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RETOOLING INITIATIVES ON THE PERFORMANCE OF CURRICULUM SUPPORT OFFICERS IN THE WESTERN REGION OF KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to investigate the effect of innovative Human Resource Management (HRM) practices on the performance of curriculum support officers in the western region of Kenya, grounded in the Resource-Based View, Human Capital Theory, and Social Exchange Theory. The study sought to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between these HRM practices and the performance of curriculum support officers, addressing the significant research gap in HRM practices within the education sector in the western region of Kenya. The research utilized a cross-sectional survey design, where data was collected from 150 curriculum support officers in the western region of Kenya. The choice of a census sampling approach ensured unbiased representation of the entire population. Structured survey instruments were employed for data collection, and prior diagnostic tests were conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the research instruments. The study hypothesized that there would be no significant effect of retooling on the performance of curriculum support officers. By focusing on these practice, the research sought to offer novel insights that can inform effective HR strategies and address unique regional challenges within the education sector. The ultimate goal was to contribute to the enhancement of educational outcomes in the western region of Kenya. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between retooling initiatives and CSO performance ($r = 0.538$, $p = 0.000$). These results highlighted the potential of this HRM practice to significantly enhance job satisfaction and productivity among curriculum support officers. The data analysis, involving rigorous application of descriptive and inferential statistics, was interpreted within the context of existing literature to provide valuable references for policymakers and educators. This interpretation offered insights that can be utilized in the formulation and implementation of HR strategies in comparable low-resource settings globally, thereby contributing to improved educational outcomes beyond the specific regional context.

KEYWORDS: Retooling, Performance, Curriculum, Support Officers

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Human Resource Management (HRM) practices have become increasingly essential in the rapidly evolving global education sector. Human Resource Management (HRM) has the capacity of influencing the organizational behaviour of the employees, thereby ensuring achievement of the corporate objectives. HRM positively influences firm performance which leads to Organizational Commitment. The multidimensionality of Human Resource (HR) practice allows organizations to accomplish the corporate and personal objectives and therefore the approach of the Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a pivotal role in the success of the company (Jawaad et al., 2019). The performance of curriculum support officers (CSOs) is critical in ensuring the effective implementation of educational policies and programs. However, these officers face various challenges, including heavy workloads, inadequate training, limited opportunities for professional development, and a lack of recognition and support. The western region of Kenya faces unique challenges in the education sector, such as inadequate resources, limited infrastructure, and disparities in access to quality education.

Effective curriculum support centres role is to provide and build quality sustainable ECDE education through classroom teacher support to be able to raise the quality of classroom teaching and learning. Even if changes seems to have been made in the supervision of ECDE division of the Ministry of Education, little has nevertheless been done to establish how or in which way the role and influence of CSOs contribute to effectiveness of curriculum delivery in public pre-schools (Ndegwa & Khamah, 2018). CSOs are employees of the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC), which has established curriculum support centres at zonal and sub-county levels to provide quality teaching and learning (CODE of Regulation for Teachers, 2015). The TSC has designated CSOs to provide support services to teachers, update them on curriculum changes, develop work programmes, collect and submit data on teaching staff, provide professional guidance and counselling, set up subject panels, and visit schools to observe, demonstrate, and advise teachers on appropriate pedagogy and resources needed for teaching (CODE of Regulation for Teachers, 2015). CSOs are a key human asset in the educational sector and TSC human resource directorate.

In recent years, there has been a shift towards more innovative HRM practices that aim to improve the performance and productivity of employees. Human resource management practices (HRMP) have been gaining an increased attention especially in the fields of economics of the organization, strategic management and human resource management. HRMS and innovation relationship in firms is growing as many researchers inspected this area (Easa and Orra, 2021). Today's increasing competitive pressure has required firms to unendingly innovate their human resource services to meet the rapid changes of customer demands (Than et al., 2023). In this study, the innovative HRM practices are hybrid office environments, retooling, recruiting the best fit, and data-driven HRM and human analytics. These practices have been researched in various contexts and regions, including

international, regional, African, and East African settings (Couch & Citrin, 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work and flexible work arrangements, leading to the emergence of hybrid offices. The increased prevalence of COVID-19 has had severe implications on the well-being of most organization and professionals most especially in the field of human resource management. Most organizations laid off their workers and consequently lost their customers ever since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic and this has greatly affected the profitability levels of such organizations mostly due to deterioration in efficiency and productivity of the human resource (Kalogiannidis, 2021). Hybrid offices allow employees to work both remotely and in-office, providing greater flexibility and work-life balance. This approach helps organizations to attract and retain talent, reduce costs, and improve productivity and collaboration (Couch & Citrin, 2018).

A study conducted in Europe by (Vartiainen, 2021) found that organizations that adopted hybrid office environments experienced higher job satisfaction, better employee retention, and improved overall performance. Similarly, a study conducted in the United States by (Fridrihsone and Suhodojska, 2021) reported that companies that effectively implemented hybrid work arrangements had higher employee engagement, productivity, and overall success. (Davidescu et al., 2020) found that organizations that offered ongoing training and skill development opportunities reported heightened employee satisfaction and increased performance. Research conducted in Europe and the United States further supports the importance of retooling initiatives in enhancing job satisfaction, employee retention, and overall performance (Jang et al., 2017).

(Turner & Turner, 2020) in collaboration with LinkedIn, found that organizations that prioritized finding the best-fit candidates reported higher employee engagement, increased productivity, and reduced turnover rates. (Argue, 2015) also emphasized that companies focusing on hiring the best-fit candidates were more successful in meeting their business objectives and achieving higher overall performance. Research conducted in Europe and the United States supports these findings, showing that organizations employing best-fit recruitment strategies experienced higher job satisfaction, better employee retention, and improved overall performance (Hudson et al., 2017).

In the Central African region, Kufuor (2022) investigated the effect of retooling initiatives on employee performance within the manufacturing industry in Gabon. Their findings revealed that companies investing in consistent skills development reported improved job satisfaction, higher employee retention, and enhanced overall performance. This study collaborates the importance of retooling initiatives observed in broader global studies

In the West African context, with a focus on the banking industry demonstrated that organizations prioritizing recruiting the best-fit candidates experienced improved employee satisfaction, higher

productivity, and better overall performance (Salimi & Chandrasekar, 2023). Research in the West African context also supports the importance of data-driven HR and human analytics. Kiran et al., (2023) found that organizations leveraging data-driven HR practices experienced improved employee satisfaction, higher productivity, and better overall performance across various African countries and industries.

In the Kenyan context a study by Gitau (2016) demonstrate that retooling initiatives lead to improved employee satisfaction, higher productivity, and better overall performance across technology industries. Further, (Muema, 2018) found that ongoing training and skill development opportunities resulted in higher job satisfaction, increased productivity, and better employee retention. In the telecommunications sector of Kenya, (Turner, 2019) found that companies that prioritized hiring the best-fit candidates reported better employee engagement, higher retention rates, and improved overall performance. They suggested that this positive outcome was largely due to the alignment between the employees' skills, interests, and values with the company's mission and culture, which is a key aspect of best-fit recruitment strategies. Furthermore, these optimal matches between candidates and the company led to a stronger sense of commitment and identification with the organization, thereby reducing turnover and enhancing productivity. They found that organizations adopting data-driven HR strategies reported higher job satisfaction, increased productivity, and better employee retention in the Kenyan context.

In summary, research on data-driven HR and human analytics as an innovative HRM practice has been conducted at the global, regional, African, East African, and Kenyan levels by various authors. These studies consistently show that organizations leveraging data and analytics in their HR decision-making experience improved employee satisfaction, higher productivity, and better overall performance, with some variations depending on the specific context and industry. This underscores the importance of data-driven HR and human analytics in optimizing HR practices and enhancing organizational performance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The existing research on the effect of innovative Human Resource Management (HRM) practices on employee performance has predominantly focused on sectors other than education, such as banking, hospitality, and telecommunications (Momanyi and Rop, 2020). Specifically, there was a noticeable gap in the literature concerning curriculum support officers in the education sector in the western region of Kenya, a region that faces unique challenges including inadequate resources and limited infrastructure (Adala, 2016). These officers, who are crucial for the implementation of educational policies, face various challenges including heavy workloads and inadequate training, yet there was limited empirical evidence on how innovative HRM practices could address these issues (Momanyi and Rop, 2020). This lack of targeted research hampered the ability of educational institutions and

policymakers to develop effective HR strategies that cater to the specific challenges of this region. Therefore, there was a pressing need to investigate the effect of innovative HRM practices and the performance of curriculum support officers to improve educational outcomes in the western region of Kenya. It was against this backdrop that this study sought to elucidate the potential effects of innovative HRM practices on the performance of curriculum support officers in the western region of Kenya. This endeavor aimed to refine the understanding of the applicability and effectiveness of these HRM practices in the educational sector, thereby contributing novel insights and empirical knowledge to both theoretical and practical dimensions of human resource management and educational administration. The emphasis was particularly placed on exploring and validating the relevance and implications of these practices in the context of curriculum support officers, whose roles are pivotal in educational outcomes and advancements in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Retooling and Performance of Curriculum Support Officers

In the rapidly changing world of work, the importance of retooling has become increasingly evident. Numerous studies have explored the role of continuous learning and skill development in enhancing employee performance across various industries (Jaiswal et al., 2022). This section will delve into the existing literature on retooling, identifying key findings and emphasizing the need for more research on the effect of these practices on the performance of curriculum support officers in the western region of Kenya. (Maurer & London, 2018) in a global study, emphasized the role of retooling initiatives in organizations, suggesting that these practices not only enhance employee skills but also foster greater job satisfaction and increased overall performance. Companies that consistently invested in retooling reported increased job satisfaction, higher employee retention, and improved overall. Narrowing down to the Kenyan context, studies conducted by (Muema, 2018) provide compelling evidence on the role of retooling initiatives in boosting employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall performance across the technology industry. One study evaluated the effectiveness of retooling initiatives on faculty performance. Cayogyog (2022) conducted a mixed-methods study to assess the impact of a faculty retooling seminar on teaching performance. The quantitative analysis revealed a significant improvement in faculty performance post-seminar. Qualitative data indicated that retooling enhanced teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches, attributed to training, feedback, university policies, and peer support. However, some technical course teachers felt the retooling was insufficient and inappropriate for their needs, suggesting that future retooling programs should consider the specific requirements of different teaching disciplines.

Although there was an extensive body of literature emphasizing the importance of retooling for employee performance, there was still a research gap concerning its effect on curriculum support officers, especially in the western region of Kenya. Curriculum support officers play a crucial role in

the education sector, and understanding the effects of retooling initiatives on their performance can provide valuable insights for policymakers, educational institutions, and other stakeholders. By focusing on this specific context, researchers can help identify the most effective strategies for implementing retooling initiatives and assess their effect on the performance of curriculum support officers in the western region of Kenya.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the effect of innovative human resource management practices on the performance of Curriculum Support Officers in the Western Region of Kenya. The cross-sectional survey design was chosen for this study for several reasons. First, cross-sectional surveys are efficient, as they allowed for the collection of data from multiple respondents at a single point in time. Given the limited empirical evidence on the application of innovative HRM practices for Curriculum Support Officers in the Western Region of Kenya, this design allowed for the efficient and effective capture of current trends and patterns in this specific context.

Target Population

The target population for this study consisted of 150 Curriculum Support Officers in the Western Region of Kenya. Given the study's target population size of 150 Curriculum Support Officers in the Western Region of Kenya, the study will employ a census sampling technique. The advantage of a census is that it provides a complete and accurate representation of the population.

Table 1 Western Region CSO distribution per county

County	Total population of CSO	Target population of CSO
Bungoma	40	40
Busia	30	30
Kakamega	45	45
Vihiga	35	35
Total	150	150

Source: Teachers Service Commission. (2023). *TSC County Database*.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Sample Size

The census study encompassed the entire target population, which consisted of 150 Curriculum Support Officers in the Western Region of Kenya. Determining an appropriate sample size is crucial

for ensuring that the results of a study are reliable and representative of the population under investigation. In this study, the sample size was determined by conducting a power analysis. Power analysis is a statistical method used to calculate the minimum sample size required to detect an effect of a given size at a desired level of confidence. Assuming a medium effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.3$), a significance level (alpha) of 0.05, and a desired statistical power level ($1 - \beta$) of 0.8, the recommended sample size is approximately 134. However, to account for potential non-responses or incomplete responses, the sample size was increased by approximately 12% to 150. This helped to ensure that the study had sufficient power to detect statistically significant effects and made accurate inferences about the population. This sample size was manageable and sufficient to provide accurate and meaningful insights into the relationship between innovative HRM practices and the performance of Curriculum Support Officers in the Western Region of Kenya. Furthermore, considering the nature of the study and resource availability, a sample size of 150 was practical and feasible.

Sampling Technique

Given the study's target population size and nature, a census sampling technique was used. In a census, data was collected from all members of a population, which provided a complete and accurate representation of the population. This technique eliminated sampling error and biases.

Data Collection Instrument

Data for this study was collected using a structured questionnaire based on the High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) questionnaire by Sun, Aryee, and Law, which was adapted to capture information on the independent variables (hybrid office environments, retooling, recruiting the best fit, and data-driven HR and human analytics) and the dependent variable (performance of curriculum support officers). This instrument was selected due to its comprehensive coverage of various HRM practices and their effect on employee performance (Siddique & Ganguly, 2019).

Data Collection Procedure

Respondents were provided with a research permit from the Ministry of Higher Education National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), along with an introduction letter from Kibabii University. The structured questionnaires were administered either in person, via mail, or electronically, depending on the preferences and accessibility of the respondents. The researcher provided clear instructions to the respondents on how to complete the questionnaires and help as needed to ensure accurate and reliable data collection.

Data Analysis

Once the data had been collected, it was entered into a statistical software program for analysis. Prior

to conducting inferential analyses, extensive diagnostic tests were executed to ensure the data's adherence to the prerequisites of the statistical models. These included tests for normality, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, and outliers, to detect any possible anomalies or deviations within the data. Recognizing and addressing such discrepancies was crucial to affirm the reliability and validity of the subsequent findings.

Pilot Study

Before the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted to test the reliability and validity of the research instruments. A sample of 15 Curriculum Support Officers, representing 10% of the total study population was selected from Siaya County, which was outside the main sample, was used for the pilot study. The feedback from the pilot study was used to refine the questionnaires, ensuring clarity, relevance, and effectiveness in data collection.

Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

Validity and reliability are essential elements in ensuring the accuracy and dependability of the study's findings. The validity of the research instruments was assessed through content and construct validity. Experts in human resource management and education were consulted to evaluate the appropriateness of the questionnaire items. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a value of 0.7 or higher considered acceptable for the consistency of the research instruments.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Retooling Initiatives Response Summary

Table 2 demonstrates how respondents rated their experiences with retooling initiatives.

Table 2: Retooling Initiatives Response Summary

Statistic	Value
Std. Deviation	0.75
Variance	0.56
Range	4
Minimum	1
Maximum	5
10th Percentile	2
25th Percentile	3
75th Percentile	4
90th Percentile	5

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

The descriptive statistics for Section C of the questionnaire, focused on retooling initiatives, reveal notable patterns in respondents' perceptions. The standard deviation value of 0.75 indicates a moderate level of variability in these perceptions. The variance value of 0.56 further corroborates this variability. The range of responses was 4, with minimum and maximum values at 1 and 5, respectively, indicated that responses spanned the entire scale provided in the questionnaire. The 10th percentile value suggested that a significant minority of respondents had less favorable perceptions (2.00). In contrast, the 90th percentile value at 5.00 indicates that a substantial proportion of respondents experienced highly positive effects from retooling initiatives. These findings suggested a general tendency towards favorable perceptions of retooling initiatives among the participants, with some variation that was attributed to individual differences in work dynamics and personal preferences.

Correlation between Retooling Initiatives and CSO Performance

The second objective was to assess the effect of retooling initiatives on the performance of curriculum support officers in the western region of Kenya. Table 3 shows the correlation between retooling initiatives and CSO performance.

Table 3. Correlation between Retooling Initiatives and CSO Performance

Variable	Retooling Initiatives	CSO Performance
Retooling Initiatives	1	0.538**
CSO Performance	0.538**	1

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

The correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between retooling initiatives and CSO performance, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.538. This suggests a moderate to strong association where more effective retooling initiatives were linked with better performance among curriculum support officers. The significance of this correlation was reinforced by a p-value of 0.000, indicated that the relationship was statistically significant at the 1% level. This finding highlights the potential positive impact of continuous training and skill development on employee performance.

Regression between Retooling Initiatives and CSO Performance

Table 4. Regression between Retooling Initiatives and CSO Performance

Model Summary / Coefficients	Value
R	0.538
R ²	0.289
Adjusted R ²	0.284
Std. Error of the Estimate	0.68
Constant (Intercept) - t	4.85
Constant (Intercept) - Sig.	0.000
Retooling Initiatives - t	5.97
Retooling Initiatives - Sig.	0.000

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

The regression analysis revealed a positive relationship between retooling initiatives and CSO performance, as indicated by an R value of 0.538. The model explains 28.9% of the variance in CSO performance ($R^2 = 0.289$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.284, suggesting a moderate fit. The standard error of the estimate was 0.68, reflecting the average distance between the observed and predicted values of CSO performance. The coefficient for retooling initiatives is significant ($t = 5.97$, Sig. = 0.000), underscoring its positive effect on performance. The intercept was also statistically significant ($t = 4.85$, Sig. = 0.000), establishing a solid baseline for the model.

These findings highlighted the beneficial effects of retooling initiatives on the performance of curriculum support officers. The positive correlation and significant regression results suggested that continuous training and skill development enhance job satisfaction and productivity among CSOs. This was aligned with broader research indicating the advantages of ongoing professional development in improving employee outcomes.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The investigation into the effect of retooling initiatives on CSO performance revealed a strong positive correlation, with a Pearson coefficient of 0.538 ($p=0.000$). This significant correlation highlights the importance of continuous training and skill development in enhancing job performance. The findings suggest that retooling initiatives improve job satisfaction, effectiveness, and retention among CSOs, emphasizing the critical role of ongoing professional development in the education sector.

Given the strong correlation between retooling initiatives and CSO performance found in this study,

further research could examine how different types of training programs and skill enhancement initiatives impact performance across various educational contexts. Comparative studies that look at different regions or types of educational institutions could reveal diverse approaches to professional development and their effectiveness, providing valuable data for optimizing training programs.

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