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¹ Kawai, M. K., ² Egessa, R., & ³ Tsuma, E.

¹ School of Business and Economics, Business Administration and Management Sciences, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology [MMUST], Kenya

² Doctor, Lecturer, School of Business and Economics, Business Administration and Management Sciences, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology [MMUST], Kenya

³ Doctor, Lecturer, School of Business and Economics, Business Administration and Management Sciences, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology [MMUST], Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Universities are adopting empowerment strategies to enhance academic staff competencies in spite of a myriad of challenges experienced. Academic staffs are regarded as the key resource of any institution of higher learning in the achievement of its goals. Despite the empowerment strategies adopted, concerns on quality education in universities has been in the public domain. These include: low output of quality research, teaching competency, unethical practices and few innovations impacting on quality of graduates and ranking of Kenyan universities globally. In view of the foregoing, this study investigated the effect of coaching on service delivery among the Academic Staff in Kenyan Public Universities. Transformational leadership theory was explored in guiding the development of theoretical and empirical review. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used in data collection. 358 respondents were sampled in accordance with Yamane's formula from the nine universities where >0.7 Cronbach value was accepted as reliability value. The study findings revealed that coaching had a significant influence on service delivery among the academic staff in the Kenyan public universities; coaching (t-statistic=13.055, p-value=0.002< 0.05. The study recommends that public universities should prioritize coaching in building a strong institutional culture where senior staff can provide professional development to junior academic staff through innovative teaching, writing and conducting quality research and inculcation of leadership qualities.

Key Terms: Employee Empowerment; Service Delivery; Coaching

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INTRODUCTION

Human resources are beneficial to an organization if maintained and utilized effectively. This has been made possible through reliable policies, loyalty reinforcement and provision of an enabling environment for employees to work flexibly in pursuit of organization's excellence (Armstrong, 2014). In an increasingly global competitive economy, the main ways by which organizations can influence their performance is by ensuring they operate effectively and efficiently (Honold, 2014). This has been achieved through having the right staff in place, in the right numbers and performing right jobs at a given time. Hence, human resources are a valuable internal asset in an organization system that ensures smooth operations and achievement of the desired results (Pfeffer, 2013; Vasishth, 2013; Voegtlin, Boehm, & Bruch, 2015).

Universities are crucial institutions in creating, sharing quality knowledge and skills for a country. Quality education has been cited to be a major driver of economy recovery, competitive advantage and social progress. (Vassiliou and McAleese 2012). However, the quality of education in universities has been dwindling day in day out (Odhiambo, 2011; Itegi, 2015). This has majorly been attributed to by government underfunding, weaknesses in financial management and skewed employment which is impacting on universities quality service delivery. Furthermore, emergence of unethical practices among the academic staff such as moonlighting in other institutions in spite of the heavy workloads allocated in their respective institutions is on the increase. This has resulted to reduced staff loyalty impacting on the quality service delivery hence making it impossible for universities to realize its objective. More so, some academic staff have been accused of demanding money or sexual favours in exchange for passing grades, falsification of results, false authorship and wrong appropriation of grant money (Odhiambo, 2011; Neema, 2016). These unethical practices are impacting on quality teaching, researching and generation of new knowledge by the academic staff

(Okongo, Onen & Okaka, 2019). Despite the challenges encountered all customers are in dire need of quality service. Universities need to strategize and meet the demands of the job markets (Sharma, 2012).

Coaching is a human resource development practice that is gaining popularity and acceptance as an effective strategy to develop university staff (Devine, Meyers& Houssemand, 2013). Coaching supports the development of professionals among peers yet with different experiences and skills. According to Alexander, Marysol, Emerson, & Guillermo, (2020) coaching equips employees with tools, knowledge and opportunities for development in order to become efficient and effective. It is the sharing of skills and information between knowledgeable employees with the less skilled employees. It is considered as a process of training that may result in confidence and efficacy (Berg & Karlse, 2011). Bozer & Jones, (2018) further define coaching as a communal relationship that exists between a coachee and coach with an aim of enhancing his/her personal and professional growth.

With the unprecedented increasing competition in higher education institutions, academic staff are under increased pressure not only to deliver quality teaching but also undertake collaborated research that attracts funding and publish in high impact refereed journals (Camel & Paul, 2015; Hakro& Mathew, 2020). Universities in the United Kingdom (UK) adopted coaching as a tool to address the significant changes experienced such as high students' enrolment, intensive development, progressive economisation and the computerisation process. More so, it has been embraced as a staff development programme to deal with stress among the academic staff in Europe and UK Universities (Devine, Meyers& Houssemand, 2013). It is a popular management development programme in the USA, Canada and Australia and peer coaching is too gaining popularity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Universities and organizations across the globe are embracing coaching to enhance work performance; as a tool for development; for training; for new insights; career progression; enhancing strong relationships resulting to synergy; improved goal setting and attainment, increased satisfaction, increased self-awareness; self-confidence; motivation and change (Theeboom, Beersma & Vianen, 2014; Gander et al, 2014; Koroleva, 2016; Sharma & Sengputa, 2017; Rekalde, Jon & Albizu, 2017).

Most universities choose senior faculty/school members basing on their accumulation of wealth of wisdom to orient and coach new members of staff. This has been achieved through faculty/school gatherings and staff meetings where members congregate, discuss, share thoughts and ideas related to career growth and development (Steinbacher-Reed & Powers, 2012). Senior Faculty/School members provide professional development on educational inquiry, writing of winning research grants, effective teaching strategies, inculcation of leadership qualities, development of courses/ programmes, encourage right behaviour/culture and innovative practices in teaching. This enhances both personal and professional development (Hakro& Mathew, 2020). Junior staff on the other hand introduces current methodologies in educational theory and practice. The senior staff also benefit from peer coaching programs. Coaching is a conversational and individually based style that aims at equipping staff with finding their own solutions (Bozer, Sarros & Santora, 2013). The coach encourages the coachee to discover for himself and assists in finding the correct answers and relevant strategies in achievement of the set goals. Thus, the coach does not offer solutions but counsels or advices the coachee's ideas by provoking relevant questions, uses active listening and ensures maintenance of their focus (Costa & Garmston, 2015; Stratford, 2015). By improving individual performance, organization performance is enhanced through

quality service, labour productivity and enhanced customer's satisfaction (Jarvis, 2014).

According to transformational leadership theory, leaders provide vision, encourages, inspires and motivates its followers to come up with ideas that will ensure the growth of an organization. It states that there are four characteristics of transformational leaders; intellectual stimulation, inspiration motivation, individualized consideration and idealized influence (McCleskey, 2014; Abasilim, 2014; Hoffiman, Grossman & Hinton, 2011). Transformational leadership greatly influence employee performance, trust and commitment in organizations (Datche, 2015; Rua and Araujo, 2015 and Ayacko, K'Aol, Linge, 2017). However, transformational leadership theory has been criticized that it has elements that are too broad (Northouse, 2013). It assumes that leadership has more of personality traits than cultured behaviour hence prone for power abuse. The leaders may at times use their power for achievement of their personal goals thus exploiting workers. Further, Yukl, (2011) asserts that the theory does not sufficiently identify the impact of context and situational variables on effectiveness of leadership. It assumes that people follow leaders who inspire them but a person having vision and passion can actually achieve great things without having a leader who inspires.

Coaching has been found to significantly influence employee performance. In a study conducted by Kelly, (2016) the study findings revealed that coaching improved the advisor / advisee relationships leading to a collaboration that was both successful and rewarding. This study was conducted in universities in Mid-Atlantic region. Pousa and Mathieu, (2014) did a study on coaching in two international fields, Latin America and Canada. The results revealed that coaching positively affected performance. The study was done on sales people and frontline employees in profitable international companies. Public universities in Kenya are non-profitable hence the

findings may not be applicable. Alexander *et. al.*, (2020) did a study on managerial coaching on organizational performance. The results revealed that companies that adopted managerial coaching processes significantly impacted on the internal processes. The study was restricted to 117 executives of profit and private medium-sized companies in Iberoamerican countries. Its findings cannot be generalized to public universities which are non-profit institutions.

In a study conducted by Geber, (2010) on coaching for accelerated research in higher education, the findings confirmed that coaching positively influenced the careers of academic beginners. The study was conducted in Witwatersrand university and only qualitative study was employed. Its results cannot be generalized to Kenyan public universities and a mixed study ought to be implored to maximize its strength. Mwangi, *et.al*, (2018) did a study on coaching and employee performance, the results showed that coaching impacted positively on employee performance. The study focused on human resource managers of 187 state corporations. A cross sectional survey design was used. The results cannot be generalizable to public universities as it focused on human resource managers who are the policy makers of any organization unlike the academic staff. Muriithi, (2016) and Bosibori, (2015) conducted research on the impact of coaching on employee performance at Standard Chartered Bank and Cooperative Bank respectively. They studied different constructs to determine the effects of coaching on employee

performance. The studies found out that coaching environment had a significant impact on employee's performance. The studies were carried out in the banking sector creating a contextual gap.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in the nine Kenyan public universities in the western region. A descriptive survey research design was employed. Target population for the academic staff was 2,311. 358 respondents were sampled in accordance with Yamane's formula while 27 key informants (9 Deans, 9 Registrars and 9 DVCs) were purposively selected. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used in data collection. A Cronbach value of 0.819 was acceptable value for the study reliability. Interview schedules were conducted to the top management of the university and analysed thematically. Data analysis of questionnaires was conducted descriptively by use of frequencies, mean, percentages and standard deviation. Inferential statistics of linear regression to find the cause and effect of coaching was employed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher sought to establish the effect of coaching on service delivery among the academic staff in the Kenyan public universities. A five (5) Likert Scale was used where one (1) implied the least and five (5) the highest positive response (thus, 1=Strongly Disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3=Undecided (U), 4=Agree (A), 5 =Strongly Agree (SA) was used in the analysis of data. The results of the Likert Scale were shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Likert Scale on Coaching

Description	N	SD (%)	D (%)	U (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Senior academic staff (Coach) offer guidance on teaching & research to junior faculty (coachee)	348	11 (3)	80 (23)	79 (22)	110 (32)	68 (20)
Senior Faculty/School members provide professional development i.e., innovative teaching strategies, writing of research winning grants, inculcation of leadership qualities (Coaching)	348	116 (33)	117 (34)	69 (20)	34 (10)	12 (3)
We hold school/faculty meetings where we discuss and exchange thoughts and ideas regarding professional growth and development	348	27 (8)	14 (4)	30 (7)	173 (50)	104 (30)
The coach provides a level of neutrality to seek multiple opinions and points	348	46 (13)	100 (30)	30 (7)	110 (32)	62 (18)
The coach inspire, creates learning opportunities and motivate in working towards the set goal	348	31 (9)	37 (11)	77 (22)	119 (34)	84 (24)
Coaching is done using different approaches	348	34 (10)	69 (20)	11 (4)	119 (34)	115 (33)
Coaching provides new insights impacting on my behaviour	348	13 (3)	80 (23)	79 (22)	110 (32)	68 (20)
There is increased academic activities as a result of coach-coachee relationship	348	36 (11)	48 (14)	71 (20)	144 (42)	49 (14)
Coaching culture has led to strong relationships in my university	348	15 (4)	45 (13)	79 (23)	163 (47)	46 (13)
Coaching has exposed me to more academic work and teaching materials	348	41 (12)	42 (12)	51 (14)	117 (34)	97 (28)
Coaching has improved my competencies providing advancement of opportunities	348	85 (25)	64 (18)	19 (6)	95 (27)	85 (24)
Coaching has enhanced my confidence levels	348	7 (2)	55 (16)	73 (21)	123 (35)	90 (26)
My university should consider enhancing coaching activities	348	79 (23)	63 (18)	8 (2)	123 (35)	74 (22)

Source: Researcher, (2022)

From Table 1, the results showed that 52% of the respondents agreed that senior academic staff offered guidance on teaching & research to junior staff, 80% agreed they held school/faculty meetings where they discussed and exchanged thoughts and ideas regarding professional growth and development. More so, over 50% of the respondents agreed that coaching provided new insights, had increased coach-coachee relationship, improved competencies, led to strong relationships in the university and had exposed the academic staff to more academic and teaching materials.

However, it was noted that a significant percentage, 233 (67%) disagreed that senior faculty/school members provided professional development such as innovative teaching strategies, writing of research winning grants, inculcation of leadership qualities. Thus, coaching as an empowerment practice needs to be maximumly explored for quality service delivery in Kenyan public universities.

Inferential statistics was carried out to determine whether the data collected met the assumption of the regression analysis through diagnostic tests.

This test was important as it dictated the direction to use in data analysis for instance, whether to use parametric test or non-parametric test. The results of diagnostic tests are discussed below.

The researcher carried out normality test on the data of coaching using both Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Sminorv tests at 95% confidence interval. The findings were shown in table 2.

Normality test for Academic Staff Questionnaires

Table 2: Normality Test

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Coaching	.162	20	.178	.952	20	.406
Service delivery	.117	118	.152	.939	118	.412

Source: Researcher, (2022)

From table 2, results from Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) and Shapiro-Wilk (SW) suggested that the residuals were normally distributed (sig. >.05) meaning that tests of normality were significant and therefore parametric test was used. The KS results in Table 2 indicate that data collected on coaching (df = 20, p = 0.178) and service delivery (df = 20, p = 0.152) were normally distributed as $p - values \geq 0.05$. Thus, we accept the null hypothesis. On the other hand, the SW results showed that the data collected on coaching (df = 20, p = 0.406) and service delivery (df = 20, p = 0.412) were normally

distributed at $p - values \geq 0.05$ therefore, not statistically significant at 5% level of significance. This meant that the tests of normality were significant and therefore parametric test was used for analysis.

Heteroscedasticity/ Homoscedasticity

The study used Levene statistic to test the null hypothesis that the variance of the explained variable was equal across all levels of explanatory variables. The results was presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Test for Homogeneity for Academic staff data

	Test of Homogeneity of Variances			
	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Coaching	2.207	1	347	.367
Service delivery	0.843	1	347	.132

The results in Table 3 ($p > 0.05$) implied that we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the variance of the dependent variable was steady and fulfilled the assumption of homogeneity of variance.

Multicollinearity Test

The study sought to investigate whether there was a perfect multi-collinearity relationship among the predictors in table 4 below: -

Table 4: Tests for Multicollinearity

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.112	226
Coaching	2.342	3.004

a. Dependent variable: Service delivery

Source: Researcher, (2022)

From the regression model predicting employee empowerment practices and service delivery among the academic staff in the Kenyan public universities, the tolerance and VIF values for coaching was accepted; tolerance value > .10 and VIF value < 10. This therefore implied that the assumption of multi-collinearity was met.

Correlation analysis

Bivariate correlation which measures the association between two variables was computed

for the observed variables using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r). The values of r ranges between 0 and ±1 indicating the extremes of no correlation and perfect correlation respectively and shows the extent to which a linear relationship exists between two variables. The results of correlation analysis was presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix of the study variables

		Service delivery	Coaching
Service delivery	Pearson Correlation	1	.657
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.036
Coaching	Pearson Correlation	.657	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	

Source: (Researcher, 2022)

The findings indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between coaching and service delivery. This is depicted by a Pearson correlation coefficient $r = 0.657$, $p\text{-value} = 0.036 < 0.05$ which was significant at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that coaching results increase the service delivery.

Coaching

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.657 ^a	.431	.437	5.03507

ANOVA Test

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4320.7741	1	4320.741	170.431	.002 ^b
	Residual	5704.176	347	25.352		
	Total	10024.916	348			

Regression Coefficients Model

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.049	1.592		1.915	.057
	Coaching	.693	.053	.657	13.055	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Service delivery among academic staff

b. Predictors: (Constant), Coaching

The study sought to investigate the hypothesis, 'Coaching does not affect service delivery among the academic staff in the Kenyan public universities'. To establish this, simple linear regression test was used. The study utilised the following null hypothesis which was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the hypothesis test were presented in Table 6: -

In table 6, the value of R-square is 0.431 which implied that, 43.1% of variation of service delivery among the academic staff in the Kenyan public universities was explained by coaching. The results further shows that coaching was significant at 0.05 level of significance $F(1,347) = 170.431$, ($p=0.002 < 0.05$). Further analysis shows that coaching had a significant influence on service delivery among the academic staff in the Kenyan public universities (t -statistic=13.055, p -value=0.002< 0.05). Therefore, at 5% level of significance, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that coaching influences service delivery. The regression model equation is:

$$Y = 3.049 + 0.693coaching$$

From the model, the results show that for every 1 unit increase of service delivery, there is an increase of 0.693 increase in coaching. This results are in agreement with study findings of Geber, (2010) and Kelly, (2016). The findings also support the transformational leadership theory specifically the intellectual stimulation element.

The thematic analysis of interview from Deans of Universities shows that Coaching is a critical programme as it helps in the preparation for succession planning which is in line with our study findings. However, these findings differed from Meng & Sun, (2019) who advised universities to create a supportive environment to promote the professional development of younger and junior

Faculty. Thus, from the above findings, it can be seen that coaching was a predictor of service delivery. If embraced by public universities it can instil innovative teaching skills and offer a platform for writing and conducting quality research. More so, it may inculcate leadership qualities leading to a strong institutional culture. This may eliminate unethical practices leading to quality service in the public universities.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study found out that coaching had a significant influence on service delivery among the academic staff in the Kenyan public universities. Coaching was also a significant predictor of service delivery as it offered guidance, inspiration, provided a level of neutrality and created learning opportunities. Furthermore, coaching provided new insights, increased coach-coachee relationship, improved competencies, led to strong relationships in the university and had exposed the academic staff to more academic and teaching materials. The study recommends that coaching should be prioritized since it enhances service delivery. This will help build a strong institutional culture where senior staff will provide professional development to junior academic staff through innovative teaching, writing and conducting quality research and inculcation of leadership qualities.

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