

LEARNING ORGANIZATION AND PERFORMANCE OF KENYA URBAN ROADS AUTHORITY

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ABSTRACT

Performance of Kenyan state corporations and in particular, Kenya Urban Roads Authority remains crucial for micro and macro-economic development of the country. The general objective of this study was to investigate the effect of learning organization on performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority. The specific objectives of the study were to determine the effect of continuous learning, dialogue, team learning and empowerment of staff on performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority. Descriptive survey research design was adopted and a population limited to 220 employees of Kenya Urban Roads Authority was targeted. Random sampling technique was used to select the sample size of 142 respondents. Two strata were used; the management level staff stratum and the lower level stratum. The study utilized primary data where self-administered questionnaires were used as the main instrument for collecting of data. Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and the relationship between the variables was established using multiple regression analysis. Results showed that

the mean summaries of the continuous learning, dialogue, team learning and empowerment statements, respondents agreed to a great extent that the learning organization dimensions affected the organizational performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority. Moreover, the relationship between organizational performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority and continuous learning, dialogue and team learning was positive and statistically insignificant at the 95% confidence level. The relationship between organizational performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority and empowerment was positive and statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. The study recommends empowerment of employees as it will lead to stronger job performance, job satisfaction and commitment to the organization thereby positively affecting the performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority.

Key words: Continuous learning, dialogue, team learning, organizational performance, KURA

INTRODUCTION

Many firms strive for a culture of learning organization, by creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge while adapting its patterns to mirror the acquired information and concepts (Marquardt et al., 2012). This is an indication that learning organization is a promising concept in management of organizations enhancing their performance (Mbakaya, 2018). Further, organizations learn when their employee learn, hence there is a good case for individuals to double efforts and to achieve the workplace targets. This translates to better individual performance and which in turn improves organizational performance.

Organizations advance and learn from experience through their history and the strategic decision choices (Richard *et al.*, 2009). In solving challenges, taking chances and making mistakes, there is creation of cultures that act as repositories for lessons learnt and expertise reflecting collective learning (Omadede, 2012). Learning that is embedded in culture and expertise are transmitted between employees through socialization and thus it is not whether there is learning or not, or the process of an organization becoming a learning organization, it is about whether all organizations have unique learning abilities and unique techniques of learning and therefore the focus should be on understanding the learning processes and the existing mechanisms and how, where and what gets learnt (Perrin & Marsick, 2013).

Learning organization is an organization coalescing knowhow and intellectual asset management, invention, learning organization and individual learning (Khosravi & Ahmad 2013) and the organization's ability to enhance the learning, revolution of itself and its members (Atalay *et al.*, 2012). Boden *et al.* (2012) also indicated that learning organization as to It is also said to deeply plant the capabilities of learning, accommodating and variation in the culture of the organization and more efficiently training staff including attaining competitive advantage, knowhow and the formation of a working team (Cheung *et al.*, 2013).

Learning organization is a model type of organization with the ability to lead more effective learning to improve the advancement of an organization (Nazar, 2013, Agarwal *et al.*, 2012) in addition to empowering employees, enhancing commitment of the employees and reducing the requirements of technical organization (Yazici, 2012). It allows organizational members to continuously expand their capabilities, create acceptable outcomes, ability to cultivate new thinking ways and continuously learning to get skills together in an attempt to form the basis for success (Ganjinia *et al.*, 2014).

Cheng and Fu (2013) identified organizational learning dimensions as systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision and team learning. The dimensions are focused on a shift of mind from envisioning parts to envisioning wholes, from envisioning people as helpless reactors to envisioning them as active members in shaping their reality, from reacting to the current to creating what is forthcoming (Senge, 1990). There are seven dimensions that

characterize learning organization culture (Watkins & Marsick, 1993) and are continuous learning, dialogue and inquiry, team learning, embedded system, system connections, empowerment and strategic leadership. It is the learning culture that contributes to the existence of learning organization.

State corporations have featured significantly in the development strategies of most nations in Africa. Most of the state corporations and especially those in road network, energy, water and sewerage, telephone and communications, transport, have had a long history of performing poorly (Mutegi & Ombui, 2016). Governments in Africa, with or without the help of donors, have been unsuccessful in reforming state owned organizations using evolutionary approaches short of ownership variations. Lack of this success brought about heavy reliance on private sector participation and ownership. A high quality road network especially in urban areas is a treasured asset for any economy (Esha, 2014). With the Kenya vision 2030 and promulgation of the new constitution, Kenya has set up a detailed development blueprint and political framework promoting wealth creation and equitable development. Making effective transport and communication is important in the accomplishment of this objective. Further, the Kenyan government acknowledges that attaining Kenya Vision 2030 and millennium development goals is highly dependent on road networks that are quality (Esha, 2014).

The Kenya Urban Roads Authority (KURA) is a statutory body which was formed in 2007 by the Kenya Roads Act. The Act also formed other Roads Authority (RAs) and stipulated their powers and roles in the Act. The Authority began its functions in the FY 2007/2008 with its head office in Nairobi and ten (10) regional offices within the country. Since its inception in 2007, KURA has been carrying out its mandate in managing, developing, rehabilitating and maintaining all public Roads in Cities and Municipalities efficiently except where the roads are National Roads. The core roles of KURA are to construct, upgrade, rehabilitate and maintain roads under its control, control urban road reserves and right of entry to roadside developments, implement roads policies concerning urban roads, ensure observance by motorists to the rules and procedures on axle load control stipulated under the traffic act and under any policies under the act and ensure that the road networks quality is in compliance with such standards as may be (KURA, 2014).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Performance of KURA remains crucial for micro and macro-economic advancement of the country. The government of Kenya has admitted that over the years there has been poor performance in terms of timely delivery, efficiency and effectiveness of services which has impeded the achievement of sustainable economic growth (Ongeti & Machuki, 2018). Further, effectiveness and efficiency are performance measures, which organizations can use to determine their performance making performance of KURA a matter of great concern to the management practitioners, government and the public at large. Researchers have indicated that road

construction projects by KURA are facing challenges of non-completion and failure due to time in efficiency, inadequate funds, ineffectiveness and inefficiency in resource utilization (Gitahi & Tumuti, 2019; Nyarieko, Nzioka, Oludhe & Osepere, 2019).

Kamuti (2010) studied organizational learning practices adopted by state corporations and found out that the practices adopted were skills management, continuous learning, dialogue and inquiry, open communication. Mbutia (2018) determined the effects of learning organization dimensions on the organizational performance of commercial banks within Ongata Rongai Township. The study concluded that dimensions of learning organizations had a significant effect on the organizational performance of commercial banks. Nzuve and Omolo (2012) concluded that more than half of commercial banks in Kenya had adopted the dimensions of learning organization. Omadede (2012) conducted a study on learning organizational practices at Kenya Shell Limited in relation to various dimension of the learning organization model and established that team learning was positively related to performance where increase in team learning led to increase in performance of the organization.

Despite the increased study on learning organization in Kenya in the recent years there are few current study on learning organization dimensions and their influence on organizational performance of state corporations. A number of studies have focused on the importance of learning although few past studies addressed the processes needed to build learning organizations and their probable effect on organizational performance. There exist few studies focusing on the variables employed in the current study. Lastly there exist mixed results on the effect of learning organizations. This hence saw a need of conducting the current study with the aim of determining the effect of learning organization on performance. Therefore, this study aimed at filling this gap on the effect of learning organization on performance of state corporations. The study focused on learning organization and performance of Kenya Urban Road Authority (KURA), a state corporation in Kenya.

General objective of the Study

The general objective was to investigate the effect of learning organization on performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority (KURA).

Specific objectives of the Study

- i. To determine the effect of continuous learning on organizational performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority.
- ii. To establish the effect of dialogue on organizational performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority.
- iii. To ascertain the effect of team learning on organizational performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority.

- iv. To find out the effect of empowerment on organizational performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Continuous Learning and Organizational Performance

Husein *et al* (2016), sought to investigate the association between learning organization culture and organizational performance in Public Institutions of Higher Education in Malaysia. 40 Public institutions of higher education were used as a sample size. Questionnaires were used to collect the data. Descriptive research design and quantitative method was employed in analysis. Correlational analyses were used to determine the existence of the relationship between continuous learning and organization performance. The findings showed that continuous learning was highly associated with organizational performance.

Akhtar *et al.* (2011) carried out a study to determine the effect of organizational learning on organizational performance of higher education institutes of Pakistan. Non-probability purposive sampling strategy was used and a sample of size 150 was selected. Data collection was by DLOQ where regression analysis was done. The results revealed that continuous learning was highly in significant in relation to the organizational performance.

A study to identify the influence of the Learning Organization on Malaysian TVET teachers' Innovative Work Behavior using the regression analysis was carried out by Clifton *et al.* (2016). Survey was the tool used for data gathering and SPSS for data analysis. Questionnaires were used in data collection and were given to a total of 213 teachers in three TVET institutions who were sampled. The regression tests determined the effect of learning organization dimensions on their performance. Findings showed that continuous learning had significant positive impacts on the TVET teachers' performance.

A study aiming at determining the correlation between organizational learning and performance among employees of public organizations in Kerman was carried out by Toulabi *et al.* (2013). The population consisted of all the 3119 employees of public organizations in Kerman. 342 employees formed the sample size. Data was collected using standard questionnaires. Descriptive, referential statistical methods and Spearman test were utilized in data analysis. Research findings showed a significant correlation between continuous learning and learning organization.

Dialogue and Organizational Performance

Harris and Samreen (2015) conducted a study to examine the impact of learning organization practices on financial and non-financial performance of Pakistan hospitals. Questionnaires were distributed to medical staff of four large hospitals for data collection. Two hundred and fifty seven participants were used as a sample size, where 85% were nurses while 14 % were doctors. Data was statistically analyzed through descriptive and correlation analysis to assess the variation amongst hospital performance and learning organization. The results indicated that dialogue was significantly and positively related with the performance of the hospitals.

Wetherington and Daniels (2013) studied the correlation between learning organization dimensions and performance in the nonprofit sector. Questionnaires were distributed to the staff in the NGOs for collection of data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were carried out using SPSS software. Findings revealed the existence of a positive correlation between dialogue dimension and performance.

Mrisha *et al* (2017) sought to investigate the impact of learning organization culture on organizational performance in Mombasa County. Descriptive survey design was used while stratified random sampling was used to choose respondents. 171 respondents were sampled from a population of 300 respondents across 34 logistics firms where questionnaires were distributed. Pearson correlation coefficient and the correlation between learning organization and organizational performance was determined using regression analysis. Findings showed a positive and strong correlation between dialogue and organizational performance.

Team Learning and Organizational Performance

Omadede (2012) conducted a study on learning organizational practices at Kenya Shell Limited in relation to various dimension of the learning organization model. The case study involved interviewing senior managers in the organization and a review of relevant documents, reference and existing information sources through content analysis. Findings established that team learning was positively related to performance where increase in team learning led to increase in performance of the organization.

Pokharel and Choi (2015) carried out a research to explore the correlation between the learning organization and organizational performance. Secondary data was collected and organizational performance through a proposed conceptual framework was considered in higher education institutes. Findings revealed that development of team learning takes place when there is sharing and learning new knowhow, silks and perspectives by the members of the team.

The study of Norashikin *et al.* (2016) was set to determine the correlation between learning organization and organizational performance. The study explored the level of learning organization culture and its correlation with organizational performance in a Public Institution of Higher Education in Malaysia. Findings gotten from 40 academics indicated significant positive relationships and that team learning were highly related with organizational performance.

Nkaiwuateri (2012) sought to find out the factors affecting learning organization and the effect of learning organization on continuous improvement in Kenyan banks. 43 respondents formed the sample size who were given questionnaires for collecting data. Analysis was carried out using SPSS. Teamwork was found to be significant and thus very critical for organizations in the achievement of continuous improvement.

Empowerment and Organizational Performance

Kimolo (2013) sought to determine the correlation between practices of employee empowerment and employee performance in Regional Development Authorities in Kenya. The population included all the employees of Regional development authority. A random selection was conducted to get a sample of 173 employees, primary data collection was used. Descriptive analysis was done while Pearson product moment correlation determined the strength of the relationship between employee empowerment practice and employee performance. The study found that employee empowerment practices related positively to performance.

Abdulkadir *et al.* (2016) examined the effect of employee empowerment on organizational performance at telecommunication firms in Mogadishu-Somalia. The researchers utilized convenient sampling to collect 70 questionnaires from three Telecommunication Firms in Mogadishu, Somalia. Correlation coefficient was used in data analysis. The study found that organizational performance had significant positive influence with employee empowerment.

A study aiming to determine the level of employee empowerment and its effect on employee satisfaction in manufacturing organizations was carried out by Mukwakungu *et al.* (2018). A mixed methods research design was used. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. 11 managers were interviewed. Findings showed that there was a significant level of employee empowerment.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. It is a methodical, pragmatic analysis whereby the investigator has no direct control of the independent variable. This is because their manifestation has already occurred hence cannot be manipulated (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012). The design was preferred since this study was not restricted to data collection and data description but it sought to find out whether there are specific relationships among the study

variables (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012). Data was collected through a survey which was carried out through questionnaires with standardized questions. Survey is an approach of data collection from individuals about their demographics, behaviors and thinking (Malhotra et al., 2011).

Target Population

The study targeted employees of Kenya Urban Roads Authority. The researcher focused on the management level staff and the lower level staff of the organization. The management level staff comprised of the regional managers and departmental managers while the lower level staff entailed officers working in those departments on a different level other than management. The study focused on the management since they had all the information needed to meet the objectives of the study.

Sample Design and Procedure

A sample is a demonstrative part of the aggregate population whereas the manner in which that part is determined is called the sampling technique (Kothari & Garg, 2014). The sample size determination technique that was used is the Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967) as follows; this formula yields the best sample that is representative of the entire population. Further, it does reflect the basic trade-offs between precision, accuracy and sample size. Random sampling was used to select the respondents who participated in the study.

The sample size for this study was derived using the formula below;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N (e)^2}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Sum of population figure of 220

E = Maximum limit of tolerable error (0.05)

Hence, n = $\frac{220}{1 + (220 \times 0.0025)}$

$$1 + (220 \times 0.0025) = 142$$

Table 1: Sample Size

Designation	Target Population	Percentage	Sample size
Management level	40	22%	31
Lower level Staff	180	78%	111
Total	220	100%	142

Data Collection Instrument

Data collection was done using semi-structured questionnaires, comprising of open-and closed-ended questions, developed by the researcher. Shields and Rangarjan (2013) observed that questionnaires are ideal for conducting research as they facilitate efficient and effective collection of data across relatively dispersed populations. Quantitative questions mirrored the 5-point Likert-type scales designed to measure the extent of agreement on the research indicators. The questionnaires were intended for primary data collection and were administered to the sampled respondents in the KURA.

Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaires were physically distributed to the sampled respondents since they were within reach of the researcher. Drop and pick later method was used so that the respondents could have adequate time to fill the questionnaires. Those far got the questionnaires via google documents or email. A follow up took place in cases where the respondents took more than a week to return the filled questionnaires.

Data Analysis and Presentations

Sekaran (2009) asserted that data analysis involves three objectives which are obtaining a feel for the data, assessing the goodness of the data and answering the research question. When the goodness of the data is established, the successive analysis and results are rendered credible. Filled questionnaires were reviewed for any discrepancies. They were assembled, coded, summarized and analyzed to generate statistics descriptively including means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages. Inferential statistics were also conducted where linear regression was carried out to establish how continuous learning, team learning, dialogue and empowerment influence performance of Kenya Urban Road Authority (KURA). Data was analyzed using the SPSS version 25. Data was presented graphically and in tabular form using percentages and frequency. The following equation was used to show the relationship:

$$Y = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y - Performance of KURA (dependent variable)

α_0 - Is the constant

X_1 –Continuous learning

X_2 – Dialogue

X_3 – Team learning

X_4 - Empowerment

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ & β_4 - Coefficients

ε - Error term

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Learning

The study determined the effect of continuous learning on organizational performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority. Continuous learning was conceptualized to constitute identification of skills, knowledge sharing, training of employees and innovativeness. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with different statements defining the continuous learning indicators. Results showed that the respondents agreed to a great extent that continuous learning affected the organizational performance of KURA since the indicators had a composite mean of 3.89.

Descriptive Statistics for Dialogue

The study established the effect of dialogue on organizational performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority. Dialogue was conceptualized to constitute listens to others views, free to question decisions, treating each other with respect and building trust with each other. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with different statements defining the dialogue indicators. Results showed that the respondents agreed to a great extent that dialogue affected the organizational performance of KURA since the indicators had a composite mean of 3.56.

Descriptive Statistics for Team Learning

The study ascertained the effect of team learning on organizational performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority. Team learning was conceptualized to constitute share experiences and information, freedom to adapt to goals, focus on group tasks, reward teams of achievement. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with different statements defining the team learning indicators. Results showed that the respondents agreed to a great extent that team learning affected the organizational performance of KURA since the indicators had a composite mean of 3.78.

Descriptive Statistics for Empowerment

The study sought the effect of empowerment on organizational performance of Kenya Urban Roads Authority. Empowerment was conceptualized to constitute choice in work assignment, distribution of responsibilities, contribution towards the vision and recognition of initiatives. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with different statements defining the empowerment indicators. Results showed that the respondents agreed to a great extent that empowerment affected the organizational performance of KURA since the indicators had a composite mean of 3.97.

Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Performance

The study examined organizational performance in Kenya Urban Roads Authority. Organizational performance was conceptualized to constitute timely delivery of services, efficiency and effectiveness. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with different statements defining the organizational performance indicators. Results showed that the respondents agreed to a great extent that there was organizational performance in KURA since the indicators had a composite mean of 4.00.

Model Summary

The adjusted R-Square statistics of 0.443 implied that continuous learning, dialogue, team learning and empowerment explained 44.3% of organizational performance of KURA while 55.7% of organizational performance is explained by other factors other than the ones in this study.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.678(a)	0.563	0.443	0.67289

a. Predictors: (Constant), continuous learning, dialogue, team learning and empowerment

Source; Survey data (2021)

ANOVA

The ANOVA results gave a significance of 0.622 showing that the regression model used was insignificant tested at the 95% level of significance.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.784	4	.196	.658	.622 ^b
	Residual	33.077	111	.298		
	Total	33.861	115			

a. Predictors: (Constant), continuous learning, dialogue, team learning and empowerment

b. Dependent Variable: Organizational performance

Source; Survey data (2021)

Regression Coefficients

As per the SPSS results generated, the equation translated to;

$$\text{Organizational performance of KURA} = 2.848 + 0.137 (0.115) + 0.107 (0.123) + 0.035 (0.106) + 0.027 (0.128)$$

Where; Organizational performance = Constant + Continuous learning + Dialogue + Team learning + Empowerment

The results implied that the relationship between organizational performance of KURA and continuous learning was positive and statistically insignificant at the 95% confidence level ($\beta=0.137$, $p=0.239$). Results further showed that the relationship between organizational performance of KURA and dialogue was positive and statistically insignificant at the 95% confidence level ($\beta= 0.107$, $p=0.388$) while the relationship between organizational performance of KURA and team learning was positive and not statistically significant at 95% level of confidence ($\beta= 0.035$, $p=0.739$). This implies that there was no relationship between continuous learning, dialogue and team learning and organizational performance denoting that continuous learning, dialogue and team learning does not affect organizational performance of KURA. The relationship between organizational performance of KURA and empowerment was positive and statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($\beta=0.027$, $p=0.034$).

Table 4: Table of Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	2.848	0.814		3.498	0.001
Continuous learning	0.137	0.115	0.111	1.183	0.239
Dialogue	0.107	0.123	0.084	0.867	0.388
Team learning	0.035	0.106	0.032	0.334	0.739
Empowerment	0.027	0.128	0.020	0.210	0.034

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

Source; Survey data (2021)

CONCLUSION

This study found a positive relationship between continuous learning, dialogue, team learning and empowerment and organizational performance of KURA and concluded that continuous learning, dialogue, team learning and empowerment are significant factors of organizational performance of KURA as they lead to greater creativity of the employees, improves their retention and motivation increasing their willingness to grow and develop with the organization. This means that increasing the continuous learning, dialogue, team learning and empowerment will positively affect the organizational performance of KURA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends continuous learning to be enhanced in organization as it will help to avoid stagnation and reaching of full potential of the employees thus improving the performance of the organizations. Open and honest dialogue should be encouraged in the work place since poor communication will lead to unmotivated employees negatively affecting the performance of an organization. Further, organizations should enhance team learning as it helps in maximizing shared knowledge and learning of new skills which will result in an improved performance of an organization. Empowerment of employees will lead to stronger job performance, job satisfaction and commitment to the organization thereby positively affecting the performance of an organization.

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