

JOB DISSATISFACTION: AN ANALYSIS OF SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE MISMATCH OF ON-JOB TRAINED EMPLOYEES IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

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ABSTRACT: *It is acknowledged that Human Resource Development (HRD) practices such as On Job Training (OJT) and Job Placement (JP) are linked to employee performance. However, research is yet to focus on how performance is affected by mismatch of new knowledge and skills acquired from OJT and those required to perform their allocated responsibilities, especially in public universities in Kenya. Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) devotes some of its budgetary allocation on OJT of administrative staff and any mismatch between knowledge and skills acquired and those demanded by administrative jobs can be counterproductive. Thus a need exists to establish the relationship between OJT as HRD practice and JP of trained administrative staff. The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between on-job training and job placement of administrative staff at MMUST. This is aimed at finding out if the OJT programmes match the staff's skills and knowledge. The study employed a case study design with target population of 149 administrative staff. Since the target population was small, it formed the sample therefore census sampling. Data was collected using structured questionnaire and an interview schedule. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and was presented verbatim according to the themes while quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using percentages and frequency distribution techniques. The results indicated that majority of the respondents acquired most of their knowledge and skills while in their current positions, with a few others had the knowledge and skills that matched with the positions they held. The study concludes that properly placed employees perform optimally while misplaced employees feel demotivated and tend to have a high turn-over rate. The study recommends that organizations should ensure that they hire competent and qualified administrative staff and also, enact policies on proper placement to ensure that employees who are misplaced have a chance to be properly placed to the right positions.*

KEYWORDS: Job Placement, Knowledge, Skills, Administrative staff, Job dissatisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Policy interest in skill mismatch has been an area of interest in recent years, but almost all research has focused on individual-level determinants such as age, ethnicity and its consequences (wages, job satisfaction). Any organization that wants to succeed, and to continue to succeed, has to maintain workforce consisting of people who have their skills, knowledge and attitudes matching their job placements. They should be however willing to learn and develop continuously. On Job

Training of human capital is tremendously important in the effective management and maintenance of a skilled workforce. The knowledge and skills presented during on-the-job are directly related to job requirements. Job instruction technique, job rotation, coaching and apprenticeship training thus employees are more likely to be satisfied in their jobs other than if a training that doesn't match their placement is conducted.

LITERATURE UNDERPINNING

One form of mismatch is 'over-education'. Evidence suggests that those who are over-educated work below their potential and suffer from lower job satisfaction exhibiting a higher turnover rate compared to individuals who work in jobs matching their educational qualifications. There is disagreement on whether over-education is a transitory or permanent phenomenon, with recent studies increasingly favouring the latter. Over-education can be harmful for individuals, enterprises and societies (Cedefop, 2010).

According to Cedefop (2010), over-education may, nonetheless, have some productivity advantages for firms. Firm-level data show a positive relationship between over-skilling and firm productivity. Individuals with 'surplus' educational credentials may still receive a wage premium relative to appropriately educated colleagues in similar jobs. Available evidence also suggests that there is value-added in upgrading the skills of the under-educated. Their productivity normally lags behind that of matched colleagues who work in similar jobs but they have few incentives to engage in skills improvement since they earn more than similarly-educated individuals who are in jobs that match their skills.

According to a study carried out by Keith *et al.* (2003), approximately one-sixth of academics and nearly one-half of non-academics report some degree of mismatch. The influence of job mismatch is estimated for three job outcomes: earnings, job satisfaction and turnover. Surprisingly large and robust influences emerge. Mismatch is associated with substantially lower earnings, lower job satisfaction and a higher rate of turnover. These results persist across a variety of specifications and hold for both academics and non-academics. Estimates of the determinants of mismatch indicate that older workers and those in rapidly changing disciplines are more likely to be mismatched and there is a suggestion that women are more likely to be mismatched.

In a survey carried out by de Grip *et al.* (2008) in the Netherlands, they wanted to find out various aspects of people's cognitive abilities in relation to whether over-educated workers are more vulnerable to a decline in their cognitive abilities, and whether under-educated workers are less vulnerable. They found that a job-worker mismatch induces a cognitive decline with respect to immediate and delayed recall abilities, cognitive flexibility and verbal fluency. Their findings indicate that, to some extent, it is the adjustment of the ability level of the over-educated and under-educated workers that adjusts initial job-worker mismatch. This adds to the relevance of preventing over-education, and shows that being employed in a challenging job contributes to workers' cognitive resilience. This could equate to qualitative mismatch. Qualitative mismatches arise when the qualifications of workers, individually or in the aggregate, are different from the qualifications required or specified for their jobs (Sattinger, 2011).

According to Büchel (2004), the basic premise is that, as a consequence of frustration, over-educated employees are less productive than their correctly allocated colleagues. However, the results obtained in the present study contradict the few available empirical findings, all of which are based on data from the United States. When comparing employees working in jobs with similar levels of requirements (the sole approach which seems to be useful), over-qualified employees are found to be healthier, more strongly work- and career-minded, more likely to participate in OJT, and to have longer periods of tenure with the same firm than their correctly allocated colleagues. No significant differences could be determined with respect to job satisfaction. These findings are consistent with the established fact that over-educated workers receive wage premiums for their surplus schooling. The overall results make the hiring of over-qualified applicants understandable, and could explain the employers' motivation to accept persistent over-education in the labour force. In yet another study, Büchel (2004) asserts that both type and grade of school leaving certificate have a strong effect on the later risk of over-education. The quality of the vocational training chosen only impacts on the over-education risk when the strong selectivity effects in certain types of schools and types of vocational training are not taken into account. In line with existing literature, the risk of over-education decreases with increasing traditional skill measures such as experience, tenure, OJT, and further education.

METHODOLOGY

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), Kakamega County was the area of study. The institution was deemed relevant having absorbed trainees through interviews as university employees after which with the advancements in technology, employees undergo OJT to remain relevant in the job market. Employees who have undergone OJT are expected to be promoted to positions congruent to their knowledge, skills and qualifications to increase efficiency and attain higher performance standards. The university has a total of 1066 employees of which 149 are administrative staff (Strategic Plan, 2015 – 2020). The study adopted a case study design in with the target population consisting of all the 149 administrative staff at MMUST who were in job position by the end of the first semester of the academic year 2013/2014. This was obtained at the main campus of MMUST from the registrar – administration. The target population categories of administrative staff are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Target Population

Category of Administrative Staff	Target Population
Registrar	3
Deputy registrar	4
Senior assistant registrar	11
Assistant registrar	25
Senior administrative assistant grade 1	3
Senior administrative assistant grade 2	20
Administrative assistant	83
Total	149

Source: Author, 2015

For the purpose of this study, all the 149 administrative staff of MMUST participated. The study employed questionnaire and interview schedule as the main tools for collecting data. The selection of these tools was guided by the nature of data to be collected, the time available as well as by the objectives of the study. The study was mainly concerned with the views, opinions, perceptions, feelings and attitudes. Such kind of information can be best collected through the use of questionnaire and interview techniques (Cohen & Manion, 2003).

The collected data was then thematically organized. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data. In descriptive statistics, percentages and frequency distribution techniques were used to show the particular frequency of respondent's preferences. Quantitative data was presented graphically and in tables while further explanations were offered from the qualitative data.

RESULTS

Right Placements based on Knowledge and Skills

This required respondents to indicate whether they were rightly placed according to their knowledge and skills. The findings are as shown in figure 1.

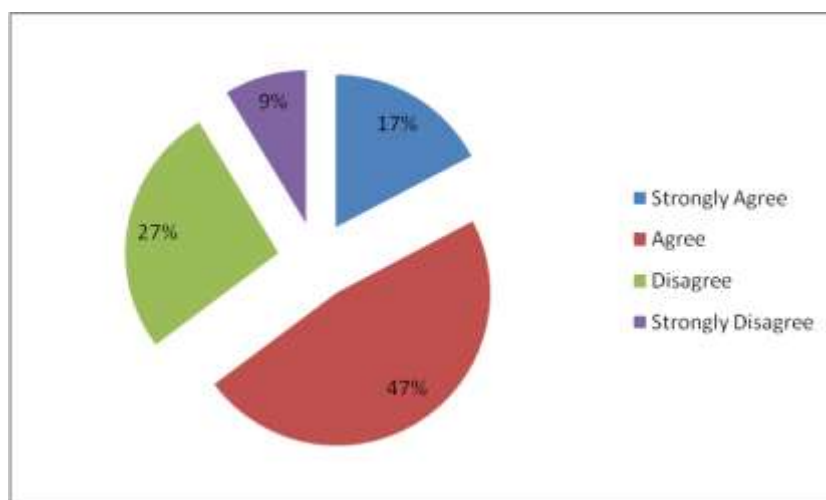


Figure 1. Rightly Placed According to Knowledge and skills

Source: Author, 2015

A 47% agreed that they were rightly placed according to their knowledge and skills. Another 17% strongly agreed that their knowledge and skills match with the positions they are currently holding. Whereas it appears that the majority of the respondents are of the opinion that they are rightly placed according to their knowledge and skills, 36% are strongly convinced that they are not placed well according to their knowledge and skills. Perhaps this means that a good proportion of administrative staff have advanced in their training since their recruitment. This is in agreement with a study done

by Keith *et al.* (2003), who identified that approximately one-sixth of academics and nearly one-half of non-academics report some degree of mismatch.

Over qualification

To establish whether these respondents were over-qualified or not, further analysis of the responses were made by using a cross tabulation. A cross tabulation of the respondents' level of education and the match between knowledge and skills possessed and job requirements provided more insight into the nature of mismatch for the 36% of the respondents as presented in table 2.

Table 2: Education Level and rightful placements

Respondents' education level	I'm Rightly Placed According to my Knowledge and skills				Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Ph. D.	1	7	8	0	16
Masters	8	26	6	2	42
Bachelors	15	33	23	10	81
Total	24	66	37	12	139

Source: Author, 2015

As indicated in 2, 16 respondents had a doctorate degree (Ph.D.) while 42 had Masters' degrees. Since the requirement for the position of administrative staff is a Bachelor's degree, it may be inferred that only 41.7% of respondents were overqualified for their current position.

From table 2, it is yet again evident that of those who were over-qualified, a total of 16 respondents (38%) disagreed that they are rightfully placed according to their level of knowledge and skills. This finding may be interpreted to mean that these respondents felt that they were not placed in the right positions at the university. Such interpretation would be tenable if these employees acquired these extra knowledge and skills after being employed as administrative officers. If however, they obtained these qualifications prior to their employment then the conclusion that there was a mismatch may not be tenable. As established by de Grip *et al.* (2008), a job-worker mismatch induces a cognitive decline with respect to immediate and delayed recall abilities, cognitive flexibility and verbal fluency. This means that, to some extent, it is the adjustment of the ability level of the over-educated and under-educated workers that adjusts initial job-worker mismatch. This adds to the relevance of preventing over-education, and shows that being employed in a challenging job contributes to workers' cognitive resilience.

The study used the Chi-square test to establish whether the relationship between level of education and the disagreement that one is rightfully placed depending on their level of knowledge and skills is true. The results of the chi-square test are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Chi-Square test of the Relationship between Education and Placement

	Value	Degrees of Freedom	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.100	6	.024
Likelihood Ratio	20.702	6	.014
Linear-by-Linear Association	.000	1	.992
N of Valid Cases	139		

Source: Author, 2015

The Chi-Square test reveals that the relationship between the level of education and the disagreement that one is rightfully placed depending on their level of knowledge and skills is significant $\chi^2(6)=19.100$, $P<0.05$. This finding indicates that for a good number of the respondents, once they attain higher levels of education, they are not placed accordingly at their workplace.

Adequacy of Knowledge and Skills to Execute Duties

The study also sought to establish whether the administrative staff had adequate knowledge and skills to execute their duties, their responses are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Knowledge & Skills adequacy in Executing Duties

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	56	40.3	40.3
Agree	66	47.5	87.8
Undecided	6	4.3	92.1
Disagree	10	7.2	99.3
Strongly Disagree	1	0.7	100.0
Total	139	100.0	

Source: Author, 2015

Majority (47.5%) of the respondents agreed that they have adequate knowledge and skills to execute their duties in their current positions. This was followed by 40.3% of the respondents who strongly agreed that they had adequate knowledge and skills to execute their duties in their current positions. However, the remaining 7.2% of the respondents disagreed with the claim that they possess adequate knowledge and skills to execute duties in their current positions. This could explain the staff's wrongful placements, or under-qualification. Either way, this raises the question which this study sought to answer, as to whether employees are rightfully placed in their current positions.

Acquisition of Current Level of Knowledge and Skills

Further, the study sought to know whether the respondents' current level of knowledge and skills were acquired while working in current position. Their responses are shown in figure 2.

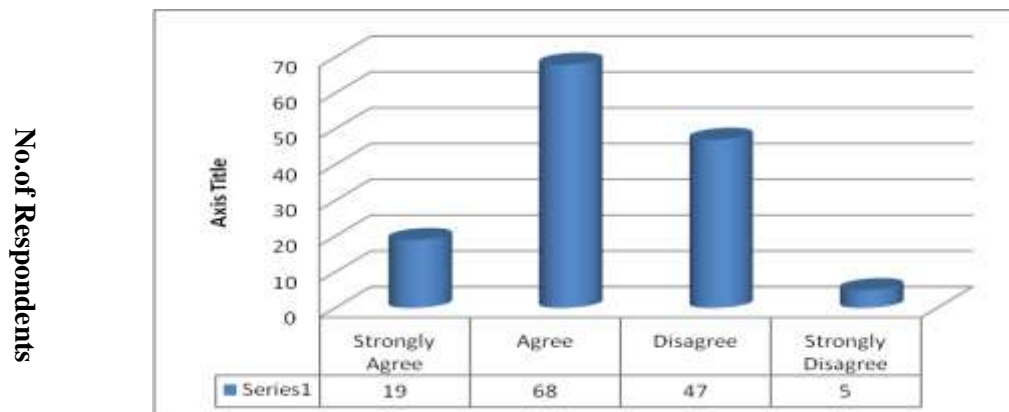


Figure 2. Present Knowledge and Skills Acquired while Working in Current Position

Source: Author, 2015

The results in figure 2 show that 68 (48.9%) of the respondents agreed that their present knowledge and skills were acquired while working in current positions. This is followed by 19 (13.7%) who strongly agreed. Most people come into employment with either basic training only, or as untrained employees. They then begin to acquire knowledge and skills on-job. In the context of a university, whose objective is to create, preserve and disseminate knowledge, it is expected that employees engage in constant training to keep abreast with the trends in management of higher learning. In addition, some key respondents indicated that as an incentive for employees, most universities have school fees waiver for those working and studying in the institution. It would thus explain the findings that majority agreed that they acquired most of their knowledge and skills while working in current positions. There were 5 (0.04%) of the respondents who disagreed that their present knowledge and skills were acquired while working in their current positions. The implication is that they may have been trained before present positions.

Need to acquire more Knowledge and Skills for best Performance

The respondents were asked if they still felt that they needed to acquire more knowledge and skills for best performance of their duties, and their responses are presented in figure 3.

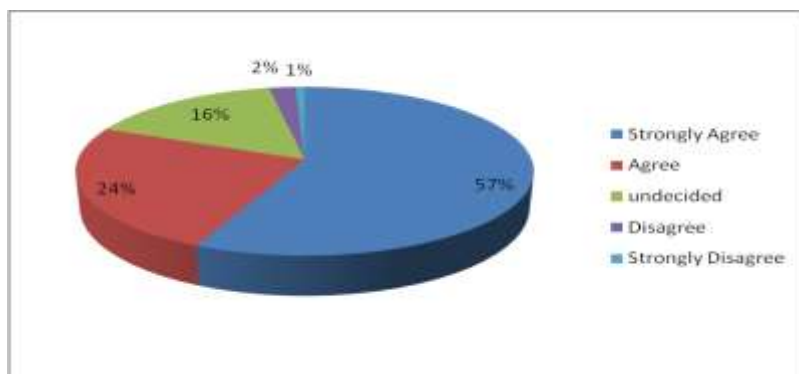


Figure 3: Need More Knowledge and Skills for Best Performance

Source: Author, 2015

Majority (57%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they needed more knowledge and skills for best performance of their duties followed by 24% who agreed with the statement. A minimum of 1% of the respondents feel contented with the knowledge and skills they possess for best performance of duties. This is understandable given the fact that each employee wishes to perform optimally, not just for the sake of producing for the organization, but also for their own job security. Therefore, the better they perform their duties the safer they feel. In addition, more knowledge, and hence better performance of duties may earn one a promotion to the next level.

From the above discussion, the study established that though the respondents agreed that they were adequately knowledgeable and skillful enough to perform their duties, they also indicated that they still undergo training and would still go for more.

Undertaken any OJT since Employment

It is in line with the above information that the employees felt the need for furthering their knowledge and training that this study wished to know; if actually the respondents had had any training since their employment. The staff responses are depicted figure 4.

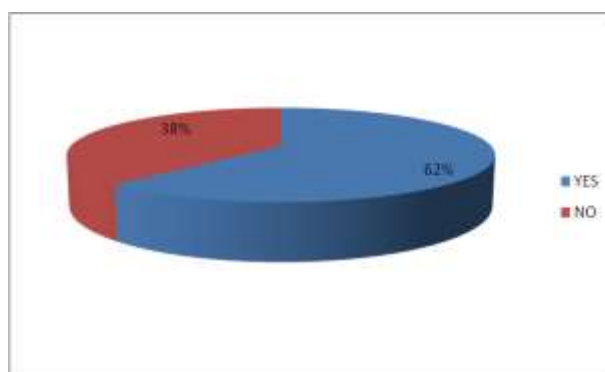


Figure4. Have you undertaken any On-Job-Training since Employment?

Source: Author, 2015

Majority (62%) of the respondents indicated that they had had some form of training while on job. The other 38% reported that they had not had any form of training. This training could have been self or employer sponsored.

Self or Employer Initiated Training

The study sought to identify the sponsor of the training and this is how they responded as shown in table 5.

Table 5. Whether Training Self or Employer Initiated

	Frequency	Percent
Employer	22	15.8
Self	51	36.7
Not applicable	54	38.8
Both	5	3.6
Neither self nor employer	7	5.0
Total	139	100.0

Source: Author, 2015

As shown in table 5, 38.8% of the respondents did not bother to go for training whether self or employer initiated while 36.7% sponsored their own training. 15.8% were sponsored by their employer. This could mean that they may have been sponsored by another benefactor/sponsor apart from themselves and employer.

DISCUSSION

From the above findings, the study established that though the respondents felt adequately knowledgeable and skillful enough to perform their duties, they also indicated that they still undergo training and would still go for more. This is because of the fact that employee competencies change through effective training programs. It not only improves the overall performance of the employees to effectively perform the current job but also enhance the knowledge, skills and attitude of the workers necessary for the future job, thus contributing to superior organizational performance (Wright & Geroy, 2001). Further still, there can be a reduction of dissatisfaction complaints, absenteeism and turnover which can be greatly reduced when employees are so well trained and therefore experience the direct satisfaction associated with the sense of achievement and knowledge that they are developing their inherent capabilities (Pigors & Myers, 1989).

Moreover, the findings of this study show that most employees have adequate knowledge and skills to execute their duties. The aforementioned is in agreement with Cedefop (2010) studies. This is as a result of OJT which enables MMUST employees to improve their knowledge and skills through Training Needs Assessment (TNA).

The study depicts most of the respondents showing that they possessed adequate knowledge and skills to perform the duties as per their current positions. This implies that either most staff have knowledge levels equivalent to their tasks or they have even more knowledge and skills than those demanded by the tasks assigned to them. Most of the respondents were not well placed according to their levels of knowledge and skills, hence non-placement.

IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The results of this study form a theoretical and practical significance to the academic community and practicing HR managers. The findings add to the understanding of the notion of non-placement/mismatch within university environments. The results of the study will be of significance to the management boards of universities. Knowledge of the effect of non-placement of on job trained employees will enable institutions to review their policy on training and placements of university staff. The information on the existence and effect of mis-match on performance of staff will enable the state department conduct the required post policy analysis on the financing of training in universities.

CONCLUSION

The results on training of employees suggest that MMUST staff present an array of skills with adequate training for staff by the institution. However, most staff end up not being placed on the right job. Indeed, since universities, unlike other institutions emphasizes on staff development, skills mismatch may be the norm rather than the exception.

RECOMMENDATION

1. There is need for institutions to ensure their HRD strategies emphasize on matching training with TNA. This therefore ensures that after training employees are properly placed, motivated and committed to ensuring they put to optimal use their skills.
2. Since there is a discrepancy between level of knowledge and skills and job placement, it is recommended that there should be constant review of jobs to ensure that the descriptions match with emerging skills that may have already been acquired by staff. This will ensure that employees are well placed, especially the ones who have sought additional qualifications that are essentially an added advantage.
3. The author recommends that a study should be done on the influencing factors of non-placement or mismatch of trained employees in institutions of higher learning.

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