



Employee training and development practices in the Tourism and Leisure sector in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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Abstract

Employee training and development is imperative for every organisation. With effective training and development in place, organisations stand a chance of earning competitive edge in the business environment. The main objective of this article was to assess the effectiveness of the training and development practices on employee performance in the Tourism and Leisure Sector. Participants for the study were employees from different organisations in KwaZulu-Natal. Data were collected using the questionnaire which sought both quantitative and qualitative data. The results of the study indicated that most of the organisations surveyed did not have well-defined training and development plans. The findings also showed that ineffective training and development systems reduce the performance of the employees. As part of recommendations, it was suggested that organisations should consider needs assessment prior to training employees. It has also been noted that training and development plans, procedures and policies should be communicated to the employees for them to effectively contribute to the success of the organisations through striving towards achieving the objectives of their respective organisations.

Keywords: Training, development, organisational objectives, employees, performance.

Introduction

Training and development of employees is inevitable for organisations that want to gain and remain competitive in the evolving business environment. In the turbulent business environment organisations are forced to swim with the tide in order to remain relevant and competitive, and one way of doing so is through employee training and development (Lyons, 2008). Training and development practices are meant to ensure that employees are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed for the attainment of the organisational current and future goals (Heathfield, 2012 and Mullins, 2007). This therefore implies that the success of every organisation revolves around the quality of its employees hence, the need to constantly update the employees' knowledge, skills and competencies. These aspects can effectively be enhanced through training and development processes which occur at different stages in different organisations.

However, the success of the training and development activities can be affected by a number of things. Among other things, the external environment which includes legislation and the changing technologies highly influence training systems Lyons (2008). Importantly, the level of education, knowledge and skills of those implementing the training activities, as well as those being trained, also determine the quality of the training. All these affect the quality of the training and development processes. Nevertheless, some organisations still do not have clearly defined training and development plans and policies. Although several studies have been done in the human resources management field, some gaps still exist on the aspects of employee training



and development, especially how this relates to employee performance especially in the developing countries (Ongalo & Tari, 2015; Kamoche, Yaw, Frank & Gerry, 2004). Additionally, while a lot is known about the developed world, training and development practices literature is sketchy in the SADC region, regardless of the effort put towards employee training and development (Afshan, Sobia, Kamran & Nasir, 2012; Debrah & Ofori, 2006: 440). In view of the above, the present article assess the training and development practices of organisations operating in KwaZulu-Natal, a province of South Africa (SA). Thus, a survey was conducted in the Tourism and Leisure sector, in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

The following section focuses on the theoretical aspects of the study. The review discusses theoretical issues on employee training and development. Next, the research methods, data analysis and conclusions are outlined. A discussion of managerial and policy implications, limitations and future research guidelines concludes the paper.

Literature review

Employee training and development

Training and development entails the pre-organised education and development programmes for employees, either as individuals or groups, with the sole purpose of benefiting both the employee and the organisation (Heathfield, 2012). Quartey (2012) defines training and development as a planned education programme aimed at sharing knowledge with the employees about the culture of the organisation. The process of training and development ranges from the job skill level to the workplace skill level and is aimed at developing employees: leadership qualities, their creative thinking and problem solving skills (Quartey, 2012).

In order to appreciate the aspect of training and development, there is a need for understanding the changes that result from the process. Employee training and development is a facet of the broader framework of human resources management. It is essential to note that training and development is not just about gaining new knowledge, skills and ability (Quartey, 2012). In the current society, training and development also includes the potential to encourage entrepreneurship, to introduce change to employees, to help them change their attitudes, to actively engage them in essential decision making processes (Paradise, 2007). Therefore, it cannot be adequate for the employees to simply add value to organisations based on their already existing knowledge, but they should also acquire new knowledge (Paradise, 2007). Employees should give as much knowledge as they receive from the organisation. This highlights the fact that financial incentives alone are not enough for employees', they also require investment in themselves in terms of their knowledge.

Training and development systems have both long and short term benefits to both the individual and the organisation. Individual benefits include the ability to effectively perform the tasks at hand, the accumulation of knowledge skills necessary for their specific jobs and the intrinsic motivation and stimulation (Keith & Frese, 2008). For the organisation, benefits include the attainment of organisational objectives, which will eventually put the organisation in a more competitive position. Other benefits include better productivity, increased employee performance, lower employee turnover, among other things (Elnegal & Imran, 2013; Kanki, Helmreich & Anca, 2010). The following section provides the organisational benefits of training and development.



Organisational benefits of training and development

Market growth

Training and development help organisations to remain solvent and competitive on the market (Ford, Kraiger & Merritt, 2010). In that view, organisations should create a learning environment that stimulates employees' knowledge of their organisation, as well as its competitive ability (Huselid & Becker, 2011). A correlation seems to exist between investing in employee development and revenues generated (Wanger, 2000). It has been found that organisations which invest more in their employees realise more revenue increase than those which invest less money on training and development activities of employees (Wanger, 2000; Ford et al, 2010).

Organisational performance

The effect of employee training and development on the effectiveness of organisations cannot be underestimated. Moreover, employees who perceive their organisation as caring for them through training and development usually improve their performance and attitude towards their work (Mehrddad, Mahdi & Ali, 2009). This highlights the assumption that human resource management activities also determine the attitudes and how employees behave in the workplace (Allen et al., 2003). It has been argued that employees positively influence their performances in the workplace when they perceive the organisation as taking care of their needs through training and development (Allen et al., 2003). However, Powell and Yalcin (2010) argued that the basis of any organisational performance stems from the emotional relationship that exists between employers and employees.

Employee retention

It has been shown that employee training and development help in employee retention, because employees value the opportunities that organisations offer them with regards to improving their learning (Powell & Yalcin, 2010). Therefore, a correlation exists between the training and development of employees and employee retention (Mehrddad et al., 2009). Experienced employees are important resources of organisations which can only be successfully retained by providing them with training and development programs (Mehrddad et al., 2009). Therefore, organisations should design effective training and development programs intended to escalate employee retention, a voluntary action by organisations to afford working conditions that attract employees for long term (Chaminade, 2007). Leonard (1998) argued that "To retain employees, organisations need to think seriously about their investment in training and development", considering that a conducive learning environment directly results in increased employee retention rates (Dillich, 2000).

In addition, an employee trained by the organisation is more likely to get a wage increase, another factor that binds the employee to the organisation. The increment might further limit the employee's options for alternative employment (Asfaw, Argaw & Bayissa, 2015). It is thus clear that the training might serve a dual purpose: skills upgrade and wage increment. Ultimately, leaving the organisation would not be a desirable option for the employee. Having discussed the benefits of training to the organisation, it is also essential to highlight how training benefits the individual employees.



Employee benefits of training and development

Employee satisfaction

Effective training and development programs are meant to enhance employees' skills. The process of training and development is also beneficial especially to the fresh graduates from the university who need to be properly prepared for the fast moving business atmosphere (Gerbman, 2000). Employees' development of knowledge and skills results in increased employee satisfaction and a decrease in employee turnover (Vemić, 2007).

Employee performance

Job satisfaction can positively influence employee performance (Satterfield & Hughes, 2007; Arthur et al., 2003). In a study involving mechanics, Barber (2004) found that on-the-job training yields superior skills. Because of the training they received, the mechanics were able to form two Jeep bodies with the use of a homemade hammer, a chisel and the oxyacetylene welder. Commenting on the efforts, Barber concluded that the mechanic profession requires "feel" in order to keep thriving.

Employee empowerment

The principle of employee empowerment is critical to every organisation. The concept of employee empowerment gives employees more responsibility and helps them to develop a sense of belonging, which invariably comes with self-confidence (Fortier, 2010). The more empowered an employee is, the more they become more effective and innovative in their work, while at the same time they do not fear experimenting something new (Vemić, 2007). This clearly indicates that employees should be given the space to work independently and in this way, they increase their work effort and eventually superior efficiency (Lawson, 2001: 8). Again, it shows that for organisations to succeed in the highly competitive environment, they should consider employee empowerment as a priority. Thus, different empowerment strategies can be developed and assessed in order to address the particular employee, as well as the organisational needs (Kennedy et al, 2013). This is essential because organisations and employees cannot be separated since empowerment is beneficial to both the employees and the organisation.

Employee commitment

Organisational goals can be achieved through the commitment strategy, an approach which attempts to build psychological connections between the employers and the employees (Kennedy et al, 2013; Scholl, 2003). Committed human resources stay longer in the organisation as compared to those who are less committed. A highly committed employee has got less desire to terminate his or her relationship with the organisation (Armstrong, 2010). This shows that the commitment philosophy reduces the likelihood of employees looking for employment in other organisations (Owens, 2006; Green, Felsted, Mayhew & Pack, 2000).

Effective training and development management

This section provides literature on some of the key areas that affect the quality of training and development programmes. The key areas include:

Top management support

The lack of support from top management is damaging to the success of any training and development program (Armstrong, 2010). For training and development programme to be successfully delivered, top management must be visible, offer continuous support throughout the implementation and post-implementation phases, as well as adequately resource and empower



the programme and the teams (Somers and Nelson, 2004). It is therefore clear that top management support in the training and development context goes beyond mere programme sponsorship and in fact, entails total commitment of the executives.

However, some of the personnel in top management do not consider training as critical and central to the organisation. They rather perceive it as non-essential and therefore do not allocate sufficient budget for training purposes (Asfaw et al, 2015). In other organisations, the training and development function is taken as a separate unit, far from the main operational bodies of the organisation. In most cases, the training manager is not positioned at par with other managers and therefore, the training manager cannot equally compete for staff and resources like other managers (Vemić, 2007).

Needs assessment analysis

It is the role of top management as well as the trainees to ensure that the knowledge and skills and knowledge acquired during training are applicable to the specific jobs. That is the reason for incorporating management into the planning and delivery of training (Enalga & Imran, 2013). Prior to training, top management has the responsibility to do thorough needs assessment so as to ensure that the training objectives are aligned with the objectives of the organisation, as well as the training needs of the employees. The needs assessment involves organisational analysis, which involves looking at the tasks to be done, the skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant for the particular tasks. Individual analysis of the employees is also essential (Enalga & Imran, 2013). Information on these aspects can be derived from the job descriptions, direct line managers, top management and the employees themselves. Above all, an effective training system is one that calls for feedback so that the organisation can continuously improve (Kennedy et al., 2013).

Clear training and development goals and objectives

Another problem affecting training and development is the lack of clarity between training and organisational objectives (Asfaw et al, 2015). Instead of seriously consider training as an essential component for the achievement of organisational goals, some organisations tend to relegate the training function a minor role (Armstrong, 2010). In that view, the resources allocated for training are not prioritised.

Evaluation of the training programme and transfer of learning

Most organisations do not bother to check if the skills and knowledge learnt during training are applicable to the job. If employees cannot transfer the learned skills to the job, the consequence is lack of improvement in job performance (Salas & Kozlowski, 2010). If not monitored, some employees would stick to their old ways of doing the job and this would give the impression that the training provided was a waste of resources (Salas & Kozlowski, 2010). Observing the employees applying the learnt skills is one way of evaluating the training programs. The effectiveness of training practices should therefore be measured prior to training the employees. Evaluation usually begins with trainees commenting on how well they liked the courses, and most organisations do not go beyond this.

Use of training institutions and management consultancy

Training institutions have rich experiences of training and development implementation experience. Companies have leveraged on the experience of consultants throughout the life of the training and development programme. However, it should be noted that the responsibility remains with the management of the training and development to guard the interests of the



business by ensuring that experts perform on their contracted deliverables. It should be noted that organisations should engage reputable and quality service providers to improve the outcomes of the training and development programme (Tsai et al., 2011).

This section has highlighted the relevance and benefits of training and development in every organisation. It also highlighted the critical role of top management in supporting the employee training and development systems in their organisations. Given this, the next section discusses the methodological procedures that were followed in this study.

Research methodology

Target population and data collection

The survey was conducted in KwaZulu-Natal, a province of South Africa. The province was randomly selected. The study targeted only employees who were being trained at a training company in Durban, during the time of data collection. Participants for the study were employees who belonged to different organisations in the Tourism and Leisure sector but, were undertaking information and technologies training. However, the researchers targeted all the 200 trainees/employees who attended the training in 2016. Thus, a census approach was used to collect the data. Data were collected between from March to April 2016.

The study used a questionnaire as the research instrument. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions that sought the demographics of the respondents, while the remaining parts had questions which sought information about the training and development systems in the employees' various organisations. Most of the questions needed the participants to assess the training and development practices in their specific organisations. This therefore meant that the nature of questions included were both quantitative and qualitative, so as to enable the participants to give details of training and development practices in their particular organisations. In that view, structured, semi-structured and open-ended questions formed part of the questionnaire. To ensure validity of the instrument, the researcher did a pilot study with a convenience sample of 20 respondents who were not part of the actual participants but were employees in other organisations. The researcher had to incorporate the respondents' suggestions during pilot testing. The pilot study was essential for the refinement of the survey instrument. To ensure that the questions were not ambiguous, the researchers clarified the questionnaire by rewording some of the words where it was deemed possible. It was after redesigning the instrument that the questionnaire was distributed to the participants.

The researchers distributed the questionnaires directly to the participants during the time they attended training, while the completed questionnaires were collected through the same channel. Respondents were given a week to complete the questionnaire and those who were not able to complete were given some extra time to do so. Clarification on some of the questions was done at the point of distribution and collection. It was made clear to the participants that participation in the study would be voluntary, while anonymity and confidentiality were also maintained. Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any particular stage, and the action would not result in any negative consequences. Within a week of distributing the questionnaires, the completed questionnaires began to trickle in.



Out of the 200 questionnaires that were distributed to the employees who attended training, 120 questionnaires were functional, giving a response rate of 60%. The data obtained from the respondents was analysed using Excel. The results were presented as descriptive statistics through the use of graphs, cross tabulations and other figures for the quantitative data that was collected.

Respondent profile

Gender and Age

Amongst the 120 participants, 63% of them were males while the remaining 37% were females. These statistics indicate that there were more males available for training than females, a scenario which is typical of the current business world where in most organisations operate, there are often more males than females. In terms of the age of the participants, 61% fell under the bracket of 26-35 years, with a few of 7% being less than 25 years old. Another category, 20%, had participants who were 36-45 years old. Eleven percent represented the 46-55 age group, while 1% of the participants was above 56 years old. The demographic information provided could be an indication of the fact that most organisations are employing younger people and eventually investing in training and development systems in order to enhance organisational productivity. The younger generation of employees could also be still flexible and can easily adapt to the ever changing business world hence, the need for top management to consider investing in them. Another reason could be that those above these age ranges do not necessarily need much of training because they could be more experienced in their jobs so there is not much need to spend resources on training them.

However, this notion could be debated if this is taken from another angle which would argue that the older employees are the ones who need more training, considering that their current skills and knowledge could be lacking because of the changing corporate world. In this technologically-driven world, older employees tend to struggle when it comes to the use of the modern technologies. This is therefore enough to argue that they need more training than their younger counterparts who are still fresh from schools and might be better equipped to deal with the current technological corporate world. Older employees are often digital migrants who were not exposed to technological aspects while the younger generation comprises mostly digital natives. In this view, it can therefore be argued that organisations should rather invest in training the older employees as they could be the ones who are lacking in terms of performance and productivity due to low skills and deteriorating knowledge levels.

Educational qualification

The information on educational qualification helps to establish the extent to which participants have prepared themselves for their job descriptions. An analysis of the data indicated that the majority of the participants, 43%, have gone up to diploma level, while others, 39%, indicated having certificates in different fields. The remainder of the participants, 15%, finished their matric but did not go further than that except being mentored through on the job training. About 3% indicated that they have completed a Bachelor's degree. However, some of them further indicated that they are furthering their education through part-time studies. This shows that the participants are willing to improve themselves in terms of their education, skills and knowledge within their respective areas of specialisation. Overall, the level of education of these participants could explain why skills training and development is essential to them, considering that a few of them have gone up to degree level and the majority of them having diplomas and certificates. However, the fact that the participants indicated to have been upgrading themselves in terms of their

education indicates their acknowledgement that in the business world, there is need to constantly upgrade the human resources in order to remain competitive. In this regard, most organisations also give their employees some study grants or scholarships so that they improve their knowledge and skills. This description clearly indicates that in order to remain competitive in the corporate world, human resources need to continue learning through various necessary platforms.

Job positions and years of service in the organisation

The job positions occupied by the participants ranged from human resources personnel, 37%, administrative staff, 33%, who are not professionally qualified but have been trained to do their jobs, computer technicians, 13% and many, 17%, from varied positions in their respective organisations. The information provided indicated that none of the participants were in the top level management. In addition, the results show that the majority (60%) of respondents indicated that they have between 10 and 16 years of experience while about 26% of the respondents ranged between 3 to 7 years of experience on their current jobs. About 6% of the respondents indicated that they had less than 6 months of experience. The level of respondents' job positions, level of education and years of experience seems to provide some evidence supporting the need for these respondents (employees) to undergo training and development programs so as to improve performance, as well as to ensure that the level of training they receive meet the requirements and objectives of their respective organisations. Further, it can be argued that effective training is crucial regardless of age, the job position and the number of years of experience, considering the rate at which the information and knowledge sector of the business environment is expanding cannot be ignored. For instance, the aspects of information handling in the organisations have greatly been affected since the advent of the computer (Quartey, 2012).

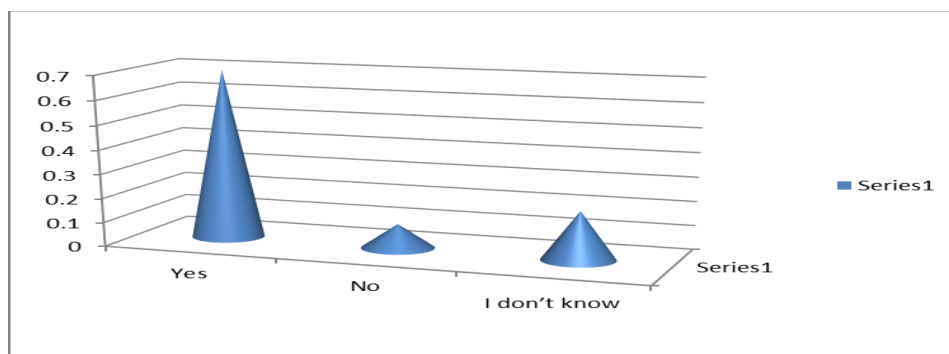
Data analysis and results

Training and development plans and objectives of organisations

Awareness of defined training plans and objectives

To ascertain whether respondents were aware of any training and development programmes in their respective organisation, a question was designed to capture this information. As such, responses for this question ranged from “yes”, to “no” and “I don’t know”. Figure 1 present the results of awareness of the training and development programs in their organisations.

Fig 1: Awareness of the training and development programs



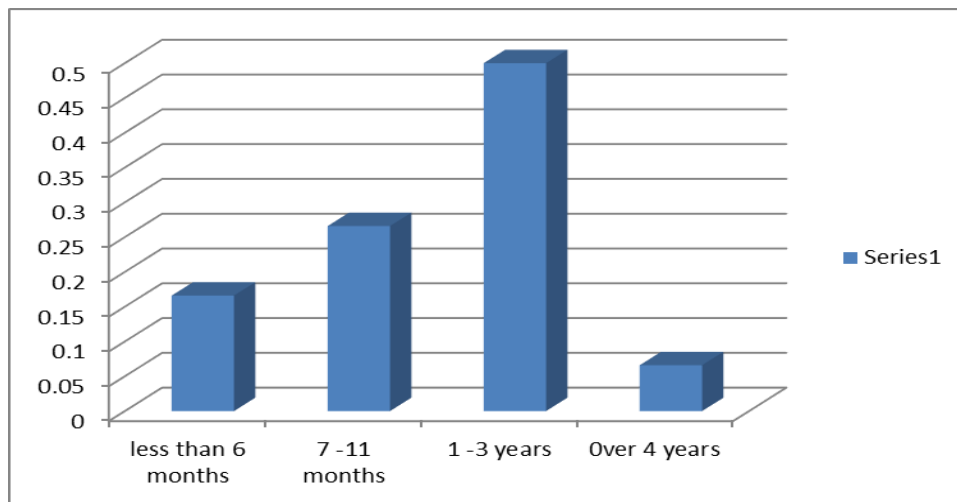
Out of the 120 participants, 70% of them knew about the training programs, while 10% and 20% indicated “no” and “I don’t know” respectively. The fact that some employees know about the

training plans in their organisation indicates that some organisations value that aspect and communicate it to the employees. However, the huge number of those who did not know of any training plans at their workplace raises concern about how organisations communicate and emphasise the aspect of employee training and development. An analysis of those who indicated that there were no training plans in their organisation also shows that the participants were not really sure whether they are there or not, so for them, the “no” option seemed a better response. These responses concerning the availability of training plans are not a good indication of how organisations value or emphasise the need for training because under all circumstances, employees should be aware of the training plans, programs and even the training policies (Ongalo & Tari, 2015).

Scheduling of the training and developmental programmes

Despite all the participants having indicated to have participated in some kind of training, the other question sought to establish how often they undergo training. Figure 2 present the results of when the respondents last attended a training and development (besides the current/ ongoing) programme. The results showed that about 17 % had last had training in less than 6 months ago, 27 % had training 7-12 months ago, others, 50% had last had training in 1-3years, while 6% last had training over 4 years ago. The fact that many of the participants have not had training in a long time could indicate that organisations do not prioritise employee training and development, an important aspect which is directly linked to employee and organisational performance and productivity. This could also confirm the assertion that many organisations perceive training and development of employees as expensive and therefore do not spend much resources investing in training. However, lack of regular employee training has been linked to reduced employee morale, quality and efficiency. This is true, considering the fact that skills become obsolete and therefore, there is always the need to upgrade the employee skills in order for them to be at par with the ever evolving business environment.

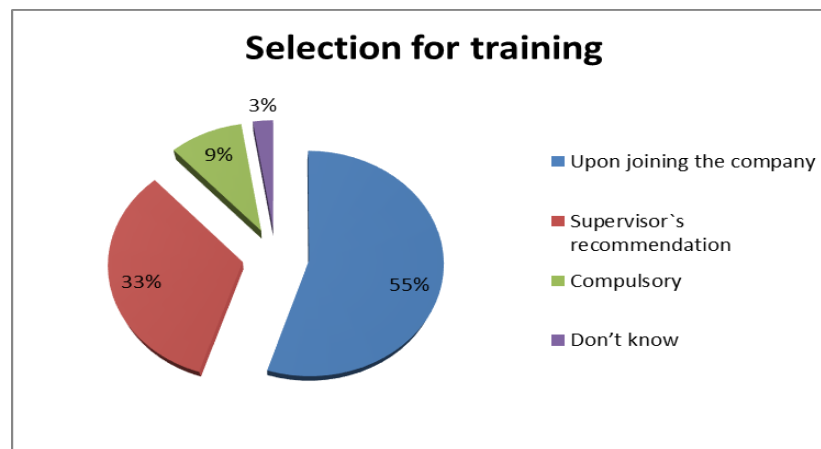
Fig 2: How long ago have you had training?



Criteria for selection of trainees

The results of the selection for the training and development programme are shown in Figure 3. The majority (55%) of the respondents indicated that they were selected for training upon joining the company, while (33%) were trained on supervisors' recommendation. Others, 9%, indicated that it was compulsory for all employees to get trained, while 3% participants did not know how they were selected for training. Unfortunately, none of the participants was trained upon employee request, despite one participant having indicated that she always requests training based on her needs when she signs her performance agreement. The fact that many employees do not request training could indicate that they might not be aware that they can request training if they feel they need to improve their skills or knowledge about something that might benefit the organisation. In that view, it is the organisation's role to encourage employees to initiate training requests when necessary. This also means that employees should be aware of training policies in the first place (Vemić, 2007). However, it can be argued that the reason why employees do not request training is the fear of being labelled as incompetent in their respective jobs hence, they prefer not to initiate the proposal even when it is necessary.

Fig 3: Selection for Training

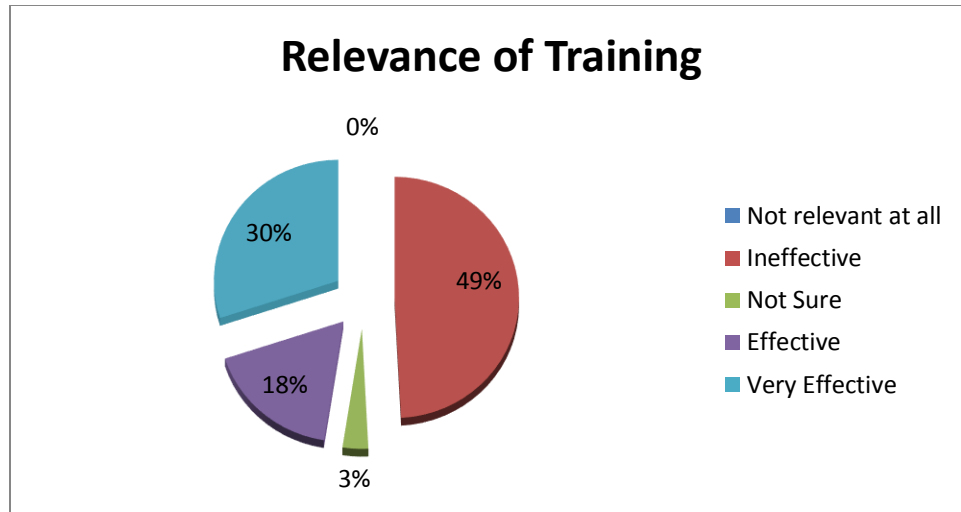


The effects of training and development on employee performance

Relevance of training on employee skills set

The results of the respondents' experiences about the training programs are presented in Figure 4. The results indicate that 49% of the respondents rated the training and development programme as ineffective, while 18% rated it as effective and 30% said it was very effective for their particular job specifications. The remainder was neutral. In addition, most respondents appreciated the previous training and development program and rated it excellent, very good and good, although a few of the respondents rated the training program as very poor.

Fig 4: The relevance of the training received to work



One of the reasons for the poor and ineffective training could be attributed to the fact that employees were not consulted as regards their training needs, instead the management “just imposes” for them the kind of training to participate in. Some participants indicated that the training did not change anything on their skills and performance hence, they rated it not effective.

Impact of training on job performance

The analysis of the study provides some mixed results. On one side, the study reveals that some of the respondents highlighted that the impact on their job performance was marginal (due to the ineffectiveness of the training). On the other side, some participants showed that they had benefited from the training, with one respondent admitting that:

... It really helped me in how I do my work, especially time management and making priorities. I now know that it is more important to spend time on the things that are more productive at work. I have to admit that the time invested in this training was worth it because what I learnt was very practical.

The above response clearly shows that employees are more productive when they are fully knowledgeable about what they are supposed to do how they are supposed to do it, and when they are supposed to do it. The skills and the knowledge that they acquire about the job are what makes them more efficient and effective. The response also shows that training can be very effective in improving job performance, changing attitude and behaviour towards one’s job. The aspect of time management highlighted above is very important in any work environment.

Responses to the question of how training impacted on the employees’ skills indicated that training enhanced their skills and technical knowledge, aspects which would eventually make them perform their duties in a better and more effective way. This implies that the purpose of training is to enhance the employee’s current job, whereas development is a long term preparation of the employee’s impending job requirements.

One respondent said that the training

... helped me boost my confidence, now I can do my job without doubt and with minimum supervision”



A few of the respondents showed some kind of job satisfaction, which could have been a result of the training they had received. This was indicated when one of the respondents said that he

... I have been updated on the use of technology in the workplace.

This clearly proves the point that a positive relationship exists between training and employee performance. Given the results of the study, the following sections endeavour to present some conclusions, implications and recommendations for various stakeholders, as well as areas that would need further analysis.

Discussion

The study highlights several findings which include:

Firstly, the fact that some participants did not know of any training objectives or a defined training plan indicated that training and development activities were done haphazardly in the respective organisations in the Tourism and Leisure sector KwaZulu-Natal. This is precarious when it comes to specifically aligning the training needs of the employees with the organisational goals. Lack of a systematic training plan is therefore a hindrance to effective training. Also, the results of the study indicated that none of the participants indicated that they underwent any training needs assessment, a situation which might discredit the value of the training. An assessment of employees' training needs is vital in determining the actual training needs of the employees, so, if prior assessment is not done, it is possible to bring in some employees for training that is not relevant to their job descriptions and therefore, would not add any value to the employees. This lack of training needs assessment highlights the lack of clear training and development guidelines and policies on the part of the organisations in the Tourism and Leisure sector, whose representatives indicated as such. It also shows the lack of the culture of training in the organisations, a situation which is detrimental to organisational performance and this observation is in line with Ongalo & Tari, (2015).

Secondly, the results of the study also indicated that some organisations are prepared to invest in training and development of their employees. The fact that some participants in this study acknowledged to have undergone some kind of training and were also attending training courses at the time of the study indicates that organisations do value the importance of training and development of employees. However, what still needs to be emphasised is the breadth and depth of the training and development programmes for them to make a positive impact on both the employees and the organisations. Some participants even suggested that regular training sessions should be done so as to ensure the employees are up to date in terms of their skills, knowledge and competencies. This concurs with Heathfield (2012), who also highlighted the importance of offering regular training to employees.

Thirdly, among other things, the results also indicated the importance of training in enhancing employee performance. The results of the study have shown that training and development programmes increase employee competencies and their ability to effectively perform their jobs. This is evident in some participants' responses who indicated that training helped them in managing and prioritising their work. This also confirms Khan & Ahmed's (2011) and Batool & Bariha's (2012) assertions that employee training positively influences organisational performance. Participants indicated that training and development activities enhanced the way they carried out their tasks and resultantly, their effectiveness. The notion resonates with previous studies that training programmes enhance the knowledge and skills of employees (Sultana, et al.



2012 and Appiah, 2010). Quarthey (2012) also noted a correlation between training, development and organisational performance. In addition, the analysis also unveiled other noteworthy trends related to effective training and development activities. Participants highlighted lack of funding, poor performance development plans, as well as lack of consultation with employees regarding their training needs as the major hindrances to effective training. Overall, the results of the study indicated that most of the employees were not motivated by the training and development systems in their organisations. Basically, their perceptions of the training and development practices in their organisations were determined by several factors which include ineffective and irrelevant training which does not match their job requirements, as well as poor organisation of the training sessions, perhaps as a result of ill-equipped training personnel.

Conclusions

The results show that training and development is an indispensable facet of human resources management, which also impacts positively on both the employees and the organisations. Importantly, the findings of the study reinforce our perspectives regarding the essence of training and development. Essentially, the study has shown the significance of ensuring that training and development systems are at par with the organisational objectives. It has also highlighted the importance of assessing employee needs prior to training. This goes concurrently with the importance of evaluating training and development strategies that would have been implemented and therefore, the room for continuous improvement.

Implications

The study has broadened insights with regards to training and development of employees. In that view, human resources managers are being challenged to ensure that they implement training and development strategies that would enable employees to be strategically competent enough to deal with the volatile business environment. Thus, the results of the study are important as they indicate what to consider important when designing training programs that are meant to increase employee performance. The study highlights several implications, especially for the management and the policy makers. Drawing from the findings of the study, the following recommendations are important for different stakeholders.

For management and leadership

Regular employee training is imperative on the part of the organisation. Prior to implementing employee training, it is essential to identify employees' knowledge and skills deficit in order to maximise employee and organisational efforts. This would also inform the training approaches that are most relevant to the trainees. It also implies the need to sufficiently budget for employee training. In the evaluation of training activities, it is also important to engage the employees themselves in order to get feedback from them and even in decision making processes. Eventually, the effectiveness of the training should tally with the organisational objectives.

Motivating employees to participate in training

Management should inspire employees to learn through training. This entails engaging with employees prior to training, then the conversations should motivate the right employees to participate, of course with the right anticipation. In addition, management should engage the training developers in determining employee needs prior to training. This also includes understanding the employees' current competencies and characteristics so as to get a sense of what they need to know. Training should thus be designed in such a way that by the end of the training, trainees should have a strong self-efficacy which in turn allows them to apply what they would have learned on the job.



For policymakers

Policymakers play a huge role in determining the results of training during the designing and reviewing of training policies. Training related policies should promote intelligent investments, implying that funding should be channelled towards training initiatives which are more likely to succeed. This ensures that the right skills would be developed. Policy makers should ensure that training programs are of high quality to ensure that employees enhance their skills according to set standards. Training and development strategies should clearly indicate the employee and organisational performance objectives, and these should be communicated to the trainees as well. They should also be current and being at the same level with the ongoing improvements in the business world. This means that policies should be regularly reviewed in order to ensure that they are corresponding with the current needs of the business environment and the employees as well.

For the employees

Employees should appreciate the essence of training as meant to improve their professional knowledge and skills. This implies the need to actively participate in training programs designed for them, as this gesture does not only benefit them as individuals, but also the organisation and the society at large. This also calls for employees to have a positive attitude towards training, being proactive and innovative in their efforts to enhance their skills.

Limitations and areas for future research

The article focused on the training and development practices in the Tourism and Leisure sector, in KwaZulu-Natal province. However, there are other factors that affect employee performance in any organisation. These include the reward system, employees' level of education, job satisfaction and employee motivation. These areas have not been explored in this study and therefore, can also be investigated to establish how they affect employee performance. Another study could also focus on the gender aspect, looking at how training and development programs affect men and women and see if they are affected in the same way or not. A study of this nature would add more insights to the field of training and development.

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