

ASSESSING DETERMINANTS OF EFFECTIVE HUMAN RESOURCE FUNCTIONS DEVOLUTION IN COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF WEST POKOT, KENYA

KEFA RUTO PLIMO & PETER KIPROTICH CHERUIYOT

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Nakuru CBD Campus, Nakuru, Kenya

ABSTRACT

With the implementation of the new constitution in Kenya, a lot of functions have been devolved from the national government to the county government. These functions cut across the entire government system and have led to realignment of how human resource issues are handled. However, several human resource challenges have cropped up that impedes the successful devolution of this functions. This study aimed at assessing the determinants of effective human resource functions devolution in the County Government of West Pokot, Kenya. This study adopted a descriptive research design using quantitative approaches. The target populations for this study were the employees of county government of West Pokot who are 1,020 in number. Data was collected by use of close-ended questionnaires. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Packages for Social Scientist Version 23. Both descriptive statistics were used to describe the independent and dependent variable while regression analysis was used to test the relationships between the independent variable and the dependent variables. The result was presented using tables. The R^2 value of 0.6877 implies that 68.77% of the variations in effective human resource devolution can be explained by the variations in independent variables. It was established that both reward systems and training had the most influence while human resource planning had the least influence on effective human resource devolution.

KEYWORDS: Reward Systems, Human Resource Planning, Human Resource Devolution

INTRODUCTION

Employees are an organization's most valuable assets and their effective deployment and development will improve organizational performance (Guest, 2002). Subsequently, HRM emphasizes the importance of the employees as a valuable asset in achieving sustainable competitive advantage, that HR practices need to be integrated with the corporate strategy, and that HR specialists help organizational controllers to meet both efficiency and equity objectives, (Leigh, 2008). Many academics and practitioners have argued and agreed on the need to move away from a top down command and control model to one that is based on high involvement and reciprocal commitment. This requires that a new kind of psychological contract based on mutual trust between an organization and its employees. In their study, Ulrich and Brock bank (2005) postulated that there is a requirement for a more sophisticated style of HRM, moving from the traditionally "hard" "quantitative and calculative HR manner employed, to a "softer" more people focused and inclusive version of people management. Central to achieving this high employee involvement with reciprocal commitment through a successful implementation of strategic HRM is the role undertaken by Line Managers. According to Martins (2007), the study intimated that the major reason for HRM being devolved to the line was that the line managers were in the best position to adopt and deliver the most effective HRM, as they were closest to the front line staff.

Several African countries have adopted decentralization that focus on popular empowerment. However, a decentralization reform faces two types of problems in many African countries. The first is the absence of capacity to undertake the responsibilities that would make decentralization function as expected. The second problem is to overcome the negative attitude on the part of central officials who see the involvement of regional or local communities as a zero sum rather than a potential positive-sum power game (Olowu, 2001). In the Kenyan context, the Constitution of Kenya adopted a devolved system of governance. Devolution, as envisaged in the Constitution of Kenya is based on sharing of political, administrative and fiscal responsibilities between the national and county governments. With a number of studies reporting positive outcomes of devolution of HR function, there are equally numerous inherent problems within the framework of devolution that can seriously undermine the positive outcomes reported. In their studies, Schou and Haug, (2005), noted that the major concerns over devolution in ethnically diverse societies are that it encourages ethnic identification, accentuates inter-group differences and fosters discrimination against local minorities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With the recent enactment of the New Constitution, there have been many changes in the human resource function's organization and structure taking place in the public sector. As result of these changes, human resource functions have been devolved to County Public Service Board. However, several issues have cropped up in these boards that are impediments to successful devolution of human resource management. In the recent past, a number of governors have been summoned by the senate committees to shed more light on the various human resource issues that have emanated from these counties. In the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission report 2014/2015, there have been various irregularities with County Public Service Board. Some of these irregularities range from irregular appointments, nepotism, unfair recruitment practices, corruption and other forms of favoritisms. Furthermore the report notes that there is lack of capacity, interference by various stakeholders and presence of 'ghost workers'. In addition, the Auditor General Report 2014/2015, noted that a lot of funds in excess of 300 million have been misappropriated. In HR related issues, devolution aims at bringing services closer to its internal and external customers and therefore it would be important to establish the key determinants of effective human resource devolution. It is against this background that the study sought to assess the major determining factors for effective human resource functions devolution in the County Government of West Pokot, Kenya.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this study was to assess the determinants of effective human resource functions devolution. This study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- To assess the influence of selection on effective human resource functions devolution in County Government of West Pokot, Kenya.
- To determine the influence of training on effective human resource devolution functions in County Government of West Pokot, Kenya.
- To find establish the influence of reward systems on effective human resource functions devolution in County Government of West Pokot, Kenya

- To assess the influence of human resource planning on effective human resource functions devolution in County Government of West Pokot, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, researches related to the study variables will be reviewed so as to find out what other researchers have discussed about them. Through this, the potential gaps to be filled by this study will be identified.

Selection and Effective Human Resource Devolution

A study by Heynes (2007), evaluated and measured the effectiveness of recruitment and selection and its impact on service delivery amongst staff within the Department of Economic Development and Tourism in the Provincial Government of the Western Cape. Questionnaires were used to collect and analyze data from a sample size of 121. Heynes concluded that the guiding principles for the recruitment and selection policy for the department should be adhered to. He proposed that a toolkit be developed to provide guidance on the management of recruitment and selection process. The researcher suggested that mechanisms should be devised to ensure that the staff remains motivated to achieve excellent service delivery and that professionalism of staff at the department should be recognized. He further lays emphasis on the recruitment for diversity since it encourages creativity and expanded customer base and illustrates that employers who wish to develop a diverse workforce should ensure that it generates applications from a variety of individuals. An advice is also given on the hiring of relatives as this may compromise on the work since if relatives have to work in one department with one supervising the other issues of favoritism will inevitably emerge (Heynes, 2007). In their research, Management consultant McKinsey & Company (1997) initially investigated the challenges facing businesses in recruiting top talent in its 1997 survey tagged the war of talent. The research that surveyed 6,900 managers at 56 large and medium sized organizations in the USA found out that 89% thought it more difficult to attract talented people in 2000 than it had been before, 90% thought it more difficult to retain them and only 7% strongly agreed their companies had enough talented managers. This only displays how organizations need to be very careful with the process since its only through this that the organization will have the right start to the direction in its quest for attaining its goals and aspirations.

Training and Effective Human Resource Devolution

A research study to explore the current practices, policies and roles of training and development within Jordanian banking organizations was conducted by (Ibrahim, 2009). All Jordanian banking organizations were targeted in this study rather than a representative sample of these organizations. In total, 15 top managers and 38 training and development and HRM managers took part in the study. The study revealed that, in the majority of the organizations, there is an absence of systematic employee training needs assessment and of effective procedures for evaluation. The banks prefer to send their employees to external training providers rather than train them in the banks. The most commonly used delivery method is off-the-job training, namely lectures, seminars and case studies. Training and development is not characterized by strategic human resource development criteria and it plays a reactive rather than a proactive role in these organizations. Training improves employees' skills, knowledge, attitudes and behavior, but it does not increase employees' commitment and satisfaction (Ibrahim, 2009). Similarly, Moncarz, Zhao and Kay (2009) report that in organizations where employees receive the training needed to assume greater responsibilities, turnover rates are generally lower. However, there are some limitations with their study. Regression analysis was used to examine the relationships between predictor and response

variables. Although the study was looking at relationship between variables and could use regression analysis, it only had 71 responses out of 232 total surveys distributed among ten management companies. About 100 or more respondents would have been ideal for that kind of analysis. Also due to the low response rate of about 30 percent, the findings of the study cannot be generalized.

Reward Systems and Effective Human Resource Devolution

According to Mbaya (2011) who carried out a study on the effects of reward and compensation systems on employee performance within the National museums in Kenya, found out that the reward and compensations systems had both positive and negative effects on employee performance. The study recommended that existing reward and compensation systems should be improved and more studies carried out to investigate the strategies used to deal with employee recruitment and retention. Research has proven that employees who get rewarded and recognized tend to have higher self-esteem, more confidence, more willingness to take on new challenges and more eagerness to be innovative. In a research on the impact of compensation on organizational performance, Mbogho (2012) found out that a direct and positive relationship exists between compensation and organizational performance. They observed that a total compensation, which includes payment, or compensation, benefits and informal recognition are required to optimize the motivation and satisfaction levels of staff. In their study, Eshun and Duah (2011) carried out a research to ascertain whether rewards motivate employees, to identify what kinds of rewards employees consider most beneficial and to discuss the dilemmas and difficulties managers face in applying motivation theory to workplace setting. The analysis found out that while the use of rewards is vital in motivating employees, there is the need for management and employees to have a clear understanding of the human nature and what actually motivates employees. The research further suggests that efficient motivation is as a result of both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards instead of using only one of them. The research also shows that enhanced motivation can be attained when managers do their best to design the work environment so that it motivates employees.

Human Resource Planning and Effective Human Resource Devolution

In the research on the role of human resource planning on performance of employees of Nakuru county government, Kamau (2015) used questionnaires to collect and analyze data from all the 45 county human resource employees involved in the census. The research concluded that through the retention of its existing workforce, the county was likely to be successful. He further deduced that indeed employee attraction and retention are crucial in determining the level of employee performance. It recommended that the county governments should offer their employees with competitive remuneration terms in order to retain and attract the best skilled and competent workforce. He also advises the county government to plan well for their future human resource needs in order to mitigate any negative impacts as a result of demographics, government priorities and competency requirements.

According to the Institute of Economic affairs (IEA, 2010) report, most organizations in Kenya are currently facing conspicuous challenges of attracting and retaining qualified personnel. Indeed, Kavoo-Linge and Kiruri (2013), noted that well done induction process could improve employee confidence and performance and also provide a competitive advantage in attracting and keeping good staff. However, their study was limited to the firms in IT sector. This implies that, there exists a gap in context of county governments in Kenya.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design. Kothari (2004), describes descriptive research design as a systematic, empirical inquiring into which the researcher does not have a direct control of independent variable as their manifestation has already occurred or because the inherently cannot be manipulated. The target population comprised all 1,020 employees of the County Government of West Pokot, Kenya. The study utilized simple random sampling technique which ensured that the target population was representative, reliable, flexible and efficient. In this study an appropriate method to collect the primary data was a questionnaire survey. For the purposes of this study, quantitative data was collected using a closed-ended questionnaire. The primary data was sourced from the answers the participants gave during the survey process. The data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The respondents issued 90 questionnaires. Out of 90 questionnaires that were issued, 81 of them were filled and returned. Of the returned questionnaires, 6 were incorrectly filled and thus were not used in the final analysis. Therefore, 75 were correctly filled and hence were used for analysis representing a response rate of 83.33%.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher sought to find out the distribution of the respondents according to their gender, age bracket, education level and their working experience. According to the findings, majority of the respondents were male (65.3%) while the female respondents were 38.2% which was attributed to the existing gender gap in employment in the public sector which is predominantly dominated by the male gender. Majority of the respondents were of the age group 46 - 55 years (32%) while the least age group was below 25 years (5.3%). This was attributed to the general stagnation of the public sector in creating new employment opportunities and the fairly young age of the county governments in Kenya. The study found that majority of the respondents (30.7%) had a university degree qualification which was attributed to the higher entry requirements in most counties today. Further, over 28% of the respondents had a certificate or secondary which is prevalent in rural counties in Kenya. In terms of working experience, most of the respondents (42.7%) had between 3 - 5 years working experience. Cumulatively, more than 61% had more than 3 years of experience while only 9.3% had less than 1 year working experience. The study attributed this trend to the fact that the counties have been recruiting more employees in the past three to five years which has since stagnated.

Selection and Effective Human Resource Devolution

In this section the researcher presents various aspects touching on selection and human resource devolution in line with the first objective and the findings are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Selection and Effective Human Resource Devolution

	n	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Before recruitment exercise, the county does internal analysis to evaluate employee needs	75	1	5	3.16	.837
The county government undertakes a planning process before embarking on recruiting new employees.	75	1	5	3.82	.881
When advertising for a vacancy, the county government utilizes internet and other technologies to attract a wide pool of potential candidates.	75	1	5	2.12	.984
When there is need to fill a specific competency and skill gap, the county government will search for professionals with the ability to address the issue.	75	1	5	4.27	.977
During the recruitment exercise, the county government does ranking of potential candidates according to job related requirements in order to pick the best candidates.	75	1	5	2.28	.811

Majority of the respondents agreed that the county government undertook a planning process before embarking on recruiting new employees (3.82) and that when there was need to fill a specific competency and skill gap, the county government searched for professionals with the ability to address the issue (4.27). Further, majority of respondents disagreed that when advertising for a vacancy, the county government utilized internet and other technologies to attract a wide pool of potential candidates (2.12) and that during the recruitment exercise, the county government ranked potential candidates according to job related requirements in order to pick the best candidates (2.28). The respondents were however unsure when asked whether before recruitment exercise, the county does internal analysis to evaluate employee needs (3.16). An analysis of the standard deviations showed that all responses had a standard deviation of <1.00 which indicated smaller dispersion from the mean which was interpreted to mean convergence of responses on the particular propositions.

6.2 Reward Systems and Effective Human Resource Devolution

In this section the researcher presents various aspects touching on reward systems and effective human resource devolution in line with the second objective. The findings are based on a 5-point Likert scale and are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Reward Systems and Effective Human Resource Devolution

	n	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
The reward system offered by my county enables me to deliver effectively at my workplace.	75	1	5	4.18	.813
The county government provides adequate benefits aside from rewarding like health insurance, sick, leave, annual leave and maternity leave which improve my work life.	75	1	5	2.21	.947
The allowances offered as compensation for extra work and time outside normal schedules increases my commitment at work	75	1	5	2.45	.971
The pay structure in my county government is simple, clear and equitable and hence my satisfaction on the job is increased.	75	1	1	4.17	.803
The county government recognizes employees for their efficient and effective services and improved performance which motivates them to perform better.	75	1	5	2.19	.983
Employees demonstrating exemplary and outstanding performance are offered achievement bonuses so that they can replicate the same behavior or even do better.	75	1	5	2.02	.797

From the findings in Table 2, it was established that majority of the respondents agreed that the reward system

offered by their county enabled them to deliver effectively at their workplace (4.18) and that the pay structure in their county government was simple, clear and equitable and hence their satisfaction on the job was increased (4.17). Further, the respondents disagreed that the county government provided adequate benefits aside from rewarding like health insurance, sick, leave, annual leave and maternity leave which improve my work life (2.21), that the allowances offered as compensation for extra work and time outside normal schedules increased their commitment at work (2.45), that the county government recognized employees for their efficient and effective services and improved performance which motivated them to perform better. (2.19) and that employees demonstrating exemplary and outstanding performance were offered achievement bonuses so that they can replicate the same behavior or even do better (2.02). The study further analyzed the standard deviations and found that all responses had a standard deviation of <1.00 indicating smaller dispersion which was interpreted to mean convergence of responses on the various propositions touching on reward systems.

Training and Effective Human Resource Devolution

In this section the researcher presents various aspects touching on training and effective human resource devolution in line with the third objective and the findings are depicted in Table 3. From the findings on Table 3, it was established that majority of the respondents agreed that training conducted by their county government was aimed at enhancing the quality and standards of service delivery offered by their employees (3.97). The respondents however disagreed that the county government developed the skills of its staff in accordance with the current job requirements, preparing them for current and future change and challenges (2.18), that training was offered to prepare and promote participants into a higher grade, hence motivating to employees and facilitating management succession for the organization (2.42), that the county government offered induction training to new employees to enable them familiarize with the new environment and adapt quickly to the workplace (2.31), that their department through its senior mentors offered on the job training which had enhanced their capacity to effectively perform their duties (2.16) and that employees were provided with career advice, financial support and career breaks to enhance their career development (2.08). Since the standard deviations were <1.00, it was concluded that there was a convergence of responses.

Table 3: Training and Effective Human Resource Devolution

	n	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
The county government develops the skills of its staff in accordance with the current job requirements, preparing them for current and future change and challenges.	75	1	5	2.18	.895
Training conducted by my county government is aimed at enhancing the quality and standards of service delivery offered by its employees.	75	1	5	3.97	.848
Training is offered to prepare and promote participants into a higher grade, hence motivating to employees and facilitating management succession for the organization.	75	1	5	2.42	.961
The county government offers induction training to new employees to enable them familiarize with the new environment and adapt quickly to the workplace.	75	1	5	2.31	.977
My department through its senior mentors offers on the job training which has enhanced my capacity to effectively perform my duties.	75	1	5	2.16	.633
Employees are provided with career advice, financial support and career breaks to enhance their career development	75	1	5	2.08	.844

Human Resource Planning and Effective Human Resource Devolution

In this section the researcher presents various aspects touching on human resource planning and effective human resource devolution in line with the last objective and the findings are depicted in Table 4.

Table 4: Human Resource Planning and Effective Human Resource Devolution

	n	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
The county government is able to create and develop employee training and management succession programs in anticipation of the future needs.	75	1	5	2.13	.727
My county government takes time to examine the strengths and weaknesses of its labor force and personnel policies in order to come up with strategies to improve service delivery.	75	1	5	2.41	.987
Opportunities for career advancement are created to encourage employees to give in their best and undertake trainings to boost their performance.	75	1	5	2.31	.842
In view of competitive environment, my county government has strategies for attracting and retaining competent personnel who will assist actualizing its objectives and plans	75	1	5	2.17	.759
There are mechanisms in place to detect duplication of effort by employees which helps to eliminate excessive labor cost emanating from blotted workforce.	75	1	5	2.34	.876

The respondents disagreed that the county government was able to create and develop employee training and management succession programs in anticipation of the future needs (2.13), that their county government took time to examine the strengths and weaknesses of its labor force and personnel policies in order to come up with strategies to improve service delivery (2.41), that opportunities for career advancement were created to encourage employees to give in their best and undertake trainings to boost their performance (2.31), that in view of competitive environment, their county government had strategies for attracting and retaining competent personnel who will assist actualizing its objectives and plans (2.17) and that there were mechanisms in place to detect duplication of effort by employees which helps to eliminate excessive labor cost emanating from blotted workforce (2.34). Further, all responses had a standard deviation of <1.00 which indicated smaller dispersion from the mean which was interpreted to mean convergence of responses on the particular propositions.

Effective Human Resource Devolution

The findings in this section involve the measurement of the dependent variable. Table 5 shows the findings related to measurement of effective human resource devolution. From the findings, majority of the respondents agreed that the county government conducted the recruitment and selection process without the influence of national government bodies like Public Service Commission (4.23), that the HR budget was prepared by the HR department of the county government (4.17), that when a disciplinary issue arose, an employee is subjected to a disciplinary committee comprising of persons within the county government (4.19) and that they do their own forecasting on demand and supply of labor, determining when it needs to employ or downsize its workforce (3.91). The respondents however disagreed that the remuneration of employees was a full responsibility of the county government and was not subjected to policies and regulations from the central government (2.19), and that the county government conducted need analysis, designed, developed and evaluated its own training to suit its own objectives and plans (2.31).

Table 5: Effective Human Resource Devolution

	n	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
The county government conducts the recruitment and selection process without the influence of national government bodies like Public Service Commission	75	1	5	4.23	0.833
The remuneration of employees is a full responsibility of the county government and is not subjected to policies and regulations from the central government	75	1	5	2.19	0.957
The human resource budget is prepared by the human resource department of the county government	75	1	5	4.17	0.877
When a disciplinary issue arises, an employee is subjected to a disciplinary committee comprising of persons within the county government.	75	1	5	4.19	0.812
The county government conducts need analysis, designs, develops and evaluates its own training that suits its own objectives and plans.	75	1	5	2.31	0.998
The county government does its own forecasting on demand and supply of labor, determining when it needs to employ or downsize its workforce.	75	1	5	3.91	0.986

Regression Analysis

The study carried out a regression analysis to establish the influence of selection, training, reward systems and human resource planning on effective human resource devolution. The model summary is depicted in Table 6.

Table 6: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std Error of the Estimate
1	0.8293	0.6877	0.6798	0.3119

The R² value of 0.6877 implies that 68.77% of the variations in effective human resource devolution can be explained by the variations in independent variables. This therefore means that other factors not studied in this study contribute 31.23% of effective human resource devolution. The study further conducted a multiple regression analysis and the findings are depicted in Table 7. From the multiple regression models, holding selection, training, reward systems and human resource planning constant, effective human resource devolution would increase by 4.872. It was established that a unit increase in selection would cause an increase in effective human resource devolution by a factor of 0.331, a unit increase in training would cause an increase effective human resource devolution by a factor of 0.439, a unit increase in reward systems would cause an increase in effective human resource devolution by a factor of 0.517 and a unit increase in human resource planning would cause an increase in effective human resource devolution by a factor of 0.283.

Table 7: Multiple Regression Analysis

Model		Un standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	SE	B	t	p
1	Constant	4.872	2.307		1.783	0.085
	Selection	0.331	0.139	0.276	2.604	0.032
	Training	0.439	0.177	0.418	2.884	0.021
	Reward Systems	0.517	0.104	0.501	3.018	0.003
	Human Resource Planning	0.283	0.139	0.377	2.435	0.017

From the findings on Table 7, it was established that both reward systems and training had the most influence while human resource planning had the least influence on effective human resource devolution. From the model it was established that all the independent variables positively related to effective human resource devolution and were

statistically significant at the 5% significance level. Furthermore, since all the p-values had values less than 0.05, all the null hypotheses were rejected and the alternative hypotheses confirmed to be true. The un-standardized beta coefficients in Table 7 were then used to obtain the overall relationship of the independent variables and the dependent variable and model was formulated as:

$$Y = 4.872 + 0.331X_1 + 0.439X_2 + 0.517X_3 + 0.283X_4$$

Where Y = Effective Human Resource Devolution, X_1 = Selection, X_2 = Training, X_3 = Reward Systems,

X_4 = Human Resource Planning

CONCLUSIONS

It was concluded that the county governments should undertake HR planning before embarking on recruiting new employees. Further, it was concluded that the counties should carry out an internal analysis to evaluate employee needs. It was concluded that for effective HR devolution they should provide adequate benefits aside from rewarding like health insurance, sick, leave, annual leave and maternity leave. They recognize employees for their efficient and effective services and thus motivate them to perform better. The study concluded that training conducted by their county government should be aimed at enhancing the quality and standards of service delivery offered by their employees. Counties should also develop the skills of its staff in accordance with the current job requirements and prepare them for current and future change and challenges. Finally, the study concluded that county governments should create and develop succession programs in anticipation of the future needs, take time to examine the strengths and weaknesses of its labor force in order to come up with strategies to improve service delivery and create opportunities for career advancement to encourage employees to give in their best.

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