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Academic Staff Motivation: A Panacea for Improved Research Output and Quality Graduates from Universities in Kenya

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Abstract:

This study examined the motivational strategies employed by university administration to motivate academic staff to engage in research activities. The study focused on establishing the individual and institutional factors that determine research output in universities. The study sought to suggest sustainable motivational strategies universities can pursue to motivate lectures. The descriptive survey design was used to collect data from a representative sample of the population using questionnaires for lecturers and interview guide for chairpersons of departments. The data was analyzed using means and standard deviation and presented on tables. The findings revealed that: all of the lecturers (100%) seem to agree that individual motivators determine research output in universities. Standard deviations of being university lecturers; professional recognition and growth; participation in academic discourses; inquisitive nature for own gains; demand by academic world to engagement in research activities; the need to contribute to their discipline; research for career progression; recognition purposes and for self-fulfillment and personal interests as individual motivators for research output were statistically significant. All the motivators were significant at $P < 0.05$. The mean scores of 4.1529 and 4.4235 portrayed that university lecturers perceived professional recognition and professional growth as being the greatest determinants of research outputs. On hygiene factors, the most significant ones were provision for reduced workload for staff doing research, promotion of academic staff based on research output and Reward system for researchers ($M = 5.000$; $M = 4.9995$ and $M = 4.9112$) respectively. The study suggested that a conducive working environment should be arrived at through consultative approach, working research policies and clear cut reward systems for researchers should be enforced and finally Universities should find ways of disseminating their research findings.

Keywords: Hygiene factors, individualized motivators, institutionalized motivators

1. Introduction

Academic staff in universities is a factor of production for the universities. Their performance as lectures, researchers and managers in these institutions determines, to a large extent, the quality of their graduates and research output they produce. Organizations that do not invest in their employees are entities that have no future life (Nsamenang, Tchombe, 2011; Ololube, 2006; Ofoegbu, 2004; Ogbonna, 2011). For private universities, the role of academic staff is very crucial. The teaching staff is instrumental in training and mentoring graduates with skills most sought for by employers. Northouse, (2007) suggests that University products should be composed of graduates who possess skills that are much needed by both local and international markets. The quality of graduates they produce markets them and binds them with higher enrolment rates. The income of universities depend their enrolment rates. Omusula (2017) in his study of demand and supply driven characteristics graduates seek to establish before enrolling for master of education programmes found out that enrolment rates positively correlate strongly with university incomes.

Despite the fact that higher education institutions have a mission to offer a high-quality learning experience to all their students, they are at the same time expected to maintain a high level of production in their research work. It is the prerogative function of academic staff to ensure that they continuously engage in research as universities are incubators of knowledge production (Lanzeby, 2008). High research output enables universities to be branded, recognized and ranked among the world best institutions of higher learning. Academic staff is at the heart of university branding (Asongwe, 2008; Oluremi, 2008). Lecturers are the epitome of production of quality graduates and research output gravitates around them. To motivate them is the greatest honor of recognition of one of the universities' nerve centres. Frederick Herzberg (1987) postulates that Motivation can be self-driven or environmentally oriented.

This study sought to establish individual and institutional based factors that motivate academic staff to carry out research in universities in Kenya. In mitigation, the study identified strategies that can be applied by universities to create the much needed, desired and sustainable individual and institutional higher research productivity. The researchers

explored both extrinsic and intrinsic factors that are associated with motivation of staff in two public and two private universities in western Kenya. The researchers argue that formal reward systems are only one tool which may be used by the effective university managers to motivate academic staff.

2. Literature Review

Staff motivation and job satisfaction in higher educational Institutions can be investigated through the lenses of Abraham Maslow (1943) and Frederick Herzberg (1950) theories of motivation. Maslow (1943) suggests that all human beings have the same types of needs which he classifies as hierarchical. Frederick Herzberg argues that there are two sets of factors which he regards as motivators and hygiene factors. He affirms that motivators and hygiene factors are vital in motivating employees for very different reasons. He conceptualized institutional motivating factors as hygiene factors while individual motivational factors were the motivators.

The theorist explains that hygiene or the Institutional factors help to meet employees' need to grow psychologically. If a job provides motivators, employees will want to work and enjoy their work. Arif (2003) argues that to motivate a workforce, organizations must first make sure that all of the hygiene factors such as decent salary, fair rules, policies and pleasant working conditions are being met. University management need to reckon with the fact that university academic staff is motivated to increase their productivity by different factors, depending on their age aspirations with respect to career development and the relative priorities which they attach themselves to (Mbaku, 2005). They are also motivated by their social factors such as personal life and acceptance as team members. Good management considers recognition of individual differences. Every academic staff in universities has his or her own set of motivating factors and personal incentives that engineer them to work hard. Some are motivated by material rewards while others are motivated by material incentives. The best way to motivate academic staff is to seek to identify individualized motivating factors as needs and wants of employees differ from one individual to another (Blackman, Fenwick, 2000). Motivated employees relates to a higher staff retention and employee loyalty (Dorneyi, 2001). Higher staff retention gives rise to steady growth and development of institutions. Staff motivation is very essential to the growth, development and success of private and public universities. Motivated lecturers can not only be productive but also happy and highly committed to their jobs (Anyim, Chidi and Badejo, 2012).

Robbins and Decenzo (2008) describe motivation as the willingness to influence a high level of effort to attain organizational goals. They further observe that motivation is a function of three key elements namely organizational goals, needs and efforts. It is important for the universities to meet and introduce new motivational tools to meet the needs of employees (Mbua, 2003). However, today's major challenge for university managements is how to motivate staff to conduct more research at the same time remain active in classroom teaching (Educational Research Service, 2000). The employees' motivation, their enthusiastic and energetic behavior towards task fulfillment, can play a key role in the successes of themselves and their universities. It is thus crucial for the universities to meet and introduce new motivational strategies to meet the various needs of each member of the academic staff (Creswell, 2005).

3. Methodology

This study used survey research design. The survey first set to establish whether individual lecturers' motivating factors determine their research output in their universities. The factor in consideration were: - professional recognition, voluntary participation in academic discourse, lecturers' inquisitive nature, acknowledgement in the academic world, responsibility as lecturers, contribution towards academic discipline, individual career progression, professional recognition and growth and fulfillment of personal interests. The second objective the survey sought was to find out whether institutional (hygiene factors) based motivating factors determined research output in universities. These factors were: - conducive working environments, working research policy, dissemination of research opportunities/findings, reward system for researchers, promotion of academic staff and provision for reduced workload for staff doing research. The third objective the survey sought was to identify sustainable hygiene and motivational strategies universities can employ to maintain increased research output. Qualitative data was collected by using questionnaires and later analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The open ended statements on the questionnaires gave respondents opportunities to expound on their suggestions.

3.1. Target Population, Sample Size and Research Instruments

The population of the research is the entirety of the group of people that the researcher wishes to investigate (Sekaran 2003). This study targeted 300 academic staff members in MMUST, 60 in Kibabii, 30 in Mt Kenya and 20 in Kabarak Universities. The study categorized departments in the universities into two groups namely social sciences and pure sciences. It established the ratio of social sciences to pure sciences as 63:22 where there were a total of 63 members of academic staff in social sciences and 22 academic staff members in pure sciences in both categories of the four universities (public and private).

In order to have a fair representation of the categories from each University, the researcher sampled 10% of the targeted MMUST academic staff population, 50% of each of the targeted Kibabii, Kabarak and Mt. Kenya academic staff populations to yield samples of 30, 30, 15 and 10 respondents respectively as recommended by Orodho, (2003). Table 1.1 show the distributions

University	Population (N)	Sample % age	Sample Size (n)
MMUST	300	10	30
KIBABII	60	50	30
KABARAK	30	50	15
MT. Kenya	20	50	10
TOTAL	411	21	85

Table 1: Target Population and Sample Size Key: Mmust- Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology; Mt. Kenya- Mount Kenya University

A questionnaire was developed and was used by an enumerator to collect data. A total of 85 Questionnaires were administered to the 85 respondents. The questionnaire comprised of three sections; first section was about the individual factors of the academic staff. The second section comprised of institutional factors that can motivate academic staff to increase their research output. The third section of the questionnaire identified strategies universities could employ to create a sustainable individual and institutional increased research output. The questionnaire was pilot tested with a few employees at Kenyatta University's ODEL Kisumu Campus. The piloted work yielded Cronbach's alpha value of 0.86. As a result of the pilot test, minor changes in word selection and instructions were altered on the questionnaire.

Data received from the conducted survey was sourced from both the primary and secondary sources. Primary data with respect to this research was data collected from the field survey conducted among the staff and managers of the four Universities. The secondary sources of data were sourced from online, articles, journal, reports, and other relevant documents which were highly related to the subject matter under the study. This category of data had 95% of it used for the review of related literature and the remaining for justifying the choice of certain decision taken.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The survey for this research was conducted in Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kibabii, Kabarak and Mount Kenya (two public and two private) universities. Appointments with the relevant authorities in the respective four universities were secured and confidentiality of the opinions ensured before collection of data was done. Data analysis according to the research objectives were presented in the findings and results. For this research paper, a four-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of determination of the items as: Very Great Determinant = 5; Great Determinant = 4; Moderate Determinant = 3; Little Determinant = 2 as recommended by Sekaran (2003). This enabled the data to be analyzed in mean scores, standard deviations and degree of skewness.

4. Background of the Data Analysis

Eighty five academic staff members participated in this study from MMUST, Kibabii, Kabarak and Mt Kenya universities. The survey first set to establish whether individual based motivating factors determined research output in universities. These motivators were: - engagements as university lecturers; professional recognition and growth; interest to participate in academic discourses; inquisitive nature to conduct research for personal gains and demand from academic world to engagement in productive research. The results were recorded in Table 1.2

Individual Motivators	Mean Score	Sig.	Std Dev	Skewness
Being university lecturers	4.4235	.013	0.6139	0.321
professional recognition and growth	4.1529	.009	0.6944	0.922
participation in academic discourses	3.9059	.024	0.5388	0.989
Inquisitive nature for their own gains.	3.8235	.041	0.6229	0.228
Demand by from the academic world	3.7929	.024	0.7333	0.4355
need to contribute to their discipline	3.6895	.039	0.5572	0.4722
Their career progression.	3.6248	.011	0.6111	0.4533
recognition purposes	2.9794	.045	0.6712	0.5229
Self-fulfillment and personal interests.	2.9057	.0479	0.7999	0.1422

Table 2: Individual Motivators as Determinants of Lecturers Research Outputs
Likert Scale Weightage, Very Great Determinant = 5; Great Determinant = 4;
Moderate Determinant = 3; Little Determinant = 2

Information from the table above indicates that there was consistency in lectures' views. They opined that Individual Motivators determine research output in universities. Standard deviations of being university lecturers; professional recognition and growth; participation in academic discourses; inquisitive nature for own gains; demand by academic world to engagement in research activities; the need to contribute to their discipline; research for career progression; recognition purposes and for self-fulfillment and personal interests as individual motivators for research output were 0.6139; 0.6944; 0.5388; 0.6229; 0.7333; 0.5572; 0.6111; 0.6712 and 0.7999 respectively. The minimal differences in the Standard Deviations indicate that the all the academic staffs are in agreement individual motivators determine the research output of academic staff at various individual levels. All the motivators were significant at $P < 0.05$. The positive skewness in the ranges of 0.5388 to 0.7999 showed that respondents did not strongly differ on motivators as determination of research output in universities. On the outset however, respective mean scores of 4.1529 and 4.4235 portrayed being university lecturers and professional recognition and growth purposes as being a 'greatest

determinant' of research outputs. While participation in academic discourses, inquisitive nature of the lecturers, career progression, need to contribute to academia and demand by academic world to engagement in research activities with mean scores of 3.6248, 3.8235, 3.7929, 3.6895 and 3.9059 respectively are motivators that determine research outputs moderately. Recognition, self-fulfillment and personal interests are less determinants for research outputs.

The second objective the survey sought was to find whether institutional (hygiene factors) based motivating factors determined research output in universities. These factors were: - conducive working environments, working research policy, dissemination of research opportunities, reward system for researchers, promotion of academic staff based on research output and provision for reduced workload for staff doing research. Their views were analyzed and recorded in Table 1.2

Institutional (Hygiene) Factors	Mean Score	Sig.	Std Dev	Skewness
Conducive working environments	4.7396	.033	0.2138	-1.321
Working research policy	4.9112	.017	0.2955	0.922
Dissemination of research opportunities	4.9019	.025	0.2376	0.989
Reward system for researchers	4.9995	.024	0.2761	-1.228
Promot. acad. staff on research output basis	5.0000	.001	0.2384	-1.4355
reduce workload for staff doing research.	5.000	.001	0.2372	0.4722

Table 3: Institutional (Hygiene) Factors as Determinants of Lecturers Research Outputs

Likert Scale Weightage: Verystrong Motivator= 5; Strong Motivator= 4,

Moderate Motivator = 3; Little Motivator = 2. Non Motivator = 1

Analysis in table 1.4 show that, all the hygiene factors are statistically significant in production of research in universities ($P < .001$). The most significant were promotion of academic staff based on research output and provision for reduced workload for staff doing research ($P = .001$). Standard deviations for conducive working environments, working research policy, dissemination of research opportunities, and reward system for researchers, promotion of academic staff based on research output and provision for reduced workload for staff doing research were 0.2138; 0.2955; 0.2376; 0.2761; 0.2372 and 0.2384 respectively. This indicated little variations among the items implying that they were equally valid as motivators of academic staff in increasing research output in universities. Of particular interest was the negative skewness of -1.321, -1.228 and -1.4355 on conducive working environments, reward system for researchers and promotion of academic staff based on research output.

The negative skewness showed that Academic staff strongly differed on which kind of conducive working environments can motivate lecturers to improve their research production. Others opined that working environments dependent on individual perceptions. It could mean less workloads, enough and spacious lecturer rooms, psychosocial environments among others. On the hand, respondents were at variant on which kind of reward system should be adopted to spur research output. Some suggested cash while others were in support of material rewards and scholarships. Variations of views on promotion of academic staff based on research output arose on the basis the quality of the research produced. Some respondents suggest that consideration should only be done on published papers in refereed journals while others opined that coauthored papers should also be considered. Variations should only be considered on the basis of the number of authors per paper. The mean scores in the range of 5.000 to 4.7396 indicated that all the hygiene factors under study were strong motivators of academic staff in improving research outputs. The most outstanding ones being provision for reduced workload for staff doing research, promotion of academic staff based on research output and Reward system for researchers ($M = 5.000$), reward system for researchers ($M = 4.9995$) and a good working research policy ($M = 4.9112$).

The third objective the survey sought was to suggest sustainable motivational strategies universities can pursue to motivate lectures. The following were suggested by academic staff as sustainable motivational strategies universities can pursue to motivate lectures.

- Academic staff as a factor of production in universities should be provided with conducive working environments that can allow them teach and at the time do research. A conducive working environment should be arrived at through consultative approach to include the views of all the stakeholders as this is subject to variations in perceptions of what an ideal working environment should be composed of.
- Universities should have working research policies that work. Reduced workloads for researchers, scholarships for outstanding researchers and promotion based on research output policies are some of the basis policies could formulated to spur research in universities.
- University should have clear cut reward systems for researchers. It could be in cash or kind depending on the individual needs of lecturers. Sponsorship to conferences and seminars expose researchers to a dearth of knowledge and can be a source of growth in academic spheres.
- Universities should find ways of disseminating their research findings. This can be done through grants to put into practice findings and actualize the dreams of their staff. Shelving findings makes nonsense of the academic staff efforts invested in the fields.

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