The Contribution of Role Play Management Development Practice on Service Delivery: A Case of Public Universities in Kenya

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Abstract

Role-playing allows managers to act out in the position of responsibilities which are not theirs but have qualification to perform, it enables the managers to perform duties in the organization which belong to others. The duties they perform enable them to understand the tasks that are within the organization and increase self-confidence as well as mounting skills in handling the tasks allocated to them. Studies have been conducted on role-playing in organization but few studies have been conducted in public universities hence the study sought to establish the contribution of role-playing management development practices on service delivery in Kenyan public universities. The study adopted a positivism research philosophy and descriptive survey research design. The study targeted all the fourteen public universities located in the South Western Kenya top management both in academic and administrative staff. The study adopted stratified sampling in selecting the respondents from the strata that are relevant to the study and simple random sampling method was used in selecting respondents in each stratum. Descriptive and inferential statistics specifically the Likert scale and regression analysis were used. The study findings indicated the contribution of role-playing management development practice on service delivery was significant (Adjusted R Square = 0.335, F=105.660, p >0.05). The study

contributes to theory and practice in that organizations should encourage role playing so as to maximize on the human resources that contribute to service delivery.

Key words: Management, Role Play, Service delivery

Introduction

Management development brings about employee empowerment and employee involvement. It is management's response to an increasingly complex and competitive environment. Franks (2001) states that employee empowerment is deemed critical to organizational efficiency, innovativeness and effectiveness since empowerment initiatives are geared towards enhancing management performance. Asad and Mahfod (2015) consider training and development as a planned process to modify attitude, knowledge or skill behavior through learning experiences to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Tannenbaum and Yukl (2012) argue that training and development improve the workforce competence in order to create a competitive advantage and contribute to organizational success.

Role-play can be defined as an interactive process that involves participants assuming specified responsibilities that is a role and performing specific tasks not theirs (Mercado, 2010). Because of the interactive and reflective process, role plays have the potential to promote sustainable changes in behaviour (Chen & Martin, 2015). Thus, the identification of a successful training method is promising in saving company resources, increasing the chance of sustainability on their path towards process orientation and outbalancing associated costs.

Role-playing allows managers to act out the responsibilities of others. Role-playing enables managers to get professional advice and performance analysis from fellow managers and helps increase self-confidence as well as mounting skills in handling people (Clutterbuck, 2005). It

enables the managers to solve difficult exercises seriously by overplaying their parts and attempt to capture and bring forth decisions which are structured and anchored on rationale. Role-playing enables the manager to describe the roles, objectives, emotions, responsibilities, concerns of the position they are occupying. The provision of role-playing enables the manager to describe the situation and the problem in the organization in a more effective way with minimal stress. Role play is valuable because it allows a person to practice in a safe and non-threatening way in a higher capacity than one's designation. Role play is a very flexible learning tool; it can take several forms if done in a planned way and spur performance of specific activities since it develops proficiency in most, if not all of the skills managers need today (Baugh et al., 2007)

Service delivery in the public universities is measured through customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, research output, publications, adherence to set date lines, adequate teaching and coverage of curriculum, community outreach through advisory services/ consultancy. Number of undergraduate/ postgraduate students supervised to completion/ graduation. Wanyama (2010) observed that measuring service delivery in organization includes calculating efficiency, productivity and effectiveness. The provision of services efficiently and effectively is needed, and this can only happen when universities apply role-playing increase efficiency (Abernathy, 2000).

Purpose of the study

Role-playing approach used in organizations taps into individual and collective management creativeness and competencies in the performance of core university functions according to several studies. Mohamed (2013) conducted a study on factors affecting implementation of training programs to the public institutions but focused on public service management. However, the study was qualitative in nature which does not guarantee conclusive findings due to the small

sample involved. Githinji (2014) study looked at the effects of training on employee performance but focused on United Nations Support office for the African Union Mission in Somalia. However, the study used a cross-sectional research design in which the results are static and time bound.

Kosgei (2015) examined challenges facing staff development and training. The study context was secondary schools in Kericho County. Elnaga and Imran's (2017) study investigated the effect of training on employee performance and established a positive significant relationship. However, the study used cross-sectional research design. (Bigambo, 2004; Wanyama, 2010; Cheptoek, 2000) have pointed out that employee development leads to empowerment which directly improves performance of the workforce. The provision of role-playing enables the employees to describe the situation that exists in an organization and develop techniques which are suitable to effectively solve the problem with minimal stress (Chao, 2007).

Studies of Harold (2000) as well as Mabey and Gooderham (2005) have demonstrated a positive relationship between employee development and firm performance. The aforementioned studies have shown a number of gaps in different areas of development but failed to address the research problem, that is to show the contribution of role-playing on service delivery in public universities in Kenya hence the aim of the present study is to establish the contribution of role-play management development practice on the service delivery of public universities in Kenya.

Empirical Literature

Rene et al. (2012) studied staff's experience with role-plays using the example of training bank employees in Six Sigma as a major methodology for business process improvement. A role-play, KreditSim, is used to simulate a loan approval process that has to be improved by the participants. KreditSim has been conducted many times with various groups in both academic

and professional environments. The authors used five role-play sessions to conduct a survey among the participants and questioned seven facilitators experienced in KreditSim to generate empirical evidence for the effectiveness of such role-plays. The study findings indicated that role-play based simulations complement training programs in terms of active participation and first-hand experience. Not only methodological learning is achieved but social and communicative as well as affective learning are supported. The employed role-play highlights the relevance and applicability of the Six Sigma methodology to staff's day-to-day responsibilities. Besides boosting awareness for process thinking, the role-play also helps to engage staff members in process improvement efforts.

Leyer et al. (2015) examined whether role plays have the potential to advance process-oriented behaviour (employees perform their activities while considering other activities and colleagues in the process) of employees in daily work practices. process-oriented behaviour is difficult to achieve. The study argued that role plays in which participants take over similar roles are a promising learning method. However, effects of role play on subsequent behaviour in daily work practices are currently missing in academic literature. The results from 153 participants of a financial service institution reveal that role play used has a statistically significant impact on employees' process-oriented behaviour in terms of their cross-functional coordination, their process knowledge and their continuous process reflection, but not on employees' process awareness. Given that outcome, we argue that despite the application costs, role plays are beneficial for companies to train their employees in process orientation.

Ndanduleni and Munyai (2011) did a study on the effects of role-play as a formative assessment technique on job performance. The study used cross-sectional research design and qualitative data. A sample of 40 novice sales agents (learners) were selected and randomly

divided into the control and experimental groups. The research was conducted by means of a competence assessment used at different stages (Quality Assurance Performance Management Questionnaire). The research findings indicated that if role-playing is planned well it is an effective training and assessment tool.

Joma et al. (2010) did a study on the "Effect of 'Role-playing' on Students' Achievement and Motivation in the Governmental Schools of Bethlehem District in Palestine". The sample consisted of 125 8th grade students in the governmental schools in Bethlehem District in the academic year 2015/16. The findings of the study showed that there were statistically significant differences in students' speaking skills achievement due to the interaction between teaching method and gender. Moreover, there were statistically significant differences in students' speaking skills achievement due to the teaching method in favor of the experimental group.

Mercado (2000) confirms the effectiveness of role plays as a teaching instrument for an undergraduate business curriculum. He indicates that role plays may provide better cognitive and behavioural learning. Wüstenhagen (2012) examine role plays as educational instrument to sensitize management students on environmental issues. Given their outcome, role plays lead to a significant increase in students' understanding on that topic compared to classroom instructions. The emotional involvement as well as the confrontation with a real-world problem is not replicable in classroom settings and lead to a unique learning experience through role plays.

Chen and Martin (2015) examined role plays as a teaching instrument in adult environmental education to promote sustainable change in behaviour. Role plays address the following four criteria focusing on change to characterize an effective educational program: Focusing on change rather than knowledge transfer, focusing on a real-world scenario to increase personal

involvement and lead to passionate reactions, highlighting external and internal factors that affect current behaviour and finally implying a problem-solving approach with a reflection process that leads to a solution.

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

The Theory was created by Bandura and Ross (1963) and highlights the necessity of monitoring and modelling the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others (Brauer & Tittle, 2012). It points out that employees obtain new skills and information through seeing other knowledgeable employees within their field of operation whom they have faith in and as well believe to be credible. The theory suggested that training is impacted by person's self-efficacy and ability to learn new abilities that are propelled by encouragement, oral persuasion, logical confirmation, and observation of others (Deaton, 2015). This theory informs the trainer on the most appropriate training method in relation to the target group since it provides for a variety of training methods that include role-playing, observation, peer to peer, games, demonstration among others.

Empowerment Theory

Empowerment theory was postulated by Perkins and Zimmerman (1993) who linked individual strengths, competencies and the provision of opportunities for participation to develop knowledge and skills to engage. Empowerment theory holds that empowering employees contributes directly to their performance and in return organization to achieve competitiveness. Further empowerment theory confirms autonomy, access to information and involvement in decision making since a knowledgeable and skilled employee today is an essential component of all universities. Ebby (2007) argues that empowering employees helps universities reach their

objectives and it creates better opportunities to compete in the world. This theory is suitable for this study since role-playing aims at providing an opportunity to empower employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to reap maximum contributions and outperform those that fail to do so.

Conceptual Model and Hypothesis

The dependent variable in this study is service delivery. Service delivery is indicated by the customer satisfaction, number of students supervised to completion, employee satisfaction, research output, consultancy/advisory services, publications, adherence to set teaching, number of student joining and leaving the university. A conceptual framework is a structure of ideas presented in an inquiry. In conducting the study, the conceptual framework was schematized in Figure1.
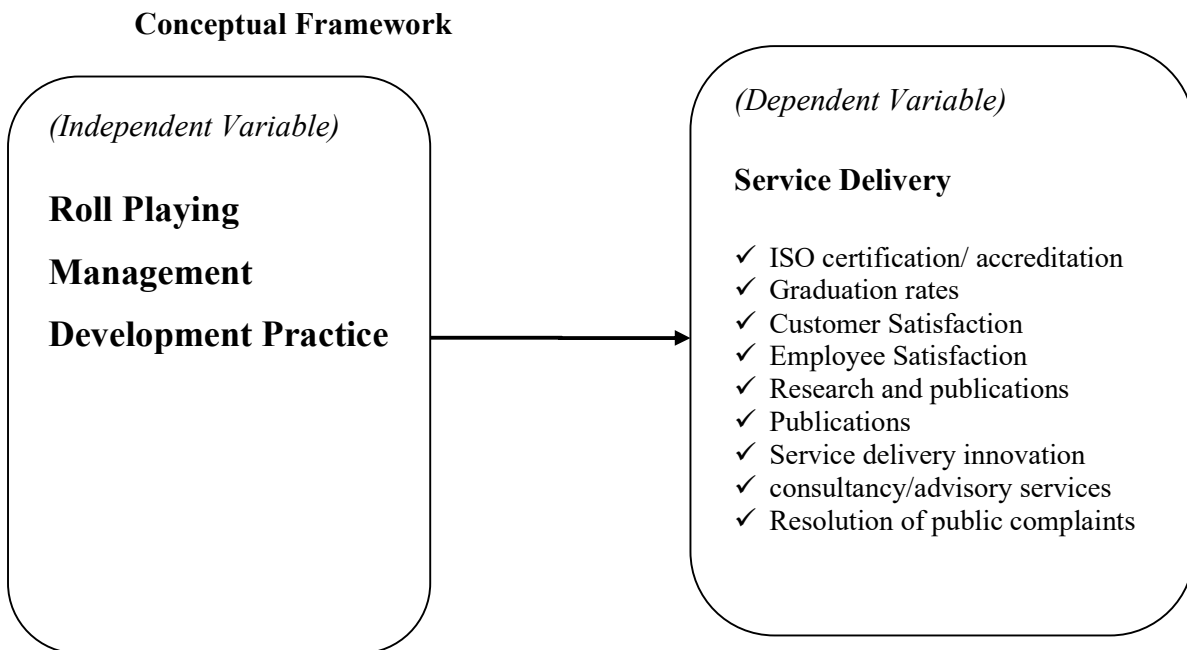
Conceptual Framework

(Independent Variable)

Roll Playing Management Development Practice

(Dependent Variable)

Service Delivery

✓ ISO certification/ accreditation
✓ Graduation rates
✓ Customer Satisfaction
✓ Employee Satisfaction
✓ Research and publications
✓ Publications
✓ Service delivery innovation
✓ consultancy/advisory services
✓ Resolution of public complaints

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The following research hypothesis was tested during the study:

Ho: Role-playing Management Development Practices do not contribute to Service delivery in Kenyan Public Universities

Methodology of Research

The study adopted a positivist research philosophy. Positivism researchers holds that there exists a reality further than the human mind; the individual perceptions are separate from a reality that forms the foundation of human knowledge. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and targeted top management both in academic and administrative staff. The study adopted stratified sampling method in selecting the respondents from the established strata; administrative staff academic staff. Simple random sampling method was used in selecting respondents in each stratum. The study sampled 400 respondents. Regression analysis was used to determine how much each variable adds to the Predictor Y value and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA =F test).

Study Results and Findings

Role-playing is one of the management development practices that has been adopted by the public universities in Kenya to enhance the management capabilities and abilities to perform. The respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed to the various statements that defined best practices in role-playing for management development and they responded to various aspects under the variable on a five-point Likert scale (5= very large extent, 4= large extent, 3= moderate extent, 2= less extent and 1= not at all) and the research findings are in Table1 below showing the resultant means and standard deviation for the variables.

Table 1: **Best practices in Role-playing for Management Development**

Best Practices in Role-playing for Management Development	**N**	**Mini-Mum score**	**Maxi-Mum Score**	**Mean**	**Std. deviation**	**Ranking**

The assuming of roles in the university is a very effective development method for a wide range of employees especially for the management.	209	1	5	4.244	.4415	To a large extent
The assuming of roles by managers in the university is more effective when carried out under stress-free or alternatively minimal-stress environments so as to facilitate easier learning.	209	1	5	3.760	.4495	
The assuming of roles in the university occasionally gets embarrassing where some managers do not take it seriously and overplay it	209	1	5	3.277	1.0873	To a moderate extent
The assuming of roles in the university has enabled managers to present solutions to real life management problems, concerns, responsibilities, emotions, and many more.	209	1	5	3.272	.4674	
The assuming of roles by managers in the university has given managers expert advice and productive analysis from their colleagues in protected training circumstances.	209	1	5	3.272	.4570	
The university allows its management to act out situations by assuming the roles of the characters involved in certain management positions.	209	1	5	3.267	.8463	
The assuming of roles by managers in the university has helped staff in leading a group or running a management meeting.	209	1	5	2.794	.5007	
The assuming of roles by managers in the university has helped staff in conducting performance appraisal meetings.	209	1	5	2.789	.5149	
The assuming of roles by managers in the university has helped staff in dealing with face-to-face state of affairs in interviews.	209	1	5	2.784	5229	
The assuming of roles by managers in the university has increased the manager's interactive skills.	209	1	5	2.775	.5020	
The university issues detailed memos explaining the situation and, broadly,	209	1	5	2.535	.5716	

their role in certain management positions						
The assuming of roles by managers in the university has helped staff in counseling, coaching and in dealing with management level complaints.	209	1	5	2.301	.5460	To a lesser extent
The assuming of roles by managers in the university has given them insight into the way the managers behave or feel through 'role reversal'.	209	1	5	2.291	.5151	
The university encourages its management staff to do role-playing where it emerges naturally from intrinsic resolution of those anxious	209	1	5	2.287	.5315	
The assuming of roles in the university has increased self-confidence as well as mounting skills in handling people for most managers.	209	1	5	2.047	.7768	
Grand Mean				**2.913**		

Table 1 indicates that to a great extent (4.244≥Mean≥ 3.760, with sign. standard deviation. ≥0.44), assuming of roles in the university is a very effective development method for a wide range of employees especially for the management; and assuming of roles by managers in the university is more effective when carried out under stress-free or alternatively minimal-stress environments so as to facilitate easier learning.

It further shows that to a moderate extent (3.277≥Mean≥ 3.267, with sign. standard deviation. ≥0.84), assuming roles in the university occasionally gets embarrassing where some managers do not take it seriously and overplay it; assuming roles in the university has enabled managers to present solutions to real life management problems, concerns, responsibilities, emotions, and many more. Moreover, assuming roles by managers in the university has given managers expert advice and productive analysis from their colleagues in protected training

circumstances; and the university allows its management to act out situations by assuming the roles of the characters involved in certain management positions.

The findings also reveal that to a less extent with ($2.301 \geq$ Mean ≥ 2.047, with sign. standard deviation.≥ 0.77) assuming roles by managers in the university has helped staff in counseling, coaching and in dealing with management level complaints; assuming roles by managers in the university has given them insight into the way the managers behave or feel through 'role reversal'; university encourages its management staff to do role-playing where it emerges naturally from intrinsic resolution of those anxious; and assuming of roles in the university has increased self-confidence as well as mounting skills in handling people for most managers. The study findings established that public universities in Kenya adopted the best practices in role-playing for management development at a moderate extent with an overall mean of 2.913.

This study finding is in line with Baugh et al. (2007), who found that role-playing enables managers to get actual experience and acquire skills from the work they are performing making them productive and develop analytical skills. Role-playing enables a manager to have an insight into the way managers who occupy the position feel and form perspectives. The use of role-playing technique role paired with play enables a manager to run his/her duties with extra skills and insight and concern.

The study tested the hypothesis by regressing role-playing management development practice on service delivery in public universities guided by the equation $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X$ and the results were presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Role-playing management development practice on service delivery

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.581ª	.338	.335	1.621	.338	105.660	1	207	.000	2.099

a. Predictors: (Constant), Role-playing
b. Dependent Variable: Service delivery

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	277.683	1	277.683	105.660	.000ᵇ
	Residual	544.011	207	2.628		
	Total	821.694	208			

a. Dependent Variable: Service Delivery
b. Predictors: (Constant), Role-playing

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-3.235	1.289		-2.510	.013
	Role-playing	4.529	.441	.581	10.279	.000

a. Dependent Variable: SD

The results presented in Table 2 above indicate that the effect Role-playing management development practice on service delivery was significant (Adjusted R Square = 0.335, F=105.660, p >0.05). The test results indicated that 33.5 % of variation in service delivery in Kenyan public universities could be explained by variation in role-playing management development practice, which was significant (p > 0.05). The β was significant (β = 4.529, t= 10.279, p > 0.05). The evidence therefore indicated that the model could be used in explaining the effect of role-playing management development practice on service delivery in Kenyan public universities. This study finding is in line with Ndanduleni and Munyai (2011) who

observed that role-play if planned well, can be an effective training and assessment tool in organizations because it makes managers to learn while performing hence an effective empowering technique in the workplace.

Conclusion

The study findings have pointed out that the hypothesis role-playing management development practice do not contribute to service delivery of public universities in Kenya was rejected since role-playing management development is directly related to service delivery. Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that role-playing management practice has a significant contribution on service delivery indicated by results that 33.5 % of variation in service delivery in Kenyan public universities could be explained by variation in role-playing management development practice, which was significant at $p > 0.05$).

Contribution of the Study

The research findings revealed that role-playing management development practice contributes to service delivery. The implication of this study is, it contributes to literature and theory development for Human Resource Management and through this the researchers can use it to advance further studies or advance theory. In practice, organizations should be keen to embrace role-playing because it has a significant impact on employee engagement and service delivery. Managers in organization should develop a policy on Role-playing where employees are allowed to act in other positions as way of empowering them and ensure that it is implemented in their organizations.

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