

The Implementation of Training and Development Programs in Civil Service Institutions of Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The role of civil service in socio-economic and political development of a country is unquestionable. In some countries, however, the civil service is not aligned with the prevailing ideological, political and economic changes as well as management theories. Moreover, in some countries, especially in Africa, the civil service is blamed as a major cause for social and political upheavals and economic crises because of institutional and capacity weakness. As a result, it is common to see many countries engaged in the reform of their civil service. In 1991, Ethiopia experienced political changes that resulted in the introduction of multi-party system, market-oriented economy and federal form of government. Accordingly, the government introduced civil service reform that includes the issues of human resource development under human resource management reform since 1996. Studies revealed, however, that the implementation process was not going well. This article, therefore, aims to assess the implementation of training and development programs in civil service institutions of Oromia National Regional State in Ethiopia. The findings reveal that though the government is committed in developing a system of human resource development, the implementation is not on the right track to fill the skill gaps evident in the civil service.

1. Introduction

The role of civil service in socio-economic and political development of a country is unquestionable. In some countries, however, the civil service is not in line with the prevailing ideological, political and economic changes as well as management theories. Moreover, in some countries, especially in Africa, the civil service is blamed as a major cause for social and political upheavals and economic crises because of institutional and capacity weakness. As a result, it's common to see many countries reforming their civil service (Paulos, 2001).

Basically, civil service reform is introduced with the intention to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, professionalism, representation and democratic character of a civil service, with a view to promoting better delivery of goods and services, with increased accountability.

In 1991, Ethiopia experienced political changes that resulted in the introduction of multi-party system, market-oriented economy and federal form of government that created nine (9) national regional states including Oromia National Regional State (Getachew and Richard, 2006). Accordingly, the government decided to restructure the civil service as part of its general political and economic restructuring programs (AH Consulting, 2010). As a result, to fit with changes introduced, the civil service reform program comprising of different sub programs was promulgated in 1996 to be implemented in civil service institutions throughout the country (ibid).

Human resource management reform comprising of different components was one of the sub programs under the overall civil service reform program. It includes, among others, the component of human resource development with the aim to build up a work force capable of effectively implementing government policies and programs (FCSC, 1997). Civil service institutions in Oromia National Regional State civil service institutions have been implementing the reforms including the human resource development component of HRM reform since 1996 (OCSGGB, 2012).

The regional state went to the extent of establishing an institution at college level among others that mandated duties and responsibilities to undertake scientific research, design human resource training and development programs that suits the human resource needs of the region and build the managerial as well as the implementing capacity of employees at different government structure of the region (ibid).

The civil service reform is still an agenda of the government of Ethiopia. It is given due emphasis in the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) of the country. The plan indicates that 'civil servants will participate in awareness creation activities that aim to develop wholly positive attitudes towards serving the public, ensure that they fully understand the policies and strategies of the government; and are capable of implementing them (FDRE, 2010).

However, as different reports revealed, the implementation of the HRM reform including the issues related to training and development underwent different challenges in the attempt to achieve the objectives set. Therefore, this study aims to assess the implementation of training and development programs in civil service institutions of the region against the objectives set to produce the required skilled work force. Based on this major objective, the study attempts to address the following questions:

1. To what extent are the requirements fulfilled in implementing effective training and development programs in civil service institutions of the region?
2. To what extent are the training and development programs implemented to enhance the performance of civil service institutions in the region?

Methodologically, the study was descriptive in nature and relevant data were collected both from primary and secondary sources using questionnaires, interviews and document reviews.

2. Review of Related Literature

Training and Development

Training and development in general focus on changing or improving the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of individuals. Training typically involves providing employees the knowledge and skills needed to do particular task or job. Developmental activities, in contrast, have a longer term focus on preparing for future work responsibilities, while also increasing the capacities of employees to perform their current jobs (Desimone and et.al, 2002).

The training and development program as a process involves series of interrelated steps such as identification of training needs, setting training and development objectives, designing training and development programs, implementing training and development programs as well as evaluation of the programs (ibid)

Human resource training and development programs are usually arranged in two aspects based on the categories of human resources in organizations. The programs include the training and development of those in managerial positions as well as employees in the organizations who are categorized as management development and employee training and development respectively.

Management development as described by Armstrong (2006) is 'concerned with improving managers' performance in their present roles and preparing them for greater responsibilities in the future'. Moreover, in the words of Desimone and et.al (2002), management development is 'an organization's conscious effort to provide its managers and potential managers with opportunities to learn, grow and change, in hopes of producing over the long term a cadre of managers with the skills necessary to function effectively in that organization.'

Management development includes the main components such as management education, management training and on-the-job experiences. In general, it is concerned with improving managers' performance in their current and future responsibilities (ibid). On the other hand, training and development of regular employees is a process of enhancing employee's competence in a way that their contribution to their organization is reflected through the achievement of organizational goal (Armstrong, 2006).

Problems in the Implementation of Training and Development Programs

The implementation of training and development programs in developing countries including Ethiopian civil service have different problems. The problems are related to requirements to be fulfilled for the implementation of training and development programs. The common problems included lack of training policy, absence of training units, insufficient training budget, overlooking the role of training in achieving organizational objectives, absence of guidelines for training need assessment and impact evaluation (Olowu and Adamolekun, 1999; Atikilt in Asnake, 2008)

Moreover, the report of AH consulting (2010) also identified that training which was given to top managers and other staff in the civil service institution was not need based and almost 80% of the civil service institutions had no training policy.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Perception of Respondents on Issues Related to the Requirements in the Implementation of Training and Development Programs

Civil service institutions are expected to fulfill some requirements to implement effective training and development programs. The requirements are related to presence of a system that govern training and development including the issue related to policy and strategies, allocation of financial resources, training and development plans as well as responsible body that coordinate the programs.

Table 1: Training and Development Implementation Process

			Yes	No	Don't know
Sex	Male	Count	9	1	1
		% within Sex	81.8%	9.1%	9.1%
	Female	Count	3	3	4
		% within Sex	30.0%	30.0%	40.0%
Total		Count	12	4	5
		% within Sex	57.1%	19.0%	23.8%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 1 indicates that 57.1 % of respondents believed that there is a system with established criteria for training and development programs; while 19% rejected the presence of the system. The rest 23.8% gave no comment. A large majority of respondents thus accept the presence of the system. This is supported by documents reviewed from the trainings so far offered by some civil service institutions. Therefore, it can be said that there is an overall system of training and development in civil service institutions of the region.

Table 2: Financial Resource to Arrange Training and Development Programs

			Yes	No	Don't Know
Sex	Male	Count	5	5	1
		% within Sex	45.5%	45.5%	9.1%
	Female	Count	3	2	5
		% within Sex	30.0%	20.0%	50.0%
Total		Count	8	7	6
		% within Sex	38.1%	33.3%	28.6%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

As indicated in Table 2, only 38.1% of respondents agreed that adequate financial resources are allocated for the implementation of training and development programs while the other 33.3% rejected and 28.6 % gave no comment. The management group also claimed that the budget allocated to run the training and development programs is not adequate. Moreover, the management group as well as employees of sub regional level comments that most of the training budget is allocated for institutions at regional level. As a result, the budget constraint restricts the efforts made to fill the skill gap in institutions at sub regional level. To show the unfair distribution of budget, they cite as an example that institutions at regional level are usually running to arrange trainings at the end of budget year just to finish the fund allocated while the institutions at grass roots levels are suffering from scarce financial resources to achieve their annual plan. Therefore, from the discussion above, it can be said that the financial resources allocated for the purpose of training programs are not adequate with the situation being more acute for those institutions at sub regional level.

Table 3: Training Strategies and Policy in the Organization

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Comment	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sex	Male	Count	2	4	2	3	0
		% within Sex	18.2%	36.4%	18.2%	27.3%	.0%
	Female	Count	2	1	3	3	1
		% within Sex	20.0%	10.0%	30.0%	30.0%	10.0%
Total		Count	4	5	5	6	1
		% within Sex	19.0%	23.8%	23.8%	28.6%	4.8%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

As indicated in table 3, employees were asked to rate their agreement about the issues related to training strategies and policy in their organization. To this end, 33.4 % of respondents agreed that there are strategies and policy in the organization that governs all issues related to training and development programs. On the other hand, 42.8% disagreed while 23.8% gave no comment. No documents were also observed related to the issues under consideration that support those agreed about the presence of strategies and policy. Therefore, from the discussion above, it can be said that there are no training strategies and policy in most of civil service institutions of the region that govern training and development programs.

Table 4: Short, Medium and Long Term Planning Of Training and Development

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Comment	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sex	Male	Count	2	4	2	3	0
		% within Sex	18.2%	36.4%	18.2%	27.3%	.0%
	Female	Count	4	1	1	3	1
		% within Sex	40.0%	10.0%	10.0%	30.0%	10.0%
Total		Count	6	5	3	6	1
		% within Sex	28.6%	23.8%	14.3%	28.6%	4.8%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

As can be seen from Table 4, while only 33.4% of respondents agreed as their organizations have short, medium and long term planning of training and development programs, the majority (52.4%) disagreed and 14.3% gave no comment. From the documents reviewed, not enough organizations possess training and development plan to guide the implementation. Therefore, from the discussion, it can be said that the civil service institutions in the region are without adequate training and development plan to guide the training and development program.

Table 5: Training and Development Programs in The Organization

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Comment	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sex	Male	Count	1	3	0	6	1
		% within Sex	9.1%	27.3%	.0%	54.5%	9.1%
	Female	Count	2	1	2	4	1
		% within Sex	20.0%	10.0%	20.0%	40.0%	10.0%
Total		Count	3	4	2	10	2
		% within Sex	14.3%	19.0%	9.5%	47.6%	9.5%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Respondents were also asked to rate their agreement about the presence of responsible body that coordinates the training and development programs. Accordingly, as indicated in Table 5, 57.1% of the respondents agreed that there are individuals/units that coordinate the activities related to training and development programs while 33.3 % disagreed and 9.5% of respondents chose not to react. From response of management group and documents reviewed, it is observed that most of the institutions at regional level have training sections while institutions at sub regional level have one employee responsible for this task. Therefore, it can be said that civil service

institutions in the region have a body responsible to coordinate the issues related to training and development programs.

3.2 Perception of Respondents on Overall Implementation of Training and Development Programs

Civil service institutions have been implementing training and development programs since the introduction of the human resource development component of the overall human resource management reform. Accordingly, they are expected to implement these programs in a way that produces skilled workforce that can fill the skill gap in their organization. This section tries to discuss the extent to which training and development programs are implemented in order to enhance the performance of civil service institutions.

Table 6. Training and Development Programs Focused on Staff and Organizational Needs

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Comment	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sex	Male	Count	1	7	0	2	1
		% within Sex	9.1%	63.6%	.0%	18.2%	9.1%
	Female	Count	2	4	2	1	1
		% within Sex	20.0%	40.0%	20.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Total		Count	3	11	2	3	2
		% within Sex	14.3%	52.4%	9.5%	14.3%	9.5%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 6 indicates that only 23.8% of respondents agreed that the training and development programs implemented were based on staff and organizational needs; while 66.7% disagreed and 9.5% were not confident enough to agree and decided to give no comment. Other documents were not available that supported or contradicted the analysis made. Therefore, it can be concluded that training and development programs implemented were not based on staff and organizational needs.

Table 7: Training and Development Programs Designed to Minimize the Gap Of Skilled Work Force

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Comment	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sex	Male	Count	1	7	0	2	1
		% within Sex	9.1%	63.6%	.0%	18.2%	9.1%
	Female	Count	3	1	2	3	1
		% within Sex	30.0%	10.0%	20.0%	30.0%	10.0%
Total		Count	4	8	2	5	2
		% within Sex	19.0%	38.1%	9.5%	23.8%	9.5%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

As indicated in Table 7, the question was also raised to know to what extent training and development programs are adequately designed to minimize the gap of skilled work force. The data reveals that 57.1% of respondents replied that the programs were not adequately designed while 33.3% accepted the appropriateness of the program implemented and 9.5% gave no comment. Based on the response of the majority of the respondents who disagreed and the gap observed in identifying staff and organizational needs, it can be said that the training and development programs were not adequately designed in a way to minimize the skill gaps specific to organizations.

The issue related to provision of equal opportunity of training and development programs for all employees is also questioned. From the discussion made with employees, they claim that selection of employees for training and development programs is not transparent. Especially, in relation to the opportunity of higher education, employees closed to politicians are more privileged. However, from documents reviewed, it is observed that there are institutions that operate with an open door policy for all employees to compete for such opportunities. Therefore, from the above discussion, it can be said that there is a gap to be filled in providing equal opportunity of training and development programs to all employees.

Table 8. Commitment to Effectively Utilize Trained Employees in The Appropriate Position

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Comment	Agree
Sex	Male	Count	3	2	1	5
		% within Sex	27.3%	18.2%	9.1%	45.5%
	Female	Count	3	2	3	2
		% within Sex	30.0%	20.0%	30.0%	20.0%
Total	Count		6	4	4	7
	% within Sex		28.6%	19.0%	19.0%	33.3%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

As can be seen from Table 8, employees were asked to rate the commitment of management group to effectively utilize trained employees in the appropriate position. While 33.3% of respondents agreed that managers are committed to assigning trained employees in the appropriate position, 47.6% disagreed and 19% gave no comment. From the discussion made with employees, they argued that trained individuals were not assigned in positions related to their specialization. To them, this is the result of the overall problem to identify training needs specific to each institution. From documents reviewed, the researcher came across improper placement of second-degree graduates in some civil service institutions that support the argument of the employees. Therefore, though it is difficult to fully attribute the problem to managers lack of commitment, it can be concluded that there is problem to effectively utilize trained employees.

In the discussions made, participants relate absence of formal evaluation system of training and development programs to the problem of improper placement. To them, no mechanism is created in civil service institutions to assess the impact of trainings offered. As an example, they cited that civil service institutions are forced to pay full salary for two to four years for employees who joined higher education. However, there isn't an accountable unit that monitors the wastage of scarce financial resources as a result of improper placement of graduates including those who may have resigned from civil service institutions without serving the full term of the agreement signed. Moreover, in most civil service institutions there is no adequate documentation in relation to activities of training and development programs. This is the result of negligence for the public money incurred with no value added to institutions. Therefore, it can be said that there is no formal evaluation system for training and development programs in civil service institutions of the region that assess the impact on the cost incurred and the overall objective of the trainings offered.

4. Conclusion

The human resource management reform introduced in civil service institutions of Ethiopia, among others, includes the human resource development as one important component of the reform. It was introduced with the aim to produce skilled workforce in civil service institutions of the country including in Oromia National Regional State. The reform is developed to solve the problems encountered in the implementation of training and development programs in civil service institutions.

Accordingly, the issues related to training policy, need assessment, evaluation of training programs, finance and others were given due emphasis to be considered in the implementation of training and development programs.

As found in the study, there is a system of training and development with responsible body that coordinates training and development programs in civil service institutions. However, the implementation of training and development programs is suffering from inadequate allocation of financial resources, absence of training policy and strategies as well as lack of training and development plans.

Moreover, the training and development programs were implemented without analysis of staff and organizational needs. As a result, the programs implemented were not designed in a way that minimizes the skill gaps specific to organizations. There is no system to evaluate training and development programs. There is also a gap in providing equal opportunity of training and development programs to all employees.

The issue related to appropriate placement of trained employees is a big concern. As a result, there is severe problem to effectively utilize trained employees. There is also no adequate documentation of activities related to training and development programs.

In general, it can be concluded that though the government is committed in developing a system of human resource development, the implementation is not on the right track to fill the skill gaps evident in the civil service.

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