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Relationship Between Ethical Practices Of Teams And Completion Of Projects. A Case Of Kenya Power In The County Of Kisumu

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***Abstract:** Project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities in order to meet or exceed stakeholder needs and quality expectations within a specified time, cost and scope. Teams are an essential component at all stages in the project implementation to ensure tasks and processes are properly done to ensure completion of the project is achieved successfully. The study was guided by relevant literature reviews to address the existing problem under study. The overall objective of the study was to establish the relationship between ethical practices of teams and completion of projects; the specific objectives of the study were to highlight how accountability, diversity, equity and professionalism of the teams relate individually and collectively towards timely completion of projects; The study was done at Kenya power and was supported by the survey design with a target population of 180 employees and a sample size of 60 respondents drawn using a stratified random sampling and administered through questionnaires and interviews; descriptive statistical analysis was undertaken and regression analysis was done to establish relationships of variables. The results were presented using tables and figures and discussion of the results done. The research established that there is a relationship between ethical practices of teams and completion of projects. That teams need to commit to be accountable of their individual actions as organisations recruit and retain a diverse team of skilled members, while unbiased distribution of resources and privileges is kept at minimal as recruitment of persons with professional training raise the quality standards of the deliverables.*

This report provides an insight on business ethics in a project triad of time, cost and scope to acquire quality deliverables.

***Keywords:** relationship, ethical practices, teams, project, completion*

I. INTRODUCTION

Legan (2000) stated that ethical behaviour is characterized by honesty, fairness and equity in interpersonal, professional and academic relationship and it respects the dignity, diversity and the rights of individual and groups of people.

Research by Trevino (1999) and Weaver (2001) showed that in the United States ethical business organizations have, as a rule, clearly communicated ethics guidelines or codes of ethics. They have incentive systems that are clearly tied to ethical behaviour, and promote the achievement of both economic outcomes and non-economic goals.

According to Gabler (2006), employees of an ethical business have "a sense of responsibility and accountability for their actions and for the actions of others and freely raise issues and concerns without fear of retaliation". In such businesses "Managers model the behaviours they demand of others; and communicate the importance of integrity when making difficult decisions."

Avtonomov (2006) analysis of business ethics in post-Communist Russia suggested that universalist rule-based ethics, central to the Western market economies, failed to develop in modern Russia despite radical economic reforms of the last two decades. One of the main differences between Western market economies and the new economic arrangements in Russia is the state's dominance over the business sphere and legal institutions. In these conditions, business behaviour is based on considerations of personal loyalty and in-group allegiances, not on universal considerations of right and wrong, or of potential impact on community and society.

Ahmed (2003) studied business students' perceptions of what constitutes ethical business practices in six countries: China, Egypt, Finland, Korea, Russia, and the US. They found that all six groups agreed on basic foundations of ethical business behaviour. However, Russian and Chinese students differed from the rest of the sample on one dimension: They displayed stronger inclination to engage in unethical behaviours, if these actions would lead to higher profits for their companies.

Mele (2006) study found that the majority of 100 largest companies in Brazil had some form of formal or informal ethics policies. The study participants believed that formal policies were important factors in developing ethical business cultures and central role in implementing ethical policies rests with CEOs.

According to Mbaku (1996), throughout Africa, bureaucrats and politicians promote perverse economic policies, while impoverishing most of society; provide concentrated and significant benefits to the national elites and interest groups. Corruption is known to be widespread in many African nations. In countries such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, DRC, it has become a part of everyday life. Indeed, those who refused to cooperate with corrupt officials were barred from receiving government contracts. As a result, people found it necessary to bribe public officials in order to carry on business. To date corruption, is prominent in most of African nations, Kenya included.

BACKGROUND AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to the communication department of Kenya power (2016), the parastatal is the sole distributor and transmitter of electricity in the country with over 3000 permanent employees and over 5000 contracted and temporary employees, a nationwide consumer base of over 3.3 million customers and hundreds of suppliers spread over four geographical regions of operation namely Nairobi, Coast, Western and Mount Kenya.

Kerzner (2009), noted that the scope of a project is the work that must be completed to achieve the final project, namely the products, services, and end results.

As stated by Knipe (2002), all aspects of the project should be coordinated, which implies integration in terms of cost, schedule, quality and staffing. Knipe (2002) further notes that a project is composed of people. Acquiring these people's services, developing skills, motivating them to high levels of performance and ensuring commitment to the project are essential in order to achieve the objectives of the project.

Burke (2010) states that projects are performed by people and managed through people, thus it is essential to develop an organisational structure, which reflects positively on the demands of the project tasks, the requirements of the project team and, just as important, the needs of the individual.

Ideally, teams develop a distinct identity and work together in a co-ordinated and mutually supportive way to fulfil goals or purposes as reported in a study by Pryke and Smyth (2006).

The importance of public organizations as entity designed to serve the public, along with the imperative for accountability, makes studying the problem associated with the public sector essential as stated by Trionfetti (2000).

Ethical climate has been found to be a mediator of the relationship between ethical leadership and employee misconduct, according to Mayer, Kuenzi and Greenbaum (2010)

A study by Shacklock, Manning and Hort (2009), concurred that in recent years there have been increasing emphasis on ethical behavior within public sector jurisdictions and one approach to the description of the ethical characteristics of workplace environments is that of ethical climate.

Schweitzer (2004) found that specific, difficult, and unmet performance goals motivated unethical behaviour, both for goals associated with monetary rewards as well as ''mere goals'' with no external incentives. In the study, individuals who were closest to meeting their goal were the most likely to behave dishonestly. The study was undertaken to establish whether there is a relationship between professionalism and completion of projects at Kenya Power, Kisumu County.

Similarly, Cadsby, Song, and Tapon (2010) found that goal-based compensation systems increased unethical behaviour more than linear piece-rate and tournament-based compensation. One explanation for these findings is that individuals' motivational calculus may shift depending on a goal's perceived achievability.

Accordimg to Tukua (2012), most incumbent public enterprise managers may have sound qualifications; they basically lack the relevant skills required to uphold integrity and ethics. In other words the bulk of public enterprise managers, just like most incumbent members, are generally lacking in "commercial background". As a result lack of corporate governance principles such as transparency, integrity, openness, trustworthiness, honesty and accountability has led to the collapse of many business ventures in Africa.

The organizations that created codes and built more ethical corporate cultures have discovered that substantial positive benefits can flow from building a reputation as an ethical company. Employees prefer to work for ethical companies. A reputation for ethical business practices attracts better-qualified, better-motivated job applicants, employees moral and public relations benefit.

According to Cragg, (2000), Trevino, Weave, Gibson & Toffler, (1999), long-term benefits and profitability can be enhanced as reported by their results of effective ethics and compliance by management which highlighted reduced unethical/illegal behaviour in the organization, increased awareness of ethical issues, more ethical advice seeking within the firm, greater willingness to deliver bad news or report ethical/legal violations to management, better decision making because of the ethics/compliance program, and increased employee commitment. A company's inability to identify and resolve ethical vulnerabilities can cause irreparable harm to the company's brand.

Kenya Power, a utility company operating in the county of Kisumu is experiencing numerous challenges arising from dishonesty, lack of fairness and equity, lack of diversity and lack of integrity within the various functions and departments, spread at all levels in the organization, as it conducts its routine business transactions. The study was undertaken establish whether there is a relationship between equity of teams and completion of projects in Kenya Power, Kisumu County. Managers are also faced with the challenge of evaluating the influence of this entrenched culture and behaviour on the performance of the organization.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study set to establish the relationship between ethical practices of teams and completion of projects at Kenya Power, with specific objectives to establish the relationship between accountability of teams, diversity of teams, equity of teams, professionalism of teams and completion of projects at Kenya Power.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

EQUITY THEORY

Adams' equity theory, according to Adams (1965) is a model of motivation that explains how people strive for fairness and justice in social exchanges. This theory proposes that perceived inequity is a motivational force. The conditions that are necessary to produce equity or inequity use an employee's perceptions of inputs and outcomes as their basis. The ratio of inputs to outcomes becomes a process of social comparison in which each employee compares his or her inputs and outcomes to those of another employee as noted by Weller (1995). Adams (1965) describes this other person as the 'comparison other.'

There are usually several inputs according to McKenna (2000), Northcraft and Neale (1994), they include acceptance of responsibility, job knowledge, experience, education, personal involvement with work, dedication, age, effort, seniority, time, skill and performance. Outcomes usually consist of rewards or benefits like pay, promotional opportunities, praise, prestige, recognition, interpersonal relations with supervisors and co-workers, status, increases in salary and fringe benefits.

Rasche and Esser (2006) and Solomon (2007) noted that accountability is concerned with how agents account for their actions to stakeholders. Rooted in accounting, ethics and governance, accountability encompasses corporate governance, management and internal control, and external auditing and reporting. There are different types of accountabilities at the different levels of an organisation and, consequently, different mechanisms for ensuring that agents appropriately fulfil their responsibilities.

RAWLSIAN THEORY OF JUSTICE

According to Rawls (1971), Rawlsian theory of Justice is for the most part centred on normative ethics. Jackson and Sillanpaa (2000) noted that it has had some impact in meta-ethics as well. To argue for his principles of justice, Rawls (1971) used the idea of a hypothetical contract, in which the contracting parties are behind a "veil of ignorance" that prevents them from knowing any particular details about their own attributes. Thus one cannot try to benefit oneself by choosing principles of justice that favour the wealthy, the intelligent, males, or whites.

The Rawlsian theory of justice is similar to the approach of utilitarianism but the difference is with it lies in the attempt to allow individual interests greater weight in argument. This Theory points out two principles which are that the individual has an equal right to basic liberty, and that inequalities in distribution are to the benefit of all.

The NASW Code of Ethics (1999) requires social workers to promote social justice so that all people, and particularly poor, vulnerable, oppressed and marginalized people, "have equal access to resources, employment, services, and opportunities that they require to meet their human needs and to develop fully."

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

From a population of 180 employees, this study used the population of Kenya Power staff that consisted of 60 employees both permanent and on contract, 5 of whom were senior managers, 10 were middle-level managers, 15 were supervisors and 35 were support staff.

The study adopted stratified random sampling. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) suggested that stratified random sampling method ensures inclusion.

Kothari (2004), states that if the target population is small, a representative sample can be between 20-30% of target population.

The sample size was 180 employees. Each cadre of employees, that is, senior managers, middle-level managers, supervisors and junior level staff were sampled to represent the characteristics of the population.

Due to the nature of the study and the type of information collected, stratified random sampling was used to select the 60 respondents

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The number of questionnaires, administered to all the respondents, was 60. A total of 55 questionnaires were properly filled and returned by the employee of Kenya Power in Kisumu County. This represented an overall successful response rate of 91.67% as shown in Table 4.1. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of 50% or more is adequate. Babbie (2004) also asserted that return rates of 50% are acceptable to analyse and publish, 60% is good and 70% is very good.

The respondents were asked to state the position that they held in their company, majority at 26(47.3%) were juniors, 11(20.0%) were supervisors, middle-level managers and senior managers were both at 9(16.4%).This distribution was good for the study because all the critical levels in the organogram at Kenya Power.

The respondents were asked to state the department to which they belonged, the results were as shown in Table 4.4. It was established that, majority of the respondents at 15(27.3%) were in the finance department, 11(20.0%) in procurement, 9(16.4%) in human resource, Regional coordination and ICT departments had a tie at 8(14.5%) with the department having the least number of respondents being Networking & Infrastructure at 4(7.3%).This was an indication that all the departments and teams were had their views well represented in the study, this was critical because each department/team play a role in having projects completed on time. It is also at the departmental level that ethics are enforced.

Respondents were asked to state whether top managers in their organizations demonstrate high ethical standards, most of the respondents at 25(45.5%) said seldom, 14(25.5%) respondent often, 13(23.6%) said never, the least respondents at 3(5.5%) said its always demonstrated. Asked how they rated junior level employees in regard to accountability, majority of the respondents said it was acceptable at 37(67.3%) with unacceptable rating indicated by 18(32.7%) respondents. Most respondents at 39(70.9%), rated the supervisors accountability as acceptable with the minority at 16(29.1%) rating it as unacceptable. Asked about to rate the accountability of the middle-level managers, majority said it was acceptable at 36(65.5%) with 19(34.5%) rating is as unacceptable, another majority at 35(63.6%) were satisfied senior managers' in regard to accountability with only 20(36.4%) showing displeasure. The overall mean of the accountability of teams indicators was 3.02, this meant that the level of accountability of teams at Kenya Power was acceptable among the employees. Respondents were asked to state whether their colleagues experience discrimination in their organizations, majority of the respondents at 44(80.0%) answered on the affirmative, 9(16.4%) responded on the negative while 2(3.6%) were not sure. Majority of the respondents at 48(87.3%) said they were an issue while minority of the respondents at 7(12.7%) did not thing they were an issue.

Respondents were asked to rate the junior level employees in regard to diversity, Majority of the respondents rated acceptable at 39(70.9%) while the minority rated unacceptable at 16 (29.1%).It was common among the respondents to rate the supervisors as acceptable at 34(61.8%) while the minority rated the supervisors unacceptable at 21(38.2%). Majority of the respondents rated the middle level managers as acceptable at 29(52.7%) while the minority of the respondents rated the middle level managers as unacceptable at 26(47.3%). It was unpopular among the respondents to rate the senior managers as acceptable at 24(43.6%) while the majority rated them as unacceptable at 31(56.4%). The overall mean of the diversity of teams indicators was 3.27, this meant that the level of diversity of teams at Kenya Power was acceptable/satisfactory among the employees.

There were bottlenecks in their departments during service delivery, majority at 37(67.3%) yes, 10(18.2%) no, and least respondents at 8(14.5%) not sure.

The respondents were asked to rate the procurement practices and processes, for example supplier selection in their departments and the minority of the respondents rated it as acceptable at 25(45.5%) while the majority of the respondents rated it as unacceptable at 30(54.5%). It was popular among the respondents to rate the junior level employees in regard to professionalism as acceptable at 35(63.6%) while the minority rated their junior level employees as unacceptable at 20(36.4%). Majority of the respondents rated their supervisors concerning professionalism as acceptable at 47(85.5%) while the minority rated them as unacceptable at 8(14.5%). It was popular among the respondents to rate the middle-level managers in regard to professionalism as acceptable at 40(72.7%), while the a few number of respondents rated them as unacceptable at 15(27.3%). It was also common among the respondents to rate the senior manager concerning professionalism as acceptable at 40(72.7%) while the minority rated the senior managers as unacceptable at 15(27.3%). The overall mean of the professionalism of teams' indicators was 3.036, this meant that the level of professionalism of teams at Kenya Power was acceptable/satisfactory among the employees.

The researcher used multiple linear regression model to explain the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables when all are brought together.

The regression model is specified as: y_i=**1.343**+**0.098** x_1+**0.052** x_2 **-0.068** x_3 + **0.026** x_4

A unit change in accountability of teams would result into 0.098 unit change in completion of projects at Kenya Power. The relationships was significant at 0.05 level of significance (N=55, p=0. 028). A unit change in diversity of teams would result into 0.052 unit change in completion of projects at Kenya Power. The relationships was significant at 0.05 level of significance (N=55, p=0.030). A unit change in equity of teams would result into 0.068 unit change in timely completion of projects at Kenya Power. The relationships was significant at 0.05 level of significance (N=55, p=0.034). A unit change in professionalism of teams would result into 0.026 unit change in completion of projects at Kenya Power. The relationships was significant at 0.05 level of significance (N=55, p= 0.015).

V. CONCLUSION

As indicated by the literature, many categories of factors can result from the absence of ethical practices within the projects life cycle. This report has provided an insight on business ethics in a project triad of time, cost and scope to acquire quality deliverables. The research established that there is a relationship between ethical practices of teams and completion of projects.

Teams need to commit to be accountable of their individual actions for collective attainment of deliverables at the completion of the project. The organisations needs to recruit and retain a diverse team of skilled members to who will collectively oversee the goals and aspirations of the organization are realized.

The unbiased distribution of resources and privileges help in binding the team members and reduces exclusionism. The recruitment of persons with professional training raise the quality standards of the deliverables can minimize unqualified opinions of some vital actions on processes and tasks which may be counter-productive.

There is need by organizations to encourage team members practice accountability at their workplaces during implementation and towards completion of the project. Organisations also need to recruit and retain a diverse team of skilled members to who will collectively oversee the goals and aspirations of the organization are realized. Organizations also need to reduce exclusionism resulting from biased distribution of resources and privileges to the team members. Organizations need to recruit persons with unquestionable professional skills to raise the quality standards of the deliverables and minimize unqualified opinions.

Future research would involve capturing and examining ethical and unethical practices and their effects in a project implementation set-up by introduction of new variables to the study.

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