

Talent Management; Its role on competitiveness of public universities in Kenya

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Abstract: *It is generally accepted amongst management researchers that a sustainable competitive advantage comes from the internal qualities that are hard to imitate and Human capital is such a resource. The study sought to find out the role of talent management on competitiveness of public universities in Kenya. Stratified sampling was adopted to obtain a representative sample of the study which was made up of both the teaching and non teaching staff of the Public Universities in Kenya. A questionnaire that employed likert scale was used to collect data. Factor analysis revealed that all the 16 items used had a loading value above 0.4 as recommended hence they were all included in the analysis. The instrument was determined to be reliable since the data collected had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.942. Data analysis revealed a positive relationship $R = 0.498$ (p -value < 0.05) indicating a significant linear relationship between talent management and competitiveness.*

Keywords: *Competitiveness, Kenyan Public Universities, Talent Management*

I. Introduction

Talent management' in the institutions of higher learning seems to be the key theme driving strategic HRM throughout organizations. Organizations are becoming more and more aware of the fact that they are to suffer a significant knowledge loss due to retirements (Foster, 2005). Everyone in an organization should be able to change and to allow for entrepreneurship, innovation and growth (Nicholls-Nixon, 2005). This leads to more and more of firms' competitive advantage while relying on intangible assets such as knowledge (Lawler, 2005).

Berger points out that even after 70 years of human resource management growing in sophistication, no common approach, to meet the current and future needs, has been espoused for identifying, assessing and developing highly talented people (Berger, 2004). In the light of this, Talent Management has been conceived. Another problem with HR research is that different country specific laws and labor practices make, for example, American research hard to generalize to Europe. Regardless of the perspective taken, the fundamental question of what is and what is not considered to be talent needs to be addressed. (Tansley, Harris, Stewart, & Turner, 2006) claim that talent management requires HR professionals and their clients, to understand how they define talent, who they regard as 'the talented' and what their typical background might be. It also requires thinking about whether such recruits should be seen as particularly gifted.

It is generally accepted amongst management researchers that a sustainable competitive advantage comes from the internal qualities that are hard to imitate rather than, for example, the firms' product-market position. Human capital is such a resource. The resource and knowledge based views recognize the firms' knowledge resources as its tool for achieving a sustainable competitive advantage (Ordonez de Pablos, 2004). Heinen and O'Neill argue that Talent Management can be the best way to create a long-term sustainable competitive advantage. A sustainable competitive advantage stems from valuable, company-specific resources that cannot be imitated or substituted by competitors (Heinen & O'Neill 2004).

Organizations know that they must have the best talent in order to succeed in the hypercompetitive and increasingly complex global economy. Along with the understanding of the need to hire, develop, and retain talented people, organizations are aware that they must manage talent as a critical resource to achieve the best possible results. Talent management focuses broadly on developing high potential employees for future leadership positions across an organization. Furthermore, talent management occurs at multiple levels of the organization and does not limit its scope to senior management positions, a common misperception made by many. In short, talent management looks to establish continuous leadership development which can position an organization to attract highly qualified, external resources while retaining current personnel with significant potential (Christie, 2005). Gay and Sims (2006) defined talent management as —facilitating the development and career progress of highly talented and skilled individuals in the organization, using formalized procedures,

resources, policies, and processes. The talent management process focuses on developing employees and leaders for the future of the organization.

1.1 Talent Management Reliability analysis

Reliability is defined as “an assessment of the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable” (Hair et al. 2006). Cronbach Alpha has been the most common tool to measure reliability. However, other measures such as average variance extracted, composite reliability are becoming the other measures used from Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Nunnally and Berstein (1994) indicated that the measurement instrument is reliable if the Cronbach Alpha is or above 0.70. Sekaran (2000) confirmed that the Cronbach Alpha measure above 0.70 indicates that the measurement instrument has the internal consistency. The results show well above 0.7 implying that the instruments were sufficiently reliable for measurement.

Analysis Table 1.1 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.942	16

1.2 Factor analysis of Talent Management

Factor Analysis was conducted to ascertain the suitability of all variables. According to Beaumont (2012) a factor loading of 0.4 or above is acceptable. All the factors had a loading of more than 0.4. As such none was eliminated.

1.3 Descriptive statistics on Talent Management

Most respondents (51.1%) noted that the top management recognised that human resources are extremely important while (38.1%) disagreed. The findings are consistent with those of Riech (2010) who noted that human resources remain as the only national potential source of increased competitive advantage of any country. It is possible that without a well-designed HRD policy and a comprehensive labor market database, Kenyan universities may be unprepared to meet the challenges of a global economy and directly engage in addressing problems facing the society. The findings imply that employees receive good support from the universities.

On rewarding performance, (36.6%) of respondents noted that good performance is rewarded in the institutions while (37.6%) disagreed. A study by Riccio (2010) on the practice of Talent Management in private institutions of higher learning established that all levels of the institutions required continual development in order to be prepared for current and future challenges as well as maintain a high degree of motivation. (Wang, Tsui, Zhang and Ma, 2003) established that in order to contribute to organizational outcomes, organizations should reinforce the specific employee behaviors and qualities required by the organization. These findings are a pointer to the fact that the universities need to look for better ways of rewarding performance.

The study established that (36.5%) of the respondents agreed that senior officers/executives take active interest in their juniors and help them learn their job while (35.8%) indicated that they do not. A study by Robert and Jackson (2010) established that having supportive supervisors and managers who serve as mentors, can be a motivation source to employees. In a study by Cairns (2009), on the challenge of Talent Management revealed that most of the companies concern was continuity in executive leadership for future while neglecting other staff. In a study by Peters (2005), it was noted that talented people need to feel valued and that their contribution is making a difference. Affirmation is powerful; feeling appreciated, recognised and valued is motivational. Opportunities will help the talented person feel motivated and aligned to the organisation but future opportunities and roles will also need to be available at the right time. The findings of the study suggest that the universities leadership should take more interest in the subordinates.

On competence (37.2%) of the respondents disagreed that people lacking competence in doing their jobs are helped to acquire competence rather than being left unattended while (36.9%) agreed. According to Cappelli (2008) talent management includes a wide variety of functions, including recruiting, learning and training, compensation, employee performance management, and succession planning. Talent management is based on the idea that employees are an organization's most valuable asset. This is particularly relevant for universities – both public and private. Fey (2008) contends that the main challenge for involving employees – encouraging them to constantly look for more effective and efficient ways for the firm to operate and suggesting how to improve them, trying to contribute their best efforts to the company, thus becoming more empowered – is to combine strong organisational leadership with the leadership that encourages and rewards high employee involvement. The resulting empowerment will bring great returns to the organisation, when employees slowly begin to contribute ideas, work more independently, become more engaged, be proud of and loyal to their work. The findings point to the fact that more needs to be done in attending to the employees.

On organization climate (37.6%) of the respondents agreed that psychological climate is conducive to any employee interested in developing himself by acquiring new knowledge and skills while (32.3%) disagreed. The climate is the feel of the organisation, the individual and shared perceptions and attitudes of the organisation's members. Climate influences both individual and team motivation and satisfaction (Heinen & O'Neill, (2004). The findings of the study show that there need to have a climate that will enable the employees develop themselves better.

The study established that (40.4%) of the respondents disagreed that supervisors treat mistakes of employees with understanding and help them learn from such mistakes rather than punish or discourage them while (39.0%) agreed. The findings contrasts with those of Harteis (2008) on a study on how employees make mistakes in organizations, who established that a workplace culture of learning from mistakes stands to maximise them as effective learning experiences. These findings imply that better methods of treating employee mistakes should be adopted in the universities if talent would be developed.

On rewarding of employees (37.6%) of the respondents disagreed that there are mechanisms to reward any good work done or any contribution made by employees while (36.6%) indicated that they are there. According to Vaiman, (2010) job performance that is rewarded is likely to be repeated. When each employee more consistently satisfies customers, it helps to improve a company's competitive position. The findings implications are that the universities should create mechanisms that will enhance employee development.

On psychological climate (47.6%) suggested that it is conducive while (32.2%) disagreed. As organizational behavior researchers Pierce and Jussila (2011) noted, psychological ownership is the "glue that connects and bonds the individual to the work that they do and to the organization in which this work is performed". When this deep emotional connection is felt, employees tend to engage in positive behavior that is rewarding for both the organization and the employees. The findings imply that the universities have developed a good organization climate which should be enhanced.

On average it was established that there exists a fairly strong talent management systems as noted by (40.80%) of the respondents while 31.49% disagreed. Heinen and O'Neill (2004) argue that Talent Management can be the best way to create a long-term sustainable competitive advantage. A sustainable competitive advantage stems from valuable, company-specific resources that cannot be imitated or substituted by competitors. There is growing recognition that organisations need to manage talent on a global basis to remain competitive, reflecting the trend that competition between employers for talent has shifted from the country level to the regional and global levels, and that talent may be located in different parts of the global network. The universities need to address several issues related to talent management including; rewarding good performance, supporting employees as they learn through mistakes in their work, supporting talent development and emphasise on proper utilization of employee potential.

The information is summarised in table 1.0 below

Table 1.0 Talent Management

Key: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Total
1 The top management believes that human resources are an extremely important resource and that they have to be treated more humanly.	12.4	16.7	19.9	40.8	10.3	100
2 Talent development of the subordinates is seen as an important part of their job by the managers/officers here.	9.6	22.7	26.6	31.9	9.2	100
3 The personnel policies in this organization facilitate employee talent development	10.3	23.4	27.7	31.2	7.4	100
4 The top management is willing to invest a considerable part of their time and other resources to ensure the development of employees	11.3	25.5	26.6	30.5	6.0	100
5 Senior officers/executives in this organization take active interest in their juniors and help them learn their job.	9.6	26.2	27.7	29.4	7.1	100
6 People lacking competence in doing their jobs are helped to acquire competence rather than being left unattended.	13.1	24.1	25.9	29.1	7.8	100
7 Managers in this organization believe that employee behaviour can be changed and people can be developed at any stage of their life.	8.9	23.8	24.5	33.7	9.2	100
8 Psychological climate in this organization is very conducive to any employee interested in developing himself by acquiring new knowledge and skills.	10.3	22.0	20.2	34.8	12.8	100
9 The top management of this organization makes efforts to identify and utilize the potential of the employees	9.9	27.7	23.4	30.5	8.5	100
10 There are mechanisms in this organization to reward any good work done or any contribution made by employees.	14.2	23.4	25.9	27.7	8.9	100
11 Supervisors treat mistakes of employees with understanding and help them learn from such mistakes rather than punish or discourage them.	9.9	30.5	21.6	28.4	9.6	100

12	Weaknesses of employees are communicated to them in a non-threatening way	12.1	26.2	21.6	29.1	11.0	100
13	Employees returning from training programmes are given opportunities to try out what they have learnt.	9.6	20.2	23.4	31.2	15.6	100
14	Employees are sponsored for training programmes on the basis of genuine training needs.	11.0	16.7	22.7	34.4	15.2	100
15	When seniors delegate authority to juniors, the juniors use it as an opportunity for development.	5.3	12.8	24.8	42.9	14.2	100
16	Job-rotation in this organization facilitates employee development	11.0	22.0	20.9	31.6	14.5	100
	Average	9.97	21.52	22.73	30.66	10.14	100

1.4 Correlation analysis of Talent Management on Universities competitiveness

The objective of the study sought to determine whether Talent Management as HRM factor influenced the competitiveness of the Universities in Kenya. From fig.1.1 it is clear that there is a positive linear relationship between Talent Management and competitiveness of public Universities in Kenya

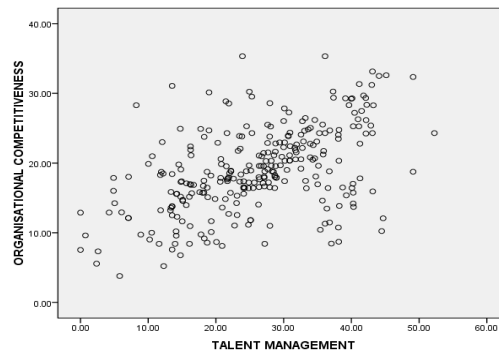


Figure 1.1 Scatter plot of the relationship between Talent Management and universities competitiveness. The finding in table 1.1 shows a positive correlation of 0.498 between Talent management and competitiveness. This implies that an increase in Talent Management effectiveness will lead to an increase in the Universities competitiveness

Table 1.1 Correlation between Talent Management and Competitiveness

	ORGANISATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS	TALENT MANAGEMENT
Pearson Correlation		1
Sig. (2-tailed)		.498**
N	282	282
Pearson Correlation	.498**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	282	282

**.

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

1.5 Regression analysis of Talent Management on Competitiveness

A graphical illustration of the relationship between Talent Management and competitiveness was presented in fig1.2 A positive correlation agrees with Cobb(2006) who asserted that for universities, talent management offers the opportunity to improve overall organizational execution, and drive a competitive advantage



Fig 1.2 Relationship between Talent Management and competitiveness

Table 1.2 provides the R and R² value. The R value is 0.498, which represents the simple correlation. It indicates a relatively low degree of correlation. The R² value indicates how much of the dependent variable, "Competitiveness", can be explained by the independent variable, "Talent Management". In this case, 24.8% can be explained, which is relatively low

Table 1.2 Model Summary of Talent Management

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.498 ^a	.248	.246	5.29433

Predictors: (Constant), TALENT MANAGEMENT

ANOVA results in Table 1.3 indicate that the regression model predicts the outcome variable significantly well. This indicates the statistical significance of the regression model that was applied. An F statistic of 92.480 indicated that the model was significant. This was supported by a probability value of 0.000. This is less than the conventional probability of 0.0005, which is less than 0.05, and indicates that; overall, the model applied can statistically significantly predict the outcome variable.

Table 1.3 ANOVA for Talent Management and Competitiveness

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2592.218	1	2592.218	92.480	.000
	Residual	7848.384	280	28.030		
	Total	10440.602	281			

Table 1.4 provides the information needed to predict competitiveness from Talent Management. Both the constant and Talent Management contribute significantly to the model. The regression equation is presented as follows; Competitiveness = 11.479 + 0.286(Talent Management)

Table 1.4 Coefficients determination of Talent Management and Competitiveness

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	11.479	.843		13.623	.000
	TALENT MANAGEMENT	.289	.030	.498	9.617	.000

The regression model $y = \alpha + \beta x + e$; shows α is the constant represented by 11.479, β is represented by 0.289, this value indicates the steepness of the regression line or how much the predicted value of the competitiveness increases when the value of talent management increases.

II. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study established that public universities in Kenya have adopted relatively good talent management practices. However there were areas where improvement is needed as per the findings of the study. They include; rewarding good performance, supporting employees as they learn through mistakes in their work, supporting talent development and emphasise on proper utilization of employee potential. The study therefore recommends that Public Universities in Kenya improve on talent management strategies since it's a major contributor to their competitiveness.

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