

IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

Kenyan public universities needed an empirical study to guide them on how they should handle employee development programs of their non-teaching staff. Thus, this study sought to fill this empirical gap by finding out the effect of employee development programs on non-academic staff's performance in Kenyan Public Universities. This study adopted descriptive research design that involved a field survey and questionnaires to collect data. It target 2174 respondents of non-teaching staff. Simple random and purposive sampling was used to select 327 employees as respondents from all the public universities. The study used SPSS to analyzed data. The study revealed that employee development and support influence performance in public universities but not to a large extend as indicated in R squared of 0.8 percent and 0.54 percent. The study recommends that Public Universities should use other motivational strategies and a well designed appraisal procedure to evaluate staff alongside staff development.

Key words: *Employee development, Public Universities, Motivation, Performance*

Introduction

The globalized business world has undergone unprecedented changes that have pushed Organizations to undertake various initiatives to stay afloat (Baruch, 2004; Greenhaus, Callanan and Godshark, (2002). This has resulted in organizational mergers and acquisitions, incorporation of technology in operations with other firms downsizing their operations. Given the central role played by a firm's human resources in giving it a competitive advantage, many organizations are turning to human resource development to increase their employees' knowledge, skills and capabilities so that they can survive. This push has elevated employee

development programs to become an integral part of many organizations' strategic plans. According to Thite (2001) and Kaye (2005), a well-developed employee development system enables organizations to tap into their wealth of in-house talent for staffing and promotion purposes. This ensures the knowledge; skills, experience and aspirations available are matched with the needs of the organization. Organizations that invest in their employees expect to get positive reciprocity from employees in terms of organizational citizenship and improved performance (Crepanzono and Mitchell, 2005). Investment in employees' professional development is taking place both in the public and private sector with individual employees themselves or organizations they work for funding the exercise. This however is dependent on the needs of each individual or sector since individuals have different career aspirations and some sectors have been affected more than others by the changing global economic conditions.

In the higher education sector, the demands for a high caliber of employees to man the different sectors of the economy have put a premium on University education. World Bank (1994) and Sifuna (1998), note that education plays an important role in promoting the social and economic development of a country. In that light, Manyasi, Egessa and Warentho (2011) recognize the responsibility of Universities in equipping individuals with advanced knowledge, skills and competencies required for positions of responsibility in the public and private sector.

In Kenya, the number of people seeking university education has increased to the extent that public universities cannot absorb all the eligible candidates (Chacha, 2004; Kalai, 2009). The government has responded to this challenge by establishing more universities and university colleges, diversifying the programs offered by these institutions (Vundi, 2009; Chacha 2004) as well as initiating self-sponsored programs. From an initial one university college in 1956, Kenya today boasts of seven full-fledged public universities and thirteen university constituent colleges. The number of private universities has also increased.

This rapid expansion of university education has led to a myriad of challenges especially for public universities. These include low funding from the exchequer forcing these institutions to operate under very tight budgets, increased student enrolment without commensurate improvement in available facilities as well as reduced research capacity (UNESCO, 1998; Chacha 2004; Kalai, 2009). Additionally, recent studies by Kalai (2009) and Kadenyi *et al* (2009) indicates a decline in effective teaching, research and publishing by lecturers, yet these are the critical measures of lecturers' performance. This has been attributed to heavy workloads as a result of high students' enrolment.

Public Universities in Kenya

The higher education fraternity has undergone tremendous transformation in the recent past. Key among them is the enactment of Universities Act No. 42 of 2012 which commenced on 12th December 2012. This brought the establishment, governance and administration of universities

under same legal framework. This caused repealing of Acts of Parliament for seven (7) universities which operated under individual Acts. The new law also caused some public university constituent colleges operating under Legal Orders to be upgraded to fully-fledged public universities. Various categories of universities authorised to operate in Kenya are as indicated in Appendix IV and V below.

Statement of the Problem

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Annual Report for 2000 explains that people are the only source of differentiation and sustainable competitive advantage and that essential to this is employee development and increased performance. The report stated that staff management and development has become the primary weapon available to managers to generate competitiveness and performance. This statement reinforces the importance of employee development performance (EDPs) to the strategic initiatives of an organization.

According to CIPD (2002), it is necessary to develop staff because the global changes are rendering obsolete some of their original professional skills and knowledge and demanding the development of others. Members of staff are therefore being encouraged to engage in continuous professional development (CPD) through professional activities, formal learning, and self-directed and informal learning.

In tandem with the global changes, Public universities can gain a competitive advantage from the human resources they possess. Therefore, these organizations are expected to strive to improve the capabilities of their employees so as to enable them cope with changes in their environment. Undoubtedly, such practices enable an organization to get superior performance from their employees. That said, the lack of employee development programs and practices will create an environment or situation where the organization has poorly trained staff who underperform and mismanage the organization. As a result the University will be run down and degraded. Consequently, high performing individuals will be frustrated and leave the organization in search of greener pastures (Kraiger& Ford, 2007).

Organizational support, family support, perceived benefits and one understanding of his or her strengths and weaknesses had been identified as predictors of the success of employee development programs and hence enhanced employee performance (Kraiger and Ford, 2007). Without a doubt, Public Universities included employee development programs as part of their mandate and strategic plans. Such initiatives were expected to improve employee's performance of duty. Nonetheless, studies indicated that there was very little effort put in place for overall employee development in Kenyan public universities. As a matter of fact studies showed that the number of non-academic staff in these institutions undertaking career development programs was on the decline (Chacha, 2004; Lewa, 2009).

Therefore, Kenyan public universities needed an empirical study to guide them on how they should handle employee development programs of their non-teaching staff. Thus, this study sought to fill this empirical gap by finding out the effect of employee development programs on non-academic staff's commitment in Kenyan Public Universities. Most of the non-teaching staff felt that there was no job security and most of the universities management did not have a training policy that would give the employees feeling of belonging and so affecting their commitment.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess if training needs analysis is conducted and its effect on organizational performance
2. To examine the impact of employee development programs on organizational performance.
3. To find out the types of employee development support offered by the different public universities in Kenya and how they influence organizational performance
4. To examine the relationship between the employee development programs and staff performance in Kenyan public universities

Research Questions

1. Does the organization assess the training needs and how does this influence organizational performance?
2. What are the types of training offered and how do these influence organizational performance?
3. Does the training offered lead to career progression and how does this affect organizational performance?
4. What is the relationship between the employee development programs and staff performance in Kenyan public universities?

Significance of the Study

The study was to provide useful insights into the effects of employee development programs on organizational commitments. These insights would be able to assist the University management improve on the level of their service delivery through the encouragement of improved employee commitment by creating and offering effective employee development programs.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design that included both qualitative and quantitative research methods, was utilized. This involved a field survey that included a visit to Public Universities in order to obtain information on issues relating to staff training and development directly from the University members of staff. A mixed method descriptive research design was

selected because it presents many advantages. To begin with, a mixed method descriptive research design incorporates the advantages and strengths of both the qualitative and quantitative methods. Thus the description and overall report of the outcome is simplified. In addition, to a small extent, it helps to generalize qualitative data and is quite useful when unexpected results arise, especially when compared to a previous study (Creswell, 2003, p. 211).

Target population

The study targeted the public Universities in Kenya; University of Nairobi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Technology, Moi University, Kenyatta University, Egerton university, MasindeMuliro University and Maseno University. However, random sampling was used to identify three universities which have been in existence for over ten years, as their structures and policies would reflect the general situation in all the other public universities, and MoiUniversity, Kenyatta University and Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Agriculture were selected.

Sampling frame

The study used a descriptive survey design. The unit of analysis was the Kenyan public universities and the respondents were non-teaching staff in these universities. Jomo Kenyatta University, Moi University and Kenyatta University gave their consent and allowed the research to go on while the others did not give the consent. From a Population of about 5000 non-teaching staff, a study sample of 357 respondents was selected. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used in selecting the sample to ensure all cadres of non-academic staff were represented in the study.

Response Rate

The study targeted 357 respondents from seven (7) public universities in Kenya. Three public universities gave their consent hence 30 percent of target population. Following the huge population in this study, the study applied stratified random sampling method to select 30 percent of the target population for inclusion in the study making a sample size of 107 respondents. Out of 107 questionnaires administered, a total of 53 questionnaires were filled and returned giving a response rate of 50percent which is within Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) recommended sufficient response rate for analysis.

Description of respondents' personal data

Description of respondents' personal data is given in terms of departments: Human Resources with 28 percent, Gender 55 percent female while 45 percent male. In highest level of education and age bracket Middle and technical staff representing 40 percent of all respondents presumably these are the employees who require a high level of employee development in order to improve their skills and consequent service delivery within the organization. 23 percent of the respondents belonged to senior management while the support staff only account for 36 percent

of 23 percent of respondents hold masters or doctoral degrees while 38 percent of respondents hold a bachelor's degree. Consequently, no respondents had primary or secondary education as their highest level of education meaning that the employees in public universities are sufficiently trained. Nonetheless, 30 percent of the respondents were holders of a diploma or a higher national diploma.

Types of employee programmes offered

Fifty Seven percent (30) of the respondents indicated that the type of employee development program being offered in the public universities are in the form of academic programs like an undergraduate degree, a master's degree, a doctoral degree or any other academic programs. Consequently, 22 percent (12) answered that workshops and seminars were available to different members of staff depending on the department and the training requirement. Lastly, 21 percent (11) of the respondents indicated that they are aware of on the job training programmes within the public universities. The finding implied that public universities use academic programs, workshops and seminars in order to train their staff and, on the job training is yet to gain momentum within the universities.

Descriptive staff response

The question of whether employee development programmes improve employee commitments within the university, majority (62 percent) strongly agreed with the statement. The findings are in tandem with Shekley and Keeton (2001) who asserted that employee development programmes develop new knowledge about the business or the technical capabilities of employees. Also, majority (66 percent) of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that public universities evaluate effectiveness of training programs. Consequently, (76 percent) strongly agreed with the statement that Employee development programs leads to career progression.

Another majority (74 percent) indicated that public universities offers various employee development programs. This finding is supported by the university of Nairobi staff handbook which elaborates on the available staff development programmes that are available within the university. In addition, various respondents indicated that they participated in various types of employee development programs.

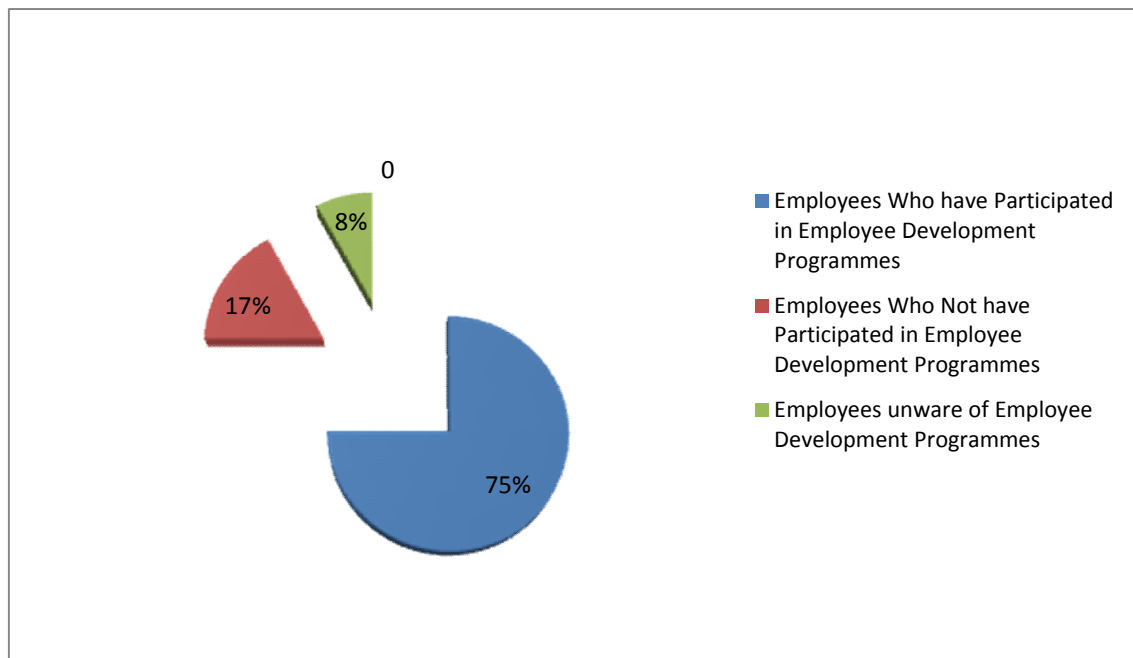
Seventy one percent of the respondents strongly agreed that public universities do not have a written policy on employee development programs. Indeed, the researcher was unable to locate any policy document, within the different public universities, clearly elaborating on employee development programs. However, these universities, despite having a clear cut policy, train and develop their staff.

Lastly, another majority (59 percent) strongly agreed that public universities have effective and useful training methods. These training methods, as indicated earlier, include academic programs, both short term and long term, workshops and seminars, and on the job training. Notably, this research finding agrees with the assertion of Odor (1995) who claimed that seminars, conferences and workshops, create and avail opportunities for professionals to enrich themselves or get abreast with new knowledge and ideas.

Findings

From the findings in figure 1.1 below show that 75percent of the respondents participated in various employee development programmes, 17 percent had not participated in any employee development programmes while 8percentwere unaware of employee development programmes within their university. The results imply that most respondents had participated in various employee development programmes and thus were knowledgeable enough to answer the questionnaire.

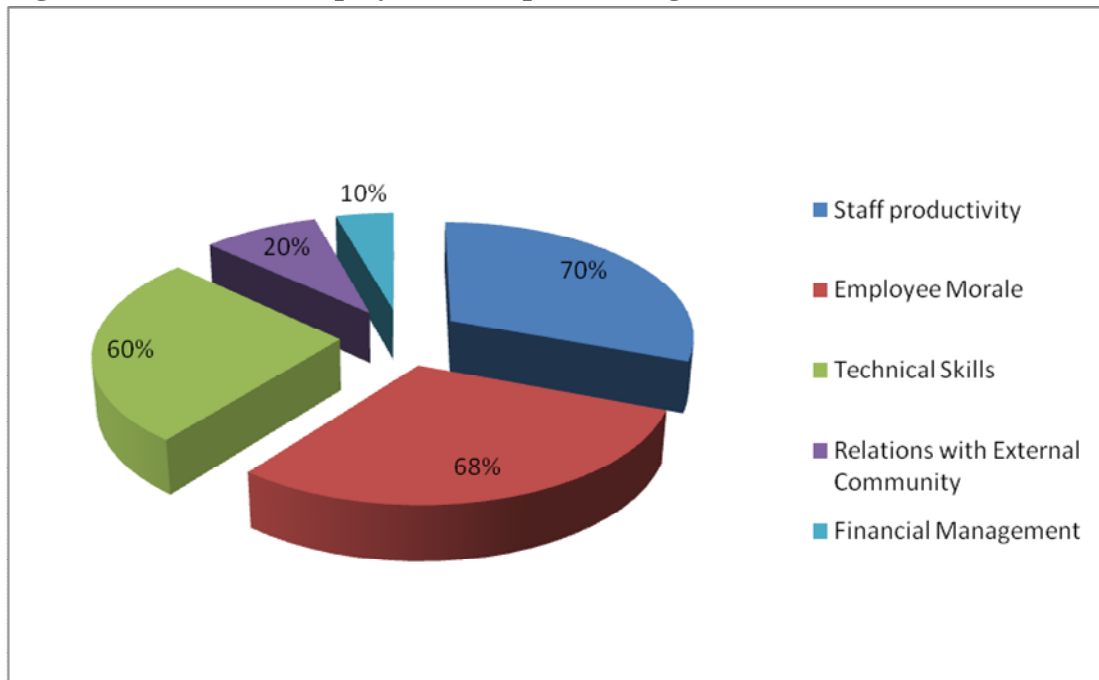
Figure 1.1: Respondents who have participated in Employee Development Programmes



The study sought to find out the effect of Employee Development Programmes on Performance. The research revealed that employee training enhanced the performance of the employees, through staff productivity, to a great extent with a 70percent of the respondents' indication. In addition, 68percent and 60percent of the respondents indicated that employee development programmes improved employee morale and the technical skills within the university. However, very few respondents, 20percent and 10percent respectively, associate employee development with improvement in financial management and better relations with the external community.

Also, the researcher wanted to know the extent to which the factors; Training programs, Frequency of training, Effectiveness of training methods, Form of training methods/approaches and training needs analysis affected the performance in the organizations. The research revealed that all these factors influenced the effectiveness of employee performance in the organizations to a moderate extent.

Figure 1.2: Effect of Employee Development Programmes



Types of employee development programs

The study sought to find out the types of employee development programs offered by the various public universities as shown in the table 4.5 below.

Table 4.6: Types of employee development programmes

Type of program	Respondents	percent
Academic programs (Masters, PhD etc)	30	57
Workshops and Seminars	12	22
On the Job training	11	21
Total	53	100

From the findings in the above table 57percent (30) of the respondents indicated that the type of employee development program being offered in the public universities are in the form of academic programs like an undergraduate degree, a master’s degree, a doctoral degree or any other academic programs. Consequently, 22percent (12) answered that workshops and seminars were available to different members of staff depending on the department and the training

requirement. Lastly, 21 percent (11) of the respondents indicated that they are aware of on the job training programmes within the public universities. The finding implied that public universities use academic programs, workshops and seminars in order to train their staff and, on the job training is yet to gain momentum within the universities.

The findings of this research found that public universities evaluate effectiveness of training programs. Without a doubt, the human resource department of any organization is given the responsibility of recruiting, training and appraising employees. It has primary staff responsibility for planning, developing, and implementing policies, programs, standards, and systems for effective acquisition, utilization, development, and management of human resources to accomplish the overall mission of the organization; for evaluating effectiveness of the Department's personnel management program; and for the analysis of position structures. The human resource department develops and implements policies, procedures, programs and services to facilitate the successful implementation of described initiatives on behalf of the university secretariat. Therefore, it is mandatory that this department to evaluate organizational programs that involve the staff in any way in order to ensure its effectiveness in supporting organizational strategy, mission and vision (Jackson, Schuler & Werner, 2011).

These findings are in tandem with Sheckley and Keeton (2001) who assert that employee development programmes develop new knowledge about the business or the technical capabilities of employees. This finding has also been supported by Buckley and Caple (2000) who found out that training of teachers in elementary schools in North London had both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits to the individual resulting from the ability to perform a task with better skills and increased job performance. Therefore, continuous training programs, both off the job and on the job training, positively impact the performance level of the employees as it contributes to the improvement of technical skills and general business and organizations practices.

In 2010, the ministry of State for public service asserted that training and capacity building is highly necessary to improve performance and thus the Government was keen on establishing development programs for the public service in order to achieve the objectives of Kenya Vision 2030. Hence this finding is supported by intentions, objectives and assumptions of the ministry of state for public service in Kenya. In addition, the above findings also support the Human capital theory (Schultz, 1961) on which this study anchors on, which posits that effective job performance accrues when there is a linkage between the strategic interests of the organization with the interests of their employees through training and education. Therefore, it is without a doubt that training has a significant positive relationship with the job performance of the non-teaching staff in public universities.

Majority of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that public universities evaluate effectiveness of training programs. Without a doubt, the human resource department of any organization is given the responsibility of recruiting, training and appraising employees. It has primary staff responsibility for planning, developing, and implementing policies, programs, standards, and systems for effective acquisition, utilization, development, and management of human resources to accomplish the overall mission of the organization; for evaluating effectiveness of the Department's personnel management program; and for the analysis of position structures. The human resource department develops and implements policies, procedures, programs and services to facilitate the successful implementation of described initiatives on behalf of the university secretariat. Therefore, it is mandatory that this department to evaluate organizational programs that involve the staff in any way in order to ensure its effectiveness in supporting organizational strategy, mission and vision.(Jackson, Schuler & Werner, 2011).

This finding is also strongly supported by Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick (2011) who suggest that evaluation of training programs is completely vital to the organization as this process assists in justifying the existence and budget of the training department by showing how it contributes to the organization's objectives and goals. In addition, evaluation of the effectiveness of training programs helps organizations to decide whether to continue or discontinue training programs and to gain information on how to improve future training programs. Therefore it goes without saying that the evaluation of the effectiveness and relevance of training programs is highly vital to an organization, its growth and continuity. Majority (76percent) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that Employee development programs leads to career progression. These findings are supported by Jacoby (1984) and Morishima (1986) who in their research on managers, unions and the transformation of work in American Industry, indicate that promotion opportunities are increased by the level of individual professional qualification.

Kenyan public Universities have laid down criteria for promotion that concur with the one at Makerere and probably other institutions. Lastly, majority (71 percent) of the respondents strongly agreed that public universities do not have a written policy on employee development programs. This finding is supported by the responses of some administrative members of staff. Nevertheless, despite having a working documented policy on the subject matter, the universities are still keen on promoting and continuing employee appraisal and development programs.

The findings of this study show that most of respondents are highly committed and have a good attitude towards the organization. This is because they talk about the organization in a positive manner and associate it with family attributes. According to Scholl (2003), commitment within the workplace typically results from the interaction and the relationship that an employee has with an organization. An organization enhances this relationship by offering various training and developmental opportunities to the employees thus the more training given to employees', the

stronger employees' commitment to the organization. Therefore, training should be implemented as part of the larger organizational development strategies aimed at getting a committed workforce. Employees interpret training as an indicative of commitment from the organization to them, and which they may reciprocate through their committed to the organization.

Fifty percent of the respondents feel that they would be happy to spend the rest of their career life working in the organization while only nine percent of the respondents disagree with this question. Interestingly, 40percent of the respondents strongly agree with the fact that they easily become attached to any other organization that they work for. However, this attachment arises due to a good working environment that is associated with work and career support from the respective organization. Brum (2010) asserts that access to training can also play a significant role into the level of commitment that is established. In addition, Bartlett (2001) argues that organizations that are able to create an environment where training is supported and valued by employees will be able to achieve greater commitment outcomes such as low employees' turnover.

Consequently, Seventeen percent of the respondents would be afraid to leave their jobs if they did not have another one lined up while 33 percent would feel quite comfortable leaving their jobs without necessarily having another option. It is believed that this is associated with proper training activities available within the organization that enhance the skills of a person thus finding a new organization where his or her skills would be highly needed is relatively easy. Also, thirty nine percent of the respondents would feel uncomfortable to leave the company if they were offered another job and a majority of the respondents (60 percent) would still choose to work with the organization if they were given a choice to decide. Undoubtedly, this shows a high level of commitment towards the organization. Nonetheless, it must be noted that organizational commitment is encouraged by the employer who sets up incentive based structures that appeal to the employees thus making it impossible for them to leave the organization. Existing research suggests that a strong psychological bond between an employee and his or her employer is created when training and development provision is taken as a sign by employees that their organization desires to enter into a social exchange with them (Garrow, 2004).

Additionally, Fifty percent of the respondents indicated that they would have difficulties leaving the company at the moment while another 40percent of the respondents felt that their lives would be highly disrupted if they left the organization. Meaning that they are quite satisfied with the environment and working condition presented in the organization. Cascio (2003) believes that changing employment landscapes have weakened employees' physical, administrative, and temporal attachments to organizations. In fact, employees are now more mobile, more autonomous, and less dependent on their organizations for employment than ever before.

Majority of the respondents (40percent) strongly disagree with the notion that working for the organization is associated with an obligation that they feel. Thus they strongly disagree with the question that they continue to work for the organization as leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice. In contrast, majority of the respondents (60percent) believed in the value of showing loyalty to the organization. This finding is supported by the concept of affective commitment as outlined by Meyer & Allen, 1991. Indeed, commitment is a key concept for explaining relationships between individuals and organizations (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday & Sutton, 1993). Nevertheless, organizational commitment can take multiple forms namely, normative, affective or continuance. Whereas normative and continuance commitment often involve feelings of obligation or pressure to be attached, affective commitment involves feelings of intrinsic motivation and self-determination (Meyer, Becker & Vandenberghe, 2004). As seen in the findings of this research, respondents did not view their work in the organization as obligatory but as a show of loyalty that they are reciprocating to the organization.

The study found out that training and developments programs have the highest impact on acquisition of technical skills with indication that the more an employee is exposed to training and development programs at workplace, the more technical skills he/she is likely to acquire and hence increase employee productivity.

Conclusions

From the foregoing discussions, the following conclusions were drawn from the study. To begin with, it was revealed that employee development and training is positively related to job performance in the Kenyan public universities. Training opportunities like short courses, seminars, conferences, postgraduate diploma, Master degree, PhD programs and sabbaticals, which are within the context of individual control, tend to increase job performance of the members of staff present in public universities. Nonetheless, there is need for more comprehensive opportunities for training. Notably, the study revealed that public universities in Kenya have employee development programs though they do not have a written policy on the same. Nevertheless, the universities offer various training opportunities to their employees upon individual request or when a need or opportunity arises in a specific department. These training programs include workshops, seminars, on the job training and academic programs such as diplomas, degrees and so on.

In addition, the study has revealed that there is a significant relationship between employee's training and organizational growth and development. This is because highly trained staff performs better within the organization thus positively impacting on the overall performance of the organization. Therefore, staff training must not be neglected by any organization that values growth and enhanced productivity. The reason is not far-fetched, as in deed, training and development helps to ensure that organizational members possess the knowledge and skills they

need to perform their jobs effectively, take on new responsibilities, and adapt to changing conditions.

Furthermore, the study has shown that employee development programs leads to improved staff performance in the Kenyan public universities. Various developmental programs enable the members of staff to improve on their technical skills, understand their responsibilities better and gain insight on better ways of performing their functions. Thus when employees participate in short or long term programs their performance tends to improve. The study has revealed that public universities value employee performance and strive to improve this through the evaluation of the effectiveness of training programs. They encourage employees to participate in employee development programs and consequently offer incentives through possible career progression. However, these institutions do not have a clear cut policy that dictates employee development in its entirety.

The availability of employee development programs enhances an employee's commitment to the organization. This is because he or she feels that the organization is aware and taking care of his or her well being thus such practices enhance loyalty and commitment towards the organization. Lastly, this study depicted that employee development programs have a significant positive impact on acquisition of technical skills and staff productivity. However, it doesn't have a significant impact on employee morale.

Recommendations

This study recommends that staff development, as a standalone program, does not lead to significant improvement in job performance as it needs to be supported by other career development strategies such as recognition, promotion, and salary increase. In fact, a highly trained individual will be very demotivated if he or she remains in one position for a long time. Therefore, public Universities should use other motivational strategies alongside staff development to engineer staff interest for improved job performance. In addition, there should be well designed staff appraisal procedures to evaluate staff as well as inspire further improvement in performance.

Furthermore, this study recommends that efforts should be made by government, or the relevant body, to increase the allocation being given to employee development programs to further improve on the various training programs and afford sponsorship for the employees. Indeed, the universities should further improve on their grant scheme to employees in order to encourage more people to study and to increase the overall performance of the organization. Consequently, this study recommends that universities should adopt the system of Performance based pay on all its employees in order to improve efficiency in the work place. Public universities should also take proper consideration of competence, assessment and development of the employees that are working within the universities.

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