

The Impact of Training and Development on Performance in the Public Service in Zimbabwe: A Case of Gokwe South District in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The researcher conducted a quantitative study based on a questionnaire as the data collection instrument undertaken with a sample of 100 respondents. The sample comprised of 32% of male and 68% female. Members of the Public Service Commission based in Gokwe South District of Zimbabwe's Midlands Province. The study revealed that training practices, methods and activities at the Public Service Commission were not in line with best practices regarding the planned and systematic nature of the training process. The study also revealed that Public Service Employees were not well informed about training and development programmes in the organisation. The study recommends that the processes involved in training be duly followed. The study also recommends that the Public Service Commission should help its staff to identify career paths and should guide them in the pursuit of higher qualifications.

Keywords: Impact, training, development, organisation, performance and Public service

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Public Service is an organisation responsible for the civil servants in Zimbabwe. The Ministry draws its mandate from Section 73 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. Section 73(i) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe states that, "There shall be a Public Service for the administration of the country". It is made up of Departments, all meant to cater for the needs and services of the Public Servants of Zimbabwe. The Departments are Human Resources Training, Industrial Relations, Communication, Image, Legal Services and HIV and AIDS [2]. Industrial Relations caters for the grievances, welfare, employment relations, Public Relations, Human Resources Training is responsible for training of all civil servants, Reforms is for the results based management programme, (RBM) and Skills Audit, Image & HIV is there to monitor and maintain the image of the civil service, Finance & Administration is for the financial and administration responsibilities to the Ministry, Audit for internal, Records management, Legal Services – deal with legal matters of the Ministry Communication – for all the marketing of the Ministry and exhibitions. The Ministry has functions, such as the processing of Public Service Training loans for Human Resources Development. Processing Funeral assistance for the deceased civil servants. In the Ministry of Public Service, the department responsible for the training of civil servants is the Human resources Training Department. The overall Ministry is headed by the Minister of Public Service with the assistance of the Deputy Minister.

The Ministry has a Parastatal which falls under it namely the Public Service Commission which is formed under Section 74 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. The Public Service comprises of Public Servants in Parastatals and the General Civil Service. Its functions are governed by Public Service Act

chapter 16.04 [1]. The Public Service Commission is made up of Agencies and not Departments as in Ministries. The Agencies are; Selection, Recruitment and Assessments – for the recruitment, selection and conducting psychometric tests, recruiting and promoting members to posts, uniformed forces – for monitoring the working conditions of the army and police, Air Force and Prisons, SSB – for processing of salaries for civil servants, Pensions office – for processing pensions for retired civil servants, conditions of service responsible for setting up structures that is posts in the Civil Service and Legal services responsible for setting up structures that is posts in the Civil Service and Legal services which provides legal advice to civil servants. Unlike the Ministries, the Public Service Commission is headed by a Chairman assisted by Commissioners, Managers and deputy Managers [2].

Statement of the problem

The performance of public servants in most departments in Zimbabwe leaves a lot to be desired. This is true especially with newly recruited civil servants to various portfolios. There is a public outcry about the performance of government workers and their attitudes towards their work and their clients. This then requires for a significant paradigm shift in the way how these employees carry-out their duties, and this can only be possible if there is a sustained programme of training and developing the civil servants.

Research objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To expose the importance of having skilled workers in an organisation.
- To reveal the merits of training and developing of workers for the organisation.
- To come up with a model for sustained training of workers in the Public Service Commission.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Armstrong [3] “defines training as the systematic development of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required by an individual to perform adequately a given task or job. Drucker [20] defines training as the act of increasing knowledge and skills of an employee for doing a particular job”. The term “training” indicates the process involved in improving the aptitudes, skills and abilities of the employees to perform specific jobs.

Training refers to some kind of organised event like a seminar, workshops that have a specific beginning date and end date. Cole [4], states that training is a learning activity directed towards the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills for the purpose of an occupation or task. Training is characterised as an instructor-led, content-based intervention leading to desired changes in behaviour’ [5].

Training is the planned and systematic modification of behaviour through learning events, activities and programs which results in the participants achieving the levels of knowledge, skills, competencies and abilities to carry out their work effectively [6]. Niazi [7] defines training as the systematic process of altering the behaviour and or attitudes of employees in a direction to increase the achievement of organisational goals. This means for any organisation to succeed in achieving the objectives of its training program, the design and implementation must be planned and systematic, tailored towards enhancing performance and productivity.

Most organisations have long recognised the importance of training to its development. As new technology progresses, making certain jobs and skills redundant, an increasing emphasis is being placed on the need for a skilled and highly trained workforce. Many of the jobs being replaced by machines have been of an unskilled and semi-skilled nature, and this emphasises the need for higher education and skills for those wishing to gain employment in the future.

This was also affirmed by Tracey [8]. They expressly indicated that the success of a training program depends more on the organisation’s ability to identify training needs and the care with which it prepares the program so that if the trainees do not learn what they are supposed to learn, the training has not been successful. They further indicated that training experts believe that if trainees do not learn, it is probably only because some important learning principle had been overlooked.

Bryan [9] wrote on the nature of learning and said learning is a term used to describe the process by which behavioural changes results from experience. They also said the fact that learning has occurred could only be inferred from a comparison of an individual’s

behaviour prior to the experiences of specific kinds of task.

Differences between training and development

Antonacopolou [10] conceptualises training as an organisational activity, which also comprises development, contrasting this with learning as an individual activity, thereby making a distinction between organisational and individual learning. Training and development are in format and purpose distinct activities, Warr [11] argues that “job-specific training seeks to improve effectiveness in a current job role, whereas development activities take a longer-term perspective and may extend into career planning and reviews of personal progress”.

Laird [12] writes that training “permits employees to perform to a standard whilst development on the other hand refers to ongoing, long-term intervention to prepare people and groups for futures. Thus, within the literature training and development appear different Practical differences emphasise how training is a focused and time-framed activity with clear organisational focus whilst development is open-ended and long-term; the role of managerial support being important for each activity.

Benefits of Training and Development

The purpose of training is mainly to improve knowledge and skills, and to change attitudes or behaviour. It is one of the most important potential motivators which can lead to many possible benefits for both individuals and the organisation. Changing technology requires that employees possess the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to cope with new processes and production techniques. According to Cole [4] training can achieve:

- High morale – employees who receive training have increased confidence and motivation;
- Lower cost or production – training eliminates risks because trained personnel are able to make better and economic use of material and equipment thereby reducing and avoiding waster;
- Lower turnover – training brings a sense of security at the workplace which reduces labour turnover and absenteeism is avoided;
- Change management – training helps to manage change by increasing the understanding and involvement of employees in the change process and also provides the skills and abilities needed to adjust to new situations;
- Training provide recognition, enhanced responsibility and the possibility of increased pay and promotion;
- Give a feeling of personal satisfaction and achievement, and broaden opportunities for career progression; and
- Help to improve the availability and quality of staff.

Cascio[13] looked at the training environment and the structure of organisations, and emphasised on the effects of internal political and cultural factors on training and development. Tracey [8] argues that many new employees can be equipped with most of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to start work, but others may require extensive training to ensure their effective contribution to the organisation. A majority however, will require some type of training at one time or another to maintain an effective level of job performance.

According to Krietner [14] states that no matter how carefully job applicants are screened, typically a gap remains between what the employee does know and what they should know. An organisation which desires to gain the competitive edge in its respective industry, needs among other things, extensive and effective training of its human resources.

Organisational performance

The programmes of training and development of employees allows organisations to achieve set targets and align culture to their mission and values [15]. If employees are trained in the public service targets can be reached as well as efficiency and effectiveness can be achieved. Specialised skill training to the employees not only increases safety and productivity but it also leads to higher job satisfaction which highly improves performance of the organisation.

In a study by Niazi [7] on training and development and its role in organisational performance the findings revealed that Human Resources roles are to establish and implement a high level road map for strategic training and development. The strategic positioning of training and development directly promotes organisational business goals and objectives, and thereby enhancing organisational performance. The findings that emerged from the survey are organisations must focus on continual learning and job trainings. Training and development strategy should be worked out to shape and implement a learning strategy that reflects the heart of the organisation’s learning cultures which positively contribute to organisational performance.

Importance of training and development

As noted by [16] an employee is a key element of the organisation. Therefore organisations, are investing huge amounts of money on employee development. Training and development is important because it:

- Creating a pool of readily available employees and adequate replacements for personnel who may leave or move up in the organisation.
- Enhancing the company’s ability to adopt and use advances in technology because of a sufficiently knowledgeable staff.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the quantitative methodology. The quantitative methodology was chosen for its ability to enable this study’s findings to be generalised to other organisations that provide services to their clients or customers [17]. The quantitative methodology was also found to be useful in this study because it enabled the researcher to investigate 100 civil servants’ perceptions on the impact of training and development on their performance. The study settled for the survey research design enabled the researchers to gather widespread perceptions of respondents in regard to the studied phenomenon [18]. The study used simple random sampling to select the 100 civil servant in the district to have an equal chance of participating [19]. The researcher used a questionnaire with close-ended questions. Closed-ended questions enabled the researcher to collect predetermined respondents’ opinions regarding the studied phenomenon [19]. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to the selected respondents at their work stations. The same method was used to collect the completed questionnaires. The questionnaire produced descriptive statistics around the variables under study. These statistics were computed and inferential implications from them derived and recorded.

Findings and Discussion

The study sought to explore the impact of training and development of Public servants in Zimbabwe. Discussions and findings are presented in tables, graphs and charts.

Table-1: Sex of Respondents (N=100)

Gender	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Male	32	32
Female	68	68
Total	100	100

Distribution of the respondents by sex

Sixteen respondents (32%) were men while thirty four respondents (68%) were men. This is because female employees make two thirds of the staff. The results reflect a nationwide scenario where more female employees than male employees are given preference to migrate to urban centres to be with their families. This was presented as a policy issue to curb the prevalence of HIV/AIDS.

Age of Respondents (N=100)

The distribution of respondents by age is summarised in Fig 1 below:

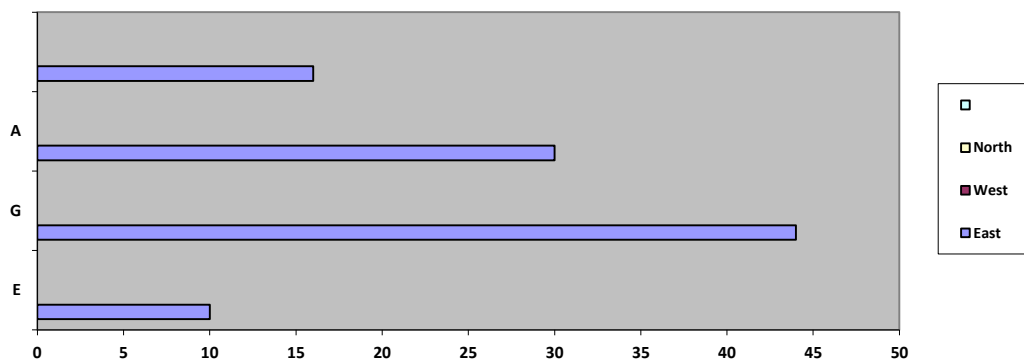


Fig-1: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Eight respondents (16%) were in the 45+ age group while fifteen respondents (30%) said that they were in the 35-44 age range. Twenty two (44%) respondents said that they were in the 26-34 age range. Only five respondents (10%) said that they were in the 25 and below age range. From the findings, the respondents are mature enough to provide meaningful and credible answers to the issues sought.

Distribution of Respondents by highest qualifications held (N=100)

The majority of respondents (15 respondents and 70%) reported have ‘O’ Level as their highest qualification while thirteen respondents 26% holds an ‘A’ Level certificate. Ten are diploma holder’s (20%) while six respondents 12% are certificate holders. Five respondents (10%) reported holding degrees and only

one respondent 2% had a Master’s degree. No one from the respondents has a master’s degree.

This suggests that people of different educational qualifications are present in the organisation. This implies that different levels of training which is planned and systematic may be required to improve their quality. The findings generally point out that most respondents do not hold some highest qualifications for the job at hand. The prerequisite entry qualification for any employee in the Public Service Commission is five ‘O’ Levels. Majority of the employees are clerks the entry qualification for a clerical position is five ‘O’ Levels that is the reason why most of the respondents occupy low positions.

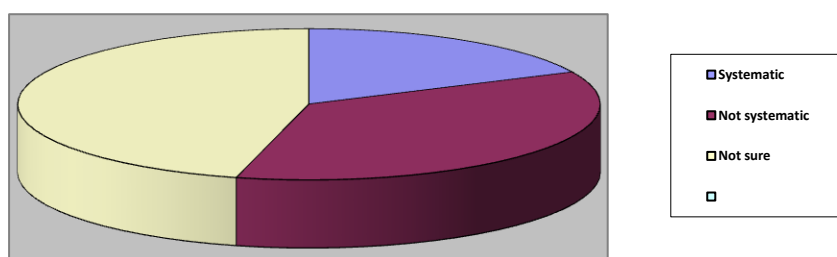


Fig-1: Planning and systematic of training programmes at the Public Service Commission

Twenty three respondents (46%) indicated that the training programs are systematic, 9 respondents 18%, indicated that the training programmes are not systematic. Eighteen respondents (36%) were not sure about the training programmes.

From the foregoing discussions, it is clear that training in the Public Service Commission has not been following the known and standard training practices and methods. Training is a planned and systematic modification of behaviour through learning event, activities and programmes which results in participants

achieving the levels of knowledge, skills competencies and abilities to carry out their work effectively [6]. For the organisation to succeed in achieving its objectives the training program, the design and implementation must be planned and systematic, tailored towards enhancing performance and productivity.

CONCLUSION

On the whole, the study sought to investigate the impact of training and development on worker performance and productivity in public sector organisations using the Public Service Commission as a

case study and findings and recommendations provided. The Public Service Commission will need to take action to correct its training and development activities, and make sure the processes involved are duly followed.

The findings of this research indicated that this nature of work depends mainly on high technological and sophisticated equipment. This makes continuous training and development of its human resource crucial and vital, taking into consideration the rapid technological advancement. It also organises training programs from time to time for its employees to update their knowledge and skills and to ensure that maximum efficiency exist.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study puts forward the following recommendations:

- Training and development is positively correlated to organisational performance. Therefore the Public Service Commission should plan and execute training programmes in line with the goals of the organisation and match employee's abilities and skills to enhance effective organisation performance.
- Management should constantly look at ways to improve the competencies of its employees. This will help to implement quality programmes hence improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation.
- Continuous training and development of employees is recommended because of its long term benefits to the employee and to the organisation as well. Continuous training is recommended to be at the best in class. The results of a continuous training are continuous improvement which enhances high performance.
- Organisations should encourage their employees to develop themselves. They should be sponsorships, study leaves for employees to pursue with their studies. Organisations should also promote on that job training. Employees are exposed to new ideas and they are offered an opportunity to know more about new developments in their professions.
- Employees must identify their aspirations and abilities, and through counselling recognise what training and development are required for a particular career information and training to its employees. Development and succession planning will also play a great role. Career progressions projection plans and training and development projections should be made available to each employee.
- Motivation generally seeks to boost employees' morale to work hard and thus increase productivity. It is against this fact that the researcher wishes to recommend that in instituting proper training and development programs, the Public Service Commission should initiate a policy for motivation attached to training.

- It is vital to evaluate training in order to assess its effectiveness in producing the learning outcomes specified when the training intervention is planned, and to indicate where improvements or changes are required to make the training even more effective.

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