

Capacity Building in the Public Service in Kenya An Evaluation of the Senior Management Course

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Abstract

This paper assesses the effectiveness of the senior management course offered at the Kenya school of Government (KSG) to middle level management staff as perceived by the participants of the program. The program was developed in the 1960s and has since undergone various reviews with the current revision having been launched in 2008. The aim of the paper is to highlight the reactions of employees, who have gone through the program, on its effectiveness in preparing them for their roles at senior management levels. The research was based on a survey of participant evaluations using the Kirkpatrick framework of training evaluation, at reaction level. The reaction level measures the participants' interest, motivation, and attention levels (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005). This level is important for the future of the program because the motivation to learn, and changes in behaviour, is greatly influenced by the participants' positive reactions. The key finding was that the perceptions of participants about the relevance, delivery and application of the Senior Management Course vary significantly and correlate negatively with age, job group, years in service and years served in their current job group. The main contribution of this paper lies in highlighting how to improve the effectiveness of management development programmes as well as informing both policy and practice in the public sector.

Key Words: *Capacity Building, Public Service, Management, Evaluation, Kenya.*

Introduction

Employee Training and Development (T&D) is a widespread human resource management (HRM) practice that deals with the systematic approach to developing individuals and teams with the aim of improving the effectiveness of organisations and institutions (Kraiger & Ford, 2007, Boselie & Van der Wiele, 2002). With the underlying aim of employee training being to improve employee productivity, a key issue is the assumption that there is a direct relationship between T&D and employee outcomes (Kraiger, McLinden & Casper 2004). Such an assumption seems to exist, at least, based on its widespread presence across countries and cultural settings (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2008).

According to Kimmel (2009), results from numerous HRM studies show that there is a positive relationship that exists between T&D and the performance of different organizations. He however, notes that it is not always clear if T&D is the main or the only cause of this effectiveness. In addition, Boselie, Dietz and Boon, (2005) argue that some studies seem to suggest that there is a likelihood that organizational performance is a precursor of investments in T&D, rather than the T&D activities being the predecessor of organizational performance.

Evaluation is one way of finding out if a particular training program has had the desired effect. In 1959, Kirkpatrick published a four-dimensional evaluation method that tests reactions, learning, behaviour and results—a simple measurement method for comprehending training evaluation, and the most quoted procedure (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005). In this model, . . . learning is measured during training and refers to attitudinal, cognitive, and behavioral learning. Behavior refers to “on-the-job” performance and, thus, is measured after training. Additionally, reactions to training are related to learning, learning is related to behavior, and behavior is related to results. (Alvarez, Garofano, & Salas, 2004, p. 388).

The Kirkpatrick model has stood the test of time and is widely used to evaluate T&D programs in different fields. In this model, the reaction level is a markedly subjective evaluation method that learners or trainees make about the training activities (Ngure, 2013). This level is the principal means by which many organizations assess the success of the training programs (Sitzmann *et al.*, 2006; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005). Findings by several researchers such as Colquitt, LePine and Noe (2000) and Tannenbaum, Mathieu and Martineau (1993) indicate that there are mediating individual and environmental variables that affect the relationship between perceived training activities and trainee outcomes. For instance, there is need to study motivation both as a mediator ‘. . . how perceptions of training relevancy affect motivation . . .’ and as a moderator ‘. . . how motivation affect willingness to learn’ (Kraiger & Ford 2007, p. 302).

Although a number of researchers (e.g. Colquitt *et al.*, 2000), have questioned the validity of the relationship between trainee reactions and employee performance, there is a growing consensus that these reactions provide an important avenue for a further understanding of the relationship between T&D activities and employee performance. Investing in T&D activities and other HRM practices assumes that the employees will be provided with additional knowledge and skills to improve their effectiveness. Unfortunately, more often than not employee perceptions of the T&D may vary significantly from those of their supervisors in the organization (Gavino, Wayne & Erdogan, 2012; Khilji & Wang, 2006). Thus, there is need to carry out studies of the employees’ views to get their insights, because they are the envisioned consumers of the training events in terms of motivation, attraction and retention (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2008). In addition, because trainee reactions comprise attitudes, a positive affect has a direct relationship on subsequent training enrolment and reputation and, organizational engagement and information-processing (Sitzmann, Kraiger, Stewart & Wisher, 2006). The effects of employee social exchanges influence the levels of organisational investments because they create a feeling of employee obligation which in turn influences positive performance of employees (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2008). Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to establish employees reactions particularly those of middle level managers who have gone through the senior management course (SMC) of the Kenya School of Government (KSG) on the training program and subsequent opportunities and outcomes in the form of task performance, citizenship behaviour and turnover intention.

The SMC focuses on building the competences of middle managers to prepare them for senior managerial roles (Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA), 2008). A senior manager in the public sector is an officer in charge of a unit or section and is involved in formulation and implementation of policies. In a rapidly changing work environment where there is increased public expectation of efficient services, such managers are required to provide effective leadership in the delivery of services to the public. The SMC is therefore intended to develop the capacity of senior managers to meet the challenges associated with the rapidly changing work environment. The course is intended to produce managers that can provide efficient and effective leadership in the provision of government services to the public (KIA, 2008).

By the end of the SMC, the participant is expected to be able to (i) apply relevant management principles and practices in public service delivery (ii) carry out planning for government activities (iii) communicate Government policies to the public effectively (iv) lead individuals and teams for effective performance (v) manage various resources for optimal outcomes (vi) promote the practice of good governance (vii) respond to the challenges associated with rapidly changing expectations of the public and (viii) demonstrate their understanding of the course work by writing and presenting a paper (KIA, 2008).

Problem of Research

There exists a vital link between the performance of the public service employees and the growth of a nation's economy. This has a significant effect on the activities and growth of businesses and industries that largely support the government and absorb human labour. One of the ways that the government ensures that its employers are kept abreast with global trends, emerging issues and technological change is through capacity building. Ahmed and Hanson (2011) observe that in developing the capacity of public officers, it is crucial to lay emphasis on vital issues of leadership development, that include building the capacity for leaders to instil confidence and motivate workers into a mutual vision to realize organisational objectives. Capacity development therefore is expected to enhance institutional leadership in Africa to compete in today's rapidly globalizing world and knowledge society, and, to contribute to social capital and social cohesion (Labonte & Laverack, 2001).

Strengthening service delivery is a key strategy for achieving the Kenya Vision 2030 (KV 2030) which is a national development blue-print whose main objective is to provide high quality life to the population in a clean and secure environment by transforming the country into a newly industrialising, middle-income country by 2030 (GoK, 2007). To this end, the Kenya government has implemented key public sector reforms initiatives to create an efficient and more productive public service, with the focus being to transform it into a more pro-active, outward looking and results oriented system (GoK, 2008). The introduction of performance contracting has enabled the government to properly align ministerial and departmental strategic plans in order to improve efficiency and accountability. Many public organizations in Kenya have now adopted employee capacity building as a means of improving the quality, efficiency and speed of public service delivery (UNDP, 2013). The recognition of the employee as the key resource in an organization has also accelerated the need for capacity building (Ahmed & Hanson, 2011).

The Government is further committed to capacity building of its employees in order to align them to the requirements of attainment of the (KV 2030). Towards this end the Government, through its training agency, the KSG, developed various programs for public servants. The KSG is a KV 2030 flagship project that amalgamated the Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA) and four other government training institutions namely; Mombasa, Matuga, Baringo and Embu (KSG, 2013). One of the programs being implemented is the SMC for senior managers, which takes a period of four weeks conducted in the various institutions countrywide (GOK, 2008). The employee's perception on this course may not exactly be the same as government's intention. This study therefore seeks to elicit the reactions of the SMC participants on the relevance of the course to find out if they are aligned to the government objectives for the course.

The two authors of this paper took part in the SMC training and developed an interest of researching this subject as a result of interactions and discussions with the other participants, some of whom expressed some very negative feelings toward the course. Indeed in one of the informal discussions one participant expressed his frustration thus: "this is a course designed by some idlers to frustrate middle-level managers". Another one felt that his superiors had never attended this course, yet they sanctioned it in a bid to make the KSGs relevant; yet another one explained that the course content was a duplicate of numerous others he had attended with the only difference being an examination. The participants were especially disappointed with the type of examination which most of them felt was punitive and unnecessary.

With some of these negative comments, the authors became interested in collecting scientific data on the reactions of participants on the effectiveness of the SMC with a view of making recommendations to the stakeholders to enhance the quality and suitability of the course. The study is timely because all government institutions have adopted results based management towards the realization of (KV, 2030), which can be achieved through a well-designed capacity building system to attract and retain talented employees and cater for their career growth. Further, the public sector is intimately related to the private sector through its service.

Although the government launched the SMC in 2010 and has trained more than 600 officers in the various KSG institutions, the authors observed there is a paucity of research on the effectiveness of the training. Besides initializing debate, this study seeks to fill this gap by contributing to research data on this vital area.

Research Focus

The main objective of this study was to elicit participants' reactions to the training of senior managers. The study therefore sought to address the following specific objectives:

1. To establish the participants' perceptions of the relevance of the course in capacity building.
2. To find out the participants' level of satisfaction with the methods and the content of training employed by the SMC.
3. To determine the participants' expectations after completion of the SMC on their career growth.
4. To establish the variations in perceptions based on various demographic factors: age, education level, years in service, job group, and years in current job group.

The study is important since it sought to unveil the perceptions of participants on the effects of SMC on career growth and the extent to which the course has achieved in its intended purpose in enhancing career growth. The study anticipates that the management of the KSG and the Public Service Commission of Kenya will find the results useful in effecting capacity building and therefore improved service delivery, besides opening avenues for further research in this field. Those carrying out similar research in this field in future may find this study useful.

Limitations of the Research

Bryman (2012) describes delimitations as the restrictions/bounds that researchers impose prior to the inception of the study to narrow the scope of the study. This research was limited to the participants of SMC at KSG campuses at Mombasa and Matuga without extending to other comparable campuses such as, Nairobi, Embu and Baringo. Further, this study has only focused on the reactions of the participants, while other levels of evaluations such as learning, behaviour and results have not been looked at. Hence generalisation should be done with this in mind.

Methodology

Neuman (2008) observes that a research design can be regarded as an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance with research purpose. This study adopted a descriptive survey study design. The descriptive design is appropriate for it is fact finding and exploratory in the capacity of establishing the truth. Neuman (2008) infers that descriptive research has the capacity to describe the present status of a phenomenon, determining the nature of the prevailing conditions, practices and attitudes and seeking accurate descriptions of activities.

The population for this study is defined as the participants of the SMC at the KSG, Mombasa and Matuga. A population can be defined as including all people or items with the characteristic one wishes to understand (Bryman, 2012). The study adopted a census method and therefore the entire population of the participants of course No.31/2012 in the KSG Mombasa and course No. 23/2013 in the KSG Matuga were included. The researchers observed views advanced by Patton (2001) who argues that the sample size depends on what one wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done with available time and resources. Census method was used because the participants were readily available and understood the significance of the research.

Both primary and secondary data were collected for this study. The primary data was collected using questionnaires while the secondary data was drawn from relevant journals, research reports, the internet, published text books and government publications. The researchers undertook the survey with structured questionnaires which were distributed to the participants during the normal class hours, which ensured that the targeted population was reached. Self-administering the questionnaires makes it easy to collect data from a wide section of respondents in a relatively cheap process and short duration (Bryman, 2012). In developing the questionnaire items, the fixed choice of the item was used. The items adopted a Likert scale (e.g. 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-No opinion, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly agree). Reliability using Cronbach's Alpha of the 13 items in the scale yielded a coefficient value of 0.884, which was deemed to be adequate for the purposes of the research.

Content validity of the instrument was determined through piloting, where the responses of the subjects were checked against the research objectives. For a research instrument to be considered valid, the content selected and included in the questionnaire must be relevant to the variable being investigated as argued by Neuman (2008). Once they were completed by the respondents, the questionnaires were checked for completeness and consistency of information. The data from the completed questionnaires was cleaned, coded and entered into the computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics which enables the researcher to describe the aggregation of raw data in numerical terms was computed for presentation and analyses of the data (Neuman 2008). The descriptive statistics involved the use of frequency and percentages. Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Analysis of Variance were used to assess the variability in the responses based the gender, age, length of service, education, job group and number of years in the current job group (see appendix). Data was presented in the form of tables and figures that facilitates description and explanation of the study findings.

Findings

Characteristics of Respondents

Respondents were asked to describe themselves by answering the questions in the questionnaire. Table 1 presents a summary of the characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Summary of Respondents' Characteristics

Variable	Profile	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	39	70.9
	Female	16	29.1
	Total	55	100
Age	25-35 years	4	7.3
	36-45 years	32	58.2
	46-55 years	19	34.5
	Total	55	100
Highest education level	College diploma	5	9.1
	Undergraduate	26	47.3
	Postgraduate Diploma	8	14.5
	Masters	16	29.1
	Total	55	100
Length of service	Less than 10 years	20	36.4
	11-20 years	16	29.1
	Over 20 years	19	34.5
	Total	55	100.0
Current job group	K,L,M	45	81.8
	N	9	16.4
	P and above	1	1.8
	Total	55	100.0
Years in current job group	Less than 3 years	36	65.5
	4-8 years	15	27.3
	Over 8 years	4	7.3
	Total	55	100.0
Organization	Mainstream civil service	52	94.5
	City /Municipal council	3	5.5
	Total	55	100.0

The distribution of respondents shows that there are 70.9% males and 29.1% females, a suggestion that the men are almost three times more likely to occupy senior management positions. The main reason can be attributed to historical prevalence of education is the boy child. Ngerechi (2003) observes that women have a lower participation rate than men at the higher levels of education because according to cultural beliefs among Kenyan communities, women are discouraged from enrolling in some courses like technical courses and university. This has resulted in serious omissions in the structure of the training and development programmes. Another explanation that can be levelled is that men are more likely to take up senior management positions because leadership in the African content has largely been masculine and are therefore the natural choice when a chance occurs (Lutta-Mukhebi, 2004). Due to the unequal distribution of the sexes in the senior management of the public, the Government has introduced a gender policy that aims at the representation of at least one third of either gender (GoK, 2010), but the effects are yet to be observed in reality.

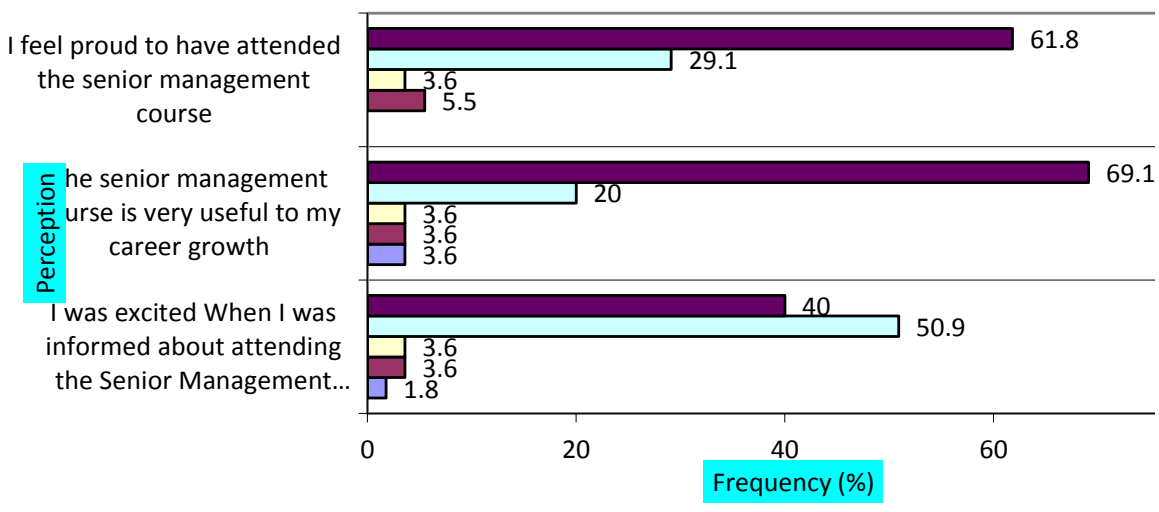
From the table, the education levels show that 90.9% of the senior education officers have attained at least a degree certificate; and 43.6% of these have gone further and attained a postgraduate degree. Most officers have acquired post graduate training because it is a requirement for advancing to some job groups, while others have acquired it with the hope that it will increase their chances of promotion (Maliranta, Nurmi, & Virtanen 2010).

Most senior officers were above 36 years of age. The reason is that most senior senior managers joined the public service after completing their university or tertiary training as junior officers and it has taken some years for them to be promoted to senior levels. As observed, most officers of these officers are in job K, L and M having joined the service at job group J and taking a minimum of three years to rise to the next grade. 34.6% of the respondents have been in their current grade for period of more than four years and 65.5% of these have served in their current job group for period of less than 3 years. The government has introduced succession management in the public sector to ensure the progression of the all cadres. Thus in the recent past many officers have been promoted through the public service commission.

Participants’ Perceptions of the Relevance of the Course in Their Capacity Building.

Questions were asked to gauge the perception of the respondents to the SMC. Their responses are presented in the in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Perceptions of SMC on career growth



Majority of the respondents were excited to attend the SMC. Further as observed in Figure 1, the participants felt that the training was useful for their career growth with the understanding that the SMC is a prerequisite for promotion. "Career growth" or "Job advancement" usually means a change from an entry level position to a job which has more duties and that receives more compensation (Ahmed & Hanson, 2011).

For example, a company which is large enough to allow a sequence of jobs: base worker to team leader to supervisor to vice president is a company which allows "career growth." Further, employers and employees need to continually upgrade their skills to remain relevant in their careers. Tsang (1999) outlined the benefits that are expected to be accrued from a country's training program when the inputs are correctly aligned to the expected outputs. He defines these in three levels: the trainees would reap benefits such as enhanced cognitive and non-cognitive abilities, boosted chances of finding employment, stability in employment, enhanced job satisfaction and additional career options; businesses would experience less employee turn-over, reduced downtime and increased productivity; the country would experience more economic growth, higher taxable income, reduced rates of unemployment and less social injustices.

Excitement about attending the course had a significant and negative correlation with age of the respondent ($r=-.319$, $p=0.018$). The current job group also correlated negatively with their perception of the usefulness of the course to their career growth ($r = -0.299$, $p=0.027$). Similarly, the participants excitement when informed about attending the SMC correlated positively with the perception that senior management course is very useful to career growth ($r=0.564$, $p=0.000$). Analysis of variance showed the significant variations (at 95% confidence limits: See Table 2 in appendix). This means that there are significant differences between the various age groups represented in the sample on their excitement about being nominated for the SMC program. The older they are the less excited they seemed to be about the nomination. Similarly, the older participants were not satisfied with their current career growth. Likewise, respondents who had spent more than four years in their current grade felt that they were not growing professionally and indicated that they expected management to intervene in their situation by assisting them to get promotions. Thus, the older participants as well as those who had been in their job groups for more than three years were not excited about attending SMC despite acknowledging that the program was very useful.

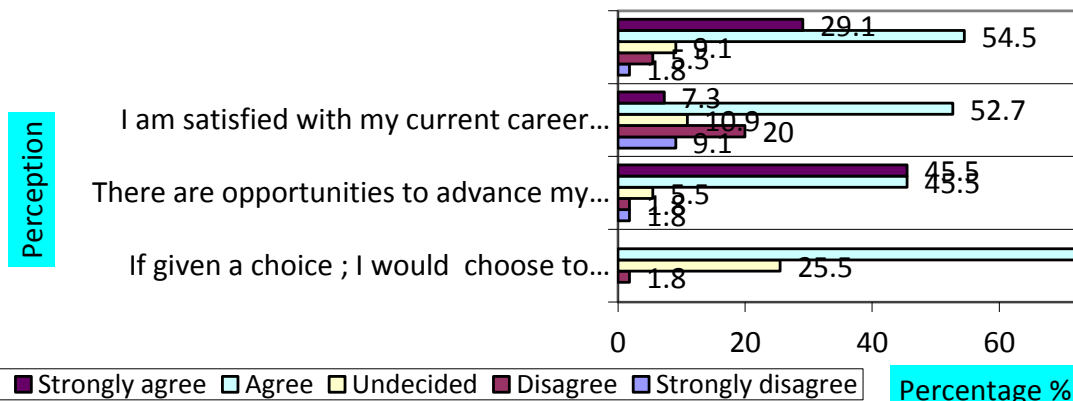
Some of the participants informed the researchers that they had been trying to get to the training for a long time hence their excitement at having been offered a place in the training. A number of them had even made private arrangements with the KSG and paid for themselves in order to assess this course, because it was seen as mandatory for career growth. Hence the excitement was not really about the training rather, most participants viewed it as a hurdle to be overcome for them to move to the next grade.

Satisfaction with the SMC Program

This study was about reactions to the SMC training, and the researchers were interested in the feelings of the respondents to the SMC. These feelings are presented in Figure 2. Satisfaction of trainees is a measure where the evaluation framework evaluates the trainee's feelings and opinions about the program. This level is important for the future of the program because the motivation to learn and changes in behaviour are likely to be influenced by the participants' positive reactions (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005). In Figure 1, it was observed that majority of the trainees were proud to attend the course; Figure 2 shows a similar trend, where majority of trainees felt they were growing professionally. However, in Figure 2, it is observed that the trainees had various levels of satisfaction with their current career growth. This variation further correlated negatively with age ($r= -0.337$, $p=0.012$), and length of service ($r= -0.279$, $p=0.039$). This means that the older participants, who had served in their job groups for more than three years were less satisfied with their career growth.

This research sought to find out the participants levels of satisfaction with the SMC course because the outcome of the course is dependent on their perception of the course, which is a determining factor of the level of attainment and understanding.

Figure 2: Satisfaction with current career growth



Understanding individual variables enables trainers to focus on those areas that facilitate the trainee to not only be more productive, but to acquire higher job satisfaction. For example, the needs of the youth and those of mature-age learners are quite different because the latter have more experiences to draw upon besides needing to juggle multiple priorities, while the former tend to be more inquisitive and explorative (Wagonhurst, 2002). Results are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Satisfaction with SMC course

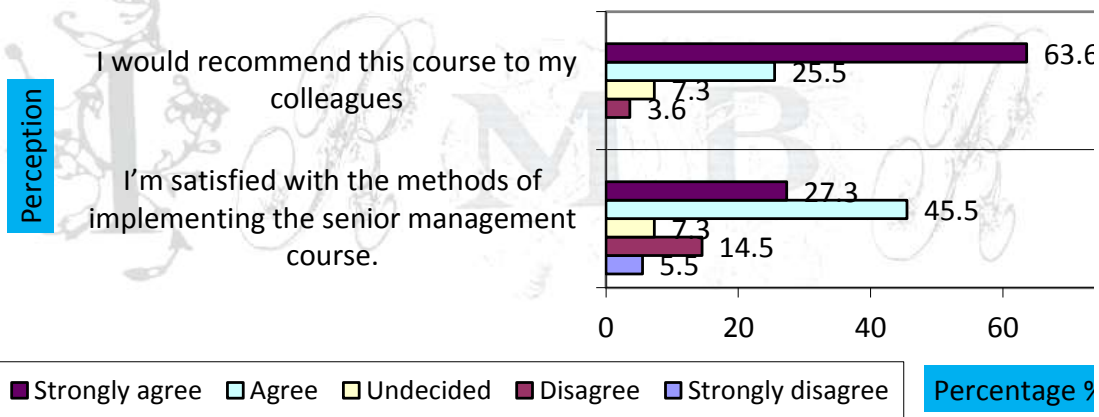


Figure 3 shows that 45.5% agreed, 27.3% strongly agreed while 20% disagreed that they are satisfied with the methods of implementing the program. Satisfaction with the methods of implementing the SMC correlated negatively with the 'length of service' ($r = -.302, p = .025$), 'current job group' ($r = -.289, p = 0.032$), and 'number of years in current job group' ($r = -.279, p = 0.039$) but positively with if they would 'recommend the program to their colleagues' ($r = 0.516, p = 0.000$). This means that satisfaction with the SMC implementation methods, which included intense classroom lecturers, project work and examination (KIA, 2008), decreased in participants who had been in the service longer. Satisfaction was also lower for staff that had grown in their career paths and served more years in their current job groups. However, those who were satisfied with the program also indicated that they would recommend the program to their colleagues.

Participants who were unsatisfied with the course further wondered why in this age and time it requires participants to sit in a classroom setting for a whole four months. Two participants who had travelled from overseas countries to attend the mandatory training felt that online classes would suffice since most of it was theoretical. Others submitted that some of the topics were not necessarily and the course could have taken a shorter period than the four weeks. The frequency of the examinations was a bone of contention

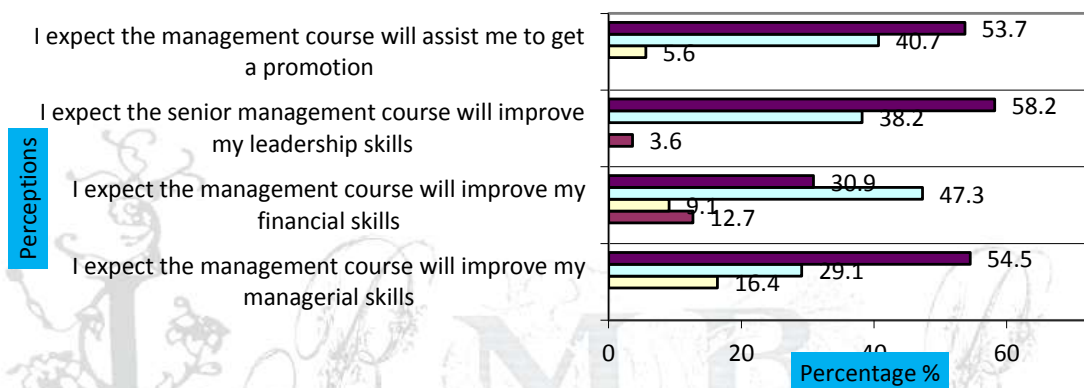
too. Participants suggested that weekly continuous assessments were better than a single paper at the end of the program.

In addition, the participants expressed their displeasure with an academic examination being the sole assessment of their level of understanding. They suggested other methods like practical, portfolios and observations that were more relevant to their work. Another complaint was with the some trainers. Although the participants were unanimous that most of the subjects were pertinent, they felt that some trainers demanded their status. A majority of the trainers kept on referring to the high failure rate of the course, which the participants felt was more of a threat than an advice.

Participants Expectations at the End of The Program

Respondents were asked about their expectations at the end of the program. Their responses are displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Participants expectations on course completion



From the Figure 4, most of the respondents felt that the program had worked on improving their leadership skills, financial skills and managerial skills, while 12.7% disagreed that their financial management skills would improve. In elaboration, 21.7% indicated that the course had improved their interpersonal relations and skills as well as their personal lives. When asked about the impact that they expected the SMC to have on their organization, 19.4% were not sure about the direct impact, although they had seen people who had completed the course being promoted, performing their work more professionally, and having improved managerial and interpersonal skills.

Age correlated negatively with expectation that the program would improve their financial skills ($r = -.308$, $p = 0.022$), or their managerial skills ($r = -.319$, $p = 0.018$). Length of service also correlated negatively with the perception that the program would improve their financial skills ($r = -.273$, $p = .044$), the current job group correlated negatively with expectation that the course would improve their leadership skills ($r = -.276$, $p = .041$), and their managerial skills ($r = -.413$, $p = .002$). This implies that the older participants were set on their ways and did not feel that their skills would improve. The staff in higher job groups felt that the methods of implementing the program were not satisfactory. Further they indicated that the program would not improve their financial skills.

Discussion

The process of creating market-oriented economies, securing productive labour, and creating democratic political systems in developing countries can be traced to the effectiveness of government performance (Boselie & Van der Wiele, 2002). A central focus of developmental activities is capacity building, because when carried out effectively, it can effectively improve public sector performance and correct any deficiencies that may exist in an organisation. Further, employee training has the ability for professional growth and can be used for building professional relationships among peers, maximizing organisational

profit, loss minimization and for rectifying employee deficiencies (Lucas, 2003). Kenya has experienced a major shift in policies and procedures occasioned by the millennium development goals and the KV 2030. The country has changed to a radical constitution and other major developmental changes such as a new political arena, which calls for a shift in activities and government policies to be aligned to these changes. The effectiveness of the training program should be a major concern for the government and policy makers, because it guides them when considering the relevance and suitability of the activity.

Grindle & Hilderbrand, (2006), assert that there are inherent assumptions that underlie most training efforts such as: that the activities being viewed as the logical site for human development interventions; that organisational structures and the rewarding system determine the organisational and personnel performance; that the effectiveness of organisations is determined when there are structures and monitoring mechanisms; and that training activities improve individual performance as a result of skill and technology transfer. Although institutional, political, demographic as well as resource challenges exist, the public service need to take advantage of its unique positioning in Kenya to exploit its knowledge management and strengthening private-public partnerships (Ahmed & Hanson, 2011). The aim of the SMC is to impart knowledge to the public officers to make them more prepared to move the economy and offer better services, senior officers were more driven by the need to be promoted, instead of knowledge acquisition. This was a concern that was raised throughout the program with even some trainers regretting that some officers threw the hand-outs in the dustbins as soon as they learnt that they had passed the exam.

To measure the impact and effectiveness of the program, it is vital to carry out its evaluation. Evaluation is the means by which a training program's outcomes are compared to the set objectives with the aim of finding out the extent to which the training process has achieved its purpose (Armstrong, 2009). A particular training is tailored to suit the needs of a specific time (Staley, 2008), and evaluation studies the level at which the training program meets the set targets through activities such as organisational performance changes, training content and design evaluation, and changes in learners (Alvarez, et al., 2004). Although post-training evaluation is crucial, evaluation can be done at any stage of the training process because the aim of evaluation is to guide the training activity to ensure its effectiveness, while correcting any deficiencies identified during implementation. Thus this evaluation was done towards the end of the training and could therefore only capture Kirkpatrick's reaction level.

There are three basic reasons for evaluating a training program: to find out how to improve the program, to determine the viability of the program, and to justify the existence of the training program to providers (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005). Fretwell (2003) observes that the results of the evaluation are vital in informing the public decision-making and stimulating debate, improving employer decisions about the training, informing the clients about training options and quality, and improving the quality of the training systems. The author adds that evaluation helps to avoid the possibility of wasting valuable resources by selecting optimum options, continuing with plans that are likely to produce intended results and detecting factors that may negatively impact on the training strategy. Some participants of the SMC intimated that they were not being taught anything new, since they had been trained in some of the courses, and they felt they were only attending the lecturers for the sake of passing the examination.

The reactions level therefore measures the participants' interest, motivation, and attention levels (Smidt, Balandin, Sigafos, & Reed, 2009). This level is important for the future of the program because the motivation to learn, and changes in behaviour, is greatly influenced by the participants' positive reactions and their perception of the course (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005). Perception involves the identification, organisation, and interpretation of observations and information gathered so as to epitomize and comprehend the environment (Dhamodharan, Daniel & Ambuli, 2010). Thus perception to a training programme is the way the trainees interpret the usefulness of the training activities to the improvement of their capabilities, capacity and performance. Reactions level therefore measures customer satisfaction in the training program by evaluating the trainee's feelings and opinions. It is at this level that the trainees voice their judgment of the program and also recommend whether future training is necessary.

In this study reactions level was measured through perception, satisfaction and expectations. While these three constructs may not be adequate to gauge the entire program, they nevertheless give an insight into the employees/trainees usefulness and readiness of the program. Other variables such as “tangible and intangible benefits, empowerment and respect, workplace involvement, concern for employee welfare, supportive management, and the workplace environment” (Szamosi, 2006 p. 662) play an important part in the employees job satisfaction.

Conclusions and Recommendations

From the findings of this research, the following conclusions can be made

- Most participants are over 36 years, with a substantial number being over 45 years old. This is an issue with the training because although the SMC is very crucial to developing employee capacity and capability, the perception of the usefulness diminishes with age and seniority in the service. It is therefore recommended that the program is introduced early in one’s career before the employee becomes set in certain ways of operating. This will thus ensure that there are more positive impacts of the program.
- There were important issues that were raised by those participants who were dissatisfied with the course. The SMC runs for a period of four weeks, which participants felt was too long for the kind of content therein. Further, other methods of training such as e-learning and/or distant learning need to be considered against the available facilities and technology.
- Examination was a bone of contention for many participants who felt that this should not be the only mode of evaluating their competency of the course. Although this study did not address the failure rate, most participants were afraid of failure and the subsequent humiliation associated with it. This study recommends that besides an academic examination, other methods of evaluation such as observation, practical examination and portfolios could be added. Further the role that the examination is meant to play need to be clarified to the satisfaction of the participants.
- There is need to gauge the entry level of the participants before subjecting them to courses that they had already been trained in. Older participants who had been through several in-service courses and others who had done a Masters in Business and Administration felt that the courses were a repetition of what they had already done. Thus a recognition of prior learning is necessary to avoid wastage of valuable resources.
- The distribution of respondents show that there are over 70% males and 29.1% females, an indication that men are more likely to occupy senior management positions. The gender policy needs to be enforced to ensure that more women take up senior positions in the government.
- Although most participants were excited to attend the course, their main motivation was that they viewed it as a vehicle for upward mobility in the public service. While this is a positive endorsement of the course, the benefits of the SMC should also include the acquisition of knowledge imparted through the content of the course.
- The participants felt that the program had worked on improving their leadership skills, financial skills and managerial skills. However, the participants were not sure about the direct impact that SMC would have on their career growth, but they intimated that they expected to get promotions, perform their work more professionally and improve their managerial and interpersonal skills. The government ought to nurture these positive expectations to take the training a notch higher. In addition, the course objectives and expectations need to be spelt more clearly. Notably, the participants who were above job group M, indicated that the financial skills acquired in this program were not sufficient for their jobs. This creates a training need for a more advanced financial skills program for middle level managers in the service.

This study focuses on the first level of Kirkpatrick’s evaluation model-reactions. Further research is necessary to test the other levels: learning (which requires an analysis of knowledge acquisition), as well as behaviour and results (which can only be done once the employees go back to their stations and practice

what they have been trained). This would create an interesting comparison because while this study focused on the employees during training, the later would focus on their ability or inability to apply their learning.

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Appendix: Significant Pearson correlation coefficients

		<i>I was excited When I was informed about attending the Senior Management Course</i>	<i>I feel that I am growing professionally in my current career</i>	<i>I am satisfied with my current career growth</i>	<i>I'm satisfied with the methods of implementing the senior management course.</i>	<i>I expect the senior management course will improve my leadership skills</i>	<i>I expect the management course will improve my financial skills</i>	<i>I expect the management course will improve my managerial skills</i>
Age	Pearson Correlation	-.319(*)	-.268(*)	-.337(*)			-.308(*)	-.319(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018	.048	.012			.022	.018
	N	55	55	55			55	55
Length of service	Pearson Correlation			-.279(*)	-.302(*)		-.273(*)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.039	.025		.044	
	N			55	55		55	
Length of time in the service	Pearson Correlation		-.329(*)		-.279(*)			
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.014		.039			
	N		55		55			
Current job group	Pearson Correlation				-.289(*)	-.276(*)	-.413(**)	-.175
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.032	.041	.002	.201
	N				55	55	55	55

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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

Table 1: ANOVA Table of the Variables and Factors in the Scale

Independent variable	Dependent variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Age	I was excited When I was informed about attending the Senior Management Course	Between Groups	4.526	2	2.263	3.523	.037
		Within Groups	33.401	52	.642		
		Total	37.927	54			
Age	I am satisfied with my current career growth	Between Groups	9.056	2	4.528	3.780	.029
		Within Groups	62.289	52	1.198		
		Total	71.345	54			
Highest education level	The senior management course is very useful to my career growth	Between Groups	10.794	3	3.598	4.276	.009
		Within Groups	42.915	51	.841		
		Total	53.709	54			
Job group	I'm satisfied with the methods of implementing the senior management course.	Between Groups	10.081	2	5.040	4.073	.023
		Within Groups	64.356	52	1.238		
		Total	74.436	54			
Job group	I expect the management course will improve my financial skills	Between Groups	8.727	2	4.364	5.508	.007
		Within Groups	41.200	52	.792		
		Total	49.927	54			
Years in the grade	I feel that I am growing professionally in my current career	Between Groups	4.555	2	2.278	3.169	.050
		Within Groups	37.372	52	.719		
		Total	41.927	54			
Years in the grade	I expect the management course will assist me to get a promotion	Between Groups	2.389	2	1.194	3.563	.036
		Within Groups	17.093	51	.335		
		Total	19.481	53			