

# INFLUENCE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF JOMO KENYATTA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY

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**Abstract:** The research looked at the influence of Diversity management strategies on employee's performance in public universities in Kenya a case study of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. The general objective of this study was to investigate the influence of diversity management strategies on employee's performance in public universities in Kenya: The specific objectives of the study were to establish the influence of: diverse recruitment and selection strategy, diverse training strategy, diverse leadership commitment strategy and their influence on employee's performance.

Literature was reviewed to seek various opinions and views from different authors in the area under study. The conceptual framework was presented giving relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The research methodology applied descriptive research design. Stratified random sampling was used to select a representative sample. Data was collected using structured questionnaires. Data collected was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools and SPSS .Correlation analysis was used to describe the strength of the linear relationship between two variables. From the findings, it can be deduced that public Universities embrace diversity management of workforce. This was evidence by the fact that majority of the respondents (68%) were in agreement that diversity is practiced by JKUAT as a recruitment and selection strategy. The study recommends that the Universities should spend significant amounts of money recruiting, training and developing their employees, top priorities being the retention and development of diverse talent.

**Keywords:** Diverse Recruitment and Selection Strategy, Diverse Training Strategy, Diverse Leadership Commitment Strategy, Focus Strategy.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Managing diversity in the workplace should be the concern of every organization. In order to survive, a company needs to be able to manage and utilize its diverse workplace effectively. Managing diversity in the workplace should be a part of the culture of the entire organization (Anderson, 2012). Workplace diversity can be defined as the physical characteristics, family status, cultural differences, disabilities and a variation of the academic abilities possessed by different individuals

who live and work together. Other scholarly works define work diversity as the ability of individuals to work together and tolerate the differences found in other individuals due to education, skill, economic and social status (Pendry, 2007).

As the forces of globalization spread around the world, the workplaces are increasingly faced with a diverse workforce and need for effective workforce diversity management processes. The need to survive under the global culture and markets also has pushed firms to employ a diverse workforce and also to interact with people from diverse cultures, beliefs and backgrounds than ever before. Diversity plainly means difference. Diversity has to do with recognizing that everyone is different in a variety of visible and non-visible ways (The Law Society of Scotland, 2013). Diversity has to do with recognizing individual as well as group differences. It is about creating a culture and practices that recognize, respect and value difference.

Diversity is valued in organizations for a variety of reasons. Researchers have identified diversity as an important element in sustaining equality of access and opportunity in the workplace. The support for equal opportunity helps institutions gain the most benefit from an increasingly multicultural labour force (Henderson, 2011). In this way initiatives supporting diversity are aimed at ensuring that a given organization does not lose or waste talent. Bringing equality and equity to the workplace has significant economic benefits, too. Employers who practice equality and equity have access to a larger and more diverse workforce. Diversity in workplace promotes understanding and appreciation of socio-cultural differences unity. Researchers have come up with recommendations of how Human Resource (HR) can adapt their systems to accommodate diversity; most suggestions are in general term such as need to change the culture. Scholarly and practical knowledge is still evolving regarding the design and integration of specific HR policy areas (Konrad et al., 2006).

The main undoing of diversity in the workplace is increase in conflicts. These conflicts arise largely due to ignorance, prejudice feelings or derogatory comments that cause lack of acceptance. These lead to negative dynamics such as ethnocentrism, stereotyping, cultural or gender clashes with the feeling of being superior to others. If management ignores such conflicts; the company performance may suffer (Otiike & Mwalekwa, 2005).

In Kenya, the adoption of the New Constitution has introduced a new democratic process. The constitution of Kenya (2010) talks of the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres (Namachanja & Okibo, 2015). It also prohibits discrimination directly or indirectly against any person on any ground including race, sex, pregnancy, marital status, health status, ethics or social origin, colour, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, dress, language or birth, (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). The awareness of the importance of diversity is an essential aspect of organization performance in Kenyan institutions and the effectiveness of firms operations, no matter how sophisticated they are, may not be sufficient to sustain growth unless there are strategies that complement the operations (Waiganjo et al., 2012).

Due to the rapid expansion of the Universities nationally and even internationally, there has been an increase in the diversity of the employees and leaders within the universities. These employees and leaders have varied worldviews, perceptions, culture and these can only be successfully tapped to the advantage of the Universities, if there is an effective workforce diversity management strategy in place (Munjuri & Maina, 2013). Although the Universities have done extremely well in attending to diversity in the way they handle their customers, it is not clear whether this approach to diversity has been embraced internally among employees. The Universities seems to lack diversity among its core values of professionalism, integrity, creativity and innovation, quality, collegiality, transparency, dynamism, and accountability, which could be an indicator that the concept of work force diversity is foreign (Wamaitha, 2013).

The public universities are in different geographical locations in the country and are autonomous in matters of management of their human resources. All public universities major funding is by the government, their core activities being teaching, research and consultancy services and this therefore calls for recruitment of varied employees from skilled to unskilled, for example, lecturers, administrative staff as well as support staff (Wamaitha, 2013). However, administrative and support staff forms the bulk of public universities staff. Being public establishments, public universities are also affected by legislations and government directives that are deemed to be of national interest and best human resource practices.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The support for equal opportunity helps institutions gain the most benefits from an increasingly multicultural labor force (Henderson, 2011). In this way initiatives supporting diversity are aimed at ensuring that a given organization does not

lose or waste talent. Bringing equality and equity to the workplace has significant economic benefits, too. Employers who practice equality and equity have access to a larger and more diverse workforce. Diversity in workplace promotes understanding and appreciation of socio-cultural differences unity (Ostergaard et al., (2011).

However, questions have been raised regarding workforce diversity in public universities in Kenya. In a report released by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (2012), indicated that most of the public universities in Kenya either had more than one-third of their employees from one community which is against the constitution, had majority of their employees from the local community in which the universities are located or had majority of their employees from the same ethnic group as the Vice-Chancellor/Principal or had more than one third of one community at the expense of other communities (National Cohesion and Integration Commission, 2012). The continued ethnicization of university employee's appointment may lead to increased industrial unrests, lost academic hours, strained personnel relationships particularly between academic staff and university management, and brain drain. Ultimately, the final product being rolled out as graduate students stands the risk of being 'half-baked' and thus not adequately prepared for the job market.

A number of studies on the influence of diversity on employee's performance have been conducted. Wamaita (2013) sought to establish the challenges of implementing workforce diversity policies in public universities in Kenya. The study established that although public universities in Kenya have in place workforce diversity policies they have not laid down strategies for effective implementation. Wambari (2010) studied on work place diversity management effects on implementation of human resource management practices in the ministry of health, Kenya.

However, despite several studies that have been conducted on workplace diversity in other public universities, no study has been undertaken to study workplace diversity and employee performance in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.

In an effort to manage workplace Diversity on employee's performance JKUAT has put in place a Directorate of Gender and Disability mainstreaming department. JKUAT has also developed Gender policy which provides a comprehensive framework of the principles and strategies to be pursued in order to achieve gender equity and equality in education and institutions of learning.

## **1.2 General Objective**

The general objective of this study was to investigate the influence of diversity management strategies on employee's performance in public universities in Kenya.

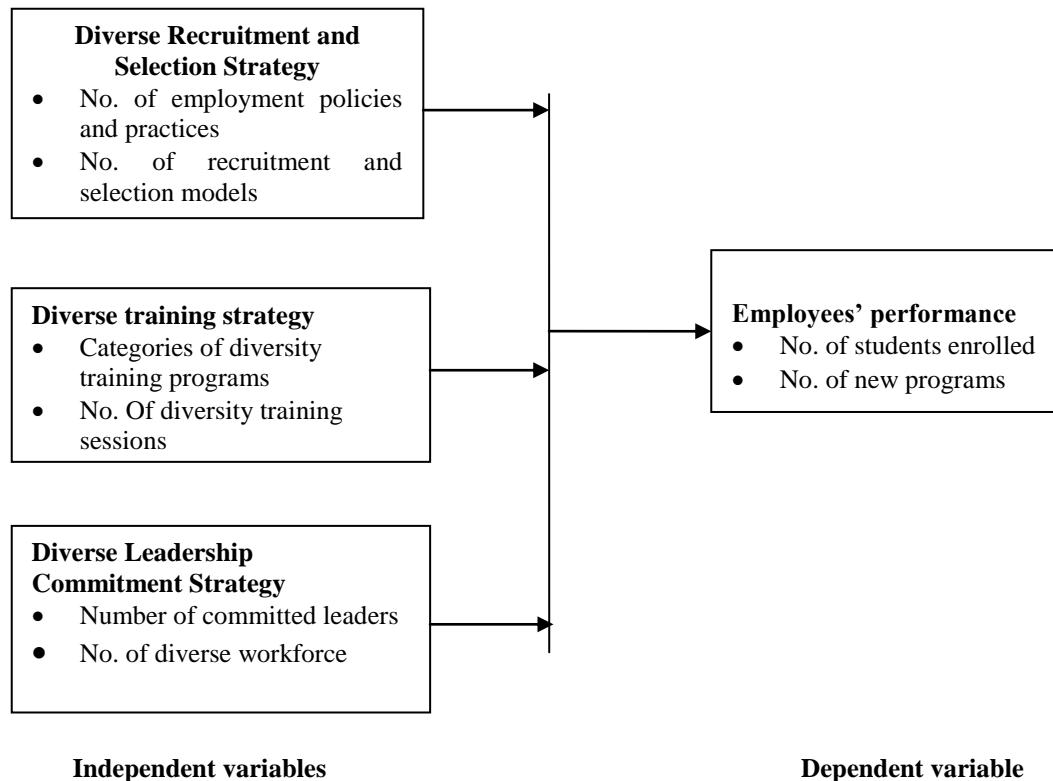
## **1.3 Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To establish the influence of diverse recruitment and selection strategy on employee performance in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.
2. To determine the influence of diverse training strategy in employee performance in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.
3. To establish the influence of diverse leadership commitment strategy on employees performance in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

## **2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), 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 and also outlines the relationships and the desired effects, forming independent and dependent variables respectively. This study will be guided by the independent variables; diverse recruitment and selection strategy, diverse training strategy and diverse leadership commitment strategy and their effect on the dependent variable which is employee performance.



### 2.1 Diverse Recruitment and Selection Strategy on Employee Performance

According to Thomas and Ely (2007), recruitment and selection is important in managing workforce diversity and increasing performance for most organizations. Human resource managers usually tend to bring people into the organization and promote employees who fit or have values similar to the organization ones. Therefore, recruitment and selection should avoid what Schneider (2007) called ‘the A-S-A (attraction-selection-attrition) cycle’ in order to develop multiple employee diversity cultures in the organization. Human resource professionals and line leaders who recruit and interview job seekers in a multicultural workforce need to be aware of the ways in which the interviewers’ beliefs, attitudes, and stereotypes influence interview behaviour.

Holly (2008) and the Equal Opportunities Review (2007) presented the evidence of discrimination in recruitment and selection in the UK public sector. The study argued that the increasingly competitive environment makes it difficult for public sector leaders to maintain the levels of organizational commitment required for equal employment opportunity to be truly meaningful.

### 2.2 Diverse Training Strategy in Employee Performance

According to Morrison (2005), diversity training programs teach leaders behaviours that foster respect and inclusion. Diversity training is used to increase awareness of diversity and educate employees about the business case for diversity (Skalsky & McCarthy, 2009). Ellis and Sonnenfield (2005) point out that training for diversity should be more extensive. They recommend a series of workshops which give time for individuals to think, check their assumptions and reassess between sessions. This should involve competent trainers and a carefully considered participant mix.

Education and training should be tailored to the specific needs of the organization, division, level, team or individuals. Critical to the success of education and training is the important step of linking training to the strategic objectives of the organization. Kossek et al. (2005) suggested that external facilitators involved in diversity training may help to achieve higher levels of productivity in a shorter time given work group diversity can lead to increased conflict among members in the short-term.

### 2.3 Diverse Leadership Commitment Strategy on Employee Performance

Leader’s commitment and ability to recognize diversity and its potential advantages and disadvantages defines an organization’s approach to managing diversity. There is no single recipe for success and it mainly depends on the leader’s commitment and ability to understand what is best for the organization based on teamwork and the dynamics of the

workplace and Roosevelt (2007) feels that managing diversity is a comprehensive process for creating a work environment that includes everyone. When creating a successful diverse workforce, an effective leader should have the commitment to focus on personal awareness and both leaders and employees need to be aware of their personal biases (Knoonce, 2005). Hence leaders must always understand that fairness is not necessarily equality and there are always exceptions to the rule. However, Erasmus, (2007) feels that workforce diversity is a forced integration that creates conflict and uncertainty and leadership is not committed and skilled in the discipline of diversity management.

Specifically, diversity may broaden the range of informational resources and perspectives on which leadership teams have to draw. In addition, leader racial diversity may extend a firm's professional and social network ties, which may improve its access to resource and diverse stakeholder groups (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Consequently, commitment to diversity in firm leadership may be related to improved firm performance. Despite these positive effects of leader diversity, research by Lau and Murnighan (2008) suggests that moderate levels of diversity also have the potential for enhancing organization commitment.

## **2.4 Employee Performance**

Performance is defined by Lee and Jimenez (2011) as the way to perform the job tasks according to the prescribed job description. Performance is the art to complete the task within the defined boundaries. There are lots of factors that affect the performance of employees. In a research on Workforce Diversity Management and Employee Performance in the Banking Sector in Kenya by Munjuri & Maina (2013), it was found out that employee diversity management seems more sensitive in the Bank and served a pivotal role. It encourages better employee retention, increased productivity, better morale, an expanded market share and improved customer service.

Ndungu (2009) points that the environment in which most organizations operate is dynamic and competitive. Organizations gradually evolve and develop with the support of their employee's diversity also have the potential for enhancing organization commitment.

Timmermans et al., (2011) stated that good workforce diversity practices in the area of human resources are believed to enhance employee and organizational performance. Managing diversity involves leveraging and using the differences in people's skills, ideas and creativity to contribute to a common goal, and doing it in a way that gives the organization a competitive edge. Diversity allows increased creativity, a wider range of perspectives, better problem definition, more alternatives and better solutions. It is also argued that, with decreasing homogeneity in the workforce, it has become crucial for organizations to develop equal opportunities and diversity management policies to maintain the skills of employees with diverse backgrounds in order to protect their competitive position in the marketplace.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The case study design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches was adopted for this study. According to Yin (2009), a case study involves an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. This design has several advantages namely; the continuous reality check since the process is iterative between theory and data; secondly, the possibility to use quantitative and qualitative techniques and thirdly, the boundaries that the case creates in the study (Harrison, 2002).

Sekaran and Bougie (2010) define population as the entire group of people, events or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. The target population were all Public Universities in Kenya. JKUAT which was the focus of the study has a total of 2,000 employees, comprised of both Teaching and Non-teaching Staff. The study focused on 1500 employees categorized into their respective designations; Teaching staff, Administrative staff, and Technical staff at main campus in Juja.

Data will be coded for ease of classification where categories will be aligned to the research questions the study aims to answer. Descriptive statistics was applied to analyse quantitative data with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Qualitative data was coded in line with the study's research questions, summarized and analysed to determine frequency of emerging themes. Visual displays such as tables, graphs and charts were also used to present findings of the study.

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#### 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

##### 4.1 Correlation Analysis

Diverse recruitment and selection strategy was found to be positive and significantly related to Employee Performance ( $r = 0.379$ ,  $p$ -value = 0.000). Diverse training strategy was found to be positively related to Employee Performance ( $r = 0.586$ ,  $p$ -value = 0.000) at 0.05 levels of significance. Diverse leadership commitment strategy was found to be positively related to Employee Performance ( $r = 0.639$ ,  $p$ -value = 0.000) at 0.05 levels of significance as indicated in table 4.1

		Employee Performance	Diverse recruitment and selection	Diverse training strategy	Diverse leadership commitment
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.379**	.586**	.639**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	103	103	103	103
Diverse recruitment and selection	Pearson Correlation	.379**	1	.610**	-.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.456
	N	103	103	103	103
Diverse training strategy	Pearson Correlation	.586**	.610**	1	.214*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.030
	N	103	103	103	103
Diverse leadership commitment	Pearson Correlation	.639**	-.074	.214*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.456	.030	
	N	103	103	103	103

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

##### 4.2 Regression Analysis

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.806 <sup>a</sup>	.650	.639	.60467
a. Predictors: (Constant), Diverse leadership commitment, Diverse training strategy , Diverse recruitment and selection				
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance				

The model analysis of regression is shown in the table above. Regression indicates the strength of the relationship between the independent variables (Diverse leadership commitment, diverse training strategy, diverse recruitment and selection) and the dependent variable (Employee Performance). The R square value in this case is 0.650 which clearly



suggests that there is a strong relationship between diverse leadership commitment, diverse training strategy, diverse recruitment and selection and Employee Performance. This indicates that diverse leadership commitment, diverse training strategy and diverse recruitment and selection share a variation of 60.5% of Employee Performance.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

The study concludes that most public universities in Kenya have been in the forefront in championing diversity cause through the diversity policies position in which the policies are not only in existence but are also fully operational with an awareness campaign and oversight authority to ensure full enforcement. This shows that public universities have put the necessary strategies for proper policy implementation and while the challenges of implementing the diversity policies are numerous, public universities must ensure that these challenges are overcome as there is immense benefit to be reaped.

Proactive diversity management practices are therefore essential to realize the true benefits. Every effort should be made to counter the challenges in order not only to correct imbalances but also to create a sense of belonging for all in the diversity groups while ensuring workforce cohesiveness. While it remains a challenge, it is hoped that this will be short-lived once diversity balances have been achieved and diversity policies continue to be implemented effectively and reviewed regularly to accommodate arising situations.

While some researchers have claimed that managing diversity provides a less controversial alternative to affirmative action and others seeing it as complementary to a mandatory policy, from whichever perspective, the benefits of having a diverse workforce cannot be overlooked.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

Given the challenges public universities in Kenya are facing in ensuring effective implementation of diversity policies, the study recommends that there is need to ensure that lasting solutions are worked out to contain the situation. Challenges like ethnic balancing can be solved by consolidating all public universities staff under a single management body to enable effective ethnic distribution of staff through deployment and transfers.

From the findings and conclusion the study recommends that in order to achieve a high level of innovation that ensures employee's satisfaction, quality, market share and the number of new products management in the company must ensure that adoption of diverse workforce strategies. Repercussions for not adopting managing strategies for workforce diversity would lead to lack of skills, competencies and interests in employees, which will ultimately increase employee turnover and reduce individuals and organizations performance to a great extent. Therefore the study recommends that management should support workforce diversity efforts such as mentoring or recruitment of minorities for top jobs, organizational diversity and upward mobility efforts more effectively.

The study recommends that the Universities should allocate sufficient resources for diversifying the workforce, recognizing and utilizing it as an important organizational resource to achieve a competitive edge. The successful workforce diversity management strategies at the University enhance organizational culture change to create a work environment that nurtures teamwork, participation and cohesiveness which positively impact performance.

The study recommend that recruitment in workforce diversity management influenced building diversity through recruitment process enabled the Universities to select competent, qualified and knowledgeable workforce that improve on its productivity and improve the performance of the company. The management diversity recruitment policy adopted by the Universities determines how to award, postings and where to post them considering the generational, gender, racial or culture for a diverse recruitment.

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