Effects of Training Needs Assessment on Employee Performance in the Postal Corporation of Kenya, Bungoma County

Joseph Emwatok Ejakait

Abstract
Training needs assessment or needs analysis is the process of determining the organization's training needs and seeks to answer the question of whether the organization's needs, objectives and problems can be met or addressed by training. The purpose of this study was to establish the effects of training needs assessment on employee performance in the Postal Corporation of Kenya. The study adopted a survey research design. The whole population of 50 employees was taken as respondents. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics which gave frequencies and percentages. Correlation was used to generate results. The study found out that the organization did not carry out a training needs assessment before developing a training programme and subsequently selecting employees for training. The study concluded that despite the organization continuously investing in training, determination of individual training needs through training needs assessment was not emphasized. As a result most employees were not sure whether their performance was reviewed and how they were considered for training.   The study recommends that the organization should emphasize the need to carry out training needs assessment before the training.
Keywords: Employee performance, Information, Training.

Introduction

According to Goldstein and Ford (2002) needs assessment or needs analysis is the process of determining the organization's training needs and seeks to answer the question of whether the organization's needs, objectives and problems can be met or addressed by training. Within this context, they continue to say that needs assessment is a three-step process that consists of organizational analysis (e.g which organizational goals can be attained through personnel training? Where is training needed in the organization?). Task analysis (e.g.What must the trainee learn in order to perform the job effectively? What will training cover?). Person analysis (e.g. individuals need training and for what?).

According to Armstrong (2006) training is a formal and systematic modification of behavior through learning which occurs as a result of education, instruction, development and planned experience. He continues to point out that because of the practical implications of training, it is important to have training that is effective. He further states that studies have proven that more costly but effective training can save money that is wasted on cheap but inefficient training. Evans and Lindsay (1999) note that training impacts positively on employee's performance by generating benefits to both the employees and the organization they work for through the development of skills, knowledge, abilities, competencies and behavior.

In a research conducted on the causes of poor attitude to work among workers of both public and private sector organization in Bauchi State-Nigeria,Wasilu (2013 pp145) quoting from Haslinda and Mahyuddin (2009) suggested that public sector organizations had increased their concern with regards to the effectiveness of training and development since it is critical to enhance on the job performance in order to achieve Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for each employee. Ismail and Bongogoh (2007) in the same study opined that training and development program is a strategic function of human capital management which focuses on developing employee competencies in order to overcome daily, routine and short term problems.

According to Ivancevich (2010), training is a process that attempts to provide employees with information, skills and understanding of the organization and its goals. He further adds that training aids an employee to continue to make the necessary positive contribution to the success of employing organization in terms of his/her good performance on the job. To start this whole process is orientation and socialization of employees into the organization.

Thomson (2002) quotes from a survey carried out in the UK in 1996 which showed that the young employees of today value training and development opportunities over pay and perks. According to the survey seventy three percent (73%) of those surveyed said they would stay with an organization that invested time and energy in their training and development rather than move to a rival organization that paid more money but less investment in helping them to progress. In Korea, Bae and Lawler (2000) opined that training and development practices significantly affect organizational performance.

According to Barney and Wright (1998) present scenario of business world is characterized by a growing competitiveness, market globalization and technological advances in organization. They continue to say that the survival of an organization implies the prosecution of sustainable competitive advantage. They further add that the knowledge and skills of an organization's employees have become increasingly important to its performance, competitiveness and advancement. They contend that among the internal resources which can be

considered sources of competitive advantage is the human element mainly due to its intangible characteristics: knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Cooke (2000) describes performance as the accomplishment of a commitment in such a manner that releases performance from all liabilities laid down under the employment contract. He adds that efficiency and effectiveness are ingredients of performance apart from competitiveness and productivity and that training is a way of increasing individual's performance. Asare (2008) defines performance as employee effort. He continues to say that performance is measured in terms of input-output relationship and that it is the measure of the efficiency with which inputs or resources are utilized to create outputs.

Statement of the Research Problem

Firms that focus on shareholders and customer satisfaction realize the importance of investing in training and thus recognize the worth of employee training (Evans and Lindsay, 1999). Mullins and Laurie (2007) view training as being necessary to ensure an adequate supply of employees that are technically and socially competent for both departmental and management positions. He noted that many organizations however never make the connection between their strategic objectives and their training programs. As a result, much of an organization's investment can be wasted through training programs that are often misdirected, poorly designed and inadequately evaluated. He continues to say that these problems directly affect organizational performance. Despite the increasing effects of training on organizational employees, there is still increasing concerns from organizational customers towards low quality services (Debrah & Ofori, 2006).

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to examine the effects of training needs assessment on employee performance in the postal corporation of Kenya, Bungoma County.

Literature Review

According to Goldstein and Ford (2002) needs assessment or needs analysis is the process of determining the organization's training needs and seeks to answer the question of whether the organization's needs, objectives and problems can be met or addressed by training. Within this context, they continue to say that needs assessment is a three-step process that consists of organizational analysis (e.g which organizational goals can be attained through personnel training? Where is training needed in the organization?). Task analysis (e.g.What must the trainee learn in order to perform the job effectively? What will training cover?). Person analysis (e.g. individuals need training and for what?).

According to Cole (2002) if an organization has to justify its training expenditure, it must surely do so on the basis of organizational need. He asserts that organizations adopting a systematic approach to training and development will usually set about defining their need for training in accordance with a well organized procedure. He adds that such a procedure will entail looking at training needs from a number of different perspectives.

Goldstein and Ford (2002) note that conducting systematic needs assessment is a crucial initial step to training design and development and can substantially influence the overall effectiveness of training programs. They argue that the first step in managing training is to determine training needs and set objectives for these needs. There are a number of widely varied methods of identifying problems to be solved through systematic training. Professional training people are becoming more systematic in determining training needs. Although the method selected must be appreciated to the specific situation, it would appear that one or more of the following would be the most practical in many setting: interviews, questioners, group discussions and work samples-content analysis of jobs (Mc Ghee, 2000).

Dessler (2008) opines that it is futile spending time training an employee whose work is deficient because of insufficient motivation. He states that distinguishing between can't-do and won't –do problems is thus the heart of performance analysis. He further states that: First determine whether it is a can't do problem and if so its specific causes. For example: The employees don't know what to do or what your standards are; these are obstacles in the system such as lack of tools or supplies. On the other hand, it might be a won't-do problem. Here employees could do a good job if they wanted to. He adds that, ''perhaps the biggest trap that trainers fall into is (developing) training for problems that training just won't fix.

According to Belcourt (1999), Managers and HR staff should stay alert to the kinds of training that are needed, where they are needed, who needs them and which methods will best deliver needed knowledge, skills and abilities(KSAs). They added that' to make certain' that training is timely and focused on priority issues, managers should approach needs assessment systematically by utilizing the three different types of analysis: Organization analysis, task analysis and person analysis.

Organization analysis according to Belcourt et al (1999) refers to 'an examination of the environment strategies and resources of the organization to determine where training emphasis should be placed. According to

them, several issues tend to have widespread effect on the training needs of many organizations such as training in health and safety which is often driven by laws and court decisions; Mergers and acquisitions which consistently require that employees take on new roles and responsibilities and adjust to new cultures and ways of conducting business. Organizations typically collect data such as information on direct and indirect labor costs, quality of goods or services, absenteeism, turn over and number of accidents to use in the analysis.

Belcourt et al., (1999) view job analysis as involving review of the description and specification to identify the activities performed in a particular job and the KSAs needed to perform them. They outlined two steps in making this analysis: List all the tasks or duties included in the job, list the steps performed by the employee to perform each task. According to them, so far as the job is understood thoroughly, the type of performance required along with the skills and knowledge necessary for performance can be identified. The types of performance, skills and knowledge that trainees need can be determined by observing and questioning skilled jobholders and/ or by reviewing job descriptions. This information helps trainers to select program content and choose the most effective training method.

Wright et al., (2003) comment that Person analysis involves determining whether task performance by individual employees is acceptable and studying the characteristics of individuals and groups who will be placed in the training environment. They add that it is important to determine what prospective trainees can and cannot do so that the training program can be designed to emphasize the areas in which they are deficient. Commenting on determining training needs, they emphasized that in today's highly competitive business environment, undertaking program simply because other firms are doing it, is asking for trouble. Instead they added that a systematic approach to addressing bonafide needs must be undertaken. According to them training needs may be determined by conducting analyses on several levels: From an overall organizational perspective, the firm's strategic mission, goals and corporate plans should be studied along with the results of the human resource planning. The next step or level of analysis focuses on the tasks that must be accomplished in order to achieve the firm's purposes. Job descriptions, performance appraisals and interviews or surveys of supervisors and job incumbents are important data sources for this analysis level. Finally they agree that individual training needs must be addressed. The relevant questions are ''who needs to be trained? And what kind of training is needed?''

Research Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. Since the target population was small, the whole population of 50 employees comprising Management, Technical and Support was involved in the study. Questionnaires were the main data collection instruments. The research instruments were piloted in Kakamega branch of the Postal Corporation of Kenya in Kakamega County. To measure validity the instruments were given to the supervisor and the experts to evaluate the relevance of each item in the instruments to the objectives. To test reliability, the test-retest method was used whereby the questionnaires were administered to the same respondents twice. The questionnaires received from the field were scrutinized to confirm whether or not all the questions were answered. The data was then edited, coded and fed into the computer using the statistical package for social scientist (SPSS). Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Mean, frequencies and percentages were obtained for analysis. Correlation technique was used to analyze the degree of relationship between independent and dependent variables. The presentation of data was done using tables

Results and discussions

A total of 50 questionnaires were taken to the field for data collection .Out of 50 questionnaires 44 were returned successfully which represented 88 % of the total questionnaires. The study captured the respondents' demographic characteristics as shown in Table 4.1

Table 4.1 Demographic/ Back Ground Information

		F	%
Sex of respondent	Male	18	41
	Female	26	59
Age of respondent	18-25	11	25
	26-35	13	30
	36-45	8	18
	46-55	10	23
	55+	2	5
Dept of respondent	Mails	44	100
Designation of respondent	Manager	1	2
	Supervisor	5	11
	postal officer	26	59
	postal assistant	9	21
	Messenger	3	7
Years of service of respondents	1-4yrs	10	23
	5- 9 yrs	10	23
	10- 14 yrs	7	16
	15 - 20 yrs	6	14
	over 20 yrs	11	25
Highest academic qualification of respondent	KCPE/CPE	2	5
	KCSE/KCE	41	93
	A-level-KACE-EACE	1	2
	Total	44	100
Highest professional qualification of respondent	Certificate	31	71
	Diploma	13	30
	Total	44	100

On the gender of the respondents, the study found that 59.1 % of the respondents were female while males formed 40.9%. This showed that majority of the employees in the organization were female. From the findings which sought to know age brackets of the respondents, 25% of the respondents were aged between the ages of 18-25 years, 29.5% were aged between 26-35 years, those aged between the age of 36-45 years comprised 18.2%, 22.7% were aged between 46-55 years whereas 4.5% were above 55 years. Majority of the respondents were therefore between 26-45 years. Data regarding the respondent's department showed all the respondents (100%) worked in the mails department.

Concerning designation, managers comprised 2.3%, 11.4% of the respondents were supervisors, 59.1% were postal officers, 20 .5% were postal assistants while 6.8% were messengers. This indicates that a majority of the respondents were postal officers. On the number of years worked, the findings indicate that 22.7% of the respondents had worked in the organization for between 1-4 years, 22.7% had worked in the organization for between 5-9 years, 15.9% had between 10-14 years working experience in the organization, 13.6% had worked in the organization for a period of between 15-20 years while a majority of the respondents comprising 25% had worked in the organization for over 20 years. The researcher sought to know the professional qualifications of the respondents and the findings indicated that 70.5% of the respondents had professional qualifications of certificate level while 29.5% of the respondents hold diplomas. Most of the respondents were therefore holders of certificates.

The study further sought the opinion of respondents on various constructs of training needs assessment and how they affected employee performance. The respondents were asked to comment on the extent to which they agreed with statements on the issue on a likert scale ranging from 1- strongly agree to 5- strongly disagree as shown in Table 4.2

Table 4.2 Results on Training Needs Assessment

Statement	SA		A		NS		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Determination of training needs helps in the attainment of set targets	12	27	4	9	2	5	5	11	21	48
Person analysis improves work quality	24	55	10	22	3	7	3	7	4	9
Organizational analysis contributes to increased work output	11	25	8	18	7	16	5	11	13	30
Content analysis contributes to increased employee job satisfaction	16	37	8	18	5	11	7	16	8	18
Training Needs Assessment Is Conducted	9	21	6	14	7	16	5	11	17	39
Training Needs Assessment Improves Performance	9	21	8	18	6	37	4	9	17	39
Total	81	185	44	91	30	91	29	65	90	183
Average	14	30.8	7	15	5	15	5	10.8	13	31

The researcher gave employees six statements to examine their organization's programmes on training needs assessment. On the statement whether determination of training needs helps in attainment of set targets, 59% disagreed, 5% were not sure while 36% agreed. On the statement as to whether person analysis improves work quality, 16% disagreed, 7% were not sure, while 77% agreed. On the third statement as to whether organization analysis increased work output, 41% disagreed, 16% were not sure while 43% agreed. Statement four had 34% disagreeing, 11% were not sure while 55% agreed. On statement five whether the organization conducts a systematic needs assessment 50% disagreed, 16% were not sure while 34% agreed.

On the last statement as to whether training needs assessment greatly improved employee performance 47% disagreed, 14% were not sure, while 39% agreed.

On average 41.3% disagreed, 11.4% were not sure while 47.4% agreed. These results indicated that the training assessment in the organization was not adequately done. Employees showed mixed opinion as to whether their organization carried out a training needs assessment before developing a training programme and subsequently selecting them for training since those who disagreed (41.3% were almost equal to those who agreed (47.7%). This contradicts Goldstein and Ford (2002) who noted that conducting a systematic needs assessment is a crucial initial step to training, design and development and can substantially influence the overall effectiveness of training programs. It further contradicts Belcourt (1999) who stated that managers and HR staff should stay alert to the kinds of training that are needed, where they are needed, who needs them and which methods will best deliver needed knowledge, skills and abilities(KSAs).

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that despite the organization continuously investing in training, determination of individual training needs through training needs assessment was not emphasized. As a result most employees were not sure whether their performance was reviewed and how they were considered for training.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the effectiveness of training programmes, the researcher recommends that the organization should emphasize the need to undertake training needs assessment before implementing training programmes.

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