

FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE SELECTION IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE IN KENYA

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Abstract

Employee selection is the process by which the most efficient and qualified employee is selected to occupy a position which should be free from nepotism and favoritism. This should follow a certain criteria in order to ensure that organization gets the best suited candidate for the job without compromising the integrity of the organization. The public service is the main employer of all government workers in Kenya. The general objective of the study was to analysis of the factors influencing selection of employees in the public service in Kenya with the reference to state law office Nairobi. The specific objectives were to establish whether academic qualifications influences employee selection, to determine whether work experience influences employee selection, to determine whether background checks influences selection of employees and to find out whether personal characteristic influences employee selection in the state law office Nairobi. The study used a descriptive research design and conducted a census of all the respondents. Questionnaires were used to collect data from respondents. Multiple

regression analysis method was to test the hypothesis using SSPS version 22. The study found that employee selection in public service was highly influenced by academic qualifications and background checks. It was recommended that the public service should ensure that the employee selection policies are reviewed in order to incorporate the emerging issues in employee's selection in all the government institutions.

Keywords: Academic qualification, Work experience, Personal characteristics, background checks, Selection

INTRODUCTION

Employee selection is the process by which the most efficient and qualified employee is selected to occupy the post away from nepotism and favoritism, nepotism. The selection of employees depending on their qualifications and experiences that suit their aspirations is not the end for the managements but the performance of these employees shall be followed up as they shall be trained and empowered to reach a level in which they can take decisions relating to their jobs without refereeing to their managers. By selecting right candidates for the required job, organizations will also save time and money. Proper screening of candidates takes place during selection procedure. All the potential candidates who apply for the given job are tested. While it has always had the capacity to form a key part of the process of managing and leading people as a routine part of organizational life, it is suggested selection has become ever more important as organizations increasingly regard their workforce as a source of competitive advantage (Dorra & Al sabag, 2010).

Armstrong (2006), stated that the reliability of an employee selection instrument, such as a test, is the extent to which the instrument is a consistent measure of something. An intelligence test is said to be reliable, if the same person's scores do not vary greatly when the test is taken several times. The higher the reliability, the more confidence can be placed in the measurement method. Usually, the instrument is more reliable if it is longer. The instrument used must also be internally consistent to be considered reliable, which is a good predictor of success for the job performance in question.

It should be noted that the criterion used to predict performance or success is a proxy of actual performance. Since good job performance is usually a combination of many factors (quality of work, quantity of work, etc.) a criterion such as a supervisory rating is a proxy for the real measure, job success or performance. Various writers and scholars in economics, accounting, and organizational behavior literatures predicts that when it is difficult to align incentives by on output, aligning preferences through employee selection may provide a useful

alternative Moreover, there is considerable evidence that organizations devote significant resources to employee selection in settings where it is difficult to contract on output (Dessler 2007).

The state law office requires heavy investment of money to get the right people to do the right job. Induction and training costs are also high. If the right types of people are not identified, it will lead to huge loss to the employer in terms of money, time and effort. Therefore, it is essential that these institutions devise a suitable selection procedure. Absenteeism and employee turnover are the important problems which are often faced by this department. The intensity of these problems can be reduced if in the future all selections are made carefully. Whenever unsuitable employees are appointed, the efficiency of the organization will go down and especially the quality of education and other services. Such employees will shirk work and absent themselves from work more often. They may also be compelled to leave their jobs. If this happens, all the expenses incurred on the selection and training of such employees will go to waste (Robbins 2007).

Statement of the problem

The State Law Office or Office of the Attorney General as it is commonly known has the overall responsibility of providing legal advice to the Government and its agencies. The Office of the Attorney General is responsible for ensuring that the Kenya legal system effectively offers opportunity for the activities of the public and private Sector to be carried out within the ambit of the Law. To fulfill its objectives the Office of the Attorney-General is currently divided into ten (10) Departments - Public Prosecutions, Civil Litigation, Legislative Drafting, Treaties and Agreements, Registrar-General, Kenya Law Reform Commission, Kenya School of Law, Administrator-General, Advocates Complaints Commission and Administration and Finance.

The LSK has been complaining that the quality of service is constrained since the SLO is not well staffed owing to its inability to attract, develop and retain the best lawyers the country can offer. Despite all the efforts by the government to select the most suitable candidates for the job in a cost effective, the department has experienced challenges in retaining these employees. The department has set standards for its staff and this cannot be compromised. The department remuneration policy and fringe benefits are very competitive in the market and it is the desire of every person to work for such an organization.

However, the department are paying substantial amounts of money on lost cases because of uncoordinated case preparations and representation. Registries and library services are constrained and there is lack of adequate staff. Treaties and agreements department is not supported by an adequate manpower and resource center. Most of the ministries conclude their

agreements without seeking the services of the treaties and agreements department due to inadequate staff to facilitate such services in most of the established counties. The facilities, equipment and working tools are inadequate thus affecting work performance.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study was to analysis of the factors influencing selection of employee in the state law office. The specific objectives were;

1. To find out whether academic qualification influences employee selection in the State law office.
2. To establish whether work experience influences employee selection in the State law office.
3. To determine whether background checks influence employee selection in the State law office.
4. To determine whether personal characteristics influences employee selection in the State law office.

Research Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between academic qualification and employee selection in the State law office.
2. There is no significant relationship between work experience and employee selection in the State law office.
3. There is no significant relationship between background checks and employee selection in the State law office.
4. There is no significant relationship between personal characteristics and employee selection in the State law office.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Tomoki Sekiguchi (1996), came up with the theory of person-organization fit and person-job fit in employee selection. Person-organization fit refers to the compatibility between a person and the organization, emphasizing the extent to which a person and the organization share similar characteristics and/or meet each other's needs. According to Edwards (1991), person-job fit refers to the match between the abilities of a person and the demands of a job or the desires of a person and attributes of a job. Judg & Ferris (1992) noted that in employee selection research, P-O fit can be conceptualized as the match between an applicant and broader organizational

attributes). Practitioners contend that P-O fit is the key to maintaining the flexible and committed workforce that is necessary in a competitive business environment and tight labor market. While studies agree on the importance of P-O fit, there is an ongoing debate in the literature regarding the operationalization of this construct. Kristof's extensive review of P-O fit literature identified four different operationalizations of P-O fit. The first centers upon measuring similarity between fundamental characteristics of people and organizations. The second is goal congruence with organizational leaders or peers. According to Johnson (2003), bimodal prediction theory the most fundamental challenge concern in selection is term bimodal prediction. Core assumptions in the predictivist paradigm in selection have been founded upon the relative stability of the job role being recruited for, against which the suitability of applicants is then evaluated.

Rapidly changing organizational structures, flexible forms of work organization, team-based structures, newly created jobs, and increasingly unpredictable future scenarios in organizations have all added immeasurably to job instability. In essence, the stability of the criterion space being selected for has, in many organizations and for many job families, been undermined. Formerly, selection concentrated upon merely bimodal conceptualization of fit—person–job fit. Increasingly, they will first have to predict the likely composition of a job role, and only then begin to consider issues of person–job fit i.e. “bimodal prediction”; (Herriot & Anderson, 1997). Howard (1995) noted that this term differs from its use in a statistical sense. Bimodal does not refer to a split distribution upon a quantitative scale. Rather, bimodal prediction refers specifically to the need to first predict the likely components of a changeable work role, and only then being able to address issues of person–work role fit. Given these sweeping and relatively rapid environmental changes, it has perhaps been inevitable that research and practice in selection has taken some time to catch back.

Only recently have methods of future-oriented job analysis begun to be developed and used; questions over the relevance of longer-term predictive validity studies have been raised; emergent constructs such as innovation potential, flexibility, adaptability, openness to change, and trainability for future job skills have come to the fore in selection; and research adopting a bimodal conceptualization of selection processes has begun to emerge but these are initial responses to these challenges (Chan, 2000). Against the historic backcloth of an impressive selection, research of predictivist paradigm, have much to do and to respond in a professional and evidence based manner to the challenges of bimodal prediction. Further signs that selection research has been making tangible advance in this regard stem from proposed models of job performance on the one hand and the expansion of conceptualizations of the criterion space to

include organizational citizenship behavior and pro-social behavior as positive patterns of work behavior, and counterproductive behaviors as the opposite (Motowidlo, 2003).

Principal-Agent Theory

According to Gibbons (1999) the principal-agent theory has been the central to much of the work in economics, and they have been especially useful in understanding employment relationships. A considerable amount of research has been directed at understanding and addressing the inherent moral hazard problem associated with employment in principal-agent frameworks -- the incentives for individual employees to pursue their own interests at the expense of those of their employer. Virtually all that research focuses on economic governance schemes that provide incentives to induce employees to act in the interests of their employers.

Morduch (1999) noted that the theory defines the appropriate selection of potential employees, performance, monitoring and conclude with economic rewards and in some cases punishments to motivate employees. The theory has been adopted by employment agencies as one of the agency-based models. This has been most extensively used in the context of executive employment where the agents have considerable control over their performance and where the effects of their performance can be readily observed, albeit at the firm-level. It is found that agency models have been used somewhat less for understanding production or hourly employment where job performance may be less within the control of the individual (e.g., more paced by machines or supervisors) and where individual performance may be more difficult to measure. There is another way to address the moral hazard problems associated with principal-agent frameworks in employment selection. However the approach relies on heterogeneity across employees in their abilities; specifically their interest in working hard, that is sometimes included under the heading of “unobserved human capital.” Under this view, some job applicants are simply better workers than others (Nagin et al., 2002).

Specifically, they may be willing to work harder for the same rates of pay and/or are less inclined to shirk their responsibilities, requiring less monitoring and supervision as a result. The complication for the firm is first that while the applicants know their own capabilities, it is difficult for the employer, short of hiring them, to tell. Hence the unobserved problem. Second, applicants who are not hard workers may have an incentive to pretend that they are, especially if regimes of low monitoring make it easier for them to shirk and if the jobs pay premiums of the kind that might be associated with having better workers (Ichnowski et al., 1997). According to Lynch & Black (2003), the theory of principal agent is used to provide solutions to moral hazard problems from this perspective often rely on self-selection: Potential applicants typically sort themselves out across opportunities such that those who lack the unobserved human capital

associated with hard work do not apply for jobs that will require it while those that have it do. The complication with extending these models more broadly is that they require reasonably unique and sometimes complicated reward structures to create the separating equilibrium that attracts hard workers and scares away lazy ones, such as piece rate systems or back-loaded compensation where workers have to demonstrate their performance in advance of the reward

Review of Related literature

According to a study conducted by Mohamed (2008) on graduate recruitment and selection in the UK, the findings of the research showed that all employers, regardless of organization size or activity type, tend to use more sophisticated, objective and cost effective methods of recruitment and selection than before. The process of graduate recruitment and selection in the UK has become more person-related than job-related because many employers are more interested in the attitudes, personality and transferable skills of applicants than the type or level of qualification acquired. Although some of the usual methods such as interviewing remain popular, there is a greater variety of ways by which graduates are attracted to and selected for their first jobs.

Mohamed (2008) found out that graduate recruitment has become one of the tough challenges for an increasing number of employers who have realized that the future of their organizations depends on the recruitment and selection of the best among an increasing number of graduates in different disciplines from a wider range of higher education institutions. The methods of graduate recruitment and selection used in the UK seem to vary according to organizational size and the number of graduates required, but the process has generally become more rigorous and sophisticated as competition to obtain graduates has increased. There has been a move from job-related to person-related methods of recruitment and selection, such as the use of the internet and assessment centres. Graduate employers are more interested in the attitude and personality of applicants than in the type or level of qualifications acquired.

Raybould & Sheedy (2005), conducted a research to find out whether graduates are equipped with right skills in the employability stakes. The study found out that there are transferable skills that employers like to see in a graduate and these can vary according to type of role. In general graduates are keen to develop their skills further. The emphasis on skills by employers varies depending on the type of job roles to be carried out within an organization. However, there has been some consensus of opinion on the importance of “transferable” or “employability” skills for employees particularly for those in management positions. These skills

refer to certain personal abilities of an individual, which can be taken from one job role to another, used within any profession and at any stage of their career.

The general consensus from higher education institutions is that the current and future employment market requires graduates to be equipped with a range of skills. Applicants need to be able to demonstrate their core transferable skills in addition to their academic success. Students and graduates need to be willing to develop their personal and professional skills relevant for the world of work to improve their chances of employment success. In addition, they need to take advantage of opportunities to develop relevant skills.

In a study carried out by Ahmad & Schroeder (2002) on the importance of recruitment and selection process for sustainability of total quality management, it brings into focus the importance of prospective employees' behavioral traits for the effectiveness of quality management practices. The findings of this study emphasize that checking employees' behavioral traits during the selection process is crucial for achieving superior plant competitiveness. Paying close attention to recruitment and selection is consistent with one of the principles of quality management, which is the notion that prevention is better than a cure. It is hard to modify negative behavioral traits of employees. Therefore, it is best to check for requisite behavioral traits during the selection process to prevent mismatch between the technical and social systems.

Ahmad & Schroeder (2002), found out that many organizations have jumped on the total quality management (TQM) bandwagon thinking that if they copy the tools and techniques, they will reap the benefits of TQM. This myopic view has resulted in performance improvement, if any, that is short-lived. The findings suggest that the social systems cannot be ignored, rather both technical and social systems need to be developed simultaneously. Moreover, it is the integration of these two systems that creates value in a way that is rare and difficult for competitors to imitate due to causal ambiguity and path dependency.

Farnham (2000), researched on developing and implementing competence-based recruitment and selection in a social services department; a case study of West Sussex County Council. The research findings provided a comprehensive critique, both positive and negative of the existing recruitment and selection system as well as some understanding of the participants' attitudes towards competence and competence-based recruitment and its implications. All research participants were clear about the importance of recruitment and selection in finding the best fit for the post. Both managers and personnel and training staff were critical of the existing recruitment and selection. While managers focused on the operation of the system, in terms of time delays and concerns with consistency, personnel and training staff focused on over-reliance on interviews and subjectivity inherent within the system.

Senior managers were aware of the process of evidence gathering in competence-based recruitment, through their experiences as candidates in the organizational change project. Managers at a lower level were clearly aware of the language of competence but not of its use and meaning in recruitment and selection. Personnel and training staff had a good understanding of competence and its application in recruitment and selection and accepted that manager's understanding of competence would vary. Most managers stated they were reliant on personnel and more senior managers for considerable support in recruitment and selection activity and attributed this to a lack of training. Personnel and training staff noted that, in addition to training managers in the practice of recruitment and selection activity, from writing job descriptions, person specifications and adverts through to assessing candidates, there was also a need to train managers in managing and administering recruitment activity.

Managers were of the view that decision were being made in the current system after discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate, rather than by scoring and moderating against identified and agreed criteria. They were concerned that some managers' tended to compare candidates against each other, rather than against their suitability for the post or identified standards. There was also a perception that managers sometimes appointed candidates who failed to meet the expected standard, because of a need to fill the post. Personnel staff suggested this might be acceptable, if the gaps were not significant and could be met through training. Both managers and personnel and training staff agreed on the need to check references before making appointments. Personnel staff considered the role of references in a competence based recruitment system should be part of a factual check, not part of assessment.

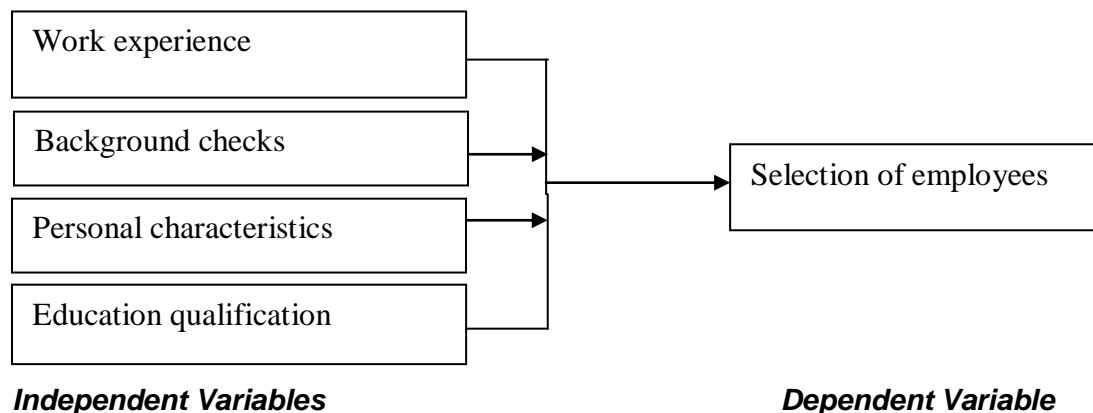
In a survey carried out by Society for Human Resource Management (2010) on current practices in employee reference and background checking the following findings were revealed; the use of credit background checks in employment decisions has not changed in any discernable way over the past six years, most organizations do not conduct credit background checks on all jobs candidates. The Society also found out that organizations conduct credit background checks for those positions where this information is most relevant to the job. The study noted that employers place lower relative importance on credit background checks than on other job-related factors in making hiring decisions and employers do not use credit background checks to screen out mass numbers of candidates in the early phases of the application process. Credit background check results are seldom used as a definitive hiring criterion.

Employee Screen IQ (2011) commissioned a study of over 600 employers in order to understand the trends and challenges that were transforming the world of employment

background checks. The findings revealed that background checks had increased in importance among employers and would only grow in popularity. The study also illustrated employer's thoughts about credit checks, contract workers, social networking and more.

The survey revealed the following; 92% of employers will reach out to candidates to consider job relevance when a background check reveals adverse information. Only 8% of respondents say they reject a candidate outright. Respondents cited qualifications and interview as the leading influences when making hiring decisions. While candidates criminal records were ranked third in importance, employers weigh background check results as one element in a candidates overall body of work. 21% conduct credit checks on all employees while 33% do not perform them at all. Most respondents only check credit when it is relevant to the individual's job duties or because they are in a regulated industry. Only 15% of the companies surveyed believe in the value of automated hiring decision matrices, while 81% choose not to use them or are not familiar with the concept. 66% of respondents never check social networking sites such as face book, LinkedIn, and others for the purposes of conducting background checks. 80% of surveyed companies agree the employment screening is not a commodity. Only 20% believe that all vendors offer the same services at the same prices.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a descriptive design, this is because the technique is flexible and appropriate in terms of; the data to be collected, the methods of collecting the data and the timing of the research. This design is faster and comparatively low cost methods that adequately helped answer the research questions. In addition; the descriptive research design will be the most

appropriate, as it presents data in a meaningful form that assist in the understanding of the characteristics of the employee selection in the State law office.

Target Population

The target population was all the Administrative staff and legal staff of State law office. The target population for this study was 75 respondents from the administrative and legal departments of State law office, Nairobi.

The study conducted a census of all the 75 respondents since the population is not large and it is manageable. This was appropriate as it give every respondent from every respondent a chance of participating.

Data Collection Method

Questionnaires were used to collect data from respondents. Drop and pick method was used to administer the questionnaires to the sampled population and in order to ensure that respondents are reached without any external influences, the questionnaires were personally dropped and picked after 3 days.

Research Instrument reliability

Reliability is the measure of the degree to which instrument yields consistent results after repeated trials. To increase the reliability of the data collected, the study will adopt test re-test method in which the instrument will be administered twice at different time to the same respondents to examine whether the same responses is obtained.

Data Analysis

Two types of data were collected in this study: Qualitative and quantitative, and two types of statistical analysis were used. The quantitative data analyzed the descriptive statistics, which included frequencies, percentages and measures of central tendency like means; while the qualitative data analyzed the content analysis. The analyzed data was presented using tables, charts and figures. The study also used multiple regressions to help determine the relationship between the variables under study. Multiple regression is a flexible method of data analysis that may be appropriate whenever a quantitative variable (the depended or criterion variable) is to be examined in relationship to any other factors (expressed as independent or predictor variables). Relationships may be nonlinear, independent variables may be quantitative or qualitative, and one can examine the effects of a single variable or multiple variables with or without the effects of other variables taken into account (Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003).

Multiple regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = A + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_3 + B_4X_4 + e$$

Y=the predicated score on the dependent variable, A= the value of Y when both X1 and X2 equal zero, B1=the change in Y unit change in X1 when other dependent variables are controlled, X1 is the score of independent variables X1 and e = is the error. When Y= Composite index of Employee Selection.

A= Constant

X1= Index of Identity on academic qualifications

B1=Coefficient indicating the academic qualifications

X2= Index of Work experience

B2=Coefficient indicating the Work experience

X3= Index of Background checks

B3=Coefficient indicating the Background checks

X4= Index of Personal characteristics

B4=Coefficient indicating the Personal characteristics

e = error

Complete instruments were assembled; the data collected from the respondents was edited for completeness and consistency, and then coded and interpreted in relation to the research objectives. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS version 22. The data analyzed was presented using tables and narrative form.

ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

The regression analysis was done with employee selection as the dependent variable and the rest of the variables as the independent variables. Overall, the study found a strong positive relationship between employee selection and the public service employee selection mechanisms such as academic qualifications, background checks, work experience and personal characteristics. This is shown by the positive Pearson product moment of correlation $R = .760$. The $R\text{-square} = .578$ indicates that the factors under discussion influenced up to 57.8% of the variance in employee selection in the state law office. Further, the adjusted $R\text{-square} = .559$ shows that, the factors accounted for 55.9% of the variance in employee selection. The standard error of estimate for the model was 0.36. The coefficients are shown in table 1. These results indicate the coefficients for each of the variables as well as their significance levels in the model. As shown, Academic qualifications and background checks influence significantly affected employee selection in the public service (p value = 0.000 and 0.000 respectively). Work

experience and personal characteristics did not have a significant impact on employee selection (p value = 0.227 and 0.857 respectively).

Table 1: Coefficients of independent variables

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T. test	P. Value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.454	.300			.000
Academic Qualifications	.398	.075	.492	5.279	.000
Work Experience	-.083	.068	-.095	-1.216	.857.
Personal Characteristics	-.019	.107	-.020	-.181	.227
Background Checks	.360	.075	.442	4.821	.000

Employee selection = 1.454 + 0.398 Academic qualifications + 0.360 Background checks + 0.019 Personal characteristics + 0.083 Work experience + 0.300

The correlations are shown in table 2. The results indicate how each of the independent variable influences employee selection and the significance of each. As shown, all the variables had positive correlations with employee selection. The most significant factors were academic qualifications and background checks. These correlations were significant at 99% confidence level.

Table 2: Correlations of employee selection factors on employee selection

		Employee Selection
Academic qualification	Pearson Correlation	.648
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000
Work Experience	Pearson Correlation	.551
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000
Background Checks	Pearson Correlation	.650
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000
Personal Characteristics	Pearson Correlation	.180
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.080

The study was guided by four objectives. First the study sought to determine how academic qualifications influences the employee selection, Secondly the study sought to assess the influence of work experience in selection of employees. The study also sought to evaluate the influence of background checks of potential employees on employee selection and also to determine the influence of personal characteristics on employee selection. The following

emerged from the findings and responses: Regarding the influence of personal characteristics as a selection strategy on employee selection, the study found that personal characteristics had a minimal influence on employee selection. From the results, the correlation was 0.180 meaning that personal characteristics contributed to only 3.2% of the in the requirements of employee selection in public service. The study found out that academic qualifications have a significant positive influence level of statistical significance on employee selection. Therefore academic qualifications positively influence employee selection. The research findings concluded that academic qualifications and background checks in totality is a vital requirement to employee selection in order to secure a job in the public service.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that personal characteristics do not have a significant impact on the employee selection. This is shown by the low correlation $R= 0.180$, $P=0.227$ with employee selection. The study findings concluded that academic qualifications is a vital strategy in employee selection in the public service. The study further concludes that background checks positively influences employee selection in the state law office. This is shown by the strong significant correlations ($R=0.650$, $p=0.000$) found with saving mobilization. These findings are in agreement with Lisa (2006) that academic qualifications influences employee selection in an organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government and ministry of state law should come up with a mechanism to ensure that there is clear employee selection guidelines to be followed. It is also recommended that government through the state law office should review the existing employee selection policies as a matter of urgency to incorporate emerging issues. It is also recommended that the public service should come up with a matrix that will be used as threshold for employee selection and it must be acceptable by all the employment stakeholders concerned.

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