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Employee Empowerment Initiatives Employed in the Ministry of State for Public Service, Kenya

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Abstract:
This study was carried out to help management in the Ministry of State for Public Service understands the manner in which it could enhance and facilitate employee empowerment in the ministry. The study sought to establish the employee empowerment initiatives employed in the MSPS and the extent to which the initiatives were applied in the Ministry. Employee empowerment has been necessitated by the unprecedented changes taking place in the economic environment requiring managers to be flexible in the way they manage in order to facilitate speedy decision making. Ministry of State for Public Service was chosen as the context of the study as it was the one mandated to provide policy guideline in Human Resource Management and Development in the public service in Kenya and could be instrumental in the implementation of employee empowerment in the public sector.

The study involved 66 respondents from the Ministry drawn from all cadres of staff. The data was collected using a structured questionnaire comprising of both closed and open-ended questions administered through self-administered basis. The data was analyzed using factor analysis by use of SPSS software. Descriptive statistics in form of means, std. deviations and percentages were used. The findings of the study revealed that upward problem solving, downward decision making, representation is some of the empowerment practices employed in the ministry. Financial empowerment was note popularly applied. Notable also were discrepancies in application across different cadres. This could be attributed to different nature of work and skills among staff in different levels of management. However, it would necessary to carry out further research to establish the cause of the discrepancy.

In general, the study had been a success and will go a long way in shedding light on how to improve employee empowerment both in public and private sectors. It will also provide insight for further studies on the topic in the future.

Keywords: Employee empowerment, empowerment initiatives

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Changes taking place in the economic environment are changing the way firms are managed. Organizations today must grapple with revolutionary trends: accelerating product and technological change, globalized competition, deregulation, demographic changes and trends towards a service society and the information age (Price, 2007). These trends have changed the playing field on which firms must compete. In particular they have dramatically increased the degree of competition in virtually all industries while forcing firms to cope with unprecedented product innovation and technological change.

In the companies that had responded to these challenges new modes of managing had emerged. In particular a lot of emphasis has been given to the management of human resource. This followed the realization that human resource is unique in that, it is valuable, rare, and imperfectly imitable and has no substitute (Khatri, 2000). It gives an organization competitive advantage. Managers appreciate the importance of empowering employees by giving them skills and authority to make decisions that affect them at operational level. This enables them to respond quickly to customers' needs while availing adequate time to managers to concentrate on more critical issues. It also results to increased job satisfaction, loyalty, commitment and trust amongst employees and managers and ultimately to increased productivity and efficiency.

The process of empowerment is a complicated one and must be managed skillfully in order for it to succeed. Certain conditions exist that may facilitate or inhibit successful implementation of the programme. Such conditions may be attitudinal, structural or may be as a result of lack of the requisite skills and knowledge ideal for empowerment (Nikodym, Warren, Simmonetti, Welling 1994). It is only through mutual trust, understanding and cooperation between managers and employees that the programme of empowerment can be effective.

Employee empowerment is a complicated concept with different meanings to different people and contexts. Various authors have come up with different definitions. Ettore (1997) defines employee empowerment as employees having autonomous decision-making capabilities and acting as partners in the business, all with an eye to the bottom line. Du Gay and Salaman (1992:625) state that the concept of empowerment is to make meaning for people by encouraging them to believe that they have control over their own lives, that no matter what position they may hold within an organization their contribution is vital, not only to the success of the company, but also to the enterprise of their own lives.

The process of empowerment entails providing employees with the skills and authority to make decisions that would traditionally be made by managers (Gomez, Balkin, Cardy 2010). Claydon and Doyle (1996:3) point out that empowerment connects with organizational learning. Thus, more open communication, shared problem solving geared towards continuous improvements and a willingness to explore existing organizational arrangements to critical scrutiny imply more democratic, less authoritarian and bureaucratic work relations (Claydon and Doyle, 1996:4).

The goal of empowerment is for an organization to have enthusiastic, committed people who perform their work ably because they believe in it and enjoy doing it. This is in contrast to an organization that gets people to work as an act of compliance. Empowerment can encourage employees to be creative and to take risks, which are key components that can give a firm a competitive edge in a fast-challenging environment (Gomez et al., 2010). Empowering employees also means that managers lose some control and must learn to accommodate a more questioning and risk – taking work force (Arkin, 1995). According to Marchington and Goodman (1992), employee empowerment consists of those practices which are initiated principally by management and are designed to increase employee information about, and commitment to the organization.

Certain factors and conditions exist that affect the effectiveness of employee empowerment programme. If these conditions are not managed skillfully attempts to implement the programme may fail (Nikodym et al. 1994). Empowerment like quality management programmes is a culture change initiative. Values, attitudes and employee expectations have an impact on the empowerment programme (Beardwell & Holden, 1997; Nikodym et al.1994). Empowerment practices are dependent on cultural environment on which they are introduced. Leadership/ management style highly affect the programme, so does the organizational structure. Environment under which the programme is introduced also affect the effectiveness of the programme. What can suit well in a mechanistic environment may not be appropriate under an organic environment (Quinn & Spreitzer 1997).

The size, type and sector of the organization also influence the level and nature of empowerment programme. What may work in a small firm may not be appropriate for a large bureaucratic organization. What may work in a democratic organizational culture will probably be unsuccessful in a more authoritarian one (Wilkinson, 1989). It is important for managers to understand these conditions and manage them skillfully for the programme to be successful. Managers must be willing to concede some of their authority to front line employees and provide proper feed back to show that employees are really listened to and not in a lip service fashion. Action must be taken which reinforce the view amongst the work force that their contributions are well received (Beardwell and Holden, 1997)

The MSPS is under the office of the Prime Minister. The circular on organization of government of May 2008 mandated the MSPS to provide strategic leadership and guidance to the public service on human resource management and development. The Ministry's core functions are: to formulate human resource management and development policies, rules and regulations in the public service on organization structures, ministerial functions, staffing levels, development and review of schemes of service as well as career guidelines. It is also responsible for training and capacity building in the public service. It initiates and coordinates human resource management reforms in the public service and reviews harmonize and update terms and conditions of service for the public service. It provides guidelines and monitor payroll and human resource records in the public service (MSPS, strategic plan, 2008 – 2012).

The ministry top leadership organ constitutes of the Minister, Assistant Minister, Permanent Secretary and a number of directors who are in charge of various departments and units in the Ministry. The current organizational structure of the ministry comprises of Human Resource Management (HRM), Human Resource Development (HRD), Management Consultancy Services (MCS), Central Services Unit (CSU), Permanent Public Service Remuneration Review Board, Government Training Institutes (Mombasa, Matuga, Embu & Baringo) and Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA) is also under the Ministry but is semi-autonomous, and Kenya Development Learning Center (KDLC) (MSPS, strategic plan, 2008-2012)

1.2. Research Problem

Human resources are one of the most critical capital to any organization be it labour intensive or capital intensive. It is the only resource which cannot be copied (Khatri, 2000: 338). It therefore enables an organization to gain competitive advantage. The physical resources such as land, machinery and finance require competent human resources for them to be employed efficiently and effectively.

Organization development and success requires involvement of all its employees as they pursue organizational objectives. This calls for a human resource management strategy that increases individuals' discretion over how they do their work. Employee empowerment provides opportunities for employees to participate in decision making process in matters that affect them and their work environment. It is a form of delegation that enables work decisions to be taken as near as possible to the operating units and their customers (G. A. Cole, 2002).

The Ministry of State for Public Service like any other government institution was characterized by lengthy bureaucratic procedures and processes aimed and ensuring that government resources were managed in a transparent and accountable manner. The Ministry, however, could not been spared from the changes taking place in the economic environment such as technological and demographic changes, globalization and increased accessibility to information among other changes. These and the increased desire by employees to be involved in the decision-making process implied that the government and the Ministry of state for public service in particular had to change the manner in which it manages its affairs. The Ministry had to come up with various mechanisms for empowering its employees without compromising on transparency and accountability.

This study sought to establish the employee empowerment initiatives employed in the MSPS and the extent to which the initiatives were applied in the Ministry. The study therefore sought to answer the following questions: What were the employee empowerment initiatives employed in the Ministry of State for Public Service and what was the extent to which the initiatives were applied?

The study would shed more light on the employee empowerment initiatives employed in the ministry and the extent to which they were employed and make critical decisions for improvement if found necessary. The study also provides very useful information to other public and private organizations that could be used as the basis for introduction or improvement of employee empowerment programmes in the organizations. The study could as well provide useful information to academicians in enriching their knowledge on the topic and could form the basis for further study and/ or future reference.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Employee Empowerment

Review of literature indicated that employee empowerment involves devolving power and responsibilities to teams at work place or customer level (Arkin, 1995). G. A Cole (2002) described empowerment as a method of delegation that allows work decisions to be made as near as possible to customers. Bowen and Lawler (1992) define employee empowerment as sharing with front line employees four organizational ingredients: the information about the organization's performance: knowledge that enables the employees to understand and contribute to organizational performance: rewards based on organization's performance and power to make decisions that influence organizational direction and performance. They suggested that empowerment exists when organizations implement practices that distribute power, information, knowledge and rewards throughout the organization (Bowen & Lawler, 1995: 73). This implied that for empowerment to exist the leadership of organizations should delegate power, develop effective two-way communication channels, be committed to training and building capacity of its staff through engagement in decision making and introduction of performance-based incentives.

According to Stahl (1995), empowerment requires an organization to create a culture where people have the knowledge, skills, authority and desire to decide, act and take responsibility for results of their actions and for their contribution to the success of the company.

There are other researchers who have taken a more skeptical view and see empowerment as a management control tool essential for achievement of maximum organizational potential. Rose (2001:5) defines power as the extent to which one party to a relationship can compel the other party to do something he would not have otherwise done voluntarily. Another skeptical viewpoint sees the delayering of organizational structure as aimed at adding further burden of responsibility to employees without increasing pay levels or status of workers (Hyman and Mason, 1995:387). Hales and Klidas (1998) asserted that empowerment entails some additional employee choice at the margins of their jobs rather than any substantial increase in employee voice. However, despite such cynical viewpoint many researchers still belief empowerment does exist in many organizations and results to increased job satisfaction and improved performance while increasing employee commitment to the organization.

According to Beardwell and Holden (1997), employee empowerment is part and parcel of overall culture change which involves delayering, creation of flatter organization structure, improvements in communications and devolvement of authority to the operational units and customer level. To empower employees is to gain their commitment to the organizational goals and to enable them to take responsibility for their roles and functions within the organization (Beardwell and Holden, 1997). Gomez et al (2010) observed that empowerment can encourage employees to be creative and to take risks which are key components that can give an organization competitive advantage.

2.2. Employee Empowerment Initiatives

Various employee empowerment initiatives were identified as; upward problem solving, downward decision making, representation and financial empowerment. Upward problem solving is designed for the purpose of capturing ideas and solving production problems (Marchington et al, 1992). It is in the form of suggestion schemes, problem solving groups such as quality circles and attitude surveys. Task-based participation, team working and self-management could also be considered here (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2005). Suggestion schemes work on the principle that employees submit their suggestions, say in a suggestion box, the suggestion is reviewed by a manager and a decision to accept or reject it is made. If accepted the employee generally receives a financial reward.

According to Butler and Glover, Problem solving groups are generally small in nature and people meet on a voluntary basis. The purpose of problem solving groups is to identify quality or work-related problems and explore solutions to such problems. Unlike suggestion schemes no financial rewards for ideas generated by problem solving groups. Task-based participation, another form of upward solving mechanisms, can occur both horizontally and vertically. Horizontal participation popularly known as job enlargement involve engagement of employees in a wider variety of tasks. Vertical participation or job enrichment means that employees may be trained to undertake tasks at a higher skill level or they may be given managerial or supervisory responsibilities (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2005). Team working implies that employees are no longer restricted to strict job demarcation. It emphasizes functional flexibility and multi-skilling.

Another form of employee empowerment initiative is downward decision making (Marchington et al (1992). This initiative takes the form of top-down communication from management to employees. It is usually in the form of company Newspapers, meetings, team briefings and the use of intranet. Others include notice boards, Newsletters, emails and employee surveys. Holden (2004) explains that team briefing systems are normally used to cascade managerial messages down the organization. He asserted that though they are essentially top-down forms of communication employees are given a chance to ask questions or even lodge comments, queries or concern.

Butler and Glover observed that Newsletters are widely used in the public sector. Holden (2004) notes that though widely used Newsletters have limitations in that management retain editorial control making them unsuitable forum for employees to air their grievances. Butler and Glover observed that the use of intranets and email is becoming popular as time goes by. Employee surveys were said to be popular in the public sector. In a nutshell studies have shown that many companies have infrastructure for downward communication but effectiveness of such infrastructure depends highly on how well they are applied (Glover, 2001).

Another form of employee empowerment is financial participation which means that employees have a financial stake in the company. It aims at enhancing the employee motivation and commitment to the organization by linking the performance of the organization to that of the employee (Holden, 2004). Marchington et al., (1992:13) suggests that schemes such as profit-sharing, employee share ownership and organization-wide bonus arrangements are some of financial rewards used in the empowerment process. While some researchers/authors have considered financial rewards as key to empowerment others have come up with contradicting findings.

Gennard and Judge (2005) observe that it is difficult to create a clear identifiable link between effort and reward. Some individuals may feel that their efforts are not adequately reflected in the profit that they share. Also, the gap between the day the activities are carried out and the reward is given make it difficult for employees to relate the reward to the efforts. Profit-related pay works on the basis that a proportion of employees pay is linked to the overall profits of the company. In practice profit –related pay can be difficult to calculate particularly if the jobs are of an intermittent nature.

Burke (1986) argues that intrinsic reward provided by way of informal, spontaneous and immediate praise upon exemplary behavior is likely to be more effective than extrinsic rewards provided by formal incentive systems, promotions and the like. Klidas et al. (2004) in their research, Managing Employee Empowerment in luxury Hotels in Europe, pointed out that management should align the reward system to the empowerment process by instituting rewards for excellence in customer care, for example "employee of the year award".

Representative participation is another way of empowering employees. This refers to mechanisms for indirect participation such as work councils, trade unions, consultative committees and co-determination. They aim at increasing the influence of employees vis-à-vis the employer rather than being concerned with technical issues of corporate efficiency. Representative participation is fundamentally power-oriented. It is typically about joint decision making (Blyton and Turnbull, 2004:59). Representative participation is likely to give employees access to a relatively higher order range of decisions. It is therefore viewed as a political process contributing to a high-level decision making as opposed to the social-technical nature of employee involvement which restrict tangible employee influence to narrow production issues.

Representative participation unlike the other forms of empowerment is based on the principle of pluralism while the others tend to be individualistic in nature. Trade unions are an important mechanism for representative participation and terms such as social partnership and partnerships are widely used (Ackers and Payne, 1998; Guest and Peccei, 2001; Martinez and Stuart, 2002). Traditionally the relationship between employers and employees was characterized by mistrust and hostility. However recent findings by Cully et al (1999) noted that an active and strong trade union presence requires high commitment management practices. The study indicated positive links between high performance and trade union representation.

There exist three levels of consultation according to Butler and Glover: high, middle and low levels. They asserted that it is only in high level consultations that management takes workers views seriously and is likely to modify plans accordingly. The other levels of consultation are viewed as "pseudo participation" where representatives have a chance to voice their views but these may not necessarily be adopted by the management. Martinez and Stuart (2002) observed that there is often a gap between the rhetoric of partnership and the experiences of trade unionists on the ground. Suff and Williams (2004) concluded that the reality of market relations and the balance of power in the employment relationships imply that genuine mutuality is likely to be unobtainable in practice.

Employee empowerment is associated with benefits such as improved employer-employee relationship as employees participate in goal setting and in deciding the means to achieve them.

Miller and Monge reported a positive correlation between participation and job satisfaction in studies conducted in organizational settings that incorporated measures of multiple issue participation. Nikodym et al., (1994) reported that some studies have found that participation in work decisions generates a more positive attitude towards supervisors and the company. They further reported that though results of some studies are mixed there seem to be positive trend towards job satisfaction when consultative participation is used. Informal participation arising from interpersonal relationships is reported to be positively related to job satisfaction, motivation and commitment. Likewise, employee ownership has been found to have a positive relationship with organizational performance (Nikodym et al., 1994).

Smith and Brannick also felt that participation causes greater job satisfaction because employees feel more valued and trusted by management and because they gain a better understanding of management difficulties by dealing with some of the same problems. Schuler suggest that increased participation in decision making reduces role conflict and ambiguity. Since role conflict and ambiguity affect emotional strain then one way of reducing job strain has been participation in decision making.

Beardwell and Holden (1997) indicated that employee empowerment changes the managers' mindset and leaves them with more time to engage in broad- based thinking, visioning and nurturing. They suggest that upward problem-solving forms of communication are most associated with new managerial initiatives and clearly aimed at increasing employee motivation and influence. They also aim to boost employee morale, loyalty and commitment with a view to increasing service and efficiency. Employee empowerment programmes are also said to facilitate acceptance of changes in work practices, functional flexibility and new technology as well as engendering an atmosphere conducive to co-operation and team building (Shipper and Manz, 1992)

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design
This is a survey study design. A survey is an efficient method of collecting data from a broad spectrum of individuals and social settings. The design was selected because of its versatility and ability to lead to a large sample (Ross, 1990)

3.2. Population of the Study
The target population of this study was composed of all employees of the Ministry of State for Public Service. There was a total of 660 employees as listed in the payroll (June 2011). The employees were distributed throughout the ministry's six units and four GTI's. The employees were categorized into four cadres' namely senior and lower management, technical and support staff. The staff of the ministry was of diverse technical and professional skills thus making it quite appropriate for the study. The respondents were drawn from all the units/and GTIs and covered all the four cadres of staff.

3.3. Sampling
A sample constituting 10% of the target population was used. This gave a total of 66 respondents drawn from all cadres of staff (senior management, lower management, technical staff and support staff) in the Ministry. A sample size of 10% was considered ideal for descriptive studies (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). This was to ensure that the sample was representative of the target population while taking care of time and cost constraints. A stratified sampling technique was used where the target population was sub-divided into strata of the different cadres of staff in the ministry.

Cadres of Staff	Strata Size	Sample Size (10% of Target Population)
Senior Management J/G P and above	96	10
Lower Management J/G L-N	128	13
Technical Staff J/G H-K	204	20
Support Staff J/G G and below	232	23
Total	660	66

Table 1: Sample for the Study

3.4. Data Collection
Primary data was used to obtain information necessary for achievement of the objectives of the study. The data was obtained through a structured questionnaire, comprising of open-ended and closed questions. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, 1, 2 and 3. Section 1 was designed to obtain general information on person and organizational profile. Section 2 consisted of questions on employee empowerment practices and section 3 consisted of questions on factors influencing employee empowerment programme. The questionnaire was administered through "drop and pick later basis".

3.5. Data Analysis
Before analysis, the data collected was checked for completeness and consistency. Descriptive statistics such as means, std. deviations and percentages are used to analyze the data. The results are presented in form of tables where appropriate. Factor analysis by use of SPSS has been used in the analysis.

Factor analysis is a general term for several computational techniques. All these techniques reduce to a manageable number many variables that are related and have overlapping measurement characteristics. The predictor-criterion relationship that was found in the dependence situation is replaced by a matrix of inter-correlations among several variables, none of which is seen as being dependent on another.

4. Data Analysis, Results and Discussions

4.1. Response Rate

During data collection, a total of 66 questionnaires were given out to respective respondents. Out of these 59 or 89.4% of the total questionnaires given out were filled and returned. 7 questionnaires or 10.6% of the total questionnaires were never returned even after several follow up visits were made. Out of the 59 questionnaires returned, 2 were considered spoilt as most of the relevant information sought was not given leaving a total of 57 questionnaires or 86.4% of the total for analysis. This response rate was considered adequate to enable the researcher achieve the objectives of the study as it was above 50%. A response rate of above 50% is considered adequate to lead to conclusive findings.

4.2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

4.2.1. Gender of Respondents

Majority of respondents were female but on average there was an even distribution across gender.

Gender	Frequency
Female	32
Male	25
Total	57

Table 2: Gender of Respondents

The above analysis shows that the population is fairly evenly distributed with regard to gender. This will enable the researcher make conclusions on whether gender has any influence on employee empowerment in the Ministry of State for Public Service and ensure fair representation based on gender.

4.2.2. Department under Which Respondents Work

The analysis shows that respondents were fairly evenly distributed across all departments as indicated by the table below.

Department	Frequency
Human Resource Management	10
Human Resource Development	10
Administration	10
Central services Unit	7
Management Consultancy Services	7
Government Training Institutes	9
PPSRRB	4
Total	57

Table 3: Department under Which Respondents Work

This ensures that all the departments were represented and also enables the researcher make judgment as to whether departmental groupings have any impact on employee empowerment.

4.2.3. Respondents Employment Position in the Ministry

The questionnaires were distributed proportionately to the number of employees in each cadre of employment.

Cadres of Staff	Frequency	Percent
Senior Management	8	14.0
Lower Management	13	22.8
Technical Support staff	20	35.1
Subordinate staff	16	28.1
Total	57	100.0

Table 4: Respondents Employment Position In The Ministry

A response rate of above 50% was registered for each cadre of staff and was considered adequate to help the researcher arrive at conclusive results as to the influence the position of employment had on employee empowerment.

4.2.4. Age Bracket of the Respondents
Majority of respondents fall in the age bracket of 41 to 50 years, followed by those in the age bracket of 31 to 40 years as shown in the table below.

Age	Frequency
21 to 30 years	6
31 to 40 years	18
41 to 50 years	22
Over 50 years	11
Total	57

Table 5: Age Bracket of the Respondents

This implies that majority of employees in the ministry have a wide range of experience, are more likely to appreciate the importance of the study and be objective and serious while providing the required information.

4.2.5. Number Of Years Worked In The Current Position
The analysis shows that majority of respondents have worked in their current position for between 2 to 5 years as indicated by the table below.

No. of Years in Current Position	Frequency
Less than 2 years	7
2 to 5 years	39
6 to 10 years	7
Over 10 years	4
Total	57

Table 6: Number of Years Worked in the Current Position

This means that majority have mastered the operations of their department and understood all aspects of the job hence the ability of the respondents to answer most of the questions objectively. This will enable the researcher make judgment as to whether employee empowerment practices do vary with years of experience.

4.2.6. Education Level of Respondent
Majority of the respondents had attained at least college level of   education as shown in the table below. They were therefore able to answer the questions objectively and the researcher was able to make judgment as to the influence employees' level of education has on employee empowerment.

Level of Education	Frequency
Secondary	6
College	29
University	22
Total	57

Table 7: Education Level of Respondents

4.3. Employee Empowerment Practices

4.3.1. Policy Guideline
Majority of the respondents agreed that there is policy guideline on employee empowerment in the ministry. This shows management commitment to enhancing and supporting employee empowerment.

4.3.2. Methods of Communication Used by the Ministry
The analysis shows that various forms of communication are widely used in the ministry, with circulars and memos being the most used forms of communication, followed by the Newsletters, and meetings and letters in that order.

Methods of Communication	No. of Respondents
Circulars and Memos	56
Verbal briefings (meetings)	48
Weekly bulletins	39
Ministry Magazines	46
committees	41
Newsletters	49
Letters, Emails, verbal etc	48

Table 8: Methods of Communication Used by the Ministry

The presence of well established channels of communication is evident that downward and upward problem-solving forms of participation do exist in the ministry as well as representative participation in the form of committees.

4.3.3. Employee Empowerment Practices
The analysis shows that different forms of empowerment are employed in the ministry as shown by the table below.

Statements	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
I understand all aspects of my job particularly in relation to the overall goal of the ministry	4.5263	.73449
I perform my job without being pressured or coerced by my supervisor	4.5965	.72849
I work efficiently with very minimal supervision	4.8070	.39815
My supervisor delegates both authority and responsibility to me	3.7018	1.38828
I regularly make certain decisions without seeking approval from my supervisor	3.5000	1.36182
I have significant autonomy in determining how i do my work	3.2500	1.44285
I am always accountable for the results of my actions / decisions	4.6786	.74118
I am always informed about what is going on in the ministry	3.5439	1.35053
I always participate in the goal setting process	3.3684	1.45935
I always discuss my progress with my supervisor	4.1228	1.15062
I receive feedback on my performance timely and conveniently	3.8421	1.36001
My supervisor encourages team working	4.3929	1.00324
I interact freely and in a friendly manner with my supervisor and co- workers	4.2632	1.14215
There are established channels of communication that facilitates co-operation, understanding and co-ordination	4.1579	1.08215
My problems/ issues are sufficiently addressed through these channels	3.8246	1.15144
Suggestion/ complaint boxes are in use in my ministry/ department	3.2281	1.65850
My suggestions are always considered	2.8772	1.33724

Statements	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
I do other activities beside my core role	3.9825	1.10988
I voluntarily participate in problem solving groups with my colleagues	3.6140	1.31956
My department/ employer administers attitude surveys periodically	3.1053	1.48425

Table 9: Employee Empowerment Practices

Upward problem solving does exist as the respondents indicated that they are always accountable for the results of their actions/decisions recording a mean score of 4.6; that their supervisors delegate both responsibilities and authority with a mean score of 3.7 and that they receive regular feedback on their performance with a mean score of 3.8. They also asserted that they do perform other activities beside their core role recording a mean score of 3.9 and that they work efficiently with very minimal supervision recording a mean score of 4.8. These high mean scores recorded are evidence that task-based participation is employed in the ministry with both horizontal and vertical participation emphasized as Marchington and Wilkinson (2005) stated that upward problem-solving participation takes the form of task participation, team working and problem-solving groups.

Team working and problem-solving groups are other forms of upward problem-solving participation employed in the ministry with mean scores of 4.3 and 3.6 recorded respectively. Self-management participation also exists as respondents indicated that they perform their jobs without being pressured by their supervisors recording a mean score of 4.5. These are evidence of existence of upward problem-solving participation in the ministry. However, the ministry does not give much emphasize to suggestion schemes as only very few respondents agreed that suggestion boxes are employed in their departments and that their suggestions are considered during decision making recording low mean scores of 3.2 and 2.8 respectively.

The analysis also confirms the presence of downward participation. The respondents indicated that there are established channels of communication that enhances understanding, co-operation and co-ordination recording a mean score of 4.1. The presence of team working as indicated by a mean score of 4.3 imply that team briefing sessions could be applied as Holden (2004) asserted that team briefing are used to cascade managerial messages down the organization The presence of well established channels of communication in form of Newsletters, magazines, circulars, committees and others as indicated by table 4.4.2 are evidence that downward participation is employed in the ministry as Marchington et al.,(1992) asserts that they facilitate communication from management to employees.

The existence of committees as shown by table 4.4.2 is a proof that representative participation is employed in the ministry as Blyton and Turnbull, (2004) assert that representative participation refers to mechanisms for indirect participation and is in the form of work councils, consultative committees and trade unions among other forms.   Financial participation is however not given much emphasizes as indicated by the poor response shown on table 4.4.3. The small tokens given at year end are nothing to mention about. It is important to note that employees do not have to participate in all forms of participation to be said to be empowered.

4.4.1. Response on Extra Compensation for Extra Work Done
Majority of the respondents, 80.7% were of the opinion that no such compensation is ever given. Only 19.3% indicated that compensation on extra work is given as shown by the table below.

Extra Compensation	Frequency	Percent
Yes	11	19.3
No	46	80.7
Total	57	100.0

Table 10: Response on Whether Extra Compensation Is Given for Extra Work Done

Even they were of the opinion that, the compensation given in form of gifts and tokens at year end is not anything to mention about. This is an indication that though the ministry is committed to employee empowerment, financial empowerment has not been given much emphasize and this does not augur well with employees. Holden (2004) suggests that financial incentives that link organization performance with employee performance should be given so as to enhance employee motivation and commitment to the organization.
4.5. Response on the Extent to Which the Respondents Consider Employee Empowerment in the Ministry a Success
Overall the research findings show that some degree of employee empowerment exists in the Ministry of State for Public Service with responses ranging from to a very great extent to a small extent as shown by the table below.

Extent of Empowerment	Frequency
To a very great extent	10
To a great extent	19
To a moderate Extent	16
To a small extent	10
Not at all	1
Missing System	1
Total	57

Table 11: Extent to Which the Respondents Consider Employee Empowerment in the Ministry a Success

Majority of the respondents believe that employee empowerment is employed at least to a moderate extent while only a few felt that employee empowerment is only employed to a small extent. This divergence of views may be attributed to different demographic characteristics as Lewis (1994) stated that empowerment is affected by the levels of skills and knowledge among employees. Employees with lower level of education and lacking in experience may not enjoy the same privileges of empowerment as enjoyed by employees with wide range of experience and higher level of education hence the divergence of views.

5. Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Summary of Findings

The research findings aim at achieving the objectives of the study. The objectives of the study are to establish the extent of employee empowerment and factors that influence employee empowerment in the Ministry of State for Public Service. The study establishes that there was a fair representation of the population across gender and department and only one department recorded low representation. With respect to age majority are in the age brackets of 41-50 and 31-40 years implying that they have a wide range of experience and exposure and more likely to appreciate the importance of the study. Most of them have been in their current position for more than 2 years and have attained at least college level of education which further emphasizes their wide experience and that they are well informed.

With regard to employee empowerment practices three forms of participation are employed in the ministry with an exception of financial participation as no extra compensation is given for extra work done. Upward problem-solving participation exists through job enlargement and enrichment; team working and problem-solving groups do exist. However, suggestion schemes have not been given much attention and only very few respondents agree that they were employed. Downward participation was also employed as supported by the presence of well established channels of communication in forms of Newsletters, circulars, magazines and others as well as representative participation as indicated by the strong support of existence of committees by respondents.

The findings confirm that there are well established frameworks within which employee empowerment is built. From an individual perspective, employees' perceptions, beliefs and experiences show that individual empowerment exists as employees have a very strong sense of competence, self-determination, control and a sense of impact. From an organizational perspective management support and commitment is evident from the fact that a policy guideline on employee empowerment existed and supervisors were willing to delegate responsibilities and authority to their subordinates.

A supportive empowerment culture is also evident in the ministry. The respondents agree that the relationship with their supervisors is characterized by friendliness, understanding, trust and openness and that well established channels of communication enhance co-operation and co-ordination. The existence of modern information and communication technology is evident of management commitment to investing in technology thus encouraging creativity and innovation and encouraging employees to improve their skills and knowledge by accessing online information through websites, internets and intranets.

The ministry's structure is supportive of employee empowerment in that the respondents agreed that they make certain decisions without seeking approval from their supervisors; that supervisors delegate both responsibilities and authority and that the reporting structure put in place actually facilitates speedy decision making. The management also encourages team working and individuals have control of their work implying that there is little direct supervision.

The ministry according to respondents had well established channels of communication in form of newsletters, circulars, weekly bulletin, magazines and meetings among many others. All these ensure that employees have access to relevant strategic information that enables them to perform their jobs effectively and receive adequate feedback on their performance. All the above are the frameworks that support employee empowerment in the ministry.

It is important to note that employees do not have to be enjoying all the privileges associated with employee empowerment for them to be said to be empowered. So long as they are exposed to a substantial number of them then they are empowered. This is because the manner in which a job is done greatly depends on the skill levels of the employees. This however does not mean that the management cannot narrow the gap by providing employees with relevant skills.

5.2. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the management of the Ministry of State for Public Service is committed and supports employee empowerment and has put in place measures that facilitate employee empowerment. The ministry's structure, culture and established channels of communication are very supportive to employee empowerment. Also, management support and guidance and employee perceptions are quite favourable for employee empowerment in the ministry. However, there is a wide discrepancy in the manner these components are employed as indicated by high std. deviations. This means that some practices are made available to employee in some demographic characteristics but not to others.

Another conclusion arrived at is that downward, upward problem solving and representative participation are practiced in the ministry. However financial participation is lacking as no compensation is given for extra work done or exceeding targets. In summary the management in the Ministry of State for Public Service is committed to enhancing and supporting employee empowerment and has put in place measures to support this notion. The factors that influence employee empowerment are employed in the ministry although it appears that some discrepancies in the manner in which they are employed exist.

5.3. Recommendations

The recommendations given are meant for policy makers in the Ministry of State for Public Service and other ministries, parastatals and other private organizations. They are also meant for employees in the ministry and other organizations as well as researchers who would wish to carry out a research on the topic in the future. The research findings show that the management in the Ministry of state for Public Service is committed to encouraging and supporting employee empowerment in the ministry. This is evident from the high ranking registered in most statements.

However, the high std. deviations recorded in most statements show that some measures are not employed evenly throughout the organization or across different demographic characteristics of employees. The management must investigate the reasons behind such discrepancies and put in place measures to narrow this gap. Also notable is the absence of financial incentives to enhance employee empowerment. From the findings it is obvious that no extra compensation is given to employees for extra work done or exceeding targets. The management should put in place systems to ensure that employees are compensated for their extra efforts.

This study only focused on establishing the employee empowerment initiatives employed in the Ministry of State for Public Service and the extent of application of those initiatives. Further studies could be extended to other ministries, parastatals and even private organizations in order to establish the consistency in findings and if not to establish the causes of the discrepancies. Since employee empowerment is not an end by itself, another study could be done to establish the effects of employee empowerment on the performance of the Ministry of State for Public Service.

Another recommendation derived from the findings is that employees must be made to understand their role in employee empowerment programme. Employee empowerment starts with employees as individuals knowing and appreciating that their contributions in making employee empowerment a success is vital. Employees must have a sense of self-determination, competence, control and must find a meaning in their work role for employee empowerment to succeed. They must take initiative to empower themselves through training, seeking mentoring services and accepting responsibilities and control of their work. This would go a long way in reducing the amount of discrepancies registered by the high std. deviations. In summary a high level of employee empowerment is employed in the Ministry of State for Public Service but regular review and improvement are recommended so that the gains made could not be lost.

5.4. Limitations of the Study

The study on factors that influence employee empowerment in the Ministry of State for Public Service was relatively a success. However certain limitations need to be highlighted. The study was constrained by time and cost constraints. As such some questionnaires were never collected as respondents took so much time before filling them. However, the number of questionnaires not returned was negligible as compared to those that were fully filled and returned. The researcher was not able to establish the outcomes of employee empowerment. Since employee empowerment is not an end in itself it is important to determine the outcomes of empowerment for it to be considered a success. This is an area that requires further research in future.

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