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A CASE OF KAKAMEGA COUNTY**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the impact of performance appraisal on productivity in the public service. The research was motivated by the fact that there had been concerted efforts to correct the scenario of declining performance of the public service. The Government of Kenya adopted, as a policy, the application of performance Contracts in the management of the Public Service. Having adopted Performance Management in most of the Ministries by the year 2006, research had been carried out mainly among recipients of the service to establish its effectiveness in service delivery. This research was carried out among public servants working at Kakamega County. The target population was 112 respondents on Job group J and above whose statistics were available at the County Governor/Commissioner's office. Descriptive research design was used. Primary data was collected by use of structured questionnaires, with closed ended questions; 100 questionnaires were issued. They were reviewed for completeness and validity, coded and keyed into the computer for analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Percentile comparisons, frequency tables, pie charts and various types of graphs were used for presentation of findings.

Findings showed Performance appraisal had a positive influence in making respondents more transparent to their clients.

Key Words: Performance appraisal, productivity, Kakamega County

INTRODUCTION

The objectives of introducing performance contracts in Kenya include improvement of productivity to the public by ensuring that top-level managers are accountable for results; reversing the decline in efficiency and ensuring transparency in use of resources that must be focused on attainment of key national policy priorities of the government; institutionalizing performance oriented culture in the public Service through introduction of an objective performance appraisal system, measuring and evaluating performance.

The concept of performance management in Kenya was first introduced in the management of state corporations in 1989. A Parastatal Reform Strategy Paper, which was approved by cabinet in 1991, was the first official recognition of the concept of Performance Management. The first two parastatals to be on Performance Management were Kenya Railways Corporation and the National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB). Kenya Railways signed performance contracts in April 1989 and NCPB signed in November 1990 (Kobia & Mohammed, 2006). Performance contracts eventually failed due to lack of political goodwill to drive this process; it was perceived as donor-driven. There was no performance incentive system and no provision for the impact of external factors such as changes in government policy, inflation, exchange rate fluctuations that would have made evaluation fair.

Many of the research and theory building is focusing on how to narrow the gap between government and the citizen. Citizen participation, increasing transparency and productivity improvement seem to be the key issues to deal with in order to improve the legitimacy of public administration and regain the trust that citizens lost in their governments (Hoogwout, 2005).

Productivity is the provision of goods and services to clients. In order for it to be deemed to be effective

and efficient, the same should be offered at the right time and place and in the right quantities and expected quality at minimal cost. The service providers are expected to be accountable, transparent, and efficient as they offer the services.

Statement of the Problem

Performance Management was introduced in the public service from 1st July 2006. According to Kobia and Mohammed (2006), in implementing performance contracts, some of the common issues that were being addressed included improvement of performance to deliver quality and timely services to the citizen, improve productivity in order to maximize shareholders wealth, and to instill a sense of accountability and transparency in productivity and the utilization of resources. Obong'o (2009) in his conclusions on his research on Implementation of Performance Management in Kenya expressed that public sector reform is taking place in a continually changing environment. Current practices therefore need continuous review so as to help organizations improve their productivity.

In the review of performance management in the public sector in Kenya by a Panel of Experts (2010), recipients of service from the public sector made it clear that even those MDAs deemed to be performing highly as per evaluations were not delivering required services. This study intends to reveal the perception of the service providers themselves as to whether according to them performance management has either enhanced or hindered their efficiency in service delivery. Apart from Kobia and Mohammed (2006) who drew their study sample from among senior public servants in 2006 when performance management had just been regularized in the ministries, the rest of the studies reviewed focused on members of the public, public institutions and case studies. Also no related

research in Kenya has been carried out in Kakamega County.

The above scenario therefore gives a strong case and ground to attempt to fill the gap that exists in the area of the performance management process and its effect on productivity among the public servants. The researcher considers it necessary to undertake this research to offer a continual review and assessment on how performance management is affecting productivity, as perceived by those who have rendered the service under performance contracts for the last five years.

Research objectives

The objective of the study was to evaluate the impact of performance appraisal on productivity in the public service.

LITERATURE REVIEW

General Systems Theory (GST)

General Systems Theory was originally proposed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1928. The subject matter of GST was the formulation and derivation of those principles which are valid for systems in general. The Primer group defines a system as a family of relationships among the members acting as a whole. It is a configuration of parts connected and joined together by a web of relationships. A system is characterized by the interactions of its components and the nonlinearity of those interactions. Organizations are complex social systems; reducing the parts from the whole reduces the overall effectiveness of organizations. In most cases the whole has properties that cannot be known from analysis of the constituent elements in isolation (Walonick, 1993).

Systems theory specifically developed following the World Wars from the work of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Anatol Rapoport, Kenneth E.

Boulding, William Ross Ashby, Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, C. West Churchman and others in the 1950s, specifically catalyzed by the cooperation in the Society for General Systems Research. The systems view was based on the idea that all phenomena can be viewed as a web of relationships among elements, or a system; all systems have common patterns, behaviors, and properties that can be understood and used to develop greater insight into the behavior of complex phenomena and to move closer toward a unity of science. Von Bertalanffy's desire was to use the word "system" to describe those principles which are common to systems in general.

The term 'complex adaptive systems' was coined at the interdisciplinary Santa Fe Institute (SFI), by John H. Holland, Murray Gell-Mann and others. It is claimed that, because there are often properties-of-the-whole which cannot be found among the properties-of-the-elements, in some cases the behavior of the whole cannot be explained in terms of the behavior of the parts. An example is the properties of the letters of the alphabet which when considered together can give rise to words that have meaning, which does not exist in the letters by themselves (Walonick, 1993).

According to Lucey (1991), General Systems Theory emphasizes that it is vital to view a system in totality and not a sum of individual functions; that what all the subsystems can do while working together is greater than the sum total of individual subsystems- known as holistic approach. Viewed in this manner, organizations are open systems with various subsystems named as departments and sections along with work procedures. They are inter-related and interdependent, hence each department and section depends on another for its success, and what one department/section does affects all the others within the organization! system.

Lucey further states that systems theorists see organizations as complex social systems that interact with their environment and which must respond to numerous interdependent variables such as people, tasks, technology and the relationships between them.

The organization has both internal and external environments. The external environment consists of economic, social, political and technological aspects; the internal includes workers, machines, and procedures. An organization interacts with its environment by receiving from it raw materials, labour and other factors of production while it gives back goods and services. The systems theorists allude that there is no best way of designing organizations and their work systems and that the best way is contingent upon prevailing conditions.

Performance Contracts are executed within an organizational set up and, according to general systems theory, are part of the variables of an organization's environment. For their execution there is involvement of people, tasks and technology which, along with other factors, contribute to the achievement of the organization's objectives. One of the main objectives of implementing PCs is to improve efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery to the citizens. The PC process, also referred to as the PAS, is indeed regarded as a system, its component subsystems being the annual work plan, performance target setting, performance evaluation and appraisal, and performance reporting. The success of the whole process depends on the performance of each of the parts in relation to the other.

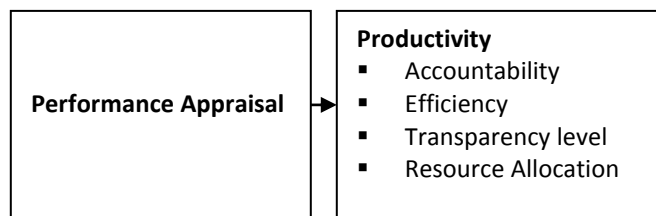
Further, a Performance Contract being carried out in an organizational set up may be regarded as a subsystem of the organization, hence other factors within the organization must come into play for the organization to achieve its objectives.

Performance Management is said to be part of the broader Kenya Public Sector Reforms aimed at improving efficiency and effectiveness in the management of the public service.

Obongo (2009), states that it is important to view a performance contract as part and parcel of a wider performance management system, but not as a standalone operating outside the established human resource regulations. Just in the same way some properties may not emerge from action of individual parts, achievement of any part of the PC process alone may not show any results, nor can accomplishment of the PC process alone without considering other factors within the organization.

Njogu (2010) states that a modern public service culture requires values of fair play, efficiency and accountability and without this mind set, the commitment to professional standards and resource management, social interventions, reforms and development cannot be effectively executed for efficient service delivery. This statement concurs with general systems theory in that the values may be considered to be variables which interact with each other and together bring about the achievement of the objective of efficient service delivery. Efficiency and accountability are envisaged as indicators of efficient productivity which is the dependent variable in this study.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variable Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author (2018)

Appraisal

Under performance monitoring, the staff member provides regular feedback to the manager on their progress towards the achievements of the agreed performance objectives. The manager provides regular formal and informal feedback on their assessment of the staff member's achievements. Armstrong and Baron (2004), argue that the manager and the staff member should regularly (periodically) evaluate the staff member's performance and the achievement of the objectives in the work plan as well as the agreed training and development plan. This phase should then be fed into the next cycle of the performance management process.

According to Chapman (1995), performance appraisals help develop individuals, improve organizational performance, and feed into business planning. Formal performance appraisals are generally conducted annually for all staff in the organization. Each staff member is appraised by their line manager. Directors are appraised by the CEO, who is appraised by the chairman or company owners, depending on the size and structure of the organization.

Annual performance appraisals enable management and monitoring of standards, agreeing expectations and objectives, and delegation of responsibilities and tasks. Staff performance appraisals also establish individual training needs and enable organizational training needs analysis and planning. Performance appraisals are also essential for career and succession planning - for individuals, crucial jobs, and for the organization as a whole. Performance appraisals are important for staff motivation, attitude and behaviour development, communicating and aligning individual and organizational aims, and fostering positive relationships between management and staff. They provide a formal, recorded, regular review of

an individual's performance, and a plan for future development.

In a point of digression from the importance of performance appraisals, Chapman states that managers and appraisals commonly dislike appraisals and try to avoid them. He says that to these people the appraisal is daunting and time-consuming. The process is seen as a difficult administrative chore and emotionally challenging. The annual appraisal is, maybe, the only time since last year that the two people have sat down together for a meaningful one-to-one discussion. No wonder then that appraisals are stressful - which then defeats the whole purpose. Within the context of performance evaluation, Armstrong and Baron (2004) speculate that the staff member's performance and the achievement of the objectives in the work plan needs to be evaluated periodically.

The Strategic Plans form the basis for the implementation of a performance contract. The coming into effect of Vision 2030, the main macroeconomic policy guiding document, in 2007, saw Government institutions revise these strategic plans in line with the priorities set out in Vision 2030 (Log Associates, 2010). The process of identifying performance targets and negotiations is carried out in two phases. The first phase which is the pre-negotiation consultations involves carrying out SWOT analysis for the institution to determine its performance capacity. Its main objective is to determine whether the targets being developed are SMART, growth oriented and benchmarked to performance of similar organizations in the particular industry (GOK, 2010).

In the second phase of the negotiations, the issues agreed upon are factored in the PC. The draft contract is then submitted to the PCSC for vetting. The vetting process ensures among other things that the contracts comply with the guidelines and that they are linked to the strategic objectives of

the organization anchored on the Strategic Plan, growth oriented and relevant to the institution's mandate and in line with Vision 2030 (GOK, 2010). The signing of the contract is done at two levels: the first level is between the government and the Ministers. The Permanent Secretaries representing the various ministries sign with the Minister for Public Service on behalf of the government, while the Chief Executives sign on behalf of the Public Institutions (Trivedi, 2000).

Empirical Review

A case study carried out by Sonja (1999) in the Ministry of Justice, and Department for Courts in New Zealand on Public Sector Performance Management revealed that PC would improve communication both between staff and their managers and within organizations as a whole. In this research, one of the objectives is to find out the effect of performance appraisal on productivity by public servants. In a performance contract, the supervisor appraises the subordinate by meeting with him/her to discuss and assess the extent of achievement of set targets. Much as this may improve communication between workers and supervisors, the researcher wishes to find out whether such improvement in communication through performance appraisal leads to improved service delivery to clients through increased transparency.

According to the study, the emphasis for effective performance is values, attitudes and aptitudes. In the Kenyan case and more so in this study, it is observed that in performance appraisal using GP 247 form, some of the areas appraised include service values and work ethics. This implied that values, attitudes and aptitudes may impact on effectiveness in productivity. The study by Raga and Taylor is an alert for the researcher that there may be other factors other than the variables considered that could impact on effectiveness in service delivery. The Batho Pele principles in the above

study tally with service delivery indicators in the current study which include transparency, accountability and effectiveness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive research design, which entails the process of collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects in the study. It determines and reports the way things are and it also attempts to describe such things as behaviour, attitudes, values, and characteristics (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The target population for the study was public servants in various government ministries, represented as County departments, who are on job groups 'J' and above, working at the Western Region Headquarters, Kakamega County. Out of 45 County departments, 19 of them did not have any statistics at the County Commissioner's office. The 26 departments that had statistics were therefore included in the target population. For collection of primary data, the researcher used questionnaires. Closed-ended questions were used as they could be analyzed more easily than open ended- questions. There were few open-ended questions to supplement and countercheck answers to the closed ended questions. The researcher administered questionnaires to the respondents. Completed questionnaires were reviewed for completeness and validity, coded and keyed into the computer for analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS

The researcher sought to find out the effect of performance appraisal on perceived service delivery. On Performance Appraisal and Transparency, the indicator used was on whether performance appraisal had an effect on transparency towards clients.

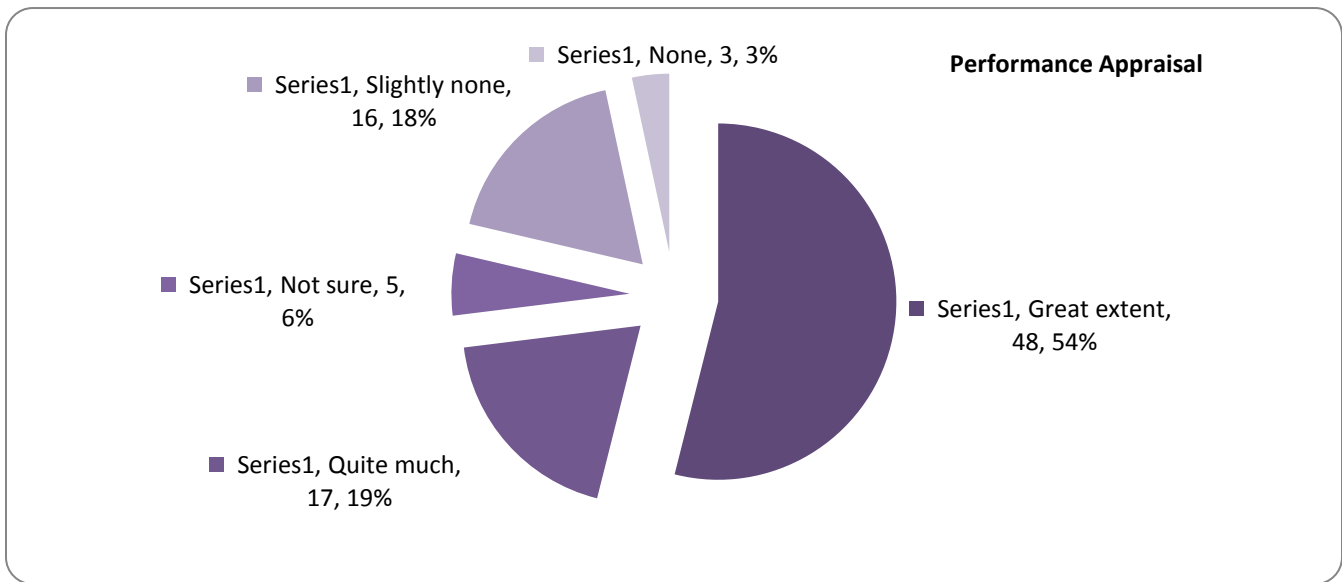


Figure 2: Performance Appraisal

Source: (Survey Data, 2015)

Majority (65191) that is 72 % (19%+ 53%) agreed that performance appraisal helped them become more transparent to their clients. Six percent (6%) did not know whether it helped them to become more transparent or not, but 22 % (19% + 3%) were sure that it did not help them. These findings that performance appraisal helped respondents become more transparent to their clients tally with the study by Obong' (2009) in which he states that PC has offered the opportunity to achieve a high degree of accountability and transparency in performance target setting.

CONCLUSIONS

On conclusion, Performance appraisal had a positive

influence in making respondents more transparent to their clients.

Recommendations for further research

Civil servants on job group H and below signed their first performance contracts in the 2008/2009 financial year. There is need to carry out research focusing on this group in order to get their perception on its effect on service delivery and any challenges that they could be facing. It would also be necessary to carry out research on other factors other than performance appraisal that could help improve performance in the civil service.

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