



**CULTIVATING PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES' WORK ETHICS THROUGH STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS:
INSIGHTS FROM THE KENYA NATIONAL POLYTECHNICS**

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ABSTRACT

The public sector institutions play a critical role in the functioning of government business. It is based on this understanding that government employees in the public sector are expected to perform optimally. Reward structures contribute to the staff motivation and in essence improving performance. Despite numerous reward systems being put in place, non- financial aspect of the reward system is rarely linked to definite output measures such as employee work ethics. This paper delved into uncovering how employee works ethics are linked to staff development initiatives adapted by public sector institutions in Kenya. The paper discusses findings of staff development programs at the Kenya National Polytechnics and their contribution to employee work ethics. The findings were generated from a population of 1635 drawn from the 12 registered National Polytechnics trainers and administrative staff categories. A sample size of 234 was selected. Correlation and regressions analysis was conducted on the data collected using questionnaires. The findings show that there is a positive but weak relationship between staff development and employee work ethics in the Kenyan public service. The paper recommends that in order for the public sector in Kenya to cultivate work ethics among its workforce, more strategies need to be involved. Further research can focus on other sectors using other factors.

Key words: Public Sector; Staff Development; Kenya National Polytechnics; Work Ethics; Employees

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INTRODUCTION

Employees are seen as important assets and essential resources for the business in the current corporate world. Employees are the key component in developing and carrying out strategies and guidelines. Whether or not they interact directly with clients, employees' behavior has a significant impact on a company's ability to succeed (Alalade & Oguntodu, 2019). Businesses that are aware of how employee performance affects them are better equipped to impact employee output and productivity (Adjei, 2020). An organization can boost profitability and consistently achieve defined objectives by effectively managing employees' work ethics. Rewarding staff is one method of managing them effectively. Work life balance programs are an emerging strategy to improve employee work ethics without necessarily involving monetary measures.

Bishop (2018) asserts that compensation has a substantial impact on an organization's reward system and that it also has an impact on employees' work ethics. Organizations strive to achieve a sustainable balance between performance, loyalty, and dedication of their employees due to the competitive nature of the staff development and growth programs. Reward strives to provide a flexible and economical method of equally rewarding both good and poor employees.

Based on Armstrong (2019), a renowned HR expert, non-monetary and monetary benefits are different but complimentary. He argues, financial incentives such as bonuses encourage workers to continually give their all in the work place and by extension look out for the good of the company. to the company in order to meet their needs on a daily basis. Work-related benefits, such as housing, transportation, and medical allowances, help one achieve this. A key component of fostering and growing great people is reward strategy.

The public sector employees enjoy a relatively secure job positions and have predictable expectations. The security and stability of the public sector may be a good motivation to keep employees on their jobs for long. However, the

changing economic times and the need to be creative and innovative in public service amid dwindling resources may call for the need to change employee terms of employment. This means the public service may adapt staff development programs among other aspects of reward system to retain a vibrant human resource base to steer public service to the productivity scale expected a by a more enlightened citizenry.

Strategies for rewarding employees are influenced by many factors such as age, experience, and talents. Promotions, pay raises, among others, Janabi (2018). In this paper, staff development programs are considered as part of the reward framework and are expected to influence in the long run the productivity of the public sector.

The national polytechnics in Kenya are under the Ministry of education department of Vocational and Technical Training. They are established under the Kenyan Technical and Vocational Education and Training Act, No 29 of 2013. Kenya National Polytechnics are TVET institutions charged with the mandate of training middle level technical and vocational labor force. In the global arena, Science, Technology and Innovation are the drivers for rapid world's economic prosperity, social development and provide tools and solutions to address global challenges. These institutions contribute greatly to the technical skill development of the youth in line with vision 2030.

Problem and Focus

Beardwell and Claydon (2021) found that in addition to rewards, there are many other elements that affect employees' work ethics. Aside from performance as a measure of progress in the organisation, wok ethics is becoming a key indicator of employee productivity and commitment. Work ethics ensures that employees do what is expected of them at all times. Moreso because of the critical role the TVET sector plays in the attainment of vision 2030 and the country's technical skill development amid various economic and environmental challenges, employees' work ethics in the sector is important to enhance performance

and also attainment of the objectives of the sector. A major objective of TVET sector is to produce a critical mass of well-trained human resources to implement programmes and projects identified in Kenya's Vision 2030 and also the sustainable development goal number 4 concerning access to quality education. Kenya polytechnics are in the skill development sector and require committed employees to impart skills to the next generation of learning. Given the emerging technological breakthrough and the changing trends a well-developed staff will maintain the momentum of a vibrant public service.

Given that the critical role played by training institutions in the public sector, there is need to uncover the drivers of work ethics among the public service. This paper delves into the aspect of staff development since it is a critical component of employee reward structure.

The paper addresses the question of:

How does staff development programs build on employee work ethics?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review and Literature

This paper is based on human capital theory which essentially portend that organisations are a product of committed and loyal employees who contribute to its efficiency and productivity. A company's human capital is just as valuable the other factors of production, (Becker 1964). Employee productivity and loyalty can be linked to staff development and according to Becker, organisations are willing to invest in employee development to reap the benefits thereof. From this theory this paper argues that it is in the best interest of the public sector in Kenya to invest in staff development. This paper further expounds on the contribution of staff development to the employee work ethics measured in terms of; Professionalism in service Delivery; Timely Service Delivery; Employee Productivity and Work tasks commitment. Although these aspects may not be directly quantifiable, they

contribute to the actual performance. Staff development programs enhance these aspects.

Work ethics is used to describe various behavioural aspects of employees in the work place and as workers. Personal ethics are those moral precepts or moral laws that one should incorporate into their activities and behavior (Sen, 2020). Employee work ethics is portrayed in work activities, engagement and commitment. Work ethics is also used to describe various behavioural aspects of employees in the work place and as workers such as; professionalism in service delivery, timeliness in service delivery, employee overall work productivity and task commitment. The term ethics is used sometimes interchangeably with morality, though some attempts are made to differentiate them.

The term "moral" or "morality," which refers to the code of conduct or specific standards of conduct or behavior advanced by the community, the group, the individual, or reasonable beings, is derived from the Latin word "mores" (Gert, & Gert, 2018). However, some philosophers have suggested that they differ in the evolution of ethical discussions. On the one hand, some philosophers define "ethics" as the moral philosophy that examines the decency of a particular act or the criteria used to assess its decency (Singer, 2022). In other words, it is the study or science of morals, whereas morality refers to the code of conduct or moral norms. It addresses the notion of why a particular act or behavior is good or harmful/ bad /good/ desirable/ frowned on etc.

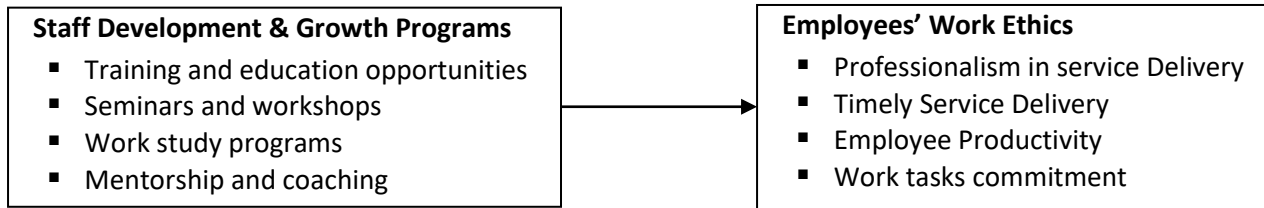
Work ethics is becoming an important topical issue in modern business world because of the challenging environments in which work is being performed. Globalisation and other trends have corrupted the moral fabric of society and hence behavioural change is unprecedented. Organisations and professional bodies are continuously reviewing their ethical stand by constantly formulating codes of ethics to guide their members. Ethics and integrity is gaining acceptance even among governments. For example, the 2010

constitution of Kenya has dedicated a chapter on ethics and Integrity, (GoK 2010).

Conceptual Framework

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ethics is portrayed in work activities, engagement and commitment. Work ethics is also used to describe various behavioural aspects of employees in the work place and as workers such as; professionalism in service delivery, timeliness in service delivery, employee overall work productivity and task commitment. The conceptual framework below shows how variables of staff development connect to work ethics.



Independent Variable

Figure1: Conceptual Framework

From the conceptual model above staff development and growth programs contribute to employee work ethics represented by evidence of professionalism in the work, timeliness in delivery of services, employee productivity and work commitment. These aspects though difficult to measure accurately, are a good way to monitor employee work ethics. Research has been exploring various aspects of employee reward system and relating it to employee work ethics Armstrong and Brown (2017). The reward system influences work ethics among employees. This paper explores non-financial reward system and employee work ethics with a focus on staff development programs.

METHODOLOGY

This paper reports on findings obtained using a descriptive design which enabled analysis of respondents' views on the key variables. A population of 1634 respondents who comprised of 1266 trainers and 368 administrative staff members

Dependent Variable

was targeted. A sample of 234 respondents was obtained using Yamane formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N * (e^2)}$$

Where;

N = Population, n = sample size, e = margin for error (0.05)

$$N = \frac{1635}{1 + 1635(0.05^2)} = 234 \text{ Respondents}$$

The table below gives the population and Sample distributions:

Table 1: Study Population and Sample Size

Category	Population	Sample Size
Trainers	1,266	181
Administrative staff	368	53
Total	1,634	234

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This paper reports findings on staff development and its role in strengthening employee work ethics in the public sector. From the findings it is clear that staff development programs are important in developing employee work ethics. This section discusses the descriptive results with a view of bringing out the relationship between staff development and work ethics. The respondents agreed that career growth prospects in the organisation greatly affected their work ethics with 44.8% strongly agreeing, 25.8% agreeing and only 11.7% disagreeing with the opinion. On nurturing through mentorship and coaching programs a majority of the respondents agreed that the programs influenced their work ethics with 27.6% strongly agreeing, 28.2% agreeing and 20.9% being neutral/ moderate with the opinion. The respondents further agreed having extra duties to prepare them for management positions in the organisation influenced their work ethics with 66.9% agreeing and only 13.5% disagreeing with the

opinion. The training and development programs by the organisation influences the work ethics of the respondents this is from the 47.9% of the respondents that strongly agree and 27.6% that agree with only 13.5% of the respondents disagreeing. The impact of seminars and workshops was positive with 46.0% strongly agreeing and 25.8% agreeing. The respondents were conflicted on the provision of work study programs by the organisation. 51.6% agreed with the opinion, 18.4% of the respondents were moderate with 30.1% disagreeing with the opinion which is an increase from the preceding programs/ opinions. The data depicts that staff development programs does influence the work ethics of the respondents to a large extent but this could only apply to those members of staff who benefit from such programs. It is therefore important that staff development programs be applied strategically and equitably to benefit all members of staff to build a cohesive and committed workforce. Table 2 below gives these findings.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Staff Development Programs and Employees' Work Ethics

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	SD	D	M	A	SA
The career growth prospects in the organization.	4.0	1.1	3.7%	8.0%	17.8%	25.8%	44.8%
There are employee mentorship and coaching programs to nature employees' career growth	3.5	1.3	11.7%	11.7%	20.9%	28.2%	7.6%
Employees are given extra duties to prepare them for management positions in the organization.	3.8	1.2	7.4%	6.1%	19.6%	30.7%	36.2%
The training and development programs	4.0	1.2	6.1%	7.4%	11.0%	27.6%	47.9%
There is an impact of seminars and workshops provided by organization	4.0	1.3	9.8%	8.0%	10.4%	25.8%	46.0%
The organization provides work study programs	3.3	1.3	14.1%	16.0%	18.4%	30.7%	20.9%

Furthermore, the level of employee awareness and consideration of ethical foundations in performing their functions was evaluated and the findings showed that a large majority of the respondents took work ethics seriously when performing their tasks.

All respondents were in agreement with the view that work ethics is a personal choice independent from the influence of other external factors. This is evidenced by 93.9% of the respondents who considered professionalism as key when delivering services to client. 91.4% give timely services to clients, 93.9% give equal value of work in their job,

93.3% of the respondents agreed with the opinion that their work productivity is in line with the organisation's expectation, 95.7% are committed to accomplishing their task at work and 96.3% put consideration in their work ethics and integrity when performing tasks. It is therefore commendable that the public service is aware and

agrees with the core aspects of work ethics. The standard deviations for all the variables were within the range of 0.6-0.7 implying a highly consensus finding. The mean scores were also above the agree range being within 4.5-4.7. These findings are presented in the table below.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Employees' Work Ethics

Variables	SD	D	M	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev
I consider professionalism as key when delivering services to my client.	0%	0%	6.1%	17.8%	76.1%	4.7	0.6
I always give timely services to my clients.	0%	0.6%	8.0%	31.3%	60.1%	4.5	0.7
I always give equal value of work in my job.	0%	0%	6.1%	25.8%	68.1%	4.6	0.6
My work productivity is in line with the organization's expectations of me.	0.6%	0.6%	5.5%	34.4%	58.9%	4.5	0.7
I am always committed to accomplishing my tasks at work.	0%	0.6%	3.7%	24.5%	71.2%	4.6	0.6
I always consider work ethics and integrity when performing my tasks.	0.6%	0.6%	2.5%	19.0%	77.3%	4.7	0.6

Inferential Statistics Analysis

This section discusses the inferential statistics to show if there is a statistical relationship between employee work ethics in the public sector and the staff development programs.

From the findings, it evident that employee work ethics is influenced significantly and positively by staff development programs. The correlations also strong ranging between 0.284 to 0.595, implying that when the public sector improves on staff development programs such as; staff training,

engaging staff on extra duties so as to learn managerial roles as well as allowing staff to proceed on work study programs, they stand to benefit in the improvement of the employee work ethics. This in essence will motivate employees to be more productive, professional, deliver services to their clients in a timely manners and become more committed to their organisations. This will ensure a more committed and vibrant public sector workforce in the long run. These findings are presented in table 4 below.

Table 4: Staff development and Employee Work Ethics Correlations

	Stament/coc Staextdut	Statraing	StaSem/wrkshps	Stawkstud	Empwkethics	
Stafment/coach						
Pearson Correlation	1					
Sig. (2-tailed)						
N	163					
Stafxtraduties						
Pearson Correlation	.595**	1				
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000					
N	163	163				
StafTrainng						
Pearson Correlation	.409**	.595**	1			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000				
N	163	163	163			
StafSem/wrkshp						
Pearson Correlation	.435**	.545**	.702**	1		
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000			
N	163	163	163	163		
Stafwrkstudy						
Pearson Correlation	.456**	.560**	.473**	.663**	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		
N	163	163	163	163	163	
Emplwrkethics						
Pearson Correlation	.284**	.285**	.308**	.274**	.256**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.001	.001	
N	163	163	163	163	163	163

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

In order to ascertain the statistical significance of the contribution of each variable on the dependent variable, a regression analysis was undertaken. From the findings, staff development programs were not statistically significant in influencing employee work ethics. Therefore, for the public service to influence adequately the work ethics in the public sector, other strategies need to be targeted. However, it is

noted that though minimal influence was seen, it was contributing to the level of work ethics. From the findings, 13% of work ethics in the public sector can be explained by various aspects of staff development. The rest of 87% is attributed to other factors outside this report. The model is however a good fit for the data as shown by the model table below.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.363 ^a	.131	.103	.41913

a. Predictors: (Constant), Stament/coc Staextdut Staftraing StafSem/wrkshps Stafwkstud on

b. Dependent Variable: Employees work ethics

This model can also be interpreted to mean the public service is not investing enough in staff

development programs to influence commitment to work, timely service delivery and professionalism at the work place.

Table 6: Regression Model Coefficients.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	4.037	.132		30.691	.000
	sdgmentorcoach	.051	.032	.151	1.581	.116
	sdgxtraduties	.014	.042	.038	.335	.738
	sdgtrainndvlp	.066	.042	.179	1.549	.123
	sdgsemnwrkshp	.006	.042	.017	.137	.891
	sdgworkstudy	.023	.036	.070	.638	.524

b. Dependent Variable: Employees work ethics

This is further confirmed by the regression coefficients of the above regression model which confirms that though the entire model is statistically significant and that there is a positive relationship between staff development programs and employee work ethics, this relationship is low and not statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval. This is hence a confirmation that though its

critical for the public sector to engage in staff development, it cannot be depended upon alone to influence meaningfully employee work ethics which is gaining considerable ground in the work place. More strategies need to be discovered and applied together with staff development since it was found to influence 13% of the employee work ethics.

Fig 2: Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual



The regression plot shows a linear relationship between the independent and the independent variables confirming that there a positive relationship.

SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper brought out the issue of work ethics and staff development as a determiner. From the correlations it is evident that employees in the public are aware of the importance of work ethics

and also staff development. Though the variables are related, the relationship is not statistically significant. The public service needs to combine various strategies to induce employee work ethics.

Based on the findings, the paper concludes that the public sector employees are aware of work ethics and they consider it when performing their duties. The staff development programs used by the public service were not found to induce work ethics and hence needs to be done to connect staff development with employee work ethics since it is a critical factor in quality service delivery.

The paper recommends that the public sector takes more effort in including staff development initiatives in their reward strategies and constantly monitor its influence on employee work ethics. The future employee will require high ethical standards and integrity since they will have to work in highly dynamic environments including remote working.

Future researches can invest other factors that are responsible for employee work ethics in the public sector. A comparative study can also be conducted between financial and non-financial reward system to uncover their contribution to employee work ethics among diverse sectors.

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