

## Research Article

# Influence of Access to Professional Development on Organizational Performance of Public Universities in Kisumu County, Kenya

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## Abstract

All public Universities have functional human resource empowerment policies in place yet observations are that several workers in these institutions have assumed a work behaviour in which they keep shuttling between different campuses. It is therefore not clear if the human resources in these public Universities are adequately empowered to execute their roles meaningfully. This paper gives results on the influence of access to professional development as a component of human resource empowerment in public Universities in Kisumu County, Kenya and shows how adequately they have empowered their human resources with the view of achieving improved organizational performance. A Pearson's correlation coefficient of  $r=0.556$  was obtained showing that there is a positive relationship between access to professional development and organizational performance.

**Keywords:** Professional Development; Influence; Organizational performance; Human resource.

## Introduction

Employee development focuses on building employee competencies required for future work performance [1]. Human resources' professional development is the responsibility of the employer. Human resources are responsible for their long term individual development but once an individual has been hired, professional development becomes the responsibility of the organization of employment. All human resources generally possess creative abilities but the main challenge is how to unlock them and tap into them to benefit organizations. Innovative companies not only focus on hiring creative people but also strive to develop them so as to maximize on their creative output [2]. As much as training only lays emphasis on upgrading employee skills and focus on work-related topics at the benefit of both employees and the organization, development on the other hand seeks to provide general knowledge about theoretical concepts not only for the current job but over lifetime hence career progression [3].

Although human resources are hired with a certain set of knowledge, skills and abilities, their position, hence roles and responsibilities do

change and the employer has a 'corporate social responsibility' to invest in their human capital. Since the human resources do invest in their organizations by working longer hours, handling evolving tasks and assuming increased responsibilities, it is fair to expect their employers to also assume the cost of their professional development. In [4] it is stated that organizations ought to develop their employees in a manner that guarantees their competencies for future work performances and leadership roles.

Organizations that understand the true value of professional development, culture, innovation and creativity also recognize the value of continuously educating their human resource base. In return, such organizations will be better positioned to adapt to the rapidly changing demands of today's work environment. Incorporating professional development in the corporate strategy with so many competing organizational interests and tight budgets is however challenging. Many organizations have endured by understanding that the investment in talent development is part of their expense into human capital as it relates to skill development

for job advancement and better organizational performance. As much as there is a requirement and benefit in developing employees, this benefit may be hard to quantify hence undermining the investment in human resources development [5]. Further, Universities ought to set aside a fraction of the personnel wages budget specifically for training and development of staff. For relevance, the government should partner with Universities to undertake regular training needs assessments for current and future human capital requirements [6].

### Research methodology

The study employed correlational research design for this study so as to be able to easily authenticate the existence of relationships and the degree to which the variables relate to each other. Correlational research design indicates an association between two or more variables. It is a quantitative research method in which the researcher collects numeric data from participants and analyzes it using statistics before conducting an objective inquiry [7].

According to [8] correlational designs determine if relationships exist or if one variable influences the other. Correlational design examines if the degree to which one variable's differences relate to another variable's differences hence the researcher considered it appropriate for addressing the objectives of this study. The target population comprised all employees of the 8 public Universities in Kisumu County. Respondents (both academic and non-academic staff) were selected from all the 8 public Universities whose population was 3,857. This population gave a sample size of 362 respondents.

### Result and discussions

The present study looked into the highest level of training of the respondents as a pointer of their competency level. The implication of the results was that majority of the respondents were literate, suitably skilled and knowledgeable in their areas of duty hence guaranteeing their prowess in articulating the study issues. Higher education institutions such as Universities, colleges and polytechnics are labour intensive organizations that mainly depend on people for the delivery of their services. The quality of staff in these institutions is thus central to their effectiveness in the same way that it is to all

people centred organizations [9] On the contrary, the results differ from those of [10] who established that training as a component of human resource management practices is not a predictor of organizational performance.

It is evident from table 1 that only 20.3% were in agreement that their institutions provided study leaves for employees, 3.4% were undecided while 76.2% disagreed. 26% agreed that their institutions offered scholarships for employees, 2.6% were undecided on this while 71.4% disagreed. 24% agreed that their institutions availed technical training on new skills to employees, 3.7% were undecided while 72.2% disagreed on the same. 25.7% were in agreement that their learning institutions invested in in-house training of employees, 4% were undecided whereas 70.3% disagreed. 26% agreed that their institutions exercised equity in provision of opportunities for career progression to all staff, 2.6% were undecided while 71.4% disagreed. 26% were in agreement that Professional development program in their institutions was simultaneously benefiting the staff and institution, 5.1% were undecided while 68.8% disagreed. It was as a result interpreted that most employees did not appreciate the efforts of public Universities in Kisumu County in strengthening employee professional development. It was as such concluded that employee professional development activities such as provision of study leaves, scholarships, proper investment in training, equity in career progression and adoption of employee development strategies which are beneficial to both organization and staff were not well entrenched in the institutions. [11] Contends that employee development should be purposeful, sequentially planned and a mindful activity. Its success cannot be guaranteed if it is performed indiscriminately. Although human resources are hired with a certain set of knowledge, skills and abilities, their position, hence roles and responsibilities often change and the employer has a 'corporate social responsibility' to invest in their human capital [12]. As much as human resources are responsible for their long term individual development, once hired professional development should become the responsibility of the organization of employment [5]. Correlational analysis was also done and the correlation coefficient between professional development and organizational performance is

r=0.556. This shows a positive and significant relationship between these two variables as shown in the table 2. Analysis of variance was

also done between the variable and the results are displayed in the table 3.

Table 1. Professional development

Factors	1	2	3	4	5
Provision of study leaves for Employees	28(8.0%)	43(12.3%)	12(3.4%)	109(31%)	159(45.2%)
Offer of scholarship for employees	35(10.0%)	56(16.0%)	9(2.6%)	99(28.3%)	151(43.1%)
Technical training on new skills	25(7.1%)	59(16.9%)	13(3.7%)	95(27.1%)	158(45.1%)
Investment in in-house training of Employees.	30(8.6%)	60(17.1%)	14(4.0%)	115(32.9%)	131(37.4%)
Equity in opportunities for career progression to all staff.	35(10.0%)	56(16.0%)	9(2.6%)	99(28.3%)	151(43.1%)
Professional development program benefiting both staff and institution.	41(11.7%)	50(14.3%)	18(5.1%)	90(25.7%)	151(43.1%)

Five point key response scale: 1. Strongly agree; 2. Agree; 3. Undecided; 4. Disagree; 5. Strongly disagree. Source: Research Data, 2016.

Table 2. Correlation between human resource empowerment and organizational performance

	Correlations	Access to professional development	Organizational performance
Access to professional development	Pearson Correlation	1	0.556**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	350	350
Organizational performance	Pearson Correlation	0.556**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	350	350

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: Research Data (2016).

Table 3. Analysis of the Variance (ANOVA)

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15.501	5	5.904	9.565	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	22.190	40	0.773		
	Total	37.691	45			

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant)-Intervening variables

Source: Research Data (2016).

At 3 degrees of freedom, the computed F = 9.565 is greater than the critical F = .00. This implies

that the overall regression model is significant. Therefore, the results of table 3 show that there is a significant relationship between

organizational performance and access to professional development. In general if and access to professional development is enhanced, organizational performance also improves. If the calculated value of F happens to be equivalent or more than its table value, then the difference is considered as significant hence the samples are believed to originate from different spheres [11].

In [4] there is an agreement that this result show acceptable levels of within group agreement and between groups variability in empowerment. From the above excerpts it can be deduced that some public Universities under this study had recognized the importance of giving employees opportunities for further studies, however, it should be noted that it is how well such policies are entrenched, that can leave an impact on organizational performance in these institutions of learning. This is in line with the findings of [12] that human resources' professional development is the responsibility of the employer. Employees are responsible for their long term individual development but once hired, professional development becomes the responsibility of the organization of employment. It is in seminars, workshops and conferences that employees get in touch with the current but dynamic work environment tips to polish their work performances.

This is probably why [1] concluded that innovative companies not only focus on hiring creative people but also strive to develop them so as to maximize on their creative output for their organizations. 7 (87.5%) Universities agreed that their institutions had a policy on professional development of employees and this policy had been put into use so as to enhance professional development. The professional development activities include allowing employees to go for further studies, granting study leaves and also allowing them to attend seminars, workshops and conferences. Some are given fee waivers as they study in the Universities they work in. On the other hand only 1 (12.5%) University admitted to employing all the other professional development activities but fee waiver had not been effected. In general, all the Universities consented to giving employees access to professional development a fact that has positively impacted their organizational performance. The findings are not peculiar and

as a matter of fact do conform to those of [2,6,8] that human resources' professional development is largely the responsibility of the employer.

## **Conclusions**

The present study aimed at establishing the influence of access to professional development on organizational performance of Public Universities in Kisumu County as one of its objectives. It was deduced that the Universities indeed had recognized that access to professional development of employees is their responsibility and gone ahead to provide such opportunities. In spite of this, it is believed that the Universities had not adequately embedded employee professional development into their institutional structures in such a manner that it could be appreciated and its impact felt by all employees. It has been established that among the factors believed to hamper the implementation of HRE are its costly nature and the difficulty to quantify its benefits. Public Universities in Kisumu County are mainly funded and run by the government hence the assumption that they may be characterized by weak capital outlays and insufficient funding like other higher learning institutions. The study aimed at establishing the influence of access to professional development on organizational performance of Public Universities in Kisumu County as its first objective. The study recommends that governments should refrain from wide based economic assumptions that could derail focus on employee professional development programmes especially in public institutions. Public institutions should also strive to cement employee professional development programmes in their organizational systems since it is their full responsibility to develop human resources that they have hired. There have been reports that some governments have emphasized on cutting on support staff in public institutions. This approach could undermine the organizational performance especially in public institutions of higher learning.

## **Conflict of interest**

Authors declare there are no conflicts of interest.

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