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**The Relationship between Human Resource Management
Practices and Performance of Public Universities in Kenya
.A Critical Literature Review**

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Abstract

Purpose: The main aim of this study is to establish the relationship between human resource management practices and performance of public universities in Kenya.

Methodology: The paper used a desk study review methodology where relevant empirical literature review was reviewed to identify main themes and to extract knowledge gaps.

Findings: The objective of this study was to establish the relationship between strategic human resource management practices and performance of public universities in Kenya. Based on previous studies, resourcing practices, reward management and training and development were expected to have a positive effect on performance

Unique Contribution to Theory and Practice: With due regard to the ever-increasing desire to have high organizational performance in public universities there is need to invest in various strategies. This should be done in a manner in which all the stakeholders are happy

Keywords: *Strategic management, human resource management, performance, university*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A consensus has emerged among scholars and practitioners alike that the business environment has become more competitive than in the past because of globalization (Busienei 2015). Busienei 2015 argues that in order to survive in this new era, businesses must focus even harder on their competitive strengths so as to develop appropriate long - term strategies. The researcher further state that the way an organization manages people can influence its performance. In particular HRM practices such as resourcing practices, job design, employee participation and empowerment, team-based production systems, extensive employee training and performance-contingent incentive compensation are widely believed to improve the performance of organizations (Busienei, 2015). Impact of human resource management practices on organizational performance has been a widely researched area for years. Results of studies, from developed countries to developing countries have been time and again showing that HR practices have significant impact on organizational performance (Busienei, 2015). But unfortunately, very insufficient number of studies have been conducted in this area of context in Kenya and other developing countries (Busienei, 2015). Considerable evidence suggests that investments in training produce beneficial organizational outcomes (Seidle, 2016). The effectiveness of skilled employees will be limited, however, if they are not motivated to perform their jobs.

According to Bhatti (2018), higher institutions of learning can adopt various HRM practices to enhance employee skills as well as motivate them to work harder towards achieving the set targets. Higher institutions of learning can improve the quality of current employees by providing comprehensive training and development activities. Considerable evidence suggests that investments in training produce beneficial organizational outcomes (Seidle, 2016). The effectiveness of skilled employees will be limited, however, if they are not motivated to perform their jobs. Organizations can implement merit pay or incentive compensation systems that provide rewards to employees for meeting specific goals. Performance management as a process explicitly recognizes that in today's globally competitive industrial environment, every employee's effort must focus on helping the company to achieve its strategic goals.

Yonezawa (2017) argues that higher education institutions pursue multiple goals namely: Human capital development, most notably through classroom instruction for students; providing additional services to aid students in their development of human capital – through such mechanisms as tutoring, mentoring, child care, thoughtful scheduling; provision of services to the local community and knowledge production goals through faculty research programs. The researcher went on to clarify that human capital production and the role of instructors and managers in achieving this goal provides meaningful success and effectiveness in institutions of higher learning. Yet even within this narrower definition of the goal of broad-access institutions, the meaning of success or effectiveness is difficult to define or measure (York, 2015). There has been rapid expansion in the higher education sector of Kenya. More people are seeking higher education from the few universities we have. The university education system is also isolated from the society. A meaningful modern education system should stimulate all aspects of human intellectual potential. It should not simply emphasize access to knowledge, but also uphold the richness of local cultures and values, supported by valuable disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, including philosophy, literature and arts (Cook, 2016)

The report by World Bank (2015) points out that higher education institutions, such as universities, colleges and polytechnics, are labor intensive organizations; they depend on people for the delivery of their services. The reports confirm the institutions the quality of the staff in institutions of tertiary education is thus central to their effectiveness, in the same way that it is to all people-centered organizations (Mutahi 2015). In business and the professions there is a wide recognition that the skills of their staff need to be continually strengthened and enhanced. In the face of challenges from national and international competitors the better companies are investing more resources in the continual training and retraining of employees at all levels. They focus not only on the competences of their staff, but also give time to stressing the need for commitment to the organization's goals and to promoting a capacity to change. Should not be the same be true of our institutions of higher education? They are crucial to national aspirations for economic development and, if such capacity building aims are to be achieved, the institutions will have to make the most effective use of all their human resources (Mutahi 2015).

Human resource management practices are critical for success in any higher institution of learning. The commonly utilized human resource practices to enhance performance include but not limited to: recruitment and placement, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits and employee relations and the issues and challenges encountered in the implementation of these practices among others. However, this study will look consider resourcing practices; reward management; training and development to enhance performance which is operationalized by; labor turnover, employee job satisfaction, employee empowerment, and employee job commitment. Scholars have argued that recruiting and selecting high potential employees at some point in time doesn't automatically guarantee that they will perform effectively (Pandita, 2018). Training is an expensive venture and organizations need some assurance of return on investment on training, in the form of enhanced productivity. The total reward concept emphasizes on combining intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to get a complete package. Organizations use performance-related pay as an extrinsic motivator to recognize and reward those employees that meet the set performance targets. Intrinsic motivation is provided when people feel that the work, they do is intrinsically interesting, challenging and important and involves the exercise of responsibility, autonomy or freedom to act, and opportunities for advancement and growth. This argument is consistent with the conclusions made by Busienei (2015).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Research on human resource management practices and its effects on performance have accelerated over the last two decades (Munjuri 2015). These scholars have expressly called for research on and documentation of human resources management practices and its effect on organization performance. Most of these research works have focused on the effect of human resource management practice in enhancing organizational commitment and performance. Mutahi (2015) studied on the effect of human resources management practices in enhancing employee performance in catholic institutions of higher learning in Kenya. The researcher found that the performance-related pay had the greatest impact on increasing employees' level of performance. Griffin (2016) considered human resources management practices and organizational commitment in higher educational institutions. In his research Griffin [2016] found that human resource management practices were more important than demographic characteristics in influencing organizational commitment; demographic characteristics and differ in their influence on each

dimension of organizational commitment; and private universities had more superior HRM practices than public universities. On the other hand, Khan (2015) considered the perceived implementation of human resources management practices and demographic variables of employees in private higher education institutions. The researcher found that all the human resources management practices were implemented to a great extent. Based on the foregoing empirical studies among others, limited systematic study has been undertaken to show the effect of human resources management practices on performance of public universities in the Kenyan context and that there was need for the same. From the statement of the problem, the following broad research questions is raised: What is the effect human resource management practices on the performance of public universities in Kenya?

1.3 Objectives of the study

The overall objective of the study is to establish the relationship between human resource management practices and performance of public universities in Kenya.

1.4 Significance of the study

The study will provide insight to organizations on the effect the various HRM practices have on employee performance, hence enabling them to take the necessary action in order to improve overall organizational performance. The management of higher institutions of learning in Kenya would find this study informative and useful to them in their daily operations. This study would equip the managers of these higher institutions of learning and other policy makers with the knowledge of effects of human resources management practices and its applicability in managing activities. The study will enable the government more specifically, the Ministry of Education, to develop and implement human resources management policies that are tailor-made to enhance performance. This study paves the way for other researchers in this field towards identifying areas for further research. The study will also add to the increasing body of theoretical knowledge in the human resource management field, in particular, it will enrich human resource practices in relation to firm performance among others. This therefore, lays down the foundation for other similar replicative studies with extensions in developing countries. However, in this respect, recommendations for further research will be presented at the end of this study.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Human Resource Management

Human resource management is an approach to manage human resource of an organization, in an attempt to define HRM, Katzenbach (2015) emphasized that it is people working in an organization who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives. The human resource is a living and active input that operates the other factors of production. It is people who create organizations and make them survive and prosper. Hence, their special management cannot be neglected as other components of the organization are likely to suffer. Without people, organizations could not function. Busienei [2015) suggested a number of human resource management practices, termed as best practices, which he believed could improve organizational performance. These are namely; selective hiring, extensive training, employment security, diffusion of information, team working, reduction of status differences, performance related and

incentive pay. Lai (2017) argues that a relationship exists between the use of appropriate HRM practices and positive employee attitudes among them job satisfaction and commitment. Defined by Chytiri (2019): Human resource management is a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to obtain competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and skilled workforce, using an array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques. It is clear that human resources management is an important part of today's business management.

Theories on best practices or high commitment theories suggest that universally, certain HRM practices, either separately or in combination are associated with improved organizational performance. Researchers have also found that those well-paid, well-motivated workers, working in an atmosphere of mutuality and trust, generate higher productivity gains and lower unit costs. Human Resource Management practices differ from one country to another and the factors which affect the HRM practices include external and internal factors. In order to develop a sound HRM system, the organization should have effective Human Resource management practices. HRM practices refer to organizational activities directed at managing the pool of human resources and ensuring that the resources are employed towards the fulfillment of organizational goals (Mahapatro, 2022). Theories on best practices or high commitment theories suggest that universally, certain HRM practices, either separately or in combination are associated with improved organizational performance.

Employee involvement, for example, keeping employees informed of key changes in the organization. Performance appraisals with links to contingent reward systems, for example, gathering customer feedback to recognize the work by employees over and above their expected duties, which in turn is likely to lead to a bonus for staff. Recently, Saxena and Tiwari (2019) examined the HRM Practices implemented by leading IT Companies such as TATA, Infosys and Wipro in India. They developed the 3cTER Framework of HRM practices and identified Training and Development, Employer-Employee Relations, Recognition through Rewards, Culture building, Career Development, Compensation and Benefits as important HRM practices. Parallel to the understanding that human resources are vital for an organization, human resource management function is also going up in organizational hierarchy. Human resource management aims to ensure that the organization obtains and retains the skilled, committed and well-motivated workforce it needs. This means taking steps to assess and satisfy future people needs to enhance and develop the inherent capacities of people-their contributions, potential and employability-by providing learning and continuous development opportunities. It involves the operation of recruitment and selection procedures, management development and training activities linked to the needs of the business.

Furthermore, Aktar (2018), by analyzing the literature over the last years on the HRM performance relationship, reported wide disparities in the treatment of the components emphasizing the "black box" stage between HRM and performance. They indicated that the theoretical frameworks which dominated the field were the "contingent framework" (i.e., HRM influences performance in relation to contingent factors such as business strategies), the resource-based view (HRM influences performance according to the human and social capital held by the organization and the AMO theory HRM influences performance in relation to employees' Ability, Motivation and Opportunity to participate (Appelbaum, 2015). Moreover, considering that there was no agreement

on the HRM practices, policies and systems employed and accordingly the constructs developed. Specifically, although there were attempts to create ‘HRM checklists’, these lists were not generally accepted due to the different context and concept of HRM employed by the authors of the studies. Additionally, the HRM-outcomes categorized as “employee skills” (employee competences, including cooperation), “employee attitudes” (motivation, commitment, satisfaction) and “employee behavior” (retention, presence), were the usually employed sets of mediating variables (Pauwe, 2015). However, the studies considering HRM-outcomes as mediating variables also produced mixed results with respect to causation (Wright, 2015).

2.2 Performance of public universities

Organizational performance comprises the actual output or results of an organization as measured against its intended outputs (or goals and objectives). Organizational performance is the concept of measuring the output of a particular process or procedure, then modifying the process or procedure to increase the output, increase efficiency, or increase the effectiveness of the process or procedure (Pfeffer, 2017). The roles of higher education institutions are clear. First, they should provide education and training within a structure that combines research and teaching. Second, they should offer professional training in fields such as Medicine, Engineering, Architecture, Law and Teaching. Third, these institutions should operate as research centers, responsible for carrying out research in a broad range of disciplines.

Fourth, they should play a part in regional development as well as developing international contacts, and last but not least, they should play a social function in fostering the intellectual and social development of the society. But scholars and critics alike have never stopped blaming the system, which most of them went through, and their critiques are somewhat justified. Studies have confirmed that the nature of training provided by Kenyan public universities does not adequately prepare the higher cadre human resources that are required for development. In an editorial article in the Daily Nation (July 12, 2007) it was observed that Education in Kenya has largely operated in isolation from the economic sector it is supposed to serve. This study will however focus on research output, number of students enrolled, number of graduates produced, web ranking and completion rate of students as measures of performance in public universities in Kenya.

2.3 Empirical review

Ndung’u (2015) conducted a study on the effects of selected human resource management practices on job satisfaction: a case of the floriculture industry in Naivasha Sub- County, Kenya. The main objective of this study was to investigate the effects of selected human resource management practices namely; Training and Development, participation in decision making, communication, Occupational Safety and Health, supervision, and Rewards, on job satisfaction in the floriculture farms in Naivasha Sub - County. A descriptive survey research design was used in the research. The target population consisted of 41122 employees from forty 40 large flower farms in Naivasha sub-county. Simple random sampling was used to select 12 farms while stratified random sampling was used to select the respondents of the study, who constitute a sample of 21 Human Resource Managers, 139 Supervisors as well as 221 General workers. Data was collected using questionnaires. The results of the study showed that human resource management practices

substantially influenced employee job satisfaction. The results of the Pearson's Correlation analysis showed that hypothesized selected human resource management practices had significant relationships with employee job satisfaction. The results of the multiple regression analysis found that training and development, rewards, and supervisory support were the only significant predictors of employee's job satisfaction while participation in decision making, communication as well as occupational safety and health were found not to be significant predictors of employee job satisfaction.

Kagwiria (2015) conducted a study on the alignment of Human Resource practices and business strategy at the Coca-Cola bottling company in Nairobi. The purpose of the study was to determine the alignment of human resource practices and business strategy of Coca-Cola Bottling Company in Nairobi. The study was a case study and utilized primary data. The research involved interviewing top level management of Coca-Cola Bottling through the use of interview guide, to get their opinion on how human resource practices are aligned to business strategy. The interviewees comprised of top management at Coca-Cola bottling company total 12 out of the 17 targeted interviewees provided feedback. The results of the study showed that Human Resource Management is highly integrated into the company's business operations. The findings indicate that HR practices aimed at enhancing employees core competences in delivery to customers more efficiently and effectively are to a very great extent in line with the business strategy of enhancing business competitiveness. The findings indicate various sections of Strategic HRM objectives were outlined in the organizations business strategy to a very great extent. The findings indicate that the training and development programs helped employees with new skills that enhanced customer satisfaction and the achievement of business strategic goal of competitiveness

Kisilu (2012) conducted a study on perceived factors influencing strategic human resource development practice at the National Cereals and Produce Board. The objective of the study was to establish the perceived factors influencing strategic human resource development practice at the National Cereals and Produce Board. A descriptive research design was used to gather data by means of questionnaires. The results of the study showed that the Board has been using various Human Resource development practices in attempt to equip its employees with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them handle their current and future needs. This has been mainly through on the job training and career development. Delegation, Job enrichment Programs, Peer Consultations by employees and Employee empowerment human resource development practices were found to be used to a moderate extent. However, Job enlargement, Coaching, Mentoring, Job rotation and Succession Planning human resource development practices were found to be used to a low extent.

2.4 Research gaps

A knowledge gap exists when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the matter being discussed. For instance, Kagwiria (2015) conducted a study on the alignment of Human Resource practices and business strategy at the Coca-Cola bottling company in Nairobi. The purpose of the study was to determine the alignment. The results of the study showed that Human Resource Management is highly integrated into the company's business operations. The findings indicate that HR practices aimed at enhancing employees core competences in delivery to customers more efficiently and effectively are to a very great extent in line with the business

strategy of enhancing business competitiveness. On the other hand, our current study focused on investigating the relationship between human resource management practices and performance of public universities in Kenya.

In addition to that, a methodological gap can be identified as the mentioned researchers, for example, Kisilu (2012) who conducted a study on perceived factors influencing strategic human resource development practice at the National Cereals and Produce Board, adopted a descriptive research design. The results of the study showed that the Board has been using various Human Resource development practices in attempt to equip its employees with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them handle their current and future needs. This has been mainly through on the job training and career development. Our current study adopted a desktop literature review method.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved an in-depth review of studies related to the relationship between human resource management practices and performance of public universities in Kenya. Three sorting stages were implemented on the subject under study in order to determine the viability of the subject for research. This is the first stage that comprised the initial identification of all articles that were based on the relationship between human resource management practices and performance of public universities in Kenya. The search was done generally by searching the articles in the article title, abstract, keywords. A second search involved fully available publications on the subject on the relationship between human resource management practices and performance of public universities in Kenya. The third step involved the selection of fully accessible publications. Reduction of the literature to only fully accessible publications yielded specificity and allowed the researcher to focus on the articles that related to the relationship between human resource management practices and performance of public universities in Kenya which was split into top key words. After an in- depth search into the top key words (Strategic management, human resource management, performance, university), the researcher arrived at 3 articles that were suitable for analysis. These are findings from the 3 research papers done by:

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4.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

The objective of this study was to establish the relationship between strategic human resource management practices and performance of public universities in Kenya. Based on previous studies, resourcing practices, reward management and training and development were expected to have a positive effect on performance. The study findings led to the conclusion that reward management is more important than resourcing practices and training and development in as far as enhancement of public universities' performance was concerned.

4.2 Recommendations

This study is a justification that human resource management practices significantly affect performance of public universities in Kenya. With due regard to the ever-increasing desire to have high organizational performance in public universities there is need to invest in various strategies. This should be done in a manner in which all the stakeholders are happy. This ensures that they are incorporative hence acceptable, accessible, ethically sound, have a positive perceived impact, relevant, appropriate, innovative, efficient, sustainable and replicable. This therefore calls for establishing strategies that meet employees' needs. Specifically the study recommends: The management of public universities to develop an employment policy that encourages employee job security; The management of public universities to invest in human resources information system so as to increase human resources effectiveness; Ensure recruitment and selection in public universities is based on equal employment opportunity principle; Management of public universities to link the compensation package with performance of employees; There is need to conduct a Training Needs Analysis in public universities which will identify the relevant training for various employees. Thereafter, employees will be trained so as to conduct their jobs effectively and efficiently and Management to review training programs constantly to fit with the changing environment.

This study is a milestone for future research in this area, particularly in the education sector. First, this study focused on the public universities in Kenya and therefore, generalizations cannot adequately extend to private universities. Based on this fact among others, it is therefore, recommended that a broad-based study covering both public and private universities in Kenya be done to find out the relationship between strategic human resource management practices and their

performance. It is also suggested that future research should focus on other strategic human resource management practices on organizational performance.

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