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Investigation Of The Diversity Management Practices In The Civil Service In Kenya

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Abstract:

The main objective of this study was to investigate diversity management practices in civil service of Kenya. The study used descriptive research design to investigate the way in which diversity practices are exploited in the management of civil service in Kenya. The population under study composed of all the public ministries in Kenya where the study targeted human resource managers or any other officers in HRM departments. A questionnaire with open ended and closed ended question was developed by the researcher and used in data collection. The study found out that: civil service in Kenya kept diversity inventories; civil service had few policies and programmes on diversity; the civil service management do not link workplace diversity issues to HR decision making; and management in civil service give less support to diversity issues. The findings therefore, revealed that a better understanding of the different groups, recognizing of different views and ways at workplace, support from management and all stakeholders, eradicating prejudices and biases as well as empowering all employees on diversity issues can result to better performance thus, high productivity. The study recommended that civil service in Kenya should establish proper plans of keeping diversity inventories; create viable and workable policies/programs to regulate diversity, management to incorporate employees in decision making, the management of civil service to give full support to diversity practices.

Key words: Diversity, diversity management, diversity inventories, civil service, policies and programmes, workplace diversity issues, human resource management.

1.Introduction

According to Mujtaba, (2008) diversity is an avenue of increasing one's cultural competency, understanding people as individuals rather than groups, and building productive human relationships in the workplace by focusing on an individual's head, heart, and habits. He further states that diversity is a reality of life, and it requires examining one's own beliefs and values as well as learning the skills of dealing appropriately with those whose personal beliefs and professional values may be very different.

We live in times when global corporations and their reach across the world bring benefits in terms of innovative HR policies as well as challenges in terms of managing the workforce are concerned (Management Study Guide, 2009). The rise of such corporations means that the workforce is composed of diverse races and ethnicities. In the contemporary business world as well as in state corporations both witness the changing of the workforce's composition. On the other hand, Cox, (1991) argues that the divided labour market is now seen to have maintained inequalities that led to discrimination in employment as they are seen to favour in-group members out of those that are considered out-group. The growing sophistication of research on diversity management in public organizations parallels the evolution of organizations into increasingly complex and dynamic forms. This makes HR diversity management to be more critical to the success of both public and private sector organizations.

As groups interact with other teams, the organizational context in which teams operate can create opportunities as well as pose challenges for team functioning. In this study, we consider how the civil service embraces diversity management and therefore, attempt to contribute to the academic discourse on diversity. We draw attention to such attributes like diverse inventory, diversity policies and programs, linkages of diversity to management decisions and management support for diversity in relation to the extent at which public organization utilizes diversity management.

To meet organizational goals, each organization must be effective in terms of its internal functioning. In addition, each organization must effectively manage its relationships with other team players and individuals in the public organizations. Through their

relationships, team members may gain access to needed resources and apply influence that is beneficial to the organization and its individual members.

2.Diversity Management

Snow and Miles, (1986) described diversity management as an innovative network organization characterized by constantly evolving inter-team linkages that allow organizations to quickly respond to technological and market changes, and thereby improve their chances of survival. This can be witnessed today by widespread implementation of such team-based organizational forms (Hackman, 1999). Thomas, (1996) argues that the characteristics protected by law, other similarities and differences commonly cited in the workplace include background, education, language skills, personality, sexual orientation, and work role. Generally, in an organizational context, diversity is often interconnected with different social identity groups.

The content of diversity management can be classified as relations oriented and task oriented (Jackson, et al., 1995; Milliken and Martins, 1996). Relations-oriented diversity refers to the distribution of attributes that are instrumental in shaping interpersonal relationships, but which typically have no apparent direct implications for task performance. As we use the term here, relations-oriented diversity is similar to what Jehn, et al., (1997) called social-category diversity. As the term suggests, task-oriented diversity refers to the distribution of performance-relevant attributes. In contrast to Jehn, et al., (1997), we do not distinguish between informational diversity and diversity of views about the organization's objectives. In our classification, both of these are considered types of task-related diversity.

In erstwhile days human resource management was considerably simpler because the work force was strikingly homogeneous (Sadarrudin, 2001). Some individuals do not have a 'nationality' which describes their culture, but operates in a truly global fashion throughout the world. As a country, we should encourage fair employment practices nationwide and offer equal opportunities to all our employees. We should also try to take family considerations into account in any decisions about personnel matters or assignments. Since our workers all share the same interests and needs, personnel's responsibility should get them in the door, sign them up, tell them about the standardized benefit program, and plan how to approach organizations' interests.

In a nutshell, managing diversity means similarities and individual differences are recognized, understood, and valued so that all employees can reach their full potential and maximize their contributions to organization strategic goals. According to U.N. Expert Group Meeting, (EGM), (2001), in more recent times, public service and management thinking on workforce diversity has taken new and increasingly nuanced forms. Workers struggles has led to recognition of various insights in management thinking and new management techniques which compel managers to balance efficiency, profit making and social inclusiveness for all members of society.

Kenyan civil service should attract and retain top performers worldwide from the full depth of the talent pool and address the evolving needs of our diversity management in terms of quality of life and dual career expectations. By creating a variety of perspectives such as gender and culture that stimulate productive creativity and innovation, by doing these, we shall maintain our competitive edge and enable diversity embracement in our public service.

3.Statement Of The Problem

The 1990s witnessed the liberalization of economies and structural adjustment policies brought about by the International Monetary Funds (IMF) and World Bank institutions which opened the doors to free market economies especially in Africa that further brought in the free movement of labour as a commodity that has resulted in the diverse management across the continent. This was coupled with the privatization of most of the state-owned enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa which also created an open door for migration of labour from all over the world. In line with this, Jain and Verma, (1996) saw the development of a new trend in the form of workforce diversity.

With the current dynamic global landscape, organizations must value diversity practices in order to survive. It is argued that organizations that value diversity will definitely cultivate success and have a future in this dynamic global labour market (Jain and Verma, 1996). Workforce diversity management has become an important issue for both governments and private organizations. Broadly defined, diversity management is the systematic and planned commitment by the organizations to recruits, retains, reward and promote a heterogeneous mix of employees (Saji, 2004).

In recent years, Diversity management has increasingly become a "hot-button" issue in corporate, political, and legal circles. Managers in public and private organizations will have to understand, predict and manage this intriguing nature of the diverse workforce (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998). Given this urgency, it is surprising to find out how few committed efforts to managing diversity have been made generally (Human, 1993). Many organizations pay lip-service to the need for managing diversity, yet few appear to have incorporated these kinds of objectives into either their strategic planning process or reward systems (Human, 1993).

In Kenya, the tribal and ethnic identities are pronounced, with each major 'tribe' represented in the workforce. This, according to African Peer Review Mechanism report, (2009), indicates that the public service in Kenya is very diverse, with more than 42 ethnic groups with different histories, traditions, culture, languages, gender, race, disability and religions represented. Interestingly, the report further indicates that Kenya has yet to properly manage its ethnic diversity and to turn it into strength. According to The National Ethnic and Race Relations Bill, (2008) Kenya seeks to provide long term remedy to the ethnic imbalance and perceived marginalization of some communities from the development process is an indication of lack of effective strategies to manage and appreciate diversity in a way that delivers the best results to the nation. This study therefore sought to investigate diversity management practices among civil service in Kenya.

4. General Objective

The overall objective of this study was to investigate the diversity management practices of the civil service in Kenya.

5.Specific Objectives

The study aimed to:

- Find out whether the civil service in Kenya keep diversity inventory of its workforce
- Establish whether the civil service in Kenya have policies and programs that address employee diversity
- Examine whether civil service in Kenya link workplace diversity concerns to organizational HR decisions
- Investigate whether the management of civil service in Kenya supports the promotion of culture that harness diversity issues at workplace.

6.Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

- Do civil service in Kenya keep diversity inventory of its workforce?
- Do civil service in Kenya have policies and programmes that address employment diversity?
- Do civil service in Kenya link workplace diversity concerns to organization's human resource decisions?
- Do the management of civil in Kenya support the promotion of the culture that harness diversity issues at workplace?

7. Scope Of The Study

The propositions of this study were tested in the civil service (that is, ministerial headquarters and/or representative offices) within Nairobi County. It covered all the 42 public ministries in Kenya, given that there is varying number of public ministries within Nairobi County.

8.Literature Review

The study adopted descriptive research approach due to its investigative nature. Both empirical and theoretical literatures were reevaluated to investigate the way in which diversity practices are exploited in the management of civil service in Kenya. The dependent variable was diversity management practices while independent variables were diversity inventory, diversity policies and programs, diversity based decisions, and management support for diversity issues.

9.Diversity Management: Definition And Context

Kreitner and Kinicki, (2001) describe diversity as the collection of many individual differences and similarities that exist among people. Grobler, (2002) also supports this view by adding that each individual is unique but also share any number of environmental or biological characteristics. Diversity refers to the coexistence of employees from various socio-cultural backgrounds within the company. Diversity includes cultural factors such as race, gender, age, colour, physical ability, ethnicity e.t.c. The broader definition of diversity may include age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, values, ethnic culture, education, language, lifestyle, beliefs, physical appearance and economic status (Loden, 1996).

Diversity management is an organizational setting in terms of a collective of individuals who differ from each other on one or any number of dimensions including culture, values, education, gender, marital status and age (Church, 1995).

10.Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework links diversity inventory, diversity policies and programs, diversity based decisions as well as management support to facilitate diversity management practices in the civil service of Kenya. The following is a graphic summary of conceptual framework.

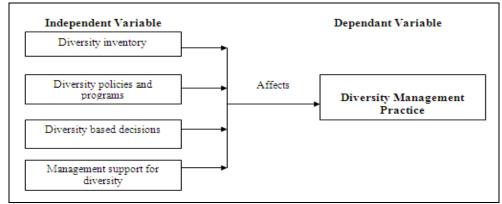


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

11.Methodology

This chapter describes the procedures that the researcher used in the study. It is comprised of research design, population, sampling, data collection, pre-testing, data analysis and presentation.

• Research Design

The study used descriptive research design which is preferred since it is carefully designed to ensure complete description of the situation, making sure that there is minimum bias in the collection of data and to reduce errors in interpreting the data collected (Meredith et al., 1989). According to Schindler and Cooper, (2003) descriptive study is concerned with finding out who, what, where and how of the variables, which was the concern of the research.

• Population

The population under study composed of all the public ministries in Kenya. The study interviewed staff and management in the all the human resource departments of the government ministries in Kenya. The population of the study therefore included the 42 ministries in the republic of Kenya.

Sampling

The study targeted human resource managers or any other officers in HRM departments who may be assigned the responsibilities of dealing with diversity management in the respective ministerial headquarters where all returns are made. This means that the respective ministries were the unit of observation. The study adopted a census approach and considered all the 42 ministries in the Republic of Kenya.

• Data Collection and Instrumentation

The study collected primary data through an interviewer administered questionnaires which contained both closed and open ended questions. On the other hand, secondary data were collected using reviews from both empirical and theoretical literatures existing. The literatures were sourced from various sources such as library, journals, internets and any other relevant databases.

• Pre-testing

A pilot study was done to enable the researcher to access the clarity of the instrument and its ease of use. Five (5) questionnaires were used for pre-testing; ideally, this test was done on the same kinds of people who were included in the main study. The results were used to locate possible ambiguities in instrumentation requiring further attention and clarity.

• Data Analysis and Presentation

The data were cleaned, coded and systematically organized in a manner that facilitated analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data were analysed by categorizing, tabulating and recombining evidences to address the research questions. Quantitative analysis was analysed through descriptive statistics like measure of central tendency to generate relevant percentages, frequency counts, mode, and median and mean where possible.

12. Findings And Discussions

12.1.Descriptive Analysis

12.1.1.Response Rate

Data was collected from the forty-two public ministries in Kenya. Thirty eight (38) ministries responded translating to 90% response rate which is regarded as overwhelming and hence yield a clearer picture of the objectives under investigation. This response rate is agreeable with Fincham, (2008) who asserted that a response rate of 50%-60% or greater is optimal. 10% non-response is attributed to mainly to the busy nature of the respondents since the units of observation in all ministries are senior staff/management.

12.2.Respondents Demographic Profile

12.2.1.Gender

A simple majority (53%) were female while 47% were men. These findings show that there is a fair gender distribution and therefore is a sign of diversity in itself. However, slightly higher number of females may be attributed to various massive gender mainstreaming efforts and activism across the land which agitate for the rights of women.

12.2.2.Respondents Age

The respondents' age was divided into different reasonable ranges from 18 to over 51 years. Of the 38 responses received, the majority of the respondents falls in the age bracket of 18 - 30, 50 and above both represented by 29% each, 24% belonged to 31 - 40 age group, while 18% were in the age bracket of between 41 - 50 years. Therefore, representation shows that people who participated in the study were mature and the majority of the workforce in the civil service in Kenya is comprised of mixed age groups and therefore an indication of workforce diversity. Hence, they were in a position to understand and give mature ideas/information.

12.2.3.Level Of Education

The highest level of education of the respondents was masters degree (24%) with the majority 39 % having undergraduate degrees, 21% of the respondents had diplomas/certificates, while O/A Level being the least account for only 16%. In addition to diversity emphasis, it was an indication that most of the respondents who were interviewed had sufficient knowledge on diversity. Hence, they gave an informed data for this study.

12.2.4. Number Of Years In Service

In the number of years worked in the civil service, majority 37% of the respondents had worked with the civil service for a period of between 1 to 10 years, while 24% had worked for less than 1 year and 21% had been with the civil service for over 21 years, whereas 18% of the respondents had worked for 11 - 20 years. From this outcome, it was understood that all levels of stakeholders were fairly covered in the study. This was an indication that respondents had vast experience and knowledge about diversity practices in the civil service, hence likely to provide accurate data for the study.

12.3.Diversity Inventory

12.3.1.Records On Workforce Diversity

The majority (58%) of the respondents indicated that their respective ministries kept diversity inventories while 42% of the respondents seemed not to have kept diversity inventories. This was a clear indication that government ministries in Kenya keep inventories of its workforce. Hence, is a sign of workforce diversity as it was in conformity with Hung and Ng, (2001) views that management begins by reviewing its current human resource status through a human resource inventory. Where, the input for this report is derived from forms completed by employees. This inventory therefore, enables management to assess what talents and skills are currently available in the organization.

12.3.2. Aspects Of Diversity In The Ministries

The majority of the government ministries pay attention to diversity aspects in the following sequence: gender (29%), educational background (25%), ethnicity (15%), tribalism (9%), professionalism (9%), geographical aspect/place of birth (9%), place of work/working environment (3%), and lastly family background (3%). This is a clear indication that when recruiting their staff, human resource management in government ministries, observe diversity aspects. The trend however continues to suggest that Kenyan government ministries are proportionally less positive about tribalism, professionalism, geographical aspect, place of work and family

Therefore, the government ministries have the mandate to improve and balance their diversity aspects so as to accommodate its workforce. This result is agreeable with Church, (1995) who asserts that diversity in an organizational setting is defined in terms of a collective of individuals who differ from each other on one or any number of dimensions including culture, values, education, gender, marital status and age.

12.3.3.Benefiting From Diversity

Majority (53%) of the respondents seemed to be benefiting from diversity management, while 47% of the respondents indicated that diversity management did not assist them in any way. This is an indication that once workforce diversity is embraced there will be also great positive outcomes as the new way of thinking will continue to penetrate our business environments as a result of changing demographics. These echoes further the benefits of diversity as outlined by (Ospina, 1996).

12.3.4.Establishment Of Diversity Inventories

On this question, there were equal divided opinions about this issue as 50% of the respondents pointed out that their respective ministries had plans to build/establish diversity inventories while the other 50% of the respondents thought the opposite. This indicates that there was need to redouble the efforts in planning for the establishment of diversity inventories.

12.3.5. Workforce Diversity Balance In Departments

Majority (71%) of the respondents stated that their departments did not have diversity balance in their workforce while the rest 29% indicated that their respective departments had plans to balance workforce diversity. This meant that employees working under these government departments/ministries were not diverse.

This from Kreitner and Kinicki, (2001) perspective, is not a good sign of workforce diversity management and can be dealt with through affirmative action which can be an artificial intervention aimed at giving management a chance to correct an imbalance, an injustice, a mistake or outright discrimination and that it does not foster a need to change leadership's thinking about diversity management.

12.4.Management Diversity Policies And Programs

12.4.1. Workplace Diversity Policies

Majority (71%) of the respondents indicated that there were no policies/programs that catered for diversity at their workplace; but only 29% of the respondents stated that there were some diversity policies/programs at their respective workplace. This was a sign that most ministries did not have proper policies/programs which catered for diversity of their workforce. This opposed Lieberman, (2008) views that organizations should truly support workforce balance with a combination of programs that support the balance they are advocating to their employees.

12.4.2. Diversity Policies/Programs In Civil Service

From the responses, some of the policies/programs found in the government ministries are practiced to the following percentages: recruitment policies (23%), management diversity policies (23%), management training programs (31%) and gender equality policies (23%). This was an indication that government ministries standardized their workplace diversity through management training programs frequently as compared to other policies/programs and therefore, an indication of diversity support.

12.4.3.Resourcing Policy And Diversity

Majority (61%) of the respondents revealed that the resourcing policies in their respective ministries were not sensitive to diversity issues, whereas, the rest 29% admitted that their ministries resourcing policies were sensitive towards diversity issues. This indicated that the government ministries' resourcing policy was not sensitive to diversity issues. If promotion on diversity policies especially the resourcing policy is not strengthened, this could pose a danger in ministries' workforce.

12.4.4.Reinforcement On Diversity Policies/Programs

Majority (68%) of the respondents indicated that their management did not reinforce diversity related policies/programs while 32% agreed that there was some reinforcement on diversity policies/programs. This response indicated that the government ministries did not support the available diversity policies/programs. From the responses which were given, these policies/programs could be reinforced through; adhering to all policies/programs; being accountable; use of external trainings like seminars; putting into consideration how the policies would affect management; and also an inclusively better working environment.

12.4.5.Penalties For Breach Of Diversity Regulations

Great number (74%) indicated that there were no consequences or sanctions granted on perpetrators in case of breach of policies and programs regulating workforce diversity. On the other hand minority 26% revealed that there was some aftermath given to perpetrators who breached workforce policies and programs in their respective ministries. This was an indication that management and employees in most government ministries in Kenya might continue to breach diversity related regulations with impunity. Some of the consequences that could be used to curb breach of diversity regulations were; suspects being fired; perpetrators being demoted; suspects being given warnings; as well as perpetrators being given transfers.

12.5.Diversity Based Decisions

12.5.1.Employees On Management Decision Making

Majority (84%) supported the idea of involving employees or employees' representatives in management decision making while 16% thought the opposite. This shows that most employees in government ministries advocate being included in management decision making. Hence, calls for more involvement in unlocking the full potential and commitment of the civil service workforce.

12.5.2.Employees' Influence In Decision Making

Majority (71%) of the respondents indicated that there would be great influence of diverse workforce to management when the government ministries consider including employees in decision-making, but only 29% felt that there was no impact in involving employees in management decision-making. This indicated that the government ministries employees were of opinion that their contribution in decision making will have great effects to the positive outcomes in the ministries. Thus, this can translate to the civil service in Kenya having more likely to benefit from diversity, than to suffer because of it.

12.5.3.Management Decision And Diversity

Majority (53%) of the respondents declined that the management decision was sensitive to the diversity within the workforce while 47% of the respondents stated that the management decision of their respective ministries were sensitive to diversity within the workplace. This was an indication that government ministries gave diversity issues a low regards. Maznevski, (1994) warns that diversity tension is often created because people feel that they are being marginalized or treated unfairly, and this signals that these problems have to be addressed.

12.5.4.Past Decision On Diversity Issues

Majority (76%) of the respondents noted that the employees in their respective ministries were not pleased with the past management decision made on diversity issues while only 24% indicated that they were pleased with the past decisions made on diversity issues. From these results, it is evident that government ministries do not value diversity based issues. Consequently, government ministerial managers will have to become increasingly more concerned with changing employee attitudes in order to reflect shifting perspectives on racial, gender and other diversity issues.

12.5.5.Diversity Issues And Management Decision

Majority (72%) suggested that the government ministries can consider having strong enforcement on diversity related issues, while another group (12%) proposed compulsory training on diversity issues to all employees and management in the government ministries and the rest (16%) recommended for proper policies and programs on diversity related issues. From these responses, there was an indication that the need to strongly enforce diversity related issues in government ministries of Kenya was high. This indicated that the few regulations which were found in government ministries were not followed to the latter, hence, causing threat and diversity imbalance in government ministries workforce.

12.6.Management Support For Diversity

12.6.1.HR Department And Diversity Management

Majority (61%) of the respondents indicated that their respective ministries applied workforce diversity management while 39% of the respondents declined that their ministries practiced workforce diversity management. This was an indicator that government ministries in Kenya practice workforce diversity management. This findings concurs with Kramer, (1991) that how well or how prepared managers are able to invest in the concept of diversity will impact not just on work issues but also on sensitivity to customer's needs, legal compliance, business' ethical issues, profitability and even social cohesion.

12.6.2.Contributors Of Diversity Issues In The Government Ministries

Majority (32%) of the responses indicated that diversity management issues were initiated by senior management, 28% by supervisors, 18% by board of directors, 14% by middle level management and the other 8% is other stakeholders' contributions. This was a clear indication that there was top management support and team work in the efforts of ensuring that diversity issues are established in government ministries.

12.6.3.Budget Committed To Diversity Programs

Majority (55%) of the respondents indicated that the ministries under which they worked had budgeted for diversity related programs; whereas 45% decline having any budget to cater for workforce diversity programs. This was an indication that government ministries had invested in programs to support diversity issues. Therefore, this is a sign of efforts in promoting skills and experience of workforce diversity issues in the government ministries, hence leading to best personnel as echoed by Carrel et al., (2006) that organizations that develop experience in and reputations for managing diversity will likely attract the best personnel.

12.6.4. Adequacy Of Budget For Diversity Management

Majority (68%) of the respondents revealed that the budget allocated to diversity programs in their respective ministries was not enough, whereas, 32% of the respondents indicated that the budget was adequate. This indicated that government ministries had set a side some finances for workforce diversity programs in the management of the civil service in Kenya although not sufficient to cater for diversity related issues. This can create concern that diversity programs may be disproportionately hit with the current budget cuts in the some of the government ministries.

12.6.5.Diversity Management Training

Majority (63%) of the respondents indicated that their respective ministerial management did not have adequate training on diversity issues, while 37% stated that their management had sufficient knowledge on diversity issues. This showed that there was a reassuring reason to advocate for more training on the diversity management in the civil service and the need to create workforce diversity awareness to all civil management staff. This is inline with Wright, (1995) views that diversity training is provided to develop managerial capabilities for interacting with subordinates and colleagues irrespective of demographic differences.

12.6.6.Employees And Diversity Awareness

Majority (55%) of the respondents stated that most of the government employees in their respective ministries were not aware of diversity issues, whilst 45% of the respondents interviewed noted that the employees in their respective ministries were aware of diversity issues. The results indicated that the government ministries employees were ignorant of diversity related issues; hence, it calls for sensitization and/or training of government employees on diversity related issues.

12.6.7. Diversity Issues Expert

Majority (66%) of the respondents indicated that their ministries were not ready to appoint any officer to be dealing with diversity issues in the department of their respective ministries while the remaining 34% indicated that there were plans of appointing diversity expert. From these outcomes, there is a clear indication that the government ministries employees might continue being uninformed of diversity related issues due to lack of enough information from the experts as well as support from the management, this results therefore, reveals deeper shades of working together in diverse settings. It is evident that managers, as well as staff members, have to be empowered to perform effectively.

13.Conclusion

The conclusions derived from this study are presented below:

- Civil service in public ministries do not have a better understanding of the different groups which can lead to creation and strengthening of diversity balance in workplace keeping of proper diversity inventories.
- Proper formulation of diversity policies and inclusion of different views and ways at workplace can help come up with viable and strong rules to regulate diversity based issues.
- Kenyan government ministries have not done much in eradicating prejudices and biases as well as empowering all employees on diversity issues whereas this can result to better performance and hence high production.
- Support from management and all stakeholders is the key to success in dealing with diversity issues.

14.Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were made:

- The government ministries should establish or come up with proper plans of keeping diversity inventories and this should include all major diversity aspects that can enable them accommodate their employees' differences.
- There should be strong, viable and workable policies/programs to regulate diversity in all the government ministries; this can be done by involving experts in diversity field. There is also need for government ministries to establish solid penalties to be given to those who breach diversity rules and regulations.
- Decision makers in the Kenyan government ministries should incorporate employees in decision making as this is one of the foremost contributing variables towards good performance.
- The management of government ministries should show support towards diversity issues as workforce diversity needs to
 encompass the status quo that is supportive to any formulation of new ideas in order to respond to an ever-changing work
 environment in civil service.

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