

COMMUNICATION OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A SURVEY OF TEACHERS SERVICE COMMISSION EMPLOYEES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

One solution to decreasing the risk of change failure could be to look at the way the change is communicated, as it has been noted that communication plays a vital role in the change process. As such, this study was designed to establish how communication of organisational change affects the performance of the employees of Teachers Service Commission (TSC) in Kenya. This study used a descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Murang'a County, Kenya, targeting all the 80 TSC employees in the County except practicing teachers. Stratified random sampling was used to select 66 respondents, who were proportionately drawn from all the categories of employees in the target population. Self-administered questionnaires were used to gather information from the selected employees. Data analysis procedures employed involved both quantitative and qualitative procedures. The study found that majority of the employees felt that the TSC uses a top-down approach to communicate about changes taking place in the organization. The employees found this communication approach to be effective in communicating the changes taking place in the organization. There is however the need to use other approaches to communicate organizational change.

Keywords: Organizational Change, Organizational Communication, Employee Performance

INTRODUCTION

In dynamic world today change in the workplace is a crucial topic, because change is seen primarily as an adaptive response by the system, acting as a whole or through subsystems with specific functions, to maintain itself in balance with a shifting environment (Gupta, 2012). Since change is inevitable, once it occurs the management has a responsibility to facilitate and ease change and also help employees understand reasons, aims and goals as well as strategic framework, including mission, vision and values. Change management entails understanding the needs and the attributes of the impacted organization, and customizing and scaling the change management efforts based on the unique characteristics of the change and the organization (Hiatt & Creasey, 2003). Change management has been shown to influence employees either positively or negatively.

Within the education sector, Olsen (2002) argues that school administrators have succeeded in coping with changing environments but they have done so in ways influenced by existing administrative arrangements: formal organizational structures have been stable while practices have changed. With such changes the administrative role of the principal has evolved from the practicing teacher, with added technical and administrative duties, to the full-time manager and developer of human, financial and physical resources (Mulford, 2003).

In Kenya, the role of teacher management rests with the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). The TSC was formed by an Act of Parliament and was officially launched on 1st July 1967 (Okumbe, 2001). The functions of the commission include the registration, recruitment, deployment remuneration, maintenance of standards of education and discipline of all teachers in education institutions established under the Ministry of Education. TSC has powers under Section 4 (1), Section 6 and Section 7 (3) of the Act. These powers include; recruiting, employing and registering teachers; assigning teachers for service in any public school, remunerating teachers, promoting or transferring the teachers in service, terminating the employment of such teachers, delegating to any person or body with the consent of the minister and subject to such conditions as he may impose some of their duties, keeping under review the standards of education, training and fitness, supplying teachers and tender advice to the minister from time to time on the aforesaid matters and refusing to register unsuitable person as a teacher. Finally, TSC has power of compiling and publishing a code of regulation, which shall apply to all teachers employed by the commission, and from time to time modify or amend the code of regulations in such manner as it deems fit (TSC, 2002).

Since inception, TSC used the supply-driven method of teacher recruitment and management, which resulted in uneven distribution of teachers. This policy changed in 1997, following the Government freeze on employment of civil servants, including teachers, due to budgetary constraints. Since the year 2001, the Commission has only been allowed to recruit teachers to replace those who leave service through natural attrition. Thus, the Commission adopted a demand-driven policy in the recruitment and deployment process (TSC, 2006). To facilitate this process, the recruitment process was restructured and decentralized. The decentralization process has necessitated the redefining of the roles of the TSC agents. It also called for the involvement of the stakeholders at various local levels and also gave more responsibilities to the District Education Boards (DEBs) and Boards of Management (BoMs) (TSC, 2006).

According to TSC (2008), the responsibilities of TSC that are devolved to the district level include recruitment and employment of teachers, placement and transfer of teachers, promotion of teachers, and discipline of teachers. Only two TSC functions have not been devolved, that is registering of teachers and remuneration of teachers. The TSC agents on the ground, according to TSC (2008) include the Provincial Directors of Education (PDE), District Education Officers (DEO), Municipal Education Offices (MEO), and the BoMs. The functions delegated to the agents include: 1) Assignment of Duties - Transferring teachers from one school to another within their area of jurisdiction; and 2) Promotions: The PDEs interview applicants for promotion to GATI, Job Group 'L' for deployment as Heads of Department. MEOs and DEOs interview teachers for appointment as heads and Deputy Heads of Primary Schools, from which reports are forwarded to the Commission

The implementation of the new constitution has led to changes in the way human resources in the education sector are managed. With the TSC becoming an autonomous body and independent of the MOE, changes are taking place in the way TSC employees at the county level are managed. This study tried to find out how such changes affected the engagement of employees' attitudes towards change. Specifically, the study sought to find out how TSC employees' engagement and performance is affected by communication of change, employee training or lack of it during change, involvement in decision-making and changes in job content as a result of change.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

One solution to decreasing the risk of change failure could be to look at the way the change is communicated, as it has been noted that communication plays a vital role in the change

process (Hayes, 2007). As such, the objective of this study was to establish how communication of organisational change affects the performance of TSC employees in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive surveys are those studies which are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual, or of a group (Kothari, 2004). The design was considered suitable to the study because no variables were actively manipulated by the researcher. The study was conducted in Murang'a County, Kenya, targeting all the 80 TSC employees in the County except practicing teachers. These included the TSC County Director, 5 District staffing officers, 7 District Human Resource Officers (DHRO), 38 Lower cadre TSC personnel, and 29 Teacher Advisory Centre tutors. Stratified random sampling was used to select 66 respondents, who were proportionately drawn from all the categories of employees in the target population.

Self-administered questionnaires were used to gather information from the selected employees. Data analysis procedures employed involved both quantitative and qualitative procedures. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, means and percentages. Qualitative data was analysed qualitatively using content analysis based on analysis of meanings and implications emanating from respondent information and comparing responses to documented data on change management and employee performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The goal of the study was to establish how communication of organizational change affects the performance of TSC employees. To address this objective the respondents were asked to indicate the type of communication mechanism employed in TSC. Majority (89.0%) of the respondents indicated that TSC employed a top-down approach of communicating with the employees. This implies formal communication is used to communicate change, whereby information flows through the authorized channels in the organization, including supervisory relationships, work groups, permanent and ad hoc committees and management information systems (Poole, 1997). This communication process, also referred to as downward communication, is used by group leaders and managers to assign goals, provide job instructions, explain policies and procedures, point out problems that need attention, and offer feedback about performance (Robbins, Judge, Odendaal & Roodt, 2009). Previous research found that employees were twice as likely to be committed to changes when the reasons behind them were fully explained (Robbins & Judge, 2013). According to Kotter (1996), top-down communication should be supported by informal one-on-one communication between employees and managers further down in the organization.

To establish how communication of organizational change affects TSC employees' performance, the employees were presented with a questionnaire designed using Likert-type questions that sought to determine the effectiveness with which the TSC communicated about changes to employees (Table 1). Response options were in a 4-point scale (Strongly Agree [4], Agree [3], Disagree [2], and Strongly Disagree [1]). The midpoint of the scale was a score of 2.5 denoting a neutral opinion. Scores above 2.5 denoted that respondents agreed with most of the statements while scores below 2.5 denoted that respondents disagreed with most of the statements.

Results indicated that the mean score obtained by respondents ranged from 3.47 to 2.73. This means that majority of the respondents perceived the TSC to effectively communicate change

to employees. The highly ranked statements were: I believe that effective communication by TSC helps improve my work performance (3.47); I am familiar with the structural changes in the Teachers Service Commission (3.18); and my manager pays attentions to what I say (3.18). On the other hand, the lowest ranked items were; I can discuss the changes with my manager to my satisfaction (2.73); TSC provides detailed information about their restructuring process before effecting any changes (2.74) (See Table 1 for mean scores per item).

Overall, the study established that 52.0% of the employees found TSC to effectively communicate to them about changes in the education sector, 24.0% found communication by TSC to be very effective, and another 24.0 % felt that TSC was not effective in communicating organizational change. These findings show that majority of the employees rated TSC as effective in communicating changes taking place in education. Effective communication is vital to the effective implementation of organizational change. As established by Elving (2005), communication has an effect not only on readiness for change, but also on uncertainty. Poorly managed change communication results in rumours and resistance to change, exaggerating the negative aspects of the change (Smelzer & Zener, 1992). According to Gordon (2006), communication about change aids in the unfreezing of old behaviours, the transition during which new behaviours are adopted, and the refreezing of the new behaviour into habit.

Respondents were asked to state the effects of combination mechanisms employed in the organization on staff performance. The results (Table 2) indicated the employees felt that communication mechanisms used by TSC positively influence staff commitment in work (90.9%), leads to employees' motivation (84.8%), creates harmony in the work place (68.2%), and saves time when making decisions in the organization (56.1%). This shows that communication of the organizational change positively influences TSC performance through motivation, commitment, creating a sense of belonging among the staff and also saving time used when making organization decisions. Previous research (Luecke, 2003) has shown that communication can be an effective tool for motivating employees involved in change. Appropriate communications provide employees with feedback and reinforcement during the change (Peterson & Hicks, 1996), which enables them to make better decisions and prepares them for the advantages and disadvantages of change (Saunders, 1999).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizational communication is the process by which language and social interaction promote coordinated action toward a common goal (Eisenberg, 2009). In this study the goal was to establish how communication of organizational change affects the performance of employees in educational settings. Theories such as Karl Weick's Organizational Information Theory have led to a departure from traditional view of organisational communication as a simple top-down hierarchical model. Organizational communication is no longer viewed as something that goes on inside an organization, it is instead seen as the very process by which organizing happens. In this study, majority of the employees felt that the TSC uses a top-down approach to communicate about changes taking place in the organization. The employees found this communication approach to be effective in communicating the changes taking place in the organization. There is however the need to use other approaches to communicate organizational change. Employees should be involved in the change process and in making decisions about how change is to be effected. Further research is needed on the extent and impact of employee involvement in policy reviews in Kenya.

Table 1. TSC employee's responses on communication of organizational change

<i>Statement</i>	<i>SA</i>		<i>A</i>		<i>D</i>		<i>SD</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>		
I believe that effective communication helps improve my work performance.	33	50.0	31	47.0	2	3.0	0	0.0	3.47	.561
I am familiar with the structural changes in the Teachers Service Commission	29	43.9	35	53.0	1	1.5	1	1.5	3.39	.605
My manager pays attention to what I say	25	37.9	30	45.5	9	13.6	2	3.0	3.18	.783
My manager always updated me on any recent changes in the organization.	21	31.8	32	48.5	11	16.7	2	3.0	3.09	.779
I am free to discuss with my manager about any changes happening in organization	23	34.8	24	36.4	13	19.7	6	9.1	2.97	.960
Top managers communicate the change in an appealing way.	16	24.2	37	56.1	6	9.1	7	10.6	2.94	.875
My manager provides relevant and practical reasons for any changes required in the organization.	17	25.8	27	40.9	18	27.3	4	6.1	2.86	.875
I am satisfied with information communicated about changes in our organization	12	18.2	32	48.5	16	24.2	6	9.1	2.75	.867
TSC provides detailed information about their restructuring process before effecting any changes	12	18.2	28	42.4	23	34.8	3	4.5	2.74	.810
I can discuss the changes with my manager to my satisfaction	12	18.2	31	47.0	16	24.2	7	10.6	2.73	.887

Table 2. Effects of Communication Mechanism on Staff Performance

<i>Effects of communication mechanism</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Increase level of commitment in work	60	90.9
Effective communication lead to employees motivation	56	84.8
Create harmony in the organization	45	68.2
Create a sense of belonging in the organization	43	65.2
Easier time in making decisions	37	56.1
Effective communication leads to employees satisfaction	31	47.0
Distortion of information	5	7.6

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