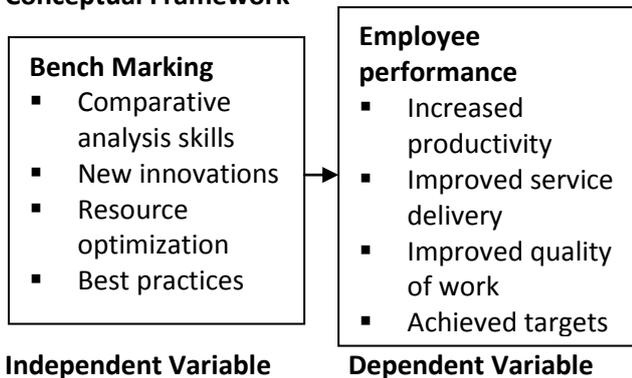


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Authors (2018)

Empirical literature

Empirical studies are researches that derive their data by means of direct observation or experiment to answer a question or hypothesis (Sekaran, 2006). The study has to put forward different perspectives and views of functionalists and positivists, in order to compare or argue his/her perspective in relation to the topic of study. Sufficient background information should be presented for readers to understand and evaluate the results of the present study.

Role of training on Employee Performance

Gunu, et al. (2013) in their study of training as a tool for organizational development on selected banks in Nigeria conclude that there are additional outcomes that are related to performance indirectly. Referring to the work of Abang et al. (2009), the researchers observe training has the greatest impact when bundled together with other human resource management practices. On their part, Obi-Anike et al. (2014) argue that management training is an investment with immediate and long term returns. According to them, there exists a positive relationship between training and organizational performance. Benefits raised in the study include increased job satisfaction, reduced employee turnover, enhanced inter personal relationship and teamwork. Similarly, McNamara (2010) contends that training increases job satisfaction, improves the efficiencies in processes, employee motivation, raise the ability to obtain new technologies and reduce employee turnover.

Benchmarking

Alstete (1996) identified five methodological approaches to benchmarking in his study of benchmarking Universities in the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia, and North America. Ideal type standards (or „gold“ standards) involve creating a model to represent ideal best standards and evaluating the extent to which institutions fit into it. Activity based benchmarking entails selection of a set of activities (typical to organizational context) in one institution and comparing the same with another. Vertical benchmarking as a methodology focuses on performance comparison within a defined functional area, for instance the work of customer care. Horizontal benchmarking analyses the performance of single processes that cut across more than one functional area. This methodology reviews performance of entire processes and practices across functions.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRATATION OF DATA

Benchmarking

Table 1: Benchmarking

| | Benchmarking | Agree | Disagree | Total |
|---|--|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1 | My organization has a program on benchmarking as training method | 70% | 30% | 100% |
| 2 | Benchmarking has improved my performance in my organization | 79% | 21% | 100% |
| 3 | I have acquired useful skills from benchmarking programs in our organization | 80% | 20% | 100% |
| 4 | My organization has a number of innovations out of the benchmarking programs | 79% | 21% | 100% |
| 5 | My organization has attained resource optimization from benchmarking | 79% | 21% | 100% |

Table 1 above indicated that 70% of the respondents confirmed that their organizations had programs with benchmarking as a training method while 30 % lack such a program in their organization. This indicated that a majority of Public Organizations employ benchmarking as a training method and suggested that organisations consider benchmarking as a useful training and development tool.

It also indicated that 79% of the respondents agreed that benchmarking had resulted in improved performance in their organization. This implies that majority of the respondents have employed benchmarking as a training method successfully, resulting in improved performance. This suggests that organizations will improve their performances on employment of benchmarking as a training and development tool.

The table further indicated that 80% of the respondents confirmed that they had received useful skills from benchmarking programs in their organizations. This implied that a majority of the respondents successfully utilized benchmarking skills to enhance their performance within their organization. This suggested that benchmarking training was a good source for useful skill acquisition for employees in Public sector.

79% of the respondents agreed that their organizations had a number of innovations out of the benchmarking programs while 21% indicated that they did not have such innovations from benchmarking programs. This implied that majority of organizations had developed innovations from benchmarking programs. This suggested that benchmarking was an important source of innovations for Public entities.

Finally, Table 1 above indicated that 79% of the respondents agreed that their organizations had attained resource optimization from benchmarking programs while 21% indicated that their organization had not received resource optimization from benchmarking. This implied majority of organizations represented by the respondents had attained resource optimization from benchmarking programs. This meant that benchmarking plays an important role in resource optimization.

SUMMARY

Most of the public institutions have adopted benchmarking as a method of training and development. Benchmarking has greatly improved the employee performance and the organizational performance in the public sector.

This is because employees acquire useful skills such as innovation and resource optimization from other institutions and employ them in their own institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings the study concluded that Benchmarking is the most effective method of training and development that has been adopted and implemented in the public sector. However, with optimal utilization other training methods can also be used to improve employee performance. Also, from the findings, it was concluded that training and development can be categorized in two types basing on whether it is conducted internally or externally. These included on job training and off job training.

The research found that there is a very strong positive relationship between training and development and employee performance. Training, development and optimal implementation greatly improve employee performance. It was therefore worthy to note that training and development plays a very significant role in the day to day performance of workers in every organization. Therefore, performance of any sort is a result of capacity building, training and obtained from the organization and thereby improved and increased performance.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Management should standardize the employees' training and development policies and fully implement them to reflect the maximum potential of employees. The organization should consider further informing, training and development of its staff to equip them with more skills to improve their performance. The researcher therefore recommended that the organization should carry out a study before using a method.

Employees' training and development matters should be carefully handled to reflect modern day technology and trends. Management should practice fairness in managing training and development needs and organizational affairs so that all employees in the organization get a fair chance.

In conclusion the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this study could potentially have enormous benefits for the public sector in Kenya, and the recommendations should be considered against the impact it could have on enhancing both individual and organizational performance but also improving the relationship between the employees, their supervisor, the clients and the work performance.

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