The Significance of Culture Management in Public Universities in Kenya: The Case of Moi University

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Abstract

Cultures are fluid, dynamic and are usually influenced by factors within and outside organisations. To improve employees' performance and their commitment, public universities in Kenya should not ignore the management of culture. Organisational culture refer to the characteristic spirit and belief of an organisation demonstrated in the norms and values that are generally held about how people should behave and treat each other, the nature of working relationships that should be developed and attitudes to change. These norms are usually, taken for granted assumptions that are not always expressed, and are often known without being understood (Torrington and Hall, 1995: 114). This paper attempts to assess the current culture of public universities and how culture can be managed using the Force Field Analysis (Williams, et.al, 1993). Using convenient sampling, the paper used Moi University as a sample to represent the six public universities in Kenya. Data was collected from Focused Group Discussion interviews comprising Administrative Officers, Senior Administrative Assistants and Administrative Assistants, and was analysed qualitatively. The paper found that managers of public universities ignore the management of culture and yet it impacts positively and/ or negatively on employee performance and commitment. The paper recommends that policy makers and administrators should manipulate cultures in their organizations to conform to the university objectives.

Introduction

This study concerns culture management in public universities in Kenya. Public universities are owned and sponsored by the Government. They are University of Nairobi, Moi University, Kenyatta university, Egerton University, Maseno University, and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology.

From the early 1980s, there has been increased interest in the study of organisational cultures in western countries and many successful managers attribute their success to changing or adopting an appropriate culture i.e. ways of doing things, mentality etc, in their organisation business. Because of this importance, Williams, et al. (1993) indicate that organisational culture is now a better understood concept which appears in management agenda through issues such as the management of change, empowerment, learning organisation, re-engineering, performance management, competitive advantage etc. which have cultural implications. It can be argued that many public organisations in Kenya do not perform well because leaders fail to understand their organizations' culture. The power of organisation culture is therefore not understood and yet it is by understanding culture that suitable changes can be introduced. Culture has important consequences at the strategic and operating levels of an organisation (Kiggundu, 1989). It influences the management style, the structure and the behaviour of employees and hence impacts on employee performance.

Many writers on Human Resource Management, notably Armstrong (1992) contends that the management of culture has a central role in the management of organisations because employees become more committed to their jobs when the culture is appropriate. Culture management involves reinforcing the positive aspects of the way things are done and changing the inappropriate ones so that the organisation can attain its objectives. This study therefore

sought to highlight the significance of understanding cultures and how to manage them. Management of culture involves reinforcing the desirable aspects of culture and changing the undesirable ones. The study concludes that it is possible to manage public universities more efficiently and effectively by addressing cultural aspects, a venture which is difficult but important and worthwhile.

Methodology

Convenient sampling was used to choose Moi University as a sample representative of the six public universities in Kenya. Data was collected in 2001 using Focused Group Discussion interviews (FGDs) comprising Administrative Officers, Senior Administrative Assistants and Administrative Assistants, and was analysed qualitatively. The study was based on the Force Field Analysis approach, which was developed by Kurt Lewin (Williams, et.al. 1993). This approach is used to identify the driving forces and the resisting forces of culture in an organization. This is necessary before culture reinforcement/ change programmes are implemented.

It should however be understood that if change happens, the resisting forces are likely to modify the direction of the desired change and therefore, there is more need for evaluation and further action. This may call for a multidimensional approach using Schien's (1985) ten mechanisms. These are: Planned change and organisation development; turnaround; technological seduction; managed evolution through hybrids; revolution through outsiders; and natural evolution. Others are self guided evolution through organisational therapy; scandal, explosion, and myths; incrementalism; and coercive persuasion. For the purposes of emphasis, the first five methods are explained.

In planned change and organisation development mechanism, consultants can be used to manage change programmes which aim at resolving conflicts among sub cultures. Change agents can also adopt the turnaround mechanisms which involve using many mechanisms under one programme. The turnaround involves unfreezing the organisation so that it feels that its past ways of thinking; feeling and doing things are obsolete. Coercive persuasion can be used to achieve this. Technological seduction mechanism concerns how technology is used to make people to re-examine their culture so as to adopt new beliefs, values and assumptions. In this aspect, training can be used to enforce new ways of working and new working relationships. The use of computers by managers is a good example of how training in new technology can bring change. In the managed evolution through hybrids, the organisation leaders can recruit insiders who have grown up in the existing culture. This ensures that the organisation does not lose its identity. In this process, training consultants help the organisation leaders to obtain insight because consultants, through therapeutic process can know what is missing in the organisation. When the objective of the organisation is to introduce new management tools, the mechanism for change is revolution through outsiders. This method is used when the organisation performance is in crisis and about to fail. It is usually associated with a breakdown in procedures, beliefs and symbols.

Despite the above prescribed strategies and mechanisms to change, it is believed that many organisations still experience problems in their attempts to change their cultures. It is further noted that before any culture change/ reinforcement programme is carried out, an assessment of the existing culture (diagnosis) is made to establish the weaknesses and strengths. Understanding the culture of organizations is therefore paramount before any attempts are made to manage culture.

Understanding the Culture of Public Universities

In analysing public university cultures, this paper used historical aspects, the categories of employees, employee performance, attitudes, and working relationships.

Historical Aspects

From the late 1980s till recently, public universities in Kenya have been expanding rapidly. New schools/faculties and departments were started and the number of students increased without serious regard to physical facilities. This situation however is not peculiar to Kenya. Even in Britain, after the Second World War, several universities competed with each other to establish new medical schools without any apparent regard for the effect the inclusion of a medical school could have on their institution (Livingstone, 1974).

Although public universities operate under master plans and long and short term plans the present management problems seem to point towards planning. Even during the first International University Seminar, the first Vice Chancellor of Moi University warned that "the momentum for the growth of the university is there and if there is no immediate planning, that momentum can push the university to directions, which may not be desirable in the future" (Moi University, 1987:9). The establishment of Moi University in 1984 was due to pressure exerted by public demand for education, which the University of Nairobi could not cope. This suggests that there were elements of haste in the establishment of the university. It is widely agreed among scholars that the founders of organisations have an influence on the kind of culture created. From the history, it was noted that Moi University started without any physical facilities. This was evident with the accommodation of students and the administration in tents at Kaptagat and Sirikwa hotels respectively. This gives the impression that plans and implementation were hasty.

The process of planning and establishment of public universities however is beyond the scope of this piece of work. The issue of concern here is the existing way of doing things in public universities, which seems to have an historical explanation. Elements of lack of planning or hasty planning and implementation are currently prevalent. One of the major consequences for this is that staff were required to work without adequate facilities. This seems to affect employee's behaviour, attitudes, performance and their commitment to work.

Public universities occasionally admitted students before the relevant curriculum had been fully prepared. More frequently, the semester started before the teaching timetables were ready or the examination session started before updated timetables were released. It is not surprising to note that an examination was postponed because a member of staff failed to set it. These factors may indicate the level of performance and commitment of staff to their jobs. This may be better understood by examining in more depth the various categories of staff, the levels of performance, attitudes, and the working relationships.

The categories of people employed

Previously, public universities acquired teaching staff through hurried recruitment missions' abroad, particularly in India, Britain and USA following the rapid expansion. Nearly all the non-teaching staff were hired from within the country. The Universities therefore became, as commonly referred, truly international communities. Recruitment procedures during crisis periods were also rushed and this was also partly responsible for the kind of culture existing in public universities. The various faculties and departments in each university appear to reflect different sub cultures because the type of staff recruited seem to have different leadership styles which may reflect where the leaders came from. In addition, there are sub cultures

among the teaching staff and non-teaching staff. A brief examination of each category to note their attitudes, performance and commitment is therefore appropriate.

Teaching staff comprises Professors, Associate Professors, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers, Tutorial Fellows and Graduate Assistants. Most non-Kenyan teaching staff are recruited at the first three levels because they come as expatriates while most of the locals are recruited at the last four levels. Women are under represented in this category partly because of their under-representation in higher education. To cope with the rapid expansion of programmes and student numbers, the Universities revised their recruitment policies to allow reviews of Tutorial Fellows and Assistant Lecturers who have taught for one year to be promoted to Lecturer grade. This system worked well up to early 1990s as it helped retain teaching staff at the levels of Tutorial Fellow and Assistant Lecturer who were assured of promotion to the next grade after one year of successful teaching.

Non-teaching staff generally comprises administrators, technicians, library staff, and other support staff. There seems to be no uniformity in the recruitment practices of non-teaching staff. The tendency is that administrators are appointed through interviews, although many employees believe that actual appointments of some non-teaching staff take place before the interviews and those interviews are only meant to regularise/ formalise them. As mentioned earlier, some appointments are made during periods when the universities are faced with tight schedules (crises) e.g. at the opening of semesters or during graduation ceremonies. Most temporary staff are also recruited during these periods. The perceptions of employees towards public university systems of recruitment and promotion appear to contribute to low morale among staff and probably the cause of low work performance. The problem is however how to determine their performance.

Performance of staff

Public universities have no reliable criteria for measuring the performance of non-teaching staff. The Universities have traditionally relied on confidential reports from Heads of Departments/ Sections, which are not free from personal bias. To make it worse, most of these reports are only written in relation to a transfer or promotion. Many members of staff therefore tend to believe that the reports written about them do not necessarily reflect their performance but their relationship with the boss. There is, therefore, a tendency for subordinates to do things, which reinforce their relationship with the bosses. Others tend to do things, which make the bosses believe that their performance is good, e.g. working after office hours, even when there is no urgency, in order to be noticed. This behaviour is more common among senior administrative staff.

Public university administration is labour intensive even in the current age of information technology. A tendency to depend on individual employees to provide information prevails. Operations in some sections of the universities can therefore cease to function when an employee who has crucial information is absent. Although attempts have been made to computerise staff and student records, computer equipment and skills are scarce.

Although it may be debatable whether the performance of teaching staff has declined in public universities since the early 1990s, there is evidence to suggest that resources have declined and teaching has had to contend with this. As Ombati (1994:74) observed, "productivity and morale at the University of Nairobi are no longer as high as was the case in the past when academic staff were believed to be the elite of the society and hence enjoyed many privileges as the University had many excellent teaching and welfare activities and working environment - all of which were eroded by the growth of the University". The sharing of resources between the regular and module II programmes compounds this. Measuring the performance of teaching

staff can however be controversial if not difficult. Teaching staff normally consider their duties to be teaching, research and to engage in social functions, which are difficult to quantify.

It is observed that many of the teaching staff are not trained in the teaching profession. Any performance criteria, which emphasise ability to teach, may therefore be resisted. Further, some teaching staff perform non-teaching functions and therefore this criterion may not be universally applicable. The ability to meet deadlines could also be one of the criteria but this also is not absolute because not all deadlines are realistic. Further more there are other factors beyond the control of the employees, which can affect meeting the deadlines set. Lastly, the ability to carry out research may be most controversial because of the difficulty of measuring the success and nature of research. As an aspect affected by culture, determination of performance can easily be ignored though it is important to the organisation.

Attitudes of staff

The attitudes of the teaching and non-teaching staff influence their work performance and commitment to the organisation. The commitment of employees to work and the organisation is important because it helps them to obtain satisfaction and identiication, be loyal and have a desire to remain with the organisations. Most of these aspects seem to be lacking in public universities hence indicating that employees lack commitment to their universities. Employees believe that no one cares about them and hence they also develop a 'don't care' attitude towards work and their universities. This situation is usually prevalent in a job-oriented culture where employees believe that the organisation is only interested in their work rather than their welfare.

One of the reasons behind the development of these attitudes could be the culture which makes employees perceive that the universities have no objective systems of measuring performance and that poor performers can some times be rewarded owing to internal and external influences which are unrelated to the work situation. Lack of commitment can best be explained with an example. Theft of university property is rampant and many employees seem to believe that, if independent investigation were done, it would likely reveal that most of the theft cases involved staff members directly or indirectly. The university security systems don't seem able to overcome this situation because some times the staff within these sections are involved. Further the universities lose many theft cases in the law courts because there is no serious follow up and witnesses are not given adequate support. Culture can also be reflected by the working relationships between people working in an organization.

Working Relationships among staff

The working relationships between the teaching and the non-teaching staff appear sour perhaps because of the attitudes, which each group has towards the other. The attitudes of university teaching staff towards non teaching staff may be summarised by Livingstone's (1974:51) assertion, when commenting on the British universities, that In many ways, administrative staff are the poor relations in the university statussystems. Apart from one or two very senior positions, they are not technically members of the university, unlike even the humblest undergraduate, and have no formal rights of representation in university government or ceremonies. They are employees, whether they be cleaners, janitors, accountants or architects.

An examination of this assertion suggests that the teaching staff believe that the purpose of the universities is to teach and conduct research and therefore any body else doing other things has only a minor contribution to make. The non-teaching staff, particularly the administrative staff believe that top management favours the Academic Staff in every aspect and is therefore biased in giving privileges, rewards and punishments. This is why the non-teaching staff are in many occasions not represented in the decision making committees

of the universities even where their welfare matters are being discussed. Until 2006, they were not allowed to have a union except the most junior staff in grade 1 to IV.

The teaching staff view the Administrative staff, as employees who enjoy better facilities, such as big offices with carpets and telephones, which should be available to them. They also believe that Administrators unnecessarily possess more power in the control of university resources, which should have been vested in them. At the extreme, some teaching staff believe that secretaries can comfortably perform the duties of a university administrator. Livingston, (1974), believed that administrators want more resources to be devoted to the management function yet their work can be performed by academic staff, given a day's notice. In short, the teaching staff tend to compare their facilities, power, status and privileges with those awarded to non-teaching staff. The administrative and teaching staff relations have been compounded by economic hardships, caused by polices such as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) which were imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In summary, the current culture at public universities reflects a conflict between the teaching and non-teaching staff, which not only affects their performance but also the way, they perceive their working environment. This culture of conflict appears difficult to manage because it is about status, power and resources distribution, which are vested in the roles they perform in the University. Therefore as Lai, (1991:52) observed "culture determines how people perceive their role in an organisation and their relationship with the firm they work for and their work colleagues".

Factors which inhibit culture management in Public Universities

This section discusses the implications of these factors for culture management in public universities. Internal and external factors influence the current culture at the universities.

Internal factors

The following internal factors, which are also prevalent in other public sector organisations, may influence the management of culture in public universities:- Ethnicity, centralisation of power, the committee system, and communication.

Ethnicity/ Kinship

The nature of Kenyan society is that the family support system is strong where there is widespread tendency for people to look after their close relatives and, to some extent, members of their own ethnic group. These factors have extended to the public universities and have influenced recruitment, promotion etc. as they sow seeds of favouritism. In many public universities, members of one ethnic group dominate some universities/ departments/sections, which may suggest favouritism during recruitment.

Ethnicity also forms a basis of tribal allegiance where individual officers feel obliged to help members of their tribe at the expense of the policies of the university. In return, employees become loyal and committed to members of their tribe rather than to their immediate superiors. To perpetuate this system, officers therefore tend to centralise power.

Centralisation of Power

Apart from the power vested in various Council and Senate Committees, the Public Universities tend to be large bureaucracies where authority is in the hands of a few individuals, particularly the members of the various University Management Boards. The vice-chancellor and or the Chief Administrative Officers/ Registrars make decisions, which can have real

impact in Public Universities. The offices of these officers tend to be over crowded by staff that consult them on all types of issues. This implies that power is concentrated in a few people.

The Committee System

Public university committee systems have been criticised as inefficient because, many of them tend to spend many hours engaging in rhetoric rather than serious discussion which result in decisions on issues which, occasionally, leave some chairmen to take decisions themselves or issues have to be deferred until later meetings. This phenomenon is common also in Western Universities as Livingston (1974:54) observed in Warwick University, "the Committee system of government was in danger of running riot." Many of these committees are too large and incapable of making decisions. A lot of paper is used in preparing the agenda and minutes for these committees. This means more work and high costs are involved at the expense of other relevant work and development.

Committees can create difficulties for University culture change programmes when they are used to make unpopular decisions by individuals who have power but fear to commit themselves openly and, therefore, hide behind committees which they use to 'fire their bullets'. Sometimes the Senate and the Council Committees are seen as rubber stamps of the small sub committees when their roles are reduced to ratifying what the sub committees have decided. The Councils, for example, which rarely meet and have large lay membership, appear to lose touch with the universities. It may, therefore, not understand or appreciate the sentiments of the majority of university members. On the other hand, the various Senate Committees comprised of all Deans who form the Committee of Deans. They also include all Heads of departments and the full professors, who are members of the departmental and School/ Faculty Boards. It can therefore, be safe to argue that matters which go to Senate have already been decided at other levels in the universities by appropriate committees. The size and number of these committees should be reduced to make them efficient as agents of change and facilitators of communication.

Communication

Communication systems may inhibit culture change because members of various groups can interpret in many different ways communication from the university top officials. The practice in Moi University is that internal memoranda are used to transmit information. This method appears to be associated with the issuing of directives. In fact the word 'Memo' to many staff means a letter of warning or directive. Moi University staff spend much time moving around from one office to another because the buildings are far from each other and telephone systems are not adequate. At one time, a new Vice Chancellor thought that the employees were on strike when he looked through his window because he saw too many workers walking from one building towards the administration building. Staff can even be absent from their offices or the University without being noticed.

With better communication systems, the universities could introduce new values and beliefs or reinforce old ones. Save for the mobile phones which staff own, staff are unable to communicate by office telephone outside the university because many of them are not entitled to calling cards as they are only supplied to few officers and top executives. A few telephone booths, which have been installed, are far from most offices and are usually engaged by students or not functioning. Staff therefore tend to make unnecessary journeys outside the university for matters, which they could have solved by phone. Increasing the number of pay phones and linking all offices by internal telephones to avoid a lot of time wasted by staff who give priority to personal needs rather than office duties could improve communication.

External factors

The following are some of the external factors, which hinder culture management: Political patronage, dependence on government grants, and structural adjustment programmes.

Political Patronage

The general political situation in a country can determine the state of affairs of organisations. Related with the nature of family support systems, political patronage is where politicians provide protection to employees who are members of their own tribe or political affiliations. The problem exists in Moi University and other public universities and the public sector in general as Ombati (1994:77) noted in the case of the University of Nairobi, "Politics have infiltrated the university and has become so pervasive that it... determines appointment, promotions, award for scholarships, research etc." The problem of political patronage therefore starts with recruitment and extends thereafter. During periodic recruitment of junior staff, it is common in Moi University to see the local chiefs, councillors, local chairmen of political parties and other influential people lobbying with the top executives of the university for the employment of their protégées. Political patronage ends in nepotism where those who have external political protection influence the employment of their relatives. It is not surprising that spouses of some expatriates in public universities have been employed in low-level jobs, which could be done by unemployed citizens.

It would be difficult to change this state of affairs because the top executives who are responsible for culture management tend to be pressurised to yield to political pressure, as they are often political appointees themselves. The Deans and Heads of Departments, until 2005, were appointed by the Vice Chancellors and some also tend to please the authorities in their actions irrespective of their true beliefs.

The performance and discipline of staff who depend on political patrons tend to be low. They are not motivated to work because they believe their jobs are well protected. If they misbehave, their patrons within or outside the universities influence the cases so that they are withdrawn before they reach the disciplinary committee or influence them during disciplinary meetings. Politicisation of the universities makes employees loyal to politicians rather than the university officers. This makes the relationship between the teaching staff, non-teaching staff and the top management strained because politics affects them.

Dependence on government grants

Public universities depend on Government grants. Universities have heavily been criticised because this dependence has made them neglect ways of generating their own income to supplement the government grants. Moi University, for example, which has 1,200 hectares of land, is criticised for not generating large commercial farm produce. University staff however, believe that their area of specialization is teaching and research rather than commercial activities. Thus generating income through module II was an acceptable option.

Not only has over dependence on Government grants made public universities neglect ways of self reliance through generating income, public universities are also big spenders. The present attitude is that when departments exhaust their budget allocations, they ask for more funds from other votes, defending this habit with the common phrase "the University has to run." Consequently, public universities are normally forced to negotiate for bank overdrafts whilst government grants are awaited. This has created 'a loose control oriented' culture where accountability is at a low level and remedial measures are resisted. It is now believed that, with SAPs, public university officers have been forced to change these attitudes as they charge fees and engage in commercial activities to generate income to supplement government grants. For this reason, culture management at this stage is more crucial than ever.

Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs)

The Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank on Kenya has had dire consequences for public universities. The Government reduced its spending on education and hence grants to universities dwindled. The SAPs package included the introduction of fees and a cost sharing system, which implied that students were required to subsidise their accommodation and food costs. Student intake to public universities was also reduced.

The immediate reaction of students to SAPs was demonstrations and strikes in early 1990s, which have frequently been re-occurring. Students were also forced to engage in anti social activities such as cohabitation, in order to minimise living costs, which have led to low morality in the campuses. The general economic situation in the country declined and this also affected the lives of staff and consequently their commitment to their universities. They became committed to solving their own socio-economic problems rather than working at the universities. Many staff engaged in moonlighting activities while others resorted to corrupt practices which consequently led to the suspension / dismissal of some of them from service. It is thus difficult to change a culture in a positive way, which reflects the universities' objectives and interests, when there are excessive political and economic pressure. It can however be argued that the conditions brought by SAPs could be a starting point for public universities to manage their cultures because SAPs have emphasised the need for making plans and sticking to them.

**How to create a positive culture in Public Universities**

The need for a desired culture in public universities like any other organisation is evident. A desired culture should be created and maintained because it can help the employees to improve their performance as they become committed to their universities. The question is therefore, 'how can this culture be achieved? It is expected however that the interpretation of a desired/appropriate culture can be controversial. First, there will be problems of who is to interpret the culture and second, whether the universities should have one uniform culture or not.

The Force Field Analysis

The Force Field Analysis (Williams, 1993) is applicable in public universities as a way of creating a desired culture because, after the culture has been diagnosed, changes could be made in the committee system, recruitment, promotion, training, and performance appraisal.

Force Field Analysis is a model for changing culture by changing the behaviour of individuals and social systems (Williams, et al. 1993). It suggests that for change to happen, the equilibrium state of an organisation should be disturbed by strengthening the driving forces for change or by weakening / restraining forces which resist change. This process goes through three stages of unfreezing the culture, introducing change and refreezing the culture.

Unfreezing the culture in public universities would involve drawing the attention of staff to the inadequacies in operations and how they could be improved. The introduction of changes in operations would mean the strengthening or weakening of driving forces and resisting forces respectively. Lastly, refreezing of culture involves the recognition of changes taking place as introduced by management. It is recommended that these changes should affect the normal operations of the universities such as recruitment, promotion and rewards systems, training, and appraisal as discussed below. When changes occur in these areas, they are expected to affect people's beliefs, attitudes and values.
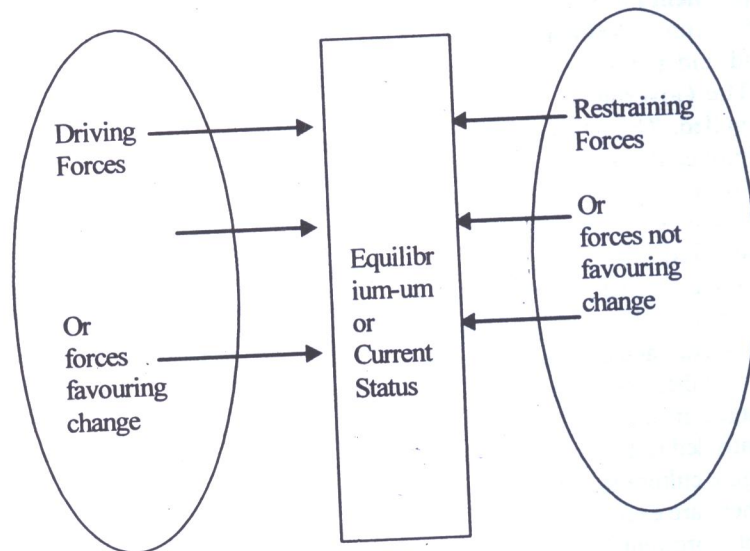
Source: Williams, *et. al* (1993) with modifications

The Committee System

The organisation structures in the universities indicate that many functions are vested in the hands of committees. The Committees and Sub Committees are so many that they pose a management problem of how to co-ordinate their work. In Moi University, for example, there are more than 20 Standing Committees of Council and Senate. Although these committees occupy an important place in the university's organisational structure they need to be reduced drastically. There seems to be over-emphasis of Committees and Sub Committees at the expense of efficiency. Although the universities have reviewed their existing committees with a view to eliminate some of them and their functions, it is generally agreed that the committees are too many for efficient management. There is also need to review the membership of some committees like the Senates and the Councils to make them smaller. Committees like 'Senior Management' should be legalised to make them more accountable and to avoid staff being cynical about it. The other problem of these Committees is that members maintain high power distance hence making interaction with other staff difficult.

Culture diagnosis can reveal departments/ sections in the universities where administrative staff are under-utilised. Such staff should be transferred to areas where there is a shortage. Rotation of administrators and support staff should be encouraged to avoid the attitude of perceiving transfer as a punishment, which should be resisted. An assessment of culture may also show that the Chief Administrative Officers/Registrars in charge of administration appear to have more control of all the officers in both divisions. This tends to weaken the position of Chief Academic Officer/Academic Registrar and the Academic Division. Structural changes can therefore be aimed at strengthening Divisions and Officers for better performance. The introduction of Responsibility Based Management (RBM) in the universities will go along way to alleviate this problem.

Human Resource Management (HRM) models advocating for flatter structures so that senior managers' span of control is widened; hence forcing them to delegate responsibility to lower levels of management is relevant (Armstrong, 1992). In application to public universities, this implies the reduction of the number of committees. In addition, merging positions should be enhanced to reduce the administrative grades.

The recent rationalisation /structural changes in the universities aim at eliminating departments that are uneconomical to run especially those with few students and/or departments which exist only with one member of staff. A private sector approach should be adopted where the implementation of a new course is like launching a new product. It should involve setting objectives, making plans, selecting personnel, allocating resources, starting production, and controlling/managing output through motivating and evaluating staff (Livingstone, 1974).

Recruitment

It was earlier asserted that politics and nepotism have influenced recruitment in the universities and it was suggested that a better system, which attempts to match individuals with jobs, was required. This is crucial, particularly in the middle level and senior grades, where jobs require more skill and professionalism. In the case of junior staff where the government policy is to recruit from the local communities, criteria for their selection should also be worked out to avoid too much politicisation.

The public universities also needs to consider seriously the employment of women and the disadvantaged members of society in the senior grades in order to influence the attitudes of staff about these issues. Above all, public universities should conduct job analysis regularly before recruiting staff. This helps to match people with jobs and hence a step ahead towards minimising undesirable external and internal influences.

Promotion and Rewards

Disaffection with the universities' promotion and rewards systems has led to lack of commitment and poor performance among staff. The problem of disaffection seems to be more common in all the levels of staff where political influence is prevalent. To combat these problems, the leaders of the universities need to adopt a system of promotion and rewards, which are acceptable to employees, and a scheme of service for each category of staff. Employees are likely to change their beliefs and values if they are convinced that the systems used are fair and have benefits.

The other methods, which Hofstede (1991) prescribed, included changing the superficial and the deeper levels of culture. Universities could easily change the former by re-introducing articles, which bear the university logos. Articles such as key holders, pens, T-shirts, caps, ties, cutlery etc. can be sold to staff or given to them as incentives/rewards. There is also need to promote songs and introduce slogans, which make employees identifiy with the universities. In Moi University, for example, old slogans, which may be misused such as 'this is a university with a difference', need to be understood and used correctly. The deeper levels of culture, which arguably is difficult to change, can be addressed by targeting behavioural changes. This means the universities should introduce ways of rewarding behaviour, which is useful to the attainment of the organisation's objectives. It is assumed that this would lead to changes in individual deeper beliefs and assumptions.

Training

Earlier, it was observed that public universities do not conduct Training Needs Analysis. As a result of this, staff whose performance could be enhanced through training become frustrated. Non teaching staff whose performance is considered high but have been awarded scholarships, take them as rewards and therefore pursue training in areas which may not be related to their jobs. The consequence of this is that many of them leave the universities after training as if the universities prepared them for jobs outside the organisation.

Performance appraisal

As earlier indicated, the universities' appraisal systems are subjective as they rely more on confidential reports of Heads of departments. To change staff assumptions that progression in their careers depends on reports and their loyalty to Heads, there is need for an open appraisal system which is based on the work which the staff perform and the results that the universities expect of them. Appraisals also need to be done as a continuous process rather than only when there are complaints about employee performance. Lastly, appraisal should not be used as a method to determine staff to be punished but rather as a system of how employees can be helped through training, re-deployment etc. for better performance and commitment to their universities.

Conclusion and recommendations

This paper has discussed the significance of culture management in public universities in Kenya by taking the following steps. The need to create a desired culture has been examined and the ways to create a desired culture suggested. Hofstede's (1991) method of process, structure and personnel has been considered together with Schein's (1985) ten mechanisms. Taking cognisance of the fact that culture management is not an easy exercise, this paper discussed the internal and external factors, which inhibit culture management in public universities. Lastly, the paper recommends the use of the Force Field Analysis to assess culture and to identify aspects of culture, which should be changed and reinforced. The paper also suggested that public university leaders should influence the process of selection, appraisal, training and rewards to create an appropriate culture, which could enable the organisation to achieve its objectives.

The paper has also observed that culture management is influenced by factors, which are not always under the control of the university managers. The management therefore may not be able to influence some factors, which create an inappropriate culture.

Mnaging culture seems to be ignored because, while subordinates and top executives appear to be aware that the general performance of the organisation is low due to low employee satisfaction, no one seems to take any initiative to bring about desired changes. As it were, culture concerns assumptions and things taken for granted hence managers do not give any seriousness to re-examining the organisation's culture. Thus, public universities do not consider the management of culture as an important task. It is often ignored and yet it impacts significantly on employee performance and commitment. Policy makers and administrators should therefore manipulate cultures in their universities to conform to the university objectives. Culture management in public universities requires a multi-dimensional approach. Schein's (1985) turn around mechanism may be appropriate because it requires many programmes and effort of all employees to be used. Piece meal changes in a few Departments, though important, would not augur well for a culture to be planned, created and sustained. There is no doubt that some departments view some aspects of their sub cultures as appropriate. Departments need to be encouraged to identify aspects, which need to be reinforced. Where departments have formed tea clubs, which enables their members to interact with each other and are within reach also, helps not to waste time looking for tea in far away places outside the university.

The universities also need to promote some values such as accountability in all the Departments of the universities. Attempts should be made to ensure that Departments feel that they own university resources, which are under their care. Allowing departments/ sections more autonomy in their day-to-day running could facilitate this. Appropriate incentives might also be considered to persuade key staff not to leave universities. In this way the top management, particularly the Vice Chancellors and the Chief Administrative Officers/Registrars, should be convinced that culture management is not only important but can also have practical