

Re-nurturing of Workforce Talents from Crisis to Consistency: A Kenyan School Perspective

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Abstract

Strong talent management leads to a greater workforce. Studies have shown that it is imperative that organizations up their game in this era of organizations competitiveness. The global society has become tight with products from schools struggling to keep pace with the job market. Education is not responding first to increased market demands with research suggesting that, students need to be imparted with the proper knowledge which is vital in achieving vision 2030. However, a talented workforce which was churning out talented students in the past decades has become increasingly exam oriented. By strictly focusing on the academic basics, the work force is failing to address the complexities and needs of the 21st century learners. If we are to seriously address the dysfunctional workforce, more efforts have to be made to address the problem of untalented workforce. Being a theoretical paper secondary sources of data were sought. The causes of untalented workforce are well known but what can be done about it requires a management's will. As to mitigating the problem of untalented workforce, multi managerial transformations and mechanisms need to be adopted to help schools develop a talented workforce. One example is performance evaluation to identify potential. Ultimately though, stability in re-nurturing the workforce depends on increased investment in knowledge management particularly in underperforming schools where majority of the students obtain a mean grade of below C+ thus cannot pursue the mainstream academic careers. As we prepare ourselves in marking the attainment of Education For All (EFA), we need to reflect seriously at what causes de-nurturing of the workforce and articulate on interventions to be done at national, regional and global levels to reduce the impact on a multitude of youths who are not receiving quality education.

Key Words: Re-nurturing, Workforce, Talents

INTRODUCTION

Education, by its nature, is an integrated discipline, one with the aim of developing learners from various angles. Republic of Kenya (2013) states that, in order to make the curriculum relevant to Vision 2030; emphasis shall be focused on technology, innovation and entrepreneurship, talent development, and the need for schooling to be more closely related to the world of work. For this reason, the workforce must strive to develop their skills in various fields of knowledge.

Prior to the launch of the 8-4-4 system of education (Republic of Kenya, 1999) and the subsequent introduction of various talent driven subjects such as Music and Art and Design there was an overriding need of ensuring a holistic development of the child. Therefore, the Kenya secondary school being amongst one of the biggest single employer in Kenya and employing tens of thousands teaching and non teaching staff, had to attract and establish an artistic and a capable workforce. Coupled with this, is the intention of the country to create a globally competitive and adaptive workforce to meet the requirements of a rapidly industrialized economy as envisaged in the economic, social and political pillars of Kenya Vision 2030 (National Economic and Social Council, 2007). It is in light of this that, Oredo (2006) points out that, teachers should be able to weave all pertinent competencies into one holistic knowledge tapestry.

Increasingly though, the future seems uncertain. As Wango (2010) states, the national education curriculum is obsessed with developing cognitive skills at the expense of other critical non cognitive skills which are increasingly becoming more important in the learning and living environment of the student. This has made the current formal education system and education management to hardly stimulate inventive reflection in the workforce. On the other hand the government and private enterprise have not helped either. They insist on academic papers to hire their workforce with innovation and entrepreneurship and talent development being accorded low or no consideration at all in formal employment. And as Onsare (2006) puts, talent is killed when a parent, guardian, or a teacher drives the student away from the student's best interests.

Although it can be argued that the school management has tried to deliver on the development of student talents through its workforce, a wider long term development of the workforce that encompasses nurturing talent is required. The new government should drastically reform the secondary workforce and ensure that it shift from time-bound, curriculum-based training to flexible and competency-based training by the workforce (Onsare, 2006). These concerns have been highlighted in a 2006 Economist Intelligence Unit study with the findings showing how core nurturing talent is to organization (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, 2006). The overly ambitious Vision 2030 also lists core teacher competencies top of its agenda in improving students' talents (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

Like many developing countries, the teaching and non teaching workforce in Kenya has been in crises thus the need for nurturing talent. Wango (2010) states that, the nurturing talent concept which aims to solve this crisis entails managing and developing employees (teachers) to achieve education goals through training, staff mentoring and job enrichment to stretch employees with new responsibilities and tasks. It's upon these foundations that, this paper critically examines the re-nurturing of the workforce talents with the purpose of developing a creative mind amongst students.

ELEMENTS OF WORKFORCE TALENT

A high-quality teacher workforce doesn't simply happen by chance or as a result of a cultural respect for teaching; it is a result of deliberate elementary choices. As Reynolds (2005) and Senge (1990) notes, key element of nurturing workforce includes the following.

Planning and Expectation Setting

Nurturing talent success requires clear goal setting. The means by which those goals will be evaluated must also be made clear and a specific time frame must be outlined and then adhered to.

Monitoring

School managers have to come up with the many ways in which to monitor performance of the workforce. This means that the workforce will be able to keep track of their performance at work, which will give them ownership of their own development; an essential quality to cultivate in an effective workforce that is set out to develop its talents.

Development and Improvement

Once monitoring of the workforce has been achieved over a specific period of time and through a number of ways, the element of further improvement and development has to be sought. If an employee is on target to meet his or her goals, the shrewd and effective school manager will not stop there, but encourage ways in which to help the teacher exceed and go beyond their indicated goal. Several ways of stretching this includes training, professional development and career development.

Periodic Rating and Performance Appraisal

It's important to avoid waiting until judgment day when working on strengthening talent management system. School managers ought to have outlined their cut-off point for reaching the goals that were set, but in the interim period it is essential that they provide some kind of feedback or rating to help the workforce realize whether or not they are on track in terms of meeting that future goal. Part of the workforce sees their development clearer than others. The other doesn't realize until the last minute that they are not going to achieve what they have been asked to achieve. They over estimate their capabilities and do not plan ahead. This is why the successful performance manager learns to provide periodic ratings in between the setting of the goal and the evaluation of that target.

Rewards and Compensation

In some ways, the rewards and compensation stage is the most important element of all when looking for nurturing talent success. It has been argued in various studies that, rewarding the workforce lead to high

performance. Okumbe (1998) confirms that, educational managers should strive to release maximum potential from the staff through proper application of motivation and job satisfaction.

Recruitment

Strong academics are essential, but so is commitment to the profession and to serving diverse student bodies. By putting energy into the front end of recruiting high-quality and talented workforce and giving them good training and continuing support, education management doesn't have the problems of massive untalented and persistently ineffective teachers and principals that plague many systems.

THE DEPLETING TALENT CRISIS

It's hard to miss the rising voices of concern about an impending talent crisis, or the clamour for new talent nurturing strategies to deal with it. Reynolds (2005) asserts that, a shortage of talented workforce in most parts of the world have resulted in a talent shortage for educational institution. Paradoxically though, the educational managers who were to expand this pool are the same making it a rarity. A study that focused on the higher levels of the organization by Schuler, Dowling, Smart and Huber (1992) found that, despite the fact that managers consider having the right talent as critical to their organizations' success, less than half had improvement plans for their workforce and only a quarter had talent pipelines for improving the workforce. The study found that, organization whose boards and senior executives fail to prioritize nurturing planning end up either experiencing a steady attrition in talent, or retaining people with out-dated skills. This is further supported by Husen, (1994) who says that, whilst many employers acknowledge the benefits of a nurturing talent approach, such as increased institutional performance, many are still not taking full advantage of the rewards on offer. These sentiments strongly indicate that, leaders capable of nurturing talent remain rare. Besides schools are bound to be faced with a problem of finding out which areas their teachers are most talented in.

Certainly, on the contrary, as Reynolds (2005) puts, educational managers have reported increasing difficulties in recruiting and nurturing the talent that they need meaning that much of the focus in talent management is now on an —explicit commitment to grow and develop talented people as part of the organization's long term strategy and as an integral part of the vision and mission for the business.

OPPORTUNITIES IN NURTURING WORKFORCE TALENT

Women Involvement

According to Hafkin and Taggart (2001), a limited number of Kenyan women (less than 2%) study science, technology, and engineering curricula, in developing countries. Given this limited participation in the industrial economy, it is important that we re-examine women's participation in the area of development of students' talents. Further studies indicate that, no country can raise the standard of living and improve the well-being of its people without the participation of half its population which includes women. Experiences in other countries have shown over and over again that, women are important actors in development thus holding them back are holding back the potential for economic growth (World Bank, 2004). This is such an opportunity that we need to appreciate in order to burgeon talent development among the workforce and the students. Research further suggests that development policies and programs that assist women and girls can have a major impact on a country's overall development (World Bank, 2004).

ICT Development

With growth of Information Communication and Technology in Africa and Kenya in particular, the workforce is being afforded increasing opportunities for participation (International Telecommunication Union, 2003). ICTs are important tools that provide access to lifelong learning and training. Neglecting to give workforce access to these tools not only deprives them and their schools of skills, but reduces the skill-level of a nation's human resource, limits national productivity, and bars a country from being competitive in the global market (International Telecommunications Union, 2003).

The information and communication technology has made it easier for the workforce to access information on new products development through research and internet facilities (ITU, 2003). A majority of institution use ICT for internal and external communications (Larsen, Kims & Theus, 2009). Such an opportunity in ICT development can see the workforce building their capacity through distance learning methodology as it was witnessed with Kenya Education Management Institute during the introduction of Diploma in Education management in 2011. To enhance coordination in nurturing of talents in the coming years the schools management and the government need to position its website as a reliable data bank for information related to talent development.

Empowering Youth through Workforce Development

The Government of Kenya defines youth as being between the ages of 18 and 35, and comprises over 35 percent of the population (Republic of Kenya, 1999). The search for employment is a daily struggle for many young Kenyans, with close to 2.5 million youth currently unemployed and only 125,000 entering the formal workforce each year (World Bank, 2004). However, many young Kenyans have not been given adequate opportunities for participation. It is in the interest of this paper that, the large younger workforce in emerging economies can seem like the panacea educationists need to resolve their workforce talent gap.

The New Political Dispensation

During the speech by his Excellency Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, president of the republic of Kenya, on the occasion of the Kenya national drama festival state concert, 2013 the president provided an opportunity to nurturing of workforce by reiterating that the Government is committed to providing the youth with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to be relevant and competitive in the modern global economy by providing holistic quality education (State House, 2013). Under this new policy framework, emphasis is laid on early identification and development of talents in the creative arts. He committed to establishing a Kenya Film School and construction of an ultra-modern National Theatre and development of creative hubs across the country. Besides, 2010 marked the realization of a new constitution that brings with it numerous reforms aimed at enhancing education management. With such, opportunities are rife for the nurturing of talents.

RENURTURING THE WORKFORCE

CIPD (2006) states that, the rapidly changing global education environment presents a real opportunity for institution to pull away from their competition, armed with an effective talent nurturing strategy and an ongoing commitment to workforce development. Wango (2010) points out that all human beings have the seeds of greatness within them and they just need nurturing and a safe environment to grow their talents and blossom into mastery. It is against this backdrop that key policies and structural reforms were lined up for the financial year 2013/2014 which included among others investing in people for higher productivity and long term development (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

Proactive Retraining and Education Strategy

Parry and Tyson (2007) point that, today's best organizations (schools) emphasize on- demand, constant and informational learning to improve their workforce expertise. Workplace learning must be built around the present skills, missing skills and future skills. The schools' success is measured by how well the workforce is trained to fill these skills and talents shortages. According to Parry and Tyson, development tools should go deep, in order to reach the highest number of people. Tools such as E-Learning, communities practice, mentoring programs, face-to-face trainings, electronic performance support systems (EPSS), job aids and education incentives should all be utilized.

While there are pros and cons to making training requisite, consideration to providing an incentive for workforce which put into practice concepts they learn during training is important. Schuler *et al.* (1992) argue that giving a reward for simply attending training doesn't guarantee that participants are fully willing to engage in nurturing student talents; however, asking teachers to use what they learn through training is a motivator. Incentivized teachers who use training concepts through incorporating it in organizations end up being holistically nurtured.

Rewarding Achievement

Feedback is a crucial part of developing a productive team, but it is important here to remember to try not to single out the same person for rewards too frequently – everyone likes to know they are doing a good job. Praise should be spread as evenly as possible as Mwangi (2009) puts, it's obviously hard to reward every good behaviour. Amburo (2008) notes that, the school workforce is the handler of student's talents thus it's necessary that their actions are rewarded to increase their performance.

Networking

Frequent events relating to talent development happen all over and further afield out of school. For purposes of nurturing the workforce it is important to provide the team with the opportunity to attend as many external events as possible. Williams (1992) agrees, saying that attending events or conferences provides confidence and exposure and the outcome can mean the team benefits as a whole.

Effective Performance Management

Effective performance management can be a key determinant in the achievement of workforce and students talents (Cornelius, 1999 cited in Schuler *et al.*, 1992). A performance appraisal system which is a key feature of management should be objective, relevant to the job and the school, and fair to all employees and offer no special treatment (Schuler *et al.*, 1992). Through an effective teacher appraisal, teachers' practices are bound to improve when strengths and weaknesses are identified for further improvement function. In so doing, teachers who are untalented can be re-nurtured.

Adaptive Leadership Style

A shift is now taking place towards leadership style that is inclusive, empathetic, nurturing and appreciative and that values the richness and expansiveness of people, their ideas and diversity (Wango, 2010). Such is a style that has the hallmark of creating a talented workforce. As Kimani (2013) puts, amongst the core principles of this style is engaging in the utility of people skills. It can be argued that adaptive leaders pursuance to complex environments can be vital in making managers to agitate for a talented workforce especially that which is not flexible to change.

CHALLENGES TO NURTURING WORKFORCE TALENT

While progress has been made with regard to the emphasis placed on nurturing workforce talents, significant shortfalls still exist.

Developing High Potential Workforce is a Priority, but Consistent Execution Falls Short

Growing recognition of the need to develop workforce talent early has given rise to —high potential or —emerging leader programs, in which promising talent is identified and cultivated (Husen, 1994). Not only does this ensure a strong pipeline to meet future needs, it increases the engagement of the company's most valuable workforce. While most understand the need for such programs, many organizations struggle with consistency in terms of high potential identification, communication and development.

Few Schools are Strategic

Instead of being empowered by decision science, the majority of organizations depend on hearsay in terms of nurturing talents. Williams (1992) says that, by and large, organizations take an ad hoc approach to building a strong talented workforce. Such a perspective is helpful in that it provides good current state information, but it does not enable the prioritization and focus needed to improve talent practices or link talent analytics to holistic educational outcomes. As Parry and Tyson (2007) puts, the main barrier could be that strategy-making in areas of nurturing workforce talents are limited generally, usually being done for operational not strategic reason

Gender Discrimination

Regarding gender, many researchers found that men are favored whether they are in the majority or minority, while women are disfavored, especially, when they are in the minority, and sometimes even when they are in the majority (Williams, 1992). Today, in most organizations, women form a large chunk of the talent pool yet they remain underrepresented because most drop out midway, mostly compelled to familial and parenting responsibilities or a sheer lack of support from their organization. Research has shown that, women employees are an asset to any organization and organizations that make active efforts to recruit and retain their female workforce, tend to thrive and grow at a higher rate.

School Costs

Organization of Economic Co-operation Development (2010) explains that, there is a crisis of costs when it comes to nurturing the workforce. Actually many national education systems need to hire more teachers and provide better training opportunities for them, but cannot afford to do so within current financing models. Investment in personnel, teacher professional development and meaningful in-service support as Rao (1996) correctly puts, is inherently subject to the 'fiscal space', not only within total government spending, but also within school education budgets. Cost constraints therefore are bound to hamper most of the strategies that involve an economic aspect such as retraining.

CONCLUSION

Given the increasingly challenging global education environment, nurturing talent will and must remain a top priority for schools managers and schools in the years ahead. The future of nurturing talent will need to evolve from where it is today to become a more systematic process. The paper has shown that, leaders see the value of talent, but most organizations are still struggling to systematize and integrate their nurturing talent processes. There is a need for more direct, tangible accountability for developing talent among managers, and the workforce but this accountability needs to work both ways. While there may be some innovations in this area, most organizations need to push past static operational measures to more strategic consistent measures. For organizations to be ready to tackle the education challenges of tomorrow, they must begin building a cadre of a strong workforce today. Though many have already embarked on this journey, it's clear that more sustained focus and consistency is needed to effectively build this capability. While many of these actions appear straightforward, putting them in place is not easy. Many of the organizations with effective talent nurturing management practices have been at it for years consistently demonstrating their commitment to developing great talent. And over time, this commitment has translated into a strong base of talent and a pipeline of leaders with a demonstrable impact on education.

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BIO-DATA

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