

COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCE FLEXIBILITY: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT: *This paper discussed the relationship between competency assessment and human resource flexibility. The objectives of the paper were to examine the roles dimensions such as technical, behavioural and leadership competency assessment play in outcomes of human resource flexibility. As a seminar paper, a theoretical design was adopted in the structure and approach towards assessing the variables. The review of literature was premised within the knowledge-based theoretical framework which advocate a focus on advancing knowledge systems and processes in understanding and conditioning competency of the workforce as a basis for driving outcomes such that human resource flexibility for improved organizational competitiveness and adaptability. Following the review, the study observed as its findings that the stated dimensions of competency assessment contribute toward the actualization of human resource flexibility; it was stated in conclusion that related actions and processes of competency assessment are critical to the quality, responsiveness and effectiveness of the organization's human resources, advancing flexibility features necessary for survival and well-being. It was recommended that organizations emphasize and advance necessary policies for improved features and conditions which drive and advance outcomes of human resource flexibility.*

KEYWORDS: competency assessment, human resource flexibility, knowledge-based theory

INTRODUCTION

The problem of this research traces to the poor capacity for change and sustained relevance during periods of change or turmoil – owing mostly to the inability of the organizations workforce to effectively adjust to new role demands or responsibilities, emergent from the context of the organization (Boxall, 2013). Such inadequacies when it comes to role adjustments and flexibility are such that delimit the organizations capacities, exposing its weaknesses and leading to loss of resources and capital. It also weakens the organizations competitiveness such that, given the rigidity of its workers, it is unable to cope or survive during turbulent situations or dynamic environment (Eilstrom & Kock, 2008).

Such a problem poses a major risk within the context of today's business environment, given the growing dynamism and change that mark and characterise the business world or environment. Zeb-Obipi (2016) noted that the competences of organizations are linked and draw primarily from the capabilities of their human resource. This suggests that by focusing on the deficiencies and inadequacies of the human resource, organizations can drive and extend their capacities in ways that serve their flexibility goals and objectives. In line with this observation, this research therefore examined the role of competency assessment in the actualization of human resource flexibility – particularly with regards to outcomes such as skill, behavioural and practical flexibility.

Employees with diverse skills and knowledge have the capability to serve customers in a better way (Flavián & Guinalú, 2015). Logan, Faught and Ganster (2011) argue that effective management of employee competencies can make organizations have competitive advantage against their competitors. Ability of the organizations to adjust to changes, develop new products, minimize wastage and implement new changes are purely dependent on skills acquired by employees in an organization (Njuguna, 2014). Well informed employees can easily understand organizational policies thus dedicate their efforts towards achieving goals in a more efficient and effective manner. Increased awareness of customers on quality services has not only made companies to recognize the need or re-training workers but also motivating them (Logan et al, 2011).

Alexander and Young (2011) contend that, for any organization to navigate through unpredictable business environment investment in human capital as well as the assessment of competency levels of its human resource are not optional but mandatory. Despite variations on human capital investment from one firm to another (Maurice, 2014), employee turn-over and strikes can be minimized by assessing and equipping workers with appropriate skills and knowledge. The confidence of workers to undertake new tasks or cooperate in the organization is determined by the level of knowledge and skills individual workers possess (Maurice, 2014) which in turn influences their level of flexibility in the workplace.

Armstrong (2009) ascertained that employee who are ill-equipped with appropriate skills and knowledge not only make companies to drag on implementing new policies but also unsatisfactory services (Armstrong, 2009), human resource management functions such as reflected in competency assessment play a major role in enhancing individual level outcomes (Youndt & Snell, 2004; Siddique, 2004; Chen & Li, 2016). Yet still, despite the views and related positions on the imperatives of competency assessment in advancing preferred individual level outcomes and features; there is unfortunately scant literature or research addressing the relationship between the variables. This paper departs from previous research as it discussed the relationship between competency assessment and human resource flexibility.

Conceptual Framework

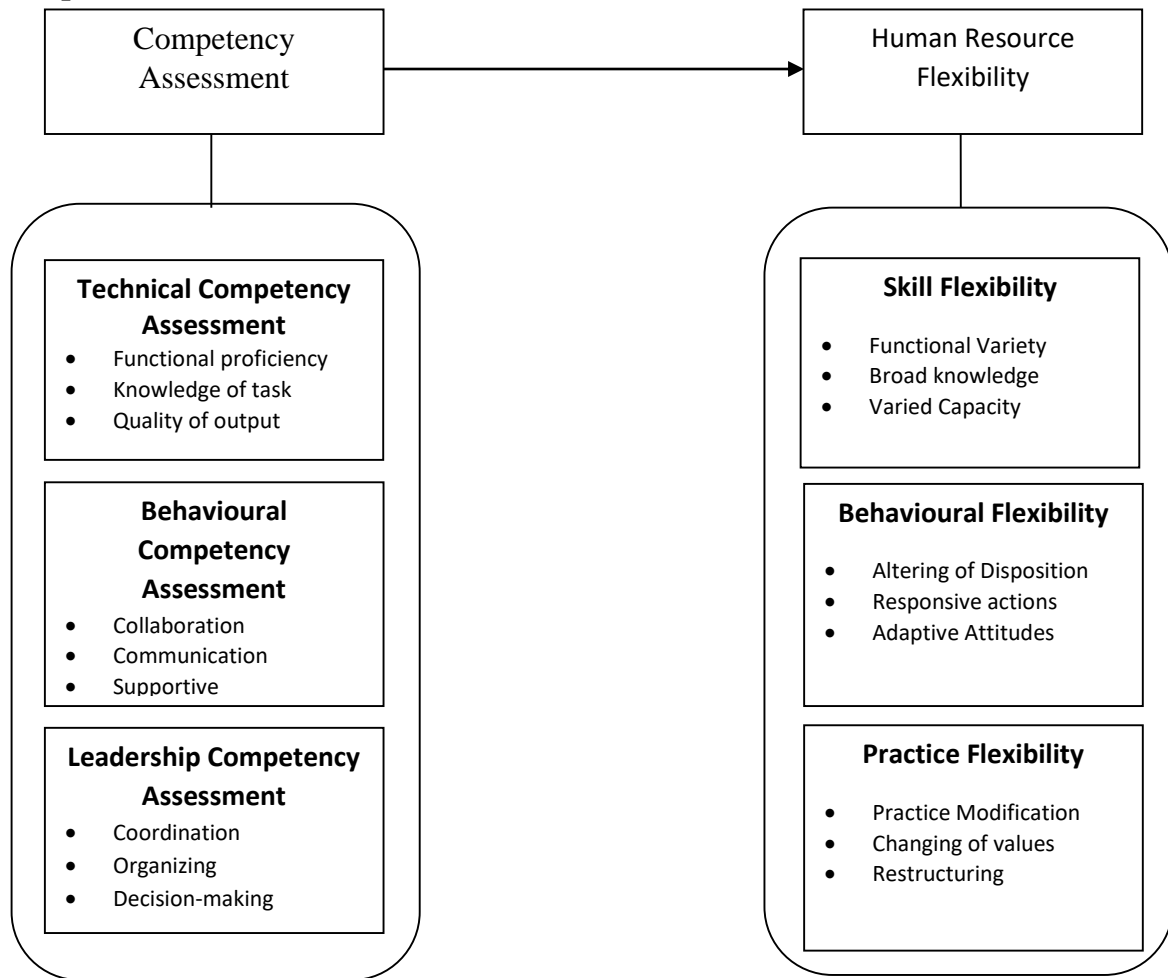


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Competency Assessment and Human Resource Flexibility

Source: Researcher’s Desk (2022) with dimensions adapted from Kang et al (2015) and measures from Sekhar et al (2016).

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this paper is to discuss the relationship between competency assessment and human resource flexibility. The objectives are to:

- i. Discuss the relationship between technical competency assessment and human resource flexibility
- ii. Examine the relationship between behavioural competency assessment and human resource flexibility
- iii. Ascertain the relationship between leadership competency assessment and human resource flexibility

LITERATURE REVIEW

Competency Assessment

The term ‘competency’ has close relationship with a Latin word ‘competentia’ that means “is authorized to judge” or “has the right to speak” (Heinsman et al, 2006). This term has received a great deal of attention and interest among the psychologists in the first half of the 20th century, and this was reflected in the abundance of empirical studies in psychology field at that time (Kang et al, 2015). However, it was until 1970s when David C. McClelland, a Psychology Professor at Harvard University and founder of McBear and Company and later called the Hay Group (Kang et al, 2015), published a study titled ‘Testing for Competence Rather Than for Intelligence’ that led to the wide application and investigation of the term in various human resource management (HRM) practices and studies (Kang et al, 2015).

In the study, McClelland (cited in Boxall, 2013) found that students might did well in their lives and careers just like the top students although they did poor in universities. He subsequently argued that traditional intelligence or aptitude tests and school grades are less accurate in predicting either the job performance in the workplace or other important life outcomes. Instead, the underlying personal traits and enduring qualitative behaviours, or he called as ‘competencies’, could be used more effectively for the measurement and validation of the job performance of individuals and their successes in lives. In specific, McClelland (cited in Boxall, 2013) proposed that it is desirable to measure not only the traditional cognitive skills and knowledge (e.g., reading, writing, and calculating skills), but also the personality variables that are more generally useful in clusters of life outcomes while determining the performance levels of individuals in the workplace. These variables include leadership, interpersonal skills, communication skills, ego development, patience, goal-setting ability, and so forth.

McClelland’s (cited in Boxall, 2013) idea on competencies has brought a substantive impact on HRM practices because it opened a fresh new perspective and initiated a movement for the investigation of more valid and reliable tools to predict the job performance of individuals in the workplace. Leading business organizations started using competencies for recruiting, selecting, developing, and managing the superior performers. In 1982, Boyatzis extended McClelland’s (cited in Boxall, 2013) idea and developed ‘Job Competence Assessment (JCA) Technique’ to identify the attributes that distinguish top performers from average performers in managerial context in the United States (Boxall, 2013).

Since then, the idea of competency began to spread worldwide (Boxall, 2013). However, the important roles of competency have not been fully integrated into the business world, creating a gap between theory and practice (Kock et al, 2007; Kuijpers, 2003). There seems to also appear a number of misperceptions about the use of the term ‘competency’ in the literature (Maurer et al, 2003). The subsequent sections of this paper aim to explore the various definitions and concepts of competency proposed by different scholars as well as to discuss the processes, guidelines, and techniques that can be used for developing competencies for a particular job or profession through literature review. The importance of competency-based assessment in organizations for today’s HRM practices is also included.

Yahya (cited in Kock et al, 2007) also described competency-based assessment as a process of collecting evidence and making judgment to determine individuals' competency levels while performing assigned work tasks based on prescribed standards or criterion. As compared to other performance appraisal methods, competency-based assessment is perceived to have higher levels of fairness because it focuses on the individuals' behaviours and actual job outputs instead of other social and cultural factors (Boxall, 2013). Competency-based assessment can contribute substantially to HRM practices in any business organizations. It plays an important role in recruiting, selecting, and developing talented individuals (Kock et al, 2007).

During the assessment process, the assessors make judgments about whether individuals fulfil the pre-determined competency standards based on their actual performance on assigned job roles (Boxall, 2013). However, it is challenging to carry out successful competency-based assessment (Moore et al, 2002). First, as Gonczi et al. (cited in Boxall, 2013) highlighted, competency can hardly be observed directly. Second, the job scope and activities of certain business organizations or professions are highly complex and diversified. These have created difficulty in making sound judgments. Therefore, it is necessary to use a few assessment methods to measure the competency levels of individuals accurately and effectively in performing specific tasks and roles (Kuijpers, 2003). Besides, the quality and quantity of the evidence of performance must be adequately collected for making sound judgments (Kock et al, 2007; Kuijpers, 2003).

Technical Competencies Assessment: Technical competencies are such that are reflected in the skills, knowledge and practical know-how of the worker (Moore et al, 2002). Assessment of such forms of competencies are such that emphasize on ensuring that workers skills and competencies match and are well aligned with the needs and expectations of the organization. Technical competencies are imperative to the success of the organization as they reflect the core operational capacities and determine the capabilities of the organization. These are expressed at functional levels and through related assessments, organizations can determine the extent to which its human resource is deficient in terms of skills (Boxall, 2013).

Behavioural Competencies Assessment: This measure of competency assessment provides for the actions geared towards examining workers capacity for connecting with significant others within the workplace (Kuijpers). Behavioural competency assessment provides the basis for understanding the social challenges and gaps in the workplace – that way specifying the necessary actions for enabling healthier and more collaborative outcomes (Kuijpers). Behavioural competencies are important for the wellbeing and internal stability of the organization, especially since they facilitate communication, interdependency and cooperation between parties in the organization.

Leadership Competencies Assessment: The third dimension in this research builds on the process in which workers capacities in terms of coordination and decision-making are assessed. Leader competency assessment details the various actions concerned with identifying leadership qualities and prospects within the workforce and propagating that as a basis for effectiveness in terms of organizational continuity through leadership succession (Boxall, 2013). Leadership competency advances a future for the organization, ensuring that its human

resource are fully equipped to drive the vision and goals of the organization where the situation arises (Moore et al, 2002).

Human Resource Flexibility

Within the strategic approach to human resource management, researchers have advocated flexibility in human resource systems and processes to help the organization adapt to a complex and dynamic environment (Ketkar & Sett, 2009; Way et al., 2012; Camps et al., 2015). From this point of view, human resource flexibility is conceived as a capability through which the organization can more easily adapt to environmental contingency changes (Tracey, 2012; Camps et al., 2015; Sekhar, Patwardhan & Vyas, 2016), where both intangible assets, such as knowledge and other tangible ones, play a role in the determination of competitive advantage (Hitt et al. 2001; Sirmon, Hitt & Ireland, 2007; Aryee et al., 2016). In the words of Wright and Snell (cited in Stokes et al, 2015), employees' flexibility can be defined as the extent to which the firm's human resources possess skills and behaviour repertoires which offer the organization a chance to develop strategic alternatives within its competitive environment.

Human resource flexibility concentrates on the multi-talented nature of workers as indicated by the changing nature of their personality domain, for instance their expertise, behaviour and learning. It refers to the ability to develop, organize and install human resource system in an organizational setup which will manage human resources as a whole to compete on the basis of environment responsiveness and innovation. Human resource flexibility has been perceived as a capability that helps an organization to adapt to changing environmental contingencies (Nieves & Quintana, 2016). Beltran-Martin et al. (2008) has found that employees having the advantage of the flexible work system shows greater involvement towards organization which ultimately increases organization's performance.

With the support of human resource flexibility, performance management system not only value current performance of the employees, but also demonstrates a further way for their advancement of capabilities, skills and knowledge in upcoming times. This will inspire them for positive conduct towards work and organization. At the same time, this will make employees to react aggressively and effectively to their respective portfolio, ultimately leading to effective organizational performance (Galinsky, Sakai, & Wigton, 2011). Employees with high human resource flexibility system are more satisfied with their employment than organizations with a lesser flexibility plan. It has a positive impact on employee performance (Ketkar & Sett, 2009).

Employees with a broad knowledge base contribute to the organization's competitive advantage because this base generates higher capabilities to develop more efficient means to fulfil the different task requirements (Boxall, 2013). A number of studies assume that greater flexibility increases employees' level of satisfaction and motivation and, accordingly, their productivity (Camps et al., 2015). Moreover, flexible employees maintain profitable relationships with customers that contribute to meeting those customers' needs, as well as to improving their satisfaction levels (Youndt & Snell, 2004; Fu et al., 2015).

Human resource flexibility may become relevant in the adoption of innovative solutions inside the firm because such flexibility implies that employees can better respond to stimuli which

have previously appeared. To this must be added that, when employees improve their knowledge base on a regular basis, their performance variability at work decreases and, consequently, their productivity increases (Nieves and Quintana, 2016). Similarly, flexibility encourages the members of an organization to improvise and come up with new ideas, to question themselves and reflect on their actions, to give sense and generate new knowledge from these actions. For instance, it allows organization members to think about ways to reduce costs and develop new innovations in service delivery (Youndt & Snell, 2004; Nieves & Quintana, 2016).

Skill flexibility: Flexibility in skills is one of the most relevant antecedents of flexibility in behaviours (Nieves & Quintana, 2016). Following the suggestion of Wright and Snell (1998), Beltrán-Martín (2008) and Kumari and Pradhan (2014), skill flexibility refers on the one hand to the number of potential alternatives uses where the knowledge and skills owned by an employee can be applied. Those who have acquired a large number of skills which allow them to perform a wide range of tasks are flexible employees. A flexible employee is thus one who shows the ability to work on different tasks and under various circumstances, a low cost and a short period of time being required to mobilize this employee to new functions or jobs (Nieves & Quintana, 2016; De Lastra et al., 2014; Camps et al., 2015).

On the other hand, skill flexibility is also related to the ability of employees to develop a broad variety of skills in the future (Wright and Snell, 1998; Maurer et al., 2003; Martin et al., 2013). Flexible employees are trained and recycled according to necessity; they anticipate the needs for future skills, show enthusiasm about learning new approaches to tasks, and perceive each event occurring inside the organization as a way to learn something important for the future (Pulakos et al., 2000; Dyer & Ericksen, 2005; Chang et al., 2013; Stokes et al., 2015).

Skill flexibility is that option given by the association where workers can utilize their abilities. It has two attributes, (a) resource flexibility, and the number of potential alternatives uses to which employee skills can be applied and (b) how individuals with different skills can be quickly reorganized. Resource flexibility in regard to employee competencies refers to the degree to which employees possess - or can quickly acquire - competencies that enable them to successfully perform alternative work-related activities (e.g., tasks, roles, jobs, etc.) and employ alternative technologies.

Moreover, skill flexibility describes how quickly and effectively employees are adapting new skills that the organization gives them (Boxall, 2013). Broadly speaking skill flexibility can be generated in two different ways. First, organizations may have employees who own a set of broad-based skills and are capable of using them under different require conditions. Broad-based skills are valuable because they generate output streams for existing requirements and are also capable of producing output for possible alternative requirements. However, skills possessed by employees, but not currently be of use may open up new opportunities of business for the organization, and indeed, may influence strategic choices (Nieves & Quintana, 2016). Second, an organization may employ a wide variety of “specialist” employees who provide flexibility by allowing the firm to reconfigure skill profiles to meet changing needs. Neuman and Wright, (cited in Tracey, 2012) have brought the findings stating that with this flexibility, when the need arises, the firm may reorganize its employees (e.g., through project teams) to

achieve the desired skill profile to fit with the changed demand. Thus, a wide range of employee skills contributes to flexibility. An organization may develop skill flexibility through processes such as job-rotation, cross-functional teams, and project-based work arrangements, all of which generate broad skill configurations specific to the organization that are not easily replicable (Bates, 2004). Employees having skill flexibility will easily cope with different type of job requirements. They can successfully meet the requirements of the market, customers and are more likely to manage the job stress effectively than the employees without having skill flexibility in them. This in turn makes them better performers contributing towards organizational effectiveness. It can be assumed that the higher the level of skill flexibility, the higher the organizational effectiveness (Bates, 2004).

Behavioural flexibility: The definition of behavioural flexibility by Wright and Snell (cited in Tracey, 2012) gives the consideration of 'behaviour' at work to those routine scripts or sequences that employees follow when performing their tasks. For these authors, behaviours become rigid or inflexible when the employees who have applied a sequence of actions to handle repetitive situations select the same sequence to deal with new situations. By contrast, if employees are capable of using different routines when faced with new circumstances, their behaviours are flexible. Expressed differently, employees with flexible behaviours adapt their responses to previously unknown circumstances on the basis of improvisation rather than following predefined action patterns (Bhattacharya et al., 2005; Dyer and Ericksen, 2005; Kumari & Pradhan, 2014;). There is a variety of reasons why flexible behaviours amongst employees constitute a valuable resource for the organization. Firstly, employees who can successfully cope with different contingencies at their workplace allow the firm to achieve savings in the costs derived from the lack of adaptation to change (Nieves & Quintana, 2016). And secondly, behavioural flexibility makes it easier to implement change processes in the firm, insofar as it gives the organization real chances to adequately respond to a wide range of situations (Bhattacharya et al., 2005; Beltrán-Martín and Roca-Puig, 2013).

Behavioural flexibility states about adjusting to new circumstance contradicted to the routine conduct. It represents an adaptable attitude of the employees as opposed to routine behaviours and the extent to which employees possess a broad range of behavioural characters that can be adapted according to the situation-specific demands. Resource flexibility in workforce behaviours refers to the degree to which the firm's existing employees possess - and are willing (motivated) to employ - behaviour scripts that can be applied to alternative uses (Nieves & Quintana, 2016). Behavioural flexibility can be distinguished from skill flexibility in the sense that employees may be skilled but lack the behavioural motivation to change or they may be highly motivated but lack the necessary skills or knowledge to make change decisions (Way et al, 2013). Employee behaviour flexibility is valuable because it enables the employee to deal with a variety of situations towards facilitating change implementation.

Organizations having employees with enhanced learning behaviour capabilities means that the organization does not need to hire new people with new attributes to address environmental changes (Fu, 2015). There is some evidence that behavioural flexibility at the organizational level contributes to organizational performance. Organizations having the culture of flexibility are adaptable to the changing environment which has a positive impact on organizational effectiveness (Fu, 2015). Some studies have shown that organizations that are superior at

learning and modifying its behaviour reflect new knowledge and insights which can enhance organizational performance (Boxall, 2013). This is because employees with behavioural flexibility usually have more likability in the workplace and enjoy favourable relationships with colleagues, superiors and subordinates. They are more likely to behave positively in every situation and context that arises. This will help the employees as well as the organization to perform effectively in a wide range of contexts.

Practice flexibility: Practice flexibility is about how rapidly, viably and productively human resource department adjusts and executes new human resource practices. Human resource practice flexibility in workforce management refers to the degree to which the organization can quickly (and effectively) implement alternative human resource processes and structures - i.e., implement human resource practices that are different than those currently employed by the firm (Nieves & Quintana, 2016; Kock et al, 2007). Aryee et al (2016) defined practice flexibility as having five classes, for example, 1- choices of overseeing time, 2- flexi time and flexplace, 3- reduced time, 4- time off, lastly 5- culture of adaptability. Whereas the Dension hypothesis (cited in Camps et al, 2015) has brought human resource flexibility composing of four collective qualities, for example, involvement, consistency, flexibility, and mission, which are key components of organizational effectiveness. From all these components, flexibility studies are stressing on human resource flexibility as it is more related with worker behaviour adaptability and human resource practice adaptability. It has an immediate effect on human resource management, i.e., worker, maintenance, work fulfilment (Ngo & Loi, 2008).

Flexibility of human resource practices is the extent to which the organization's human resource practices can be adapted and applied across a variety of situations, or across various sites or units of the firm, and the speed with which these adaptations and applications can be made (Way et al, 2013). Flexible human resource practices permit employees to have an adaptable work plan that makes them to perform adequately both particular and expert levels of work as the situation demands. Practice flexibility in workforce management refers to the degree to which human resource systems are comprised of human resource practices that can be staffing, developing, dismiss, retain, and motivate employees across different environmental contexts. Practice flexibility allows the firm to offer similar human resource practices across different units in achieving strategic consistency while adapting parameters to meet local concerns (Nieves & Quintana, 2016). Organizations that develop practice flexibility create an environment where the employees are able to respond more dynamically to environmental change, which is related to competitive advantage and thus bringing organizational effectiveness. It allows employees to work in a stress-free condition, enhancing their effectiveness and productivity.

Human resource management practice flexibility is the degree to which such practices can be adapted and applied to a variety of situations or in diverse units or sections of the organization, as well as the speed at which these adaptations and applications take place (Bhattacharya et al., 2005; Beltrán-Matín et al., 2008; Kumari & Pradhan, 2014). It could be said that it is the firm's ability to implement/apply alternative human resource practices easily and effectively. Flexibility in practices may create value inside the organization in several ways. Firstly, when the firm's situation undergoes changes, the organization can change its practices quickly. For instance, a remuneration system based on the description of jobs is bound to create resistance

to change; however, a flexible pay policy linked to profit measures adapts faster to changes in terms of profit increase or decrease (Ismail et al., 2015).

Secondly, flexibility in human resource practices will most probably result in flexible behaviours amongst employees. In the previous example about variable compensation plans, it becomes easier for employees to adapt to the change required by the business because their remuneration is determined by the firm's success. And thirdly, human resource practice flexibility enables the firm to offer similar practices in different units and to achieve coherence throughout the organization.

Competency Assessment and Human Resource Flexibility

Mulinge (2014) indicated that there is a positive relationship between employee training and organizational performance. Employee skill development is a tool that managers can utilize to service standards and their desired level of performance. The challenge for the organization is to design training options that give employees the information or skills they need and then measure whether those training options were effective in producing desired outcomes. Otswana (2016) established that organization having much better skilled and creative employees can easily avoid wasteful investment to improve efficiency and performance of organization.

Training is the most important part of human resource management function on the effective use of human resources. Training enhances knowledge and information about a certain field and also adds advantage to networking for efficiency and performance of employees. KIPPRA (2015) concur that there is a positive correlation between strategic interventions and quality service delivery. They noted that customer satisfaction was the centric point of quality management. The concept of quality was determined by all stakeholders of the organization. The study concluded that organizations were to satisfy their customers if only invested in modern technology, employee training, visionary leadership, team work, and product innovation and consumer research.

Kemboi (2016) suggests that the goal of employee training is to enhance the organization effectiveness. It also demands an influence on employee's performance, as well as in relation to organizational performance which is mediated by means of employee's performance. Training is a driver organizational development and competitiveness. In this competitive world, training is the key strategy to achieve the organizational objectives. Training benefits employees' performance and organizational effectiveness. Attractive employee's performance is highly demanding in this competitive world for achieving the organizational performance. Choi and Eboch (2008) revealed that employee training is considered as the process of improving the existing knowledge, exposure and general performance abilities in an individual. Training is an organized increase of the know-how skills and sensations needed for staff members to execute efficiently in the offered process, as well as, to operate in underling situation. Flavián and Guinalú (2015) argue that satisfied employees are likely to adapt to changes more easily compared to dissatisfied workers. Institutionalization and

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Knowledge-Based View Theory

The knowledge-based view (KBV) of the firm addresses the issues of the existence, the boundaries, and the internal organization of the multi-person firm (Foss, 2005). The starting point is that knowledge is the key explanatory factor, and the nature of knowledge (tacit, socially constructed etc.) is an important determinant enhancing understanding of firm organization and behaviour (Foss, 2005). Knowledge is fundamentally inter-subjective: it is embedded and crafted in continuous social interactions among the members of the organization. Rather than residing in the minds of individuals or in databases, the most important type of knowledge is that which is located between people (e.g., Spender, 1996b). Therefore, social psychological concepts such as communication, collaboration and trust are focal elements of the KBV. In addition to examining various features on the level of the firm, the analyses are often conducted on group and business unit levels, and the interaction of multiple levels, such as individual and organizational, is addressed.

Individual types of knowledge also cannot provide a sustainable source of competitive advantage for the firm (Foss, 2005). Recently, it has become almost normative for companies to declare that the skills and knowledge of their employees constitute the main competitive asset of their organization. However, looking at Spender's typology (cited in Foss, 2005), this view can be questioned as too simplified. First, there are problems concerning the appropriability of individual knowledge. Neither type of individual knowledge, conscious or automatic, is possessed by the organization. Rather, they are stored in the individual employees and demonstrated in their activities. The knowledge of individuals cannot provide the basis for sustainable organizational profits, because individuals are transferable between firms; thus, this knowledge is in danger of walking out of the company, in the worst case in the welcoming arms of a competing company. In addition, rents generated by the specialized knowledge of individuals are more likely to be appropriated by the individuals than by the company (Foss, 2005).

Empirical Reviews

Pradhan and Kumari (2017) did a critical review on how human resource flexibility relates with firms' effectiveness in manufacturing firms in India. This work employed cross sectional survey. Questionnaire was utilized in data collection from respondents. The work employed a random sampling method, 500 respondents which comprise of employees in upper echelon. Questionnaire was distributed personally and through mails. However, 350 questionnaires which represent 70% of total response rates were correctly filled and valid for the study. The linear structural equation modelling was used for data analysis. The result of the analysis revealed that skill flexibility and behaviour flexibility have a noteworthy positive relationship with organizational effectiveness in terms of operational performance and employee performance. They concluded that human resource flexibility system of an organization enables the firm to take instantaneous actions and to successfully satisfy new or urgent demand in the market. They suggested that organizations should train their staff and develop them to make them flexible in order to produce more benefit and better results for the organization.

Ubeda – Garcia, Claver-Cortes, Marco-Lajara and Zaragoza-Saez (2017) did an analysis on how HR flexibility relates with performance of hotel in Spain. Survey research was carried out

by the researcher. Questionnaire was used in collecting data. 100 questionnaires were given out to respondents. The data retrieved was analysed using Partial Least Squares (PLS). The study noted that skill flexibility does not have statistically significant relationship with performance of hotels in Spain. They however stated that employees must be given the opportunity to develop new skills in order to perform different task or function.

Yousuf, Haddad, Pakurár, Kozlovskiy, Mohylova, Shlapak and János (2019) examined the rapport amongst operational flexibility and performance of establishment. Ninety industrial firms in Jordan served as the sample, questionnaire was distributed to managers in senior cadre in product development, operations, marketing and financial departments and Regression Technique was utilized. It was observed that operational flexibility clearly and directly affects financial and operational performance of Jordan companies. More precisely, flexibility in volume as form of operational flexibility does not influence the companies' performance in Jordan, notwithstanding, mix and new product flexibility directly affects both financial and operational performance of the companies.

Chen and Li (2016) did an extensive study where they examined how flexibility human resource management relates with innovation performance of enterprise. Survey research was carried out by the researcher. The structural model equation was used in analysing the data. The findings revealed that behaviour flexibility and skill flexibility can be employ by firm in enhancing and boosting innovation performance of enterprise. This thus implies that innovation of an organization can be enhanced through human resource flexibility. Alibakhshi and Mahmoudi (2016) looked at how flexibility in human resources relates with performance of hospitals of Tehran Medical Sciences University. A cross sectional survey was carried out. 317 staff from 5 hospitals. Questionnaire was used in gathering information from respondents. Stratified random sampling was used in the study. Data was analysed using linear regression. The outcome of the study revealed that skill flexibility does influence the performance of organization positively to a significant degree. They maintained that human resources flexibility plays a significant role in creating unique capability and in enhancing competitiveness of the organization.

Way, Wright and Tracey (2018) looked at how HR flexibility relates with performance of firms; up to 100 employees were covered in the study. The data was analysed using the hierarchical linear modelling. Construct of human resources is indicated as intrinsic characteristics of an organization, or as causal ambiguity (Lippman and Rumelt, 1982; Barney, 1991), otherwise known as isolating mechanism (Mahoney and Pandian, 1992; Knott, 2003). However, it requires further clarification and exploration (Acedo, Barroso and Galan, 2006) as to why the resource heterogeneity and distinctiveness can improve enterprise performance, competitive advantage, or organizational effectiveness.

According to the above, when the basic and the professional capabilities of the human resources satisfy the industry's demand for the workers, the suitability of the supply and demand of human resources between industry and market will be reflected in the workers employment rate. To induce its reasons, through the two-way three-party, the workers and managers, contribution, the suitable supply and demand in human resources can be achieved. This is why the basic and the professional capabilities of the trained workers should have the quality of

value, rarity, inimitability, and non-substitutability. The basic and the professional competitiveness of the workers is in line with the organizations demand for this worker, because the human resources preference requirements are in line with the resource quality of value, rarity, inimitability, non-substitutability.

Knowledge Gap

From the discussion it is evident that while literature abounds on the manifestations of human resource flexibility, both as a consequence and antecedent of various factors, there appears to be a lacking in terms content addressing the role of competency assessment and human resource flexibility. The knowledge gap of this study is such that is reflected in the scarcity of both empirical and theoretical literature on the relationship between competency assessment and human resource flexibility. Furthermore, related studies on competency assessment have most often emphasized on the variable as a dimension of competency management, with scarce regard for its operationalization or measurement; this also poses a major gap in literature. Thus, given these observations, it is the position of this research that furthering the investigation on the relationship between competency assessment and human resource flexibility would be beneficial and contribute substantially to knowledge.

FINDINGS

In line with the review and the congruence of views identifying competency assessment as imperative for outcomes of human resource flexibility, the following findings are stated:

- i. Technical competency assessment advances actions which serve to drive the skills and knowledge of workers and thus contributes towards outcomes of human resource flexibility
- ii. Behavioural competency assessment enables knowledge on existing social capacities in the organization and thus serves in advancing features that enhance outcomes of human resource flexibility
- iii. Leader competency assessment enables knowledge of existing gaps in the coordinative and decision-making capacities of workers, thus advancing conditions that serve to enhance outcomes of human resource flexibility.

CONCLUSION

In line with the discussion and review on the relationship between competency assessment and human resource flexibility, it is position of this research that actions concerned with competency assessment contribute substantially towards the workers capacity for flexibility in terms of skill, behaviour and also practice. The results suggests that actions geared toward competency assessment provide for improved knowledgeableability of the organizations deficiencies and functional gaps; thus, enabling enhanced processes and actions that drive its flexibility goals. It is therefore the conclusion of this paper that related actions and processes of competency assessment are imperative to understanding and advancing conditions that further drive the human resource flexibility outcomes of the organization.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the noted imperatives of competency assessment in advancing and the outcomes of human resource flexibility. These are stated as follows:

- i. It is recommended that more effort be channelled towards advancing conditions and features that drive the technical competency assessment of the organization, enabling improved outcomes of human resource flexibility
- ii. It is recommended that policies are enacted to enforce and sustain competency assessment practices, especially that concerned with the behavioural competency of workers as a way of driving and advancing outcomes of human resource flexibility
- iii. It is recommended that the necessary platforms and structures are advanced in enabling the effective assessment of leadership competencies so as to understand and ensure actions geared toward outcomes of human resource flexibility

Contribution to Scholarship

This paper contributes in a variety of ways to knowledge and scholarship. As a theoretical paper it advances the knowledge-based view theory and the human capital theory as substantial in explaining and predicting the outcome of the relationship between competency assessment and human resource flexibility. In this way, the study contributes through the support and reinforcement it offers these theories as appropriate models and frameworks in understanding competency assessment and its implications for organizations.

This paper also contributes through its operational approach in the review of the relationship between the variables – competency assessment and human resource flexibility. The discussion offers a narrower and more specific perspective on the conceptualization of the variables and the roles dimensions such as technical competency assessment, behavioural competency assessment and leadership competency assessment, play in advancing outcomes of skill flexibility, behavioural flexibility and practice flexibility.

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