

QUALITY TRAINING AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN THE TELECOMMUNICATION SECTOR

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Abstract: This study sought to examine the influence of quality training and employee performance in the telecommunication sector. The study focused on two telecommunications companies namely; Safaricom Kenya limited and Telkom Kenya limited strategically identified due to ease in data collection. Questionnaires were the primary identified instruments of data collection. The questionnaires were designed to incorporate open and closed ended questions. The collected data was collated, edited and cleaned for completeness and consistency to prepare it for coding. Descriptive statistics measures such as mean and standard deviations were used to analyze the data. Regression analysis was also used to test the relationship between training and the performance of employees at the identified study companies. The findings of the study are presented in percentages, graphs and bar charts for easy understanding. Further, the findings were interpreted so that the processed data can end up as information suitable for decision making by the end users and other consumers of this research. The study also established that there is a strong relationship (R-value = 0.761) between employee performance and employee training. The results further revealed that employee training accounts for 57.2% of the total variance in employee performance. The study further established that employee quality of training, has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance in the telecommunication sector in Kenya.

Keywords: Quality Training, Employee Performance, Telecommunication.

1. INTRODUCTION

Emphasis on employee training and development at work place has in the modern business environment become an important strategy that firms are using to gain competitive advantage that help them survive the harsh competition in the market (Sultana, Irum, 2012). The current trend of intense competition among businesses which is heightened by factors such as globalization, changes in political and economic environments, increasing consumer awareness and technological advancements (Evans, Pucik & Barsoux 2002), requires firms especially those that target large scale success to train their employees so as they are prepared to adjust to the increases changes in business environment which enhances their performance.

According to Cole (2002), training employees is important because it; enhances the employee morale, lowers the cost of production through reducing wastes, lowers employee turnover, enhances the firm's change management, improves availability and quality of the company's staff and also makes employees more responsible, more recognized thus increasing the chances of promotion. Sultana et al. (2012) also suggest that training ensures that the firm gets employees that are competent both technically and socially thus was able to develop their careers. Training also helps to develop employee potential through building skills, being able to cope with uncertain conditions in the work place and enhancing their motivation and commitment (Elnaga & Imran, 2013). In light of these benefit, many firms have resulted to adopting effective employee training programs although there is still limited literature on how these benefits can influence firm performance especially in developing countries (Debrah & Ofori 2006).

Telecommunications sector is a vital enabler of productivity among societies and even economies. This is because the sector does not only contribute towards the country's economic activities, but also to the growth of other industries (Al-Mamary, Shamsuddin & Hamid, 2015). Recently, developing countries have witnessed significant transformation within this sector due to the rapid change in information technology and its effect on the economies of countries. The Kenyan telecommunication industry is an interesting industry to study, not only due to its volatile nature in terms of technology development, or policies, but also due to enormous growth of the sector due to growth of the mobile communications industry, the fighting of the biggest stakeholders in the industry for the uncertain regulatory context to get big shares and the high competition triggered by the price wars between the two major operators in the industry (Viaminck, 2015).

However, Golub, Arunakul and Areej (2016) suggested that it is important that the governments and other institutions in charge support firm efforts that are focused on sustainable training programs, especially within low and middle-income countries. This enhance sharing of knowledge on existing curriculums, programs, and systems which increases opportunities globally that focus on building regional capacity and also increase access to interdisciplinary services. A study by Ghafoor, Furqan and Aslam (2011) on Pakistan concluded that on job training, training design and delivery style have significant effect on employee performance which in turn has a positive effect on the performance of the organization especially among firms in developing countries.

In the survey by the Global Human Capital Trends report of 2015, more than half of survey respondents said that their firms have either poor or no training program at all in place to gauge employee engagement levels (Kern, 2015). Only ten percent of respondents said they have an excellent training program in place. Only five percent of the respondent accepted that their firm is performing excellently. The report revealed that firms globally face the challenge of lack of leadership succession programs. Other common challenges that face employee training and development in the global business environment include; cultural barriers, lack of financing, lack of reorganization and support by the government. This has hindered the progress in the development of accredited training programs globally (Golub, *et al.*, 2016).

In Kenya, training and development has also been reorganized firms as a tool gain competitive advantage. This is evident from the many programs that are developed by firms to enhance employee training in the country. Virtual HR Services Ltd, a human resource consultancy firm, in partnership with PDA International are said to launch the Personal Development Analysis (PDA Assessment Tool) into the Kenyan market at the end of the years 2016 (Sewe, 2016). This enables the firms to carry out employee competency behavioral assessment online using the system. The tool uses a scientific methodology to generate employee competency reports thus enabling the management to effectively train and also match accurate person – to – job which helps retain talent (Sewe, 2016). Some of the firms that are already using the tool include Britam, Cooperative Bank of Kenya, ICEA Lion Group, Capwell Industries, ACORN Management Services and Strathmore Business School.

Kenya Airways in one of its AGMs was concerned that the company is losing its key talent mostly engineers and pilots to other airlines especially the Middle East carriers. The company pledged to fight the brain drain since it had done a lot of investments in their training and development (Umidha, 2016). Hospitality industry in Kenya is also another industry that is having problems concerning employee skills and development (Mwakio, 2016). According to the Utalii College report 2014, employees in the hospitality industry lacks professional training which has affected the sector which has over 400,000 staff. He added that in the hospitality industry, it is only at the supervisory and management levels that well-trained manpower can be found (Mwakio, 2016).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The realization of the benefits of training in recent years has been heavily influenced by the increase of competition and the relative success of organizations where investment in employee development is considerably emphasized (Ahmed & Mehmood, 2012). Training is necessary to ensure an adequate supply of better staff that are technically and socially competent and capable of career development into specialist departments and management positions. There is therefore a continued need for the process of staff development, and training fulfills an important part of this process (Sultana *et al.* 2012).

There is a limited number of studies in field settings addressing training issues empirically (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2008). These sentiments are supported by Burgard and Görlitz (2011) who argued that non-monetary returns to training are less often examined in the empirical literature. Similarly Agyemang and Ofei (2013) argue that despite employee engagement and employee commitment and their determinants received a great deal of attention in the last decade in academic circles,

the concepts remain new with relatively little academic research conducted on them especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore most studies on the subject of training and how it impacts on employee and organizational performance are majorly confined to the developed world within the context of individual countries and organizations raising the question on whether their findings can be generalized to other sectors, countries and the developing world.

In sub Saharan Africa, most scholars have focused primarily on established institutions as case studies in an attempt to highlight the relationship between staff training and employee performance. Jagero, Komba, and Mlingi (2012) used DHL and FedEx courier companies that operate in Dar es Salaam Tanzania as their case study; Wachira (2013) Barclays Bank Kenya; Otuko, Chege and Douglas (2013) Mumias Sugar Company Kenya; Neo (2000) East African Breweries Limited. There lacks sufficient empirical evidence regarding the impact of staff training on the international civil servants based in Kenya.

The communication sector in Kenya is highly competitive. The competition was introduced largely by the deregulation of the sector segments in 1998 by the then Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) (Waema, 2007). The competition has seen some firms such as Telkom Kenya retrench more than 15000 employees (Waema, 2007), other firms such as YU mobile were acquired by their rivals Airtel and Safaricom (Malakata, 2015), while others fell out of business. According to Michael (2008), the high competition in the telecommunication industry in Kenya is also fueled by the threat of new entrants which over time decreases profit potential for existing players. This has made firms in the telecommunication industry in Kenya to come up with strategies such as employee training and development that help them gain competitive advantages to enhance their survival.

Firms are investing a lot of resources on employee training but they are not doing a follow up to establish how this influences employee engagement and performance (Bersin, 2014). Studies have also been done on this are of knowledge for instance, Elnaga and Imran (2013) evaluated the effect of training on employee performance in Pakistan. Diab and Ajlouni (2015) examined the influence of training on employee's performance, organizational commitment, and quality of medical services at Jordanian Private Hospitals. Locally, Angela (2014) examined the effects of training on the performance of the employee of United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia. Mohamud (2014) examined the effect of training on the performance of employees working at the NHIF in Machakos County in Kenya.

In all these studies reviewed, the estimation framework does not allow taking time variant and unobserved factors into account; it is not clear whether these results would uniformly persist for other countries and sectors as well all classes of employees which present a knowledge gap. Furthermore studies have found conflicting results on the influence of training on employee performance. Some scholars have found a positive and significant relation; others found a positive but insignificant relationship while others suggested no relationship. The studies reviewed were based on other industries other than the telecommunication industry. This study sought to establish the influence quality training and employee performance in the telecommunication sector.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality involves the characteristic of a product or service that gives it the ability to satisfy the given or implied needs (Kotler& Armstrong, 2002). Firms can increase the quality of their employees through providing comprehensive and quality training. According to Elnaga and Imran (2013), quality training is crucial not just to increase the firm's productivity but also to motivate and inspire employees through enhancing their skills and knowledge thus making them to feel important at their jobs. A quality training program is not made up of the talent or experience of the trainer, it's not the comprehensiveness of the training, nor even the talent of the participators in the training. Ensuring that every employee in the organization is committed is hard especially if the organization's mission, vision, and goals are not aligned and are not well-known, or if the employee doesn't see how a training program helps support those goals. According to Bombisky (2014) determinants of quality training include; quality facilitator, appropriate training, a quality curriculum and appropriate training location.

A quality training program ensures that people who plan, implement, strategies have the skills needed to perform their responsibilities. Employee only have superior performance because of good quality training program. This enhances their motivation which boost their productivity (Swart et al., 2005). Other benefits of quality training are: enhanced capacity to embrace new technologies and approaches, increased employee motivation, increased employee morale and job satisfaction, increased efficiency in processes, increased innovation and reduced employee turnover.

Studied that have reviewed the relationship between quality and employee performance have found a positive relation for instance; A study by Chong and Jose Galdo (2006) that determined whether the quality of training matters in Germany established that individuals that had attended high-quality training courses had higher average and marginal performance. Angela (2014) determined the effects of training on the performance the employees of United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia and found that the quality of training influences employee performance through positively influencing employee engagement; innovation; better performance and also enthusiasm to work.

Asfaw, Argaw and Bayissa (2015) examined the way training and development impact employees' performance at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and found that training the quality of employees which in turn affect their performance positively. However the studies were not based in the telecommunication sector. This study examine whether factors such as; the quality the facilitator, appropriate training, quality curriculum and the appropriateness of the training location affect the employees in the telecommunication sector.

Quality involves continuously achieving better products and services at a price that is competitive (Stoner, 1996) as cited by Nassazi (2013). Kotler and Armstrong (2002) also defined quality as the characteristic of a product or service which gives it the ability to satisfy the given or implied needs. It a general assumption that quality training affect employee performance positively. Organizations can enhance the quality of their employees through providing comprehensive and quality training. Quality training is crucial not just to increase the firm's productivity but also to motivate and inspire employees through enhancing their skills and knowledge thus making them to fell important at their jobs (Elnaga& Imran, 2013). Some of the benefits that result from quality training are: enhanced capacity to embrace new technologies and approaches, increased employee motivation, increased employee morale and job satisfaction, increased efficiency in processes, increased innovation and reduced employee turnover.

The relationship between quality training and employee performance of has been reviewed by various scholars both locally and internationally for instance; According to Kinicki and Kreitner (2007), happy and satisfied employees perform better thus the management find it easy to motivate them to attain the organizations objectives and goals. The workers are only satisfied when they see themselves competent enough to attend to organizational duties, which are enhanced through quality training programs. This thus recognizes that the role that quality training plays in employee motivation and performance is crucial. Quality training enables top executives to create better working environment that would eventually improve their motivational level which enhances employee performance.

Kithenji (2014) analyzed the effects of training on the performance the employees of United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study used a sample of 45 which was drawn from the population of 144 staff of the United Nations Support Office for the African Mission in Somalia. The researcher concluded that the quality of training influences employee performance through positively influencing employee engagement; innovation; better performance and also enthusiasm to work. The study further concluded that training enhanced the performance employee through positively influencing employee motivation levels by ensuring employee recognition; alignment to organizational goals; positive leadership traits; and motivation for work performance. Asfaw, Argaw and Bayissa (2015) determined how training and development impact employees' performance at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia using an institutional quantitative research method. The study established that the quality of training offered by a firm had positive and significant relationship on employee performance. These studies however were not based in the telecommunication sectors.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey design to answer the research questions. The target population for this study was Safaricom limited and Telkom Kenya limited telecommunication firms operating in Kenya. The sampling frame of this study was derived from the database of the Communication Authority of Kenya (CA) which regulates and licences Telecommunication companies in Kenya. This study used primary data that was collected using semi-structured questionnaires. Stratified sampling technique was used to obtain a sample for the study. Multiple regression analysis was used to explain the relationship between training and the performance employees.

5. FINDINGS

The study sought to determine how quality of training affects employee performance in the telecommunication sector. The responses were rated on a Likert scale of 1-5 where: 1= not at all; 2= to a lesser extent; 3= to a moderate extent; 4= to a great extent; 5=to a very great extent. The mean scores recorded were interpreted using the following interpretation scale: 1-1.49 = No Extent; 1.5-2.49= Little Extent; 2.5-3.49= Moderate Extent; 3.5-4.49= Great Extent; 4.5-5.0=Very Great Extent.

Table 1: Quality of Training

Parameter	Mean	Std. Deviation
Quality facilitator	4.84	0.365
Quality curriculum	4.65	0.478
Appropriate training	4.56	0.518
Appropriate training location	3.68	0.731
Overall	4.43	0.523

The study results revealed that the quality of training affects employee performance in the telecommunication sector to a great extent as evidenced by an overall mean of ($M= 4.43SD= 0.523$). The quality of the facilitator was the most rated with a mean of ($M= 4.84, SD= 0.365$) implying it affects employee performance to a very great extent. Quality curriculum and appropriate training were also found to influence employee performance to a very great extent as evidenced by their means of ($M= 4.65, SD= 0.478$) and ($M= 4.56, SD= 0.518$) respectively. Appropriate training location was rated as influencing employee performance to a great extent with a mean of ($M= 3.68, SD= 0.731$). There were minimal differences in the respondent's opinions as indicated by the low standard deviations that were recorded.

Existing literature indicates that firms can increase the quality of their employees through providing comprehensive and quality training. For instance, Elnaga and Imran (2013) observes that quality training is crucial not just to increase the firm's productivity but also to motivate and inspire employees through enhancing their skills and knowledge thus making them to feel important at their jobs. Chong and Jose Galdo (2006) established that in Germany, individuals that have attended high-quality training courses have higher average and marginal performance.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that employee training Quality of Training, has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance in the telecommunication sector in Kenya. The study found out that the quality of employee training has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance in the telecommunication sector in Kenya. The study therefore recommends that the management of Safaricom Kenya Limited and Telkom Kenya should keep on investing in quality facilitators, appropriate training, quality curriculum and appropriate training locations which in turn improves employee performance.

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