Influence of Information Power on Career Development among Administrative Staff in Public Universities: A Case of the University of Eldoret, Kenya

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Abstract: Institutions of higher learning in Kenya are faced with a multiplicity of challenges due to policy shifts that have led to massification of education. The structural adjustment programmes (SAPS) together with other neoliberal policies introduced by Britton wood institutions has had major implications for the education sector in Kenya. The greatest effect has been on the human resource working in institutions of higher learning that have been faced by various challenges including career stagnation. These has led to a pool of demotivated staff which has a spiral effect on the quality of service provision thus leading to frequent and persistent strikes by both the staff and the students. All these are linked to organizational politics and specifically its subset the politics of information. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to examine the influence of information power on career development among administrative staff in public universities: a case of University of Eldoret (UOE) in Eldoret, Kenya. The specific objective of the study was to determine the influence of Information power on career development among administrative staff in public universities .The research design employed was a case study to enhance collection of extensive and detailed information on the research objective. The target population comprised of 134 permanent administrative employees of University of Eldoret. This also formed the sample size since the population was not big enough the researcher employed a census technique in the selection of respondents for the study. However only 130 respondents were able to fill their questionnaires and return. Closed ended questionnaires with the aid of likert scales were employed as the data collection instrument for the study. Data was analysed with the aid of both descriptive and inferential statistics specifically correlation to test the effect of information power on career development. This data was then presented using tables, charts and graphs to enhance analysis of data. This study is of great significance to policy makers, Human resource practitioners in universities, as well as the University management who are able to make clear and effective policies on the issue of information power and career development.
Keywords: Information Power, career development, Administrative staff and Public Universities

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary business world is littered with enhanced competition due to a multiplicity of factors, including globalization and liberation of economies. These two factors have opened up space in terms of information communication technology (ICT) which in essence leads to overflow of information to organizations. This however has not really had a positive impact in organizations and especially in developing organizations where most organizations are opaque in terms of information flow, corporate governance and transparency. Information control, distribution and manipulation are genres of information power and in some instances it can be veiled as Expertise game. According to Cacciattolo *et al.* [1] Expertise Game is played when an employee hoards information for himself because of some hidden agenda. She argues that this experience enhanced the participant's rapport with colleagues and subordinates

whilst learning informally from them. On the other side of the continuum this political game appeared to promote a sense of frustration, stress, demotivation to learn, and he also considered leaving the job. This supports Ladebo's [2] and Vigoda-Gadot & Kapun's [3] proposition that organizational politics are a source of stress at the place of work [1].

Power accrues to those who control vital information. For example, many former government or military officials have found power niches for themselves in industry as a Washington representative of a firm that does business with the government. The vital information they control is knowledge of whom to contact to shorten some of the complicated procedures in getting government contracts approved. The same applies to human resource procedures in which some employees who might be juniors might control very

vital information thus influencing their career development [1].

Related to controlling information is controlling lines of communication, particularly access to key people. Administrative assistants and staff assistants frequently control an executive's calendar. Both insiders and outsiders must carry favor with the conduit in order to see an important executive. Although many people attempt to contact executives directly through email, some executives delegate the responsibility of screening email messages to an assistant.

Information is defined as processed or meaningful data about the world we work within. In this sense, any observation may be considered data and once processed and made meaningful to a recipient it is then defined to be information.

Access to information is very important for the feeling of being involved by employees within the organization. As already stated participation in decision making is very critical in reducing negative organizational politics. Information is very critical in the day to day operations of any organization and is at the center of activating and deactivating organizational politics. Organizations are entities, which process information. Decision making is largely a process of information as Cheney *et al.* [4] present. This means that the organization itself can be seen as bits of information that are moving forward in organization. Gathering more information and sending it forward in an organization creates the work of information processing [5]. The flow of information makes the environment for decision making for individuals and groups. The amount of information in this flow affects how successful the decision making in the end is. Cheney et al. also point out that when individuals cannot process large amounts of information; organizations tend to gather more and more information through for example surveys and forecasting [5]. Organizations do collect and distribute information to enhance its efficiency and in the process, this information might be distorted which may be intentional or accidental for instance, sometimes employees are asked to summarize data and report it to their supervisors. By definition, summarizing data means leaving some parts of it out. This is one type of distortion that is intentional. Other times, organizations distort data so much as to change its meaning and value. In other instances some employees who might have firsthand access to information like secretaries might intentionally distort information which ends up fuelling organizational politics. For example a leaked departmental report might speculate promotions and reshuffles in the work place thus fuelling a lot of organizational politics. In most cases filtering is the dominant form of information manipulation. It occurs in a situation when a sender purposely manipulates information to make appear more favorable to the receiver. An example can be the situation when a manager tells his boss the information he wants to hear. In doing so, he, is filtering information that he communicates. This barrier is closely connected with status differences. If there are many levels in the organization's hierarchy, there are more opportunities for filtering. Very often employees want to please a boss, thus sometimes saying to him what they think he wants to hear and, in this way some employees distort upward communications. This can become a source of conflict.

Another predominant mode of information manipulation is Information Overloaded. Sometimes an employee receives too much information and it exceeds his processing capacity. As a result there is information overload. For instance, employees receive many e-mails, phone calls, faxes and have meetings at the same time. In this case they ignore, pass over or forget important information. The result can be the loss of information and less effective communication, which can lead to conflict situation. These conflicts can result to higher organizational politics within the organization.

The purpose of distributing information in an organization is to encourage the sharing of information. A wider distribution of information promotes more widespread and more frequent learning, makes the retrieval of relevant information more likely, and allows new insights to be created by relating disparate items of information. When this fails to be the goal of information distribution then a lot of manipulation is realized [5]. The separation between information provider and information user should be dissolved: both ought to collaborate as partners in the dissemination and value-adding of information to help ensure that the best information is seen by the right persons in the organization. To encourage users to be active participants, it should be made easy for them to comment on, evaluate, and re-direct the information they have received [5]. In most instances employees who indulge in politics manipulate information and it is never passed on in its desired form which has various adverse effects like for instance superiors get a wrong picture of what is actually happening in the organization and a wrong person walks away with the credit in an organization where employees are indulged in politics.

The importance of information to organizations can never be over emphasized as organizations have a strong belief in information. Feldman & March [6] find that organizations think that more information characterizes better decisions, and having more is better than an organization with less. The quality and quantity of information is considered as alternatives to a decision makers' knowledge. Seeking and using information in decisions is a value to organization and this means that using it, asking it and justifying decisions in terms of information symbolize

that the organization is a good decision maker and well managed [5].

According to Feldman & March [6], the use of information is more important than the pieces of information. Many organizations gather too much information, which is never used in the decision making process. Too much information can even paralyze the individual or groups who are making decisions. Organizations, as well as the employees, can make effective use of only part of the information.

Eisenhardt (1989) emphasizes the importance of information distribution by underlining the significance of information in decision making, especially in strategic decision making. According to her, in fast decision making more information is used than in slow decision making. Also more alternatives are used. The speed of strategic decision making correlates with the use of real-time information [5].

Veryard [7] points out that sometimes the effectiveness of the decision making process is increased by the quality and quantity of information. Increased information could also reduce the effectiveness [5].

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY
The main objective of the study was to investigate the influence of organizational politics on career development among administrative staff in public universities. The specific objective of the study was:

To determine the influence of information power on career development among administrative staff in public universities.

RESEARCH QUESTION
Does Information Power have an influence on career development among administrative staff of public universities?

THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK
Equity theory [8]
Organizational politics as already stated impacts each organization and individual employee in varying levels depending on how it's handled. Given that Organizational politics takes the form of power, authority, Favoritism, influence, justice among many other variables it mostly takes a negative turn when an employee or department feels that it has unfairly been treated. Perception of injustice tends to be a fertile breeding ground for organizational politics which if not handled well can lead to organizational dysfunction. Thus based on equity theory [8] and on the idea of social exchange and social reciprocity [9], the motivation to perform better and the development of positive employee attitudes and behaviors depend on the display of similar positive attitudes and behaviors by other members of the organization (peers, supervisors, management, and the organization as a whole).Clarity of policies and the feeling of equal and fair treatment of employees tends to reduce the lacuna for speculation. Thus Equity theory is very relevant in this study in that the more employees are treated fairly with less bias either on the basis of gender, tribe, ethnicity or other variables the less they tend to be political which in a sense impacts on the overall organizational performance.
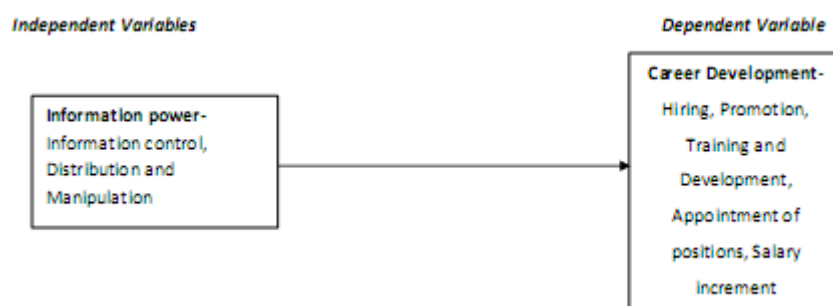

Fig-1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Research Design
The study adopted a case study research design in order to investigate the influence of information power on career management among administrative staff in public universities. A case study of University of Eldoret was employed since the University has faced a lot of unrest and strikes from both the students and the staff due to mismanagement issues coupled with Information manipulation. A case study is also relevant

since it leads to detailed and extensive search for data relevant for the study. These data can then be generalized to other universities.

Target Population
The target population for the study was all permanent administrative staff (134) of the University of Eldoret. All the departments were thus represented in this study. The number of employees was derived from the universities human resource department roll.

Sampling Design and Procedures

A census technique was employed for this study since the target population was small and hence the entire population was selected for the study. A census is very significant in situations where it can be used since it derives information that is representative of the entire population. A census also reduces incidences of random errors.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Closed ended questionnaires with the aid of likert scales were employed as the data collection instrument for the study. Closed ended questionnaire was used because it provides responses that can easily be analysed.

Validity

Validity refers to whether an instrument measures what it was intended to measure. Content validity in this case was achieved through the help of experts in the field and specifically with the help of the research supervisors.

Reliability

Reliability refers to repeatability; that is results have to be consistent in each questionnaire such that results of the study can be reproduced under similar methodology [10]. Reliability was achieved through a pilot test in which a small sample of 20 employees was used and this was then tested using a Cronbach's Alpha test in which it was found to be reliable with a critical value of 0.6 obtained.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Since the researcher employed closed ended questionnaires only Quantitative data was collected, edited and coded with the help of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Data was then analysed with the help of descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (multiple correlations).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of education of respondents and duration of employment was used to present the demographic characteristic of the respondents to as to know how information Power influences their career development.

Table 1: Level of education of respondents

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Higher National Diploma/ Dip.	44	33.8
Bachelors	56	43.1
Masters/PhD	27	20.8
Others	3	2.3
Total	130	100.0

The results in Table 1 show that majority (43.1%) of the respondents held Bachelor's degree while those with "Others" were the least (2.3%). Respondents who were holders of higher national diploma or Diploma certificate were 33.8% whereas those with Masters/PhD degree were 20.8%.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by duration of employment

Duration	Frequency	Percentage (%)
less than a year	4	3.1
1-3yrs	12	9.2
4-5yrs	12	9.2
6-10yrs	55	42.3
above 10yrs	47	36.2
Total	130	100.0

Results in the Table show that majority of respondents (42.3%) had been employed for a period of 6-10years. Those who have been in job for 10years and above were 36.2%, 4-5yrs and 1-3yrs were similar (9.2%), while those with a period less than a year recorded were the least (3.1%).

Influence of information Power on career development

Respondents were asked to give their views on how much they agreed or disagreed with the influences of information control on career development. Their views were varied as summarized in Table 3 below. Generally, Table 3 showed that, Most of the respondents 106 (84.6%) agreed that informational Power is significant in career development, with 4 (3.1%) disagreeing and 1(0.8%) undecided. However, most of the respondents (>50%) generally agreed that information control in their institution affected career development negatively. For example, 91(70%) agreed that information is manipulated by some employees for their own interest, while only 17 (13.1%) of them disagreed and (5)3.8% were undecided. About 90 (69.2%) of the responded

agreed that manipulation of information is done only to suit promotion of few employees while only 13(10%) disagreed with this. A similar number of respondents 77(59.2%) agreed that employees have unclear information on their roles and trainings while 16(12.3%) and 27 (20.8%) disagreed on the same respectively. Spearman rank correlation analysis indicated that information control had a negative significant association with career development (r=-.691; p=0.04) as show in Table 3.

Table 3: Influence of information Power on career development

Influence of informational control on career development	SD		D		U		A		S A	
	Freq.	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
information control plays an important role in your career path	6	4.6	4	3.1	1	0.8	106	84.6	10	7.7
Majority of employees manipulate information	6	4.6	17	13.1	5	3.8	91	70	11	8.5
Information flow influences HR policies	8	6.2	8	21.5	5	3.8	69	53.1	20	15.4
Information flow pushes for unequal treatment of employees	10	7.7	12	9.2	6	4.6	82	63.1	20	15.4
Manipulation of information influences salary increment of few	9	6.9	26	20	5	3.8	78	60	12	9.2
Manipulation of information influences unfair promotion of some employees	10	7.7	13	10	2	1.5	90	69.2	15	11.5
Manipulation of information leads to unfair decision making	6	4.6	30	23.1	3	2.3	64	49.2	27	20.8
Only those who distribute information benefit from the institution	11	8.5	20	15.4	3	2.3	70	53.8	26	20
Job objectives and roles are not clearly communicated to employees	6	4.6	16	12.3	1	0.8	77	59.2	30	23.1
Unclear what employees are expected to do to be promoted	10	7.7	25	19.2	3	2.3	78	60	14	10.8
Unclear on what one must do to attend trainings and workshops	8	6.2	27	20.8	2	1.5	77	59.2	16	12.3

Items for information control were used to compute the coefficient of correlation to generate Table 3. Results on Spearman correlation reported a negative significant (p<0.05; r=-.691).

Table 4: Correlation on career development and information Power

Correlation on career development		Career development	Information Power
Career development	Spearman Correlation Sig.(2-tailed)	1	
Information Power	Spearman Correlation Sig.(2-tailed)	-.691* 0.004	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From this study, most respondents agreed that information control plays an important role in career development. This is because employees in institutions where information flow is clear have been reported to record high performance hence development in their career path [6]. Furthermore, Eisenhardt (1989) emphasized that information distribution is important especially during the strategic decision making and this could significantly leads to employee career growth. Although most employees agreed that information control affects their career development, most of them agreed that in their institution (UOE), the way information was controlled affected their career path negatively. This finding is not different from what Cheney *et al.* [4] reported. In their study, they pointed out that when individuals are denied the chance to access information, they tend to loss morale in their work. Furthermore, Mykkänen [5] clearly stated that, when information in an organization is manipulated by some of the employees, the system tends to favor only a few while those you are not in a position to access information will tend to remain in a static state.

CONCLUSION

It was revealed through the study that the majority of respondents in the main sample agreed that control of information plays a central role in their career path. However, most of them agreed that information control in their institution did not favor them. Therefore the study concluded that, although information is key to career growth, at UOE information flow affected career growth of employees negatively. Thus Information Power reported a significant negative effect on the career development of administrative staff at UOE. The

study therefore concluded that information power had a negative significant effect on career development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that information control amongst employees should be improved. Their hopes and aspirations should not be choked by manipulation of systems and information.

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