

IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT KISII TEACHING AND REFERRAL HOSPITAL

¹*Mary Susan Arasa

¹Department of Business Administration, University of Nairobi

Corresponding author's e-mail: maryarasa@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Human resource management functions involve the management and development of people in organizations, formulation and implementation of human resource practices and policies. The aim of this study was to establish challenges facing the human resource management practices at Kisii Teaching and Referral Hospital.

Design/ Methodology/Approach: The methodology employed in this research was a case study design. The tool used was an interview guide. Respondents were drawn from the human resource department and two line managers were interviewed. The interviews were well versed with the human resource management function and had knowledge and understanding of Kisii Referral Hospital's operations.

Findings: Results from the study established that human resource managers at Kisii Referral Hospital experience challenges of policies and procedures that curtail recruitment such as delayed information from line managers on staffing requirements for departments.

Contribution to policy and practice: the study is of importance to the management of Kisii Teaching and Referral, and the government. It will help the hospital's management in managing its human resources and also aid in addressing the myriad challenges facing the human resource managers.

Originality/Value: The study extends the literature on human resource management.

BACKGROUND

Successful implementation of HR practices needs to become institutionalized into the interpretive schemes of organisational actors in order to make such practices gain legitimacy in organizations (Van MierloMierlo et al., 2018). It follows that implementation of human resource practices entails broadly the transition process during which human resource policies and practices develop from an idea or goal, into an institutionalized, functioning organisational instrument (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016; Wright & Nishii, 2013). Thus, implementation of HRM practices is considered to be a rational process with foreseeable and where attendant difficulties can be dealt with or avoided if such practices are designed and managed correctly (Van MierloMierlo et al., 2018).

This study was anchored on the Human Capital theory (HCT) (Becker 1964), and Ability, Motivation and Opportunity (AMO) theory (Paauwe & Boselie 2005) and Self Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci and Ryan, 2000). HCT argues that training and development activities are not costs to be minimized but return on investments which should be part of an organisational investment capital (Becker 1964). AMO posits that employees perform well when they have the capabilities, adequate motivation, and their work environment provides opportunities to participate (Boxall & Purcell 2003). SDT postulates that employees need autonomy, relatedness, and competence in order to promote their growth, well-being, and performance (Deci and Ryan, 2000)

Kisii Level 5 Hospital was upgraded into a Teaching and Referral Hospital (KTRH) and this allowed residents in the County and even beyond to access specialized treatment at lower costs. Since it is a research centre, the hospital is now attracting more funding ultimately improving health care service provision. In 2014, it received Ksh 57 million and presently it is now receiving Kshs.120 million as a conditional share. In addition, other development partners like Danida have now come on board (Kisii County Government, Annual Development Plan, 2018/2019). Accordingly, the County has recruited and deployed health workers among them specialists, medical officers, nurses, radiologists, and pharmaceutical technicians, medical lab technologists among others (Kisii County Government, Annual Development Plan, 2018/2019). With all these recruitments of human resources taking place, this study is motivated by the need to investigate how the HRM practices have been implemented at KTRH as it seeks to deliver on its services mandate

Implementation of Human Resource Management Practices

A review of the literature has shown that scholars often write about implementation of HRM practices but rarely define it. Klein and Sorra (1996) defines it as a process of gaining targeted employees' appropriate, committed, and skilful use of an HRM practice that is aligned with the corporate strategy. Schuler and Jackson (1987) define implementation HRM practices as a system that attracts, develops, motivates, and retains employees to ensure the effective implementation and the survival of the organization and its members. Other scholars have defined it as a set of internally consistent policies and practices designed and implemented to ensure that a firm's human capital contribute to the achievement of its business objectives (Delery & Doty, 1996; Minbaeva 2005).

Kisii Teaching and Referral Hospital

Overtime, Kisii Teaching and Referral Hospital (KTRH) has been upgraded into a Teaching and Referral Hospital. The hospital being a research Centre, is now attracting more funding ultimately improving health care service provision. The facility is now receiving Kshs.120 million as a conditional share from the County Government. This has resulted in the County Government recruiting and deploying health workers among them specialists, medical officers, nurses, radiologists, and pharmaceutical technicians, medical lab technologists among others.

Research Problem

Various scholars have yet to arrive at a consensus on what constitutes successful implementation of HRM practices. A study by Bowen & Ostroff (2004) found out that successful implementation of HRM practices depended on how employees perceived HRM to be distinctive and consistent among policy makers. Bondarouk et al., (2006) argued for the alignment in understanding of HRM practices between line managers and human resource practitioners. A study by Wright & Nishii (2013) established that in order to implement HRM successfully, the gap between intended, actual and perceived HRM practices should be kept to a minimum by providing adequate information before implementing HRM practices. a study by Mugira (2014) found out that recruitment and selection, performance appraisal and teamwork significantly influenced performance. Thus, as much as scholars have provided many explanations and solutions that has led to many valuable insights into HRM practices implementation, it has remained one-sided and static as they have not explained the dynamics of RM implementation and the interactions between organizational actors and HRM.

Kisii Teaching and Referral Hospital (KTRH) being upgraded to a teaching and referral hospital is now attracting more funding ultimately improving health care service provision. Currently, the the facility receives Kshs.417 per year million as a conditional share from the County Government. This has resulted in the County Government recruiting and deploying health workers among them specialists, medical officers, nurses, radiologists, and pharmaceutical technicians, medical lab technologists among others.

Various global and local studies have been done on implementation of human resource management practices. A study by Nehles et al., (2006) on implementing HRM practices by first line managers established that lack of capacity, competencies, support and policy and procedures hindered successful implementation of the practices. Kehoe & Wright (2010) study on the impact of high-performance human resource practices on employees' attitudes and behaviors in a large multi - unit food service organization in USA found out that employees' perceptions of the use of high-performance HRM practices at the job group level positively influenced their attitudes and behaviors. Tan & Nasurdin (2011) study on the influence of human resource management practices and organizational innovation in Malaysian manufacturing firms established those training and performance appraisals were positively related organizational innovation.

A study by Mugira (2014) on the influence of human resource practices on project implementation in Meru County, Kenya established that, recruitment and selection, performance appraisal and teamwork significantly influenced project performance. Wairimu (2012) study on

the challenges of implementing human resource strategies in the civil service in Kenya established organizational culture hindered effective implementation of HR strategies especially performance-based systems.

A review of the literature has revealed a number of conceptual and contextual gaps. Most studies have focused on challenges of implementing HRM practices in private organizations (Nehles et al., 2006; Mugira 2014). Other studies have focused on the influence of HRM practices on performance or how the practices are perceived by employees (Kehoe & Wright 2010; Sagwa et al., 2015). This study will however focus on the HRM practices implementation and challenges faced in a publicly funded hospital in Kenya. Thus is a bid to address these gaps, this study sought to answer: How has KTRH implemented its HRM practices and the attendant challenges?

Study Objectives

- i) *Identify the human resource management practices that have been implemented at Kisii Teaching and Referral Hospital (KTRH).*
- ii) *Establish the challenges KTRH has faced in implementing the HRM practices*
- iii) *Determine measures that have been put in place to mitigate the challenges at Kisii Teaching and Referral Hospital*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Implementation of Human Resource Management Practices

The organizations human resource strategies depend mainly on the overall business strategy and the culture of the organization, which contributes to shape and determination of the need for human resources, both in terms of quantity and quality and also helps to identify the requisite skill levels. On the other hand, the competitive business environment, particularly the economic scenario and position of the organization determines the extent to which financial resources could be budgeted for the development of human resource strategies in the organization (Mutsuddi, 2012). The most tangible aspect of strategic human resource management is a set of human resource policies and processes in existence in an organization and these would normally address the various aspects of people management such as recruitment, diversity management, development, and reward and employee relations. In other words, rather than being able to identify the human resource strategy of an organization, one will encounter the organizations recruitment strategy, reward strategy, either explicitly addressed as a strategy or reflected in the organizations policies and processes.

For many organizations, the main focus of their human resource strategies is to acquire, develop and maintain a high-performance workforce. Since there are many important aspects of people management strategy, it becomes essential that these various strategies are coherent and supportive of each other, as well as being aligned with the overall business strategy. Other crucial aspects are effective communication and change management. In order to be motivated to achieve organizations goals, its people need to understand what is expected of them and how their efforts contribute to their organizations success, hence the need for excellent communication systems (Foot and Hook, 2010).

Challenges of Implementing Human Resource Management Practices

On global look out, a study carried out by Mattso (2007) in Russia on compensation as an added value on employee's performance, established that as employees become aware of the regional differences in the compensation structures, some campaigns for similar rewards hence unrest demanding for the same opportunities to add value in the productivity. Relatively, studies by Armstrong (2009) and Allan Price (2007) concur that, well managed Human Resource practices has a positive effect on human resource activities and business policies whose goal is performance improvement.

According to a survey of more than three hundred human resource professionals that was carried out in A study done in Australia on the challenges faced by human resource professional found out that managing change, employee engagement & retention, demonstrating value as a business partner, building internal credibility and influence and employee development were the major challenges (Asia – Pacific HR Report, 2016) to investigate the major challenge facing human resource management functions, found that money and productivity were more valued than employees' needs and welfare hence great employee turn out and that due to lack or limited employee refreshment of their past knowledge, they lack development of new ideas hence value decrease in productivity. However, my opinion is that money is one of the least employee rewards in motivating workers.

In other previous studies where researchers like Elaine Wanjiku Ngugi,(2011) studied the extent of involvement of Line managers in human resource management practices in Thika water and sewage company limited and concluded that most of the line managers were involved in human resource planning to a moderate extent, however , not fully involved in development of policies for recruitment, motivation and reward. These managers were moderately involved in employee relations, communication of strategy and measurement of performance / appraisals, however, not full involved in negotiations of employment solving issues arising from employment and employment relations. However, Elaine did not study on the involvement of line managers in defining the holiday time of employees, employee exit analysis and taking part in industrial relations.

According to Rust et. al. (1996) organizations with satisfied employees have satisfied customers. Organization with strategies of high-quality customer service also has programs aimed at nurturing a loyal workforce in order to achieve quality customer service. Baraza (2008) states that the reason for this is simply a function of the fact that the employee's intimate knowledge of organization routines grow with their length of service. Ultimately a customer's contact with a company is through employees. Overtime contact between employees and repeat customers build bonds of trust and expectations. When these employees leave a vacancy chain is set in motion, often involving the transfer of many other employees. This again disrupts the smooth working of the organization and quality defects emerge at the end of the chain with external customer effect. Managing costs is a major challenge in many organizations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the implementation of human resource management practices at Kisii teaching and referral hospital. This technique was carefully selected by the researcher because it is economical hence convenient for a data collection process. Further, through this design the study established the link between study variables and study problem. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was obtained through an interview guide. Respondents were human resources officer from the human resources department, two heads of departments in the clinical areas, and one head nursing officer they were responsible for monitoring the progress HR management implementation.

Results

Human Resource Management Practices at Kisii Teaching and Referral Hospital

Kisii Teaching and referral Hospital has an established human resources department that is headed by the manager human resources. The mandate of the department is stated in the vision and mission statements. To be the provider of innovative human resource

Services for specialized quality healthcare. The mission of the department is to attract and retain competent human resource, facilitate need-driven training and development programmes, institute performance management systems and reward employees competitively. The department is charged with the management and administration of the hospital's current operational staff that constitutes 58% technical staff who include doctors, dentists, pharmacists, paramedics, nurses, and auxiliary staff. Administrative staff makes up the remaining 42%. The study established that Kisii teaching and referral hospital endeavors to be to an equal opportunity employer and seeks to recruit the most qualified person for the job.

Affirmative action is applied in regard to gender equity, participation of physically challenged persons and persons from marginal regions without adversely compromising the principles of meritocracy. The study established that the authority to recruit staff at all levels rests with the hospital's board of management. The board of management delegates authority to the chief executive officer and to specific committees. All vacant positions in the hospital are filled competitively. When vacancies occur for managers and policy makers who give leadership and direction to the operations in the hospital, the chief executive officer informs the board. The management recruitment committee works under delegated authority of the board and recruits professional staff. The management recruitment committee is chaired by the chief executive officer.

Challenges Facing Human Resource Management practices at Kisii Teaching and Referral Hospital

Challenge is campaigning for positions by influential people both within the hospital and from outside. Campaigning for positions by influential people places the heads of departments and the human resource managers in awkward and compromising situations. Position lobbying leads to poor and premature employment leads to admitting candidates who might not be the best

qualified leaving out better qualified candidates. This situation is aggravated by the high rate of unemployment in the country. The high rate of unemployment has resulted in a flooded job market with many applicants seeking employment which results in huge number of applications. The study established that the management encounters several obstacles during recruitment emanating from the increased demand for specialized healthcare due to limited budget to satisfy needs. The inadequate resources result in measures to cut costs and hence understaffing in both technical and auxiliary areas is experienced. Understaffing is exacerbated when workers affairs, food and nutritional services. Moreover, training is expensive, and this therefore leads to underestimating the training needs and training requirements of the employees in an effort to contain cost which is a challenge. The institution managers' experiences challenges in their efforts to evaluate training programs to send employees, carrying out training needs assessment and cost benefit analysis also poses a great challenge.

The study established that managing diversity in the hospital is a challenge especially due to the large number of employees from different backgrounds, ethnicities and diverse social and economic situations of employees. There are also powerful subcultures in the hospital based on occupation and specialization for example, physicians, nurses and pharmacists. These groups have their own definition of errors, quality and efficiency in healthcare. The interests of the physicians, nurses and pharmacists and their functional and occupational orientations do not facilitate an efficient approach to the promotion of safety and performance improvements, thus managing these differences and orientations is a challenge to the human resource managers.

One of the biggest challenges for the hospital today is the availability of a strong, capable, and motivated workforce. The hospital is people driven and the primary expenses are labour costs. The study established that 50% percent of the total working cost of the hospital is in employee wage and assistances. This means a huge budget for the payroll to meet all employee salaries. Meeting this huge budget with restricted financial allocations from the government is a challenge to HR managers. The most important asset to the hospital besides physical capital and consumables is their health human resources, without which they cannot properly function. The challenge for the human resource managers is to provide competitive pay packages for the employees. It is paramount to provide competitive pay in order to retain qualified employees. In order to manage costs associated with employee remuneration, the human resource managers have to also manage the number of employees, skill mix, and wages. This situation is exacerbated by insufficient government funding to the hospital which hinders the financing activities such as replacement of staff, equipment and purchase of supplies. Yet the staff is persistently engaging in industrial action and strikes demanding for increased pay and better working conditions.

Measures that have been put in place to mitigate the challenges at Kisii Teaching and Referral Hospital

The effective process of any enterprise or system requires that the individuals involved learn to perform the functions of their current jobs at a satisfactory level of expertise. An operational organization however, requires that it has within itself a pool of individuals who are qualified to accept increasing responsibilities to move into other higher-level jobs with reasonable facility

(Sing et al., 1992). Development of human resource provides a framework for self-development, training programmes and career development to meet an organization's future skill requirements (Price, 2007). Reward management is concerned with the formulation and implementation of strategies and policies in order to reward people fairly, equitably and consistently in accordance with their value to the organization. It deals with the development reward strategies and design, implementation and maintenance of reward systems which aim to meet the needs of both the organization and its stakeholders. Reward can be regarded as the fundamental expression of the employment relationships (Armstrong, 2009). Pay is an important feature of human resource management; it is the main reason why people work. It is a sensitive and controversial area that has been extensively debated at both practical and theoretical levels.

CONCLUSION

Kisii Teaching and referral Hospital being an important Referral and teaching hospital requires an efficient human resource management practice to support the role of the hospital in healthcare services delivery to the nation. Sound human resources management practices are essential for retaining effective professionals in the hospital. The central focus of the human resource department should be geared towards the success of the hospital. Having an efficient human resource management function system to provide accurate and timely information for human source planning is crucial. The human resource managers face enormous challenges, given the complexity of the services the hospital provides. The role of the human resource managers and those who combine the role of human resource management with other responsibilities should not be underestimated. The management of the hospital should provide managerial support to the managers with human resource management responsibilities as an effective mechanism to improve employee motivation, job satisfaction and retention.

Areas for Further Research and recommendations

To enable the hospital deliver good quality, safe healthcare, improving human resources management is critical. Human resource management is a discipline which requires a distinct knowledge base and training and there is therefore a need to expand human resource professional knowledge and competencies to perform well especially among departmental heads that play a vital role in human resource management and provide supervisory support. The management should prove further education or training to the clinicians who assume human resource management responsibilities. This is necessary to increase their competencies for the effective management of human resources.

The researcher suggested that more survey should be done on the challenges facing the human resources, the individual employees themselves working at Kisii Teaching and Referral Hospital in their provision of healthcare services. Further research can also be undertaken to establish if the institution has adopted any strategic human resource management practices at the hospital in order to efficiently manage its human resources. The researcher recommended a longitudinal type of approach for further study in the same institution, to determine whether there is a link between one factor and another.

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