

Human Resource Practices and Performance of Tanzania Local Governments

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Abstract: *Human resources practices are essential in influencing organisation performance. The primary goal of the study is to assess the practices which are commenced by employees as practitioners in the performance of local government authorities in Tanzania based on competence, commitment and performance culture. The study was guided by three specific objectives which seek to identify the human resources practices in LGAs; how human resources practices influence performance; and human resources practices LGAs use in influencing performance. It was performed using exploratory design with facts generated from interviews and focus group discussions. Findings revealed that, human resources practices influences performance in LGAs through several ways including competence, commitment and working culture. LGAs obtain these HR practices through recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, performance management and work environment. Finally, it is recommended that human resources practices and performance in LGAs is a two way traffic that the government must make sure that it commits and assures that employees are supplied with all the expectations from the government to conform to the good practices influencing performance.*

Keywords: Human resources practices, Local governments, Performance, Competence, Commitment and Performance Culture

1. Introduction

Human resource management is becoming a major concern in many organisations in recent years. Human resources are ever asked to provide a sustainable competitive advantage for organisations to ensure individual, team and organisational performance (Blackbank, 2016). This is essentially based on human resource capital theory (Schultz, 1961), resourced based theory (Barney, 2001) and expectancy theory (Vroom, 2015). Human resources have become a significant factor for the organisations to gain a competitive advantage especially to survive in this era of globalization (Hssan & Mahmood, 2016). Iftikhar, *et al.*, (2015) argued that in order to succeed in this highly competitive world, organisations must ensure employee performance is improved as it has a significant relationship with organisational competitiveness. Moreover, Phanwattan and U-On (2017) argued that Human Resources outcomes are found to be the mechanism which mediates the human resource management and organisational performance linkage.

Local Government Authorities in Tanzania were established since colonial period through Native Authorities (Illiffe, 1979). The following years of independence Tanzania adopted several policies of LGAs. In the first decade of independence (1961 – 1972) the central government consolidated all authorities over the local authorities. This was done for the purpose of building and consolidating national unity (Illiffe, 1979). However, the most dramatic change occurred during the period 1972-1984 when the government abolished local authorities. The deconcentration exercise of the 1970s and early 1980s could not bring about the desired results (REPOA, 2008)

Local Government Authorities were re-established in mainland Tanzania in 1982. Four important legislations were passed in 1982 namely Local Government (District Authorities) Act No. 7 and Local Government (Urban Authorities) Act No. 8, Local Government Finance Act No.9

and Local Government Service Act No.10 (URT, 1982). The councils were empowered to pass by-laws, collect revenues, and determine local budgets and plans, among other functions. The councils were also given direct responsibility for service delivery in the areas of primary and secondary education, health, local water supply, local roads, and agriculture extension. In 1999 the Local Government Acts were amended to enable the implementation of the Government's policy of decentralization by devolution.

The amendments of Sections 17 and 52 of the Local Government Laws Miscellaneous Amendments No. 6 of 1999 introduced objectives for all local authorities in performing their basic functions, such as: to give effect to meaningful decentralization in political, financial and administrative matters relating to the functions, powers, responsibilities and services at all levels of local government authorities (URT, 1982). In order to give more meaning to LGAs, amendments of Sections 10 and 20 of the Local Government Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) No. 13 of 2006 were made to give more powers to the people to competently participate in the planning and implementation of development programs within their respective areas, by making LGAs more effective and efficient in executing their statutory duties. Despite all these reforms, studies show that LGAs in Tanzania are not performing well (REPOA, 2008). The LGAs underperforming has a multi – faceted and integrated challenges which comprise policy induced skills, task, and performance motivation to Human Resources (Lufunyo, 2015). It has been noted that, a big issue at LGAs level is the staffing problem. It is a problem in terms of numbers and skills as well as experience. The implications arising from this staffing situation are that LGAs capacity to deliver services and economic development is reduced (Liviga, 2012).

2. Theoretical and Literature Review

The study is being guided by ability, motivation and opportunity (AMO) theory which provides that the formula; Performance = Ability + Motivation + Opportunity to participate provides the basis for developing HR system that attend the employees' interest, namely their skills requirements, motivation and the quality of their job (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, & Kalleberg, 2000). HR practices therefore impact on organisational performance if they encourage discretionary efforts, commitment, competencies, develop skills and possess organisational culture. The theory guides the study due to its popularity in postulating the influence of HR practices to organisational performance (Rajian, Mussa, & Hardjono, 2016) The approach to people management taken by managers and a positive organisation culture supported by strong, value-based leadership from management may impact into effective organisational performance (O'riordan, 2017). However, achieving the right balance is dependent on HR investing in its own capacity and actively listening to the needs and concerns of managers and staff. The function within each LGAs needs to build its approach based on a deep and evidence based understanding of the mission and culture of Tanzania LGAs.

With that, it has been revealed from the theories that a number of HR theories have been used to explain employee commitment and organisational performance (Byremo, 2015). The theories resulted in five constructs (variables) which are important in examining and understanding HR practices for effective organisational performance namely recruitment, selection, training, development, compensation, performance management, and work environment.

2.1 Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment is the process of searching for prospective employees and stimulating them to apply for jobs in the organisation. Selection may be defined as the process by which the organisation chooses from among the applicants, those people whom they feel would best meet the job requirement, considering current environmental condition (Karthiga, Karth, & Balaishwaya, 2015). Karthiga, *et al.*, (2015) recommended that, the process of recruitment and selection should also be modified according to the requirements so as to achieve organisational performance. While recruiting the employees, organisations have to devise a strategy to carefully recruit the most suitable employees because they create the competitive advantage for the organisations. (Tizhe-Oaya, Ogbu, & Remilekun, 2017)

2.2 Training and Development

A formal definition of training and development is any attempt to improve current or future employee by increasing an employee's ability to perform through learning, usually by changing the employee's attitude or increasing his or her skills and knowledge (Imna & Hassan, 2015). The study recommended that in order to have high impact on organisational performance, training and development should be linked with career development. Training

enhances employee performance by positively influencing employee motivation level through employee recognition, alignment to organisational goals; positive leadership traits; and motivation for work performance. Training in specific skills related with corporate strategy contributes to the improvement of employee capability and firm performance by tightly the training programs with corporate strategic aims (Githinji, 2014)

2.3 Compensation

Compensation has positive impact on employee performance as it energizes employees and give a sense of organisational belonging. Hameed *et al.*, (2014) found that variables such as salary, rewards and indirect compensation should be given high priority because they play import role on employees' performance. Moreover, compensation structure is vital to enhancing organisational performance (Hewitt, 2009). Adopted pay strategy of basing compensation to knowledge has effective and ripple effects of motivating employees to further their studies which would in turn enhance employee performance (Njoroge & Kwasira, 2013)

2.4 Performance Management

Performance appraisal of employees is the systematic evaluation of employees' performance and potential for development during certain of time by supervisors or others who are familiar with their performance. Performance management is well defined as the process of planning performance, appraising performance, giving its feedback, and counseling an employee or teams to improve performance. (Prasad, 2007). Performance appraisal is an indispensable tool for an organisation because the information it provides is highly useful in decision making regarding issues such as promotion, rewards, transfer, discharge, training and development. If Performance Appraisal system is successfully used, employees would be able to know how well they are performing and what is expected to them in future in terms of their work performance and effort (Iqbal et al, 2013). Organisations to perform better, they have to design a well-defined performance management.

2.5 Work Environment

The work environment which encompasses several factors impacts on the way the employees perform their work. A comfortable and all inclusive workplace environment will boost the employees' performance hence boosting the organizational performance (Nanzushi, 2015). Office environment can be described in terms of physical and behavioral components. These components can further be divided in the form of different independent variables. An organization's physical environment and its design and layout can affect employee behaviour in the work place that workplace environment affects employee performance but behavioral workplace environment has greater effects on employees' performance (Leblebici, 2012).

Enu-Kwasi & Koomson, (2014) examined the determinants of employee retention in Ghana commercial bank in Kumasi. Using correlation analysis, the study found that

communication and justice and fairness contributed to employee retention but at a moderate rate. The study recommended that employees and branch managers should cooperate and review the existing policies that will influence communication and justice and fairness in order to improve retention. On the other hand, Kwenin (2013) studied a relationship between work environment, career development opportunities and employee retention in Vodafone Ghana limited. The study found that work environment has positive relationship with employee performance and retention. The study recommended that a friendly environment should be provided at the workplace to make employees more satisfied to remain in Vodafone Ghana (Kwenin, 2013). However, the study did not described in environment terms of physical and behavioral components. Furthermore, the study used Chi-square analysis, the method which may not be useful in studying large and heterogeneity population like LGAs in Tanzania.

3. Methodology

The study was conducted using exploratory study design since the study aimed to focus on how human resources practices influence performance in local government authorities (LGAs) in Tanzania. Information were gathered from the selected respondents from two councils of local government using the sample of 55 participants through interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Data collected were grouped qualitatively and analyzed using content analysis approach which were narratively presented with themes to support the results.

3.1 Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The study specifically intends to investigate the influence of human resources practices on performance of Local Governments in Tanzania. It was guided by three specific objectives whereas the findings are described in the manner which is as follows:

3.2 Human Resources Practices in LGAs

3.2.1 Recruitment and Selection

The findings indicate that, both Mbozi District Council and Kinondoni Municipal Council have no autonomy to recruit and select staff since the function is done by the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat. It was found that recruitment and selection is partially done in the LGAs by identifying vacancies and proposing the budget which has to be approved by the Ministry of Public Service and Ministry under which the staff category falls. This involvement of different ministries creates delays in decision making of HR matters.

It surfaced that some flexibility were in the offering to empower councils to recruit low cadre personnel from nearby areas to reduce costs of recruitment while the public service recruitment secretariat would continue processing recruitment personnel in the professional cadres. Similar findings were observed in Chamwino and Dodoma Municipal council by Stella, *et al.*, (2015). Such recruitment is done in generalist approach as opposed to recruitment on demands. Local Authorities are providers of services, but

they are also political institutions which have the capacity and authority to vary within limits the services they provide. The two aspects of the local authority are linked in the capacity for local choice. They choose what services suits the local community and how effectively the services will be rendered John Stewart (1983). Warioba (1999) states that, the aim of Human Resources management in LGAs in Tanzania is to ensure that the local authorities recruit the staff they need, properly trained and equipped to discharge its tasks. However, there appears to be a much more uniform internal organisation of human resources management activity within the districts authorities (Warioba, 1999)

HR managers who are the main players in the implementation of the recruitment and selection in LGAs councils testify the existence of skills, knowledge and competencies of Council employees. They relate that:

Guidelines are given on how to get the best employees in LGAs, there is a professional code of practice and they measure employees' commitments from their outputs. Employees are well equipped in terms of knowledge, but they go on improving them through induction training and in house training (HROR₁ and HROR₂)

This is evidenced by Council quality controller when he adds:

Council's employees are committed because in every six months they are measured against their objectives. And the objectives are coming from the Council's Strategic plan (CQC)

However, there is little innovation on the part of employees. The major factor that limits innovation is the limited resources. Both Managers and employees relate that:

Councils have limited resources like computers, vehicles and funds which reduce the capacity of employees to delivery services effectively and efficiently. With enough resources, Councils employees may immediately visit the community they serve for providing professional assistance on projects which are undertaken in community level. With soft technology like computers, and other resources such as desks and enough classrooms, teachers may provide good services in education sectors to all schools in villages (HROR₁ and TUR₁)

Implications we get from these statements are: First, not all employees in Councils are competent because of the method used to recruit them. Most of them are not recruited on variable demands but there is recruitment from generalist. Moreover, there are more head counts than head hunt system of recruitment. Secondly is incompetency among the employees because of the lack of necessary working resources.

3.2.2 Compensation

There are various models of total compensation within Tanzania LGAs. Among the commonest model is base pay with commission based on job post. The other model which comprises of management staff is knowledge and skill based

pay where individual employees are compensated according to how their skills and knowledge matches with the Job specification. Knowledge and skill based pay differs from merit pay in that it provides clear guidelines on what is being evaluated.

Councils have good motivation scheme and policy because they combine both motivators and Hygiene factors to rewards their employees. Council managers relate that:

There are different ways of recognizing employees who perform better than the rest. We have rewards for the best top three performers in every quarter of the year. For VEO and WEO each is rewarded Tshs 500,000/=. There are also letters of appreciations, certificate of recognition, and sometimes promotion (HROR₁, HROR₂, CQC and TUR₁).

Reward structures are fair and reward those that make the extra effort both internally in the institution as well as in their customer interactions. However, a leopard may not be able to change its spots. It may require a new CEO with a more open management style and commitment to high performance.

3.2.3 Performance Appraisal

The mainstream management studies view performance Appraisal as a causal mechanism that increase performance by facilitating the collection of information from and about employees for decision making; measuring employee behaviour and attitudes against standard of acceptable performance; increasing motivation, fostering productivity, improving communication, encouraging employee growth and development, helping to solve work related performance problems, and providing a basis for compensation, promotion, transfer and training and development.

However, there are many challenges with performance appraisal in Tanzania LGAs. The serious challenge is non-compliance in OPRAS to the general staff of the LGA, and appraisal procedures as it can be seen in employees' personal files. Equally; there is high non-compliance to supervisors on score agreements with their subordinates, consistent application of performance and evaluation standards. The OPRAS is not used and therefore is ineffective in fair reward distribution/ distributive justice/equity as performance management is concerned. A large number of public servants in local government authorities do not fill in the OPRAS forms. Equally, a large number of supervisors do not conduct mid- and annual reviews and agree on performance score with their subordinates. Similarly, trainings about OPRAS to a general staff of the LGA, new employees and even to weak performers as development measures after appraisal are not provided.

3.3 How Human Resources Practices Influence Performance in LGAs

The study found that Human Resources practices have four point areas of influence: On the point of stakeholders, HR practices influence the quality of services delivered to people. These services are seen in terms of social trends and

economic development. The second point is council effectiveness and efficiency in terms of financial results, strategic clarity, core competencies and organizational capability. The third point is on leadership. They influence on what kind of leadership brand and enhancing democracy in the council. These have to lead into the LGAs performance.

3.4 Human Resources Practices LGAs Use in Influencing Performance

The study further revealed several human resources practices used by local government entities in influencing performance for that matter in line with competence, commitment and performance culture respectively. Several findings have been revealed whereas with competence to start with practices in place in local government authorities (LGAs) are as follows;

3.4.1 Recruitment and Selection

This is the primary practice which is undertaken to assure competence whereas first the entities through the human resources departments and others identifies the gaps to be filled by employees as participants in different sections, segments and departments whereas they describe the gaps and set the requirements to be considered in acquiring the practitioners such as qualifications pertaining to the position, working experiences where necessary, required skills and other attributes relevant for the positions identified to be filled with the employees.

After that, they are taken all the way to the public service commission which deals with recruitment of the individuals from the general public for the purpose of getting best candidates to fill the positions available. This assures competence because the authorities describes the kind of employees they need and the attributes they should possess in terms of knowledge and skills; as well experiences where necessary for the purpose of commencing the duties in place diligently in a manner in line with competence. This is acknowledged by the human resources personnel in Kinondoni stating that;

“Local government authorities (LGAs) are keen in making sure that they get qualified and competence practitioners whereas first the gaps are identified by the departments concerned and taken to the human resources where verification is done by the personnel. Thereafter, criteria are set for each and every position that seeks to be filled and forwarded to the public service commission for recruitment and selection to take place and be supplied with competent candidate(s) to fill the position. With that, LGAs assures competence is achieved among the personnel through recruitment process to get qualified and skilled individuals”.

3.4.2 Organisation Familiarity

This is the practice which is used by the LGAs specifically by the employees already in service to enable the new recruits to be familiar with the organization since each and every organization and the environment it operates consist of unique features and attributes which needs to be familiar to each and every employee including the new recruits to

enable the total commencement of the activities. This is mostly done by fellow employees to the new recruits to make sure that they all comply with the needs and wants of the entities for competence purposes. In that case, the statement is well acknowledged by respondent H that;

“On new recruits the employees already in service usually takes initiatives to assist the new ones in exposing them to familiarity of the organization and the practices which needs to be undertaken in fostering the attainment of the organization goals and objectives for that matter. This is well embedded in most local government authorities (LGAs) for the purpose of assuring that even new recruits gets to be familiar with the organization for performance outcomes”.

3.4.3 Training among Employees

This is the practice which is employed in local government authorities (LGAs) especially in areas with several employees whereas training cannot accommodate them all whereas some are picked to be trained on behalf of others. This is mostly undertaken in teaching entities especially primary schools and others whereas few employees who have been undergoing certain trainings usually train others upon their return from training. On top of that, since employees in carrying out tasks have different skills and means to perform well and better, they learn from each other through certain skills transfer among themselves to foster competence in delivery of duties and responsibilities. This is well acknowledged by the respondent in Kinondoni that;

“Training among employees is the practice which is highly embedded among practitioners in LGAs because among teachers for instance they are many in schools such that they cannot all leave at once for training whenever they arise such that few usually go to represent others whereas they return from training they train their fellow employees to enhance their skills for competence. Despite that, sometimes among employees in the practices skills are different whereas some tend to possess extra ordinary skills whereas they learn and train among themselves to improve skills for competence purposes”.

3.4.4 Leadership Style

This is the practice in some entities and offices in LGAs that establishments with leadership style which is strict and eager to attain competence and performance automatically influences competence among employees in local government entities. This is mostly working in schools and several local government entities that leaders as head teachers, heads of sections and others once they are keen with performance they shape employees by force and requirements at work to adhere with competence and vice versa. This is well asserted by the respondent in Kinondoni that;

“The leadership pattern in the area of work is important in fostering competence since among primary school teachers; schools with head teachers who are strict and adhering to performance operate to make sure that teachers perform their duties on time, prepare the work plans and perform all required duties to carter for performance which automatic assures competence”.

This implies that competence in organizations is influenced by the nature of the employees and the practices followed afterwards. The view corresponds with Adenye (2015) stating that competence in the organisation among employees is mostly influenced by the nature of employees because the level of skills and knowledge they possess as practitioners is important rationale for recruitment and selection process to be undertaken to capture the best among all in the alternatives provided.

4 Conclusion

Human resources practices are highly essential in influencing performance of the organisations in the local government since it has been revealed the employees in most cases are competent and skilled with high level commitment and sufficient culture on performance embedded on them. Since that is the case, the negative outcomes pertaining to performance of the employees is influenced by other factors outside their realm caused by the government in most cases such as poor supplies on the equipment to perform tasks which has been demotivating employees and demoralize many local government staffs causing practices which affect performance. In addition to that, employees have been less motivated in some settings to the extent that it has made some to change and consider duties as routine exercises and not something which one needs to be undertaken based on commitment for performance results. In that case, the issues need to be addressed to assure changes and improvement in the practices.

5 Recommendations

Since the reality on the human resources practices in the performance of local government authorities (LGAs) is in that manner, the study recommends that first the government should play its part and role well in the assuring adequate deliveries of supplies on local government entities and settings to the employees as per the requirements to assure that the delivery pattern among employees is certain and adequate. This is important since availability of the supplies serve as the key motivation factors since skilled employees are always keen and enthusiastic to perform all they know and deliver diligently since it is something which guarantees individual satisfaction. The opposite practice absence of supplies and equipment for performing duties serve as demotivating factor to a great scale which may lead to the development and persistence of practices contrary to ethics and job requirements affecting performance for that matter.

Despite that, the study further recommends that employees on the other hand should be committed at any time since as practitioners they are also aware of the fact that the government is a large and complex entity with complex duties to fulfill whereas sometimes it is important to bear with the situation and foster creativity within the environments and conditions that may be available in a short period of time until the issues are well settled. This is important since it requires a sense of patriotism among employees as practitioners which is good to be imparted as well to the employees because sometimes supplies delays to

serve certain important ventures which need immediate response for that matter.

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