

## **TRAINING AS CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR EFFECTIVENESS AND PRODUCTIVITY OF LOWER CADRE EMPLOYEES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

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### **Abstract**

This paper evaluated how lower cadre employees of select local governments in Lagos State Nigeria perceive the relevance of training to their jobs. It is based on the assumption that training is a major facilitating factor for capacity development with the attendant effect of employee effectiveness and productivity. Five local governments with a workforce of 2,915 made up the population. Out of this, 365 were purposively sampled. These are those who have spent a minimum of five years on the job. In addition, only the staff within this category who also were readily available at the time of the exercise and had also indicated their willingness to participate in the survey were sampled. Data was collected through the administration of questionnaire to this sample. The return rate was 265 copies of the questionnaire. Analysis of the collected data was aimed at finding answers to the two research questions that guided the study. These were: of what relevance if any is training to the efficiency and productivity of lower cadre staff of the local governments? and, what factors if any are inhibiting the successful outcome of the training programmes? Data revealed that they perceive training as a very important factor for capacity development. They are convinced that with training opportunities open to them, they are bound to improve their efficiency and productivity. The major inhibition however is that such training opportunities are not readily available as only 22.4% of the employees have ever benefitted from any training programme of the local governments. The researchers therefore recommend the introduction of a deliberate and sustained training programme for these staff.

**Keywords:** Capacity development; Lower cadre employees; third tier of governance; Local government; Productivity

## **1. Introduction**

Developing capacity for personnel at the third tier of governance, known as the local government in Nigeria, is quite fundamental to its growth and stability. Every effort made in this regard brings about a multiplier effectiveness and productivity outcome not only to the employees but also to the administration of the local government and indeed, the entire nation (Dibie, 2014). The Nigerian local government structure in recognition of this provides in its instrument of operation, the need for training and retraining of its personnel. In spite of the various reforms since independence, training of personnel at the local government level is fraught with problems.

Among the many factors militating against the actualization of training for the personnel of the Nigerian local government is the haphazard manner with which such trainings are planned and executed. Poor funding is another militating factor. Although local governments quite often make budgetary allocations for personnel training, the release and utilisation of such funds do not correspond with the way it is orchestrated. Even when funds are made available, the content and form of such training sessions indicate that felt needs were not determined before embarking on the training sessions. The relevance of the particular training content seems not to have been considered before nominating the personnel for such training sessions. The quality of facilitators who are appointed on consultancy basis is also another militating factor. Some of these consultants do not have the requisite know-how for their tasks. The training programmes are either contracted to party loyalists or such persons as have some form of attachment to the chief executives of the local governments who see such opportunities as avenue for sharing in the national cake. This raises a very serious accountability question which no doubt is a fundamental issue in the administration of the public service (Olusegun, 2009).

In spite of the weaknesses of the management of training, it remains no doubt an essential element for the development of the capacity of all categories of staff in any organisation. It is still a major instrument of increasing human efficiency through which people are offered the opportunity to acquire new skills and current knowledge required, in carrying out various specialised tasks in their place of work (Nwachukwu, 2007). This is more so as the formal educational system does not adequately teach specific job skills for a position in a particular organization. Even where this obtains only few employees may have the requisite skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies (SKAC) needed to work. It is for this reason that many employees often require extensive training to acquire the necessary SKAC to be able to make substantive contribution towards the organizations growth

Training as a major capacity development requirement provides empowerment to employees who often require new knowledge and skills to meet up with organisational goals. Organisations for organisations that have productivity, efficiency and result as their guiding principles, investing in staff training not negotiable. is and so, organizations need to invest heavily in training and education of their employees. Training plans should be based upon job skill requirements and strategic initiatives of the organization. (Ologunde, 2009). Many organizations meet their needs for training in an ad hoc and haphazard way. Training in these organizations is more or less unplanned and unsystematic. Other organizations however set about identifying their training needs, then design and implement training activities in a rational manner, and finally assess results of training. It is worth noting that Nigeria has a vast public sector, employing the highest number of human resources with diverse skills. One of such organization in the public sector is the Local Government. This study therefore investigated the

role of training and development on employees' efficiency and productivity at the selected local governments of Lagos State, Nigeria.

## **2. Relevance of training to staff efficiency and productivity**

Human resource management (HRM) is a modern term for what traditionally has been referred to as personnel management. Human resource managers may still perform the traditional tasks of personnel managers; interviewing applicants, negotiating with unions, keeping time cards and occasionally teach a training course; but the scope and importance of their area of responsibility have since changed significantly. They now take on a strategic leadership role in their organizations. (Ologunde, 2009:228). The ability of employees to deliver value-added service consistently requires workers' dedicated application of skills. This is also dependent on the creation of challenging, but satisfying and effective working environments. When organisations provide this, the resultant effect among others would be employee empowerment, improved employee satisfaction, and ultimately sustained productivity. Most organizations have long recognized the importance of training to its development. As new technology progresses, making certain jobs and skills redundant, an increasing emphasis is being placed on the need for a skilled and highly trained workforce. Many of the jobs being replaced by machines have been of an unskilled and semi-skilled nature, and this emphasizes the need for higher education and skills for those wishing to gain employment in the future.

In recent times, the Nigerian public service, including local governments has begun to lay emphasis on capacity development. This is with a view to bringing about an improved and efficient workforce. Adebayo (2004:114) summarises the situation by saying that some 'progress has been made in the various public services of Nigeria towards training and staff development during the past decade' But the tempo and scale of training still falls far short of normal requirement for an efficient public service. It is not unlikely that such trainings had focused too often on senior management training to the relative neglect of the numerous other cadres in the public service. Among the lower cadres in the public service there is still too much working by routine, apathy, and a general lethargy to government work. There is often even barely concealed hostility or downright coldness or rudeness to members of the public who approach public officers in the lower cadres for information or service.

Derek and Hall (2000:55) examined the training environment and the structure of organizations, emphasized on the effects of internal political and cultural factors on training and development. Sherman et al (1996:16) argues that many new employees can be equipped with most of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to start work, but others may require extensive training to ensure their effective contribution to the organization. A majority however, will require some type of training at one time or another to maintain an effective level of job performance.

According to Krietner (1995:8), 'no matter how carefully job applicants are screened, typically a gap remains between what the employee does know and what they should know. An organization which desires to gain the competitive edge in its respective industry, needs among other things, extensive and effective training of its human resources'. This underscores the point that training is a very fundamental element for improved organizational performance. It brings about an increase in competence of not just the individual personnel of an organization but the overall competence of the organization itself. It helps to reconcile the gap between what should happen and what is happening – between desired targets or standards and actual levels of work performance. Although many employers continue to have reservations about the cost and extent

of tangible business returns from training, the development of skills has been identified as a key factor in sharpening competitiveness.

The purpose of training is mainly to improve knowledge and skills, and to change attitudes or behavior. It is one of the most important potential motivators which can lead to many possible benefits for both individuals and the organization. Changing technology requires that employees possess the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to cope with new processes and production techniques. According to Cole (2002) training can achieve:

1. High morale - employees who receive training have increased confidence and motivation;
2. Lower cost of production – training eliminates risks because trained personnel are able to make better and economic use of material and equipment thereby reducing and avoiding waste;
3. Lower turnover – training brings a sense of security at the workplace which reduces labor turnover and absenteeism is avoided;
4. Change management- training helps to manage change by increasing the understanding and involvement of employees in the change process and also provides the skills and abilities needed to adjust to new situations;
5. Provide recognition, enhanced responsibility and the possibility of increased pay and promotion;
6. Give a feeling of personal satisfaction and achievement, and broaden opportunities for career progression and,
7. Help to improve the availability and quality of staff.

### **3. Approaches to training as employee capacity development**

Organisations that aspire to grow and realize the reasons for their existence make deliberate efforts to invest in staff training. This is without prejudice to whether it is a production factory, a non-governmental organisation or the public service. Whatever the organisation, training as a means of developing the capacity of the employees has to follow certain steps that begin with identification of felt needs and ends with improved performance. Ghosh (2005) outlines five measures that are involved at the preliminary stage in considering training for employee capacity development:

1. Decide who needs to be trained.
2. Establish the number of people for whom training is needed
3. Specify the aim of the training they will undertake
4. Utilize available resources
5. Recognize important constraints which may limit what can be achieved.(Ghosh 2005)

A necessary further step is the determination of the objectives of the training. In determining training objectives, the sponsoring organisation must have to ask concrete questions about what the staff and indeed the organisation stand to gain at the end of the training exercise. According to McKenna and Beech (2002:110) “It is important that a sound basis is established for other associated elements of Human Resource Management practice such as performance management (appraisal), reward management(motivation) combined with training and development”. What

this means is that training and development itself cannot help in total employee development without the complement of employee appraisal and motivation.

Once attainable and measurable training objectives have been considered, a training plan can be developed. This planning tool provides a step-by-step written document for others to follow. A training plan can be either a complete training program or just one task. The training plan details the course content, resources required, method of training, who should do the training and who should be trained.

Based on the felt needs an organisation may choose from among many training types. Sometimes, a combination of two or three training types may suffice. Decauza and Robbins (1996:70) outlines some of the major training types. These are:

i. **Refresher Training:** Here the employees are made to attend refresher courses at specific training institutions. This exposes the employee to modern trends in his field of business. That is, it involves updating skills to meet the job requirement of employees.

ii. **On-the-job Training:** This is the most widely used training method, as in comparison, on-the-job method of training is simple and less costly to operate. Observing this method critically, the training places the employee in actual work situations and makes them appear to be immediately productive. Here, there is a close collaboration between trainer and learner. There are three common methods that are used in on-the-job training and these are; learning by doing, mentoring and shadowing and job rotation.

iii. **Learning by Doing:** This is a very popular method of teaching new skills and methods to employees. Here the new employee observes a senior experienced worker and learns what to do. The advantage here is that this method is tried and tested and fit the requirements of the organization. The disadvantages are that the senior worker is not usually trained in the skills and methods of training therefore it can be a process that may be time consuming as a new comer struggles to cope with the senior worker's explanations. Far more successful is to use a senior or experienced worker who has been trained in instruction or training method and whose teaching skills are coordinated with a developed program linked to off-the-job courses.

iii. **Mentoring:** This is another version of the system whereby a senior or experienced employee takes charge of the training and development of a new employee. This suggests a much closer association than master/apprentice and elements of a father/son relationship can exist whereby the mentor acts as an advisor and protector to the trainee.

needed to be effective and efficient. In an on-the-job training method, the emphasis is more on the acquisition of specific, local knowledge in a real situation. Unlike on-the-job method, off-the-job method emphasizes developing an understanding of general principles providing background knowledge and generating an awareness of comparative ideas and practices.

iii. **Vestibule Training:** This method of training is where the worker is trained to use machine or perform a task similar to the ones in the real work situation. Under this method of training, the training program is conducted out of the job in an area separate from the work place under the supervision of a skilled instructor. After going through the vestibule training for a specified time period, the trainees are expected to apply their newly acquired skills when they are assigned to their real job.

iv. **Behavior Modeling:** Here, some of the methods used in the assessment centers include business games, in-basket, simulation, problem-centered cases, and many others, to enable the trainee learn the behaviors appropriate for the job through role-playing. The use of behavior modeling is based on social theory, and it is in particular an effective method for interpersonal or social skills training.

v. **Understudy Training:** An understudy is a person who is training to assume a position at a future date, the duties and responsibilities of the position currently occupied by the person he or she is understudying. An individual or group is assigned to assist a superior officer in the performance of his duties related to the position and at times left to grapple with the day-to-day problems which confront the superior in the performance of duty. They are allowed to solve them with or without the help of the superior. When the understudy shows promise of talent, he takes over when the superior is transferred, retired or is promoted to a higher position.

#### 4. Discussion of findings

This discussion is based on data generated from five local governments of Lagos State. These local governments were purposively selected because of their strategic location and demographic mix. They can be described as the most integrated local governments in Lagos State in addition to holding a large proportion of the local government workforce of Lagos state. The selected local governments and their workforce are: Ibeju Lekki, 400; Oshodi/Isolo, 650; Kosofe, 600; Shomolu, 620 and Alimosho, 645) making a total population of 2,915 employees out of the 10,000 workforce of all the local governments in Lagos State. The following lower cadre staff were used: typists, works superintendence, driver mechanics, works attendants, porters, messengers, cleaners, security officers. The purposive and available sampling size method was used. To arrive at the sample size using these methods, participation had to be based on the following criteria: a staff must have spent a minimum of five years on the job and is readily available and willing to participate in the exercise. At the end a total of 356 staff qualified. These were served with the questionnaire being the instrument for data collection.

And this was spread in this order:

Local Government	Frequency	percent
IbejuLekki	50	14
Oshodi/Isolo	76	22
Kosofe	74	21
Shomolu	75	21
Alimosho	77	22
Total	352	100

This sample size of 352 was administered each with a copy of the questionnaire. Out of this, 265 returned their questionnaire properly filled.

Two research questions guided the work:

RQ1: Of what relevance if any is training to the efficiency and productivity of lower cadre staff of the local governments?

RQ2: What factors if any are inhibiting the successful outcome of the training programmes?

Data in table one provided the answer to the first research question. This table measured how the studied staff perceive the relevance of training to their efficiency and productivity. Ten aspects of the positive outcome of training were presented to the employees on a five point Lickert-scale of strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), disagreed (D), strongly disagreed (SD) and undecided (U). On a cumulative summation basis for strongly agreed and agreed which are positive angles of measurement, the result can be seen thus: item no. 1 has 70% (45.6%+30.4%); ; no.2 item has 79.8% (42.2%+37.6%); no. 3 has 95% (57% +38%); no. 4 has 92.8% (57.8% +35%); no.5 has 92% (54.4% + 37.6%); no. 6 has 89% (35% + 54%); no.7 has 88.9% (49.4% + 39.5%); no.8 has 90.1% (47.1% + 43%); no.9 has 80.6% (38.4% + 42.2%) while no.10 has 84.8% (44.1% + 40.7%).

The implication of this result on the first research question is that the local government staff that were investigated are aware of the great benefits that could be derived from exposure to training. They are unanimous in their consent to the fact that staff training contributes positively to employee efficiency and productivity. In an interview with the management of the local governments, they asserted that the local governments have provision for staff training as a way of boosting their efficiency and productivity.

Further inquiry into the conduct of the training programmes as a way of finding answer to the second research question revealed as can be seen in table 2 that although there are available training opportunities, but the quality of the programmes does not meet the felt needs of the employees. In addition, table 3 revealed that only 22.4% of the employees have ever benefitted from any training programme of the local governments.

This has far-reaching negative implications on the expected outcome of the training programmes. It is only with the right programme of training made available for a high percentage of the workforce that one can expect positive result from the training sessions.

**Table 1: Relevance of training to employee efficiency and productivity**

Items		SA	A	D	SD	U
1	Training helps me to be open to changes	120(45.6%)	80(30.4%)	25(9.5%)	13(4.9%)	25(9.5%)
2	Training assists me to deal effectively with pressure	111(42.2%)	99(37.6%)	32(12.2%)	10(3.8%)	11(4.2%)
3	It helps me to inspire, motive and guide others towards goal Accomplishment	150(57%)	100(38%)	13(4.9%)		
4	Training helps me to develop leadership skills	152(57.8%)	92(35%)	10(3.8%)	5(1.9%)	4(1.5%)
5	Training helps me achieve quality outcomes	143(54.4%)	99(37.6%)	11(4.2%)	5(1.9%)	5(1.9%)

6	It helps me to anticipate and meet the needs of students, parents, colleagues and the management	92(35%)	142(54%)	13(4.9%)	7(2.7%)	9(3.4%)
7	It helps me consistently develop and sustain cooperative working relationship	130(49.4%)	104(39.5%)	11(4.2%)	9(3.4%)	9(3.4%)
8	Training assets me to identify, analyze and take critical decision	124(47.1%)	113(43%)	13(4.9%)	9(3.4%)	4(1.5%)
9	It brings me up-to-date on changing technology and pedagogy	101(38.4%)	111(42.2%)	10(3.8%)	19(7.2%)	22(8.4%)
10	It helps me eliminate unnecessary and prolonged delays in completing work assignments	116(44.1%)	107(40.7%)	26(9.9%)		14(5.3%)

**Table 2: Quality of available training programmes**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	45	17.1	17.1	17.1
Agreed	50	19.0	19.0	36.1
Disagreed	101	38.4	38.4	74.5
strongly disagreed	59	22.4	22.4	97.0
Undecided	8	3.0	3.0	100.0
Total	263	100.0	100.0	

**Table 3: Participation opportunity at available training programmes**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid YES	59	22.4	22.4	22.4
NO	204	77.6	77.6	100.0
Total	263	100.0	100.0	



## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is an undeniable fact that in recent times many organizations have come to the realization of the importance of the role of training and development programmes as it increases the organisation's employees' efficiency, skills and productivity. In order to reap the full benefits of training initiative, Lagos State local government should ensure that the following are instituted at the work place.

**i. Systematic Training:** Identification of training needs should be done more professionally in conjunction with the line manager as well as the individuals involved together with the Human Resource Department. Everyone involved should agree exactly to what the trainees are lacking, for instance what skill indeed, and what attitudes need to be changed toward work efficiency. The needs identified should emanate from local government's strategic plan, which also cover departmental/sectional/teams and individual plans. Lagos State local governments should see learning, training and development as well as training's objectives, plan, implementation and evaluation as a continuous process for organizational development and survival.

**ii. Objective should be SMART and unambiguous:** Objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) and unambiguous, and should develop individual as well as meet the needs of the local governments. Objectives should also include efficiency targets, measures standards and should be seen as attainable by individuals. Also a basis for motivating through intrinsic and extrinsic rewards should be provided as this will lead to commitment and improved efficiency.

**iii. Provide Specific information to employees:** Performance appraisal information system which is used yearly at the local government to assess employees' performance and efficiency should provide specific information to employees about their performance problems and ways they can improve their performance. This assessment should provide a clear understanding of the differences between current and expected performance, identifying the causes of the performance discrepancies and develop action plans to improve performance of employees through training and development programs.

**iv. Create more Opportunities for training:** Training needs should be considered on the basis of overall local government's objectives. The goals of the local governments should determine what training programs are to be organized for staff. Staff should be motivated to add value to themselves and to their lives.

**v. Career Planning and development:** The local government's career planning involves matching an individual's career aspirations with the opportunities available in the organisation. Career pathing is the sequencing of the specific jobs that are associated with these opportunities. For career management to be successful in Lagos State local governments, both the Authority and employees must assume equal share of the responsibility for it. Employees must identify their aspirations and abilities, and through counseling recognize what training and development are required for a particular career information and training to its employees. Development and succession planning will also play a great role. Career progressions projection plans and training and development projections should be made available to each employee.

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