EFFECT OF SELECTED HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES ON TEACHERS’ PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A CASE OF BUNGOMA WEST SUB-COUNTY

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ABSTRACT
Improving company performance is something of the interest to all organizations. Employee management practices are tools that help both large and small scale employers to improve workforce alignment, which is defined as having the right people with the right skills in the right jobs. This enables an organization to realize high level performance. However, this does not always happen as there are many other factors that affect the employee in a manner that hampers optimal performance from being achieved. This study sought to examine the effects of HRM practices on the overall performance of teachers in Bungoma West Sub-county and identifying what can be done both at the policy level and at to ensure that the teachers give their best service. Such HRM practices include motivation, grievance handling, employee voice, stress management and compensation. The study shall used descriptive and correlation survey design to collect data from teachers through questionnaires and document analysis using frequencies percentages and Pearson’s product moment coefficient test.

Key Words: Human Resource Practices, employee performance, discipline handling procedure, primary motivation promotion

Introduction

Human resource management (HRM) is defined as a planned set of human resource management policies and practices that are designed and implemented to enable an organization to achieve its business objectives. (Armstrong, 2001). Many organizations today have increasingly become aware of the importance of HRM. This awareness in a system is a critical dimension in the performance of organizations (Rees, 2006). Human Resource (HR) practices namely recruitment
and selection, training and development, compensation, performance evaluation, promotion criteria and grievance handling procedures have been found to have an impact on performance in financial institutions (Teseema & Soeters, 2006). This is in agreement with a study that linked HR practices to employee turnover (Guthrie, 2001).

People use their collective skills, abilities and experience in an organization to make a significant contribution to organizational success giving it a competitive advantage. The HRM practices such as resourcing, training and development, employee relations and reward management are concerned with how people are employed and managed in organizations so as to achieve this competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce (Armstrong and Baron, 2004).

Cole (2004) emphasize that the HR function brings in the value of people in organization by making contribution to value added and contribution to organizational success. Therefore an organization relies on HR as its employees for success. Effective HRM strategy systematically organizes all individual HRM measures to directly influence employee attitude and behavior in a way that leads an organization to achieve its competitive strategy (Huang, 2001).

In view of the fact that the goals and the necessities of each of the competitive strategy types are different, the management of HR of the firm should be aligned with the overall corporate strategy. The firm can thus obtain a competitive advantage and thus achieve superior performance (Kelleher & Perret, 2001).

With the ever changing trends, it is a common belief in the business world that the human resources of an organization can be a source of competitive advantage, provided that the policies and practices for managing people are integrated with strategic goals and objectives. It is critical for organizational performance that HRM practices are taken seriously (Rees, 2006). The real life experiences substantiate the assumption that no matter how sophisticated and modern the business activities of the organization may become, it will be extremely difficult to sustain its growth and effectiveness unless there are strategies that complement its operations.

This is a recurring theme as examined by academicians, consultants and practitioners. The frequent and uncertain changes, greater competition between firms, the need for continuous innovations, quality enhancement and cost reduction force companies to face the challenge of improving their competitiveness and consequently their performance. This realization has propelled HRM as a major field of study and the renewed interest has facilitated the development of newer approaches in managing organizations and human resources (Wright, 2005).

HRM emphasizes the need for the HR plans and strategies to be formulated within the context of overall organizational strategies and objectives and to be responsive to the changing nature of the organization’s external environment. It is an approach which requires interpretation and adaptation by practitioners to ensure the most suitable fit between HR business strategies and
plans. Thus, the overall themes of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) are the integration of all HRM functions, adherence to broad organization goals and responsiveness to the external environment (Armstrong, 2009).

Several researchers in the past have studied the effect of certain individual HRM practices on firm performance (e.g. Delaney and Huselid, 1995) and found out that no single HRM practice had a direct causal connection with organizational financial performance (Paul A.K. and Anantharaman, 2003). Consequently, the current trend globally has been to study HRM practices in ‘bundles’ (Wright, et al, 2004) who proposed a model in which the intended policies, the actual practices, the experiences and outcomes of employees, their reactions and finally the performance outcomes were studied in relation to each other.

Many African countries since the late 1980s have undergone reforms to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the Civil Service to ensure its performance, capacity and sustainability over time so as to raise the quality of public service and enhance their capacity to carry out these functions. These Human Resource functions are invaluable assets in promoting socio-economic development.

According to the international conventions in education worldwide, education is a right of every child. Kenya is a signatory of many such conventions such as the UN convention on child rights and the world Conference on Education For All (EFA) (UNESCO, 2002). The role of the teacher is viewed as that of a guide, a facilitator, a leader and a source of knowledge in the learning process.

**Statement of the problem**

Trends in globalization have made most organizations to be aware of the fact that without adequate human resources management practices an organization is unable to attract, develop, maintain and dispose of a firm’s human resource. The Kenyan policy of Free Primary Education which is in line with the UN child rights and the world Conference on Education For All (EFA) (UNESCO, 2002). Though quite a noble course the policy which is contained in the Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 (Government of Kenya) has stretched the limits of the Government’s human resources for the provision of quality education. This policy document targets the provision of all inclusive quality education that is accessible and relevant to all Kenyans with teachers as implementers. This indicates that there is need to intensify HRM practices by the employer and managers of teachers in order to enhance high standards in education particularly in public primary schools. Currently primary school teachers are the most underpaid and overworked employees of the Kenyan government. This evidenced by the successive strikes in the recent past and the rising turnover of teachers; an indication of job dissatisfaction.

Research indicates that in the service sectors such as banking, service is delivered across the counter such that there is a more extensive direct contact between the employees and the
customer as compared with manufacturing industry (Ann P.B., 2004). A study in Sri Lanka public sector banks revealed that human resource practices such as compensation and social benefits, performance appraisal and training and development were found to be explanatory factors having significant effect on employee retention (Rathnawerera, 2010). Other studies done illuminated that there is a significant relationship between employee empowerment and organizational performance in the hotel industry (Chiang and Hsieh, 2012), manufacturing firms, software firms (Indravedi, 2012) and banks (Tutar, Altinoz and Cakioglu, 2011), however, little is known about the extent of this relationship particularly among non-profit organizations like public schools. Moreover, results of such research in the Kenyan context are not available by this time of this study. This study sought to fill this gap by establishing the effect of selected human resource practices on Primary schools’ teachers’ performance in Bungoma West sub-county.

Literature Review

Concept of Human Resource Management

HRM is a strategic, integrated and coherent approach to the employment, development and well being of the people in an organization, a discipline which has a strong conceptual basis from behavioral sciences, strategic, human capital and industrial relationship theories (Armstrong, 2010). The HRM policy goals involve management of people as assets which are fundamental to the competitive advantage of any organization aligning HRM policies. It is an approach that defines how the organization’s goals will be achieved through people by means of HR strategies and integrated HR policies and practices. Organizations are able to impact firm level outcomes through their human resource management. The combination or system of HRM activities working in concert rather than single practices enables an organization to realize greater outcomes which impact positively to an organization’s performance.

Within the last three decades, there have been a number of important contributions in the literature dealing with issues pertaining to the management of people. Significant attention has been directed towards human resource management (HRM). The fundamental aim of HRM is to generate organizational capability by ensuring that the organization has the skilled, engaged, committed and well motivated employees it needs to achieve sustained competitive advantage. It has two main objectives: first to achieve integration – the vertical alignment of HR strategies with business strategies and the horizontal integration of HR strategies. The second objective is to provide a sense of direction in an often turbulent environment so that the business needs of the organization and the individual and collective needs of its employees can be met by the development and implementation of coherent and practical HR policies and programmes (Armstrong 2009).

Cadwell, 2001, suggests that management of people as assets is fundamental to the competitive advantage of the organization especially when HRM goals are aligned with business policies and
corporate strategies and which in the process develop a close fit of HR policies and procedures all woven into one system. This point of view was supported by Kepes and Delery (2007) who asserted that what bring the competitive advantage to an organization are not individual HRM practices but a system of interrelated practices.

**Motivation**

People are pulled toward behaviors that offer positive incentives and pushed away from behaviors associated with negative incentives. In other words, differences in behavior from one person to another or from one situation to another can be traced to the incentives available and the value a person places on those incentives at the time. (Bernstein, 2011) Behavior is driven either by motivation arising from inside that involves engaging in a behavior because it is personally rewarding; essentially, performing an activity for its own sake rather than the desire for some external reward (intrinsic motivation) or when we are motivated to perform a behavior or engage in an activity in order to earn a reward or avoid a punishment (extrinsic motivation.)

Incentive theories proposed that behavior is motivated by the "pull" of external goals, such as rewards, money, or recognition. It's easy to think of many situations in which a particular goal, such as a promotion at work, can serve as an external incentive that helps activate particular behaviors and contrast with other theories that suggest we are pushed into action by internal drives (such as the drive-reduction theory of motivation, arousal theory, and instinct theory), incentive theory instead suggests that we are pulled into action by outside incentives (Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2003).

Goleman, (2001) explains that motivation is that passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status; the propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence. This is echoed by Armstrong (2010) who says that the motivation process is a course of action that encourages the employees to establish goals, take action, and attain the goal – a valued reward that satisfies their particular needs. The goal, in organization aspect, can be defined as desirable performance such as high academic performance level in goods and/or services as a result of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This is in line with the Expectancy Theory propounded by Vroom (1964) and Potter and Lawler (1968) which hold it that effort (motivation) depends on the likelihood that reward will follow the effort and that the reward is worthwhile. The strength of this theory is that it is the key theory that informs modern approaches to reward and that it establishes the link between effort and reward.

**Promotion**

Feedback is an important component for the employee who performs a task on how effectively the task is performed. This leads to job redesign, job enrichment self management and flexibility of work schedules all which are motivating factors that greatly contribute to organizational
performance effectiveness (Steen et al, 2009, Goleman (2001). On the other hand the 360 degree performance appraisal in which appraisal of an employee is done by the supervisor, peers direct reports and customers is important for the organization because it rates the individual based on the skills, competencies and work related behavior. Research shows that people who have the required skills are likely to receive positive performance evaluating resulting to promotional eligibility.

Thus performance appraisal paves way for upward, lateral or upward movement of employees within an organization in which employees’ job assignments, responsibilities and autonomy may be enlarged (promotion), moved to a different department within the firm (transfer) or reduced (demotion.) Each of these movements are as a result of a performance appraisal and sometimes have a bearing on the individual’s motivation as a promotion may indicate a pay rise and a demotion a pay cut (Steen et al, 2009). An accurate performance appraisal is required about how well each employee is performing in order to reward employees who perform well and improve their performance if below expectations. Job analysis helps the employer to identify behaviors and the results associated with effective performance. A competency framework proposed by Richard Hackman and Greg Oldham (2010), suggests that since job design has a bearing in performance appraisal which in turn influences employee motivation, the following characteristics must be present in a job to make it more motivating: Firstly, when the task or tasks assigned requires a variety of skills to perform it makes the job quite motivating. Secondly, an employee that is required to simply perform a part of a task is less motivated than one who is required to complete the whole part. It is also motivating for the employee to perform tasks that have great impact on the lives of others. The autonomy to make decisions concerning one job contributes to how well it will be performed. Autonomy gives employees a feeling of freedom, power and personal responsibility in determining whatever goes on in the organization in the area of duty. As a result, they are intrinsically motivated to perform tasks for the benefit of the organization (Chiang and Hsieh, 2012).

**Discipline handling procedures**

Discipline is what regulates human activity to produce a controlled performance. He further asserts that discipline is a valuable quality for any individual though produces punishment or prevention. In any organization, three forms of discipline that are found are self discipline, team discipline and managerial discipline. For discipline to exist in any organization, rules against organizational vices such as negligence, absenteeism, dishonesty, unreliability, insubordinations, intimidation, harassment, sexual offences as well as safety offences must be put in place. To ensure that said rules are kept penalties, which include rebukes, caution, warnings, disciplinary transfer demotion and suspension. HR practices ensure that the rules are kept through the use of information dissemination, induction, placement and location, training and reviewing the rules periodically, Torrington (2006).
Disciplinary measures should be meted out only after in-depth understanding of the employee reason for contravening the laid own rules. (Wedderburn, 2007). Procedures are necessary in enhancing discipline at the work place by the application of fair and consistent measures which also promote good industrial relations. They provide a framework for the organization’s management to achieve satisfactory standards and for the employee to know that there is a standard and fair means of dealing with them should they fail to comply with the standards (Edwards and Black, 2003).

It is therefore imperative that copies of procedures be availed to employees at the induction stage, during refresher courses and during trade union programmes. The procedures should be rational, fair, have the range of penalties defined, must be in the Employment Act of the country and must be in consistence with the law and the natural justice of fairness. The rules and procedures must be reviewed and updated in consistent with the changes in the work place and employment legislation (Forth & Bryson, 2006).

**Research Methodology**

The study used a descriptive survey and correlation research designs to collect data from a sample of 88 primary school teachers who were selected from 73 public primary schools in the sub county to participate in the study. Data was collected using questionnaires coded and tabulated for accuracy, reliability and ease of analysis and presentation using the SPSS software program.

**Research Findings and Discussion**

**Motivation**

The respondents were asked to comment on the extent to which they agreed with statements on the issue on a Likert scale ranging from 1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree. The results indicated that most of the respondents were in agreement that motivation has a relationship with teacher performance as shown by (55.6%), Many teachers were not happy with nature of duties assigned as shown by 53.41% and 59.01% were not compensated for extra duties assigned. Only 43.18% of the teachers said that they were satisfied with their own results. Besides that only 48.86% said that the mean score of their KCPE results improved. The results also indicate that teachers’ quit their jobs for better pay (59.09 %), for more flexible working hours (47.7 %), desire for more authority in decision making (68.1%). In conclusion teacher motivation impact negatively on school performance because of the high turnover of teachers (57.95%) due to lack of it. Teachers’ commitment and loyalty to their work can be enhanced if they are well motivated.
Promotion

The respondents were asked to comment on the extent to which they agreed with statements on promotion using a Likert scale ranging from 1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree. The results indicated that teacher promotion has a strong effect on teacher performance (88.6%), supported by the criteria used by TSC to promote them. 60.23% of the teachers indicated that the criteria used to promote teachers by the TSC was fair. 68.18% of the teachers said that the length of stay by a teacher in a given grade has an effect of teacher performance. Teachers who had overstayed in one grade did not perform as well as those recently promoted for they lacked motivation.

Discipline and performance

The results indicated that all the schools have discipline procedures such as verbal warning, written warning, suspension/interdiction, and termination/summary dismissal. Most schools use verbal warning shown by (95.45%). However, other forms of discipline are rarely used as an indication of teachers’ flexibility and adaptability to correction. This enhances the teaching learning process, because verbal warning is cheaper and saves time and leaves teachers psychologically stable.

Hypotheses tests

Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Test was used to test the study hypotheses. The results of the tests are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation between Motivation, Promotion, and Discipline handling procedure and Employee Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Resource Practices</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th>Discipline handling procedure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson’s Correlation( r)</td>
<td>0.906</td>
<td>0.646</td>
<td>0.572</td>
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</table>

From the findings of the tests, it can be deduced that Human Resource Practices constructs namely; motivation, promotion and discipline handling procedure, have a positive and significant relationship with human resource practices. According to Mangal (2004) and Krysik and Finn, 2007, any correlation that is between ±0.41 to ±0.71 indicates a moderate correlation while any correlation that is between ±0.71 to ±0.90 and that between ±0.9 to ±0.99 is a very high correlation.

Therefore, motivation had a very high correlation with employee performance (r=0.906) followed by promotion (r=0.646), and discipline handling procedure (r=0.572). All the three
variables had moderate correlation with performance. Based on the findings, all the three null hypotheses were rejected and the alternative ones accepted. This led to the study to conclude that motivation, promotion and discipline handling procedure had a strong and positive influence on employee performance.

These findings concur with earlier studies done in different contextual environments that held that HRM practices had an effect on employee performance (Indradevi, 2012; Tutar, et al, 2011; Sahoo and Das, 2011; Tuuli and Rowlinson, 2009). In this Kenyan context in the Primary School education sector therefore, motivation of the teachers is paramount as it can greatly influence employee performance, highlighting the importance the teachers place in carrying out their duties. To them, the benefit that will accrue to their clients, that is, their pupils was paramount hence their focus to meaningfully execute their tasks with dedication.

**Summary of Findings**

The objectives were satisfied by collecting and analyzing pertinent data using a researcher administered questionnaire. Once collected, the data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics The Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used to prepare and organize data for analysis to test the significant levels between the variables. The study established that motivation had a very high influence on teacher performance hence the study rejected the null hypothesis (motivation, does not influence teacher’s performance) since the correlation was very high (r=0.906). The study also established that promotion does influence teacher performance hence the study rejected the null hypothesis (promotion does not influence teacher’s performance) as the correlation was moderate (r=0.646). Next the study established that discipline handling procedure does influence teacher performance hence the study rejected the null hypothesis (motivation, does not influence teacher’s performance) as the correlation was found to be moderate at (r=0.572.) In summary, Motivation, promotion and discipline handling procedures all had a positive correlation to KCPE results.

**Conclusions**

The study concluded that human resource practices contributed to the results realized at KCPE level in BWSC primary school. To begin with, motivation of teachers is paramount in improving performance of any school because motivation produces commitment and loyalty of employees to their jobs. Secondly, when teachers overstay in one grade without promotion they develop dissatisfaction with their work. This is because promotion usually means higher pay and more autonomy and authority which are motivating to the employee. Therefore performance appraisal should be done periodically and feedback acted upon consistently. Finally, discipline-handling procedure can lead to job dissatisfaction if it is deemed unfair or if an employee feels they have been treated unjustly which leads to poor performance because an aggrieved teacher will not be dedicated to his/her job.
**Recommendations**

Based on the foregoing, the study recommends that employee motivation be encouraged by organizations in general since it is a great predictor of organizational performance. In the education sector in particular, teachers should be given incentives for good performance and any extra duties performed such as offering remedial to children below average. These can be in monetary form or otherwise. x

Promotion of teachers should be done regularly and systematically so that no teacher overstays in one grade. This is possible when regular performance appraisals are done regularly and within a specified period of time. This would mean more pay for the employee, more autonomy and more authority to make decisions concerning their work. Based on the foregoing, the study recommends that promotion be encouraged by organizations in general since it is a great predictor of organizational performance. In light of the above findings, the study makes the following policy and suggestions for further research recommendations. Discipline handling procures must be well stipulated and made available to all teachers at the commencement of their job, during refresher course and during KNUT functions so that each teacher is aware of the employer’s expectation and consequences of failing to adhere to the set standards. Trade unions should be involved in designing such rules, regulations and procedures for them to be acceptable as being fair.

**References**


