

**A SURVEY OF ORGANISATION LEARNING IN PRIVATE
RECRUITMENT AGENCIES IN NAIROBI**

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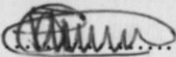
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DEDICATION

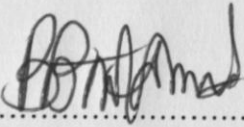
DECLARATION

THIS PROJECT IS MY ORIGINAL WORK AND HAS NOT BEEN SUBMITTED FOR AWARD OF A DEGREE IN ANY OTHER UNIVERSITY

SIGNED...  DATE... 23rd NOV 2006

FRIDAH GAKII KIRIMI

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN SUBMITTED FOR EXAMINATION WITH MY APPROVAL AS UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR

SIGNED...  DATE... 23.11.06

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NOVEMBER 2006

DEDICATION

To God for his faithfulness all through this undertaking.

To my mum and dad, I would have not made it without your total support.

And

To my sisters Eva, Grace, Martha, My brothers, Mwenda, Henry and my friend Simon. Your support, inspiration, prayers and encouragement were not in vain. You gave me all the support that I needed and ensured I never despaired. Thank you.

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PART ONE

ABSTRACT

The survey was carried out between August and September 2006. The main objective was to establish the extent to which the private recruitment agencies in Nairobi have embraced organisation learning concept and the factors that influence the adoption of the organization learning in the agencies.

The respondents were Human Resource Managers of the recruitment agencies in Nairobi. The information was collected using a structured and uniform questionnaires. Thirty of the Human Resource Managers completed the questionnaires

Among the variables used were the knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation, organization memory, systems thinking, shared vision, team learning, mental models and personal mastery.

The findings of the study suggests that the private recruitment agencies have adopted the organization learning concept to a great extent. Due to the competitive nature of business the agencies have to remain competitive and due to challenges facing the firms they have to strategically adopt the concept so as to be effective. Creating a learning organization and atmosphere has hence been the only option left for the agencies. It was also found out that for the concept to be effective the agencies have to employ right caliber staff with the necessary qualifications.

The study further suggests that a similar study be undertaken in another industry to check whether there are similarities in the adoption of the organization learning and also the challenges that are faced by the organizations in the course of adopting the concepts.

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The last century has seen an enormous change in society and organisations. The human resource development policies, strategies and practices of an organisation must be driven by the business and human resource needs of the enterprise. The starting point should be the approach adapted for the provision of learning and development opportunities. Learning is mostly concerned with an increase in knowledge or a higher degree of an exiting skill.

The challenge facing managers today is to make the effort needed to learn some of the new skills and techniques, and to put in processes that engage their work force in programmes of continuous capability development. Learning should be integrated into doing as part and parcel of everyday work. Getting the best out of everybody including you to meet challenges ahead (Farago J,1995).

Organisations today aim at offering excellent services, being intelligent, flexible and responsive to change, which happens both to public and private organisations. Many factors in society today have brought about rapid changes in the organisations environment and they have to keep pace and cope up with the challenges exposed to them, so as to accommodate the rapid dynamism in their environment.

1.1.1 Organization Learning

The organisations learning is seen as response to an increasingly, unpredictable and dynamic business environment. Its essence is the

organisations ability to use mental capacity of all its members to create the kind of presence that will improve its own (Dixon, 1994).

Dodgson (1993) has defined organisational learning as “the way firms build, supplement and organise knowledge and routines around their activities and within their culture, adopt and develop efficiency by improving the use of the broad skills of their work force.” Organisational learning has the ability of organisations to gain insight and understanding from experience through experimentation, observation analysis and willingness to examine both success and failure (McGill et al, 1992).

Companies are seeking to improve existing products and services (continuous improvement) and innovations (breakthrough strategies). This has resulted to initiatives such as Total Quality Management and business process re-engineering. But companies are finding that such programmes fail or succeed depending on human factors such as skills, attitudes and organisational culture. Top companies seem to organise around people, honouring those needs, feeling of control, something to believe in, challenge and lifelong learning recognition (Waterman, 1992).

Hamel & Prahalad (1994) argue that creating a “learning organisation is only half the solution. Just as important is creating an unlearning organization – to create the future, a company must unlearn at least some of its past. Organisations hence have to cope with rapid and unexpected changes where existing ‘programme’ responses are inadequate, provide flexibility to cope with dynamically changing situation and allow front line staff to respond.

Argyris (1992) suggests that organisation learning occurs under two conditions: First, when an organisation achieves what its intended and Second, when a mismatch between intentions and outcomes is

identified and corrected. Organisations do not however perform the actions that produce the learning; its the individual members of the organization who behave in ways that lead to it, although organizations can create conditions that facilitate such learning.

According to Argyris and Schon (1978), organisational learning occurs when members of the organization act as learning agents of the organisation by detecting and correcting errors in organisations theory in use and embedding the results of their enquiry in private images and shared maps organization. It seems that the concept of learning organization is clear enough to be putting it into practice; to others, it is fuzzy and amorphous and needs critical attention. The learning organization is best thought of as a journey, not a destination (West, 1994), a philosophy, not a program (Solomon, 1994). The learning organization has a lot to offer to the reform and restructuring of organizations but building one is clearly an enormous task. However, one can begin with the attitude that learning is "a sustainable resource, not a limited commodity" and work on developing the mindset of a culture of learning. It must be recognized that the visioning process is ongoing, not a one time event (O'Neil, 1995).

Organisms that learn well tend to survive and grow in a world that is not exactly a paradise. Organisms that refuse to learn or cannot learn fall prey to flux and strife and became extinct. This observation is also practically true for organisations. Organisations that learn fast and invest in learning mechanisms tend to grow; those that resist learning or do not develop learning system stagnate, degenerate or die. Organisations are increasingly paying attention to the concept of organization learning in order to increase competitive advantage, innovations and effectiveness (Argrys and Schon, 1978). The business environment has undergone major transformations in recent years. Today's organisations face an external environment that is

increasingly complex and volatile and one that requires closer attention to detail.

Learning organisations do more than adapting to environmental changes. They are productive and thus can take initiative and act in ways that will help them avoid having to adopt. Organisation executives usually say that a business firm's relative advantage in this era of information depends on its ability to develop and retain knowledge that is developed by structured organisation learning and used and retained through careful knowledge management (Jauck and Glueck, 1988).

Learning organisations therefore identify the key characteristics of their environments and thus are able to plan ahead and maximise opportunities. The attempt to identify interactions between the firms sub-systems that facilitate or inhibit the management of change and are better able to cope with environmental and other changes because they can accommodate unpredictability. They are not encumbered with rigid plans and procedures.

Organisational learning is becoming an increasingly important phenomenon within the business world because of its effects on the efficiency and effectiveness on the performance of organisations irrespective of whether an organisation is competition driven, service-oriented or otherwise. Learning is a phenomenon that may have consequences on the organisations operations and processes.

Recruitment helps to attract sufficient and suitable potential employees to apply for vacancies in the organization (Fiol and Lyles, 1985).

Organization learning explores ways to design organization so that they fulfil their function effectively, encourage people to reach their full potential and at the same time, help the world to be a better place.

The concept therefore assists the recruitment agencies to perform their duties/tasks efficiently and keep up with the competitive world.

This field is rooted in a set of powerful principles, values and disciplines. Senge (1990) noted that an organization is learning when it can bring the future it desires. In the business community, learning is much more than just a way to create the future you want; In today's fast paced, highly competitive work world, it may actually give your organization the edge it needs to survive and thereby keep fulfilling its purpose.

The concept helps the recruitment agencies to keep abreast with the various changes in the world for example technology, which may come in handy in the processes of the agencies. Through learning the agencies are able to compete amongst their competitors. As Senge(1990) remarks, " The rate at which organization learn may become the only sustainable source of competitive advantage". Through the organisation learning the recruitment agencies have the ability to gain insight and understanding from experience, through experimentation, observation, analysis and a willingness to examine both successes and failures.

1.1.2 Private Recruitment Agencies

Recruitment agencies can be categorized into two categories namely the Public and Private recruitment agencies. The Public Recruitment agencies comprise of the Government/state owned agencies that have the duty of sourcing for employees for the Government Ministries, Departments and other employers. In Kenya, the Public Service Commission and the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development act as the recruitment agents for the government. The Public Service Commission is an autonomous, independent and executive state organ which is empowered by the constitution to appoint persons to hold or act in offices in the public service and the

service of the local authorities (www.gok.com,2006). The Ministry of Labour has in the past one year developed a databank for university graduates who are seeking for employment. In case they are approached by either the Government or any employer for recruitments, they are able to recommend candidates from their databank. The Private recruitment agencies on the other hand are private companies or entities that are vested with the responsibility of advising and recruiting staff for their various clients. They are profit making companies and are faced with challenges of competition just like any other commercial entity. (Armstrong, 1998).

Private Recruitment Agencies serve as intermediaries between workers and employers, with the stated goal of matching the companies needs with the workers' skills and interest. They maintain a database of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers available for hire. Whenever a potential employer posts specific job depending with the agency, all the registered applicants with matching skills may receive a phone call or mail-in card notifying of the opening. Staff members of employment agencies may conduct a mini-interview or give interested applicants more details about the position (Pollick M. 2006).

The private recruitment agencies recruit man power in consultation with and based on the specific needs of the clients. The agencies ensure that the staff recruited are screened through a process of stringent interviews and evaluations before final recommendations are made. They ensure that staff recruited will fit in within the clients structure and organization culture (Pollick M. 2006). Private Recruitment agencies support and guide clients to achieve success in their business by acting as trusted business advisors. They provide quality, cost effective, personalized and effective business solutions to meet the changing needs of their clients.

In Kenya, the private recruitment agencies do not only offer recruitment services. They double up to offer/provide a whole range of services including audit and assurance, business and financial advisory, information technology, human resource consulting, taxation and company secretarial services across diverse industry and client profiles (www.pkfea.com).

The changing demands of global business means that strategic planning is essential to successfully deal with the challenges that lie ahead. The Agencies hence need to be flexible and ready to adopt and apply new and innovative solutions to benefit their clients (Pollick M. 2006).

The literature available on the subject in Kenya is on the process of organisational learning. The study (Amulyo, 2002) conducted on organisational learning was with specific reference to donor agencies. The findings of the study indicate that although donor agencies are classified as non-commercial firms, they like all other organizations embody the characteristics of organisational learning by engaging in certain aspects of the process. The donor agencies were found to have strategic purposes and processes that enhance and maximize organisational learning. It's therefore important for organisations that want to be successful and efficient to embrace the principles of organisational learning irrespective of their setting.

The private recruitment agencies act as advisors to their clients hence they are supposed to provide quality and cost effective solutions to meet the challenging demands of their clients. The organisations face challenges, setbacks and competition just like any other organisation and must however keep up with the dynamic environment, which is

1.2 Statement of the problem

Organisation Learning takes place where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspirations is set free and where people are continually learning to learn together. (Senge 1990). Learning is a complex process of acquiring knowledge, understanding, skills and values in order to be able to adapt to the environment in which we live (Cole, 1997).

Previous researchers focused on the individual's contribution to the learning process, and have tended to ignore the significance of the human resources in the learning process. Therefore, given the implications of organisational operations, its important to find out to what extent this phenomenon has been embraced by major recruitment firms in Nairobi.

The literature available on the subject in Kenya is on the process of organisation learning. The study (Amulyoto, 2002) conducted on organisation leaning was with specific reference to donor agencies. The findings of the study indicate that although donor agencies are classified as non competitive firms, they like all other organizations embody the characteristics of organisation learning by engaging in certain aspects of the process. The donor agencies were found to have structures, strategies and processes that enhance and maximize organisational learning. It's therefore important for organisations that wish to operate effectively and efficiently to embrace the principles of organisational learning irrespective of their setting.

The private recruitment agencies act as advisors to their clients hence they are supposed to provide quality and cost effective solutions to meet the challenging demands of their clients. The organisations face challenges, set backs and competition just like any other organisation and must however keep up with the dynamic environment, which is

competitive in nature so as to attract qualified personnel to their organisations and to their clients, retain them and also work towards performing their duties diligently, effectively and efficiently so as to achieve their objectives. The agencies hence need to be flexible and ready to adopt and apply new and innovative solutions if they are to benefit their clients.

The study will endeavour to establish whether Kenyan profit making organisations specifically private recruitment agencies have adopted these principles and the factors that influence the adopting of organisation learning concept in the firms.

(ii) Human Resource practitioners and academicians: The study is important as an addition to knowledge. It will also stimulate further research in other aspects of organisational learning.

(iii) Academicians: The study will be an eye opener to scholars on human resource issues and especially regarding the organization learning concepts. This will provoke further studies on the organization learning concept/ process.

1.3 Objectives of the study.

1. To establish the extent to which the private recruiting agencies in Nairobi have embraced organisation learning.
2. To determine the factors that influence the adoption of organisation learning in the recruitment firms in Nairobi.

1.4 Importance of the study

The study will be of importance to:

- (i). The management: It will provide information to the management of the different firms on what constitutes organisational learning.
- (ii). Human Resource practitioners and academicians: The study is important as an addition to knowledge. It will also stimulate further research in other aspects of organisational learning.
- (iii). Academicians: The study will be an eye opener to scholars on human resource issues and especially regarding the organization learning concepts. This will provoke further studies on the organization learning concept/ process.

PART TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Organisation learning has been defined by Argyris (1977) as the process of “detection and correction of errors” In his view organizations learn through individuals acting as agents for them. The individuals learning activities in turn are facilitated or inhibited by an ecological system of factors that may be called an organizational learning system. He notes that an organization may be said to learn to the extent that it identifies and corrects errors. This requirement, in turn implies that learning also requires the capacity to know when it is unable to identify and correct errors. He argues that the overwhelming amount of learning done in an organization is single loop because the “underlying program is not questioned”. It is designed to identify and correct errors so that the job gets done and the action remains within stated policy guidelines.

Learning organization is an organization with ingrained philosophy for anticipating, reacting and responding to change, complexity and uncertainty. The concept of learning organizations is increasingly relevant given the increasingly complicity and uncertainty or the organization environment (Senge, 1990). McGill (1992) defines the learning organization as a company that can respond to the new information by altering the very “programming” by which information is processed and evaluated.

Fiol and Lyles (1995) defined learning as “the process or improving actions through better knowledge and understanding. Huber (1991) states that learning occurs in an organization “If through its

processing of information, the range of its potential behaviours is changed. Dodgson (1993) defines organizational learning as the way firms build, supplement and organize knowledge and routines around their activities and within their cultures and adapt and develop organizational efficiency by improving the use of the broad skills of their work forces.

2.1.1 Concept of Organization Learning

Learning is crucial to any organisations no matter what business it's involved in or whether it's purely competitive or not and organisations should balance between competition and co-operation so that the importance of learning is felt or experienced in the organisations. The world seems to be changing faster and faster from the technologies available to us, to the increasingly global scope of our interactions. Moreover, the problems facing us as a global community seem to be growing ever more complex and serious. The field of organization learning explores ways to design organizations so that they fulfil their function effectively, encourage people to reach their full potential and at the same time help the world to be a better place. An organization is learning when it can bring the future it most desires. In the business community, learning is much more than just a way to create the future you want, in today's fast-paced, highly competitive work world, it may actually give your organization the edge it needs to survive-and thereby keep fulfilling its purpose.

The challenges facing managers today is to make the effort needed to learn some of the new skill and techniques and to put in processes that engage their workforce in programmes of continuous capability development. Learning should be integrated into the doing as part and parcel of everyday work. It should also be energising, stimulating and fun. Getting the best out of everybody, including you to meet the challenges ahead. Providing the systems and processes for the

management of knowledge and flow of information is, we believe, a crucial and underrated aspect of the learning organization.

The concept of organization learning is a perspective that sees work organisations as needing to become more collaborative in the way they perceive problems and opportunities and how they attempt to answer or exploit them. Thus everyone throughout the organisation is expected to reflect on practise, raise alternative (better) ways of doing things, and find the will to work together to achieve results more effectively (Cole 1997). The underlying philosophy of the learning organisation is to enhance the achievement of collective goals by harnessing the reservoir of knowledge, skills and insights of all the members of the organisation.

The goals for a business will include among others establishing a base of satisfied customers who will return for repeat business. Arising from this attention of goals individual employees may find opportunities for personal development, increase job satisfaction, and even enhanced career prospects. Depending on the level of commitment of top management to the idea of a learning organisation, the benefits for employees may be regarded as central to the exercise or merely as by-product of it. Effective learning requires that trainees adapt a flexible style, sometimes serialist, and sometimes holist. The concept of the learning organization therefore is capable of encompassing the best of modern learning theory (Gagne, 1990).

Organisational learning persons involve a different kind of learning that has been described in the past. "The process within the organization by which knowledge about action-outcome relationships and the effect of the environment on these relationships is developed"(Duncan&Weiss 1979). In his view, "a more radical approach would take the position that individual learning occurs when people give a different response to the same stimulus, but

organizational learning occurs when groups of people give the same response to different stimuli.” Organizational Learning is the ability of an organization to gain insight and understanding from experience through experimentation, observation, analysis, and a willingness to examine both successes and failures. The essence of organizational learning is the organization's ability to use the amazing mental capacity of all its members so as to create the kind of processes that will improve its own (Dixon, 1994).

Any type of organization can be a learning organization; business, education institution, non-profits, community groups amongst others. Some authors argue that learning organizations starts with the assumptions that learning is available, continuous and most effective when shared and tact every experience is an opportunity to learn. Learning is crucial to any organisations no matter what business it's involved in or whether it's purely competitive or not and organisations should balance between competition and co-operation so that the importance of learning is felt or experienced in the organisations. Organizational learning cruises to develop a firms resource based capability i.e. It's necessary to invest in people in order to develop the human capital required by the organisation and to increase its stock of knowledge and skills.

Marsick (1994) defined organizational learning as a process of coordinated system change with mechanisms built in for individuals and groups to access, build and use organizational memory, structure and culture to develop long term organizational capacity. It explores ways to design organizations so that they fulfill their functions effectively, encourage people to reach their full potential and at the same time help the world to be a better place.

Organizational learning is important because their is a deep learning cycle, team members develop new skills and capabilities, new awareness and sensibilities and overtime people start to see and

experience the world differently, new beliefs and assumptions begin to form which enable further development skills and capabilities.

Focus has gradually changed from individual learning to organizational learning. Since individuals constitute organizations, they must establish the necessary forms and processes to stimulate organizational learning in order to facilitate change. However, organizational learning is more than the sum of the parts of the individual learning (Dodgson, 1993, Fiol and Lyles 1985). Thus an organization does not lose out on its learning abilities when some members leave it. According to Senge (1990) Organisational learning takes place where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expensive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to learn together"

Organisational learning is the way firms build, supplement, and organize knowledge and routines around the activities and within their cultures and adapt and develop organisational efficiency by improving the use of the broad skills of their work forces (Dodgson, 1993). (Senge 1990) argues that the leaders' role in the learning organisation is that of a designer teacher and steward who can build shared vision and challenge prevailing mental models. He/she is responsible for building organisations where people are continually expanding their capabilities to share their future that is leaders are responsible for learning.

2.1.2 Principles of Organization Learning

According to Senge (1990), organizational learning focussed originally on the practice of five core principles or capacities. These five principles as discussed below are the keys to achieving this type of organisation.

First and foremost is the Systems thinking which is a way of thinking about and a language for describing and understanding the forces and interrelationships that shapes the behaviour of systems. This discipline helps us to see how to change systems more effectively and to act more in tune with the large processes of the natural and economic world. Practicing this discipline involves learning to recognize significant systematic behaviours all around you, and familiarizing yourself with some special terminology and some powerful tools unique to this field.

Second is Team Learning which is transforming conversational and collective thinking skills so that groups of people can reliably develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of individual members' talents. Practicing this discipline involves starting different kinds of conversations and a remarkable degree of honesty and mutual respect – all of which you can learn to do through familiarizing yourself with specific tools from this field.

Third is the Shared Vision which is building a sense of communication in a group, by developing shared images of the future we seek to create, and the principles and guiding practices by which we hope to get there. It emerges when everybody in an organization understands what the organization is trying to do, is genuinely committed to achieving that vision and clearly grasps how his or her role in the organization can continue to make the vision real. Practicing this discipline involves knowing how all the parts of the organization work together and being clear about how your own personal goals align with those of your organization.

Fourth is Mental Models which are the deep beliefs and assumptions we hold about how the world works. These models shape the decisions we make in life, the actions we take in response to events. The ways in which we interpret others behaviour practicing this

discipline involves surfacing and testing your deepest assumptions and beliefs and helping others do the same.

Lastly the fifth is Personal Mastery which is the art of identifying what makes you want to leave in the world during your lifetime. That is what's your unique purpose in life and how do you want to go about fulfilling that purpose. It involves learning to expend our personal capacity to create the result we most desire and creating an organizational environment which encourages all its members to develop themselves towards the goals and purposes they choose. Practising this discipline involves some honest explanation of your own life experiences and desires and a willingness to take some risks. Other disciplines that support and expand on the above include corporate culture, corporate social responsibility, dialogue, leadership, sustainability and work/life balance.

Organisational learning involves a deep learning cycle and its good in enhancing five tasks: First, systematic problem solving which rests heavily on the philosophy and method of the quality movement, secondly, experimentation, which includes systematic search for the testing of new knowledge, third, learning from past experience by reviewing their success and failures, fourth, learning from others which involves looking outside and immediate environment to gain new perspective and fifth, transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization.

2.1.3 Reasons for adopting Organisation Learning

According to Senge (1993), Organisations adopt the organisation learning concept for various reasons as disussed below.

To gain a superior performance. Where an organization has an energized and committed workforce hence employers must learn so as to make contributions and act in the interest of the whole enterprise

and for the senior managers who must learn how to extend mastery and self determination throughout the organization.

To improve quality. Quality Management Companies are seeking to improve existing products and services (continuous improvement) and innovation (breakthrough strategies). This has resulted in such initiatives as TQM (Total Quality Management) and BPR (Business Process Reengineering). But companies are finding that such programmes succeed or fail depending on human factors such as skills, attitudes and organizational culture. With the pace of change ever quickening, the need to develop mechanisms for continuous learning and innovation is greater than ever.

The only sustainable source of competitive advantage is an organization's ability to learn faster than its competitors so as to meet needs of the community hence gaining competitive advantage through organisation Learning.

Organization learning helps people embrace and manage change. People in learning organizations react more quickly when there are environmental changes because they know how to anticipate changes that are going to occur and how to create the changes they want. Change and learning are inextricably linked.

The technological changes that spin out into everyday life, demand that organisations learn. The economies of scale may also diminish. People in learning organizations will hence be able to look forward to creating instead of merely reacting to the new world that emerges.

There are various changes that are taking place in society and if we are going to address these conditions significantly, it will have to be at the level of collective thinking and understanding at the level of organizations, communities and society hence the recognition of interdependence.

Huber(1991) further clarifies that learning need not be conscious or intentional. Further learning does not always increase the learner effectiveness even potential effectiveness. Moreover, learning need not result in observable changes in behaviour. Taking a behavioural perspective, Huber (1991) notes: "An entity learns through its processing information the range of its potent behaviours changed."

2.2 Processes of Organisation Learning

In his literature review on organization learning, Huber (1991) describes the following processes or constructs that contribute to organisational learning namely; Knowledge Acquisition, Information Distribution, Information Interpretation and Organization Memory. Any organisation that has adopted the concept has to have the following processes in place and functioning.

Knowledge Acquisition is when an organization acquires knowledge, learning occurs. It occurs not only due to knowledge acquisition from outside the organization but also due to the rearrangement of existing knowledge, the revision of previous knowledge structures and the building and revision of theories. The acquisition of declarative knowledge or facts and information is achieved by monitoring the environment, using information systems to store, manage and retrieve information, carrying out research and development, carrying out education and training, patent watching and bibliometrics (Dodgson, 1993).

Information Distribution is the process by which an organization shares information among its units and members, thereby promoting learning and producing new knowledge or understanding. Greater sharing or distribution of information leads to greater organizational learning. Knowledge in the form of tact, know-how, letters, memos, informal conversations and reports are captured and distributed. Very

often leaning in an organization takes place by members sharing stories or anecdotes of actual work practice as opposed to what is mentioned in formal job descriptions or procedure manuals.

Information Interpretation is done so that it is shared. It is hence the process by which distributed information is given one or more commonly understood meanings. Greater learning occurs when more and more varied interpretations are developed. Huber (1991) states that individuals and groups have prior belief structures, which shape their interpretation of information and thus the formation of meaning. The deep beliefs and assumptions shape the way we interpret information, the decisions we make in life, the actions we take in response to events, and the ways in which we interpret others behaviours. Sense making or the formation of meaning is called procedural knowledge by Dodgson (1993).

Organization Memory refers to the situation where knowledge is stored for future use. It's also called Corporate Knowledge or Corporate Genetics by Prahalad and Hamel (1994). Organizational memory plays a critical role in organizational learning. Both the demonstrability and usability of learning depend on the effectiveness of the organizations memory. The major challenge for organizations exists in interpreting information and creating organizational memory that is easily accessible.

The learning organization has four types of factors which are: A learning culture, which is an organizations climate that nurtures learning; Processes, which encourage interaction across boundaries and they include infrastructure, development and management processes; Tools and techniques which are methods that aid individual and group learning such as creativity and Problem solving techniques and skills and motivation which help to learn and adopt.

Learning organizations promotes a culture of learning, a community of learners, and it ensures that individual learning enriches and enhances the organization as a whole. Its seen as a conscious attempt on the part of the organisations to retain and improve competitiveness, productivity and innovativeness in an uncertain environment. This means that the greater the uncertainties, the greater the need for learning. Organisations learn in order to improve their adaptability and efficiency during times of change (Dodgson 1993). Grantham (1993) states that learning enables quicker and more effective responses to a correspondence and dynamic environment.

Learning increases information sharing, communication, understanding and the quality of decisions made in organizations. In their research, "an organization as a learning system", Nevis et al (1995) report that all the firms they observed were learning systems. The authors describe how learning has changed organizations such as Motorola, fiat Auto Company, Federal express among others. All these firms had both formal and informal structures and processes of acquisition, sharing and utilization of knowledge and skills.

Due to the continuous learning process, organizational learning create dialogue and enquiry and individuals in organizations are in constant dialogue. Communications and enquiry so as to exchange idea and spread the knowledge acquired. People in organizations are empowered towards greater vision. All organizational personnel have a common vision, which they strive to achieve.

Organisational learning connects the organization to the environment and all that is taking place in the organizations. It provides a strategic leadership for learning. Due to this concept the staffs of the organization have greater commitment and they increase their energy

levels. The learning helps them to boost their commitment and morale.

The staff through the organizational learning develops creative thinking hence they result in new thinking and new response to the environmental turbulence. The organisational learning is a means of enhancing organizational intellectual capital.

Due to the innovations and improvement of the organization and result of the learning process, the company improves this provision of goods and services and offer competitive goals and services and hence gain super global reputation. Learning is seen as a conscious attempt on the part of the organization to retain and improve competitiveness, productivity, and innovativeness in an uncertain environment. Organisations cannot and will not make any effective progress unless, of course, they take their learning processes further by deliberately including their human resources.

2.3 Factors Influencing Organization Learning

There are various factors that influence organization learning in any organization. Influencing factors can be analyzed in three levels: organizational, functional and personal. These include the organisation of work, the culture of the organization, resources available for learning activities and skills, attitudes and motivation of managers and learners.

A Lack of learning culture impedes the organization learning. The lack of learning culture is an inhibiting factor. Its difficult to develop a learning culture and insufficient knowledge sharing hence it becomes difficult to motivate employees to share knowledge or engage in learning processes if they are not used to this or perhaps even reluctant to do so. If an organisation has a culture open to learning, this makes it easier to change the human resource development

practices such as developing responsibility to managers and employees and creating opportunities for learning within work activities (Smith,1999).

The availability of resources influences learning. This includes both financial and human resources. Work pressure is so great that it is difficult for employees to find time for learning in their daily work routine. Other opportunities for learning (such as courses) are cancelled/postponed to ensure the workload is completed.

The motivation of staff is another factor that influences organization learning. The limited involvement of managers and employees in learning issues was linked to lack of motivation for learning. When managers are involved in the learning process, they then become motivated to adopt the organization learning.

Another factor that influences organization learning is a search for clarity within an organisation. This includes clear communication, clear training systems, procedures or policy and a widely shared understanding of the importance of learning and personal development.

The structure of the organisation also influences organisation learning. A centralized, mechanistic structure tends to reinforce past behaviour while a decentralized structure promotes double-loop learning. The centralized creates a more fragmented structure which does not support people to think for themselves. Thus, individuals do not have a comprehensive picture of the whole (Fiol & Lyles (1985).

The environment also affects organization learning. Organizations must align themselves with the environment so as to remain competitive and innovative. Alignment implies that the firm must have the potential to learn, unlearn, or relearn based on its past

behaviours. If the external and internal environments are complex and dynamic, learning may not take place. It can only occur only when there is a balance between change (the new) and stability (the old) Mason, 1993.

Technology has a great impact and influence on organisation learning. Grantham (1993) states that technology can be used to clarify assumptions, speed up communications, elicit tacit knowledge and construct histories of insights and catalog them. Information systems can indirectly influence organization learning by affective contextual factors such as structure and environment which in turn influence learning.

3.2 Population

The population of the study consisted of Human Resource Managers of thirty three private recruitment agencies in Nairobi (see Appendix 1). The list of these recruitment agencies was adapted from the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development, Labour Institutions Act, Part VIII (2004).

3.3 Data Collection

The study largely utilized the Primary data. The data was collected using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was semi structured and was administered through personal interviews. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A sought bio-data of the respondents while section B addressed aspects of organization learning mainly the extent to which the various factors apply to the agencies.

PART THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology that was used to meet the objectives of the study.

3.1 Research Design

This is a descriptive survey. The descriptive method described and interpreted existed conditions in the organizations. This was found appropriate because it involved a field survey where respondents were examined on the subject in their natural set up without manipulation of the environment, which made the respondents to respond freely. This design has been used successfully by researchers to design and communicate their research findings.

3.2 Population

The population of the study consisted of Human Resource Managers of thirty three private recruitment agencies in Nairobi (see Appendix 1). The list of these recruitment agencies was adapted from the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development, Labour Institutions Act, Part VIII (2004).

3.3 Data Collection

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3.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. These included charts, graphs, percentages which were used to determine the extent to which the organization learning variables are found in the recruitment agencies.

Analyzed data was presented in form of graphs showing the level to which each factor was found in the agencies.

The graphs are used to represent all the various types of information from each of the variables which was used to summarize each of the variables that was studied.

4.2 Characteristics of the Population

4.2.1 Personal Data

Most of the human resources personnel interviewed said they have worked with the agencies for a duration 2-4 years (41%), 24% have been with the agencies for between 4-6 years, graph 1 illustrates.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analysis the data collected in the study and presents the findings in the form of tables, bar charts and pie charts containing percentages.

The findings have been discussed based on the study's objectives.

4.1.1 Response Rate

The data was collected using in depth interviews method. Thirty out of thirty three questionnaires were completed and returned. This represents a 95% response rate.

4.2 Characteristics of the Population

4.2.1 Personal Data

Most of the human resources personnel interviewed said they have worked with the agencies for a duration 2-4 years (41%), 24% have been with the agencies for between 4-6 years, graph 1 illustrates.

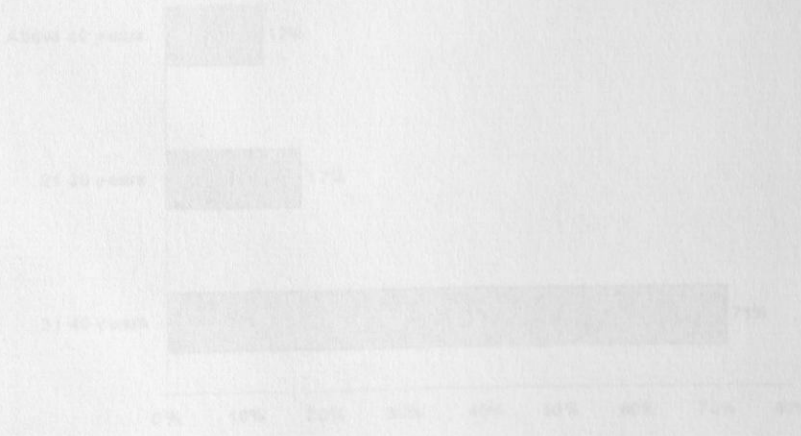
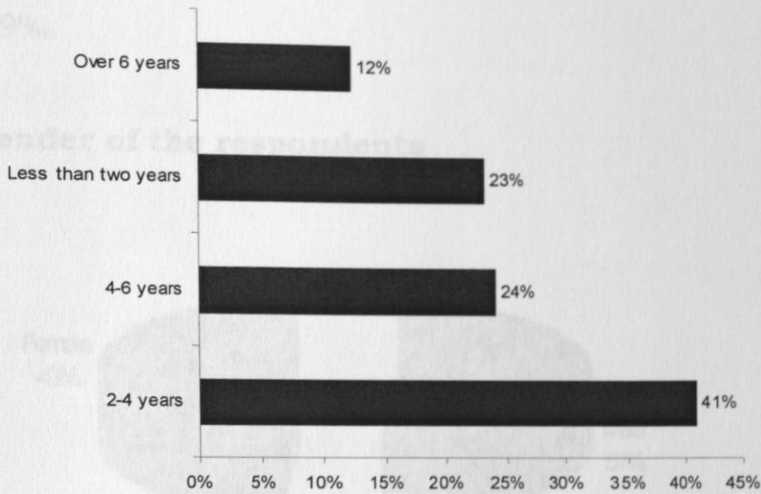


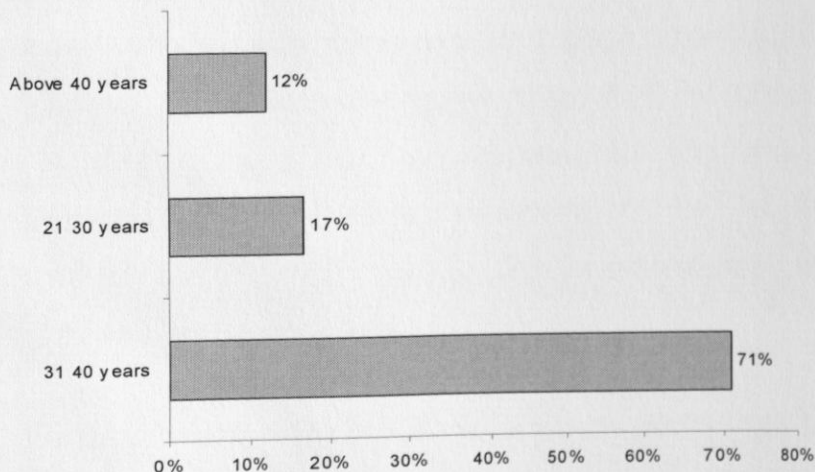
Table 1: Number of years the employee have been with the agency

As illustrated in the pie chart below both genders were well represented with male slightly more than the female, at 51% and female at 49%.



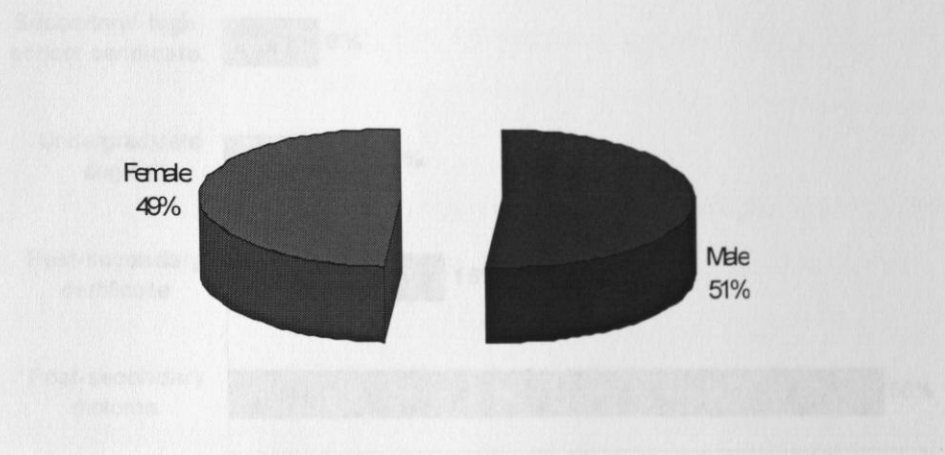
The age of the respondents indicates that a majority of 71% are adults between 30 to 40 year age bracket as illustrated in graph 2 below. The lowest are those above 41 years at 12%.

Table 2: Age of the Respondents



As illustrated in the pie chart below both genders were well represented with male slightly more than the female, at 51% and female at 49%.

Table 3: Gender of the respondents

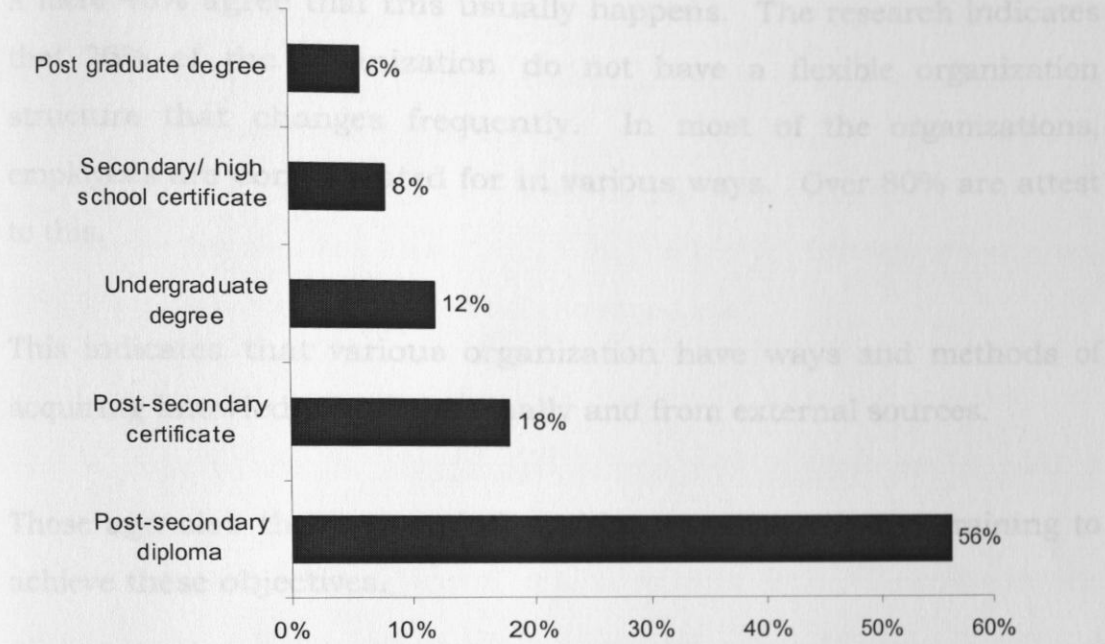


The recruitment agencies have employees who mostly possess post secondary school education, with an amazing 56% of the respondents having post secondary School education i.e. college diplomas, 12% with post secondary school certificate and a only 6% have postgraduate qualifications. The graph 4 below illustrates.

Recruitment agencies continually put a lot of effort to better their knowledge through acquiring new and extra knowledge. Up to 80% of the agencies takes the challenge. Over 83% of these organizations have strategies in place to respond to the changing working environments and over 80% are in agreement that learning new things is a way of life for very one in the organizations. However, these strategies are rarely reviewed.

Organizations carry out research often so as to get new outcomes. This is evident by 87% respondents agreeing the same. However, many organisations have no strictly followed training programme in place. This is illustrated below by 14% of the respondents. Employees in the organizations are rarely involved in decision making processes as indicated by 49% of the respondent.

Table 4: Education background



4.2.2 Knowledge Acquisition

The findings illustrate that these organizations have constant acquisition of knowledge within themselves. Respondents in the recruitment agencies continually put a lot of effort to better their knowledge through acquiring new and extra knowledge. Up to 80% of the agencies takes the challenge. Over 83% of these organizations have strategies in place to respond to the changing working environments and over 80% are in agreement that learning new things is a way of life for very one in the organizations. However, these strategies are rarely reviewed.

Organizations carry out research often so as to get new outcomes. This is evident by 87% respondents agreeing the same. However, many organizations have no strictly followed training programme in place. This is illustrated below by 14% of the respondents. Employees in the organizations are rarely involved in decision making processes as indicated by 48% of the respondent.

The involvement of all members of organization in policy and strategy formulation however is not a common phenomena in the organization. A mere 48% agree that this usually happens. The research indicates that 26% of the organization do not have a flexible organization structure that changes frequently. In most of the organizations, employees are compensated for in various ways. Over 80% are attest to this.

This indicates that various organization have ways and methods of acquiring knowledge both internally and from external sources.

Those agencies that responded positive use research and training to achieve these objectives.

4.2.3 Information Distribution

Information distribution is the process by which an organization shares information among its units and members thereby promoting learning and producing new knowledge and understanding. Knowledge in form of tact, know-how, letters, memos, informal conversations and reports are captured and distributed. The research indicates that over 90% of employees participate in policy and strategy release. Employees are also encouraged to think together with 88% respondents agreeing to the same. The respondents also illustrated that all employees are involved in team playing and learning. However, a mere 11% of the respondents felt that the employees are not encouraged to think together and be involved in team playing and learning.

Financial information is very crucial to any organization and in the traditional organizations, no feedback was given to staff on actions taken due to financial consequences. However, 80% of the agencies respondents confirmed this was happening in their organizations and 6% felt that this was not happening in their organizations.

The information is received by the agencies from within and its stakeholders as illustrated by 81% of the respondents.

Effective information distribution amongst staff in any organization is facilitated by participation of staff in joint ventures with grantees and stakeholders. This is as per the 74% of the respondents.

The respondents noted that this is only achieved through proper and effective communication channels amongst staff.

4.2.4 Information Interpretation.

This is done when the distributed information is given sense making or meaning so that its in order to form a meaningful knowledge that can be stored. The research indicates that 88% of people in the agencies give a meaning to the information they receive. However a small portion of about 6% do not bother to give meaning to any knowledge they receive. Its also indicative that not all staff in the agencies have shared goals and visions, though around 70% have the shared perceptions. Over 90% of employees understand the relationship between their personal goals and those of the whole organization and hence are able to work towards interpreting information so that they achieve the desired goals. All agencies agreed that they have strong future goals that they would want to accomplish in the long run.

4.2.5 Organization Memory

This refers to the storage of knowledge for future use. The research indicates that all agencies store vital information and all contacts will be kept in the data base for future reference, which is also passed on from one generation to the next. It also indicates that incase of any managerial changes in the organization, 85% will not change any practices.

However, its indicative that the information is not be accessible to all staff.

PART FIVE

4.2.6 Factors Influencing the Adoption of Organization

Learning

The extent to which the following factors have contributed to the organization learning concept is hereby outlined. The respondents were all in agreement that the factors of improving the quality of services, commitment and moral of work force, adaptations of technological changes, offering a competitive edge for organization, enhancing communication, understanding and making quality decisions all contribute to the adoption of the organization learning concept. This is illustrated by over 80% agreement by the agencies.

PART FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The interviewed personnel of the agencies suggested that for any agency to have an effective organization learning concept in place the following factors need to be in place. Agencies have to employ staff that have the right and adequate qualification and employments should only be on merit. This will ensure that the employees understand the importance of the concept and facilitate adoption of the same. The Staff need to be motivated so as to be able to learn the new concept and be willing to change. A conducive working environment is also essential for the concept to be adapted. An environment that encourages learning is essential for the concept to be adopted. Due to the competitive nature of business today, organizations have to adopt new concepts that give them a competitive edge over the other firms. Firms hence have to engage in market surveys and research so as to know what they need to improve their services. The concept of team work is also very important to any organization and the agencies personnel interviewed felt that its only through team work that the concept can be adopted in any organization. Team work facilitates the other processes of organization learning. Its through this that staff in an agency can have a shared vision and mission. Communication amongst staff was also noted as another factor that encourages organization learning in an organization. If staff are willing to share, communicate and discuss issues in an organization then it makes it easier for the to adopt the concept.

All in all, the respondents were in agreement that it takes sheer hard work and commitment to have the concept in place.

5.2 Conclusion *for further research*

From the research analysis, it can be evidently put that the concept of organization learning has been adopted in the private recruitment agencies in Nairobi. However, it can be noted that though the concept has been adopted, some aspects still need to be improved for instance having strictly followed training programmes in place where some agencies confirmed that this was not in place. In information distribution, it is illustrated that the firms only meet to a little extent with other agencies to share ideas. The information distribution is not very much effective in the agencies. The research also indicates that in organization memory, organizations do not avail past information to all staff.

The above factors may hence need to be improved so as to have a learning organization.

5.3 Limitation of the Study

The researcher faced the following limitations:

The interviews took a long time because the respondents wanted to clearly understand the concept of organization learning hence it consumed some time for each interview to be undertaken.

Getting documented list of recruitment agencies was not easy because the registration of the same was done last year by the Ministry of labour of which the Act is still in draft form. Accessing the draft documents to get the registered agencies from the Ministry was hence a challenge and took some time.

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5.4 Suggestions for further research

A similar study can be conducted in a different kind of industry to find out whether there is some similarity in the methods used to adopt the reasons and the reasons that prompt the organizations to adopt the concept.

A study can also be done to establish the challenges that the various organizations face while adopting the Organization Learning concept.

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APPENDIX 1

INTRODUCTION LETTER TO THE RESPONDENTS

Fridah G. Kirimi

P.O. Box 30581 – 00100

Nairobi

4th September 2006

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: A SURVEY OF ORGANIZATION LEARNING IN PRIVATE
RECRUITMENT AGENCIES IN NAIROBI**

I am a student at the University of Nairobi pursuing a Masters Degree in Business Administration (MBA) and I am undertaking the above management Research project as part of the degree's academic requirements.

You have been chosen to be part of the study and I would be most grateful if you could spare some time and fill the attached questionnaires. Please answer the questions as honestly as possible. The information you provide will be used solely for purposes of this research and will be treated with utmost confidence. Your name will not appear in the Report. However, the findings of the study can be availed to you upon request on completion of the research. In case you have any queries or need clarification on any of the questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0721 513173.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

FRIDAH GAKII KIRIMI
MBA STUDENT

Appendix 11
QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA

Name of the organisation

What is your current job title.....

How long have been employed by this agency?

Less than 2 yrs

2-4 yrs

4-6 yrs

Over 6 yrs

Please check the basic that indicates your age bracket.

20 or below

21- 30

31 -40

Above 40

Gender Male Female

Marital status single Married Other (please state)

Education (please indicate appropriate level)

Secondary /high school certificate

Post-secondary certificate

Post-secondary diploma

Undergraduate degree

Postgraduate degree

SECTION B

To what extent do the following apply to your organisation please?

(Circle the most appropriate option using the provided scales)

Please tick as appropriate.

1. Not at all
2. To a little extent
3. To a moderate extent
4. To a great extent
5. To a very great extent

	1	2	3	4	5
Employees in the organisation are continually expanding their abilities through learning					
My organisation has a strategy that responds to the changing environment					
Learning new things is a way of life for everyone in the organisation					
Policies and Strategies are reviewed often					
Organization carries out research, so as to get new outcomes					
There is a strictly followed training programme in my organisation					
People in the organisation are involved in key decision making processes					
All members of the organization play a part in policy and strategy formulation					
There is flexible organization structure that changes frequently					
There are different ways of compensating our work					

SECTION C

Please tick the number that best describes the extent to which your organisation practices the following. (Use the scale below for the most appropriate response).

Please tick as appropriate

1. Not at all
2. To a little extent
3. To a moderate extent
4. To a great extent
5. To a very great extent

	1	2	3	4	5
Participatory policy and strategy reviews by all employees in my organisation.					
Employees are encouraged to think together					
All employees are involved in team playing and learning					
All employees can access the organisation databases					
There is always feedback on financial consequences of actions as soon as they are known by accounting system					
Departments and sections in organisations all understand each others importance					
Information is received from people and organisations stakeholders					
We participate in joint ventures with our grantees and stakeholders					
We meet with other agencies and share ideas					
Various methods of communications are used in the organisation					

SECTION D

Which statement best describes your organisations position on the following. (Use the scale below to tick the most appropriate response)

Please tick as appropriate

1. Not at all
2. To a little extent
3. To a moderate extent
4. To a great extent
5. To a very great extent

	1	2	3	4	5
All people in the organization give a meaning to any information that is received in the organization					
All people in the organization have shared goals and vision that they want to achieve					
All employees clearly understand the relationship between their personal goals and those of the whole organisation.					
The organization has strong goals future goals that it wants to accomplish					
All employees help in formulating the future goals					
Employees are free to give meaning to information and situations in organisation					
Information technology is not only used for automating processes but helps innovation					
We meet with other agencies and share ideas					
Various methods of communications are used in the organisation					

SECTION E

Which statement best describes your organisations position on the following. (Use the scale below to circle the most appropriate response)

Please tick as appropriate

- 1. Not at all
- 2. To a little extent
- 3. To a moderate extent
- 4. To a great extent
- 5. To a very great extent

	1	2	3	4	5
In my organisation our vital information is stored					
The information is passed from one generation to another					
Incase of any managerial changes, the practices do not change their is continuity					
All contacts used by the organisation are kept in a database for future use					
All past information records are accessible to all staff					

SECTION F

What other factors have contributed to the adopting of organization leaning concept in your firm?

.....

To what extent have the following factors contributed to adopting the organization learning concept in your organisation? (Use the scale below to circle the most appropriate response)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

Please tick as appropriate

1. Not at all
2. To a little extent
3. To a moderate extent
4. To a great extent
5. To a very great extent

	1	2	3	4	5
To improve the quality of service by the organisation					
To improve the commitment and morale of workforce so as to cope with changing/turbulent environment					
Adaptation of technological changes so as to attract and retain qualified staff					
To place organization in a competitive edge and enhancement of communication					
To understand and make quality decisions in the organization stability of the organization					
Knowledge acquisition, exchanges and spread in the organization					

SECTION G

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. Please provide below any other comment you wish to include which is relevant to the subject of study.

.....

.....

.....

.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

APPENDIX 111

List of recruiting agencies

1. Achievers Consulting Ltd
2. Adept Systems
3. African Manpower Resource Consultants
4. Career Connections Ltd
5. Career Search Ltd
6. Competitive Edge Kenya
7. Consultants For Effective Training
8. CTC Recruitment Solutions Ltd
9. Cloves Secretarial
10. Deloitte and Touch
11. Dominion Consultants
12. Essential Management Consultancy Service
13. Executive Training Recruiting Consultants
14. Job Link Ltd
15. Human Capacity Building Consultants
16. Human Resource Management Services
17. Hawkins Associates Ltd
18. Interlead Ltd
19. Price water house coopers
20. Madam P
21. Management Training and Consultancy Services
22. Manpower Service (K) Ltd
23. MEAR Associates
24. My Jobseye .com
25. Oneworld International Ltd
26. Resource Associates-HR Consultants
27. Staff Check
28. Studio Twenty Two Agency
29. Silver – Ray Health
30. Tack International (K) Ltd
31. Unique Opportunities

- 32.Venavic Agencies
- 33.KPMG Kenya
- 34.Maer Consultants
- 35.Pinnacle Consultants
- 36.Organisation Development and HR consultants

*Source: Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development (2004)
Labour Institutions Act, Part VIII (Draft)*