

COMPETENCY MAPPING AND ITS INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN PUBLIC CHARTERED UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF JOMO KENYATTA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract: Employee retention is a key driver to the success of organizations in a hyper turbulent business environment. The performance of organizations is greatly determined by the ability to attract, maintain and retain workers who can positively contribute to the goals of the organization. It is imperative that organizations establish talent management practices that can give it a competitive edge and lead to a high level of success. Competency Mapping determines the extent to which the various competencies related to a job are possessed by a job holder. Thus, competency mapping is a process used to identify and list out competencies that are most relevant and significant to carry out job in an effective manner. Therefore, the study sought to establish the effect of competency mapping on employee's retention in public chartered universities in Kenya. The specific objective of the study was to determine the influence of competency mapping on employees' retention in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. The study adopted a descriptive research and stratified random sampling was used to pick a sample size of 90 respondents. Information was collected by use of questionnaires which were subjected to pre-test to ensure both validity and reliability. Data analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study established that competency mapping had a positive influence on employee retention in the university and therefore it is recommended that, through career mapping the university management should devise measures to encourage the employees to develop their skills.

Keywords: Career Mapping, Employee Retention, Competency Mapping, Public Chartered Universities.

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Employee retention techniques have evolved in every organization as the primary tasks of handling workers in a turbulent environment (Lee, Hom, Eberly & Li 2018). Recent research on organizational performance determinants has shown that high performing organization's place emphasis on optimizing employee capacity and using that for mutual gain and competitive advantage. In order to ensure that they maintain a competitive edge, it is critical that organizations implement appropriate human capital management practices (Sharda, 2016). Human capital management practices adopted play a crucial role in ensuring person, environment characteristics and organization fit. Organizations should therefore commit to finding employees who are ideally suit the work requirements, adaptable to formation and job requirements, change and are loyal and committed to the organization. Crane, Henriques, Husted and Matten (2015) clarified further that potential workers want to find organizations, which take advantage of their specific skills and satisfy their particular needs as this enhances their job satisfaction and therefore retention.

According to Lewa (2015), Public Chartered Universities do not train for retention of their staff and have no retention strategy. They operate on the assumption that there will always be people ready to join their Public universities as supervisors, line managers, technicians, tutorial fellows, lecturers, associate professors and professors. Clearly, there is need for policy direction in regard to staff retention in these institutions if they aspire to be competitive locally and internationally.

Globalization has not only increased competition among organizations but has also created new window of opportunity for the workforce. In the view of Mugove (2018) in Hanief, et al, (2015), the present economic situation of the world has increased the importance of competency management practices, the lynch pin to talent management practices and retention. Retaining competency employees is the priority of many organizations and it is the key differentiator of human capital management (Musambai, 2018). It is one of the critical issues facing organizations today, and the biggest challenge faced by HR in modern economy, because of shortage of skilled workers, economic growth and high employee turnover. The demand for competent employees is high especially for key decision making workforce; therefore, organizations are exposed to a continuous competitive fight for the best and talented employees. Indeed, there is a paradigm shift from human resource to human capital which consists of knowledge, skills and capabilities of the people employed in an organization which is indicative of their value (Armstrong, 2012).

Locally, there is great demand for productive and competent employees especially in the public chartered universities, thus this has brought about vicious competition and scramble for the best and talented employees. Organizations have realized that attracting the best talent is increasingly difficult, but that they are also at risk of losing employees to competition. Many organizations' ability to keep the skilled employee is vital for survival. A latest survey of talent management showed at least 75% of CEO's agree to the assertion that the top most agenda for any progressive organizations is employee retention (CIPD 2016). The rate of retention translates to the number of workers retained by a company over a period of time. The higher the retention rate the better for an organization since it also translates to a saving in terms of money and time and is also a benchmark for organizational success.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Human resource is the world's most essential resource and the backbone of all organizations. Many companies, especially public chartered universities, find it challenging to retain valued staff due to globalization, economic expansion, and a shortage of skilled labor, (Yamamoto, 2015). Even when human resource management strategies are put in place to increase employee retention, turnover occurs. Employee retention is a problem that many organizations, especially public institutions, faces. (Ng'ethe, Bravo & Namusonge, 2012). All companies, especially public chartered universities, require trained, skilled, devoted, and motivated staff in order to fulfill their goals and objectives. Employees in higher education institutions worldwide have tendency to abandon their jobs and hunt for profitable jobs elsewhere due to internal and external reasons in the business environment, resulting in significant staff turnover. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2014), indicated twenty percent of employees quit their organizations they were working earlier and this severe trench of aptitude from organizations has not left public chartered universities. This high incidence of staff turnover at these public universities can be linked to several executives who regard competency management as a non-issue and have failed to implement policies to maintain talent. (Rono & Kiptum, 2017). Korateng (2014) conducted a study on the influence of talent management on staff retention in Nigeria. The study established that key talent management strategies such motivation, training and career development if adopted would enhance employee retention. Several studies have been carried out on talent management (Wambui, 2012; Ochieng, 2015; Omondi, 2013; Ndung'u & Omondi, 2015) but majority of these studies have focused on linking competency mapping to performance of organizations. There is a dearth of literature on the influence of competency mapping on retention of employees. Furthermore, the studies previously done focused on other sectors other than the public chartered universities in Kenya (Waithiegeni, 2015; Chepkwony, 2012). This study, therefore, aims to bridge this gap by evaluating the influence of competency mapping on employee retention in public chartered universities in Kenya.

3. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The overall objective was to determine how competency mapping influences employee retention in public chartered universities in Kenya.

3.1 Specific Objective:

1. To examine the influence of competency mapping on employees' retention in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.

4. THEORETICAL/ EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The study was grounded on the Herzberg two factor theory. A review of the theory provided a clear link between competency mapping and employee retention in the public chartered universities in Kenya.

4.1 Herzberg Two Factor Theory

This theory is also known as Hertzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory or dual-factor theory. The theory has clearly attempted to explain that presence and absence satisfaction and motivation is responsible for informing retention or quitting any jobs, (Samuel et al., 2019). The theory highlighted satisfaction and dissatisfaction as realities facing the organizations adding that organizational delay to manage the two aspects leads to turnovers in which key employees are lost, (Ruth,2016).

It has highlighted that motivation would only occur as a result of the use of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors and if they are lacking the employees are likely to leave the organization. Hertzberg urges employers to continuously improve on aspects that influence employees’ attitude at work as way of increasing the production. This theory is relevant in that it recognizes that employees have two categories of needs that operate in them and that both should be addressed. If intrinsic needs are not met, the employee will seek ways to satisfy them and similarly with the extrinsic needs. The theory suggests that immediate responses on employees needs saves organizations from losing vital employee, (Harman, 2017).

The theory is relevant in this research by considering that the idea to management is that while eliminating unsatisfactory hygiene aspects may provide calm to the workplace, but it will not serve as an incentive for employees. As a result, motivation can only be achieved by using both intrinsic and external variables. This principle is relevant in explaining competency mapping as a human motivators management practice that seeks to match the employee’s competencies to the organization. The hygiene factors, management practices in public chartered universities can be focused to the improvement of their employee’s skills, ensuring a job, skills match as this enhances employee satisfaction and retention.

5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) and Smith (2014), a conceptual framework is a hypothesized model used in identifying the concepts under study and their relationships. It provides an outline of the preferred approach in the research, also outlines the relationships and the desired effects, forming independent and dependent variables respectively. The study was guided by the independent variable; Competency Mapping.

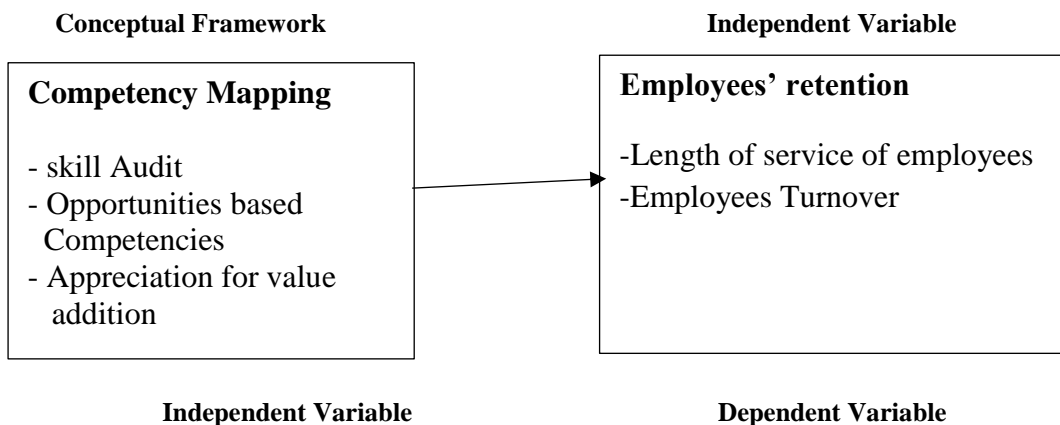


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

5.1 Review of Variables

5.1.1 Competency Mapping

Competency mapping is becoming an important HR tool today. Competency mapping is a process which identifies an individual’s strengths and weaknesses in order to help them to better recognize themselves. It is a process through which one assesses and determines one’s strengths as an individual worker and in some cases as part of an organization. It generally examines two areas: strengths of an individual in areas like team structure, leadership and decision making. It consists of breaking a given job or given role into constituent’s tasks or activities and identifying the competencies (technical, managerial, behavioral, conceptual knowledge, attitudes, skills etc) needed to perform the same successfully, (nyanjon,2013).

Competency profiling is the process by which skills needed for the jobs are measured, and competence mapping is called the system by which skills of workers are compared with the skills targeted (Königová, Urban Cova, & Fejfar, 2012). Competency mapping identifies differences in requirements and ability, describes employee expectations in a way that is measurable, objective and defensible, and allows workers to go further than expectations. It improves the efficacy of training programs, by integrating them with the requirements for success. It offers a shared structure and language to address how key objectives can be applied and communicated. It gives a mutual understanding of the nature and specifications of a particular position and common organizational expectations for professional levels that enable employees to transfer across business boundaries.

Competency Mapping is also a process through which one assesses and determines one's strengths as an individual worker and in some cases, as part of an organization. The individual's level of competency in each skill is measured against a performance standard established by the organization. In competency mapping, gaps are identified between requirements and capabilities, employee's expectations are defined in a way that is measurable, objective and defensible and behavior targets are set to encourage employees to go above and beyond expectations. Competency mapping is required to reinforce corporate strategy, culture, and vision. Organizations have to assess whether there are available employees with key already identified competencies who will be needed in the future. Competency mapping establishes expectations for performance excellence, resulting in a systematic approach to professional development, improved job satisfaction, and better employee retention. It increases the effectiveness of training and professional development programs by linking them to the success criteria, (Alice,2015).

Competency Mapping also identifies performance criteria to improve the accuracy and ease of the hiring and selection process. It provides a clear foundation for dialogue to occur between the manager and employee about performance, development, and career-related issues. Competency mapping identifies the success criteria (i.e., behavioral standards of performance excellence) required to be successful in their role. It supports a more specific and objective assessment of their strengths and specify targeted areas for professional development.

5.1.2 Employee Retention

Employee retention encompasses talent management which is the use of an integrated set of activities to ensure that the organization attracts, retains, motivates and develops talented people it needs now and in the future. The main purpose of retention is to prevent the loss of competent employees from the organization which could have an adverse effect on productivity and service delivery. The principal purpose of the retention of workers is to avoid loss of skilled employees, as this would cause the new employee to lose recruiting and training costs. It will also negatively impact organization. The objective of any organization is to recruit the staff, train them, develop and retain such talents. Organizations should follow employee retention techniques to maintain the team's employees, including team empowerment, consistent communication, openness, employee career growth and recognitions, and fair compensation schemes (Armstrong 2014).

The retention rate is the number of workers held by the organization. The retention rate for employees is helpful statistics in assessing the company's success as a benchmark, the company cost employee turnover time and money, such as recruitment and preparation for new employees takes time and money (Dessler, 2011). Creativity and novelty are other component of employee retention. Creativity describes the development of new ideas which are helpful to the ongoing problem (Amabile, 2015). Tushman & Nadler (2016) claimed that innovation consists in developing a new business unit or organization of any job, product, service or process.

6. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design was adopted for this case study since descriptive research architecture presents the facts and characteristics of a particular population or region in a systematic and precise manner. Rowe and Wilson (2015) stated that the descriptive design represents the personality, circumstance or community and frequency of the phenomenon. The design was therefore found to be relevant for the research. The study was focused on Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya and targeted 3000 employees working in the institution. Stratification was applied used in selecting the respondents to ensure representativeness.

6.1 Sampling and Sample Size

A representative sample of 90 staff was selected using stratified random sampling technique. Stratified sampling is used when a representation of each category of the population group must be included in the sample size (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013)

6.1.2 Measurement of variables

A five point Likert scale (5-1) was used for each of the statements corresponding to the various parameters of Competency mapping. Chi-Square analysis was done to establish the significance of the association between independent variables and the dependent variable.

7. FINDINGS

7.1 Descriptive Statistics

On whether Competency mapping was done to determine the issues affecting employee retention in Jomo Kenyatta university of Agriculture and Technology, the overall mean of 3.33 and standard deviation of 1.22. was realized showed that most of the respondents disagreed that competency mapping was not fully practiced in the university. This meant that the university was not empowering their employees with different competencies to navigate the ever changing corporate environment and that why majority of them left the university to other organizations.

7.1.2 Chi-Square Analysis Result

Testing significance relationships between variables:

Chi-Square analysis on Competency Mapping and employees' retention at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology is shown in the table below.

Chi-square on competency mapping at JKUAT				
Statements		Chi-square test		
		Value	df	Asymp Sig. (2-sided)
My organization encourages employees to keep developing their skills.	Pearson Chi-Square	30.482 ^a	4	.000
My organization always stresses the importance of different competences for different tasks.	Pearson Chi-Square	18.030 ^a	4	.001
Alignment of employees competencies and job description can help in better retention of employees.	Pearson Chi-Square	4.643 ^a	4	.326
Tasks in my department are distributed based on specific competencies.	Pearson Chi-Square	26.341 ^a	4	.000
Competency gap analysis is always done to help identify training needs.	Pearson Chi-Square	8.511 ^a	4	.037
HR department undertakes gap analysis to guide employees on development path.	Pearson Chi-Square	31.476 ^a	4	.000

0.05 significance level

From the findings on the table above the calculated Chi-Square tests, competency mapping was significantly above the critical value determined at a degree of freedom of four. Hence the results concluded that although statistically, there was an evidence of significance relationship between the competency mapping and the employees' retention. The results concur with the findings of Kumar,(2016), who indicated that the ability to effectively carry out competency based human resource management is becoming more and more crucial for the survival of the organization to address the changing nature of the organizations.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that competency mapping practice as used by public chartered universities in Kenya positively and significantly affect employee retention.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study proposes that university to constantly carry out competency mapping and establish programs to train and keep their skills updated in line with the job requirements. University management should devise measures to encourage the employees to develop their skills through career mapping. The university management should also promote workforce growth, analyze ability deficiencies and provide workers with opportunities to make use of their talents and skills.

8.3 Areas for Future Research

The study concentrated on the influence of competency management on employee's retention in public chartered universities in Kenya, but another study could be conducted in county sectors in the country to find out if the finding will be the same. In addition, study to be done in other universities so that the study can be generalized.

The finding of the study was that most of the staff that left the public chartered universities went to work for NGO's and other organizations. The study recommends a similar study could also be conducted in NGO's to establish the retention strategies developed and adopted and how these strategies are embedded within organization's dynamic environment

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