

THE ROLE OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY: A CASE STUDY OF A COUNTY ASSEMBLY IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

After the promulgation of the new constitution in 2010, Kenya as a country started a new chapter with the creation of various institutions among them the county Governments constituting of the county Executive and the county Assemblies. These institutions were to hire staff to fill the newly created positions whereby this mandate was given to the county public service board and the county assembly service board respectively, both being under the direct control of the governor and the speaker who are politicians. Therefore The central problem is that despite massive employment of people in the county governments, there is fear of stagnation of services which will lead to poor performance hence poor service delivery at the county level due to the quality and qualifications of those employed, Those to be employed by the County Public Service and the county Assembly Boards are supposed to be learned as well as experienced people in their areas of specialization. People were employed and majority came in with academic documents showing their academic prowess, However the exercise was marred with nepotism and cronyism leading to the hiring of people with less experience or none at all . This and other factors seem to be affecting the performance of these institutions therefore affecting effective delivery of services to the people due to inefficiency.

Key Words: *The role of performance management in enhancing effective service delivery*

Introduction

Many modern organizations strive to achieve good performance in general and better out put from its employees, this is as a result of stiff competition between organization hence the demand for improved service delivery from customers or the public. Richardo (2001) emphasized that successful organizations were those with the highest return on equity and those who had established performance management system “aligning” every aspect of the organization from top management to the factory floor.

Okumus.F. (2003), summarizes Performance management as the systematic process by which an agency involves its employees, as individuals and members of a group, in improving organizational effectiveness in the accomplishment of agency missions and goals. Smit & Cronje

(2002) state that a performance standard is a projection of expected or planned performance over a period of time, the difference between planned and actual performance is monitored to compare actual performance with the projected standard. They further indicate that performance standards enable management to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable performance. Standards help one to measure the extent to which one is meeting one's set objectives. Langdon (2000), recognized that performance should yield results or outputs. The results or outputs should be measurable to determine what was achieved. A distinction would then be made about the quality of the output/result. Wheelen & Hunger (2005) states that to set up an effective process of strategic planning and management, one needs to understand how organizations and their specific situation interact with the overall environment. It is therefore important to examine whether the newly employed staff performance is satisfying meeting the customer and the organizations needs and also, whether they have what it takes to perform their functions.

Problem Statement

Various studies reveals that any incremental in improvement in performance of public services impacts millions of people, therefore Managing performance is a continuous process in which organizations clarify the level of performance required to meet their strategic objectives, convert them into unit and individual objectives, and manage them continually in order to ensure, not only that they are being achieved but also that they remain relevant to and consistent with overall strategic objectives Smit & Cronje (2002). He also states that the essence of good performance management is managing the 'what', 'where', and 'when' but leaving the 'how' to the person doing the work. Through performance management, it is possible to link individual and organizational performance to strategic goals. Van Wyk & Schenk (1998) describe performance management as an approach to manage people; however the high failure of rate of performance management is documented and many obstacles to effective performance management exist. Dickenson (1991) states that lack of strategic management skills at the top management has been one of the problem to effective performance management. Due to the above identified problem, the primary objective of this study therefore was to investigate the role of performance management in enhancing service delivery in the devolved government units in Kenya and highlights the possible solutions to these problems.

Literature Review

Performance can be defined as "a state of competitiveness of the organization, reached through a level of efficiency and productivity which ensures a sustainable market presence "Performance implies the action of doing things – using things, attending to conditions, processing, communicating, and achieving results. Sadly, majority of organizations today have an appraisal process and not performance management system. We call it a system rather than a process, since it includes a lot of components that interact with each other, like a closed system., (Langdon, 2000). Similarly, Vanderwerf (1992) found owner-reported measures of performance

to have considerable reliability. Job standards quantify job performance in objective and subjective terms, typically using benchmarks to assess how well the worker met the employer's expectations over a given period of time. In manufacturing settings, these benchmarks may be oriented toward easily measurable outcomes, such as assessing how well an individual employee's work met a specific production quota. In service jobs, the outcomes may be specific, based on criteria such as how many customers complained, or a drop in sales. Joan, E. (2013). Accurately assessing job performance in these situations, however, is often more challenging than in manufacturing settings in which individual output can be mathematically measured. In both cases, an individual's overall attitude is commonly assessed as well

However, since managers in smaller companies may be sensitive to making public specific numerical data regarding their performance, they may be more willing to reveal broader indicators of their performance, such as their performance in relation to that of their competitors in the industry. Ayooop & Otike,J. (2010) measured organizational performance by two variables, sales growth and expected sales growth. Performance, first of all, produces an output however feedback is necessary to tell us that we have arrived at the output and achieved the consequence. The second type of feedback helps us to correct or adjust our actions so that we produce the desired output and achieve the consequence properly.

According to Williams (2002) performance encompasses inputs, conditions, process elements, outputs, consequences, and feedback. Tangible work in the form of some product, service, or knowledge. Outputs are the variables we see from work groups, jobs, core processes, and business units. The outputs which the business entity decides to produce at business unit level must be capable of being traced throughout the business from that level through the process, individuals, and work groups. Williams (2002) gives a historic background of the era of performance management. In his view, performance management as a philosophy or a system came into prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although he maintains that there is no single approach to performance management (Williams, 2002), he also positions performance management as a system for integrating the management of organizational and employee performance.

Managing performance is a continuous process in which organizations clarify the level of performance required to meet their strategic objectives, convert them into unit and individual objectives, and manage them continually in order to ensure, not only that they are being achieved but also that they remain relevant to and consistent with overall strategic objectives (Lockett, 1992:14). He also states that the essence of good performance management is managing the 'what', 'where', and 'when' but leaving the 'how' to the person doing the work. Through performance management, it is possible to link individual and organizational performance to strategic goals.

To increase performance therefore, there is need to increase organizational knowledge which is created by continuous dialogue between employees (Bradley, Paul and Seaman 2005) It is evident that in the new economy, management practices are grounded in the experience and expertise of those individuals working in an organization which therefore provides the right structures to shape knowledge into competitive and thus increasing performance (Conedlund 2008). Whittaker, J.(2001) states that performance management should be looked at from three perspectives, namely employee, customer and business perspective. Employee perspective focuses its attention on the performance of the key internal process driving the organization. Employee buy-in is important to maximize the organization's achievements.

According to Cherry, (1993), Efficiency measures reflect the cost per unit of output or outcome. Explanatory information can explain the environment and other factors that might affect an organization's performance. Dickenson (1991) states that this information may give a more complete understanding of the reported measures and identify variables that affect performance. Program impact and effectiveness and show whether expected results are achieved. Customer perspective considers the organization's performance through the eyes of a customer, so that the organization retains a careful focus on customer needs and satisfaction.

The ultimate strategic goals of an organization especially in the public sector environment, is to deliver quality public services. It is on this basis that the relationship between performance management and service delivery is apparent. However, there is a need to investigate the extent to which service delivery can improve as a result of performance management in public institutions.

Research Methodology

The study involves a descriptive survey study and is qualitative in nature. The target population was 15 senior managers and 10 middle manager purposively selected as they will be in a position to give an in- depth information required by the study.23 of the respondents were available for the study and took up the interview. Each participant was interviewed on the role of performance management in enhancing service delivery in their respective areas. The respondents answered all the questions on their own.

Discussion of results

Challenges faced by staff

The respondents acknowledged that poor performance has been experienced since the inception of the new constitution that has created the county assembly, many of the challenges were faced especially by the senior managers of the county assembly who are supposed to be the technical persons to assist the elected members to play their role of oversight, representation and legislation, most of them were hired politically not basing on their competence in the various

fields, even the county assembly clerk who is essentially supposed to be the chief executive officer, though he qualifies academically but he lacks the experience since he only worked in the public service for only two years before joining the Assembly.

Because many of the staff were employed by their relative politicians it becomes difficult for the clerk or other heads of department to command their junior staff hence the organization has a lot of staff, but there is no tangible work done up to date. The transitional authority, a national body that was formed and mandated by law to oversee the implementation of the new constitution by ensuring that these institutions acquire the right infrastructure in terms of facilities and human resources posted qualified personnel to oversee the start up and structuring of these institutions however immediately after Politicians were sworn in, they made sure that the same officers were frustrated and in some cases chasing them away to give way so they can employ their friends and relatives.

The situation is worse when it comes to the county assembly service board, the body that is mandated to employ all the staff as it is made up of politicians only whose decisions are always skewed depending on whose case they are tackling. This has also demoralized most senior officers as they cannot reprimand or punish their junior officers whenever they go wrong as many of them have their relatives in board membership.

Challenges faced by elected leaders

Finally training of these under skilled staff have become a problem also since the elected leaders control the funds and the budgeting process hence they feel that any training that comes by is entitled to them since they are the ones in charge of carrying out the legislative tasks as mandated by law forgetting that the technical staff bear the responsibility of facilitating them therefore making their work easier. However this urge for attending many training sessions was orchestrated with the fact that they are paid an allowance whenever they attend these training and since they are only there for a period of five years they do not want to lose any chance of making an extra coin. However despite many of them attending these training they come out of these training sessions only to disturb and blame the officers on their inefficiency since they have not grasped anything themselves.

The speaker is the head or rather chair of the assembly, but he is reduced to a beggar since he is not elected by the members of the county assembly and not the people, he is always under threat of losing his job since a motion of no confidence can be passed any time if he does not toe the line. This affects the speaker's productivity since he is left with no option than to dance to the tune of the members who elected him for the seat in order to survive.

Though elected members take care of their constituents needs within the scope mandated by law which includes representing them in the assembly, oversight of the executive arm of government to make sure that public resources have been utilized accordingly and coming up with good laws

that will benefit the common people. This has been viewed differently by the public who expects them to cater for their financial needs for example taking care of their hospital needs and paying fees for their children .This has also affected the performance of the said politicians since the salaries they earn is not enough for them and their families as a result of the expectations from the constituents.

Recommendations

Proper policy guide lines should be given by the government before any employment is done, also the function of hiring or firing should have been given to the national government which should employ people strictly based on qualification and experience. This is to avoid a lot of trainings time that would have otherwise been used to do other useful work. 2.Also the institution should come up with various ways such as performance contract, appraisal or the balance score card to ensure that each member of staff is performing their work accordingly, the standards to be measured should be in line with the various specific tasks expected of each cadre, for example competence in drafting of laws and bills for clerks of the county assembly and the number of bills or motions a member has tabled in the assembly for members of county assembly and their participation in various committees, however for this to work the staff should be depoliticized since this has been cited as one of the reasons contributing to non performance. 3. Priority on trainings should be given to the members of staff this is to ensure continuity after five years when other people are voted in, also this will help them carry out their duties as expected since over ninety percent of parliamentary work is done by the members of staff and not politicians. 4. The board should ensure that staff members are reassured of their jobs as most of them have become scarred of losing their jobs especially those who do not come from within the locality on top of this they should ensure that all the staff are adequately remunerated and motivated before giving them performance standards.

Setting goals and objectives is one way to ensure job performance is acceptable, the management should come up with ways of encouraging employees to come up with goals aligned to the organizations general objectives. Daily goals leading to overall objectives can improve your individual's performance review when it comes. Create a job-specific objective and strive to obtain that objective following company policy and procedures. Keep your objectives in mind and make use of daily and weekly goals to help you reach them. This can help them be productive and perform up to the expected standards therefore improving the individual work.

Civic education should be carried out thoroughly to ensure that the public are aware of the roles of the elected leaders this is to ensure that they do not disturb leaders with personal problems, this will give the leaders time to concentrate with their roles and therefore becoming effective in their work, such that they will not have scapegoats of their non performance.

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