

Employees' Training and Development Practice in Selected Ethiopian Leather Footwear Factories (Evidence from Selected Shoe Factories)

Alebel Woretaw

Abstract

To survive and grow organizations must be constantly kept up to date through effective training and development programs. Employee training and development is especially important in industries with rapidly changing technology such as shoe industries. Having this in mind, the study has been conducted in Ethiopia shoe factories to assess employee training and development practices. The methodologies used to undertake the study were both primary and secondary data collection. Besides to this, the number of participants for this study was 336 employees. The finding of the study revealed that the shoe factories has weakness in training and development practice such as with respect to periodic and clear need assessment, selection criteria, training and development methods, training period's adequacy and training evaluation. However, training and development was as such good in relation to trainer's capabilities, stating in training and development objectives. Thus, the factories should keep up with their strengths and should alleviate their weaknesses by applying clear and scientific principles regarding human resource training and development.

Keywords: training and development

Introduction

It is undeniable fact that an organization, whether a production oriented or service rendering one, requires a well trained employee in order to attain its specific and general objectives within rapidly changing environment. It is the trained people that mobilize and make use of both the human as well as the non-human resources of the organization to achieve its goals (Brum, 2007).

Training and development can be defined as a planned learning experience designed to bring about permanent change in an individual's knowledge, attitudes, or skills (Noe, 2011). According to Subha (2011), training and development is any attempt to improve current or future employee performance by increasing an employee's ability to perform through learning, usually by changing the employee's attitude or increasing his or her skills and knowledge. Besides to this concept, training and management development activities are currently receiving increased attention in the industrial and academic communities.

Wilson and Hash (2003) stated that training is one of the most important strategies for organizations to help employees gain proper knowledge and skills needed to meet the environmental challenges. Employee training represents a significant expenditure for most organizations to compete with the existing environment.

According to Ahmad and Din (2009), employee training and development are based on the premise that staff skills need to be improved for organizations to grow. New entrants into organizations have various skills, but not all are relevant to organizational needs. Therefore, training and development are required for employees to enable them work towards taking the organization to its expected destination.

According to Vemic (2007), training should not be undertaken for its own sake. It must be geared to the objectives of the particular organization. It is essential to know what the present skills are and based on the agreed objectives, what training is required to meet the objectives. Training also lead the employee to the right mix of knowledge, skills and attitudes, help a job holder to perform tasks successfully (Kumpikaitè, 2008). Often effective training can produce productivity gains that offset the cost of training. Training is especially important in industries with rapidly changing technologies.

According to Tomas (2011) employee training and development in the industry particularly in less developed countries economy like Ethiopia, Kenya, and Zimbabwe is the need of the time undoubtedly. Hence, the study focuses on one of Ethiopian industry, leather footwear factories, for which employee training and development for this sector has become essential to achieve the national economic objectives. Despite this aspect, conducted researches are insufficient specifically on employee training and development in Ethiopia leather footwear factories. Thus, the intention of this study is to examine the experience of leather footwear industry in Ethiopia on employee training and development with a view to understanding the practices and problems being faced.

Research Methodology

The primary aim of this study is to describe the employee training and development practice. To achieve this objective, descriptive type of research design with a mixed approach was employed. The descriptive type of research design helps to portray accurately the characteristics of a particular individual, situation or a group

(Creswell, 2003). So that, in this study the descriptive research design was employed to describe the employee training and development practice. The mixed research method is considered to be very efficient in answering research questions compared to the quantitative and qualitative approach when used in isolation (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, by using a mixed approach it is able to capitalize the strength of quantitative and qualitative approach and remove any biases that exist in any single research method.

Source of data and collection methods

The necessary data for this study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected through questionnaires and interviews with managers and non-manager employees of the case companies respectively. Structured and semi-structured interviews were prepared and an interview was conducted with human resource department managers of the case companies Anbessa Shoe Share Company & Tikur-Abbay Shoe Share Company. The secondary data was collected from relevant documents, organization reports, newspapers and magazines that were related to the study. When necessary, materials were downloaded from web sites.

Sampling design

In order to obtain data about employee training and development two leather footwear factories were selected using purposive sampling technique such as Anbessa Shoe Share Company (ASSC) & Tikur-Abbay Shoe Share Company (TASSC). The companies were selected based on the age (experience) and availability of an organized data for the study. On the other hand, employees were selected randomly based on their list, taken from human resource department. Accordingly, 224 employees from ASSC and 143 employees from TASSC, a total of 367 employees were selected as a sample.

Methods of data analysis

In this study to analyze the collected data descriptive data analysis method were employed. Data collected through interviews was analyzed by using description of facts. Those data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS. Finally, researcher was validated the result by triangulating different data sources of information and examining evidence from the source to determine the accuracy of the findings. Adequate steps were taken to ensure the validity of the questionnaire. For its validity, content validity was determined. The results were presented through tables and charts.

Results and Discussions

General information of the population and respondents

Three hundred sixty seven (367), questionnaires were distributed to the employees and three hundred thirty six (336) were collected back. The rest thirty one (31) of them were not returned. Twelve (12) management and three hundred twenty four (324) non-management employees were participated with the objective of identifying employee training and development practice of the shoe factories. With respect to the position of the respondents 3.6% are managers and highest number (96.4%) of respondents' falls in non-manager employees.

Respondents profile by experience and educational status

The largest groups of respondents (61.3%) have a working experience of 1 to 5 years of on the current job. The second portion (25%) of respondents have served in the sector between 6-8 years and the rest 7.7% and 6% have served in the factories above 8 years and below 1 year respectively. With regard to educational qualification, the majority of the respondents are twelve complete and below (49.7%) and 47.9% of the respondents are holders of college diploma. Only two persons have the degree of masters and there are no PhD holders at all among the respondents. The rest 1.8% of the respondents are first degree holders.

Appropriateness of current position with specialization

63.4 % of the respondents were responded current position and specialization are most likely appropriate, 25.3% of the respondents were replied current position and specialization are inappropriate and the rest 11.3% of respondents were replied appropriate. It indicates that there is a problem of placing appropriate employees with appropriate position and increase the need of employees training and development.

Methods of employees training and development

Both methods, on-the-job and off-the-job, of training and development have been used. Most of the respondents (73.2 %) have taken on-the-job training which takes place at the work place. 12.2% of the respondents replied that they have taken off-the-job training which is conducted outside the job to develop the skills of manager and non-manager employees. This includes training which was conducted in their venue, external training which was carried out in training institutions such as Leather Industry Development Institute (LIDI) and Leather and Leather Products Institute (LLPI). Moreover, abroad (like India) training is also given for some senior employees, especially product designers, although priority for abroad training is given for leaders or management groups. To the end, 14.6% of the respondents are replied that they have taken both on-the-job and off-the-job training given

by the factories itself and supportive institutions. The implication of the data is the emphasis of the companies in providing its employees on the job training more frequently and with less emphasis in off-the-job training.

Training and development evaluation process

The total respondents were 336, among these 12 of the respondents are working in the management areas where as the rest of 324 were non-managers working in different departments of the factories. Having this information, questionnaires related to evaluation process were distributed to both managers and non-managers and the finding reveals that the maximum of 45.5% of the participants were replied training and development evaluation is carry out after training where as a minimum of 22.6% of participants replied that evaluation is conducted before-training process. It indicates that less emphasis, before training evaluation, in identifying cost-benefit analysis.

Responses of management staff respondents

As it was stated in the general information of total respondents 12 questionnaires were distributed to management staffs and all of 12 were returned. All the returned questionnaires were completed and considered for the analysis.

The existences of periodic management development need analysis

The highest (66.7%) of participants were responded that the companies are not periodically analyze management development need by taking in to consideration of management as a need oriented effort and 8.3% said that we do not know whether the companies are analyzing human resource development need, and the remaining 25% responded that the companies are analyzing the development need periodically. This response implies that, the presence of problems in the footwear factories with respect to management training and development need assessment periodically in identifying the deficiency of employees' skill and knowledge.

Types of management development need analysis

As far as the theory is concerned, the dominant frame work for identifying organization's human resource development needs has been three category need analysis approach, namely, organization analysis, task (Job) analysis and person analysis (Miller & Osinski's, 2002). 41.7 % of the respondents revealed that both organization analysis and task analysis are mostly used in identifying management development need analysis and 16.7% of respondents replied that the factories are used person analysis. The response implies that, the factories are attempting to examine its management employees to determine the skill and knowledge the job requires before implement the training and development program. However, the companies are giving less emphasis for person analysis.

Relevance of management development in improving current job performance

42 % of the respondents were responded that management development they took so far was moderately relevant in improving their current job performance and 33% responded that it was highly relevant since it contributes to the improvement of their performance. The rest 17% and 8% of the respondent responded that less relevant and not relevant respectively. Thus, management development program in the shoe factories is encouraging in its positive contribution to the job performance of its leaders and companies. Because majority of 75% of participants responded that the presence of management development is highly relevant and moderately relevant.

Evaluation of management development program effectiveness

25% of the management staff responded that the companies are conducted evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the management development program, the other 66.7% responded as no evaluation takes place and 8.3% responded that they do not know whether or not management development program evaluation is conducted by the shoe factories. The response implies that there are problems in the shoe factories in relation to evaluation of human resource development since not all the management staff members are clear with the evaluation program.

Measurement criteria used in evaluating the worth of management development program

In evaluating the worth of specific human resource development programs measurement criteria should be identified and used with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of the program while it is going on and helping trainees to get feedback for their improvement and efficiency. As indicated the finding, ultimate value (41.7%) and reaction (33.3%) are the two most commonly used measurement criteria as majority of the respondents responded, and job behaviors and learning are also used by the shoe factories to some extent. The analysis reveals that most of the participants react to the learning experience by forming opinion and attitude about the instructor (trainer), the methodology, participation in the learning session and how well he or she liked the program. Moreover, how the companies are benefited from the training and development in terms of goal achievement, survival or growth (ultimate value) is considered by companies in evaluating the worth of management development program.

The level of content in management training and development program

The response related to the level of content to which the given management development are included as appropriate and desired management training content implies that the shoe factories are in a good attempt in incorporating the desired and relevant content of the program with a great note of improving the less percentage of training and development .This later on helps each management group in executing their management

functions effectively and efficiently which contributes a lot to the achievement of ultimate value of the shoe sector.

Responses of non-management employees

Employees training in their duration of stay in the companies

96% of the respondents have taken some sort of training in one way or another in their stay in the factories. This implies the attempt of the shoe factories in updating the skills and knowledge of the employees, which later on will contribute to the competency levels of trainees and organizational performance of the shoe factories.

The realization of training on the performance of trainees

The response clearly reveals that the training given by the factories to its employees has positive impact on improving their job performance as 81.2% of the respondents replied and the rest 18.8% feel that they do not see any significant positive change on their performance due to the training. It asserts the majority of the respondents have positive attitude towards the training program.

The need of employees on training

Majority of the respondents (87.3%) said that their skills, knowledge, attitude and performance needs improvement through training and the rest 12.7% of the respondents replied that they do not need improvement. This implies that, some employees have taken inappropriate training since they were not change in their performance as well as skill and knowledge.

Employees training as a main factor for the companies performance

Majority (73.1%) of the non management staffs believe that individual training is the key factor for improving the performance of the companies. In this respect, the companies are required to be engaging in continues employee training in order to take advantage of the improved performance of the trained individuals. However, 26.9% of respondents are replied training is not the main factor

Satisfaction of employees with the factors to be consider in training program

The majority of the respondents of the factories are not satisfied with the selection criteria, training methods and training period's adequacy of the factories, which are a clue for the companies to improve those elements and satisfied with trainer's capabilities and skills, and training objectives that indicates a good attempt with a sort of improvement in the areas. Also respondents are very little satisfied with training program content, appropriateness of training facilities and training evaluation and the training policy of the factories. This implies there are problems in the shoe sector regarding those aspects.

Conclusion

Regarding the training and development need assessment of the factories, organization analysis and task analysis are mostly used in identifying employees need with less emphasis of person analysis. Trainees are selected based on their academic qualification, length of service, annual performance appraisal, the perception of immediate supervisor and departmental manager and the decision of committee. That is, lack of transparency in this respect is the major problem of the factories. Besides to this, the factories are not periodically analyze management development need by taking in to consideration management as a need oriented effort.

Mostly, methods used by the factories to implement training and development program were on-the-job training methods with less attention for off-the-job methods.

There are institutions like LIDI and other affiliated organizations such as Ethiopian Leather Industry Association (ELIA) and Chamber of Commerce which provide for Ethiopian Leather Footwear Factories (ELFF) with various types of local training.

Evaluations, particularly before-training, have not been given much emphasis by the factories, since it is a means to assess the cost/benefit of the human resource training and development program to the factories. Most of the time evaluations are implemented after training and development program conducted.

The management development that they have taken so far is moderately relevant in improving their current job performance. Even though, effectiveness of training and development program is not evaluated enough that they have taken so far. Besides to this, employees are not satisfied with the selection criteria, training methods and training period's adequacy. However, they are satisfied with trainer's capabilities and skills, and training objectives.

As the study reveals that some employees are found inappropriate position, position with specialization. For example marketing department manger was graduated in accounting, and production department manager was graduated in marketing. And also there are employees that they were placed directly from grade ten and twelve.

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