

The Effectiveness of Training and Development in Organisations: A Case Study of Together- As- One Cooperative Society in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The present study's aim was to assess the effectiveness of training and development of employees in organisations with specific reference to a cooperative society in Zimbabwe. The study employed the qualitative methodology and the population was made up of all the (95) workers at Together- As- One- Cooperative Society which is based in Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. The purposive sampling was used to arrive at a sample of 2 managers and 8 general employees. A structured interview guide was used to generate the data and this data is presented in themes. The study revealed that Together –As- One- Cooperative Society was still stuck in some anachronistic traditional method of assessing training needs. It was also revealed that employees were not given opportunities by the cooperative society to train and develop themselves. The study recommends that the cooperative society should consult all employees regarding their training requirements. The society should also devise a well defined plan for training and developing its workers.

Keywords: Effectiveness, training development, organisations, cooperative society.

INTRODUCTION

Since independence, the government of Zimbabwe has promoted cooperative development in several ways [1]. It prepared relevant legislation; it provided a long-term basis for cooperative development through preparation of a cooperative policy paper in 1983. The government also increased the governmental staff to support and supervise cooperatives. However, in spite of all these well intentioned moves by the government to support the cooperatives, most of the cooperatives have since collapsed due to a number of reasons. As Illeris [2] postulates, most cooperatives collapsed largely due to lack of skills by their employees. It is a fact that most employees have some weaknesses in their workplace skills and there is need for a training program to be designed and implemented to strengthen those skills that each employee needs to improve [3]. A development program brings all employees to a higher level so they all have similar skills and knowledge in order to improve their performance [1]. Providing the necessary training creates an overall knowledge staff with employees who can take over for one another as needed. It is on account of the above information that this study assesses the effectiveness of the training and development program in the few left Zimbabwean cooperatives with special reference to Together- As- One- Cooperative- Society.

Statement of the problem

Most cooperatives have collapsed in Zimbabwe due to a number of variables, and yet the most important and yet often ignored reason is lack of knowledge and skills of the workers to effectively conduct business for the cooperative. Although Together- As- One- Cooperative- Society has survived up to this day, it is showing signs of fatigue just like the rest of the cooperatives that have become extinct.

Purpose of this study

The study sought to establish whether training and development is effectively done in organisations to promote their viability and continued existence.

Research questions

1. How does Together- As- One- Cooperative Society train and develop its employees for improved performance?
2. To what extent is the training and development offered by the cooperative impacting on its operations?
3. What are the challenges faced by the cooperative when implementing training and development activities?
4. How can the cooperative improve its training and development activities?

Significance of the study

The importance of this study stems from the fact that it seeks to expose the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of training and development activities in cooperatives in order to proffer suggestions for improving the training and development systems. The study also envisages to sensitise major stakeholders in the cooperative business about the importance of a sustained training and development programme.

Limitations of the study

The information generated was of a confidential nature hence the researcher experienced problems in accessing the data easily. The researcher assured the participants that the information would be treated with maximum confidentiality. The interview also posed a number of challenges including that it was administered on paper and the data collected had to be entered manually or scanned which increased the costs and also prolonged the analysis process.

Delimitation

The researcher delimited the investigation to the effectiveness of training and development activities of employees at Together- As- One- Cooperative Society using the qualitative research methodology. Purposive sampling was employed to arrive at a sample of ten (10) respondents. A structured interview guide was used as the sole instrument for generating data.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The benefits of training and development

There are a number of benefits that can accrue to an organisation through training and development. Cullen, Hadjivassilion, Kelleher, Sommerlad and Stern [4] state that 'looking at work from the perspective of its learning potential is fundamentally different to looking at it simply in terms of competencies needed in order to perform the job well.' Most organisations are looking for great curriculum vitae for their next hire but the real benefit can be drawn from exposing current human resources to training and development. The labour market is full of people with great curriculum vitae but when it comes to doing the job they often lack and that is where training and development comes in. Each recruit must be conditioned to suit a particular workplace. Puapongsakorn and Nipon [5] contend that training and development is expected to increase competency of the employees on working, and to result in an increase in productivity, a reduction of the operation cost, profit maximisation gained by the company, and a higher level of the company's competitiveness.

The world of work is becoming more complex and uncertain as new technologies and rapid change make it harder to predict occupational futures and very specific skills needed. What one spends a year studying

at a polytechnic may be overtaken by market events and developments before they can appropriate it to a work environment. Shora [6] points out that the introduction of new technology in both public and private organisations will generate a spate of new training needs. Everyone needs the capacity to adapt, change, and innovate. Training and development becomes a tool through which organisations and the Reserve Bank indeed, may gain competitive advantage (recruitment and retention of workers, development of innovative practices, and the production of new knowledge). This, the researcher believes is what prompted Zuboff [11], back in the day, to claim that "learning is the new labour". Since learning is no longer something that requires taking time out from being productive, learning has become the ultimate productive activity.

Billet [7] postulates that employees generally look at training opportunities in an organisation as something to compete for. This perception often gives rise to training related complaints from employees with some alleging they are being left behind, moreover, such competition will mar the needs assessment process. Eccelston and Pryor [8] suggest focusing on: learning processes; location and setting; purposes and content. Smith [9] suggests that some workers perceive training and development as an attack on their current performance and hence the need to explain the idea of learning on each occasion of training.

To increase organisational speed and effectively cultivate experience, that is, to learn and improve from experience continuously, corporate learning efforts must be closely integrated with the work at hand. Griep, Davis and Fowler [10] observed that in the current past, many organisations separated learning from the work by focusing primarily on event-based learning programs. As organisations cope with a changing workforce, globalisation and economic pressures, there is a growing desire to directly integrate learning experiences into the flow and context of daily work. Authors Griep, Davis and Fowler [10] add that learning is now the work and the work is the learning.

Learning from work is the knowledge and understanding needed to be effective in doing work in particular contexts, Costley and Armsby [12] take it further and say this is where a 'learned worker' is seen to be engaging in a curriculum driven by the exigencies of work. Since learning is no longer something that requires taking time out from being productive, we see learning at the heart of what we have come to know as productive activity. Illeris (2009) postulates that learning is generally understood as resulting in a permanent capacity change in people, therefore after each training intervention management must be able to see this relative change. When training and

development is effectively conducted, it results in learning.

Hager [13] postulates that if trained employees are observed to be failing to make some operational judgments in the exigencies of their daily work, the effectiveness of their training gets questionable. The moment an employee sets foot in any workplace they are expected to start learning. Bottomley [14] is of the opinion that “the workplace is necessarily a place of learning” hence the employer is expected to offer more opportunities for learning in the workplace, opportunities like, job rotations and secondments.

Barriers to Learning

Organisations embark on training and development activities in the hope that their employees will learn to be efficient on the job. However, there exist barriers to learning. There are barriers emanating from the trainer, from the environment, from language and speech and there are also process barriers.

Rae [15] is quoted in Shora [6] suggesting that both the planner and the trainer can inhibit the learning process. The trainer may include inappropriate content and confuse the learner. There is ‘must know content’, could know content’ and periphery content. The trainer is expected to dwell on ‘must know content’ for a training and development activity to result in learning taking place. Shora [6] propose that the trainer should be guided by training objectives to choose the most suitable training approach which does not become a barrier to learning in itself.

Rae [15] as quoted in Shora [6] stated that if the trainer is unskilled then training and development activities will not be effective. The author further suggested that such a barrier to learning can be overcome by conducting a training of trainers. Other barriers that may be encountered include accents, mannerisms and lack of subject knowledge in the trainer. Other barriers occur with the environment, issues like noise, heat, ventilation and space. Such problems should be anticipated and dealt with in good time before the training and development activity.

Language and speech barriers include blurred speech with the trainer, strong vocabulary difficult for the learner to understand, inappropriate words or phrases. Cultural differences must be taken into consideration when in come to language and speech in training and development activities. Shora [6] mentioned that different meaning can e ascribed to

different words and phrases in each group of trainees. Psychological barriers have to do with listening and understanding; they are expressed in attitudes and behaviours. Trainees may be shy to ask questions or participate, some may be aggressive if they were forced to attend a training activity in a process they were not part of. Some plainly resist change. Rae [15] observed that learning can be a frustrating experience hence learners’ motivation becomes key in training.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the qualitative methodology and made use of a case study research design. This methodology was chosen because qualitative research methods of collecting data such as interviews would give the individuals an opportunity to voice out their own views on the issue of training and development without being restricted by the pre-stated formulations based on the researcher’s own frames of references often guided by theory studied by the latter. The sample consisted of 2 managers and 8 general employees in the cooperative society. Purposive sampling was chosen because as Kumar [16] observes, its major advantage is that the researcher can use his/her research skill and prior knowledge to select respondents. Customary to the qualitative ethnographic research paradigm, the primary researcher himself was the instrument of data collection [17]. The researcher employed the interview for data generation. Data were generated by means of a structured interview guide lasting thirty minutes. The interview was chosen a Cohen and Manion [18] observe because it allows detailed information about personal feelings perceptions and opinions. However, the interview, as Bell [19] argues, has a weakness in that different interviewers may understand and transcribe interviews in different ways and interviews can be time consuming for example in setting up, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, feedback and reporting. In spite of the weaknesses highlighted by Bell [19], the researcher felt hat their strengths far outweighed their weaknesses. The use of a small sample is common in qualitative research, where the aim is depth and not breadth.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to establish the effectiveness of training and development of workers in cooperatives. This section is presented in two parts; namely demographic data and actual findings.

Demographic Data

Table 1: Category of respondents (N=10)

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Managers	2	20
Employees	8	80
Total	10	100

There were more ordinary workers in the study (80%) than managers (20%). The higher percentage of workers is a true reflection of what obtains in the cooperative society as the bulk of the personnel are shop floor workers. The advantage of having more

workers in the study is obviated by the fact that training and development is targeted at them and their perceptions are therefore the most sought after by the study.

Table 2: Distribution of research participants by sex (N=10)

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	7	70
Female	3	30
Total	10	100

There were more male respondents in the sample (70%) than females (30%). The cooperative society is a predominantly male society and the only 3 women in the study were selected as a result of purposive sampling.

ACTUAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

Identified Training and Development Activities

Together- As- One- Cooperative- Society has not been using a wide range of training and development activities. Records obtained from their training and development department showed the following as the most used training and development activities at the cooperative society; workshops and staff development sessions. Respondents limited that the cooperative society could use more training and development activities like for example employee exchange, expert coaching, e-learning, case studies among others. Most of the respondents highlighted the need for more emphasis on the use of new technology to use in the society. This tallies with observations by Shora [6] who points out that the introduction of new technology in both public and private organisations will generate a spate of new training needs. Everyone needs the capacity to adapt, change and innovate. The respondents also highlighted the importance of learning from work in order for them to be effective in doing their work. According to Costley and Armsby [12] learning no longer requires taking time out from being productive, since learning is at the heart of what we have come to know as productive activity. Illevis [2] postulate that learning is generally understood as resulting in a permanent capacity change in people, therefore each training intervention management must be able to see this relative change. When training and development is effectively conducted, it results in learning.

The impact of training and development

The study sought to find out from respondents what they felt was the impact of training and development activities in their organisations. The most common responses were; the ability to perform better in their specific roles; ability to provide needed guidance to colleagues; remaining relevant in the ever-changing

world of work and helping the organisation continue to exist as an effective entity. This information is congruent with observations by Moyo [1] who postulates that providing the necessary training needs and development creates an overall knowledgeable staff with employees who can take-over for one another as needed. Zumboff [11] argues that training and development becomes a tool through which organisations may gain competitive advantage in terms of recruitment and retention of workers, development of innovative practices, and the production of new knowledge. Billet [7] postulates that employees generally look at training opportunities in an organisation as something to compete for.

Challenges of implementing training development activities at Together As One Cooperative Society

Most employees revealed that they were not being involved in the training needs analysis process. On the other hand, management indicated that employees were reluctant to attend scheduled training workshops citing pressure of work. It was revealed that most of the workshops that employees were reluctant to attend were selected for them by their employers. This corroborates findings by Eccelstom and Pryor [8] who state that the first issue of that is often a problem in training is the active revulsion employees have to the idea of it. They expect it to be boring, intrusive n at least some of their personal time, and just an overall tedious experience. In worst case scenarios, they may also fear for their career should they fail (Pryor, 2003).

The study also revealed that most workers were not interested in the type of training that is offered. They indicated that they were not interested to sit through lectures and then tests in a classroom environment. As Smith [9] advises, requiring them to come in on weekends, travel to seminars or spend their break time in training is an excellent idea; if you want to demotivate and disgruntle your employees irreparably.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the background of the above findings; the researcher makes the following conclusions:

- Together as One Cooperative Society has not been using a wide range of training and development activities.
- Participants highlighted that there was need for more emphasis on the use of new technologies.
- Most respondents indicated that they would like to be trained and developed in the work place provided this did not interfere with their social lives.
- Participants were not being consulted during the training needs analysis process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings of this study, the researcher would like to make some recommendations:

- Management is encouraged to adopt a wide variety of training activities. The cooperative society should make more use of those activities through which the general staff find motivation to learn and willing to participate in.
- Employees should be roped in earlier into the process of identifying training needs as well as the selection of activities for training and development.
- The cooperative society should use different trainers or experts in order to for employees to benefit from individual uniqueness of these experts and where possible internal trainers could be sat for intensive training to boost their capacity to facilitate in house training.
- It is recommended that the cooperative society should use new ways of conducting training in order to motivate employees to participate willingly in the training programmes.
- Finally, it is recommended that excursions to more successful societies in the same field should be made to make sure that ideas are shared that may enhance training capacities of the cooperative.

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