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## Problems and challenges of Training and Development practices: Descriptive study

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### 1. Abstract

This research study aims to explore the problems and challenges of training and development (T&D) practices in Ethiopia, Benishangul Gumuz Micro Financing Institution. This study aims to investigate all the problems and challenges that face T&D activities and searches for practical suggestions to improve the effectiveness of these activities. The research has adopted a multi-methods approach. The data were gathered through a combination of both semi-structured interviews with 7 top and middle level managers and a questionnaire addressed to the purposely selected employees of the organization who have better knowledge and are more experienced about the organization. A purposive sampling method was used in choosing the participants of this study. In total, 7 top and middle managers and 60 employees took part in the study. The study revealed, mainly in the organization, T&D was not characterized by strategic human resource development criteria and it plays a reactive rather than a proactive role in this organization. The top and middle managers perceived that T&D is as investment rather than cost, the current level of training is not sufficient, the system and the management of the organization do not support employees to transfer what they have learned in their workplaces. T&D faces many problems: inaccurate TNA processes; poor training planning in terms of contents and delivery methods; sending inappropriate persons to the training programmes and lack of on-the-job training. To improve T&D effectiveness the researcher recommended to have separate T&D section and the top management's attention should be enhanced.

**Key words:** training, development, need assessment, micro finance,

### 2. Introduction

Microfinance is a type of banking service that is provided to unemployed or low-income individuals, or groups who otherwise have no other access to financial services. Ultimately, the goal of microfinance is to give low-income people an opportunity to become self-sufficient by providing a way to save money, borrow money and get insurance.

(<http://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/microfinance.asp>).

Businesses are currently facing very changing environments from the view point of new technologies, competition and employee needs. Managers with relevant responsibility can play a vital role in employees' training and development where they identify needs and allocate resources, as well as accept personal responsibility to encourage employees to participate in activities and support them to transfer developed skills (Reid and Barrington, 1994). Organizations are surrounded by different political, economical, social and technological changes which create challenges to which they need to pay attention regardless of their size, location and industry (McCracken and Wallace, 2000; Nolan, 2002). These changes have challenged the organizations to learn how to manage or confront the changes quickly and successfully. Organizations are relying on their human assets -the knowledge, competence and

capabilities of their workforce - as a source of success. It is, therefore, imperative for the organizations to develop effective HRM practices and policies that will enable them to attract, retain and motivate competent employees who will, in turn, contribute to the successful achievement of organizational objectives.

Training refers to a planned effort facilitate the learning of job-related knowledge, skill, and behavior by employee (Noe et al., 2006). In HRM practice, training is an important factor for productivity, higher productivity observed in firms that report providing training (e.g. Tan & Batra, 1995; Aw & Tan, 1995). Schaffner (2001) on his study assert the relationship between job training and productivity, however job training tends to be lose value when the workers change job, therefore the organization or firm increase the cost of keeping trained position filled.

### **3. Objective of the study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the problems and challenges that faced by the Benishangul gumuz micro financing institution of Ethiopia during the practices of training and development and providing suggestion for improvement.

### **4. Research Methodology**

The study aims to investigate all the problems and challenges that face T&D activities and searches for practical suggestions to improve the effectiveness of these activities. The research has adopted a multi-methods approach. The data were gathered through a combination of both semi-structured interviews with 7 top and middle level managers and a questionnaire addressed to the purposely selected employees of the organization who have better knowledge and are more experienced about the organization. A purposive sampling method was used in choosing the participants of this study. In total, 7 top and middle managers and 60 out of 127 employees took part in the study.

### **5. Literature Review**

Closing the skills gap is now a critical area of human resource development for organizations to continuously penetrate the market. Skills gap basically threatens the productivity and competitiveness both in organizational and operational levels. This requires that human resource management professionals should start the cultivation of the workforce from the recruitment period. However, this is not easy considering that there are specific works which require customization of skills and that not all newly hired employees acquire social skills aside from the basic skills. In responding to the challenges of the skills gap and skills deficiency, HR professionals have to develop programs that will address the problem (Sims, 2006). Building the organization hence is an imperative for the existence and survival of modern organizations. Consistently, companies are investing on their internal customers or employees thus taking advantage of the human capital management. Sense of ownership is also important, requiring HR professionals to develop strategies that will ensure superior knowledge, skills and experience to settle within the workforce. Learning activities shall put skills enhancement and development assignments at its core as well as empowerment and career development. This is lifelong learning which guide the organizations particularly human resource department to make an ongoing investment with organizational members and help them build their competencies (Sims, 2006).

It is very necessary for the organization to design the training very carefully (Michael Armstrong, 2000). The design of the training should be according to the needs of the employees (Ginsberg, 1997). Those organizations which develop a good training design according to the need of the employees as well as to the organization always get good results (Partlow, 1996; Tihanyi et al., 2000; Boudreau et al., 2001).

## 6. Analysis of T&D Problems and Challenges

This part of the analysis relates to the findings regarding the current T&D problems and challenges in Benishangul Gumuz Micro financing Institution; in other words, factors that might impede the effectiveness of T&D functions and programmes in the organization.

Possible factors that might hinder training and development

	SD		D		NS		A		SA	
Possible factors that might hinder training and development	C	%	C	%	C	%	C	%	C	%
Management does not support training programmes	13	21.7	12	20	17	28.3	13	21.7	5	8.3
Lack of long-term plan for developing human resource	4	6.7	11	18.3	14	23.3	20	33.3	11	18.3
Poor quality training programmes	11	18.3	9	15	18	30	19	31.7	3	5.0
High cost of training and development programmes	13	21.7	7	11.7	18	30	16	26.7	6	10
Lack of on-the-job training	10	16.7	4	6.7	8	13.3	26	43.3	12	20
Inaccurate training need analysis	8	13.3	8	13.3	12	20	22	36.7	10	16.7
Lack of private training centres	9	15	11	18.3	8	13.3	16	26.7	16	26.7
Discrepancy between the provided training and development and job skills	5	8.3	5	8.3	17	28.3	23	38.3	10	16.7
Work environment does not support new behaviors learned in training and development programmes	14	23.3	13	21.7	13	21.7	12	20	8	13.3
Lack of motivation among employees	15	25	11	18.3	15	25	13	21.7	6	10
Sending inappropriate persons to the training programmes	11	18.3	8	13.3	10	16.7	21	35	10	16.7

Lack of professional in the training and development department	14	23.3	9	15	19	31.7	8	13.3	10	16.7
Insufficient time and budget to execute training programmes	18	30	14	23.3	15	25	8	13.3	5	8.3
Difficulties to evaluate training and development outcomes	6	10	14	23.3	16	26.7	16	26.7	8	13.3
Poor training planning in terms of training content and methods	7	11.7	10	16.7	18	30	12	20	13	21.7

SD=strongly disagree, D=Agree, NS=Not sure, A= Agree, SA= Strongly agree, C= count

Table 4.1.3.1 shows, 33.3%, 31.7%, 43.3%, 36.7%, 26.7%, 38.3% and 35% of the participants agreed that lack of long-term plan for developing human resource, poor quality training programmes, lack of on-the-job training, inaccurate training need analysis, lack of private training centers, discrepancy between the provided training and development and job skills, and sending inappropriate persons to the training programmes were respectively representing the most important factor that contributes to T&D failure. 21.7% of the participants strongly disagreed that the lack of management support in training programmes was preventing T&D programme while 28.3% were not sure, however, 21.7% of the participants agreed that it is an important T&D challenge in the organization.

Moreover, 23.3%, 25%, 23.3% and 30% of the participants strongly disagreed that the factors, work environment does not support new behaviors learned in training and development programmes, lack of motivation among employees, lack of professional in the training and development department and insufficient time and budget to execute training programmes, to the training programmes respectively were contribute to the T&D failure.

21.7% of the participants also strongly agreed that poor training planning in terms of training content and methods was the most important factor that prevents T&D programme.

In addition, interviews from managers represented as follows:

The next table presents the findings of whether top managers agreed or disagreed with some of the provided T&D problems and challenges that might prevent T&D activities progress within the organization in line with mentioning some main problems of T&D in the organization where some were asked in the study questionnaire as well. For the question rose to mention some main problems T&D in the organization, most of the respondents revealed that above all the system under which the organization operating is not permissive to effective T&D activities in addition to less attention and negative attitude of top managers, lack of experienced professional staffs, lack of separate department, mal allocation of budget and other resources to T&D, lack of initiative to share experiences from other competitive organizations and the non existence of research done on this topic in the past are the most important challenges and obstacles that prevent effective T&D activities.

Possible T&D problems and challenges\

	SD		D		NS		A		SA	
T&D problems and challenges	C	%	C	%	C	%	C	%	C	%
High cost of T&D programmes					1	14.3	4	57.1	2	28.6
Trained employees leave the organization after training			3	42.9			4	57.1		
Lack of training centre			1	14.3	2	28.6	2	28.6	2	28.6
Lack of separate T&D department							3	42.9	4	57.1
Lack of experienced training staff							3	42.9	4	57.1
Difficulty in measuring T&D outcomes							2	28.6	5	71.4
training programmes introduced from external sources off-the house							4	57.1	3	42.9

SD=strongly disagree, D=Agree, NS=Not sure, A= Agree, SA= Strongly agree, C= count

The table shows that among the interviewed managers, 42.9% were disagreed by the problem stated as trained employees leave the organization after training, while 28.6% were not sure whether it is a problem of T&D in the organization. 57.1% and 28.6% of the interviewed managers were agreed and strongly agreed respectively by the problem stated as high cost of T&D programmes.

Even though, some of the managers did not believe and not sure that lack of training center is a problem that encounter T&D activity, most of them agreed that it is a problem. They argued that the presence of training center around the operation motivates managers and trainees to participate in taking training and also minimizes training costs.

However, almost all of the interviewed managers agreed and strongly believe that lack of separate T&D department, lack of experienced training staff, difficulty in measuring T&D outcomes and training programmes introduced from external sources off-the house were the most important problems that prevent the effective practices of training and development. Especially, they emphasized that the absence of in-house training in line with lack of separate T&D department strongly influences T&D practices in exactly identifying where training is needed and who are eligible to take training in addition to give emphasis to it and it should be owned by independent bodies with responsibilities and accountabilities.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

The main aim of this part is to present and analyze the qualitative data produced from the semi-structured interviews. In addition, this chapter aims to present the analysis for other qualitative data resulting from further comments of the questionnaire participants and for the researcher's own observations when collecting the research data.

As discussed in the research methodology chapter, the researcher conducted sem-istructured face-to-face interviews with 7 out of 8 top and middle managers of the organization. Justifications for interviewing top managers were also provided in the methodology chapter of the study. The objectives of the interviews were to discover how top and middle managers view T&D in their organization, in other words, to see the other side of the T&D picture in the organization. Thus, the interviews aimed to explore how top and middle managers view T&D, what they think about it, whether they think the T&D function is strategic or not, whether they think T&D influences or helps in improving organizations' performance or not, what the problems and challenges that face T&D and what needs to be done in order to improve T&D functions.

In some parts, a descriptive analysis, using the statistical technique of frequency distribution, is used to present the findings from these interviews and, where appropriate, some vivid statements are quoted from the interviews to illustrate relevant points. Thus, this section includes the following parts: top and middle level managers' view points about the position of T&D in their organization, their views on the importance of T&D to their organization performance, top and middle level managers' views on T&D problems and obstacles, general questions regarding their satisfaction or otherwise with the T&D function in their organization; their view of the application of the acquired skills and knowledge and what they think as a decision makers needs to be done to improve T&D situation.

### **Profile of Top and Middle level Managers Interviewed**

Interview participants were secured by personal contact, which is the best approach to build and establish a strong trust and good rapport with participants. Top and middle managers were at the position of (General Manager, Operation manager, Administration and Finance manager, planning and program head, Audit service head, Law service head, Branch manager and Management information system head). The intention was to interview eight top and middle managers of whom seven responded favorably. One manager (Management information system head) was not to take part in this study because he was not around for relatively longer period. Once the purposes of the study were explained, managers expressed genuine interest in the subject and were willing to take part in the study.

### **The Position of T&D in the Organization**

This part reveals the current status of the organization in line with its current T&D practices with some challenges that may encounter during the practices.

### **Satisfaction with Current T&D**

The starting point for the discussion during the semi-structured interviews was to understand whether or not T&D programme was formal and managers were satisfied with the current T&D function and programmes in their organization. Top managers' answers revealed that the organization does not have formal T&D programme and as a result almost all of them (6 out of 7) were not satisfied with. In the organization, as of the managers' response, there was no on job training or in-house training that is designed to achieve organizational objective, which was based on formal need assessment. Only Micro Finance Association designed training which is always supposed to solve the problem of the whole micro finance institutions.

For the question raised whether the organization has T&D department, all of them argued that the organization does not have separate T&D department in line with emphasizing the importance of T&D function for the success of the organization by pointing out that trained employees were eligible to changes and sustainability of the organization. Thus, they all responded that T&D is very important to both the organization success and individual career development.

In line with the questions, whether training is wastage, time taking and costly and T&D is functioning strategically, all of them responded that if training is basically managed properly at each stages of T&D process and human resource turnover is controlled, training is not costly and time taking rather an investment. They also argued that the organization does not have any T&D linked to long term planning because of lacking attentions and awareness from top managers. Therefore, all managers agreed that the T&D in the organization is not functioning strategically.

### **The Significance or T&D Outcomes**

This part tries to assess the impacts of T&D on organizational performance in general and also tries to assess the perception of employees towards the outcome of the T&D practice in the organization.

### **Effectiveness of T&D in the Organization**

The effectiveness of T&D could be seen in terms of T&D function; its successful achievement of its objectives; the impact of T&D on performance and overall organizational success and factors that contribute to its success.

As to the responses of the managers, T&D is not effective as well as not achieving its objectives because of the very beginning of the organization's T&D is designed and delivered by external trainers (Association of Micro Finance Institution). The T&D designed by this organization is most of the time aimed to solve the generic problems supposed to be happened in any micro finance institutions which is not necessarily congruent to the objectives and problems happened into the organization under study. Because the organization is the stakeholder of the association and contribute payment, rather than bypassing the training, most of the time un appropriate employees sent to training. Therefore, in general, the absence of on-job training in line with formal need assessment, not participating right employees and fail to introduce their training need ahead to the external trainers were the most important factors that hide T&D to be effective.

According to the interviewees, T&D positively influences performance in changing the behaviors and attitudes of employees in line with the changing situations like, the rising demands of customer, competition, new technologies and new working methods. Most of the respondents agreed that profitability, financial turnover of the organization, raising employee morale, quality of goods and products, productivity ,cost reduction and employee satisfaction are the most important significant impact of training.

However, below the table presents the interviewed top managers' agreements with other important statements that reflect what they think about T&D and how they consider it.

Some important statements (general perspectives)

	SD		D		NS		A		SA	
	C	%	C	%	C	%	C	%	C	%
Training is a waste of time and money and at the same time costly.	7	100								
It is very important for every organization to have a separate department for T&D activities							5	71.4	2	28.6
The current level of T&D activities is sufficient	2	28.6	5	71.4						
T&D programs must be linked to organizational strategic and strategic objectives to be successful							1	14	6	86
Without effective T&D programmes, your organization would be unable to implement their strategies							3	43	4	57
The system and the management of this organization support employee to transfer what they have learned in their workplaces			6	86			1	14		
Top managers are committed to T&D function			7	100						
The management of this organization believes that T&D programmes are cost effective	1	14.4	3	42.9	1	14.4	2	28.6		
T&D plans and policies are translated into measurable, workable programmes	1	14	6	86						

SD=strongly disagree, D=Agree, NS=Not sure, A= Agree, SA= Strongly agree, C= count

Based on the above table, the respondents’ response is narrated as follows. They strongly disagreed with the following statements, training is a waste of time and money and at the same time costly and the management of this organization believes that T&D is central for improving the organization performance, since they believe that T&D is rather an investment and argued that had it been T&D is central for improving performance T&D would have been designed in the organization with full attention.

In addition, all most all respondents disagreed on the aforementioned perspectives, the system and the management of this organization support employee to transfer what they have learned in their workplaces, top managers are committed to T&D function, line managers appreciate the value of T&D and they are keen to work with internal training staff, T&D plans and policies are translated into measurable, workable programmes and The present volume of T&D is adequate to solve your current problems. They supported these arguments with evidences like the top managers do not have initiatives to design systems that help to transfer knowledge from trained employees to work place, measure the impact of training and the way T&D is included and linked to business policies.

However, they agreed that the following perspectives are the most important problems encountered the organization, it is very important for every organization to have a separate department for T&D activities, T&D programs must be linked to organizational strategic and strategic objectives to be successful, without effective T&D programmes, your organization would be unable to implement their strategies, efficiency and profitability are the main results of T&D programmes. Most of them supported their idea with the arguments by emphasizing the effect of T&D on the organizational productivity and underline that except

that the organization tried to incorporate into strategic actions; it is even hard for the organization to survive.

### **Transferring Skills and Knowledge**

This part designed to assess whether trained employees' knowledge obtained from training is transferred to work place.

#### **Knowledge Transfer and how the Organization Improves T&D activities**

For the question raised whether there is knowledge transfer in the organization or not, most of them argued that there is no knowledge transfer in the organization because of sending in appropriate employees to training and the system does not allow free knowledge transfer even though some said that to some extent there is knowledge transfer because there are evidences that some employees may improve their skills, knowledge and attitudes after taking training.

According to most of interviewed managers, in order to improve T&D in the organization, it has to play roles in introducing in-house training programme which should be based on institutional, individual and job related need assessment and introduce structural change that invites T&D activity in the organization. Moreover, separate department and top management commitment is very important in order to incorporate T&D in the strategic planning of the organization.

For the open ended questions asked, the managers were really appreciating the all the questions in that it can solve their current training and development problems and further comments that it is very important in ensuring the sustainable competitive advantage of the organization in the future if such studies will continue especially in human capital management.

### **7. Conclusion**

Based on the responses for problems and challenges facing the organization under study, it is revealed that, paying less attention to on-job training in line with the absence of formal need assessment, not participating right employees and fail to be informed and assisted in preparation and implementation of T&D by the external trainers were the most important factors that hide T&D to be effective.

According to most of interviewed managers, in order to improve T&D in the organization, it has to play roles in introducing in-house training programme which should be based on institutional, individual and job related need assessment. Moreover, separate department and top management commitment is very important in order to incorporate T&D in the strategic planning of the organization.

### **Suggestions**

- During the process or practices of T&D there were many problems encountering the organization in addition to lack of commitment and awareness of top management as indicated in the conclusion part. Therefore, what the organization needs to do in order to improve T&D effectiveness , it is suggested as follows:
  - ✓ to tackle to the main problems and challenges of the T&D, improving the T&D situation and T&D should be taken seriously as an investment as necessary rather than a cost to be minimized.
  - ✓ T&D should be established at sectional level if not at department level where the staff needs to be addressed and able to convince the importance of T&D activities for the organization's success.

- ✓ T&D needs to be a systematic function, linked and derived from the overall organizational strategies, plans and policies, rather than being piecemeal, stand alone activities, designed to react to the current organizational conditions.
- ✓ Managers need to be involved and give more attention for T&D programme and striving to make conducive environments for knowledge transfer.
- ✓ The organization better use in-house organizational T&D programmes to continue for a long period of time, meet unique requirements that could not be met by external programmes or to develop some unique and specific skills which it needs not to be imitated by its competitors, who might use the same external training sources and to more easily focused closely on the workers specific individual and work role needs.
- ✓ The organization should adopt a culture of knowledge transfer, for example there should be a mechanism that allows trained individuals to train the rest of employees and at least having a chance of getting a copy of training modules.

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