

# Using Human Resource Management Practices to Predict Quality Service Delivery: Case of Public Secondary Schools in Kenya

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## Abstract

With rapid changes in the business environment, organizations are increasingly looking at their human resources as a unique asset that can provide sustained competitive advantage. Human resources are considered by many to be the most important assets of an organization for sustaining competitiveness through their products and services. It has been observed that very few employers are able to harness the full potential from their human resources. In view of this, this study examined the relationship between Human Resource Management Practices and Quality Service Delivery in the education sector in Kenya. The research was done as a case study of government sponsored secondary schools based in Taita-Taveta County. The conceptualization in the study was guided by the various strategic human resource theories, models and the servqual model. The results show that the regression model used is significant ( $F=23.499$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) and that the HRM practices as measured using the five practices explain approximately 45% of the variation in service quality delivery in the education sector in Taita-Taveta county in Kenya ( $R^2=0.448$ ). The results show that hypotheses one, four and five of the study are supported ( $\beta=.405$ ,  $p<.000$ ;  $\beta=.321$ ,  $p<.000$ ;  $\beta=.181$ ,  $p<.001$  respectively) while hypotheses two and three are not ( $\beta=-.113$ ,  $p=.170$ ;  $\beta=-.508$ ,  $p=.612$  respectively). The study concluded that HRM practices in the Education sector in Kenya is still undertaken with an inclination towards the traditional personnel management perspective. The study called on future research to investigate the same phenomenon using an expanded list of HRM Practices indicators and pay attention to senior executives' perspective on the strategic role of human resources in the sector.

**Keywords:** HRM practices, Service quality, Public secondary schools, service quality, Taita Taveta County

## 1. Introduction

Human Resource Management (HRM) has emerged to be an important contributor to the success of organizations. The current state of its practice embraces a strategic orientation in which human resource practice is undertaken with a focus on strategic concerns of organizations on areas such as goal achievement, survival, competitiveness and superior customer service. At the firm level, many organizations are aligning the HRM function with their strategic intents so as to pursue their future through their human resources who are regarded as strategic assets or resources whose contribution is critical to the firms' ability to achieve their purpose. Armstrong (2006) captures this unique role in the basic description of HRM that expresses the concept of HRM as "strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization's most valued assets – the people working there who individually or collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives". Thus according to Rue and Byars (2004), in strategically aligned organizations, the HRM function represents one of the firm's largest investments.

At a national level of analysis, HRM is applied by national governments to drive human resource development policies that aim at creating a human resource base to support industrial development. The strategic role played by HRM at the national level as observed from the work of Armstrong (2006), Rue and Byars (2004) is observable from national budgetary allocations to governments' ministries that deal with national human capital development notably in the area of education. The governments invest heavily on this sector with a twofold focus: to maintain a pool of highly motivated, capable personnel to deliver educational services to learners at all levels and; to create a highly educated and employable population of citizens for industrial development. The second point of focus relies on the first one while the first role is highly dependent on HRM practices at a

national level. To provide the educational services to learners, the education sector requires strategically developed human resources that will deliver the services to the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

In view of this strategic role expected to be played by the HRM function in the education sector, this study undertook to document the state of HRM practices in Kenya so as to guide not only the future practice but also add to the scanty pieces of information available on HRM practices in most developing countries (Kilika, 2012; Kilika, K'Obonyo, Ogutu & Munyoki, 2013). It is observable that while HRM is practiced with a strategic orientation in most parts of the world, the developing countries may be operating at levels where the function is modeled along the philosophical orientations of traditional personnel management. Besides, the education sector faces a huge task of providing relevant education for supporting national and international concerns for industrialization, competitiveness and reputation. Several concerns therefore need to be addressed: How is the HRM practice currently situated in the education sector in Kenya? How is the practice contributing to relevance of education by addressing the concerns of stakeholders through the dimension of quality service delivery? This study was done to establish the current status of HRM practice and its contribution to quality service delivery among government secondary schools in Kenya. A case study was taken of Taita-Taveta County in the Republic of Kenya.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Concept and Nature of HRM Practice

In presenting the conceptualization leading to the hypotheses tested in this paper, the concept of HRM was approached from its unique managerial nature associated with provision of human capital to help each organization attain performance related goals. A number of scholars in both management and the behavioral sciences consider organizational performance from a human point of view (Rue & Byars, 2004; Robbins & Judge, 2013; Luthans, 2010) which justifies the huge volumes of investments in this strategic resource. This perspective combined with that of Beardwell and Claydon, (2007) makes it possible to approach it from not only a philosophical point of view but also a practical and applied perspective as it seeks to manage people in a productive fashion in organizations. Flippo (1984), provided an approach to the practical and applied perspective that the paper used to bring about the philosophical dimension of HRM. In this paper, the practical and applied perspective considered the various functions of HRM practiced in organizations while the philosophical perspective was addressed through the relevant theoretical strands that provide the understanding on how the functions can be rolled out in a strategically aligned manner to be the basis for sustained superior performance.

The HRM functions as suggested by Flippo take a managerial perspective that considers HRM as an essential management function carrying out both managerial and operational roles. The managerial roles revolve around the traditional functions of management of planning, organizing, directing and controlling coordinating and staffing for purposes of attaining organizational goals. The approach by Flippo has been used in HRM to provide a link between the strategic imperatives of an organization and the mode of design of the HRM function and programs through the function of planning. This work points at the role of human resource planning and evaluation such that the HR activities are planned for and evaluated as components of organizations managerial functions. Under the planning function, the HR function undertakes to determine how the espoused future of the organization will be pursued using human resources. Thus HRM forecasts the future demand and supply for human labor based on internal strategic imperatives as well as key developments of the external context of each firm and specifically determining in advance how many and what type of people are required. This prior projection is considered critical as it lays down the climate that conditions the distinct manner in which HRM practices are carried in each organization so that, numbers are not only ensured but also required competencies to sustain desired levels of performance and competitiveness under the projected contextual scenarios. Thus based on this design, the HR function will undertake the second set of roles in the category of operational roles.

Operational roles of HRM refer to those tasks and duties performed in both large and small organizations to provide for and coordinate human resource functions in an organization and encompass a variety of activities that support operations within an organization. The set of activities within this category include procurement of personnel, personnel development, compensation management, industrial relations, performance management, and human resource information systems. The procurement aspect is concerned with obtaining of the proper kind and number of personnel necessary to accomplish organizational goals. Under this activity, organizations will carry out activities such as projection of manpower requirements, recruitment, selection placement and orientation. The development function addresses activities that enhance the capabilities of employees through interventions such as training, career development, succession planning, management development and performance management. The compensation aspect deals with how the organization will use incentives to

reward employee performance to attract and retain a highly motivated workforce. Several decisions are undertaken for this purpose touching on job evaluations, developing a compensation policy, wage level determination, choice of compensation plans, fringe benefits and perks.

The industrial management aspect is the one vested with the responsibility for maintaining healthy relations between management and organized workers and among the workers themselves. The specific decision areas for this include disciplinary procedures, collective bargaining agreements, and negotiations. The human resource information system has to do with record management on matters of employees and their working life. Organizations normally establish personnel registries with inventories on all information on decisions made on each employee during their employment life. Organizations may computerize such a system to ensure that relevant and quality information is available to decision makers on a timely basis.

## *2.2 Theoretical Review and Conceptualization*

It is imperative to note that the HRM function that is critical to providing the most critical arm of the organization for driving superior performance needs to design its operations using the diverse functions discussed to move the sponsoring organization to its desired future and destiny. This is where the philosophical orientation is required so that HR practitioners and line managers can execute the HR functions in a manner that aligns the practices with the strategic imperatives that derive from the strategic goals connected with the mission and vision of each organization. The dilemma that strategic oriented managers face is how to generate an overall philosophy guiding HRM practice for each firm. The strategic HRM literature has provided a number of philosophical perspectives that may guide. This paper relied on the contributions of the resource based view of the firm, the contingency approach, the Soft and Hard Human Resource Management Approach and Best Practice Human Resources Management Theory.

The Resource Based View (RBV) derives from the idea suggested by economist Edith Penrose that anchors organizational performance on internal strategic assets or resources. The theory highlights the basic characteristics that the resources should have through the VRION model. The strategic resources should be valuable, rare, inimitable, organization specific and non substitutable so as to drive firm competitive advantage (Tyson, 2006). The theory and its postulates have been well received in HRM as one of the internal resources that bears these VRION qualities is the human resource component of an organization. The main argument is that the value brought by human resource is the core of this approach whereby Human resources, by adding value, uniqueness and the most effective way to use resources, tend to increase the competitive advantage of a company in comparison to another (Miller & Shamsie, 1996; Porter, 1991). In the RBV of HR strategy, managers seek to gain a competitive advantage through the quality of the people employed. It is increasingly being acknowledged that the basic requirement to trade in most industries is a well trained workforce that demonstrates capabilities of being flexible and responsive to customer demands. Accordingly, RBV therefore emphasizes a skills and capability focus so that firms can learn faster than their rivals, and that they can protect and enlarge their intellectual capital. As a consequence, companies can generate a human capital advantage as well as an organizational process advantage.

The matching or contingency approach to HR is based on the premise that there needs to be a fit between a firm's competitive strategy and internal HR strategy on the one hand and a fit among the elements of the HR strategy on the other. The relationship between business strategy and HR strategy is said to be 'reactive' in the sense that HR strategy is subservient to 'product market logic' and the corporate strategy,' (Purcell & Ahlstrand, 1994). The fit perspective or the matching model suggests that optimal HRM combines both vertical integration between HR and business strategy, and horizontal integration between individual HR policies areas. The contingency theorists emphasize the economic desirability of fitting HR strategy to the firm's choice of competitive strategy, although there are variations which add or sometimes substitute other contingencies such as life cycle stages and structure, (Boxall, 1992). Business theorists argue that HR strategy depends on business strategy while change management theorists argue that it is not the business strategy but rather the degree of change, which would determine the HR strategy. The choice of HR strategy is governed by variation in organizational form (for example size, structure and age), competitive pressures on management and the stabilities of labour markets, mediated by the inter-plays of manager subordinate relations and worker resistance (Thompson & McHugh, 2002).

The soft and hard HRM approach is based on the argument that HRM can fundamentally be separated into two types of approaches, the hard and soft models of HRM. The hard version of HRM is primarily concerned with the business performance and is widely acknowledged as placing little emphasis on workers' concerns. The Michigan Model of HRM supports this approach of HRM and is essentially 'hard' focusing on the profitability

and well being of the organization. The 'soft' version of HRM advocates equal concern for the well being of its employees. This relationship between HRM practices and employee well being is illustrated in the Harvard model, (Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Mills & Walton, 1984), which is one of the most widely referred to models of HRM. The model looks at all stakeholders interests from the shareholders, employees, to the unions, in addition to taking into account situational factors such as societal values and workplace conditions. Taking these two sets of factors into account enables the organization to make HR policy choices such as appropriate resource flows, reward systems, work systems and employee influence that will best satisfy employees within the firm. According to the Harvard model, once the appropriate HRM policy choices have been made, HR outcomes of commitment, competence, congruence and cost – effectiveness should occur, (Beer *et al*, 1984). This model suggests a 'soft' approach to HRM is required if employers are to benefit from HRM practices. Although the two HRM approaches of 'hard' and 'soft' are vastly different, Edgar, (2003) believes that employers are likely to include elements of both models in their HRM practice. This is due to the fact that almost in all cases, the overall goal of the organization is to improve the profitability, which can be achieved through adopting the 'hard' model of HRM practice, (Edgar, 2003). However in addition to this, research has found that organizations tend to also adopt the philosophy of developmental humanism and therefore also espouse a soft approach to HRM, (Guest, 1999).

Johnson, (2000) suggests that the underlying guiding principle of best practice is the valuing and rewarding of employee performance. After extensive research, Huselid, (1995) developed a list of 13 "High performance work characteristics" that he believed constituted best practice HRM. Pfeffer, (1998) drawing heavily from this previous work done by Huselid, outlined seven best practices of successful organizations which included such things as employment security, selective hiring of new personnel, self-managed teams, decentralized high compensation relative to performance, extensive training, reduction in barriers and extensive sharing of financial and performance information. However, Guest (1999) questions the basis of some of the universal claims made about the connection between HRM strategies and organizational performance. He reports that he is not convinced by the idea that there is a general prescription of HRM intervention that can be applied in any organization, irrespective of context and priorities with the likelihood of a similar level of response and results. Therefore, activities that are designed to empower and develop the employee in addition to positively affecting the bottom line of the organization are considered 'best practice', (Edgar, 2003).

### 2.3 HRM Practice and Service Quality

The widely acknowledged purpose of human resource management both in practice and theory is to ensure that an organization is able to achieve success through people. The behavioral science perspective that lays the theoretical ground for HRM practice has focused on the concept of organizational performance through the human lense. Thus, HRM practices in organizations will trigger employee behaviors that will drive the performance of organizations. According to Ulrich and Lake, (1990) HRM systems can be a source of organizational capabilities that allow firms to learn and capitalize on new opportunities. HRM is therefore concerned with achieving objectives that are connected with attainment of organizational effectiveness. In a constantly changing world, which requires flexible responses, with strong competition from nearly every micro and macro factor, due to increased globalization, it is important for organizations to have some kind of competitive edge. Distinctive Human Resource Practices shape the core competences that determine how institutions compete, (Capelli & Crocker, 1996). Quality service delivery is considered one of the major goals whose attainment will lead to an organizational survival as it leads to customer satisfaction which ultimately will influence overall business performance through profitability, (Heskett, et al.,, 1994). Customer satisfaction is also an important determinant of customers' retention which in turn has a strong effect on profitability.

Experts in marketing have attempted to show the link between HRM practice and quality service delivery through the aspect of customer satisfaction. Employees in organizations within this context have been recognized as internal customers with needs that require satisfaction (Payne *et.al*, 1998; Christopher, Payne & Ballantyne, 2013). The argument thus is that for the internal customers to deliver satisfactions to external customers, the internal work systems should be designed and operated in a way that creates an environment for each employee to satisfy their needs and enjoy pride of workmanship so that they can translate the same to their external customers during the customer service interface. The psychological state that sustains this sense of pride will depend on the prevailing culture created by the range of human resource practices and how they are executed. Some of the cultural indicators suggested touch on employee empowerment, participation, security, trust and confidence. The psychological state will determine how employees handle work and interact with customers so as to create perceptions on the overall quality of the product or service. The customer perceptions will be based on several dimensions of both the product and the service personnel such as technical competence, motivation,

positive attitudes and knowledge of the product, organization and the customers' needs.

Organizations therefore need an understanding of the consumer perceptions of the quality and the way service quality is influenced. Managing perceived service quality means that the firm has to match the expected service and perceived service to each other so that consumer satisfaction is achieved. Service quality is measured in four key dimensions; reliability (consistency), Assurance (how confident the customer is about the service being provided), responsiveness (to the customers' demands) and empathy for the customers, (Zelthaml & Berry, 1991). The study used three components of service quality, namely: technical quality; functional quality; and image. Technical quality is the quality of what the consumer actually receives as a result of his/her interaction with the service firm and is important to him/her and to his/her evaluation of the quality of service. Functional quality refers to how he/she gets the technical outcome. This is important to the customer and to his/her views of service he/she has received. Image is very important to service firms and this can be expected to be supported mainly by technical and functional quality of service including the other factors such as tradition, ideology, word of mouth, pricing and public relations.

Parasuraman et al. (1985) proposed that service quality is a function of the differences between expectation and performance along the quality dimensions. They developed a service quality model based on a gap analysis and identified five gaps that arise from the difference between: consumers' expectations and management's perceptions of those expectations, (not knowing what consumers expect); management's perceptions of consumer's expectations and service quality specifications, (Improper service-quality standards); service quality specifications and service actually delivered (the service performance gap); service delivery and the communications to consumers about service delivery (whether promises match delivery); and consumer's expectation and perceived service. This gap depends on size and direction of the four gaps associated with the delivery of service quality on the marketer's side.

### 3. The Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Using the arguments in the reviewed literature, the study proposed a simple conceptual model linking the HRM practices of an organization with quality service delivery. The Conceptual Model used in this study and the set of hypotheses are shown in figure 1.

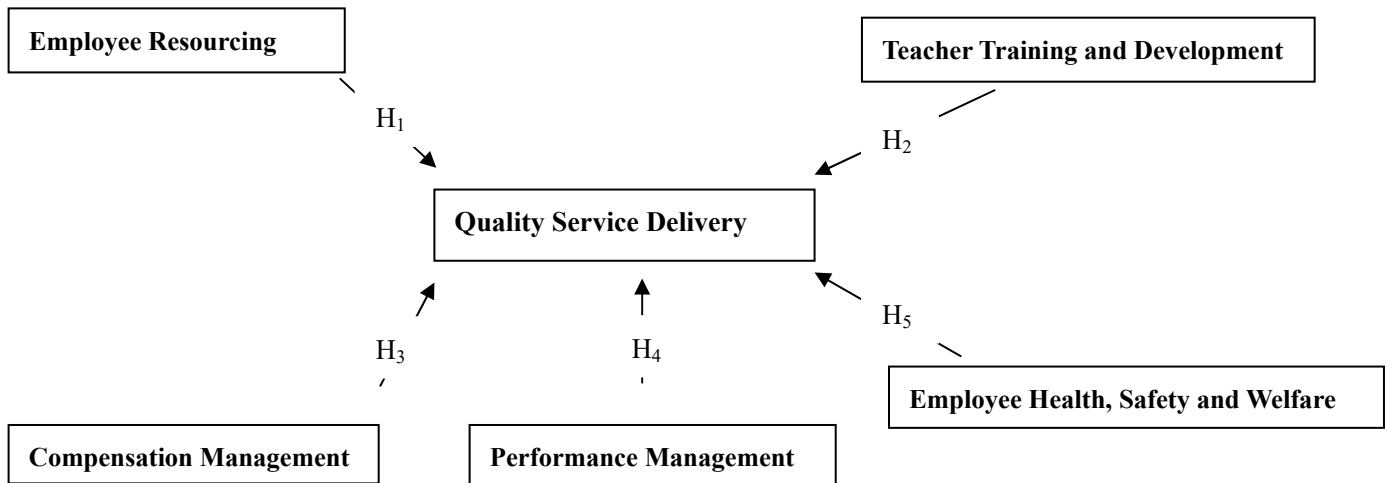


Figure 1. Conceptual Model linking HRM Practices with Quality service Delivery

HRM practice was used as the independent variable of the study comprising five components, namely resourcing, training and development, performance management, compensation management, employee safety and health. The dependent variable of the study was service quality delivery. The study used the dimensions service quality as proposed in the servqual model of Parasurman et al. (1985).

The main argument is that if these practices are implemented with a strategic focus to create strategic assets for driving performance, they will usher into the system a culture that will cause employees to exhibit behaviors that will promote superior customer service and hence affect the customers' perception of service quality. Thus based on this reasoning, the study hypothesized that the state of HRM practice in the education sector in Kenya will be

significantly related with the level of service quality delivery. Specifically, five hypotheses were proposed and stated in the alternate form:

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between recruitment and selection and quality service delivery in Kenyan public secondary schools.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between training and development and quality service delivery in Kenyan public secondary schools.*

*H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant relationship between compensation management and quality service delivery in Kenyan public secondary schools.*

*H<sub>4</sub>: There is a significant relationship between performance management and quality service delivery in Kenyan public secondary schools.*

*H<sub>5</sub>: There is a significant relationship between employee safety and health and quality service delivery in Kenyan public secondary schools*

#### 4. Research Methodology

##### 4.1 The Context of the Study

The study was done in the education sector in Kenya among students and teachers in the public sector. The responsibility for HRM practice in this sector in Kenya is vested on the Teachers' Service Commission of Kenya (TSC). TSC was established in 1967 to undertake on behalf of the government of Kenya the employment and management of teachers in the county. It uses a centralized, management structure (TSC Act Cap 212 Laws of Kenya) with representation across the country in the 47 administrative counties. It is mandated to carry out all HRM functions for staff teaching in primary, secondary and technical middle level colleges.

##### 4.2 The Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey method. The descriptive survey design was selected because it is suitable according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) for gathering of data and describes the characteristics of the population. It is also concerned with the description of existing phenomena by asking individuals about their perceptions, attitudes, behaviours and values.

##### 4.3 Population and Sampling

The population of the study was made up of all principals, school teachers and students in public secondary schools within Taita -Taveta County in the Republic of Kenya. The county has 65 public secondary schools consisting of 65 principals, 645 secondary school teachers and a total of 14,641 form four students. The choice of this region was appropriate since it had experienced poor performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E) for the last four years and the trend has attracted much attention. Moreover, the diversity of the teachers' population reflected typical public Secondary Schools in Kenya. Whereas the teachers and principals represent the role of service providers, the students represent the customer side for the education service that is on offer in the schools. The region has two schools recently upgraded to National school status, a sizeable number of county secondary schools, District and Constituency Development Fund schools. It was thus the researchers' opinion that Taita-Taveta County was a fair representation of the rest of the counties in the country.

Stratified random sampling technique was used in this research to select the categories of the respondents who participated in the study. In this technique, a population is divided into sub groups called strata and a sample is selected from each stratum. The Strata were the various categories of schools within the county; national, county and district schools. A total of 16 school principals, 280 teachers and 320 form four students were selected from 16 secondary schools to provide data for this study. The distribution of the population is illustrated in the sampling grid of Table 1.

Table 1. Sampling frame

Strata	Population Distribution				Sample selection				
	Schools	Principals	Teachers	Students	Schools	Principals	Teachers	Students	Total sample selected
National	2	2	56	358	2	2	20	40	62
County	13	13	234	1289	4	4	60	80	144
District	50	50	317	2034	10	10	200	200	410
Total	65	65	607	3681	16	16	280	320	616

Source: Teacher Management Personnel (Taita-Taveta County).

#### 4.5 Instrument and Procedures

A self-administered structured questionnaire was used to collect data with respect to the objectives and variables of the study from the sample size of 616 as shown in table 1. A 5- point likert scale was used to obtain primary data on the variables of the study. The sections of the questionnaire on the independent variables targeted the teachers and principals while that on the dependent variable targeted the students. The contents of the instrument were subjected to validity tests prior to commencing field work using teachers and students in counties that were geographically apart from the Taita Taveta County. Reliability of the instrument was determined through computation of the Cronbach Alpha score of the variables. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.841 was obtained after testing for reliability using 37 items that were structured on a 5-point likert scale. Researchers agree that the cut-off point for determining whether an instrument is reliable is an alpha score of 0.7.

### 5. Findings

#### 5.1 Respondents' characteristics

A sample size of 616 respondents was targeted for this study. With 469 respondents participating in the study, the response rate was 76.1% which according to Kothari (2004) is large enough for a survey to represent the views of the whole population. Overall, 280 teachers, 16 principals and 320 students in form four participated. Generally, the teachers had a level of education ranging from high school to PhD and were aged between 20 to 40years; teaching experience of below 5 and above 15 years. The principals were of National, county or District girls', boys' or mixed schools. On the side of the students, they were relatively within the same age bracket owing to the Kenyan education system and regulation on admission and progression.

#### 5.2 Descriptive Findings

Descriptive statistics were applied in the description of basic features of variables in the study. They were used to provide simple summaries about variables and their measures. The descriptive statistics of each of the variables in this study are presented in table 2:-

Table 2. Descriptive Results

Variable	Mean	S.d	No. of items
Employee Resourcing	3.1788	1.1506	7
Training & Development	2.8311	1.4339	8
Compensation Management	2.3448	1.1766	8
Performance Management	2.7171	1.1818	8
Safety & Health	2.7889	1.1861	6
Quality of service	3.6510	1.1240	18

The scale of the questionnaire used was a 5-point likert scale. The first variable was employee resourcing and the descriptive results show that the respondents are just slightly above indifferent on the manner they agree on the level of this practice. This variable included aspects of advertisement for positions, professional shortlisting of candidates, structure of interview panels, management of interview panels, procedural selection of candidates, free and fair hiring of teachers. The second variable was on teacher training and development. The mean score for this variable shows that the respondents disagreed on the level of its practice. The variable was measured using the areas of provision of professional training, principals support and facilitation of job training, evaluation of the quality of training, teachers attending in-service training each year, TSC adopting training and development of teachers, that training needs are frequently met, training programs are availed in line with the needs and that training is offered on time. The respondents' opinions on the third variable of compensation demonstrate that they disagreed with the items by which it was measured. The variable was measured using indicators of offering challenging job tasks, providing a good insurance cover and generous retirement plan (*Mean*= 2.032; *S.d*=1.132); offering educational assistance or reimbursement programs (*Mean*= 1.993; *S.d*=1.079), providing healthy free meals at their place of work (*Mean*= 2.339; *S.d*=1.228); providing attractive salaries (*Mean*= 1.712; *S.d*=1.239), offering a predictable promotion policy (*Mean*= 2.38; *S.d*=1.168); and having an employers' policy recognizing the significance of the job teachers do (*Mean*= 2.530; *S.d*=1.168), and having a clear career progression path for teachers (*Mean*= 2.463; *S.d*=1.205).

With regard to performance management, respondents disagreed that TSC has a well formulated and effective performance management policy for its teachers (*Mean*= 2.913; *S.d*=1.046). They also disagreed with the

observation that realistic goals are set ( $Mean= 2.919$ ;  $S.d=1.016$ ). On the other hand respondents agreed that there is rigorous monitoring of performance outcomes ( $Mean= 3.000$ ;  $S.d=1.054$ ). They disagreed that measurements of actual against planned performance of teachers is carried out ( $Mean= 2.734$ ;  $S.d=1.009$ ). Similarly, they disagreed that teachers are provided with constant feedback in the form of praise, rewards or criticism ( $Mean= 2.540$ ;  $S.d=1.984$ ). Respondents also indicated that they disagreed with the observations that TSC constantly evaluates them in order to identify their weaknesses and potential ( $Mean= 2.283$ ;  $S.d=1.088$ ); the performance appraisal methods used by the employer are suitable and relevant ( $Mean= 2.493$ ;  $S.d=1.097$ ); and that the process of setting targets, evaluating teachers and providing feedback is a collective and inclusive one ( $Mean= 2.852$ ;  $S.d=1.158$ ).

Even though the respondents agreed that for employee safety, health and welfare, that the school management provides a favorable atmosphere of work ( $Mean= 3.308$ ;  $S.d=1.150$ ); they however disagreed with several observations including that; there is sufficient assurance as to the health and safety and welfare of all users of buildings within the school ( $Mean= 2.913$ ;  $S.d=1.138$ ); there is a reasonable size of staff room for teachers to use ( $Mean= 2.816$ ;  $S.d=1.329$ ); good standards of hygiene are maintained ( $Mean= 2.952$ ;  $S.d=1.201$ ). Finally the respondents disagreed with the observation that employers made conditions of work favourable to them ( $Mean= 2.000$ ;  $S.d=1.069$ ). The respondents were neutral about the observation that the overall students' achievement in KCSE is quite impressive ( $Mean= 3.313$ ;  $S.d=1.078$ ), similarly they were neutral about the observation that the school has had no experiences of strikes by the students for the last five years ( $Mean= 3.000$ ;  $S.d=1.366$ ). Respondents agreed that students in the schools were actively involved in co-curricular activities ( $Mean= 3.625$ ;  $S.d=0.5000$ ), there was also agreement that teachers prepare and keep up to date and accurate professional documents ( $Mean= 4.125$ ;  $S.d=0.5000$ ). The respondents disagreed that their schools are furnished with the necessary physical facilities and sufficient teachers ( $Mean= 2.529$ ;  $S.d=1.178$ ). Finally, respondents agreed in their observation that teachers in the schools are respectful and helpful, easy to understand and courteous in dealing with students ( $Mean= 3.705$ ;  $S.d=1.263$ ).

The students' views on the conduct of their teachers were however different. Respondents agreed with the observation that teachers at their school were respectful, caring and courteous ( $Mean=3.77$ ,  $S.d=1.232$ ). Similarly they were neutral in their opinion about several other observations including that teachers at their school are helpful, kind and understanding; teachers at their school are punctual in attending lessons; teachers at their school prepare before coming to class with proper lesson notes; they can always count on teachers in their school for work assignments and instilling of student discipline; their teachers are accessible to discuss students' concerns; and whenever they raise complaints and their dissatisfaction as students, teachers listen to them and advise them of the resolutions. The respondents were also neutral about the fact that they were satisfied by the performance of their teachers in national exams. Respondents agreed at a mean of 4.044 and s.d of 1.14 that teachers in their school see to it that they add value to students by improving their academic performance and co-curricular activities. There was also agreement with the observation that teachers at respondents' school were qualified, knowledgeable and competent ( $Mean: 4.28$  and  $S.d= 0.79$ ).

### 5.3 Test of Hypotheses

The study used a multiple regression model to test the research hypotheses. The statistical output of the regression analysis is summarized in the table 3:

Table 3. Regression Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.617 <sup>a</sup>	.480	.448	.3787		
<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	
1	Regression	19.210	5	3.842	23.499	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	48.068	294	.163		
	Total	67.278	299			
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	1.087	.123		8.849	.000	
Employee Resourcing	.287	.050	.405	5.755	.000	
Teacher Training and Development	-.074	.054	-.113	-1.375	.170	
Compensation Management	-.018	.036	-.027	-.508	.612	
Performance Management	.191	.042	.321	4.581	.000	
Employee Safety, Health and Welfare	.132	.038	.181	3.490	.001	



The results show that the regression model used is significant ( $F=23.499$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) and that the HRM practices as measured using the five variables explain approximately 45% of the variation in service quality delivery in the education sector in Taita-Taveta county in Kenya ( $R^2=0.448$ ). The results show that hypotheses one, four and five of the study are supported ( $\beta=.405$ ;  $p<.000$ ;  $\beta=.321$ ;  $p<.000$   $\beta= .181$ ,  $p<.001$  respectively) while hypotheses two and three are not ( $\beta=-.113$ ;  $p=.170$ ;  $\beta= -.508$ ;  $p=.612$  respectively). The findings lead to the conclusion that employee resourcing, performance management, employee safety, health and welfare as human resource management practices among secondary schools influence perceived service quality delivery among students in secondary schools in Taita Taveta County in Kenya and thus are suitable predictors of service quality delivery level. The findings are consistent with earlier findings on the state of HRM practice in Kenya (Kilika, 2012; Kilika et al., 2013).

## 6. Discussions

The findings reported in this study have a number of implications to theory and practice of HRM. The first implication is based on the link between the independent and dependent variables of the study. The findings report a variation of 45% in service quality to be explained by HRM practices. This fact is an important contribution to the body of knowledge in Human Resource management because of the implications it raises on the management of quality that is reflected through the customer perception of service quality. Through the findings of the study, it is possible to point at the link between the stream of research that has used the contents of the gap model in marketing to the continuing research in HRM to demonstrate the real contribution of investment in HRM towards organizational performance. The second implication derives from the various theoretical frameworks the study was underpinned in. In terms of the theoretical underpinnings, the findings are interpreted relative to the arguments of the models of strategic human resource management. The SHRM perspective to the management of human resources embraces the view that considers human resources as strategic assets. The point of emphasis is creation of a work environment in which the practice of HRM develops capabilities of the organization's human resources into the state that they possess the qualities of strategic assets as espoused by the RBV approach. Under this perspective, the SHRM programs undertake planning for human resource activities in a way that links the HR strategies with an organization's long term strategy. Two HRM practices in the study namely training and development and compensation management were found to be insignificant. These two constitute important HRM practices that lie at the core of any strategic move to develop strategic human resources. Thus based on the fact two practices are not significant while the other three are significant, it may be argued that the design of HRM programs in this sector may not have been properly guided by the SHRM imperatives of synchronizing the HRM programs with the organization's strategic imperatives. Thus the observations of the contingency, Michigan, RBV, models have not been utilized in the design of HRM programs in this sector. The third implication is based on the context of the study. Even though the entire set of practices assessed in this study may seem sound from the view point of national human resource development endeavors, yet the strategic value attached to the expected outcome may be questioned. Early in the study, it was observed that in most of the developing countries, HRM practices are modelled alongside the traditional personnel management philosophy whereby human resources are not fully integrated into the creative processes as partners in value creation. This may point at the fact that HRM practice is yet to move to the strategic level in which success in the sector can be tied to the state of HRM practice. The fact that only 45% of the variation in the level of quality service delivery may be indicative of the possibility that this strategic dimension accounts for the remaining variation unexplained by the practices used in this study.

## 7. Limitations and Recommendations

The findings of the study are limited by both geographical and content scope. The study considered only one county out of forty seven in the country. Even though the characteristics of the county where the study was done and the large diverse sample selected may be said to reflect the best scenario for the investigation, it is the view of the researchers that an inclusion of other counties may produce more convincing findings and conclusions. Secondly the set of HRM practices selected were limited to only five with each measured using a few indicators. The study also did not investigate the views held by the senior managers on the strategic role of human resources in the sector. Future research therefore may expand this list from the variety suggested by the various SHRM models as well as establish from senior executives in this sector on their philosophical inclination toward the strategic role of human resources. Such a perspective would give insights into some of the explanations leading to the lack of integration between the HRM practices and the strategic imperatives.

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