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CHALLENGES CONSTRAINING EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEES' TRAINING IN ELDORET MUNICIPAL COUNCIL IN KENYA

Towett Geoffrey

PhD Student,
Faculty of Arts and Social
Sciences, Kisii University-Eldoret
Campus
P.O.Box 6434, Eldoret,
Kenya

Dr. James K. Chelang'a

Senior Lecturer
School of Arts and Social
Sciences, Moi University
P.O.Box 3900, Eldoret,
Kenya

Peter Gutwa Oino

PhD (Student)
Faculty of Arts and Social
Science, Moi University,
Department of Anthropology and
Human Ecology,
P.O Box, 3900-30100, Eldoret,
Kenya

ABSTRACT

Systematic employees' training plays a paramount role in equipping employees with the required knowledge, and skills in order to remain competitive in the dynamic society whether in developing or in developed world. This research paper is an outcome of a study that was conducted in Eldoret Municipal Council in Kenya and examined the various challenges facing effective employees' training. A total of 200 respondents drawn from all the seven departments namely; Environment, Education, Social Services, Town Clerk, Treasury, Health, and Engineering Departments were considered in the study. The study adopted the use of research instruments such as questionnaires, interview guide for Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and secondary information sources to supplement the primary data. The study established that the major challenges facing effective employees' training included the lack of staff training policy in EMC, inadequate budgetary allocation to employees training, loopholes in selecting trainees and undefined time for training, and insignificant support to training by the EMC. Based on the findings, the authors recommended that a regularized formal need assessment of the employees should be done in order to identify every employee's need in terms of skills and knowledge. A training policy guiding EMC and all local authorities in Kenya should be formulated to guide municipal departments in assessing their strength and weakness and thus be able to address the training gaps in time. Adequate funds should be allocated by the municipal council and the ministry of local government for facilitating employees' training programmes. It is important that the municipal council increases their current financial allocation for training in order to build the quality of its human resource. Finally, there is also the need to have a formal structure clearly outlining the criteria in which trainees are identified and selected for training as this will eliminate biased selection based on tribalism, 'sex for training', bribery and 'godfatherism'.

Key words: Constraining, Employees' training, Kenya



1. INTRODUCTION

The survival of any organization in the competitive society lies in its ability to train its human resource to be creative, innovative, inventive who will invariably enhance performance and increase competitive advantage. Training of human resource involves changes in skills, knowledge, attitude and or social behavior. In order to remain competitive, changes in these areas are needed (Ivancevich, et al, 1994). According to him, training is the systematic process of altering employees' behavior to further organizational goals. It is an organized activity designed to create a change in the thinking and behavior of people and to enable them do their jobs in a more efficient manner (Saleemi and Bogonko, 1997).

Training efforts must aim at meeting the requirements of the organization (Long term) and the individual employees (short term). This involves finding answers to questions such as: Whether training is needed? If yes, where it is needed and, which training is needed? (Wayne and Robert, 2005). Once the training gaps have been identified within the organization, it becomes easy to design an appropriate training program to meet those needs. Training may also mean changing what employees know, how they work, their attitude towards work, or their interaction with their co-workers or supervisors (Wright and Snell, 1991). Training is most effective when it is planned, implemented and evaluated in a systematic way. Systematic training is therefore, of paramount importance because it focuses on evaluation of employees training needs and participatory involvement of employees in designing, implementation and evaluation of training programmes (Sagimo, 2002).

According to De Cenzo (1996), training generally has dual function of utilization and motivation. By improving employees ability to perform their tasks, training allows better use of human resource. The purpose of training includes; greater productivity and quality, less scrap or spoiled work, greater versatility and adaptability to new methods, less need for close supervision, fewer accidents and greater job satisfaction showing itself in lower labour, turnover and less absence (Graham and Bennet, 1998). Bogonko and Saleemi (1997) argue that training is effective only when it is properly planned and effectively executed. In addition, Arcimoles (1997) noted that there is a direct relationship between training expenditures in various organizations and the economic performance measures, such as returns on assets and service provision. Furthermore, staff training also shapes organizational culture, which can in turn help employees have more positive perceptions of the organization's ethics than those working for firms without such training (Valentine and Fleischman, 2004).

Developing a new skill that fulfils a personal ambition is rewarding and learning something new out of work has a positive impact on the morale and performance of employees in any given organization (David, 2005). Despite the fact that 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 organizations ensure their employees' competencies in their respective roles (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. Training and development should be provided to enable employees to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, experience and attitude essential for the management of organizations in a dynamic environment (Ngirwa, 2006).

Human resource training in any organization should be a continuous process because of dynamism in technology and the environment, as well as in organizational goals (Jones, 2000). According to Ngirwa (2006) organizations which desire to maintain or improve their competitive edge in today's dynamic and competitive world requires a well-trained and developed staff for an effective and efficient provision of quality product and services to their clients to occur. Armstrong (2006) argues that human resource is indeed the most important of all resources in any organization. This consequently put primacy on the importance of training the human resource if organizations are to remain afloat and relevant in provision of services to their clients. As cited in various organizational reports such as in Economist, (2006) and (2007), it confirms the centrality of training in relation to productivity, innovation, retention, and work commitment, and thus justifies the strategic role the human resource department in identifying the training gaps in it employees as well as providing them with appropriate training.



As argued by Divina and Edralin (2004), training plays a paramount role in the achievement of organization goals such as in local governments or authorities. This is based on the fact that such a structure of government provides essential services to the general public at the grassroots level. However, this activity has often been constrained by various factors including lack of proper schedule on when and how training is to be conducted. Scheduling training can be one of the most difficult challenges a human resource department can face. Many managers are reluctant to let employees take much time away from their duties for training. In addition, employees are sometimes committed to their current positions and may be reluctant pursuing trainings far from their work stations.

In addition, training as noted by Harrison and Brooks (2007), often requires a huge cost. Most organizations struggle with decreasing expenses in order to maintain healthy profit margins. Owing to low profit margins that organizations often experience, few firms would come up with a well funded training programme for their employees. Employees on the other hand may also be constrained by domestic needs and cannot have surplus funds to pursue training unless sponsored by their organizations (Olbert-Bock, 2002). According to Dessler (2003), rapid changes in technology, corporate initiative and programs can make it difficult to adequately prepare training material and deliver training before employees need information and new skills. The ever dynamic work environment requires continuous training plan which most organizations may not be able to budget. For instance, Dryden (1972) noted that lack of competent manpower makes the local authorities fail to execute their roles effectively and efficiently. Moreover, Okumbe (2001) noted that various local authorities globally lack proper training policies and programmes and consequently, are ineffective in training of employees. In a research study conducted by Mbutta (1999) in Tanzania, he observed 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’’.

Preliminary findings by Land *et al.* (2007), regarding sampled local authorities in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda revealed that, the absence of a specific department to oversee or co-ordinate regular staff training is a stumbling block to efficient provision of services. On the other hand, Sleight (1993) noted that local authorities in Africa can have staff training departments which have largely been proven to be satisfactory in meeting their mandate in public service provision in their areas of jurisdiction. In Kenya, local authorities are mandated to provide essential services under the Local Authority by-laws (GOK, 1986). Municipal councils consist of various departments such as Environment, Education, Social Services, Town Clerk, Treasury, Health, and Engineering Departments. The various departments provide wide range of services that includes pre- primary and primary education management, public health and sanitation, fire brigade and Ambulance, community development and welfare, roads and drainage maintenance, refuse collection, urban planning and development control, and market and bus park control to the general public in their areas of jurisdiction (Murumba, 1987, [http: www.eldoretmunicipal.com](http://www.eldoretmunicipal.com) 20/8/11). However, less is known about the challenges municipal councils face in their quest to provide these services, with the related literature being scanty or non-existent. It is based on this background therefore, that the researchers sought to find out the challenges facing effective staff training in Eldoret Municipal Council in Kenya.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This paper is an output of a study that was conducted in Eldoret Municipal Headquarters in 2012 before the promulgation of the new Constitution in Kenya. The research on which this paper was drawn adopted a cross sectional research design. Employees from all the seven departments were randomly sampled for study and a sample size of 200 respondents was used to solicit data needed in the study. The respondents comprised of field officers in the seven departments namely; Environment, Social Services, Town Clerk, Treasury, Health, and Engineering and Education Departments. Data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions with the respondents. The paper significantly revolves around the challenges facing effective employees’ training in Eldoret Municipal Council in Kenya. This is vital in understanding how best such factors can be addressed in order to enhance efficiency in provision of public services to the resident of Eldoret.



3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The subsequent sections highlight the discussion of major finding of the study.

3.1 Challenges Constraining Effective Employees' Training In Eldoret Municipal Council.

The researcher sought to find out the challenges facing Effective Employees' Training in Eldoret Municipal Council-Kenya, and the findings were as indicated in Table 1.0.

Table 1.0: Challenges Constraining Effective Employees' Training in Eldoret Municipal Council.

Constraining Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of staff training policy In EMC	70	35
Inadequate budgetary allocation to employees training	62	31
Loopholes in selecting trainees for training	48	24
Insignificant support to training by the EMC management	20	10
TOTAL	S=200	100

In relation to the objective of the study, the findings depicted that 70(35%) respondents cited the lack of staff training policy in EMC, while 62 (31%) respondents raised inadequate budgetary allocation to employees training. In addition, 48(24%) respondents cited loopholes in selecting of trainees and in the frequency of training, while 20(10%) attributed it to high insignificant support to training by the EMC management.

3.1.1: Lack of Staff training policy In EMC

It was evident from the findings that 35 % of the respondents cited the lack of staff training policy as the leading challenge facing effective staff training in EMC. The findings were in line with Ngirwa (2006) who noted that most African local governments do not have staff training policies at their disposal to guide in employees' training. 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 organizations without suitable training policies and programmes cannot run human resource training and development programmes successfully.

As the researcher further probed the respondents, it became apparent that they could not produce a copy of the training policy and they openly confessed they had never seen it. Similar results were reported by Mbutta (1999), who observed that most local governments in African lacked staff training policies initiated from within and as a result, employee training was poor. It was also apparent that the human resources department did not have training policy to guide them in training, but they largely relied on the circular from the ministry to guide only when need be. It was further found out that important aspects such as planning, implementation and evaluation of staff training, essentials in effective management of any staff training programme, were lacking.

According to Kouhy *et al.* (2009) training is one of the main Human Resource policies all organizations should have in order to maximize the benefits reaped from training. Similarly, Beckman (2009)) noted that organizations 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. All these factors combined leads to poor performance and inefficiency in provision of essential public services.

- [1] A training programme can fail if the management can't convince the employees of its merit (World Bank, 2002). Employees must believe that the programmes have value and will help them achieve their personal and professional goals. This can only be realized if the organizations have a clear training policy and training programmes (Wayne and Robert, 2005). When designing training programs, therefore, it's paramount that all



the stakeholders be involved including employees. Stake holder analysis should be done to ensure gaps in local authorities employee's skills and knowledge are identified and appropriate training be provided in time.

[2] **3.1.2: Inadequate Budgetary Allocation to Employees Training**

As indicated in Table 1.0, a total of 62(31%) respondents raised inadequate budgetary allocation to employees training as one of the major challenge facing employees training in EMC. One of the respondents quipped;

"...how annual allocation for training is done is hardly known. Although expenditure on training is often captured in the annual reports, it is a common knowledge to employees that such money has always been peanuts and can't reach to employees...."

This finding is in line with the report by Wayne and Robert (2005), and Land *et al.* (2007) that despite employees being the most valued asset, many local authorities in Africa hardly provide substantial amount of money to employees' training to enhance their efficiency in service provision. According to World Bank (2002) this challenge has always contributed to the emergence of private firms to provide similar services to the public for a fee. Based on this finding, it is evident that employees' training is not as valued as it should be in an organization. Furthermore, it implies that it is difficult for EMC to train enough employees if they do not set aside enough funds for staff training to enhance efficiency in service delivery.

3.1.3: Loopholes in selecting Trainees and Irregular Training

It was evident from the findings as indicated in table 1.0 that 48(24%) of the respondent cited malpractices in selecting trainees for training as a serious challenges facing employees training in Eldoret Municipal Council. The researcher established that tribalism, favoritism, corruption and 'sex for training' are common malpractices in relation to selection of trainees in EMC. In addition, it was also established that there was no definite time for conducting training in EMC. This finding confirmed Mbutta (1999) research findings who also noted that such malpractices dominated the process of identifying training candidates in many local authorities in Africa. The lack of formal structure of selecting the trainees in the Municipal Council had given way to bribery for consideration for training amongst employees. One of the respondents quipped;

"....it is always hard getting trainings from the municipal council unless you have a close kin, someone in authority or a good package for some big people..."

It was clear that most selection processes were based on tribal affiliation, bribery and nepotism and thus putting deserving employees in a disadvantaged position of getting trainings. This was further complicated by the absence of definite time for systematic training. One field officer said;

".....I have always wanted to be part of the trainees. Unfortunately, I have never understood the criteria for selection. I probably could have been promoted by now because that is all I want...."

A good training programme is often done after a certain time interval based on the training needs of employees. Systematic training system is often preferable because it is participatory and often addresses the skill gaps of employees (Cole, 1996). Further probing of respondents also indicated 'sex for training' especially with women who may be interested in selection for training. For instance, one of the male field officers stated that;

"....you must always part with good sum of cash or must be having either a big person in authority or from the same tribe with your boss if you have a dream of being selected for training...it's even worse for women who are sometimes required to exchange goods for kind (sex)..."



From the foregoing findings, it was evident that several loopholes existed in relation to employees training in EMC. According to Dessler, 2003, such factors generally affect service provision in any organization. Local authorities including EMC should, therefore, take measures aimed at curbing these loopholes in order to achieve the municipal council mandate in the provision of essential public services.

3.1.4: Insignificant support to training by the EMC Management

As indicated in table 1.0, the researcher also established that a total of 20(10%) respondents raised insignificant support to training by the municipal council as one of the key challenges to employees training in EMC. In a similar study in Tanzania, Ngirwa (2006) noted that lack of top management support to training was one of the biggest problems affecting staff training and development. Although it is generally accepted that learning and the development of employee competencies are inevitably individual processes, these aspects are strongly linked to the organizational climate and to the social learning processes, which tend to provide ample opportunities for the managements of organizations to help workers further develop their career potential and grow professionally (Baitsch, 1998). This means enhancing employee competencies at the workplace strongly depends on the learning climate of an organization (Olbert-Bock, 2002). Consequently, autonomy in relation to work processes, communication, attitudes and support by superiors, as well as time for learning, are paramount in influencing the learning climate (Bergmann *et al.* 2000; Jenewein *et al.* 2002). Subordinates who receive sufficient information and support from their seniors, 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 behaviors than those who receive less support (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the foregoing discussion, the study pinpointed the core challenges constraining effective employees' training in Eldoret Municipal Council. These major challenges, based on the research findings included the lack of staff training policy In EMC, Inadequate budgetary allocation to employees training, Loopholes in selecting Trainees and undefined time for Training, and Insignificant support to training by the EMC. Such challenges often negatively affect efficiency in service provision in any organization. Therefore, in addition to the recommendations made by the authors in this research, it is of paramount importance that EMC find the solutions if it is to remain relevant in service provision to the residents of Eldoret town. The municipal council in conjunction with the ministry of local government should engage in a regularized formal need assessment of the employees in order to identify every employee need in terms of skills and knowledge. Departmental assessment of employees should be regularized in order to clearly understand the strength and weakness of every department and be able to address the gaps in time. This will be realized if a training policy guiding all local authorities is formulated and put in place in all local authorities. Adequate funds should be allocated by the municipal council and the ministry of local government for facilitating training programmes. The municipal council should increase their current financial allocation for training in order to build the quality of its human resource. There is also the need to have a formal structure clearly outlining the criteria in which the trainees are identified and selected for training. This will eliminate biased selection of trainees based on tribalism, 'sex for training', bribery and 'godfatherism'. The human resource department under the Town Clerk should recognize the actual benefits of staff training and hence accord it the right priority it deserves.

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