

EVALUATION OF TRAINING MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES AT DILLA UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: This study aims to evaluate the training management policies and practices at Dilla University. To achieve this goal, a cross-sectional case study was conducted, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to ensure a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the subject. Multi-step sampling techniques were employed, beginning with the stratification of the target population, followed by simple random sampling within each stratum. Additionally, judgmental sampling was applied for key informant interviews. A combination of primary and secondary sources was utilized to address the research questions, depending on the nature of the information sought. Comprehensive research instruments, including structured questionnaires and interviews, were developed and employed to collect data for analysis. The study's findings, presented through descriptive analysis, highlighted several key insights. The training management policy, an integral component of the university's human resource department, is designed to enhance employee quality and capability while ensuring the delivery of efficient and dependable services. Furthermore, the university's training practices have demonstrated adaptability to changes in the workplace, effectively enhancing the skills and knowledge of employees. However, in terms of employee selection for training, the study found that performance appraisal and seniority in service years are the most commonly practiced criteria. Notably, the study revealed deficiencies in training needs analysis. This issue stems from barriers such as the absence of a clear training policy and challenges in precisely identifying the required skills, knowledge, and personal attitudes. This assessment sheds light on the strengths and shortcomings of training management policies and practices at Dilla University, offering valuable insights for potential improvements and future development in this critical area.

Index Terms: Training Management, Dilla University, Assessment, Training Policies, Employee Development

Introduction

The contemporary world is evolving at an unprecedented pace, affecting all aspects of daily life. In this rapidly changing environment, the strategic utilization of personnel's capabilities has become a paramount concern for businesses seeking to remain competitive and adaptive. Consequently, the formulation and implementation of an effective training management policy are integral components of an organization's human resource endeavors.

A robust training management policy must be equipped to address the multifaceted implications of the evolving world of work. Professionals within the Human Resources Department must remain cognizant of the far-reaching effects of globalization, technological advancements, workforce diversity, labor shortages, shifting skill demands, the contingent workforce, decentralized work arrangements, and increased employee involvement, among other factors. Any alteration in one of these dimensions within the work environment can ripple through an entire business operation, underscoring the imperative role of the Human Resource Department in proactively crafting and overseeing a training management policy that is both effective and efficient.

"The term 'training practices' encapsulates the multifaceted set of activities employed by organizations to nurture and enhance the competencies of their workforce, as elucidated by Caliguri et al. (2010). This strategic approach is instrumental in not only identifying skill gaps within core competencies but also in devising effective solutions to address them, thereby complementing managerial endeavors aimed at aligning organizational resources with the pursuit of corporate objectives.

As highlighted by Miller et al. (2002), the formulation of a robust training policy serves as the cornerstone in the establishment of an effective training and development program. It not only provides the blueprint for shaping instructional programs but also guides their implementation and the subsequent

evaluation of training outcomes. Essentially, the training management policy acts as a critical decision-making tool, helping organizations assess whether training is the most appropriate response to specific workplace challenges, aligning with Brown's (2002) definition as a program of action or a set of guiding principles adopted by an organization to facilitate the achievement of its strategic goals."

Building upon the notion of the pivotal role of human assets in organizational success, there is a growing recognition that learning institutions, as described by Nolan (2002), operate as labor-intensive service industries. These institutions heavily rely on the social and technical skills, dedication, and commitment of their personnel for their achievements. Consequently, organizations, including educational institutions, must prioritize the development of robust training practices and policies. These mechanisms are integral for not only attracting and retaining competent employees but also motivating them to actively contribute to the realization of organizational goals. The synergy between effective training and the potential of a skilled workforce becomes central to achieving organizational objectives.

Statement of the Problem

In Ethiopia, the prevailing perception of training practices in many organizations does not align with their critical role as a cornerstone of organizational success. Instead, training is often viewed merely as a recreational activity or leisure pursuit, disproportionately benefiting a select group, typically associated with managers' relatives and friends. This perspective underscores the negative influence on training management policy within organizations.

The impetus for investigating this research topic within the specific context of Dilla University arises from the observed issues and shortcomings in the field. Dilla University, one of Ethiopia's public higher education institutions, achieved independent university status in 2006, with its history dating back to 1996. Despite having its own training management policy since its inception, the extent to which this policy is effectively implemented remains largely unexamined. This knowledge gap highlights the necessity for comprehensive studies aimed at addressing the shortcomings and challenges in the realm of current training practices and management.

Consequently, this study endeavors to assess the training management policy and practices at Dilla University. The preceding discussion lays the groundwork for the primary problems under examination in this research, which will be addressed through the following key questions:

1. To what extent is the training management policy designed to enhance employee quality and capability, ensure the provision of efficient and dependable services, and foster employee loyalty and commitment?
2. To what extent do training practices contribute to the enhancement of employees' skills and knowledge by effectively adapting to changes in the workplace?
3. To what extent is the training management policy implemented within the university?
4. What are the prevailing problems and challenges impeding effective training practices?
5. How is the evaluation of training practices conducted, and to what extent does it align with intended objectives?

This series of questions forms the foundation for the study's investigation into the training management policy and practices at Dilla University, aiming to shed light on potential improvements and solutions in this critical domain.

Scope of the Study

The delineation of the research scope serves to provide focus and manageability to the study. This research is exclusively centered on the evaluation of the training management policy and practices at Dilla University. Consequently, it is essential to emphasize that this paper does not encompass the training management processes of other organizations. The study's boundaries are clearly defined to ensure a concentrated examination of the specific training management policy and practices within the context of Dilla University, thereby enabling a thorough and targeted analysis.

Limitations of the Study

This study encountered several limitations, a common challenge in research, including restricted access to information and resources. Furthermore, the study faced difficulties in accessing a sufficient volume of literature, especially pertaining to the home country's context. This limitation constrained the depth of the literature review conducted, necessitating a reliance on foreign authors' works.

In addition to these limitations, the study employed a Likert scale-based questionnaire design. It's important to acknowledge that this type of questionnaire provides insights into respondents' relative favorability towards a given topic, but it does not quantify the extent of their favorability or unfavorability. These limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the study's findings and implications.

Sample Size

The target population for this study comprises all employees of Dilla University. The study population encompasses all selected employees from the source population. The study employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve its specified objectives, aligning with the nature of the research questions. Consequently, a sample is drawn from the total population to facilitate the research process. The specific details of the sampling size determination and sampling procedure would be elaborated upon further in the study.

1. Population is 1127 employees.
2. The desired sample size is calculated by sampling determining formula developed by Robert V.Krejcie and Daryl W Morgan.

$$n = \frac{NZ^2 p(1-p)}{d^2(N-1) + Z^2 p(1-p)}$$

Where

n = required sample size.

$Z^2=1.96$ the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841).

N = the population size, total permanent employees of the university= 1127

P = the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size).

d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion or margin error =0.05 (5%)

$$n = \frac{1127 \times 3.841 \times 0.5 (1-0.5)}{0.05^2(1127-1) + 3.841 \times 0.5 (1-0.5)} \approx 287$$

This yields a sample size of 287. However, since the source population is less than ten thousands (population <10, 000) sample size correction formula were used to determine the final sample size which is depicted here under.

$$nf = \frac{n}{1+(n/N)} \quad nf = \frac{287}{1+(287/1127)} \approx 229$$

nf = desired sample size (with population <10,000)

n =desired sample size (when population>10,000)

N = the total population size is (1127)

The calculated correction sample size is 229. Then considering 10% of non response rate, the final sample size is 252. This final sample size of 252 will be used for the study to ensure a representative and adequately powered sample for the research.

Sampling procedure

The sampling procedure employed in this study utilized a combination of techniques to create a representative sample from the population. Stratified random sampling was the primary method used, allowing the research to identify subgroups within the population and then randomly select the required sample from each stratum. Additionally, the study incorporated purposive sampling for the purpose of interviewing key informants. This blend of stratified random sampling and purposive sampling ensured a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to data collection, effectively capturing the perspectives and insights needed to address the research questions.

Data Collection

Data for this research was collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered through a combination of questionnaires (both open-ended and closed-ended) and interviews with key informants. The purpose of this primary data collection was to obtain the opinions of employees and managers regarding training management policy and practices, which were subsequently subjected to analysis.

Secondary data, on the other hand, was obtained from various sources related to the research topic. These sources included the organization's strategic plan and training policy documents, as well as data from published journals, relevant articles, industry magazines, bulletins, in-house newsletters, annual training reports, and books and journals on Human Resource Management. These secondary sources served as valuable references and supplementary data for the study.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis in this study followed several steps. First, the completed questionnaires from each study participant were thoroughly reviewed for completeness and consistency by the investigator. Each questionnaire was assigned a code for identification purposes. Data cleanup procedures were then executed to check for accuracy, consistency, and to address any missing values. Any logical or inconsistency errors identified during this process were rectified after referring to the original compiled questionnaires.

After collecting the raw data from the respondents, the next steps included editing, coding, classifying, and tabulating the data to prepare it for analysis. The principal investigator, along with an experienced data clerk, entered the data using SPSS Version 16 (Statistical Package for Social Science). Descriptive analysis of the data obtained from employees and management groups through the administered questionnaire was conducted. This analysis involved interpreting tables, creating frequency distributions, calculating percentages, and using measures of central tendency to present the study's results effectively.

Data Collection and Response Rate

From the 252 questionnaires distributed to the sample population, 21 were provided to the management group and 231 to employees across various faculties, departments, sections, and units within the university. Out of these, 20 respondents from the management group, representing 95.2%, and 205 employees, representing 88.7%, returned the questionnaires with complete information.

This data collection rate indicates a strong response from both the management and employee groups, providing a substantial dataset for the study. The results and their discussion can now proceed with confidence, drawing insights from the perspectives and experiences of these respondents to address the research questions and objectives effectively.

Findings

The findings, which have been meticulously derived through comprehensive data analysis, are presented below. These findings offer a deeper understanding of the key aspects under investigation and provide valuable insights into the training management policy and practices at Dilla University.

Training Management Policy

The study found that the majority of participants agreed that the training management policy, an integral part of the human resource department, is designed to improve employees' quality and capability as well as provide fast and reliable services. However, it was noted that it does not significantly contribute to employees' commitment and loyalty (as shown in Table 2).

Objectives of Training Management Policy

Among the various objectives of the training management policy, enhancing employees' skills and abilities received the highest agreement from the majority of respondents. This was followed by the objective of communicating new changes within the organization (as depicted in Table 3). These findings align with research by Al-Athari (2000), which emphasized the importance of developing employee skills and knowledge in organizational training policies.

Integration with Strategic Aims

Approximately half of the questionnaire participants, primarily from the management group, believed that training management policy is integrated with employees' needs and job requirements. However, it was observed that there is a lack of integration between training policy and the overall strategic planning and objectives of the university, and the remaining participants were unsure. These findings are in contrast to a study cited in Bailey (2008), which found that a higher degree of integration with an organization's strategic planning correlated with superior organizational performance.

Training Needs Analysis

The study explored the consideration of training need analysis before implementing training programs. It was found that there is limited consideration for training need analysis. Notably, no participant chose "never" or "not at all," suggesting that while need analysis is not entirely absent, it is not consistently conducted in a formal and regular manner. This contrasts with other studies where over half of participants reported regular training need analysis (e.g., Ikhlas, 2005).

Training Practices

The training practices at the university were found to be responsive to changes in the workplace and effective in enhancing employees' skills and knowledge. However, they were not fully aligned with the intended objectives. Around 50% of managers and more than 70% of employees identified challenges related to poor training plans, inappropriate training need analysis, and a lack of motivation among employees as the most severe obstacles to effective training programs. These findings were supported by similar challenges identified by Ikhlas (2005).

Selection of Employees for Training

Participants' responses indicated a high degree of practicality in selecting employees for training, with both performance appraisal and seniority in service years being viewed as effective criteria by both management and employees.

Evaluation of Training

The evaluation of training programs in the university was mainly done in terms of performance result reports, as confirmed by 60% of the management group and 52.2% of the employees. However, a significant portion, 75% of managers and 82.4% of employees, reported that training was not evaluated in terms of cost-effectiveness or alignment with the training policy and objectives. This suggests a lack of comprehensive evaluation, as other studies have similarly found that many organizations do not fully assess the benefits of their training programs.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study embarked on an examination of the training management policy and practices at Dilla University. The research sought to understand the efficacy and potential areas of improvement within the institution's training framework. While the specifics of the findings have been detailed throughout the study, the overarching conclusion is that there exist notable strengths and areas in need of enhancement in the training management policy and practices.

The training management policy at Dilla University holds promise in terms of improving employee quality and capability, as well as ensuring the delivery of efficient services. Nonetheless, the study underlines the importance of further integrating the policy with the university's strategic aims and objectives to fully realize its potential. Regular training need analysis is recommended to fine-tune training programs and ensure that they remain closely aligned with organizational goals. Additionally, addressing the identified challenges in training practices is essential to maximize their effectiveness.

As the research suggests, the selection of employees for training is generally practical, and the university can build upon this foundation. Furthermore, an expanded evaluation process that considers not only performance results but also cost-effectiveness and alignment with policy and objectives is pivotal. In conclusion, this study serves as a cornerstone for refining the training management policy and practices at Dilla University and, by extension, enhancing the institution's capacity to equip its workforce with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in an ever-evolving educational landscape.

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