

Factors Inhibiting Effective Staff Training: Cases of Temeke Municipal and Kisarawe District Councils, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study examined the factors inhibiting effective staff training at the councils of Temeke Municipality and Kisarawe District in Tanzania. A case study design was employed, with data collected from 47 respondents. The instruments used to collect data were questionnaires and secondary information sources. To report the findings, descriptive statistics was used. The data were validated using mean percentages. On the whole, the study findings identified lack of proper training policies and programmes, lack of or inadequate training fund allocation, lack of top management commitment towards staff training, coupled with malpractices such as favouritism and staff training fragmentation as the main factors inhibiting effective staff training in the study area. As a result, the study provides four recommendations aimed at redressing the situation. First, local government authorities should formulate clear staff training policies and provide well-designed training programmes. Second, local government authorities should increase their staff training budget allocations in addition to establishing a specific unit to oversee and co-ordinate staff training initiatives and all related matters. Third, the top management of such authorities should make an unwavering commitment to staff training. Four, the selection of training candidates should be based on the organisation's assessed training needs and the suitability of those candidates to avoid malpractices of favouritism.

Key words: Effectiveness, inhibiting factors, staff training, Tanzania

INTRODUCTION

Generally, training is a process in which people acquire knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes that they need to perform their jobs well for the achievement of their organisation's goals (Mathias and Jackson, 1998). Similarly, De Cenzo and Robbins (1996) define training as a learning experience which seeks a relatively permanent change in an individual to improve that individual's ability to perform his or her job effectively. Training may also mean changing what employees know, how they work, their attitude towards work, or their interaction with their co-workers or supervisors.

In fact, there is a correlation between training expenditures of companies and the economic performance measures, such as returns on assets and productivity (d'Arcimoles, 1997). In addition, linkages have been observed between a firm's performance and the dimensions of being a learning organisation, such as creating continuous learning opportunities, establishing systems to capture and share learning, and using model leaders who support learning at individual, team and organisational levels (Ellinger *et al.*, 2002). Miller (1991) emphasises that enterprises need to improve their employees' performance capabilities at all levels of management through effective staff training in order to be more productive and efficient in discharging their tasks. Staff training can also shape company culture (LeClair

and Ferrell, 2000), which can in turn help employees have more positive perceptions of the organisation's ethics than those working for firms without such training (Valentine and Fleischman, 2004).

It is also argued that developing a new skill that fulfils a personal ambition is rewarding and it is believed that learning something new out of work has a positive impact on the morale and performance inside as well as outside the organisation (David, 2005). Though the effect of formal training on employee performance remains subjective and sometimes doubtful because of lack of sufficient direct transfer to the workplace, formal training remains an important strategy through which organisations ensure their employees' competencies (Beatrice van der *et al.*, 2009). Again at an aggregate level, there is a strong cross-country relationship between levels of initial education and continuing vocational training, on the one hand, and employment performance on the other (OECD, 2004). Similarly, at the individual level, there is a strong relationship between training and the probability of being in work. Indeed, Ngirwa (2006) recommends that training and development should be provided to enable employees to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, experience and behaviour essential for the management of enterprises in a dynamic environment.

As a matter of fact, training and development are an ongoing process because changes in technology and the environment, as well as in organisational goals and

strategies often require members to learn new techniques and ways of working (Jones, 2000). Ngirwa (2006) reveals that organisations which desire to maintain or improve their competitive edge in today's dynamic world require a well-trained and developed staff for an effective and efficient provision of quality product and services to their customers to occur. The shortage of talented people highlighted in various literatures (Fishman, 1998; Economist, 2006, 2007) is an affirmation of the continued importance of such manpower. Indeed, talent, the world's most valuable commodity, is reportedly getting harder to find, and the only best option left to face this challenge is to offer training. After all, these reports have confirmed that training impacts all the key areas of an organisation that make the difference for people, namely: productivity, innovation, retention, commitment, and speedy recruitment and training of new staff. This justifies the strategic role the HR-unit/department plays in determining the value of training, and why the issue of the critical role of training should be a no-brainer.

Furthermore, Mbutta (1999) observes that the problem of poor execution of local councils should not be considered in isolation without taking into account the competence of the manpower prevailing in the councils. According to Mbutta, lack of competent manpower makes the local councils fail to execute projects effectively and efficiently. Moreover, some local authorities lack proper training policies and programmes, and in consequence training was ineffectively offered. Indeed, Mbutta observes that the training being offered in many of the local authorities in Tanzania was not necessarily effective and efficient and 'poorly trained personnel are likely to perform poorly even if adequate funds are available'. The same issue was raised by Dryden (1972), who stressed that the quality of employees and councillors was crucial in efforts aimed at enhancing the performance of local governments in Tanzania. Dryden was of the opinion that local governments in Tanzania had been performing poorly due to lack of qualified staff and councillors. Similarly, the preliminary findings by Bana (1995) show that, the absence of a specific unit or department to oversee or co-ordinate staff development and training is another stumbling block in the country. In the study entitled 'HRM in Tanzania local government institutions', Bana reveals that the multiplicity of human resource training authorities in the Dar es Salaam City Council, made planning and co-ordination of staff training function a nightmare. However, Mjenga (2002), points out that many companies and work organisations have not traditionally paid sufficient attention to staff training programmes and, specifically, to the factors hindering the effectiveness of such staff training.

Globally, and in particular Africa, preliminary evidence shows that local authorities can have staff training units or departments of some kind that

co-ordinate the staff training functions but have not been largely proven to be effective or satisfactory (Sleight, 1993). It is also evident from the literature review that much less is known about the effectiveness of staff training in Tanzania's local authorities, with the related literature wither scanty or non-existent. This study actually sought to provide the necessary information on this crucial component for local governments in the country and help fill this research gap. Specifically, this study was carried out to determine the factors which inhibit the effective staff training in local authorities in Tanzania.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study setting: The data reported here were collected as part of a survey conducted to determine the factors which inhibit local authorities in Tanzania from offering effective staff training. This study was conducted between May and October 2006 in two local authorities-Temeke Municipal Council and Kisarawe District Council. The selection of these two cases was based on three major factors. First, both councils are included in Tanzania's ongoing Local Government Reform Programme. This reform programme is the process by which control over locally provided services is transferred to accountable and democratically-elected councils. These local government reforms are also aimed at instituting changes which necessitate the provision of training to equip employees with the necessary skills to allow them to cope with new roles and adopt new work ethics (URT, 2000). In fact, the Local Government Service Act.no.10 of 1982 empowers the local authorities to plan and engage human resources, train and develop them (URT, 2002). Second, Temeke Municipal Council had the features taken to represent municipal Councils, whereas Kisarawe District Council also had characteristics to represent district councils in Tanzania.

Research design: The research undertaking deployed a case study approach which allowed for intensive observations and investigation of salient factors in the units of study (Kothari, 1990). On the whole, this research design facilitated a better understanding of the factors which inhibit the provision of effective staff training in Tanzania's local authorities.

Sample size and sampling techniques: The study population comprised six (6) main categories, namely; the directors, IT department staff, Human Resources Department personnel, Registry staff, accounts/finance section staff and trainees. In total 47 respondents were selected randomly to take part in the study. The collected data were then analysed using descriptive analysis (Patton, 2002). This approach made it easy to describe the

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Respondents characteristics		TMC (n = 23) in (%)	KDC (n = 24) in (%)	Total (n = 47) in (%)
Sex	Male	52	63	57
	Female	48	37	43
Age	20 - 34	26	25	26
	35 - 44	44	29	36
	45 - 54	22	33	28
	55 +	9	13	11
Education	Certificate	35	29	32
	Ordinary Diploma	9	33	21
	Advanced Diploma	22	8	15
	First Degree	26	21	23
	PGD	4	4	4
Work experience	Masters Degree	4	4	4
	≤2years	22	13	17
	2 years to5 years	30	29	30
	5years to10 years	30	21	26
	10 years to15 years	-	4	2
≥15 years	17	31	26	

Research data (2006)

basic features of the data in this study. In consequence, the respondents' profile and their perceptions towards staff training and the factors that inhibit its effectiveness among local authorities in Tanzania were effectively described. For the purpose of this study, the selection of respondents considered the age, gender, education, seniority and other aspects as much as circumstances allowed the respondents.

Data collection tools: The instruments used during data collection were primarily questionnaires with personal interviews conducted to supplement the data collected using questionnaires. In addition, documentary review involved a close scrutiny of relevant publications. Before these research instruments were administered in the field, pre-testing of the questionnaires was carried out in the Department of Finance and Administration at Temeke Municipal Council. This procedure enabled the researcher to determine whether the instruments were feasible, answerable, reliable and valid. Inconsistencies and areas of ambiguity spotted during this pre-testing period were addressed to improve the quality, validity and reliability of the data collection instruments.

Research questions: Two research questions were used to guide this study:

- What are the hindrances in the effectiveness of staff training in Tanzania's local authorities?
- What should local authorities do to improve staff training?

Data analysis and presentation: Data gathered were processed using the statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The package was preferred due to its extensive analytical capacity and ease administration of data. To explain some findings, descriptive statistics were employed. The results obtained during data analysis were presented in tables and figures.

Abbreviations of terms: In this study; LA stands for Local Authority, IT stands for Information Technology, TMC stands for Temeke Municipal Council, KDC stands for Kisarawe District Council and PGD stands for Post Graduate Diploma

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics of the respondents: Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents from the two local authorities in Tanzania. Taken into account were characteristics that would help to determine the effectiveness of the staff training offered by the sampled local authorities.

Overall, male respondents comprised the majority (57%). KDC had more male respondents (63%) than TMC (52%). Of the 43% female respondents, 48% came from TMC and 37% from KDC.

In terms of age distribution, the majority of the respondents (36%) were in the 35-44 age-bracket followed by those in 45-54 age-groups (28%). Local government employees aged below 35 (26%) and those aged 55 and above (11%) were in the minority for both local authorities. For the pensionable age-group, one explanation could be because of either voluntary or involuntary retirement.

As for their education credentials, the largest group of the respondents (32%) had certificate level education, followed by first degree holders (23%). Also, those with ordinary diplomas accounted for 21% and those with Advanced diplomas for 15%. Only few (4%) had PGD or Masters Degrees. This shows that these local authorities need concerted efforts to develop their staff to acceptable higher education levels.

With regard to work experience, Table 1 indicates that the majority of the respondents (30%) had a 2-5 years of work experience, followed by those with 15 or more years of work experience (26%), and those with work experience of below 2 years accounting for 17%, with the

Table 2: Existence of staff training policy and programme

Response	TMC (n = 23) in (%)	KDC (n = 24) in (%)	Total (n = 47) in (%)
Yes	18	54	36
NO	65	33	49
Don't Know	17	13	15

Research data (2006)

least number (2%) coming from those with 10-15 years of work experience. This indicates that the majority of the respondents had long experience working for these councils, hence serving as sources of reliable information in a bid to meet the research objective.

Staff training policy and programme: On the aspect of staff training policy and programmes, 49% of the respondents mentioned that there was no staff training policy in their respective organisations (Table 2). The findings are in line with Ngirwa (2006) who established that most African work organisations do not have staff training policies at their disposal. Similar results were observed by Jacobs (2003) who states that, it is difficult for trainees to understand the way the department works without proper training programmes being set up in place. This implies that work organisations without suitable training policies and programmes cannot run human resource training and development programmes successfully.

Out of the respondents who said that there was a training policy (36%), none of them had seen the contents of that policy (Table 2). Most of these respondents confessed that they were just guessing or relied on hearsay to claim that their organisation had a training policy. For instance, some respondents stated that their local authority usually adopted the training policy of the parent government ministry. Other respondents indicated that as they did not witness any training occurring in their workplace, they assumed that there was no training policy in place at all. In reality, no one seemed to have seen this training policy, let alone produce a copy of the council's training policy or training programme. Similar results were reported by Mbutta (1999), who observed that most local councils lacked staff training policies initiated from within and as a result employee training was poor. About 15% of the respondents in this study did not know whether their organisation had a training policy. Additional data from interviews with the human resources department of the two councils revealed that they had a list of potential trainees but they had no training programme in place to help implement their plan.

These results suggest that these local authorities did not have training policy or training programmes in place. If for any reason they had one, the employees were in the dark about these policies. For instance, 65% of the TMC respondents (compared to 33% from KDC) indicated that there was no training policy in place (Table 2). This means that the majority of the respondents, especially those from TMC believed that these local authorities did

not possess their own human resource training policies, which in turn resulted in those local authorities' ineffective and inefficient human resource training.

An interview held with HR department personnel in the two councils revealed that important aspects such as planning, implementation and evaluation of staff training programme, were absent. As a result, even when they had lists of potential training beneficiaries, they were at a loss with regard to what they needed to do. Kouhy *et al.* (2009) argue that training is one of the main HR policies all companies should possess in order to maximise the benefits reaped from training. Similarly, Beckman (2009) and Pulakos *et al.* (2000) comment that organisations without viable training programmes would fail to provide employees with frequent opportunities to practice and enhance their capabilities in terms of enhanced employee skills and knowledge. Naturally, such an anomaly leads to poor performance and inefficiency, and ultimately decreased productivity and profitability.

Similarly, Michael (2005) and David (2007) report that assessment of skill levels to check the candidate's commitment and readiness for training to ensure that the organisation only spent its scanty resources on deserving employees is necessary. But this can only be effectively enforced once that organisation has suitable training policies coupled with suitable training programmes. As such, meeting employee and organisational training needs, there is a need of first of all accurately identifying those needs in order to provide training tailored to fulfil those needs. Thus, a training needs analysis should be a requirement of every organisation's training policy.

Fragmentation of staff training: Fragmentation of staff training function was another problem that was identified by the respondents. Fragmentation of staff training can be defined as the tendency of breaking up the organisation's training function into smaller and less functional units, which in turn reduce the status of the HR-core function and deprive it of its strategic role in effectively contributing towards the organisation's performance.

The results in Table 3 reveal that 49% of the respondents agreed, 43% others disagreed and only 8% did not know that there was fragmentation of the staff training in their midst. On this aspect, more respondents from TMC (52%) than from KDC (46%) agreed that staff training fragmentation did exist. Similarly, Bana (1995) had revealed that fragmentation of the local authority's training function was a notable practice, with its major effect being reducing the status and efficacy of staff training among local authorities.

Table 3: Fragmentation of the staff training function

Response	TMC (n = 23) in (%)	KDC (n = 24) in (%)	Total (n = 47) in (%)
Agree	52	46	49
Disagree	39	46	43
Don't Know	9	8	8

Research data (2006)

Table 4: Malpractices in identifying trainees

Response	TMC (n = 23) in (%)	KDC (n = 24) in (%)	Total (n = 47) in (%)
Yes	70	79	75
No	30	17	23
Don't Know	0	4	2

Research data (2006)

Table 5: Dominant malpractices in trainee selection

Malpractices	TMC (n = 23) in (%)	KDC (n = 24) in (%)	Total (n = 47) in (%)
Favouritism	70	83	77
Corruption	9	0	4
Tribalism	0	4	2
Gender	4	0	2
Don't Know	17	13	15

Research data (2006)

Moreover, Miller (1991) points out that the failure to harmonise an organisation's strategy and staff development activities leads to ineffective staff development. However, as Miller suggests, staff training should be linked to the organisation's strategic plan for it to get higher priority. According to Harrison (2007), this can be achieved by having a fully-fledged HR department that can help to create proper and reliable training programmes within organisations that will help them to deliver goods and services more efficiently.

Malpractices in identifying trainees: Malpractices in identifying employees with the required credentials to undergo staff training refer to all unprofessional misconducts and mismanagement of the staff training function. This study attempted to identify some of these malpractices. Factors considered included tribalism, gender, corruption or favouritism. The goal was to determine whether these factors primarily dictated the vetting or selection process of training candidates among the local authorities under study. The findings of this exploration have been presented in Table 4. The results show that most of the respondents (75%) agreed that malpractices did exist in their respective local authorities, whereas others (23%) disagreed and a few (2%) simply did not know how to respond to this question. Mbutta (1999) also came up with similar findings, noting that such malpractices dominated the process of identifying training candidates in the local authorities.

To further explore this problem, the researcher wanted to establish the frequency of these reported malpractices. The findings have been presented in Table 5. The results show that most of the respondents (77%) cited favouritism as the dominant malpractice, 4% others indicated corruption was and only 2% referred to tribalism and gender as the malpractices in place.

Interestingly, these findings confirm that discrimination on the basis of tribalism and gender, which used to dominate the workplace of Tanzania, were no longer major factors. Instead it was the issue of favouritism which needs to be rooted out of the work place so that deserving candidates can also get opportunities to train and advance their employment prospects. In both local authorities, favouritism was ranked highest as the problem to contend with when it comes to staff training, hence confirming that the problem (of malpractices) was real in identifying suitable training candidates. Only 15% of the respondents did not know whether any malpractices existed.

This being the case, local authorities should take measures aimed at curbing this scourge in order for them to achieve the objectives of training competent staff to fulfil organisational needs. This also implies that selecting training candidates entails taking extra-care since considerable resources are spent on their staff development. It does not make business sense to waste scant company resources training un-trainable employees or those without the right credentials or qualities to fit into the organisation's work culture or ethic. On the whole, it pays to invest in the right candidates and these should be the ones picked as trainees for the available positions (Nguwi, 2010).

Top management support for staff training: One of the goals of the study was to determine whether lack of top management support was one of the factors undermining training in the local authorities under study. The results presented in Table 6 show that 56% of the respondents agreed that staff training was affected by lack of top management support. On the other hand, a significant minority (31%) said did not believe that lack of top management support was a problem. A further 13% of the

Table 6: Top management support to staff training

Response	TMC (n = 23) in (%)	KDC (n = 24) in (%)	Total (n = 47) in (%)
Agree	47	62	56
Disagree	40	30	31
Don't Know	13	8	13

Research data (2006)

Table 7: Staff training hindrances

Hindrances	TMC (n = 23) in (%)	KDC (n = 24) in (%)	Total (n = 47) in (%)
Inadequate budget for training	70	58	64
Training treated as unnecessary event	26	25	26
Poorly financed trainers	13	21	17
Poor methods of training	13	13	13
Incompetent trainers	4	4	4

Research data (2006)

respondents did not know that lack of top management support for training was a problem. At KDC, more respondents (62%) raised concern about the lack of top management support in meeting training needs for the council than TMC (47%), a difference of 15%. This shows that this problem was more prevalent in Kisarawe than Temeke, although it remains a significant problem in both areas. Comparable results were reported by Ngirwa (2006), who noted that lack of top management support was one of the biggest problems affecting staff training and development in many of Tanzania's organisations. Such lack of top management support inevitably results in organisations failing to prioritise staff development in budgets and, hence, its poor implementation.

Recently, more attention has been paid to the issue of how organisations differ on the basis of the conditions and encouraging learning climate they provide (Beatrice van der *et al.*, 2009). Although it is generally accepted that learning and the development of employee competencies are inevitably individual processes (Baitsch, 1998), these aspects are also strongly linked to the organisational climate and to the social learning processes, which tend to provide ample opportunities for managements of organisations to help workers further develop their career potential and grow professionally. This means enhancing employee competencies at the workplace strongly depends on the learning climate of a company or, in a smaller sense, a department (Olbert-Bock, 2002). As such, autonomy with regard to work processes, communication, co-operative structures, attitudes of and support by superiors, as well as time for learning, are essential factors that can influence the learning climate (Bergmann *et al.*, 2000; Jenewein *et al.*, 2002). Similarly, various studies show that subordinates who receive sufficient information and support from their leaders, and who engage in challenging tasks that demand taking responsibility tend to have more positive work attitudes in addition to engaging in more positive work behaviours than those who receive less support (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

Staff training hindrances: This study also sought to identify the hindrances that undermine staff training. The

findings summarised in Table 7 show that 64% of the respondents ranked inadequate budgetary allocations as the main stumbling block to enhancing staff training and development in both local authorities. Another significant number of the respondents (26%) identified the failure by local authorities to treat staff training and development as a serious issue deserving of their due attention, while others (17%) thought that the institutions that offered such training were severely under-funded and poorly managed. Of the respondents, 13% complained that poor methods of training were still being used while the smallest number (4%) said competent trainers who could help improve the competencies of the workers of local authorities were rare. Correspondingly, Mjenga (2002) observed that many work organisations performed poorly when it came to training their members of staff, simply because they had not traditionally paid sufficient attention to the factors hindering the effectiveness of staff training within their organisations.

From these findings, it is evident that inadequate budgetary allocation for training needs is reported to be the leading hindrance, especially at TMC (70%). This finding is in line with the report that so many organisations operating on tight budgets tend to further shrink the funding allocation for training initiatives. In addition, such organisations tend to cut training first from their budget and generally restore it last. As such, the continual cutting of employee training from the budget signified that training is not as valued as it should be in an organisation (McGill, 2007). These findings imply that it is difficult for work organisations and, specifically, local authorities to train enough employees if they do not set aside enough funds/budgets for staff training and development.

However, Loewenstein and Spletzer (1998) and Bartel (2000) confirm that "the effect of an hour of training on productivity growth is about five times as large as the effect on wage growth" and that employers "reap almost all the returns to company training". As such, investing in human resource development is an integral part of any organisation bent of operating efficiently and effectively. In fact, when training is offered by competent trainers can help organisations

maximise their investment in staff training and development, hence the need to identify good trainers (Michael, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The study helped to identify various factors which undermine staff training in Tanzania's local authorities. These stumbling blocks include lack of funds due to inadequate budgets set aside for staff training, malpractices such as favouritism, poor top management support because some managers did not treat staff training as a matter of priority, the absence of viable training policies and training programmes initiated by the local authorities, and the fragmented nature of the staff training. In fact, the fragmented nature of the training function resulted in poor planning, implementation and evaluation of staff training. It is, therefore, pertinent for local authorities to consider how they can address these identified hindrances and incorporate the suggestions of this study in the on-going Local Government Reform Programme to enhance the training of the personnel of these local authorities to boost the operational efficiency of these crucial institutions and meet the aspirations of the people.

RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of the study findings, it has been recommended that local authorities in Tanzania should foster a culture of continuously improving the knowledge, experience, competencies, skills and attitudes of their workers to meet the ever-changing demands of their jobs. Towards meeting this objective, staff training should be viewed as pivotal to the sustainability and efficient operations of these local governments, hence the need for continuous investment by these local authorities in human resource development. This implies that local authorities in Tanzania should formulate clear staff training policies coupled with well-designed training programmes. It is, therefore, recommended here that training policies should specify the party responsible for training, the type of training desired, and emphasise the use of annual training programmes. They should emphasise the need to base their training efforts on professionally-developed training needs assessment to ensure that investment in training focuses on getting rid of specific performance deficiencies.

This study also established that enhancing the employee competencies in the workplace strongly depends upon the learning environment of a given organisation. This implies that top management should be committed towards supporting staff training for all staff categories with equitable provision being made within the spirit the equal opportunity for all employees. After all,

these local authorities are equal opportunity employers as stipulated by the primary governmental policy.

Another important policy implication is that planners, decision-makers and HR managers should recognise the actual benefits of staff training and hence accord it the right priority it deserves. This entails increasing the allocation of resources for staff training, which in turn would increase its contribution towards enhancing the organisation's performance. As such, the study recommends that local authorities work out strategies to accrue more funds for staff training. On the whole, staff training annual budgets should be clearly spelt out and stated. Doing so will enable the staff training function in these local authorities to accommodate more trainees than under current practices. In the long-run, this will foster higher performances among local authorities in Tanzania.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I acknowledge the Institute of Social Work (ISW) and the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) for providing a grant and an enabling environment, respectively that ensured the success of this study. In particular, I thank Dr. Kitojo Wetengere for his invaluable guidance that facilitated the writing of this article. The author is also highly indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on the original draft of this article. However, I remain solely responsible for the article's final content. The author also thanks the management of Maxwell Scientific Organization for financing the manuscript for publication.

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