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PERFORMANCE CONTRACTING AND HEAD TEACHER PERFORMANCE IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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Abstract:-

This study seeks to establish the extent to which performance contracting has been adopted, its effects on the performance of head teachers and subsequent challenges in schools in Kenya with special reference to Embu County Schools. Review of recent empirical crossnational studies conducted to decode the comfort of signing performance contract, shows that head teachers did not reject implementation of performance contract in totality. There were flaws in sensitivity of scopes, meaning, importance and equity to all. Since performance contract is a freely negotiated tool, government should lay a good foundation and not hurried up process leading to confusion. Performance contracting is directed to all public civil service as a reform agenda for better service delivery. Whereas the high ranking servants may welcome the idea of measuring performance the lower cadre might feel exposed hence resist. Performance appraisals evaluate strengths and weakness against the criteria set upon organizations goal and therefore are worthy. Challenges in grading structure and negotiation committee can be addressed by agreed targets. Further, in all stages communication should remain open and eliminate any ambiguities to build trust. Fair and firm government instructions with proper standards against which results can be measured, will lead head teachers giving key areas for good results establishment. Good leadership by head teachers will influence teachers to willingly and enthusiastically append signatures in performance appraisals.

Key words: - Performance contracting, Performance appraisal, Head teachers' performance

INTRODUCTION

Performance contracting refers to an agreement between employee and management about responsibilities as well as behaviour during a review period, (Cole 2013). Essentially a performance contract is an agreement between public agency and government, providing incentives mechanisms for controlling the outcome rather than process, (Bouckaert 2001).

A lot of interest has been raised in countries such as S. Korea, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, France and Kenya which are implementing policies using this method to improve performance, (Miller 2010). According to Armstrong, (2010) performance contracting defines expectations of concerned parties; work to be done, the results expected and competences required to achieve results. The contract also enumerates the mutual obligation of two parties in achieving the set targets in the contract, (Bangura 2009). The foundation is set by common wealth secretariat which describes a performance contract as contract between owners of an enterprise and management of enterprise setting out certain results, targets to be achieved in a given time frame. This is also echoed by Bangura (2009) who says that performance contracts enumerates mutual obligation of two parties setting out time frame to achieve certain results of a set target.

Performance contracting according to Hood, (2005) shifts the emphasis from traditional public management towards “managerialism”, based principles of bureaucratic hierarchy, planning and centralization. This encourages fast moving service delivery in organizations replacing a market based public service enterprise culture, (Friedman 2002). The research objectives are to establish to what extent performance contract has been adopted, its effects and challenges in Embu County Schools.

Performance management is a process for establishing a shared workforce understanding about what is to be achieved at an organization level. It is about aligning the organizational objectives with the employees’ agreed measures, skills, competency requirements, development plans and the delivery of results, (Armstrong, 2008). The emphasis is on improvement, learning and development in order to achieve the overall business strategy and to create a high performance workforce, (Smith, 2009).

Secondary and primary public schools have remained to follow private counterparts in national examinations performance. In spite of government managing most influential colleges of teacher training, the performance management issue has remained wanting. Chief executive officers (CEO’s) in schools, commonly referred to as head teachers have vital managerial role to play in performance management and depriving mandates from Boards of managements (BOM).

Research Problem

Performance contracting is considered a modern way of evaluating performance whereby a range of management instruments are used to define responsibilities and expectations between parties to achieve mutually agreed results. As a tool it defines clear definition of objectives, supports monitoring and control methods of management. It gives autonomy to public service managers in their operations (Joanes & Thomson 2007). However, Literature shows that heads of public secondary and primary schools in Kenya have perceived the concept with a lot of mistrust, suspicion and skepticism. Teachers in leadership have felt being pushed to corners with perceived sinister motives by the government despite other public officers in Kenya having embraced the concept whole heartedly. The purpose of this study therefore is to establish the perceptions of secondary and primary school heads towards implementation of performance contracts in Kenya.

Research Objectives

This study seeks to establish the following:

- i. The effects of performance contracting on head teacher performance in primary and secondary schools in Kenya
- ii. The challenges that exist in implementation of performance contracting in primary and secondary schools in Kenya
- iii. The influence of head teacher’s leadership style on performance in primary and secondary schools in Kenya

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The Goal-setting theory

The Goal-setting theory was proposed by Edwin Locke in the year 1968. This theory suggests that the individual goals established by an employee play an important role in motivating him for superior performance. This is because the employees keep following their goals. If these goals are not achieved, they either improve their performance or modify the goals and make them more realistic. In case the performance improves it will result in achievement of the performance management system aims (Salaman et al, 2005). Since it was first researched several decades ago, goal-setting theory has been the most researched, utilized, and established theory of work motivation in the field of industrial and organizational psychology (Pennsylvania State University World Campus [PSU WC], 2015, L. 6). The theory began with the early work on levels of aspiration developed by Kurt Lewin and has since been primarily developed by Dr. Edwin Locke, who began goal setting research in the 1960s. The research revealed an inductive relationship between goal setting and improved production performance. A goal is the aim of an action or task that a person consciously desires to achieve or obtain (Locke & Latham, 2002; Locke & Latham, 2006). Goal setting involves the conscious process of establishing levels of performance in order to obtain desirable outcomes. This goal setting theory simply states that the source of motivation is the desire and intention to reach a goal (PSU WC, 2015, L. 6). If individuals or teams find that their current performance is not achieving desired goals, they typically become motivated to increase effort or change their strategy (Locke & Latham, 2006).-

Locke and Latham stated that "the goal setting theory was based on the premise that much human action is purposeful, in that it is directed by conscious goals" (O'Neil & Drillings, 1994). The decision to set a goal results from dissatisfaction with current performance levels. Setting a goal should include setting a structure that directs actions and behaviors which improve the unsatisfactory performance. Setting a goal will change a person's behavior in order to work towards achieving the set goal. Goal-setting theory predicts that people will channel effort toward accomplishing their goals, which will in turn affect performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). Locke and Latham (2002) found a direct linear relationship between goal difficulty, level of performance, and effort involved. This relationship will stay positive, as long as the person is committed to the goal, has the requisite ability to attain it, and doesn't have conflicting goals (Locke & Latham, 2006). Locke and Latham's goal setting theory states that several conditions are particularly important in successful goal achievement. These include goal acceptance and commitment, goal specificity, goal difficulty, and feedback (O'Neil & Drillings, 1994). These conditions have been extended and edited by other researchers, such as Kenneth Blanchard and Spencer Johnson's SMART goals, which are conditions that are necessary to make goals effective. The goal-setting theory is therefore very relevant in this study as it explains performance contracting goals and objectives in reaction to head teacher performance in National exams.

The Expectancy theory

Expectancy theory was proposed by Victor Vroom in 1964. This theory is based on the hypothesis that individuals adjust their behavior in the organization on the basis of anticipated satisfaction of valued goals set by them. The individuals modify their behavior in such a way which is most likely to lead them to attain these goals. This theory underlies the concept of performance management as it is believed that performance is influenced by the expectations concerning future events (Salaman et al, 2005). The Expectancy Theory of Motivation explains the behavioral process of why individuals choose one behavioral option over another. The theory explains that individuals can be motivated towards goals if they believe that: there is a positive correlation between efforts and performance, the outcome of a favorable performance will result in a desirable reward, a reward from a performance will satisfy an important need, and/or the outcome satisfies their need enough to make the effort worthwhile. Vroom introduces three variables within the expectancy theory which are valence (V), expectancy (E) and instrumentality (I). The three elements are important behind choosing one element over another because they are clearly defined: effort-performance expectancy ($E > P$ expectancy), performance-outcome expectancy ($P > O$ expectancy). In this study performance contracting is based on expectation that once resources are provided the head teacher will execute proper financial management and deliver to expectation ranking.

Modern Management Theory (Henry Fayol 1925)

The theory focused on 5 elements. These are planning (setting objectives and targets), organizing (empowerment of concern), motivation, coordination and controlling. Fayols work was distinct learning toward workers having to be told what to do, their work checked and corrected, with managers delegating tasks and overseeing from high level. (Tall hierarchy). The theory was interested in how management worked, and could be applied on a universal basis. The theories focused on Rules, Roles and Procedures. Fayols Five Elements of Management are: Planning Setting objectives, and strategies, policies and procedures to achieve them. Organizing Setting tasks to achieve the objectives; allocate the tasks to groups or individuals, and empowering those responsible for that task. Commanding, instructing those carrying out the given task. Coordinating and ensuring a common approach by groups to meet the objectives of the organization. Controlling Ensuring the performance of individuals and groups fits with the plans, and correcting as necessary. Fayols theories are as relevant today as they ever were, and most, if not all managers use his elements of management. The Work of Peter Drucker Druckers work in the 1950s followed on from that of Fayol. He had five categories of Management Operations Setting Objectives Senior Managers organize objectives into targets. This is cascaded down to more Junior Managers. Organizing the workload is divided into manageable activities and jobs. Motivating this involves communicating and creating the right conditions for targets to be achieved. Measurement, comparing performance against targets. Developing and enabling people to use their talents. Fayol and Drucker had very different views on the role of workers within their theories. Fayols work has a distinct leaning towards workers having to be told what to do, their work checked and corrected, with managers delegating tasks and overseeing from a high level. Conversely, Druckers ethos is about the empowerment of workers, giving them the opportunity to utilize their talents, with managers occupying a role that is more about assisting and coaching workers. Fayols ideas fail to take into account the people within the workplace, whereas Drucker takes a somewhat more humanist approach. Elton Mayo - The Human Relations Approach By the 1930s there was evidence emerging that production could be raised by applying motivational methods within a workforce. These ideas were very different to the techniques of F.W Taylor and, although concerned with profit, the human relations approach to management was also concerned with social relations in the organization. The approach assumed that workers were genuinely committed to their companies and that they had a desire to work towards achieving its goals. Elton Mayo had carried out experiments at the Hawthorne Plant, and these sought to find ways to improve production by changing workers conditions and pay structures. Mayo worsened conditions for workers, then returning them to how they were. The rise in output was due to workers communicating more and working as a tighter team unit. It was also found that the effect of taking an interest in workers made them feel important and that their opinions were valued. The independent concept study articulates proper planning of goals, availing of resources and checking on time bound agreed upon will enhance student's assessment, incorporate curriculum activities and give sound financial management.

The systems theory

The systems theory has had a significant effect on management science and understanding organizations. A system is a collection of part unified to accomplish an overall goal. If one part of the system is removed, the nature of the system is changed as well. A system can be looked at as having inputs (e.g., resources such as raw materials, money, technologies, and people), processes (e.g., planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling), outputs (products or services) and outcomes (e.g., enhanced quality of life or productivity for customers/clients, productivity). Systems share feedback among each of these four aspects of the system. The Systems Theory may seem quite basic. Yet, decades of management training and practices in the workplace have not followed this theory. Only recently, with tremendous changes facing organizations and how they operate, have educators and managers come to face this new way of looking at things. The effect of systems theory in management is that it helps managers to look at the organization more broadly. It has also enabled managers to interpret patterns and events in the workplace – i.e., by enabling managers to recognize the various parts of the organization, and, in particular, the interrelations of the parts.

The situational or contingency theory asserts that when managers make a decision, they must take into account all aspects of the current situation and act on those aspects that are key to the situation at hand. Basically, it is the approach that carries leadership styles in this study whereby democratic style is more recommended in comparison to Leissaz Faire and autocratic.

Measurement of Variables

Independent variables which is performance contracting will be measured using laid down objectives and goals, resources available, time period under contract review and actions to be taken.

Dependent variables will be checked through head teacher's availability of lesson preparations, pupil's assessment records, level gone in co-curriculum activities and syllabus coverage in sampled levels.

Intervening variable the intervening variables will be measured by checking leadership style of head teachers and effects to the administered employees. It is expected performance contracting would lead to improved motivation of teachers, satisfaction and better service delivery.

Moderating variable this behaves like independent variable since it contributes to effects on dependent variable. This will measure teaching experience, head teachers qualification, work load per week, working environment, responsibilities held and specialization.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Performance contracting and Head teacher performance

Performance measurement is often taken to be fundamental to delivery of improved services as part of performance management. Emphasis on performance management for delivery of results is undoubtedly influenced by the basic assumption of performance management which lies in its professed ability to unite the attention of institution members on a common objective and galvanize them towards the attainment of his objective. It is this supposition of harmony of vision that underpins the New Public Management faith in leadership and its favourable inclination towards managerial empowerment, as seen in performance management principles (Balogun, 2003).

With the increased emphasis on quantitative measurement of outcomes, the term 'performance measurement' has become a higher priority. Measuring and reporting on organizational performance focuses the attention of public managers and oversight agents, as well as the general public, on what, where and how much value programs provide to the public (Forsythe, 2001; Hatry, 2006; Newcomer, Jennings, Broom & Lomax, 2002; Poister, 2003). The strategic use of performance management is thus intended to help drive change efforts from process to results orientation in the public service. Performance management aims at by and large to attaining operational effectiveness which in a broader sense refers to a number of practices that allow an organization to better utilize its resources. The quest for productivity, quality and speed has spawned a remarkable number of management tools and techniques; total quality management, benchmarking, re-engineering and change management to mention just a few. All these, if pursued from strategy angle leads to emphasis being put on the wrong place. Typically, public agencies either are not clear about their goals or are aiming at the wrong goals. This lack of clarity can be attributed to the fact that most public agencies have to deal with multiple principals who have multiple (and often conflicting) interests (Triveldi, 2000).

Managers begin to ask the right questions, redefine the problem they are trying to solve and diagnose that problem a new. In organizations where performance measurement systems are already established, and resources are already devoted to providing credible performance data in a timely fashion, performance data can be used effectively to support these change. Where performance measurement systems are not as institutionalized, efforts to develop useful performance measures can support change efforts in several ways. Performance data will be used to: inform useful deliberations among key stakeholders about why and where change is needed – "to make the case for change". Focus on aspects of programmatic performance likely to be affected by change; and Track the effects of changes to reinforce and reward employees for achievement of desired outcomes of change efforts.

Performance measurement, therefore, for some very good reasons has been widely seen in many developing countries as a way of improving public service delivery. Kervasdoue (2007) asserts that “No one would disagree that performance contract is necessary in public affairs. Government and their bureaucrats must be accountable to their citizens about all use of taxes and public funds. Comparison of the use of these funds for the analysis of public service performance is the way of justifying their use, other than simple arguments of authority”.

In Kenyan context, a performance contract is a written agreement between the government and a state agency (local authority, state corporation or central government ministry) delivering services to the public, wherein quantifiable targets are explicitly specified for a period of one financial year (July to June) and performance measured against agreed targets. The performance contracting practice hence mirrors very closely the OECD definition ‘as a range of management instruments used to define responsibilities and expectations between parties to achieve mutually agreed results’. The government of Kenya guide-books on performance contracting defines it as a ‘management tool for measuring Performance against negotiated performance targets’.

According to Farnham and Horton (2003), the process of identifying performance targets is carried out after the budget process has been completed and institutions informed about their resource allocation. This ensures that targets are realistic and achievable within the available resources. The targets emanate from the institutions and are freely negotiated and not imposed arbitrarily by the government. The process of negotiation is carried out in two phases;

The first phase is the pre-negotiation consultations. At this stage the negotiating parties carry out a SWOT analysis in order to determine the institution’s performance capacity. This helps to determine whether the targets being developed are realistic, achievable, measurable, growth oriented and benchmarked to performance of similar institutions. This stage in the process is a storming stage where parties hold lengthy meetings, often disagreeing but finally come to a consensus. The second phase in the negotiation process is where all issues agreed upon are factored into the performance contract. The draft contract is then submitted to the performance contracting secretariat for vetting. The vetting process ensures among other things that the contracts comply with the guidelines and that they are linked to the strategic objectives of the institutions, anchored on the strategic plans, growth oriented and relevant to the mandate of the institution. The performance contracts are signed at two levels. In case of government ministries, the contract is signed between the Head of the Public service and Secretary to the Cabinet, representing the government on the one side and the permanent secretary of a ministry on the other side.

The critical requirement for each target is that they must be growth oriented and therefore must improve with time. The performance rating instrument is based on the following attributes and criteria: Excellent: Achievement of 100% above target; Very Good: Achievement of target; Good: Achievement below target but above previous year, Fair: Achievement equal to previous year; Poor: Achievement below previous year (Triveldi, 2000).

Performance contract has provided an avenue for comparing public schools through reliable benchmarks especially during the negotiation period where members of the independent team are drawn from different leading industry players. It has also offered the opportunity to achieve a high degree of accountability and transparency in performance target setting.

A climate supportive of performance measurement, within the network of stakeholders involved in the change effort, may be hard to cultivate but can reap benefits.

Performance contracting and Head teacher leadership

According to Ezeuwa (2005) leadership is act of influencing people so that they can strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the accomplishment of goals. It means working with zeal towards achievement of corporate goals. A leader has to have people to influence, direct, carry along, sensitize and mobilize towards the achievement of predetermined goals. Chanda (2008) defines leadership style as ingredient of personality, embodied in leaders that cause subordinates to follow them. Further says causes subordinates to achieve the objectives of the organization. Head teachers are entitled with administration of school resources and can accelerate or demolish progress of education in an institute (Daresh 2009).

Democratic leadership (Goldman 2002) refers to situation where there is equal work among leaders and followers. The style entails using consensus through participation but a high level of excellence and self-direction flexibility. There is a lot of respect in group participation, decisions after consultation and communication is multidirectional as ideals are exchanged (Heifetz & Bennis 1999). Team work is formed through directional approach, supportive method, participation and consultative ways.

Autocratic leadership gives full empowerment to leaders with minimal participation from followers (Yukl 2010). Leaders tend to have characteristic of not consulting, setting policies, method of work and evaluation standards method has quick decision; quite unpopular. Moreover, when followers are not productive. It is also called authoritarian style since the leader doesn’t maintain clear communication channel and subordinates. There is little delegation neither participation in policy-making nor shared.

Laissez-faire leadership style according to Hackman and Johnson (2010) is when leaders are hands off and allow group members to make decisions. Freedoms are determined by group goals, techniques and working methods. It is most

effective style where followers are mature and highly motivated. The subordinates are free to do what they like as leader provides materials and let group events take place.

According to Muchinsky (2005) performance is behaviour that people actually do and can be observed. In organization performance is the actions that are relevant to organizational goals. Appraisal is an assessment of worthy, quality of a person or thing (Robertson 1996). Muchinsky (2005) described performance appraisal as used to evaluate employees' strengths and weaknesses against criteria that are set upon the organizations goals. The local culture which organization operates must be put to consideration since imposing a new culture might course antagonistic attitudes among appraises.

In Kenya the teacher service commission (TSC) requires the heads of institutions to provide oversight role in the performance appraisal for the teachers in their respective institutions. The use of appraisal for promotion, deployment and other rewards may be prescribed from time to time. It is also a method of recommending training and corrective measures in cases of unsatisfactory performance. Appraisals according to Guest D...E (1996) Focuses on top down assessment, are done annually, are linked to pay, use ratings of known caliber as monolithic system and point on traits. In comparison performance management is concern with assumptions, mutual obligations, expectations and promises.

Performance contracting and challenges encountered.

Whereas the general public and even some high ranking public servants may very much welcome the idea of performance contracting and measuring performance, it might not be readily accepted by everybody especially those who might feel exposed (negatively in terms of poor performance) by the outcomes. In other cases resistance may come in the grading structure, those who feel that no grading system can even out the effects of lumping big and small ministries together. In the state corporations similar sentiments are expressed that it is unfair to grade state corporations operating in different sectors of the economy together (Government Press, 2005).

The separation of the negotiation committee and the evaluation committee may have its challenges. It may be argued that for consistency and to help put the evaluation into perspective, it may be advisable for the same team that has done the negotiation to also undertake the evaluation. Since both the negotiation and evaluation teams are independent the magnitude of these challenges may however be drastically reduced by the vetting process, which allows for review of agreed targets to ensure conformity to trends and policy. The success may also bring with it some challenges. The winners expect to be rewarded, over and above the normal pay.

However, the initial rounds of performance contracting took place before the finalization and approval of reward and sanction system. It was not just the high performers who did expect to be rewarded; the public also expected the poor performers but also cast aspersion on the rationale and motivation for the whole exercise. On a broader note it is important to view a performance contract as part and parcel of a wider performance management system, but not as a standalone operating outside the established human resource regulations (Balogun, 2003).

Recommendations

The government has shown a lot of appetite in improving performance through contracting however goals and objectives on what to achieve in national Exams must be agreed upon and not to pile materials on unfounded base. Resources for co-curriculum execution should be availed quite on time. The hurried up process may lead to more confusion in the learning institutions. Financing and communicating on time is vital in all stages of organization development for performance to improve. It is of paramount importance to firstly communicate goals and job expectations clearly then eliminate ambiguities of function before implementing performance contracts and consequently demanding feedback.

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