

ROLE OF REDISTRIBUTION OF POWER ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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Abstract: This study sought to determine the role of redistribution of power on organizational commitment in public universities in Kenya. The study was based on Kenyatta and Jomo Kenyatta Universities. The population for the study was 1638 teaching staff of Jomo Kenyatta and Kenyatta universities. The research used questionnaires to collect data from the respondents. The target population was 328 teaching staff of both universities. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis was used. Data was coded and organized for analysis by use of Statistical computerized packages. Redistribution of power was also found to have no significant role on organizational commitment. The researcher recommended that more studies be carried out to determine other human resource practices that could influence organizational commitment. Specifically, the researcher recommended further studies on the role of leadership style on organizational commitment in public universities.

Keywords: Redistribution, Power, Organization, Commitment, Public Universities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Commitment refers to both willingness to persist in a course of action and reluctance to change plans, often owing to a sense of obligation to stay the course (Vance, 2006). Armstrong, (2010) defines commitment as attachment and loyalty. He states that it is associated with the feelings of individuals about the organization. Organizational commitment refers to the overall strength of an employee's identification and involvement in an organization (Uygur, 2009). He states further that commitment presents itself in the form of willingness to remain a member of the organization, belief and acceptance of the values and goals of the organization and readiness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization. Meyer and Allen, (2009) observe that commitment creates a personal identification and a feeling of pride in the organization's success. They note that person's attachment is based on his or her desire to take advantage of what the organization has to offer in terms of need-fulfilling advantages.

According to Armstrong, (2010), high-commitment strategy elicits commitment so that behaviour is primarily self-regulated rather than controlled by sanctions and pressures external to the individual, and relations within the organization are based on high levels of trust. He proposes that commitment strategy seeks to increase identification with the organization, develop feelings of loyalty among employees, provide a context within which motivation and therefore performance will increase, reduce employee turnover and increase job satisfaction. Armstrong, (2010) further states that the steps in creating commitment include developing ownership, communication programmes, leadership development and developing Human Resource (HR) practices that enhance commitment. He suggests that the benefits which accrue from organizational commitment include a strong belief in, and acceptance of, the organization's goals, willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, a definite desire to maintain membership in the organization, and creation of multiple stake-holders of the organization, that is, owners, employees, customers and the public. This leads to enhanced performance.

Employee involvement is defined as "psychological identification with a job" (Akhtar & Singh, 2010). This definition implies that a job-involved person sees her or his job as an important part of his self-concept and that jobs "define one's

self-concept in a major way” Apostolou (2000) states that employee involvement is a process for empowering employees to participate in managerial decision-making and improvement activities appropriate to their levels in the organization. He observes that employees and management recognize that each employee is involved in running the business. Lawler (1996) conceptualizes employee involvement in four themes of redistribution of power, information sharing, increasing skills and knowledge and reward for performance. Redistribution of power refers to employees’ authority to make decisions which are important to their performance and the quality of their working lives. It implies participation of employees even at low levels of influence such as providing input into other people’s decisions or having authority and accountability for decisions and their outcomes. Involvement is maximized when the highest possible level of power is pushed down to the employees that have to carry out the decisions (Konrad, 2006).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Michieka (2017) states that there was no single year from 1980 to date, when staff in all grades had not asked for some increase in salaries. He notes that several strikes paralyzed learning in the Universities. The HANSARD (2004) observes that in terms of Higher Education, Kenya was rated 2nd during the first Generation of Kenya’s Independence. It states that our Universities were few, our students were few and the privileges they had from the government were overwhelming, which explained the outcry now, regarding Lecturers strike, it. The HANSARD (2004) further notes that it has been discouragement in the faculties in Universities by Professors and students who are doing research and pursuing higher education because they had high expectations which they do not have. It states that Professors and Lecturers at Universities are underutilized because the government has not given them enough moral support. It has not given them enough funds. Public Universities in Kenya have experienced a large number of strikes over the years by workers who express their lack of satisfaction with aspects of their employment, and who demand that their needs are met by university administration. The consequence of these strike action has led to a conditional fall in education standard (<https://www.grossarchive.com/project/3877/>).

They observe that during strike actions, most students are seen involved in diverse activities such as sexual immorality, cyber scan, pool betting, unnecessary gossip, watching of films and reading comic material for entertainment purposes, rather than reading their books. They further note that the students soon forget their academic work and are no longer prepared for class activities, which negatively affect their leaving capabilities. Michieka (2017) notes that there was no single year from 1980 to date, when staff in all grades had not asked for some increase in salaries. He states that several strikes paralyzed learning in the Universities. He notes that one strike in 1994 paralyzed university learning for a long period of time and that a meeting between Vice-Chancellors and Ministry of Education to chart a way forward arrived at no resolution. He states that Ministry of Education and Treasury gave Vice-Chancellors a blackout and said that they had no money to increase salaries and other allowances. The HANSARD (2004) observes that in terms of Higher Education, Kenya was rated 2nd during the first Generation of Kenya’s Independence. It states that our Universities were few, our students were few and the privileges they had from the government were overwhelming, which explained the outcry regarding Lecturers strike.

The HANSARD (2004) further notes that it has been discouragement in the faculties in Universities by Professors and students who are doing research and pursuing higher education because they had high expectations which they do not have. It states that Professors and Lecturers at Universities are underutilized because the government has not given them enough moral support. It has not given them enough funds. It further states that the demonstrations that have been going on must be researched so that we know the problems facing our Universities in order to enhance education and develop Kenya. It states that the Government should turn around and say “we need to revamp our education system by giving privileges to Universities”. The HANSARD (2004) quoted a Southern African scholar who stated that people did not want to come to Kenya because Universities here are on and off and education cannot be discontinued. The fore-stated highlighted a glaring problem in public universities in Kenya, which has caused falling education standards and which needs to be resolved. This study examined the role of redistribution of power on organizational commitment in public universities in Kenya.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Redistribution of power refers to employees’ authority to make decisions. Redistribution of power means that employees have the responsibility and authority to participate in decisions that are important to their performance and to the quality of their working lives (Apostolou, 2000). Power can mean a relatively low level of influence, as in providing input into

decisions made by others or it can mean having final authority and accountability for decisions and their outcomes. Involvement is maximized when the highest possible level of power is pushed down to the employees that have to carry out the decisions (Konrad, 2006).

According to Colvin (2003b) involvement of employees in decision-making in team-based production systems and greater labour-management trust may produce an effect in which decisions are seen as having greater legitimacy to employees. Colvin (2003b) notes that the legitimization effect would lead to a prediction of a reduction in grievance rates under high performance work systems. Employee participation is a management initiative and, as a concept means that the employees are given the opportunity to discuss issues relating to their work, to influence managerial decisions, but management reserves the right to govern.

The idea of empowering employees means abandoning command-control system and mechanistic structure. In order to achieve results, modern managers and leaders need to act as facilitators rather than controllers of the work processes (Irawanto, 2015). Employee participation in decision making is considered a key element in the successful implementation of new management strategies and plays an important role in determining the degree of job satisfaction. This, in turn, increases the commitment of the employee as well as their motivation (Irawanto, 2015). According to Addai (2013), Employee involvement involves giving workers opportunity to participate in the decision making process and therefore recognizing their potential and contributions. This participation and recognition is expected to make workers feel good about themselves and their work. Giving the chance for workers to participate in decision making is one of the forms of intrinsic motivation which makes employees feel a sense of belongingness to the family of the organisation in which they work. This will therefore spur them on to give of their best (Addai, 2013).

Creating forums for employees to develop and share ideas for improving firm performance can be effective, but only when good ideas from employees actually get used (Colvin, 2003b). According to Jones et. al. (2006), the opportunity to participate in decisions may have an impact on productivity through multiple channels. First, it may affect employee motivation to put forth effort. They state that empowering an employee to carry out some task demonstrates the supervisor's trust in the agent's ability or motivation to carry out the task, which in turn leads to a higher level of effort in equilibrium. They further note that participation may develop employee skills and that opportunities to participate in job design enable employees to learn about the content of their work and also to make productive suggestions. Appelbaum et al. (2000) find that participation also increases the intrinsic rewards from work. The next section discusses in more detail how participation may affect productivity in our case.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was based on Kenyatta and Jomo Kenyatta Universities. The population for the study was 1638 teaching staff of Jomo Kenyatta and Kenyatta universities. The research used questionnaires to collect data from the respondents. The target population was 328 teaching staff of both universities. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis was used. Data was coded and organized for analysis by use of Statistical computerized packages.

5. FINDINGS

78.7% of the employees stated that they had a say on what goes on in the department, 72.2% of the employees had a lot of influence over work and work related factors in the unit, . The average level of power sharing was found to be 3.59 with a standard deviation of 0.55 on a likerts scale of 1 – 5 (1-strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3-Neither agree nor disagree, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree). This implied that, in the opinion of the employees, that there is power sharing in the organization and they have a say in what goes on in the organizations.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis

| Item | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. I have worked in teams to help find and solve problems in my work unit | - | 10 (10.1%) | 10 (10.1%) | 63 (63.6%) | 16 (16.2%) |
| 2. In the last year, management has used the recommendations of teams I have worked on | 3 (3.0%) | 31 (31.3%) | 33 (33.3%) | 23 (23.2%) | 9 (9.1%) |
| 3. In the last year, my supervisor has taken my | 1 | 14 | 24 | 45 | 15 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| suggestions seriously | (1.0%) | (14.1%) | (24.2%) | (45.5%) | (15.2%) |
| 4. My work unit has a quality council that meets regularly | 15 (15.2%) | - | 23 (23.2%) | 52 (52.5%) | 9 (9.1%) |
| 5. I have a say in what goes on in my department | 1 (1.0%) | 8 (8.1%) | 12 (12.1%) | 54 (54.5%) | 24 (24.2%) |
| 6. I can make some changes in how I do my job without getting permission from 'higher authority' | 6 (6.1%) | 17 (17.2) | 20 (20.2%) | 49 (49.5%) | 7 (7.1%) |
| 7. In the last year, the teams I have worked on could make changes/fix problems without getting permission from 'higher authorities' | - | 7 (7.1%) | 13 (13.1%) | 50 (50.5%) | 29 (29.3%) |
| 8. My current job makes good use of my skills | - | 2 (2.0%) | 12 (12.1%) | 55 (56.5%) | 30 (30.3%) |
| 9. My current job has a variety of tasks | 4 (4.0%) | 9 (9.1%) | 14 (14.1%) | 60 (60.6%) | 12 (12.1%) |
| 10. I have a lot of influence over work and work-related factors in my unit | - | 2 (2.0%) | 23 (23.2%) | 56 (56.6%) | 18 (18.2%) |
| 11. I get the impression that my boss thinks My ideas are important | 3 (3.0%) | 22 (22.2%) | 16 (16.2%) | 52 (52.5%) | 6 (6.0%) |
| 12. On the average, I have the resources (material, financial, equipment, people) I need to do my job | 1 (1.0%) | 11 (11.1%) | 32 (32.3%) | 41 (41.4%) | 14 (14.1%) |

1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3- Neither agree nor disagree, 4- agree, 5 -strongly agree

Table 2: The Overall Role of Employee Involvement Practices on Organizational Commitment Differentiated by University

| Employee Involvement Practices | JKUAT | | | | KU | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|---------|-------|------|------|---------|---------|
| | B | SE | β | Sig | B | SE | β | Sig |
| Redistribution of Power | -.006 | .025 | -.274 | -.396 | .577 | .079 | .839 | .000*** |

$R^2 = .089$ $F = 1.95$ $P < 0.05^*$ $P < 0.01^{**}$ $P < 0.001^{**}$ $N = 99$

Overall, employee performance reward significantly predicts organizational commitment at JKUAT ($\beta = .58$, $P < 0.05$). Redistribution of power and employee information sharing do not predict organizational commitment at JKUAT. At KU, employee redistribution of power significantly predicts organizational commitment ($\beta = .44$, $P < 0.05$). This is a contraction to Irawanto (2015) finding that redistribution of power increases organizational commitment.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

According to this study, redistribution of power did not predict organizational commitment. The conclusion is that redistribution of power does not play a role on organizational commitment. It is therefore, recommended that Universities should not use this practice as a way of enlisting workers' organizational commitment with a view to ending workers' strike.

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