

**HUMAN RESOURCE FACTORS INFLUENCING PRODUCTIVITY IN PUBLIC
UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF MMUST**

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to establish HR factors that influence productivity in public Universities a case study of non-academic staff in MMUST. Using a sample of 69 non-academic employees (n=69), the study examined the following objectives:- to establish the impact of training and development on productivity; to assess the effect of working environment on productivity and to establish the effect of compensation and benefits on productivity. Descriptive survey design was used in the research. The target population was drawn from non-teaching staff by use of simple random sampling. A sample of 69 employees was selected through simple random to participate in the study. The researcher used purposive random sampling and sampled every non-academic staff in the payroll from grade I-X. The research employed a descriptive survey research design. The research targeted a total of 676 non-academic staff. The research utilized both primary and secondary data collection instruments. Reliability and Validity of the data collection tools was established through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and expert analysis respectively. Data was collected by use of questionnaires and computed by use of SPSS Version 20. The study used both descriptive and inferential statistics during data analysis. Descriptive statistics employed the use of frequencies and percentages and for inferential statistics Pearson Correlation Coefficient regression Analysis of 90% confidence was used and findings presented in tables. The findings showed that there is a positive statistically significant linear correlation between HR factors and productivity of non-academic staff in MMUST. The study findings thus confirm that there is need instigate HR factors for maximum productivity.

Key Words: *Human Resource Management, Productivity, Training and Development, Work Environment, Compensation*

Introduction

The main goal of any organization is to achieve optimum productivity. Human resources are the sources of achieving competitive advantage because of its capability to convert the other resources (money, machine, methods and material) into output (Storey, 1995). The competitor can imitate other resources like technology and capital but the human resource are unique. According to (Khatri, 1999), people are one of the most important factors providing flexibility and adaptability to organizations. (Rundle, 1997) argues that one needs to bear in mind that people (managers), not the firm, are the adaptive mechanism in determining how the firm will respond to the competitive environment. Several scholars have noted that managing people is more difficult than managing technology or capital (Barney, 1991; Lado and Wilson, 1994). However those firms that have learnt how to manage their human resources well would have an edge over others for a long time to come because acquiring and deploying human resources effectively is cumbersome and takes much longer (Wright et al., 1994).

HR's role is to develop processes to continually increase employee learning, knowledge, and skill development, while minimizing the amount of time that employees are away from their work. Productivity is maximized when there is enough balance so that employees have enough control, authority, and permissions to make most operational decisions (Brown, 2012). Technology, tools, and equipment can limit or bolster productivity. Even highly trained, motivated, and engaged employees can't be very productive when they are provided with insufficient tools and equipment to do their job. In an era where technology dominates almost every function, a failure to provide the technology, updates, or sufficient training can dramatically slow productivity (Haynes, 2012).

Productivity growth is a crucial source of growth in living standards because more real income improves people's ability to purchase goods and services, enjoy leisure, improve housing and education and contribute to social and environmental programs, (Krugman, 1992). This is through better wages and conditions to the workforce, increased profits and dividend distributions to the shareholders, lower prices to the customers, environmental and increases in tax payments to a government which are attributed as motivational aspects. This growth is important to the firm because it means that it can meet its obligations and still remain competitive or even improve its competitiveness in the market. Human productivity is the ratio of output to the input of labour. With an increase in part-time employment, hours worked provides the more accurate measure of labour input. Personnel productivity can also be used as a measure of efficiency (Wilfredo, 1994). It reflects more than just the efficiency or productivity of workers and it is influenced by many factors that are outside of workers' influence, including the nature and amount of capital equipment that is available, the introduction of new technologies, and management practices. Hence, a country's ability to improve its standard of living over time depends almost entirely on its ability to raise its output per worker. The weak productivity performance around the world has become a major concern for global business.

Statement of the Research Problem

In the world today, organizations are in a constant state of competition. The intensity of competition increases annually and the need to continuously improve organizational productivity has never been greater (Harel & Shay, 1999). Therefore, an effective and efficient use of the human resources will translate into the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. Though many organizations accept this to be true, there is need for university management to ensure that HR factors are taken care of for optimum productivity. Challenging goals, motivation, training and development, incentives, rewards and recognition, appreciation, salary, bonus, remuneration, participation, autonomy, promotion, increments are all types of employee HR factors that have been known to increase employee productivity at work place. Universities today have realized the importance the concept of HR factors plays in achieving organizational objectives. As resources increasingly become scarce, organizations seek ways to improve employee productivity without incurring additional costs. HR factors provide a way for employers to increase employee work performance and commitment to the organization without allocation of vast resources to employees. Some of the benefits of HR factors example motivation which have been cited by (Robbins, 1998), Robbins, 2001): & (Gordon, 2001) include: increase in productivity and efficiency; decrease in tardiness and absenteeism; decrease in opposition to changes being effected for the betterment of the organization; reduction in friction between workers themselves and between workers and management; improvement in relations and the working climate in the organization; reduction in wastage and accidents in the work place; reduction in employment turnover; reduction in complaints and grievances in organization; promotion of teamwork; and help and support for other workers by motivated employees. It is important to note that HR factors alone does not guarantee good performance and high productivity but the ability of the employee to perform and the availability of opportunity play a crucial role in work productivity (Robbins, 1998). In Kenya, many managers and most organizations have realized that HR factors are vital for productivity. This is seen in many seminars and workshops organized by different forums to educate Chief Executive Officers on the best HR factors to be used in their organizations for optimum productivity. Despite all these concerns, MMUST still faces many challenges with regard to the implementation of the HR factors that influence productivity.

Literature Review

Training and Development

Training is the planned intervention that is designed to enhance the determinants of individual job performance (Chiaburu & Teklab, 2005). Training is related to the skills an employee must acquire to improve the probability of achieving the organization's overall business and academic goals and objectives. Positive training offered to employees may assist with reduction of anxiety or frustration, which most employees have experienced on more than one occasion during their

employment careers (Cheng & Ho, 2001). Training has a significant effect on employee productivity. Firms can develop and enhance the quality of the current employees by providing comprehensive training and development. Indeed, research indicates that investments in training employees in problem-solving, teamwork and interpersonal relations result in beneficial firm level outcomes (Singh, 2012). Therefore training serves as a motivating force in improving the efficiency and productivity of the workers and many organizations have seen it as a veritable tool to enhance their organizational productivity.

Training presents a prime opportunity to expand the knowledge base of all employees, but many employers find the development opportunities expensive. Employees also miss out on work time while attending training sessions, which may delay the completion of projects (Singh, 2012). Despite the potential drawbacks, training and development provides both the company as a whole and the individual employees with benefits that make the cost and time a worthwhile investment. Companies today are forced to function in a world full of change and under various complications, and it is more important than ever to have the correct employees at the correct job with the right qualification and experience in order to survive the surrounding competition (Singh, 2012). The successful and prosperous future of an organization is dependent on its skilled, knowledgeable and well experienced workforce. That is why training is a fundamental and effectual instrument in successful accomplishment of the firm's goals and objectives. Training not only improves them resourcefully, but also gives them a chance to learn their job virtually and perform it more competently hence increasing firm's productivity. Training has been an important variable.

Working Environment

Working environment is perhaps a key root causing employee's engagement or disengagement. Improving the Working environment reduces complaints and absenteeism while increasing productivity (Roelofsen, 2002). (Wells, 2000) states that workplace satisfaction has been associated with job satisfaction. In recent years, employees comfort on the job, determined by workplace conditions and environment has been recognized as an important factor for measuring their productivity. This is particularly true for those employees who spend most of the day operating a computer terminal. As more and more computers are being installed in workplaces, an increasing number of businesses have been adopting ergonomic designs for offices and plant installations. Ergonomics, also called biomechanics, has become popular because of demand of workers for more human comfort.

Nowadays the relationship between employees and employers may be seen upside down. Since the number of job opportunities available for employees has been increasing in a growing worldwide economy, not just employees but also employers need to readjust themselves in order to cope up with the dynamics of business life. Therefore, human resource executives need to consider new strategies for recruiting and retaining best fit talents for their organizations

(Kiprop, 2012). Higher salaries and compensation benefits may seem the most likely way to attract employees. However, quality of the physical workplace environment may also have a strong influence on a company's ability to recruit and retain talented people. Some factors in workplace environment may be considered keys affecting employee's engagement, productivity, morale, comfort level etc. both positively and negatively.

Although convenient workplace conditions are requirements for improving productivity and quality of outcomes, working environment in many organizations may present lack of safety, health and comfort issues such as improper lightening and ventilation, excessive noise and emergency excess. People working under inconvenient conditions may end up with low performance and face occupational health diseases causing high absenteeism and turnover. There are many organizations in which employees encounter with working environment problems related to environmental and physical factors. (Pech & Slade, 2006) argued that employee disengagement is increasing and it becomes more important to make workplaces that positively influence workforce. According to (Pech & Slade 2006) the focus is on symptoms of disengagement such as distraction, lack of interest, poor decisions and high absence, rather than the root causes.

Compensation and Benefits

Rewarding has been found to be one of the main organizations policies which can increase the performance of staff and increase the outputs of organizations (Ajila & Abiola, 2004). Indeed, with the existing international economic development, many employers have comprehended this fact that productivity is needed for their organizations to compete strongly and also their employees' productivity is required in shaping the organization achievements. On the other hand, employees' performance, as a result of the development and the growth is critical for any organization. The reward system can be both extrinsic and intrinsic Gohari et.at (2013).

Financial rewards (Extrinsic Rewards)

Extrinsic rewards are external to the job and include elements like fringe benefits, pay, promotions, private office space, the social climate, and job security. Other examples are competitive salaries, merit bonuses, pay raises, and indirect payment forms as compensatory time off (Mahaney & Lederer, 2006). Extrinsic rewards are often applied to demonstrate that the firm is serious about valuing group contributions to quality. In this regard and as a subgroup, the financial rewards include cash as bonus paid to team members. In fact, the bonus is paid separately from the wage and salary. On the other hand, team rewards should be used in a way so that managers can avoid destroying staffs' intrinsic motivation in doing their jobs. Indeed, the application of extrinsic rewards which are tightly related to team's performance can teach the members to become hungry to money and to destroy their intrinsic interest in the job (Balkin & Dolan, 1997).

Extrinsic rewards also drive worker's morale and the distribution of these rewards always has loomed large in companies, especially in accordance with performance evaluations in present globalization eras Gohari et.al (2013). Furthermore, giving rewards has become a part of firm's policies as it has been shown to improve workers' performance and the organization's productivity.

Non-financial rewards may include higher status, recognition, more responsibility, positive feedback, and more assertiveness. In hindsight, recognition is one of the main significant non-financial rewards that are specifically valued by some staffs. In this regard, being noticed and valued can be a majestic motivator which encourages workers to stay with a manager (Frey, 1997).

Effect of Human Resource factors on Productivity

Motivated employees are inclined to be more productive than non-motivated employees. Most businesses make some pains to motivate workers but this is normally easier said than done (Chaudhary, 2012). Employees are all individuals with different like's dislikes and needs, and different things will motivate each. Employee doing the right job for his personality and skill set, and performing well at the job greatly increases employee motivation and satisfaction. A safe and non-threatening work environment is necessary to maintain a high level of employee motivation. Flexible human resource policies, flexible time, work from home, childcare also be liable to have happier and more motivated workers. Keeping employees motivated with good benefits is easy. Generous benefits that motivate all employees, versus raises and larger salaries to retain and attract the best workers and keep them happy and motivated to be working for you, are more are some of the factors to be noted.

In the event that an employee is paid through commission (Emery, 2009), which results to increased productivity, then the employee can rest be assured that the returns were reflected in the pay slip. If there were no set targets in achievement of an event, then there would be no sense in talking of production, as this would be a failing system. When there is productivity in the organization, the organization's annual returns are increased hence more generation of revenue for the country economically through taxations.

Research Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive survey. The study population was obtained from a randomized sample of non- academic staff ranging from grade I-X. The study targeted a total of 676 employees who were the focus of study. This comprised of 390 auxiliary staff (grade i-iv) and 286 middle level staff (grade v-x). Simple random sampling technique was used to select 69 employees from the entire population so that each and every one in the target population had an equal chance of being selected.

Study Findings and Discussion

Responses on training and development

The research also sought to find out influence of training and staff development of employee productivity. Respondents were asked questions on training and staff development. Findings indicated that 23 (33.3%) of the respondents disagreed to the assertion that there is a training policy of which every staff is aware of while 41 (59.4%) agreed. Respondents were asked if they had never been beneficiary of training programme, 14 (21.7%) disagreed and 48 (69.5%) agreed. Findings show that, 31 (44.9%) respondents disagreed that training had greatly contributed to higher productivity in the university, 29 (42.0%) agreed and on there being a fair system on training programme and every staff is bound to, 31 (44.9%) of the respondents disagreed and 29 (42.0%) agreed.

Responses on working Environment

Respondents we they were asked their opinion on what feel about the working environment at their respective places of work. Findings show that 33 (47.8%) disagreed to the assertion that the department has clear division of responsibilities and 32 (46.4%) agreed. There were 29 (42.0%) of respondents who disagreed to the assertion that am not comfortable and satisfied with work environment while 34 (49.3%) agreed. A total of 31 (44.9%) disagreed being not well placed according to their qualification, experience and job description, 33 (47.8%) agreed. As shown in Table 4.5, 31 (44.9%) respondents disagreed that the culture of the university is generally positive and supportive and 32 (46.4%) agreed that the culture is supportive. The assertion that the administrative team provides an environment in which I feel safe and secure was agreed upon by 31 (44.9%) of the respondents and 34 (49.3%) disagreed. There were 35 (50.7%) respondents who agreed that they are not treated fairly and with respect, 22 (31.9%) agreed and 31 (44.9%) disagreed. Results show that, 32 (46.4%) disagreed that they are not involved in decision making on matters involving the university and 33 (47.8%) agreed. A total of 30 (43.5%) agreed that there is always freedom of expression and no form of intimidation, 32 (46.4%) disagreed to that assertion. There were 31 (44.9%) respondents who agreed that they participate in team work wherever there is work to be done in groups, 33 (47.8%) disagreed.

Responses on employee Compensation and Benefits

As shown in Table 4.6, 30 (43.5%) agreed that they are not satisfied with their current salary in relation to the work they do and 32 (46.4%) disagreed. A total of 30 (43.5%) respondents agreed that apart from salary, they get other fringe benefits from the university, 34 (49.3%) disagreed to that assertion. A total of 33 (47.8%) agreed that they don't get praised by their supervisors when they perform their duties well, 32 (46.4%) disagreed.

A total of 33 (47.8%) agreed that they have never been promoted since they joined the university service, 31 (44.9%) disagreed having not been promoted. Findings show that, 30 (43.5%) respondents agreed that staff who undertake further studies are promoted, 31 (44.9%) disagreed to that assertion. There were 29 (42.0%) agreed to be satisfied with their health cover, 31 (44.9%) disagreed being satisfied with their health cover.

I am not satisfied with my opportunities for promotions, raises and bonuses was agreed upon by 34 (49.3%) respondents and 31 (44.9%) disagreed being not satisfied with promotion, raises and bonuses opportunities. A total of 33 (47.8%) agreed to be satisfied with their continuing education and training opportunities, 31 (44.9%) disagreed being satisfied. There were 32 (46.4%) respondents who agreed that staff are not appraised to gauge their performance before promotion, 30 (43.5%) disagreed.

Findings in Table 4.6 shows that, only 28 (40.6%) respondents agreed that there is no employee turnover and 36 (52.2%) disagreed there being no employee turnover. A total of 32 (46.4%) agreed to be giving their best performance in their current job, 31 (44.9%) disagreed being giving their best in their job. I have consistently attained my performance targets since I was employed was agreed upon by 33 (47.8%) and 31 (44.9%) disagreed to that assertion.

Results show that, 34 (49.3%) agreed that people who go for services from their offices get the required service/assistance and appreciate it and 28 (40.6%) disagreed to that assertion. A total of 33 (47.8%) agreed that there was a high student enrollment because of best services offered by staff and 32 (46.4%) disagreed to that assertion.

Summary of findings

This section presents a summary of the findings presented in the preceding sections. Majority of the respondents were male and many being in the 25-35 age bracket. Most of the respondents were diploma holders and majority had also served the university for a period of 6-8 years. Most of the respondents were in grade V-X with majority having stayed in the same grade for 1-4 years only.

More than 50% of the respondents agreed that training and development affects employee productivity and the results were mostly more significant between training and development factors and gender, age, length of service and current grade. The study also found out that working conditions at the university were slightly unfavorable with majority of the respondents admitting that they are not well placed according to qualifications, they are not treated fairly, they are not comfortable at the work place and that they are not involved in decision making process. There were slightly large number of respondents who were of the opinion that the culture and working environment of the institution was not positive and supportive, the administrative team does not provide environment at which they feel safe and secure and that

there was no freedom and some form of intimidation was present. These findings were more significant across gender, length of service and current grade of service.

Employee compensation and benefits also were found to be another major factor affecting employee productivity. Majority of the respondents agreed being not satisfied with their current salary, how promotions, raises and bonuses are conducted and opportunities for continuing with education and training. Respondents agreed that apart from salary, they get other benefits from the university and that staff who undertake further studies are promoted, however majority of them had not been promoted since they joined the university and they disagreed there being no employee turnover. Respondents also agreed that they give their best performance at the job, having consistently attained their objectives and that people who go for their offices for services get and appreciate them. Results showed that employee compensation and benefits had significant impact on their productivity with results being significant across gender, age, length of service and years in the current grade.

Summary of Findings

Majority of the respondents agreed that training and development affects employee productivity and the results were mostly more significant between training and development factors and gender, age, length of service and current grade. From the findings working environment at the university were slightly unfavorable and finally employee compensation and benefits was also another major factor affecting employee productivity because majority of the respondents agreed being not satisfied with their current salary, how promotions, raises and bonuses are conducted and opportunities for continuing with education and training.

Conclusions

HR factors have impacted negatively on productivity as indicated by 69.5% of employees have never been beneficiary of the training programme in MMUST. Thus it is imperative that employees need more on the job training so that they can utilize their potential and skills acquired. Human resource factors like working environment are not adhered to in MMUST as 49.3% of the respondents were of the affirmative that they were not comfortable and satisfied with the work environment. There is weak relationship between human resource factors and productivity in MMUST. Thus effective assimilation of HR factors with HRM practices has become a global concern for universities today.

Recommendations

There is need for enhancement of training opportunities for potential workers especially in skills such as leadership, assertiveness and time management while encouraging workers to be more productive.

In order to improve productivity of employees at MMUST, there is need to values the employees participation in achieving the organizational goals by implementing the best HR practices and integrating them with best HR factors.

There is need for provision of adequate resources in order to improve the Working environment for the workers.

There is need for provision of incentives through opportunities for workshops and good remuneration to workers to enhance job satisfaction amongst staff.

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