

Organization Development Interventions on Communication Skills of Commercial Bank Executives: A Case of KCB Bank Limited in Kenya.

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the effect of organizational development interventions (ODI) on Communication skills of the Bank Executives at KCB Bank Limited in Kenya. It utilized an analytical descriptive action type research. Ninety eight (98) executives of the bank were the research subjects who comprised senior managers from head office, branch managers, section heads and supervisors of the bank. Universal sampling was done in identifying research subjects. The study was anchored on consistency theory advanced by Festinger who theorized that managers to be effective, they must have a clear understanding of communication skills that are important in managerial role. These skills enabled managers to effectively coordinate work, communicate expectations, delivery of feedback and facilitation of knowledge. Pre-assessment and post- assessment was conducted to assess communication skills of bank executives and diagnose problem. The results as indicated by factor average rating of (μ 3:176) before intervention to (μ 4.077) after intervention which was a major improvement. Results also indicated that t-value was greater than the critical value of 1.960. This meant that the null hypothesis was rejected. The ODI yields a significant positive change in all communication skills factors. It is recommended that organizations should organize training programs to improve communication skills of their staff.

Key words: Consistency theory, Organization Development Interventions, Communication, Pre-assessment, Post assessment.

Introduction

Organization face major challenges and threats today. They could be threats to effectiveness, efficiency and profitability; challenges from turbulent environments, increased competition and changing customer demands; and the constant challenge to maintain congruence between organizational dimensions such as strategy, culture and processes. Due to improved technology which has seen the emergence of the internet as a major form of communication and e-commerce, changes have occurred the way managers perform their work and the way they interact with internal and external clients (Wallance 2004). These changes have brought new challenges to the managers and reasons managers need to seek better communication, co-ordination and improved performance. (Saras et al., 2005, Zaccaro et al., 2004). Managers must appreciate their new roles and responsibilities and learn a variety of skills to perform their job effectively and efficiently (Ahearn et al., 2004; Halbesleben et al., 2003; Stockdale and Crosby 2004; Wallance 2004; Zaccaro et al., 2004). Individual in organizations likewise face major challenges such as finding satisfaction in and through work and fighting obsolescence of one's knowledge and skills, such challenges and threats can be solved through implementation of organizational development process.

According to Porras, Robertson & Goldman (1990) OD goal is the planned change of the organizational work setting for the purpose of enhancing individual development and improving organizational performance, through the alteration of organizational members on the job behaviours.

Beer (1980) posits that the goals of OD are “developing new and creative organizational solutions” The Conceptualization of this study was anchored on consistency theory advanced by Fertinger who theorized that effective managers must process communication skills.

This study was also grounded on system theory by Lewin (1946) which models organization as three overstepping and independent subsystems (Gersick 1997). The theoretical foundations on which organization development and action research are based on include organizational learning theory (March & Sutton 1997) and organization development theory and Dynamic capabilities theory (Teece et al., 2007). These are underpinned by other theories such as industrial organization economics theory (Mason 1939; Bain 1956), knowledge based theory (Senge (1990) and resource based theory (Barney 1991).

Action research which was conceptualized by Lewin (1946) forms the basic premise on which the process of OD is grounded. Action research which is a collaborative approach follows a scientific and cyclical process (D’ souza & Singh 1998). Lewin (1946) also pioneered sensitivity training which he conducted with colleagues at MIT. It has been found to improve interpersonal relationships, increase self awareness and understanding of group dynamics among participants (French & Bell 2001). Another pillar of OD is the survey research and feedback pioneered by Rensis Likert. It uses structured questionnaire surveys for diagnosing organization problems (French and Bell 2001).

The Banking Industry in Kenya has experienced challenges since 1990s. First due to the government borrowing heavily from the domestic market which was as a result of the country’s poor relationship with the Bretton Woods Institutions and bilateral development partners. Secondly banks adopted an aggressive provisioning policy to provide for non performing loans (NPL). The provisioning policy Resulted in KCB Bank announce a pre-tax loss of Kshs 4.2 billion in 2003 one of the biggest in Kenya’s corporate history. The bank formulated a turn-around strategy that was implemented using OD process. This strategic plan was to reconfigure the entire business of KCB bank and make it more robust, customer focused and growth oriented. The strategic plan included developing capacity to support technology based products and implementation of strategic human resource development programs to upgrade and enhance managerial skills of bank executives within KCB bank. This study aimed to determine the effect of organization development interventions implemented to enhance the communication skills of bank executives.

Review of Related Literature

Literature on the managerial skills through organization development (OD) are renewed in order to provide the readers with the perspective on communication skills. Bennis (1996) conceptualize OD as a response to change and an educational strategy intended to change beliefs, attitudes values and organization structure all directed toward making the organization be able to respond to changing environmental demands. Cummings and Worley (1997) contend that OD is a planned long-range behavioral science strategy for understanding, changing and developing the organizations work force in order to improve its effectiveness.

The OD process is implemented through application of action research or diagnostic research model which is linear sequential and originates from the identification of a problem. The problem usually manifest in quantifiable and qualitative indicators (Meyer and Botha 2000). An appropriate intervention is identified to bring focus on the change process. Gibson et al (2000) contend that OD interventions should be classified according to their targets of change such as techno structural interventions which are focused on structural change or human process intervention which are focused on behavioral change. Some situations may require a combination of interventions which are referred to as multi-related or multi-targeted approaches (Meyer and Botha 2000).

According to Mintzberg (1973) managers perform ten different highly interrelated roles which can be grouped into three different categories of interpersonal, informational and decisional roles. Prior to Mintzberg’s research, managerial roles were understood to comprise planning jobs, organizing staff and leading personnel (Pearson and Chatterjee 2003). Education and experience help managers acquire three principal types of skills: conceptual, human and technical. Business training provide many of conceptual tools which are theories and techniques in functional areas that managers need to perform their roles effectively (Jones and George 2003). Conceptual skills are demonstrated in the ability to analyze and diagnosis a situation and to distinguish between cause and effect.

The modern organizations which are flatter and less hierarchical with fewer levels and more responsibilities have utilized downsizing and right sizing strategy to reduce cost and streamline operations. (Allen et al 2001; Mckinley et al 2000; Miller 1990; De Meuse et al 2004).

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According to Tead (1977), communication is a composite of (1) information given or received (2) a learning experience in which certain attitudes, knowledge and skills exchange, carrying with them alterations of behavior (3) a listening effort by all involved (4) a sympathetic fresh examination of issues by the communicator himself and (5) a sensitive interaction of points of views leading to a higher level of shared understanding and common interaction. Newman and Summer (197) posits that communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions by two or more persons. Davis (1975) states that communication is a bridge of meaning between people and by this bridge of meaning a person can safely cross the river of misunderstanding that separates all people. Scott and Mitchell (1976) suggests that communication serves few functions within an organization which are control, motivation, emotional expression and information. Computer aided communication have reshaped the way communication is channeled in organizations (Robbins and Judge 2007). Computer aided communication include electronic mail, instant messaging, intranet and extranet links. (Robbins and Judge 2007). Gordon (1999) posits that knowledge management which is facilitated by computers aided communications can provide the mechanism and the motivation for employees to share knowledge that employees find useful on the job and enables them to achieve better performance. Beckman et al (1994) argues that 70% of litigation is related to poor communication. To reduce litigation effective and efficient communication must be put in place in organization.]

Di matteo et al (1986); Zachariae et al (2003); Kim et al (2004); William and Ogden (2004) suggest that managerial staff should be trained in verbal and non-verbal communication skills and strategies that have been shared to be associated with greater customers satisfaction empathy, matching customers, body language and vocabulary. Kim et al (2004) posits that positive communication skills have shown to be related to customers perception of managerial competence. More et al (2000) argues that customers experience of managerial empathy which is an important communication skill have shown to correlate with customers satisfaction.

Rogers (1983) suggested five categories of receptivity to change and their corresponding personal characteristics such as (1) Innovators whose personal characteristics are highest social states, earnest and most specialized operations wealthy, often young and well educated (2) Early adopter- high social status, often large and specialized operations (3) Early majority, above average, social status and averaged size operations (4) Late majority- Below average social status, small operations, little operations and relatively low income (5) Laggards- Little specialization, lowest social status, smallest operations, lowest income and often oldest. Meyer and Botha (2000) have suggested strategies to develop communication, deal with these characteristics and develop change resilient staff. These strategies are; linking communication to business strategies, build credibility by coaching leadership on interpersonal skills to improve face to face communication, develop communication methods to release positive culture creativity and courage of workforce, measure the effect of every communication effort and make change where needed. O'Connor Kenney partnersinc (1999) argues that people prefer to receive communication in the following order: immediate supervisor, small groups or meetings, top executives, age group meetings, employees handbook, orientation programs, local employee publication, bulletin boards, annual business report to employees, companywide employee publication audio usual and the grapevine.

In conclusion Walsh, Ashford and Hill (1985) posits that if barriers to communication are overcome then goals, feedback and other management messages to employees will be received as intended. This will increase communication flow, reduce uncertainty and improve group performance and satisfactions (Robbins & Judge 2007). Meyer and Botha (2000) suggests that OD practioners should develop comprehensive communication strategies to improve communication so as to achieve successful transformation of organizations.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model presents the conceptualization of the study based on the theoretical framework that form the basis of the input of the study, the processing which is the activities of ODI that conforms to Susmans and Everedes (1978) five phase action research cycle which was implemented to bring the desired incremental or quantum change and the expected output of the study that indicate improvement of changes in behavior and significant positive change in communication.

Conceptual Model

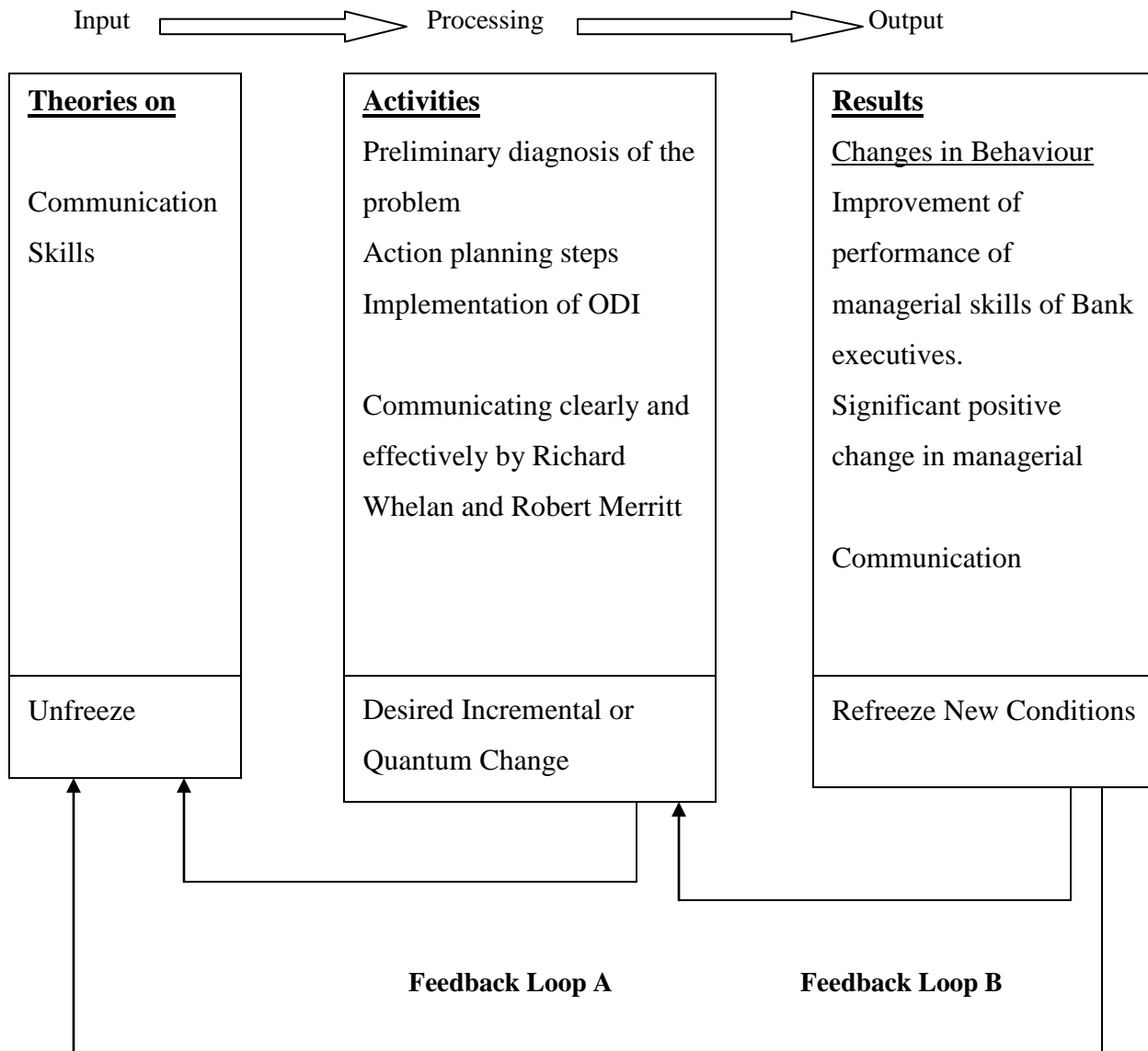


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Feedback Loop C

The conceptual model of the study supports the Schema of the study by elaborating from conception of the study to expected outcome or results of the study.

SCHEMA OF THE STUDY

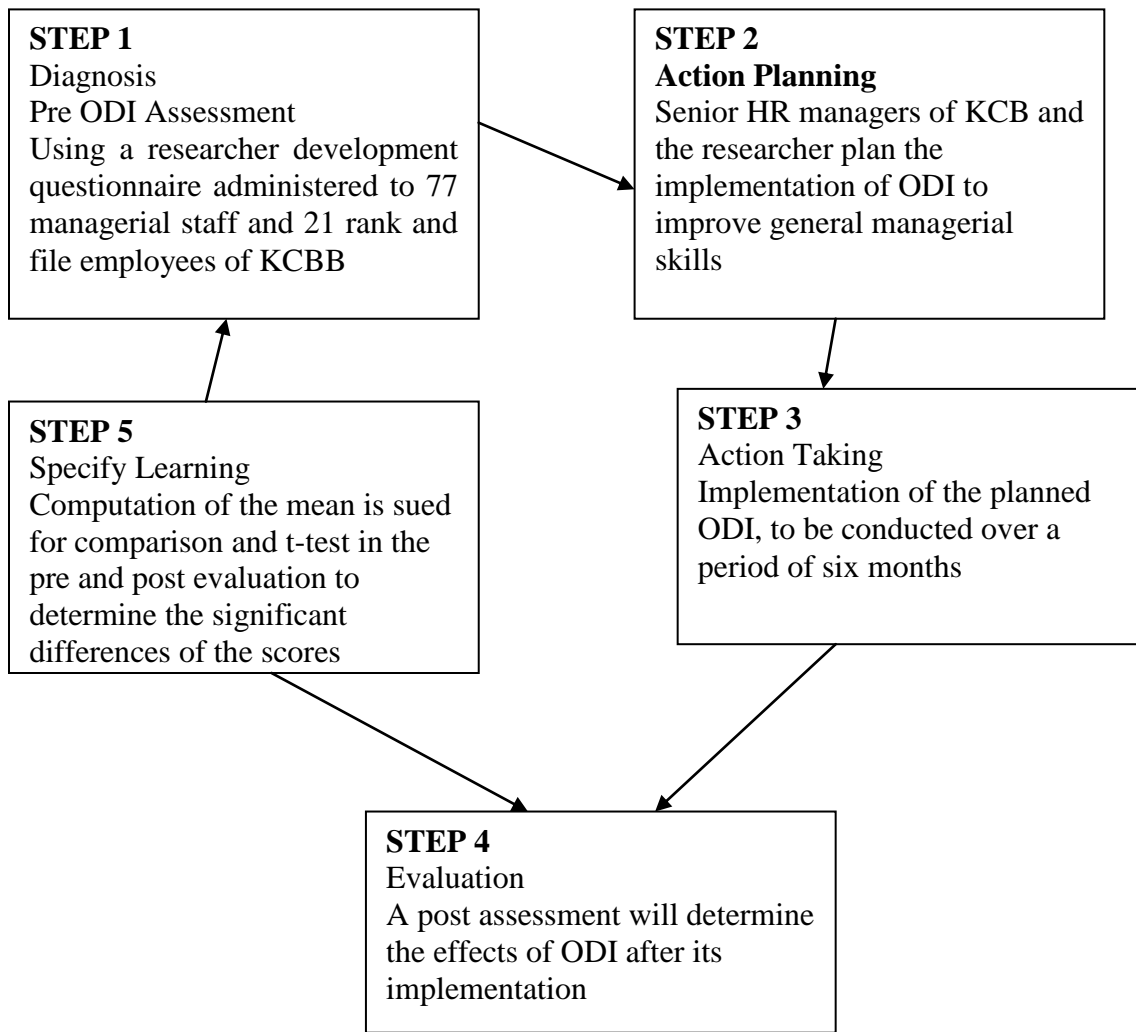


Figure 2: Action Research Cycle

The schema of the study or study flow which action conforms to Susmans and Everedes (1978), action research cycle which follows five phase cyclical processes was conducted to determine the changes brought about by the interventions implemented.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of organization development intervention on communication skills of the Bank Executives of KCB Bank Ltd. The study aimed to determine the degree of effectiveness of the interventions in improving the performance of the managers.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The study sought to answer the following questions;

1. What are the profiles of pre and post assessment evaluation on the rating of the managers in terms of the ten communication skills factors identified by the researcher?
2. Are there significant differences in the pre and post assessment data on the ten factors?
3. What transformation indicators resulted from the implementation of the organization development intervention (ODI)
4. What recommendations can be proposed to sustain and disseminate the effect of intervention?

VALUE OF THE STUDY

The result of this study will be significant in the field of banking and the findings will provide insight to the banking industry and Kenya commercial bank in particular on the critical importance of skill development programs as part of organization development interventions in their turnaround strategy.

ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

Implementation of organization development interventions was done using the model communicating clearly and effectively By: Richard Whelan and Robert Merritt was conducted by the researcher and KCB Trainers in the Model Bank room of KCB bank Leadership Center Karen for the purpose of improving the ability of the executives to communicate effectively and to give motivation for employees to share knowledge that employees find useful on the job and enables them to achieve better performance.

Overview: This one way communication activity is designed to help participants learn about the many roadblocks inherent in the communication process. Through a simple and entertaining exercise in giving directions, participants will experience various interferences to being able to effectively give and receive messages.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used a survey research design. The sampling frame was computed from the list of all managerial staff of KCB branches in Nairobi County and KCB leadership center in Karen. It was an analytical descriptive action type research design involving 98 managerial staff that was conducted at KCB Bank Branches in Nairobi and KCB Leadership Centre at Karen. A situation analysis was conducted by holding meetings with Senior Managers at KCB head office and at KCB Leadership Centre at Karen. The study utilized a researcher developed instrument which was refined after a pilot study. While studies such as Nunnally (1967) posited that an alpha coefficient equal to or greater than 0.50 is adequate to determine internal consistency later studies (Nunnally 1978, Kline 1998, Awino 2007, Ongore 2008) has used Cronbach's alpha values of 0.70 and above. The researcher concur with these later studies and used a cut-off of 0.70 to ensure all measurements attained a high degree of reliability. A content validity index of 0.83 was obtained; this was judged to be acceptable, as it is more than the 0.70 value recommended minimum (Wynd et al., 2003). The Cronbach's alpha reliability index was 0.81, also deemed acceptable in comparison with the 0.70 recommended minimum (Santos, 1999). Action planning was done by implementing planned intervention schedule, interventions covered ten factors of communication Skills. Data was analyzed using mean rating and t-test was done to determine the significant differences between Pre-and post intervention assessment.

Statement of the Null Hypothesis

This study was tested with 0.05 Alpha level of significance:

H0: There was no significant differences between the pre and post assessment data on the degree of performance by the managerial staff of KCB Bank Ltd in terms of the ten communication skills factors.

RESULTS BEFORE ODI

The table below presents the pre-assessment mean rating Communication Skills

Table 1

Pre- assessment mean rating on communication skills

		Mean	Interpretation
1	I have clearly communicated the vision, mission and core values of KCB	3.856	Very Good
2	Services reflect KCB positive public image	3.576	Very Good
3	I project KCB mission	4.186	Very Good
4	I promote KCB's future growth plans/ budget	3.600	Very Good
5	I recommend changes in policy and practices affecting the personnel	2.077	Fair
6	I am provided with relevant information to perform my job efficiently/ effectively	2.877	Good
7	I am aware about KCBs competition/ competitors	3.279	Good
8	I am comfortable communicating with anyone	3.165	Good
9	I get more information through formal and informal channels of communication	2.267	Fair
10	Group meetings are conducted with a purpose agenda and time limits	2.963	Good
	AVERAGE	3.176	Good

The results of pre-assessment evaluation on communication skills is good with an average rating of (μ 3.176) but can be improved to very good through ODI. With more emphasis in item number 10 that has the lowest rate. The aspect of managerial staff. Feeling free to suggest changes in policy and practices was rated 2.077 which was fair during pre-intervention, meaning they did take initiative to suggest for changes in policy and practices affecting personnel. The need to initiate changes will be emphasized during intervention. The need of looking for information from both informal and formal sources was rated 2.267 which is fair. This mean that managerial staff did not avail themselves opportunities to get information from informal and formal sources. This could be because they were very busy at their station of work or the information was not readily available. Being in the knowledge age, information will empower managerial staff so as to make right decision. This aspect will be emphasized during implementation of the intervention so that managerial staff should strive to get as much information as possible.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION AFTER ODI**Table 2: The Pre and Post Mean Value of the Items in Communication Skills Before and After ODI**

	Item	Before ODI		After ODI		Mean Difference
		Mean	interpretation	Mean	interpretation	
1	I have clearly communicated the vision, mission and core values of KCB	3.856	Very good	4.122	Very good	0.266
2	Services reflect KCB positive public image	3.576	Very good	4.000	Very good	0.424
3	I project KCB mission	4.186	Very good	4.897	Excellent	0.711
4	I promote KCB's future growth plans/ budget	3.600	Very good	3.987	Very good	0.387
5	I recommend changes in policy and practices affecting the personnel	2.077	Fair	3.567	Very good	1.490
6	I am provided with relevant information to perform my job efficiently/ effectively	2.877	Good	3.324	Good	0.447
7	I am aware about KCB's competition/ competitors	3.279	Good	4.560	Excellent	1.287
8	I am comfortable communicating with anyone	3.165	Good	4.123	Very good	0.958
9	I get more information through formal and informal channels of communication	2.267	Fair	3.698	Very good	1.431
10	Group meetings are conducted with a purpose, agenda and time limits	2.963	Good	3.900	Very good	0.937
	Average	3.176	Good	4.017	Very good	0.841

The table reveals the profile of the communication skills before and after the intervention, from 3.176 which is good to 4.017 which is very good. This simply means that the intervention contribute to the transformation of the communication skills of the participants since the average score increases which implies improvement. That the activity of Richard Whelan and Robert Merritt "Communicating Clearly and Effectively" gives insight and reflection to the participants that makes them to be an effective communicator.

This clearly supports the statement of Tead (1977), communication is a composite of a learning experience in which certain attitudes, knowledge and skills exchange, carrying with them alterations of behaviour and a sensitive interaction of points of views leading to a higher level of shared understanding and common interaction. The researcher strongly agrees Scott and Mitchell idea of communication that serves few functions within an organization which are control, motivation, emotional expression and information. Factors such as projecting KCB. mission and awareness of KCB's competition/competitors improved from very good to excellent and from good to excellent respectively this meant that the intervention tool was fully appreciated and applied practically by the managerial staff. While factors recommending changes in policy and practices affecting personnel and getting more information through formal and informal channels of communication improved from fair to very good. This meant that the managerial staff become more bold to suggest for changes in policy and practices and also look for more information from informal and formal sources.

The researcher relates the findings of Hill and Pullen (2001) which states that effective communication between supervisor and subordinate should be considered as a vital component. Their study revealed questions which need to be answered in relating communication to satisfaction. First, one needs to know what communication is, or more specifically what its content or purposes are. Second, one needs theory of how communication relates to subordinates. In effective organizations, managers and employees have been practicing good performance management naturally all their lives, executing each key component process well. Goals are set and work is planned routinely. Progress toward those goals is measured and employees get feedback. High standards are set, but care is also taken to develop the skills needed to reach them. All five component processes working together and supporting each other achieve natural, effective performance management.

The appreciation of these skills and responsibilities are critical to every manager in all organizations for effective coordination of work. According to Robbins (2007) it is essential for a manager to possess conceptual, technical and human skills. Conceptual tools which are theories and techniques in functional areas that managers need to perform their roles effectively (Jones and George 2003) demonstrated in the ability to analyse and diagnosis a situation. Human skills which is the ability to understand, alter, lead and control the behaviour of other individuals and groups the ability to communicate, to coordinate and to motivate people and to mould individuals into cohesive team. Technical skills are job specific knowledge and techniques required to perform an organizational role.

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

All the factors identified in communication skills improved after intervention.

The mean score of communication skills yielded a positive increase from 3.176 to 4.017 before and after intervention that was improvement from good to very good. Managerial staff have been able to establish better communication channels that have made communication more effective.

In this indicator, the improvement in communicating the vision, mission and core values of KCB, project KCB mission, resulted in internalizing its goals and objectives by all employees to promote positive feedback of the bank thereby implying a good image to the public in general. In provision with relevant information to perform the job efficiently and effectively, getting information through formal, and informal channels of communication and conducting meetings with purpose resulted to routing memorandum or formal letter announcement for any information and announcement, there is already agenda identified in every meeting called. In the aspect of comfortable communicating to others and recommending changes affecting the personnel results to an open communication between heads and generates good decision to a solution of a problem.

The researcher recommends that organizations should organize training programs for internalization of vision, mission, core values, roles and responsibility for middle managers and supervisors so that they have a sense of ownership for respective branches and also impact those values to their junior staff. Organizations should also conduct strategic behavioral training to all their senior managers.

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