ISSN 2349-7831

International Journal of Recent Research in Social Sciences and Humanities (IJRRSSH)
Vol. 3, Issue 1, pp: (179-186), Month: January - March 2016, Available at: www.paperpublications.org

Training Needs Assessment, Training and Developing Staff

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Abstract: **The aim of the study was to establish whether the Ministry trained and developed its staff at the Embassy in Washington D.C. and the two offices in Los Angeles and New York. The study also looked at ways that the Ministry can use in training and developing these diplomats and consular staff. In her study, the researcher found out that majority of the staff at the Embassy preferred their training needs assessment carried out from time to time. This was because there were those who would have liked to move up the ladder and this could only happen if this exercise was carried out in order to generate data that would provide Management with information regarding actual performance and what is required to successfully execute the strategic work plan of the Ministry. It, therefore, means that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will need to carry out an exercise of Training Needs Assessment in order to gather information on performance gaps.**

Keywords: **Training Needs Assessment, Performance Gaps, Training, and Development.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations are set up for specific purposes. To fulfill their mandates, organizations set their missions, goals and objectives in line with prevailing economic environment and technology as well as legislation and policies. In addition, organizations normally come up with strategic plans, work plans and contracts indicating targets to be met within a given time frame. A range of resources, including people, are mobilized towards realizing such targets. As organizations pursue their goals, however, their performance gets influenced by a number of factors both from within and without. This results into performance gaps and therefore, creates a need for corrective measures. To eliminate or reduce such performance gaps, it becomes necessary to undertake a performance audit to diagnose the types and causes of these performance gaps. Training Needs Assessment (TNA) is one such performance audit that brings out performance gaps. It specifically focuses on deficiency in skills, knowledge and appropriate attitude of employees.

2. TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Training Needs Assessment (TNA) is a critical activity for the training and development function. It links with the annual appraisal which relates to the jobs people do. It is a performance audit measure or process of gathering information on performance gaps that exist due to lack of skills, knowledge, appropriate attitude or value. TNA provides Management with data for comparing actual performance with what is required to successfully execute set strategic work plan of an organization. It further provides Management with an answer on whether skills and resources currently in place are adequate to close the performance gap to achieve set targets. TNA provides a basis for decision making, redefines their targets, refocuses only on aspects of the work plan that are achievable, and adopts relevant training interventions to equip employees with the capacity to handle current and planned objectives.

Training needs assessment is the first step in the establishment of a training and development program. It is used as the foundation for determining instructional objectives, the selection and design of instructional programs, the implementation of the programs and the evaluation of the training provided. These processes form a continuous cycle which will always begin with a needs assessment.

ISSN 2349-7831

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There are several sources of information which can be used for needs analysis and many ways of gathering such information. The choice of methods and sources depends partly on the nature of the problem and the purpose of the training. If the purpose is to improve an employee's present job performance, the trainer must start by identifying performance deficiencies or areas where improvement is necessary (Swanepoel 2001).[1].

There are three levels of analysis for determining the needs that training can fulfill:

i) Organization analysis focuses on identifying where within the organization training is needed.

ii) Operations analysis attempts to identify the content of training – what an employee must do in order to perform competently.

iii) Individual analysis determines how well each employee is performing the tasks that make up his or her job (Cascio 2003).[2].

2.1 Training Needs Analysis:

This is partly concerned with defining the gap between what is happening and what should happen (Armstrong 2003).[3].

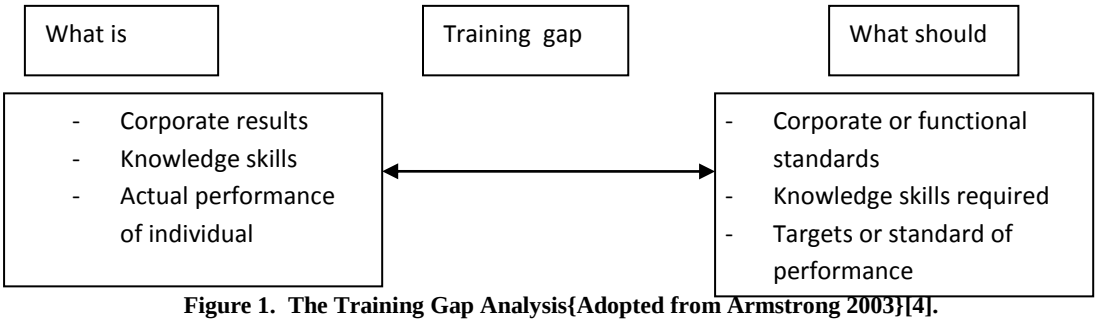

Figure 1. The Training Gap Analysis{Adopted from Armstrong 2003}[4].

The analysis of Corporate needs will lead to the identification of training needs in different departments or occupations, while in turn will indicate the training required for individual employees. The process also operates in reverse. As the needs of individual employees are analysed separately, common needs emerge which can be dealt with on a group basis (Armstrong 2003).[5]. The sum group and individual needs will help to define Corporate needs.

The following are examples of methods of gathering data for training needs analysis:

- Searching existing records by studying performance appraisals, performance records, productivity records and training records.
- Individual interviews with job incumbents, supervisors and clients.
- Group interviews.
- Assessment centres
- Observation
- Questionnaires
- Job analysis; and
- Performance tests (Swanepoel et al 2001).[6].

2.3 Levels of Needs Analysis:

Any thorough needs assessment effort must address three key areas: the organization, the job and the individual. In the first place, organizational assessment considers the processed training within the context of the rest of the organization. The following questions may be asked to highlight problem areas:

- What will the result be if we do not train?
- How does this training programme fit in with the organization's future plans?

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- Where in the organization is training needed?
- How are the different departments performing in relation to expectations or goals?
- In which department is training most likely to succeed?
- Can the organization afford this training?
- Will this training affect untrained people or departments?

An important consideration, however, is whether or not the proposed training will be compatible with the organization's mission, strategy, goals and culture. Possible factors that can create a need for future training are:

- **Product changes**: an increase in demand as a result of population shifts;
- **Economic changes:** availability of credit and loan facilities which could jeopardize small businesses;
- **Political changes:** examples are affirmative action and creation of new regional structures;
- **Sociological changes:** demographic changes, for example high urbanization;
- **Technological changes:** more efficient machinery and methods (Swanepoel et al 2001).[7].

Successful training begins with a needs assessment to determine which employees need to be trained and what they need to be trained to do. The training needs analysis phase culminates in the formulation of a set of objectives which clearly state the purpose of the training and the competencies required of trainees once they have completed the programme.

3. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Training and development is a function of human resource management concerned with organizational activity aimed at bettering the performance of individuals and groups in organizational settings. To ensure effectiveness of workers, an organization must train and develop its employees. Training and development are not synonymous terms as they do not refer to the same thing.

3.1 Training:

Training must have a purpose and that purpose can be defined only if the learning needs of the organization and the groups and individuals within it have been systematically identified and analysed (Armstrong 2008).[8]

Training is a learning experience that seeks a relatively permanent change in an individual that will improve the ability to perform on the job. It focuses on the individual's current job. Training aims to develop in employees the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for effective performance of their work and achievement of corporate objectives by cost effective means.

Training is a means to an end and an end in itself. For training to be effective, there must be precise definition of the requirements for effective performance through job analysis (Muchel'l 2006).[9]. Training attempts to close the gap by bringing employees up to but not beyond the desired standard or competence (Bratton et al 2003).[10]. Learning is based on a deficit model which assesses the gap between the behavior of employees and the set standards.

Table 2. Example of a training cycle in an organization

Steps	Management actions	Training department actions
Management goals	Management decides that it wants to reach specific target markets using radio marketing techniques	No decision making. Should pursue up-to-date knowledge of management direction and key goals.
Training needs identified	Makes a decision that a segment of a programme should cover target markets and use radio techniques to reach those markets	Suggests and recommends ways that training might best be used. Recommend ways for line managers to support desired performance.
Training designed and delivered	Communicate expectations to trainees including on-the-job application of skills to be learned	Provides advice on how to conduct precourse discussions with trainees. Designs a programme to enable students use radio-marketing techniques to reach targets.

(Source: Swanepoel et al 2001).[11].

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3.2 Developing Training Projections:

Training projections usually complement the organization's strategic plans so as to ensure availability of required human resources with relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes to carry out the organization's jobs at every given time. If the strategic plan spans over a period of five years, even the training projection will also run over a similar period of time (GoK 2010).[12].

Table 3. Development/Training Projection

Department/Division/Section ……

Compiled by…….. Designation…….Date……

Designation	Number to be trained	Venue of training	Duration	Source of Finance	Proposed course
		Either within the country or outside (specify country, if outside Kenya)			

Source: Field Study by Researcher, 2012 [13].

3.3 Skills Inventory:

A skills inventory is a listing of abilities, capacities, qualifications, and career goals of the employees. A skills inventory facilitates distinguishing and comparing available skills against those required so that the missing skills can either be sought from the open labour market or be provided through training.

3.4 Steps of compiling and updating a Skills Inventory:

It is crucial to gather and compile relevant information by proceeding along the following steps:

Step 1. Plan to collect data

To gather data on existing and required skills, one would need to:

i) Determine the scope of the job areas;

ii) Identify sources of data needed, including the target group/types, levels and number of people to interview;

iii) Prepare a work plan showing a schedule of activities during data collection;

iv) Identify and budget for resources needed for the exercise;

v) Identify and train your team;

vi) Decide on methods to use for collecting data;

vii) Design an appropriate data collection instrument;

viii) Reconfirm appointments with prospective respondents (GoK 2010).[14].

Step 2. Determine existing skills

One would need to collect data from two perspectives thus details of Human Resource skills currently in place; and information on jobs/tasks actually being performed. This will be possible by holding consultative discussions and interviews with authorized officers, heads of department/units; and supervisors to establish the true picture of staff in the organization. Information will include:

- Educational and academic qualifications of the people to perform the job/task;
- Relevant past experience and any specialized skills expected;
- Managerial and supervisory competencies (GoK 2010).[15].

Step 3. Administer Questionnaire

Administer the questionnaire to Heads of Department, Section Heads and Supervisors as well as job holders themselves.

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Step 4. Process Data

- Process data collected to enable you compile a Skills Inventory and tasks to be performed in the organization.
- Group the tasks identified to form given job descriptions.
- Classify jobs identified in the organization into occupations.
- Compile the job classification skills and human resource qualifications in your Skills Inventory.

Once the training needs have been determined and objectives stated, a training programme can be developed to achieve the stated objectives. In order to ensure the success of the training programme, appropriate training methods must be selected and suitable training materials developed to convey the required knowledge and skills identified in the training objectives (Swanepoel et al 2001).[16].

If learning that has taken place during training is not transferred to the job situation, the training programme has been ineffective. After the training, trainees should be encouraged to assess themselves against the set goals.s

3.5 On-the-job training:

On-the-job training is conducted at the work site and focuses on the actual job. On-the-job training should designed to form part of the training effort in an organization.

3.6 Off-the-job training:

Training offered at locations away from the job is designated off-the-job training, for example locations away from work, at a special training centre or at a resort.

3.7 Designing a Training Programme:

Through a training programme, employees are given an opportunity to acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for performing the job. The purpose for designing a training programme is that it helps the organization:

i) Reduce wastage of resources which would otherwise be spent on irrelevant and haphazard programmes.

ii) Achieve its set objectives.

iii) Focus on its training activities.

3.8 Development : the importance of human resource development:

Development is the growth or realization of a person's ability and potential through the provision of learning and educational experiences. Development focuses on the future engagements for the employee in the organization. It focuses on the growth of the employee. Development is more concerned with education to enhance ones ability to understand and interpret knowledge. The following are a few of the reasons why organizations should train and educate employees:

- To improve the performance of employees who do not meet the required standards of performance, once their training needs have been identified.
- To prepare employees for future positions.
- To prepare employees for forthcoming organizational restructuring or for changes in technology.
- To ensure competitiveness in the marketplace by retraining employees.
- To increase the literacy levels of employees.
- To benefit the individual employee. For example, the Human Resource Department can help the individual to make better decisions and increase job satisfaction; this in turn will benefit the organization.
- To improve interpersonal skills and to make the organization a better place to work (GoK) 2010).[17].

All employees regardless of level can be developed. Education, a key aspect of development is directed at the long term development of individuals.

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- Human resource development makes a major contribution to the successful attainment of the organization's objectives and that investment benefits all the stakeholders of the organization.

- Human resource development plans and programmes should be integrated with and support the achievements of business and human resource strategies.

- Human resource development should always be performed – related – designed to achieve specified improvements in corporate, functional, team and individual performance and make major contribution to bottom-line results.

- Everyone in the organization should be encouraged and given the opportunity to learn – to develop their skills and knowledge to the maximum of their capacity.

- Personal development processes provide the framework for individual learning.

- The prime responsibility for development rests with the individual who should be given guidance and support by his or her manager and the Human Resource Department (Armstrong 2008).[18].

3.9 Strategic Priorities:

As defined by Armstrong (2008), [19], strategic priorities for human resource development are to:

- Raise awareness of the need for a learning culture that leads to continuous improvement;

- Develop the competence of managers to become actively involved in learning that leads to knowledge creation;

- Expand learning capacity throughout the organization;

- Focus on all the organization's knowledge of workers – not just key personnel;

- Harness e-learning to knowledge sharing and knowledge creation (Armstrong 2008).[20].

3.10 Development Steps:

The steps to develop a learning and development strategy:

- Agree on the strategy –making team;

- Clarify organizational mission;

- Explore core values;

- Identify the strategic issues facing the organization;

- Agree on strategy and strategic plan (Armstrong 2008).[21].

Training and development encompasses three main activities: training, education, and development.

- **Training**: This activity is both focused upon, and evaluated against, the job that an individual currently holds.

- **Education**: This activity focuses upon the jobs that an individual may potentially hold in the future, and is evaluated against those jobs.

- **Development**: This activity focuses upon the activities that the organization employing the individual, or that the individual is part of, may partake in the future, and is almost impossible to evaluate.

In training, the following will be considered:

- Qualifications and academic achievements of the employee

Organizations operate a separate employee information system with the training and development of their staff (Cheatle 2001).[22].

Training is the planned and systematic modification of behavior through learning events, programmes and instruction, which enhance individuals to achieve the levels of knowledge, skills and competence needed to carry out their work effectively (Armstrong 2008).[23].

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4. PERFORMANCE VERSUS TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

(a) Personal achievement / a sense of tangible accomplishment on the job. Trained personnel can actually complete assignments in time with less stress, much motivation and with the right quality. Employees struggling with jobs they are not qualified for lack confidence and eventual frustration and blame others for their incompetence.

(b) Challenging work. Employees successful in their careers are motivated by challenging work/tasks. Challenging work tasks / tables improve performance and help them develop their potential.

(c) Opportunities. Career employee have more opportunities for upward mobility (vertical) those that who are interested in having a job. This in the long term reflects in better performance of work.

(d) Ability to accept changes. Career minded employees readily accept challenges and the change which comes with such challenges such as technological changes and economic changes and this leads to improved performance and efficiency (A. Desooza, 1995).[24].

As regards recruitment and retention, Beardwell and Holden (1997) [25], inform us that human resource management is supposed to come up with training and education programs and the researcher of this thesis is recommending the same for MFA's employees.

5. CAREER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

A career is a pattern or sequence of work roles of an individual. Career planning is the matching of individual employee potential, namely needs, abilities, preferences, personality and motivation with the organization's environment. Career planning and managing employee career transitions is a joint responsibility of the employer and employee (GoK 2012).[26]. To develop a career plan, the following processes have to be put in place:

i) Identification of individual employee needs;

ii) Identification of career paths, which should be created by sequencing jobs that cater for employee aspirations. This enables the employee to grow by moving up the ladder.

iii) Determine opportunities for employee development in the organization.

Career Development:

Career development is a process where employees strategically explore, plan and create their future at work by designing a personal learning plan to achieve their potential through learning, seeking opportunities, taking risks, and finding ways to contribute to the organization in a productive and motivated fashion. It encompasses acquisition of educational qualifications and certificates, career paths, self-actualization as an individual, shifting of careers and career growth, learning curve, accomplishments, family life, and recognitions (GoK 2010).[27].

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring is the continuous checking of the progress taking place during training while evaluation is the process of obtaining feedback on the effect or achievements derived from training activities. Monitoring and Evaluation are essential to the success of any training activity as they ensure control and provide information needed in deciding on retention or modification of the programme and for planning of future events (GoK 2010).[28].

The purpose of evaluating training is conducted for various reasons, namely to find areas for improvement and to generate an assessment of overall quality or value.

Four stages of Evaluating Training:

- Pre-training evaluation which is undertaken to ensure that the training activity proposed is relevant to the initial needs identified.

- On-going evaluation during the programme (monitoring). During training, activities are monitored to ensure the programme is on course.

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- End of training programme evaluation whereby the main purpose is to establish whether the set objectives have been achieved.

- Impact evaluation – the purpose of impact evaluation is to evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of the training programme in terms of its application to the work of the participants after they return to their organizations (GoK 2012).[29].

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