

EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN DEVOLVED GOVERNMENTS: THE CASE OF EMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed at examining factors affecting employee productivity in devolved governments in Kenya in terms of three thematic areas namely motivation, employee capacity and infrastructure in Embu County government. Adopting descriptive research design, the study targeted employees in the county, from whom a sample of three hundred and forty-five respondents was selected using stratified sampling technique. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire that contained both open and closed ended. Data collected was analyzed to obtain both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that the government has initiated several motivating strategies including merit promotion, an inclusive leadership and training opportunities. Merit recruitment, good leadership and employees' level of training positively influenced employee productivity. Though the county government has provided necessary working infrastructure, this was considered inadequate thereby impacting negatively on employee productivity. In light of the findings, the study recommends that the county government should provide adequate infrastructure including utilities and transport facilities, develop systems that maintain employees good work stations and provide adequate annual budgetary allocations for efficient service delivery. Additionally, the county government need to reconsider re-evaluating its training and motivation systems as well as improve on the employee working environment.

Key Words: Employee Productivity, Devolution, Motivation, Infrastructure, Employee Capacity

I. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, organizations including governments continue to operate in a dynamic and volatile environment characterized by uncertainty, complexity and ambiguous business context (Charles & Gareth, 2010). Thus, for the organizations to thrive, Charles and Gareth (2010), note that they have had to reinvent in terms of efficiency, innovation and to generally stay ahead of competitors aimed at improving employee productivity. This is premised on the fact that employees are key resources in the optimization of production process (Kaplan, 2001; Collis & Hussy, 2014). Employee productivity refers employee's capacity to generate product or services needed to achieve organizational goals which translates to improved organization performance (Prakash, Jha, Prasad, & Singh, 2017; de Been, Van der Voordt & Haynes, 2017). This is determined by assessing the relationship between output (goods and services produced) and inputs.

Drunker (1999) considered employee productivity as the sum total of employee's efforts measured on the performance of an organization which is however, affected by various factors. This is affected positively or negatively by factors considered to either emerging from outside the organization or from within the employees (Stringer, 2002) categorized in terms of organizational management systems and plans, working conditions, reinforcements and remunerations, and external environment (Rojas & Aramvareekel (2003). For example, employees who are better paid, trained and constantly motivated hold positive perceptions towards their jobs which in turn influences their levels of productivity (Stringer, 2002). On the contrary, however, poorly paid employees are unhappy, hold low perception towards the employer and the job itself which in the process affect their productivity levels. Historically, there was a tendency by governments' world over to centralize power, however, in the recent past, there has been changes in governance through devolution (Crowford, 2009; Rondinelli & Nellis 2010). In the 1990s, the United Kingdom (UK) government enacted a law allowing devolution, in which a highly asymmetrical form was adopted with different territories granted different powers and institutional arrangements (Crowford, 2009). The experience of UK, made other world nations to embrace devolution aimed at assuring an inclusive development. This was partly attributed to its ability to ensure that decisions are made by locals directly through the elected leaders at the local level (Harris, 2003). Devolution also provides greater freedoms and flexibilities at a local level, wherein meaning councils can work more effectively in improving public services for their area (Harris, 2003; Crowford, 2009). In Africa, devolution is viewed as panacea of hope, aimed at bringing to an end the historical injustices meted against its citizens including ethnicity/tribal discrimination, unequal distribution of resources and marginalization, poverty, corruption, tribal politics, insecurity and conflicts, poor governance and rule of law (Gurr, 1994; Crook, 2003).

In Kenya, the promulgation of the Constitution in 2010 and subsequent adoption of the Devolution Act of 2012, marked an important milestone in the history of the country (GoK, 2010). The constitution provides for a two-tier system of governance namely County and National government. Currently, county governments play a vital role in driving the country's national economic growth and development, particularly through supporting businesses, delivering services, creating jobs and generally rising the standards of living of the local populations (GoK, 2017). Following the implementation of Devolution in 2013, National Government has committed financial, physical and human resources towards county government which partly impacts on employee productivity. Some of these relate to enhancing of employee skills through capacity development including reviving government training facilities, support for further education, retraining of the staff, among others. Other strategies include reward systems as embedded in the performance contracting schemes, provision of necessary supporting infrastructure and equipment as envisioned in the medium terms expenditure frameworks (GoK, 2018). Embu County is one of the forty-seven units of devolved governance created by an act of parliament as per the Constitution of Kenya 2010. The County has enacted several laws aimed at providing legal framework to enable implementation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010.

One of this, is the establishment of County Public Service Board (CPSB) whose mandate is human resource management which includes employee productivity. Consequently, ten departments were established with guidance of Transitional Authority (TA) with the aim of providing necessary staff mandated to provide efficient and effective services to the populace. As envisioned in the County Integrated Development Plan, the County is committed towards improving service delivery to the populace. To realize this, investing in human resources, in skills development as well as motivating them and providing necessary infrastructure for effective service delivery is core (CIDP, 2020).

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Devolution has been received with a lot of hope in most countries including Kenya partly due to its ability to enhance service delivery to the populace. The implementation has however, been fraught with a host of challenges. One of the major challenges according to Mugambi (2016), is the lack of institutional culture that promotes good governance and the interests of the people as a whole. Mugambi opines that people entrusted to lead these institutions are incompetent and self-centered. Kasomi and Kariuki (2011) on the other hand opine that the big challenge affecting devolution and its success is duplication of offices and roles at county level. In the process, large amounts of resources are spent on recurrent expenditure including paying salaries to workers who might not add value to the county or may not be present at work stations.

Like any other public governance entity, majority of Embu County employees are on permanent and pensionable terms and few work on casual terms with only the executive staff working on contract terms. While studies have been conducted to interrogate the challenges affecting the success of devolution from the grassroots levels (Kasomi & Kariuki, 2011; Mugambi, 2016), little information exists on issues relating to labor productivity within the devolved units. Similarly, in the various county office documents, the government of Embu County has continued to invest resources aimed at enhanced services delivery by employees. Scientific investigation seems to be missing to inform policy debate and dialogue. Similarly, there is a missing link in terms of employee productivity and employee capacity, motivation, business infrastructure/resources and productivity in relation to service delivery. This partly account for literature gaps on the factors affecting employee productivity at county levels. To fill this literature gap, this study sought to examine factors affecting employee productivity in the county by specifically focusing on a vector of constructs relating to employee capacity, motivation, business infrastructure/resources and productivity.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive research design, while the target population comprised of employees of Embu County Government from the ten departments who were categorized in terms of senior management, middle level management staff and junior staff which was obtained from the County Service Board. Given the nature of the study, stratified sampling method was used and Yamane formula at confidence level of 95% applied to identify the sample of three hundred and forty-five which was apportioned proportionately in each group. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the target population and sample size.

Table 3.1 Target Population and Sample Size

Category	Population	Sample Size
County Executive Members	10	2
Chief Officers	17	3
Directors	27	4
Other staff	2446	336
Total	2500	345

In the study, primary data was collected using structured questionnaire that contained both closed ended questions. Pretesting was done on select respondents within the county who were omitted from the final sample of the respondents that responded to the research tools. This was aimed at validating the research instruments. Thereafter, the tools were administered to the identified respondents. The filled questionnaires were then collected and checked for completeness to ensure there was no missing data or anomalies before coding and data entry followed by analysis. Data analysis was done using SPSS version 23 at 95 % confidence level. Data was analysed in terms of both descriptive and inferential statistics in terms of charts, frequency tables, means and standard deviation, correlation, ANOVA and regression analyses.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Employee Motivation and Productivity

Results in terms of effect of motivation on productivity show that style of leadership adopted by the county leadership contribute positively towards employee productivity. This enable County Government perform well and that employee promotion is by merit. Being that human beings are purposefully driven by goals; the county departmental leadership had established goals that are to be achieved by the employees. Majority of the respondents were indifferent on whether it was possible to acquire commendation letters upon good performance and whether they participate in decision making. Employee participation in decision making improves the relations between managers and employees since it allows for free transfer of knowledge, opinions and teamwork development. The respondents were, however, neutral on whether county governments give timely promotion. Regression results show that employee motivation and productivity. The findings R^2 was .672 hence 67.2% of the variations in Employee Productivity was explained by the variations in employee motivation.

Table 3.1: Regression Analysis on Employee Motivation and Productivity

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change
1	.820 ^a	.672	.663	1.81230	.672	73.015	8	285	.000

An analysis of variance was conducted at 95% level of confidence between employee motivation and productivity. From table 4.3, the F statistic of the ANOVA was 73.015 with a P value of .000 implying significance.

Table 3.2: ANOVA results on employee motivation and productivity

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1918.496	8	239.812	73.015	.000 ^b
	Residual	936.062	285	3.284		
	Total	2854.558	293			

a. Dependent Variable: Productivity

Regarding employee capacity and productivity, results reveal that the county government possess robust human resource department and that the county government has highly trained staff.

Respondents agreed that the county government provides training and orientation program to its new employees. This implies that the county government recognizes that training improves employee performance through skill enhancement. The results also reveal that the county government possess clear training and development program. Respondents were however indifferent on whether the county government provides training to enhance skill development and whether on job training is provided to its staff. Respondents also had a neutral view on whether the county government reviews its processes from time to time and whether the county has a robust research and development department. The county employees were also indifferent on whether the county ICT works effectively, has robust ICT tools and systems and whether the county ICT support has decreased the county’s coordination costs and enhanced its performance. Regression analysis show that 60.4% of the variations of employee productivity was explained by employee capacity holding other factors constant.

Table 3.3: Regression Analysis on Employee Capacity and Productivity

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change
1	.777 ^a	.604	.593	2.25459	.604	52.730	8	276	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), B312, B35, B39, B38, B37, B310, B36, B311

Table 4.6 provides the analysis of variance on employee performance and productivity conducted at 95% level of confidence. Results depict F statistic of 52.730 and a p value of 0.000 implying significance of variance of variables.

Table 3.4: ANOVA Results on Employee Performance and Productivity

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2144.273	8	268.034	52.730	.000 ^b
	Residual	1402.955	276	5.083		
	Total	3547.228	284			

a. Dependent Variable: Productivity

In terms of provision of infrastructure, respondents indicated that county government provided adequate working space and that the working space is safe for them. Results also show that there are inadequate utilities in the workspace and lack of good systems that maintain work stations. As shown in Table 3.5 business infrastructure accounted for 56% of the variations in employee productivity was explained by the variations in business infrastructure holding other factors constant.

Table 3.5: Regression Analysis of Business Infrastructure on Employee Productivity

Model	R	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			df1	df2	Sig. Change	F
				R Square Change	F Change					
1	.749 ^a	.560	.552	2.42167	.560	68.849	5	270	.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), C48, C43, C45, C46, C47

An analysis of variance shown in table 3.6 outlines the F statistic of 68.849 with a P value of 0.000. The Anova was conducted at 95% confidence level hence implying significance as the model p value is less than 0.005.

Table 3.6: ANOVA Results of the relationship Business Infrastructure and Employee Productivity

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2018.834	5	403.767	68.849	.000 ^b
	Residual	1583.413	270	5.864		
	Total	3602.246	275			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee productivity

V. CONCLUSION

The results show that motivation is vital in human resource management in promoting employee productivity in the County. To enhance this, the county government has initiated and implemented various strategies aimed at motivating staff. These include but not limited to merit promotion and leadership style aimed at improving employee productivity. For instance, the county leadership has fostered employee performance which depicts the importance of leadership in employee motivation as enshrined in performance contracting. Similarly, capacity building at the county has continued to be implemented thereby contributing towards skilled development within the work force which in the process has positively and significantly enhanced productivity. Finally, there was positive and significant relationship between business infrastructure and productivity implying that good work infrastructure and tools, workers are expected to be productive and able to perform their job. In the process, this has gone a long way in maximizing productivity in the county through proper service delivery.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The county government of Embu has attempted to address the issue of employee productivity though the government still needs to work on several important issues. The county leadership need for instance, to inspire and improve on motivation of its employees for purposes of effective and efficiency in service delivery to the populaces. County government leadership need to involve their employees in decision making to ensure better productivity as enshrined in performance contracting policies. A clear formal process of identifying training needs however, should be put in place to ensure that the trainings are aligned to what is required for a specific task by the employees. It is also important to note that continuous improvement of the level of education for the employees should be systematically set and budgetary allocations set every year. As much as employees felt that the environment was conducive for them to work in, there is need to increase utilities in the workspace together with transportation facilities to get them to the areas of work and county offices. There is also need for the county government to develop proper systems that maintain employee's workstation as well as allocate and efficiently utilize the available limited resources.

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