RESEARCH ARTICLE

FACTORS INFLUENCING SELF INITIATED STAFF TRAINING AMONG MIDDLE LEVEL STAFF IN MOI UNIVERSITY- KENYA

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

In learning institutions such as public universities in Kenya, training of teaching staff is mostly emphasized in their manpower development policies. This is because training forms a major component of their job promotion. However, in recent past it has been observed that most non-teaching staff in many universities are engaged in self initiated staff training contrary to most universities training policies. This study therefore examined how job security, financial gain, desire to get a new job elsewhere, career development and university manpower training policy influence self initiated staff training among middle level staff in Moi University. Data for this study was collected from 100 Middle level employees of Moi University who were selected through multi-stage sampling technique using interview schedule. Quantitative data from closed ended questions were organized and analyzed using SPSS computer programme and presented in percentages. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were transcribed and analyzed manually. Inferential statistic such as Chi- square and spearman r correlation coefficient were used to test the relationship between variables. The study found that self initiated staff training was influenced by job security although the influence was not so strong. University manpower training policy was, however, found to negatively influence self initiated staff training while other factors such as financial gain, career development and desire to get a new job elsewhere did not have any influence. In conclusion, the study argues that self initiated staff training among middle level staff is influenced by desire of getting extra / more relevant skills which are deemed essential in meeting performance targets. Meeting performance targets is a major condition for continued job security for all employees who are in permanent and Pensionable terms.

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive world, most organizations in both private and public sector have increasingly started to appreciate the role of human resource as being imperative for organizational success (Armstrong 2001; Okumbe, 1999; Beardwell *et al* 1995; Decenzo *et al* 1989). The new concern for people is now becoming part and parcel of all organizations in their endeavor of efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. Management literature indicates that one way of showing concern for employees is the provision of training and development programmes. Training is a systematic modification of behavior through learning that occurs as a result of education, instruction and development and planned competence. It helps to reconcile the gap between what should happen, desired targets, standards of performance and what is happening and actual levels of performance (Adams *et al* 1987; Omoro, 2001). Training is a continuous process as long as an organization remains in business. Therefore training is central in the process of staff development in organizations and forms an integral part of the process of total quality management (TQM).

Training is further seen as the process of providing junior employees with specific knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to enable them to perform specific work tasks. This process`, according to Bain (1995) is a natural part of sequence of selection and induction of employees. If this stage does not receive sufficient attention from supervisors or managers, the possibility of using each individual capability becomes very remote. The scope of training and development as in most other activities in an organization depends on the policy and strategies of organization. This is because there are many organizations that carry minimum staff training and development because they prefer to recruit staff who are already trained or professionally qualified (Cole 1993). However, in some cases the non-teaching staffs in higher training institutions have found themselves in the profession due to their inability to gain entry into other professions. Therefore a consciously designed human resource development efforts is necessary if the work motivation and job satisfaction are improved to make all employees "willing employees." Consequently, Kamunge (1988); Bali *et al* (1989) and Ajay *et al* (1996) argue that educational administration and professional services should concern themselves with generating policies and strategies for training non-teaching

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staff. This is because they aid in the implementation of educational projects and programmes. However, this aid is constrained by lack of up to date and accurate skills. Okumbe (1999) and Bali *et al* (1992) also argue that in learning institutions, staffing is not only just a matter of having all staff positions filled. Instead the worker should be enabled to fit in various job demands which constantly change due to technological and managerial skills. Therefore human resource has to develop at the right time to help in preparing other workers who will fill the positions in future. This is done through strategic human resource planning. Employee training and development are therefore important procedures in building an effective work team that can reach a high level of productive efficiency. No organization can choose whether or not to train employees since all the new employees regardless of their previous training, education and experience need to be introduced to their new employer's work environment and to be shown how to perform specific tasks (Dessler,1997; Rao,1996). However, when this is not done it may turn to be costly for the organization either immediately or in future in work situation.

Consequently, Kamunge (1988) observes that in learning institutions, skills and knowledge of non-teaching staff can easily become obsolete in the same way as machines and technology. They need to be constantly kept up to date if an organization is to survive. Knowledge is increasing so rapidly and skills need to be upgraded so frequently that it is difficult for personnel managers to keep up with training needs. Higher education has been equally faced by the above problem, thereby creating a need for concern and calls for strengthening training and development of non-teaching staff. In this regards Cole (1993) notes that training is directed towards the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills for the purpose of an occupation or task. Consequently, any organizations adopting a systematic approach to training and development will usually set at defining their needs for training in accordance with a well organized procedure which embarks on different training needs from a number of different perspectives; the organization's corporate requirements, the department of functioning of the job, or occupational group and the individual employee. In most organizations training needs are caused by changes in technology, market legislation and manpower composition, work problems such as utilization of certain management tools, manpower wastage due to poor recruitment and induction. All these causes of training needs have necessitated most organizations to come up with training policies. These training policies in most cases define training needs, asses how training needs impact the achievement of organizational objectives and how they can be attained. Similarly, Moi University training policy is to ensure that the institution meets her training needs. However, it has been observed for quite some time now, most employees have been undertaking self driven/initiated training with a view to enhancing their skills without following the laid down training policy. For example, some support staff like secretaries and clerks, initially only educated up to fourth form, have of late enhanced their education to a master's and even PhD degree level:- qualifications that have no relevant relationship to their current positions in the University establishment, and which are not in conformity with the University man power planning policy. According to Moi university man power planning policy, training is mostly emphasised for teaching staff and

constitutes a major component in their promotion. Consequently, this new desire for most employees other than teaching staff to engage in self initiated staff training needs to be investigated. Therefore this study examines factors influencing middle level staff in Moi University to engage in self initiated staff training. Specifically the paper examines how job security, financial gain, desire to get a new job elsewhere, career development and university manpower planning policy influence self initiated staff training.

METHODOLOGY

Site of study

The study was carried out at Moi University in Uasin Gishu District, Rift Valley Province in Kenya. The decision to carry out the research at Moi University was due to the fact that it is a large academic institution with a big number of support staff who are pursuing/had pursued Self Initiated formal training.

Research design

The research was carried out using the case study method. The rationale of using a case study was to enable in-depth understanding of the factors influencing self initiated training among middle staff at Moi University.

Participants

Respondents for this study were 100 employees of Moi University. To participate, employees were to be middle level staff engaged in self initiated staff training.

Selection of respondents

Respondents for this study were selected from eight purposely selected departments of the university namely; Finance, internal audit, bookshop, catering and hostels, library, administration health service and estates. In identifying respondents snowball sampling was used. In this case one respondent was identified and used to identify another respondent in each department. In total 100 respondents were identified for data collection. The rationale for using snowball sampling was that most staff in self initiated staff training did so secretly for fear of victimization from the university administration.

Method of data collection

Data for this study was collected using an interview schedule. The interview schedule contained both open-ended and close-ended questions which allowed appropriate flexibility of the respondent as well as restrict them to relevant issues. Questions related to staff training were mostly open ended and the consistence of the responses of the interviewees was ensured through cross checking questions. Supplementary questions were asked where further probing was needed and recorded in a field notebook. Close-ended questions were asked to elicit quantitative data.

Techniques of data analysis

This study utilized the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) in the organization and analysis of quantitative data

from closed-ended questions. This data was presented in form of frequency and percentage tables. The qualitative data from open-ended questions and further probing was classified into various themes on the basis of their central focus for the purpose of presentation and analysis. The Inferential statistical techniques such as Chi-square and Spearman *r* bivariate correlation was used to test the associations that exist between various variables. In this study the data gathered from the field was integrated with available secondary data for the purpose of interpretation, which involved the search for broad meaning to answers given and making inferences.

RESULTS

Background data

Demographic factors

This study collected data from one hundred respondents of whom 53% were males and 47% were females. Of these respondents, 10% were aged between 25-30 years, 23% were 31-35, 36% were 36-40 and 23% and 8% were aged between 41-45 and 46 years and above respectively. These findings show that most of the middle staffs are aged between 31- 40 years which can be postulated as a pulling factor for most of them to engage in self initiated training in order to improve their careers before they retire as they have plenty of time to work.

Level of formal education

The research found out that prior to joining Moi University, 47% of the respondents had secondary certificates, 26% had post secondary certificates which included diplomas, college certificate, 22% had first degree and only 5% had masters' degree. All these qualifications are ideal for pursuing further studies as they are the minimum requirements for course pursued either within or without the university. Further, at Moi University, Middle level staff are placed, grade wise, between A and F; grade A being the lowest and F the highest. In this case, the highest level/position a certificate holder could be placed is grade B, (within the A to F scale). Most of the form four and form six certificate holders who, according to the study, constitute 47% of the respondents would likely seek additional qualification through S.IS.T. This additional qualification would ideally enable them move to higher grades through promotion and this must have been a motivating factor for their quest for further training.

Work related data

Work experience

The study found out that 46% of the respondents had been employees for over 10 years, 23% for 7- 9 years, 14% for 4-6 years and 17% for 1-3 years. These findings show that labour has been stable with regard to middle level staff at the university. Data from further probing revealed that labour has been stable in the university because most of the middle level staff lacked qualifications to enable them seek employment elsewhere. This scenario is postulated to change given the fact that most of them have completed or are about to complete their studies through self initiated training.

Placement grade wise

From the study, 81% of the respondents felt that they were wrongly placed grade wise. Only 19% felt they were correctly placed. The reasons cited by those who felt they were correctly placed grade wise were; their placement was commensurate with their current academic or professional qualification and others felt that they had enough experience to warrant them promotion to higher grades. Asked further if they were willing to change their designation given their perception about placement, 56% were willing to change and 44% were not willing. Data from further probing revealed that those willing to change their designation were mostly those who have acquired further academic or professional qualifications through self initiated training. This perception of wrong placement which results from further acquisition of academic and professional qualification may affect the morale of middle level staff in their work performance. This is vividly captured by Mr Masomo sentiments

> *..... I finished my a masters degree three years ago and I am still in the same job group yet those in teaching section are promoted almost automatically with every academic qualification earned. Worse still I earn very much less than those in teaching section even though we have similar academic qualifications.....*

Change of designation

The study found that 43% of the respondents had changed their designation since joining Moi University and 57% had not. Those who had changed designation attributed their change to extra qualification they had acquired. Some also changed because they felt that the cadre which they moved to had higher potential for upward mobility than their current ones, while others did so for social status or self esteem. On the other hand, those who had not changed designation, cited lack of openings within the university due rigid career development structure, inadequate skills or qualifications, nepotism and patronage.

Training related information

Completed Training or ongoing

The findings of the study indicated that out of the 89% were or are undertaking self initiated training since joining Moi University. Of this, 55% had completed their studies under S.I.S.T. and 45% were still going on with their studies. The findings further indicated that 49% of the respondents were doing first degree, 20% were pursuing Masters Degree, and 5% were doing PhD whereas 26% were pursuing other professional courses such as Guidance and Counselling.

Current training in relation to initial training

In this study 84% of the respondents trained in courses relevant to their initial professional training. This shows that most of the respondents were cognizant of their need to train further for their career progression. The remaining 16% took training in fields different from their initial professional training. The reasons for taking courses different from their

initial training were for financial gain, avoidance of duplication of courses and some wanted to diversify their career opportunities.

Self initiated staff training sponsorship

Data collected on sponsorship from respondents indicate that 74% of those who undertook/are undertaking S.I.S.T were on self sponsorship, 10% were on Government (DPM) Scholarship, 9% were sponsored by the University, 5% by both the University and self and 2% by Non Governmental Organization (NGO). These findings show that the university is not keen in sponsoring middle level staff in training. The explanation for minimal role/contribution towards middle level staff training is that under staff development most of the funds go to research and training of the teaching staff. Further, University manpower development policy, which is closely tied to ensuring that employment/promotion, is pegged on established positions/vacancies. Therefore the University could be weary of sponsoring more middle level Administrative staff to acquire additional/more skills for non-existent vacancies. However, as more and more middle level Administrative staffs undertake S.I.S.T, the University manpower plan is put under intense pressure.

Coping with Self initiated staff training and work

The study findings indicate that 91% of the respondents were studying/had studied without being on formal study leave and 9% were on formal study leave. Asked further on how they coped with their training without formal leave, 7% indicated that they worked late in order to cope with their work, 67% attended classes in the afternoon from 5 pm – 9 pm, 2% took work home, 9% worked during weekends, 9% worked late and also took work home, 3% attended classes in the evening, took work home and also worked over weekends, 1% did their studies through distance learning and 2% used off time.

University training policy

Most of the respondents acknowledge/or are aware that the University has a training policy but a few seem not to be aware of its existence or feign ignorance. Further analysis on the university training policy showed that, 22% felt it was relevant, 10% thought/felt it was irrelevant and 68% felt it was restrictive. Among those who thought the training policy was restrictive, 28% felt that it was not open to employees sponsorship and there was no diversity, 13% cited difficulty for one to get study leave, 44 % cited lack of study leave for their cadre and failure to be promoted after completion and 15% argued that even if the policy existed, it was s not clear on middle level staff training.

Factors influencing self initiated staff training

This study sought to determine whether job security, financial gain, desire to get a new job elsewhere, career development and university manpower planning policy influence self initiated staff training. Chi-square and spearman bivariate analysis indicated that there was no significant association between self initiated staff training and career development, desire to seek employment elsewhere and financial gain. However the study found that there was a positive significant

association, though not strong, between self initiated staff training and job security. Further, the university training policy was negatively associated with self initiated staff training.

Table 1 Factors influencing self initiated staff training

	r	χ2	df	Sign.
Independent Variables				
Self initiated staff training.				
Dependent Variable				
Job security	.237*	6.258	2	.044
Employment elsewhere	.007	. 219	2	.896
Job promotion	.120	1.572	2	.456
Career development	. – 102	5.040	2	.080
University training policy	. - 206*	5.214	2	.047
N=100,	p*<0.05,		p**<0.01	

In this study job security was found to be the most influencing factor for middle level staff to engage in self initiated staff training. Most employees are aware of scarcity of formal job opportunities. Thus most of them want to have good qualification to protect them from being laid off. Previously most layoff in most private and public sector had used academic qualification as a yardstick. Further, with the introduction of strategic plan with components like performance contracts in the university, most staff undertook self initiated staff training to ensure that their positions as employees were secure. Self initiated training staff training in this case enables the employee to have the necessary skills for meeting the various performance contract targets which is a perquisite for job retention. However, job security was found not to be a strong factor influencing self initiated self training as indicated by Spearman bivariate correlation analysis (r=.237*; p< .05) and Chi square of 6.258 at significant level of 0.044. This finding can be attributed to Moi University Human Resource policy which guarantees job security for all employees who are in permanent and Pensionable terms as long as they continue meeting their performance targets. Consequently, it can be argued that self initiated staff training was taken by middle level staff as a strategy of warding off lose of employment due to failure to meet performance targets. This argument is validated by the finding that 84% of the respondents were taking courses relevant to their initial professional training which formed the basis of their current job positions. Therefore it can be inferred that self initiated staff training was necessitated by the desire to get extra relevant skills which were deemed essential in meeting performance targets thus securing their jobs.

In addition, factors like job promotion, financial gain and desire to seek employment elsewhere were found not to be primary reasons for engaging self initiated staff training. This is because the university has well laid down regulations, criteria for job promotion and financial gain for middle level staff. However, the university training policy was found to negatively impact on self initiated training by non-teaching staff (r= -.206*; p< .05). This is because the university manpower training policy emphasizes to a greater extend training of teaching staff as it forms a major component of their job promotion. Further, the university manpower development policy was closely tied to ensuring employment or promotion was pegged on established positions/vacancies. Consequently, manpower development policy was more restrictive to middle level staff to acquire more/additional skills for non-existent vacancies.

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