

Human Resource Development Practices in the Public Sector of Konso Locality

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Abstract

This study examines the practices of human resource development (mainly training and development) programs in some selected public institutions of Konso district. The study employs a descriptive survey research design with a mixed approach. For the purpose of collecting primary data, a structured questionnaire with a five point Likert Scale was prepared and administered to 201 respondents drawn from sixteen public institutions. Moreover, interview was held with six key informants. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean, and tables as well as content analysis were used to present and analyze data. The findings indicated that the practices of training and development in the public institutions of the district are extremely poor. Consequently, in the majority of public organizations training and development is found to be ineffective in improving knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the employees as well as individuals and organizational performance. It is, therefore, suggested that public managers should strengthen the systems and practices of training and development, establish accountable and systematized approach to effectively manage training and development initiatives, and strengthen follow up, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Key words: Human Resource Development, Training and Development, Public Institutions, Human Resource, Needs Assessment, Konso, Ethiopia

1. Introduction

Human Resource Development (HRD) is one of the core functions of Human Resource Management (HRM) which is mainly concerned with improving the quality of the human resource in an institution. According to Michael (1995:96), “HRD is the process of developing the human resource working in an organization by modernizing the knowledge and upgrading – skills, attitudes and perceptions of employees in order to successfully address the changing trends of the globalised [world] and also to utilize those developments for the attainment of the organizational goals”. It is a set of systematic and planned activities designed by an organization to provide its members with the opportunity to learn necessary skills meant to meet current and future job demands (Desimone et al., 2002).

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In attempt to enhance human and institutional capacity, in 2001, the Ethiopian government had launched a comprehensive National Capacity Building Program (NCBP). The civil service reform program (CSR) is - an integral part of this broader program which focuses on building and strengthening public sector capacity for the attainment of the socio-economic development goals and objectives of the country (Adebabay & Perkins, 2010). Its overall purpose is to build a fair, effective, efficient, transparent and ethical civil service through institutional reforms and development and training. Human resource management reform (HRMR) which is one of the civil service reform programs (CSRs) intends to improve the mechanisms in which human resource is acquired, trained and developed, and retained. This shows that training and development has been the key priority of the government.

The government has also launched a district level decentralization which focuses on deepening devolution of power to local government, promoting grassroots participation in decision making and improving transparency, accountability, and service delivery as one of the key National Capacity Building Programs. In recognizing the importance of human resource development, public organizations at all tiers of government have been investing huge amount of resources in building the capacity of their workforce with the aim of satisfying highly increasing demand of the public (mainly in the areas of socio-economic development and good governance).

Konso is one of the areas in Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State which has been exercising devolution of power since its official launch at a national level. Nevertheless, local as well as regional governments have identified lack of execution capacity as a serious impediment- for public organizations and they invested a colossal amount of time and money in enhancing the capacity of the public servants. Even if a huge amount of resource is invested in human resource development, public organizations and the local government of Konso rarely have the data to know the impact of the investment. The author's experience indicates that there is also a hot debate among community members, politicians, and civil servants concerning the contribution of training and development to the performance of public organizations in the district. Moreover, the practices, achievements and challenges of human resource development in Ethiopia are under researched to date.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the practices of human resource development in public organizations of Konso district. In the study, an attempt was made to answer the following research questions: to what extent do public institutions of the district conduct training and development needs assessment?; to what extent do public institutions of the district administer, monitor, and evaluate training and development programs?; what improvements have training and development programs brought about in the public institutions of the district?; what are the challenges that public institutions have been facing in the area of training and development?

Apart from the introduction above, the paper presents - a brief review of the related literature on human resource development in general and training and development in particular in section two; the research methods in section three; the findings and analysis in section four; and conclusions and recommendations in section five.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Issues

Different scholars and practitioners have been using the term training and development interchangeably. Nevertheless, these two concepts have their own similarities and differences. For example, Bowin and Havey (2001) argued that though training and development are similar, there are essential differences between them. According to Bhatia (2005:98), “training is a systematic process of enhancing knowledge, skills, attitude and motivation of employees to improve their performance on the job as per the goals and objectives of the organization.” It is an act of increasing knowledge and skills as well as changing the attitude of- employees for improving the performance on the job (John, George, and Hill, 2000). Conversely, development is more prospect oriented and is dealt with education. It focuses more on enhancing the effectiveness of managers in their present jobs and preparing them for higher jobs in the future (Sharma, n.d.).

2.2 Purpose and Objectives of Training and Development

A training and -development venture is important for not only the organization, but also - the employees. According to Quinn, Anderson and Finkelstein (1996) and McNamara (2008) both training and development -have the following purposes: enhancing the company's capacity to adopt and use advances in technology because of- sufficiently knowledgeable staff; building a more efficient, effective and highly motivated team, which enhances the company's competitive position and improves employee moral; ensuring adequate human resources for expansion into new programs; increase productivity; reduce employee turnover; increase efficiency resulting in financial gains; decreased need for supervision; increase job satisfaction and morale among employees; increase employee motivation; increase innovation in strategies and products; and enhance company image.

2.3 Phases of Training and Development Programs

Desimone et al. (2002) and Bohlander and Snell (2004) have identified four phases of a training and development process: assessing training and development needs, design, implementation of training and development programs, and evaluating the results and providing feedback for action. Pursuing these steps - helps organizations to systematically identify their work force skill, knowledge, and attitudinal gaps and design appropriate training and development programs.

2.3.1 Training and Development Needs Assessment

Mainly training and development needs assessment addresses the following questions: who if any, needs training and development? And what type of training and development do they need? The questions appear extremely easy -, but getting good answers to these questions constitute one of the most difficult steps in the total training and development process (Yawson, 2009). In general, there are four reasons why training needs assessment should be done before training programs are developed: (a) to identify specific problem areas in the organization so that the highest priority organizational problems requiring training solutions are addressed; (b) to obtain management support by making certain that the training directly contributes to the bottom line, that the training improves employee job performance; (c) to develop data for evaluation of the

success of the training program, when the training has been completed; and (d) to determine the costs and benefits of training, because there are costs of leaving a training need unmet as well as benefits from improved job performance (Brown, 2002).

Training and development should be conducted by considering three types of analysis: organizational analysis, task analysis, and personal analysis (Desimone et al, 2002; Bohlander and Snell, 2004; Ivancevich, 2008). Whilst organization analysis provides clues as to the type of training that individuals and groups in the organizations must be given today or in the future, job analysis on the other hand involves a careful study of jobs within an organization in further effort to define the specific content of training. Individual employees can be evaluated by comparing their current skill levels or performance to the organization's performance standards or anticipated needs. Any discrepancies between actual and anticipated skill levels can help concerned bodies to identify a training need (Asare-Bediako, 2002).

2.3.2 Designing Training and Development Program

Desimone et al. (2002) have identified setting objectives, selecting the trainer, developing training and development content and lesson plan, selecting program methods and techniques, preparing materials, and scheduling the program as key activities in training and development design phase. Training and development administration which is- part of design includes creation of a suitable environment and determining the location, facilities, accessibility, timing, comfort, equipment for the success of training and development program (Noe, 2008).

2.3.3 Implementing Training and Development Programs

This is a practical phase where actual training and development program is executed and the design is put into action. Even if many actors are expected to participate, the responsibility of the trainer is crucial. As Desimone et al. (2002) clearly stated the primary responsibility for implementing the training and development programs lies with the trainer. At this stage it is very important to ensure that the training and development is moving in line with the objectives set so far and the trainees are easily acquiring the required knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

2.3.4 Monitoring- and Evaluation of Training and Development

This phase of training and development is very important but often overlooked by most organizations. Principally, the process of training and development would not be comprehensive without an appropriate monitoring and evaluation of the program. Monitoring and evaluation can help an organization to justify the costs incurred and the benefits gained from training and development programs. It could provide vital information and feedback about the effectiveness of the program and the lesson to be learned to improve a design of future programs. It enables organizations to know whether the competencies of employees are improved or not. It ensures whether the employees applied what they acquired from the training and development in their job or not (Mathis and Jackson, 2006).

2.4 Benefits of Training and Development

The primary purpose of training and development is to enhance knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the workforce or to facilitate acquisition of new skills, knowledge, and attitudes which would lead to improved individuals and team job performance (Kraiger, 2002; Hill & Lent, 2006;

Satterfield & Hughes, 2007). Several studies revealed that training and development led to greater innovation and attainment of tacit skills (Barber, 2004); acquisition of declarative knowledge - about “what” (for instance, facts, meaning of terms), procedural knowledge which includes knowledge about “how” (how to perform skilled behavior as indicated by-Taylor et al.(2005); and strategic knowledge that is knowing when to apply a specific knowledge or skill (Kozlowski et al. 2001, Kraiger et al. 1993) and enhance managerial knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Collins & Holton, 2004). All of these result- in - performance improvement of individuals and teams (Littrell et al., 2006; Ramirez, 2005; Collins & Holton, 2004; Guerrero & Barraud-Didier, 2004; Mabey & Arthur et al., 2003; Driskell et al., 2001; Morris & Robie, 2001; Frayne & Geringer, 2000).

2.5 Challenges of Training and Development

Several studies in both developed and developing countries have identified significant challenges that hinder- the proper management of training and development. Studies conducted by Al Bahar, et al. (, 1996); Ardichvili and Gasparishvili (2001); Lloyd (2002); Budhwar and Sparrow, (2002); Budhwar, Al-Yamadi & Debrah(2002); Alzalabani, (2002); Bing, et al, (2003) are worth mentioning. They have confirmed that lack of human resource development professionals; lack of experience and understanding of training and development on the part of managers; lack of immediate support from supervisors in facilitating the transfer of the learning process; lack of support, commitment, involvement and cooperation of top management in the development of human resources; high level of turnover, failure to find and hire adequately educated and skilled employees and give them with lifelong learning; failure to formulate human resource development plans and strategies and integrate them with organizational policies, plans and strategies were identified as key challenges for proper management of training and development.

3. The Methods

This study employed a mixed (quantitative and qualitative) research approach with the aim of scaling up the validity of the data collection and analysis (Johnston, 2010; McCormick and Schmitz, 2002). It is a descriptive type of research as it examines and describes the practices of training and development in the public service sector. This type has been chosen because of its appropriateness in describing the practices, achievements, and challenges of training and development in public service based on the analysis of data collected through a questionnaire and unstructured interview - from selected public institutions.

The target population of the study consisted of all employees working in public organizations. According to the civil service office of the district, there are about 2082 permanent and 542 contract employees currently working in the public organizations. So as to determine accessible population and select institutions and respondents, the researcher has used non-probability sampling technique and census method, respectively. First, the researcher categorized public institutions of the district into three sectors: economic, social, and administrative. Based on this categorization, 16 institutions were purposively selected on the basis of the role that they have been playing in improving the livelihood of the community and reducing poverty. Thus, seven (all) institutions from the economic sector, six (all) institutions from the social sector, three institutions from the administrative sector were selected.

Accessible population of the study comprised all employees working in the 16 public institutions located at Karat town (the capital of the district). Accessible population is the portion

of the population to which the researcher has reasonable access and is usually a subset of the target population. Based on the information obtained from the civil service office of the district, there are about 352 employees (higher officials, processes leaders, experts (both technical and administrative) and common service providers. These employees constitute the accessible population of the study. Nevertheless, among the accessible population, employees who are providing common services (guards, messengers, cleaners, drivers, laborers engaged in gardening) were excluded. Thus, eligible population of this study comprises 250 employees working in the 16 public institutions. Finally, the researcher used a census method due to the fact that the population is narrowed to a manageable level and is relatively small. Moreover, six higher officials, i.e. one each from health office, education office, agriculture office, tax and revenue office, civil service office, and women and children office were purposively selected for interview.

Relevant data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The -primary data were collected via questionnaire and interview. Secondary data were collected from books, journal articles, and other relevant documents including electronic materials. Desk study was then conducted to identify and review relevant empirical and theoretical literature regarding - training and development.

The data collected through questionnaire were edited, coded, and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequency counts, mean, and tables were used to present and interpret the data. Besides, content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data in which the data were organised by questions and individual respondents. Finally, emerging themes and patterns were identified across responses and questions. These themes and patterns were brought together for interpretation.

In the context of this study, human resource development is conceptualized as a framework for supporting employees in developing their personal skills, knowledge and attitudes and improving organizational capacity to achieve - the mission and vision of the organization. Training and development is operationalized as systematic process of developing the Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes of employees for the present and future roles and responsibilities in the organization. Public sector is considered as all government organizations that are governed by the rules and regulations of the civil service and deliver public programs, goods, or services.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

In general, 250 questionnaires were distributed to respondents working in the 16 public institutions. Accordingly, 201 of them were properly filled and returned making the response rate 80.4%. Nine questionnaires were incomplete and thus discarded, and the remaining 40 questionnaires were not returned.

4.1 General Background of Respondents

Table 1 below shows that public institutions of the district are dominated by males (84.6%) implying that all concerned bodies in the district and region have a lot of assignments to do in narrowing gender gap between civil servants. Regarding marital status, the majority (82.6) of civil servants got married showing that they have dual responsibility - taking care of their family and undertaking their livelihood activity as a civil servants.

As far as educational level of the respondents is concerned, the finding shows that most of the employees (94.5%) had attained high levels of education (diploma and above) which could

enable them to play key role in the development process of the district. This educational achievement is mainly due to availability and accessibility of various educational institutions throughout the country.

Regarding -work experience, 30.3% of the respondents have 1-5 years of work experience, (27.9) have work experience between 6 and 10 years, (15.9%) have 16 – 20 years, (14.4%) have 11 – 15 years of work experience and the remaining (11.4%) have worked for more than 20 years. This finding implies that public institutions of the district are manned by employees who have assorted work experiences. This could be a superb opportunity for fresh and junior civil servants to learn from their senior colleagues.

With regard to age of respondents, it ranges from 22 to 58 years, with an average age of 33.83 years demonstrating that the majority of the civil servants are in their productive age group who could energetically contribute to the development of the district when their capacity is continually developed and managed well.

4.2. The Practices of Training and Development Need Assessment

In Table 2, item number one shows that the majority of the public organizations lack a clear system that could help them to carry out employees' training and development needs assessment (as reported by 61.2% of the respondents). Almost all interviewees confirmed that their organizations lack unequivocal system to assess training and development needs mainly due to low attention from the concerned bodies and lack of professionals in the area of human resource development. And so, as replied by the majority of the respondents (68.6%) a large number of public institutions had failed to conduct training and development needs assessment on a regular basis. Interviewees were asked - whether or not their organizations - were regularly conducting training and development needs assessment and almost all of them replied that their organizations did not have such practices. One of the respondents said, "let alone conducting needs assessment on regular basis, there is no practice of conducting it at all. No one thinks about it." The interviewees underscored noted lack of skilled manpower in the areas of human resource development, low attention from bureau heads, and the attitude of expecting training and development from regional bureaus and/or NGOs hindered the practice of conducting training and development needs assessment.

Respondents were asked to express the level their agreement or disagreement with the statement that reads, 'in my organization, there is a practice of assessing both individual- and organizational training and development needs'. Consequently, the majority of the respondents (65.7%) disagreed with the statement (cf. Table 1). Since the practice of training and development needs assessment in the district is either non-existent or very weak, it is apparent that there won't be an assessment of individual and organizational needs. Another statement that is presented to the respondents was related to whether or not job skills, attitudes, and knowledge are considered in training and development needs assessment. Accordingly, 62.7% of the respondents reported that these elements were not considered in training and development needs assessment (cf. Table 1).

In response to a statement that says, 'in my organization, training and development needs assessment is conducted in participatory manner, a considerable number (66.2%) of the respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed (cf. Table 1) with the statement. This finding is consistent with the above finding- indicating that- the practice of needs assessment in the district is either awfully weak or non-existent. If such practices are not in place, it is palpable that employees would no longer participate in the process of training and development needs

assessment. Almost all (100%) interviewees reported that they don't have awareness even about the phrase needs assessment. Besides, the majority of the office heads do not consider training and development needs assessment as one of the key activities of their organization. With regard to the statement that says, 'the processes and methods used to identify training and development needs are effective', many (65.2%) respondents either strongly - disagreed (cf. Table 1). In the absence of a well- structured system of training and development needs assessment, and with a weak practice of conducting it, it is absurd to expect effective processes and methods of needs assessment.

Table 1: Practices of Need Assessment

Statements	Responses and Rates						
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	Total
There is a clear system to assess employees' training and development needs	N	33	90	13	57	8	201
	%	16.4%	44.8%	6.5%	28.4%	4.0%	100.0%
There is a practice of regularly conducting training and development needs assessment	N	37	101	5	55	3	201
	%	18.4%	50.2%	2.5%	27.4%	1.5%	100.0%
There is a practice of assessing both individuals and organizational training and development needs	N	38	95	16	42	10	201
	%	18.9%	47.3%	8.0%	20.9%	5.0%	100.0%
Job skills, attitudes, and skills are considered in training and development needs assessment	N	34	93	14	50	10	201
	%	16.9%	46.3%	7.0%	24.9%	5.0%	100.0%
Training and development needs assessment is conducted in participatory manner	N	38	95	13	42	13	201
	%	18.9%	47.3%	6.5%	20.9%	6.5%	100.0%
The processes and methods used to identify training and development needs are effective	N	41	90	21	43	6	201
	%	20.4%	44.8%	10.4%	21.4%	3.0%	100.0%
The existing system and processes will meet employees' future training and development needs and aspirations	N	38	72	24	54	13	201
	%	18.9%	35.8%	11.9%	26.9%	6.5%	100.0%

Source: Own Survey, June 2015

NB: SD - Strongly Disagree; DA - Disagree; N - Neutral; AG - Agree; SDA - Strongly Disagree

In response to the statement that reads 'the existing system and processes will meet employees' future training and development needs and aspirations', more than half (54.7%) of the respondents disagreed (cf. Table 1). This finding shows that the existing system and processes of training and development needs assessment would not be in a position to meet employees' future training and development needs and aspirations. This condition could adversely affect future career planning, motivation and job satisfaction of employees. As Garger (1999) clearly noted employees have no feeling about their organizations, if they think that their organizations are not caring about them. Wagner (2000) found that organizations which are providing training and development programs for their employees are achieving a high level of satisfaction and low employee turnover. Training and development increase an organization's reliability for employees recognize their organization is investing in their future career (Rosenwald, 2000).

4.3 The Practices of Training and Development Administration

Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement or disagreement regarding whether or not their organizations clearly developed training and development goals. More than half (57.7%) of the respondents reported that organizations did not develop training and development goals showing that the majority of the public institutions in the district failed to set noticeable training and development goals (cf. Table 2). Moreover, interviewees were asked about whether or not their organizations had a human resource development plan and they reported that a human resource development plan is either non-existent or not developed in a systematic manner, but – it was devised in an extemporized way. In such condition, it would be naive to expect clearly articulated training and development goals from the public organization.

Table 2 Practices of Training and Development Administration

Statements	Responses and Rates						
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	Total
Training and development goals are clearly stated	N	36	80	16	59	10	201
	%	17.9%	39.8%	8.0%	29.4%	5.0%	100.0%
Managers have created a positive work environment and supported training and development	N	47	71	19	50	14	201
	%	23.4%	35.3%	9.5%	24.9%	7.0%	100.0%
Managers consider training and development as a legitimate and valued work place activity	N	35	75	26	51	14	201
	%	17.4%	37.3%	12.9%	25.4%	7.0%	100.0%
Each year, adequate budget is allocated for training and development activities	N	46	82	31	34	8	201
	%	22.9%	40.8%	15.4%	16.9%	4.0%	100.0%
Trainer(s) are carefully selected within or outside the organization based on the type of training needed	N	35	90	21	45	10	201
	%	17.4%	44.8%	10.4%	22.4%	5.0%	100.0%
Location, facilities, accessibility, comfort, equipment and timing of training and development are carefully determined	N	40	84	28	45	4	201
	%	19.9%	41.8%	13.9%	22.4%	2.0%	100.0%
There is a responsible person or team that handles training and development activities	N	44	89	26	35	7	201
	%	21.9%	44.3%	12.9%	17.4%	3.5%	100.0%
There are no objective criteria to select employees for training and development. Rather, personal networks matter	N	27	42	15	95	22	201
	%	13.4%	20.9%	7.5%	47.3%	10.9%	100.0%
There is no equal opportunity for every employee to participate in training and development programs	N	33	34	25	83	26	201
	%	16.4%	16.9%	12.4%	41.3%	12.9%	100.0%

Source: Own Survey, June 2015

Another very important issue in training and development administration is public managers' effort in creating a positive and supportive work environment for training and development programs. To verify this, respondents were asked to express the level of their agreement or disagreement concerning the statement that says 'in my organization, managers have created a positive work environment and supported training and development'. The majority of the respondents (58.7%) - disagreed with the statement (cf. Table 2). This finding demonstrates that the majority of the managers in public institutions is not seriously taking training and

development activities as their responsibility and has failed to support and create favorable environment to plan, implement and evaluate training and development programs.

In response to the statement that says, 'in my organization, managers consider training and development as a legitimate and valued work place activity, more than half (54.7%) of the respondents - disagreed with the statement (cf. Table 2).

This finding shows that the majority of the managers in the public organizations have low passion in considering training and development as a legitimate and valued work place activity. This finding is in line with the information obtained from interviewees.

The interviewees indicated that managers in public organizations do not consider training and development as the part of their responsibility mainly due to lack of awareness, low attention, and attitude of considering training and development as others responsibility (mainly of regional bureaus and/or NGOs).

Respondents were also asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement with whether or not their organizations earmark adequate budget each year for training and development activities. In general, the majority of the respondents (63.7%) either disagreed with the statement (cf. Table 2) indicating that the practice of allocating reasonable budget to training and development programs is very poor. Likewise, all interviewees reported that lack of budget had been one of the critical challenges that hindered the proper planning and implementation of training and development programs.

Regarding the statement that reads, 'trainer(s) are carefully selected within or outside the organization based on the type of training needed', 62.8% of the respondents felt that their organizations are not carefully selecting in-house or outside trainers (cf. Table 2). Information obtained from the interview indicated that since the majority of training and development programs are mainly provided by regional bureaus, public offices of the district did not have control over the selection of trainer(s). Some of the interviewees, however, reported that for in-house technical training, sometimes trainers and training materials are not carefully identified and selected.

When respondents were asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement regarding the statement that says, 'location, facilities, accessibility, comfort, equipment or timing of training and development are carefully determined', a considerable number (61.7%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement (cf. Table 2). This finding implies that the administration of training and development in the district mainly in selecting the right location, facilities, accessibility, comfort, equipment or timing of training and development is poor. Almost all responses of the interviewees are in affirmation with this finding where they reported that the practice of identifying and selecting proper location, facilities, accessibility, comfort, equipment or timing of training and development of their respective organizations is extremely pathetic. One of the respondents said, "Training and development does not have owner. If the owner is not there, who do you think is responsible to identify and select proper location, facilities, accessibility, comfort, equipment or timing?"

Respondents were also asked to state their level of agreement or disagreement regarding the idea that says, 'there is a responsible person or team that handles training and development activities', and a considerable number (66.2%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement (cf. Table 2). This shows that the majority of the public institutions lack appropriate manpower that could handle training and development activities and/or programs. Information obtained from all interviewees support this finding that signals- lack of skilled manpower in the area of training and development as one of the serious problems that adversely affected the

practices of training and development. From the observation, it is also clear that all approached (16) public institutions lack a responsible person or team that would handle training and development activities and/or programs. This finding is in line with other research findings which identified shortage of training and development professionals who are skilled and experienced (Bing et al, 2003), and who have the ability to manage the vast and specialized function of human resource development across organizations (Eidgahy, 1995; Buyens et al, 2001; Garavan, et al, 2002) as key challenges of human resource development programs.

Asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement with regard to the statement that reads, ‘there are no objective criteria to select employees for training and development, but rather personal networks matter’, the majority of the respondents (58.2%) felt that their organizations did not use objective criteria in selecting employees for training and development programs (cf. Table 3). This finding however, is inconsistent with what some of the interviewees reported indicating that many of the training and development program opportunities that came from regions sometime clearly specify either the criteria or the number of trainee(s) from a specific department/team or even the position that is occupied by a particular employee who ought to have the training. According to them, when this is a case, office heads send the request to the concerned department- that directly informs the concerned employee(s). However, they said that when the region only specifies the criteria without clearly mentioning a particular department/core process/a person working in a particular position, either the management committee of the organization or an independent committee selects the trainee(s). The majority of the interviewees however reject this argument saying that this is not always the case. They argued that in most of the training and development opportunities, employees are selected based on a personal network rather than objective criteria. According to them, when the training and development program has financial benefit or proffer- a well- recognized certificate/diploma, employees in a strong network is sent to those in the network. On the other hand, when the program lacks issues of transparency and accountability, inapt employees who do not deserve - the training and development opportunity are- sent to attend the program.

Concerning the statement that says, ‘there is no equal opportunity for every employee who wishes to participate in training and development programs’, more than half (54.2%) of the respondents felt that their organizations are not providing equal opportunity for every employee to take part in training and development programs. It is evident that when the selection process is not transparent and lacks objective criteria, employees would not get equal opportunity. The view of the majority of the interviewees is akin to the finding above where they noted that in bulk of the training and development opportunities employees are not given equal chances mainly due to lack of a transparent selection system, lack of accountability, and rent seeking behavior of those who have the power and authority in deciding on candidates’ opportunities for training and development.

4.4 The Practice of Monitoring and Evaluation

Respondents were asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement that says, ‘when employees return from training and development, managers encourage them to share what they have learned with other employees’ and 69.7% of them disagreed with the statement (cf. Table 3). This shows that the practice of encouraging workers to share the knowledge and/or skills acquired from training and development programs to colleagues is poor. Almost all interviewees have confirmed this finding saying that the practice of encouraging returnees of the training to share what they have learned is very weak. One of the interviewees

said, “many employees including myself took training and development in different areas at different times, but I couldn’t remember the time when employees shared what they have learned. Nobody asked the returnees to do so.”

Table 3 Practices of Monitoring and Evaluation

Statements	Responses and Rates						Total
	SD	DA	N	AG	SA		
When employees return from training and development, managers encourage them to share what they have learned with other employees	N 43	97	10	46	5		201
	% 21.4%	48.3%	5.0%	22.9%	2.5%		100.0%
Managers guide and follow up the employees to know whether they are doing their job as per the training imparted or not	N 30	92	20	52	7		201
	% 14.9%	45.8%	10.0%	25.9%	3.5%		100.0%
Managers give employees the opportunity to tryout the knowledge and skills they acquired from training and development on the job immediately	N 41	91	22	39	8		201
	% 20.4%	45.3%	10.9%	19.4%	4.0%		100.0%
Managers ease the pressure of work for a short time so employees get a chance to practice new knowledge and/or skills that are gained from training and development	N 47	83	20	48	3		201
	% 23.4%	41.3%	10.0%	23.9%	1.5%		100.0%
Adequate time is given for employees returning from training and development to reflect and plan improvements	N 43	93	27	36	2		201
	% 21.4%	46.3%	13.4%	17.9%	1.0%		100.0%
There is a system in place to monitor and report training and development activities	N 46	84	15	45	11		201
	% 22.9%	41.8%	7.5%	22.4%	5.5%		100.0%
Results of training and development programs are monitored and evaluated on regular basis	N 48	89	24	32	8		201
	% 23.9%	44.3%	11.9%	15.9%	4.0%		100.0%
There is a practice of conducting impact assessment and recording the improvements attained due to training and development	N 49	91	20	36	5		201
	% 24.4%	45.3%	10.0%	17.9%	2.5%		100.0%

Source: Own Survey, June 2015

When asked about whether or not managers guide the employees to know whether they are doing their job as per the training imparted or not, the majority (60.7%) of the respondents either disagreed with the idea (cf. Table 3). This finding signals that the practice of guiding returnees of the training and development program in the district is weak. In response to the statement that reads, ‘managers give employees the opportunity to try out the knowledge and skills they acquired from training and development on the job immediately,’ nearly two third (65.7%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement (cf. Table 3). This finding demonstrates that public managers have failed in granting an opportunity to the returnees of training and development programs and botched to allow them to try out the knowledge and skills the trainees acquired from the training and development on the job immediately.

Respondents were asked to rate their opinions about whether or not ‘managers ease the pressure of work for a short time so that employees can get a chance to practice new knowledge

and/or skills that are gained from training and development’, (64.7%) of communicated their disagreement (cf. Table 3).

Almost all interviewees reported that their organizations neither eased the pressure of work nor gave them a chance to returnees of training and development to practice what they learned. They said that there was no such practice at all in the district mainly due to lack of responsible person that would regularly monitor the returnees and their low attention paid to the training and development activities. In supporting this finding, one of the interviewees said, ‘when an employee returns from any type of training and development, no one asks him or her to practice what he or she has learned. Practicing knowledge and skills gained from training and development depends on the interest and motivation of the employee.’

With regard to the idea of whether or not ‘adequate time is given to employees returning from training and development to reflect and plan improvements,’ (67.7%) of the respondents expressed disagreement (cf. Table 3). From this finding, one can infer that adequate time was not given to employees returning from training and development to reflect and plan improvements. On top of this, in response to the idea that ‘there is a system in place to monitor and report training and development activities and programs’, (64.7%) of the respondents disclosed their disagreement (cf. Table 3). It can be concluded that public institutions in the district lack an understandable system of monitoring and reporting on training and development activities and programs.

Asked whether or not results of training and development programs are timely monitored and evaluated in their organizations, (68.2%) of the respondents disagreed with the idea. This signifies that the practice of timely monitoring and evaluating training and development programs is trivial. Almost all interviewees reported that there are no such practices in the district. Besides, concerning the issue that ‘there is a practice of conducting impact assessment and recording improvements attained due to training and development’, (69.7%) of the respondents conversed their disagreement. One can, thus, infer that public organizations of the district lack the practice of conducting impact assessment and recording the potential improvements attained as a result of training and development initiatives.

4.5 Improvements Achieved

Slightly over half (52.2%) of the respondents either disagreed with the idea that training and development has brought about positive attitude in employees (cf. Table 4). As this study evidently shows within the highly scrappy practices of training and development in the district where training and development needs assessment and planning practices are insignificant, trainee selection procedures are opaque, where many employees perceive that there is no equal opportunity, and the system of accountability is either weak or non-existent, it would be naïve to expect meaningful improvement in attitudes of the employees. This finding spells out that in the majority of public institutions, training and development programs are ineffective in improving the attitude of employees. This would adversely affect the commitment of the employees and reduce their performance. Though considerable proportion of respondents (41.3%) felt that training and development had brought about positive attitudes in employees showing that in some public organizations training and development to some extent changed the attitudes of the employees (cf. Table 4).

This finding is in line with the information obtained from some of the interviewees. For example, interviewees from health, education, and agriculture office reported that training and

development efforts had brought about some improvement in the attitudes of health extension workers, teachers, and agricultural experts.

Table 4 Improvements Observed due to Training and Development Initiatives

Statements	Responses and Rates						Total
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	
Training and development has brought about positive attitude in employees	N	34	71	13	70	13	201
	%	16.9%	35.3%	6.5%	34.8%	6.5%	100.0%
Training and development has enhanced job related skills and knowledge of employees	N	22	81	18	69	11	201
	%	10.9%	40.3%	9.0%	34.3%	5.5%	100.0%
Training and development has enhanced managerial capacity of managers at various levels	N	31	71	34	53	12	201
	%	15.4%	35.3%	16.9%	26.4%	6.0%	100.0%
Training and development has improved the performance and productivity of individual employees	N	26	76	17	68	14	201
	%	12.9%	37.8%	8.5%	33.8%	7.0%	100.0%
Training and development has improved the performance and productivity of the organization	N	24	74	19	72	12	201
	%	11.9%	36.8%	9.5%	35.8%	6.0%	100.0%
Training and development has increased employees' job satisfaction	N	38	80	18	55	10	201
	%	18.9%	39.8%	9.0%	27.4%	5.0%	100.0%

Source: Own Survey, June 2015

In addition, in response to the issue that ‘training and development had enhanced job related skills and knowledge of employees’, slightly above half (51.2%) of the respondents disclosed their disagreement (cf. Table 4).

As indicated in Table 4, in the situation where the practice of training and development needs a high level of assessment, administration, monitoring and evaluation, it would be strange to expect improvement in the employees’ knowledge and skills. In conclusion, in the majority of the public organizations, the concept of training and development did not bring about – a significant improvement in job related skills and knowledge of the employees. However, a significant proportion (39.8%) of the respondents perceived that training and development had enhanced job related skills and knowledge of employees seeing that in some public organizations training and development -improved job related skills and knowledge of employees. This confirms the information obtained from some of the interviewees (mainly drawn from health, education, agriculture, and revenue offices) who reported that training and development programs improved the skills and knowledge of those employees who seriously had attended the programs.

With regard to the statement that says ‘training and development has enhanced managerial capacity of managers at various levels,’ slightly over half (51.2%) of the respondents disagreed with the idea (cf. Table 4). This indicates that in the majority of public organizations, training and development is found to be futile in improving managerial capacity. Data acquired from the interviewees is in affirmation with this finding implying that they had been unable to see improvements in managerial competence (capacity to plan, organize, direct, and control development endeavors, motivate employees, and create team spirit) of the public managers albeit the majority among them had participated in various training and development programs.

As far as the statement that says ‘training and development has improved the performance and productivity of individual employees’ is concerned, about half (50.7%) of the respondents disclosed their disagreement (cf. Table 4). One can thus figure out that in the majority of public

organizations, training and development hasn't improved the performance and productivity of individual employees. Although a significant proportion of the respondents (40.8%) agreed with the statement (cf. Table 4) implying that in some public institutions where employees carefully attended training and development programs and effectively applied what they acquired from the program in the workplace, it improved their performance and productivity. Similarly, a statement that says, 'training and development has improved the performance and productivity of the organization' was presented to the respondents. About half (48.7%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Equally, a significant proportion of respondents (41.8%) either agreed with the statement as well (cf. Table 4). The implication here is that in the majority of the public organizations, training and development hasn't improved the performance and productivity of the public organizations, whereas in some public institutions where employees carefully attended training and development programs and effectively applied what they learned from the program in their work place, it improved the performance and productivity of the public organizations.

The respondents were also asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement that says, 'training and development has increased employees' job satisfaction.' The responses show that a considerable number (58.7%) of the respondents indicated their disagreement showing that in the majority of public institutions training and development didn't increase employees' job satisfaction, and it did not reduce the turnover, either.

4.6 Factors that Inhibit Practices of Training and Development

Pertaining to factors that impeded the proper management of training and development, the respondents provided the responses tabulated below in Table 5. Moreover, the respondents were asked to identify the challenges (of training and development initiatives) that their organizations has been facing.

Table 5 Factors that Hindered the Practice of Training and Development

Statements	Responses and Rates					
	No		Yes		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lack of leadership commitment and support	59	29.4%	142	70.6%	201	100.0%
Lack of budget/financial resource	55	27.4%	146	72.6%	201	100.0%
Lack of transparency in selection process	66	32.8%	135	67.2%	201	100.0%
Lack of human resource development professionals	96	47.8%	105	52.2%	201	100.0%
Insufficient time duration and poor timing	111	55.2%	90	44.8%	201	100.0%
Inaccessibility of training institutions	95	47.3%	106	52.7%	201	100.0%
High cost of training and development	120	59.7%	81	40.3%	201	100.0%
Low interest of employees to participate in training and development	159	79.1%	42	20.9%	201	100.0%
Lack of organized data on human resource development needs	89	44.3%	112	55.7%	201	100.0%
Lack of employees' involvement in needs assessment and selection	95	47.3%	106	52.7%	201	100.0%

Source: Own Survey, 2015

As can be seen from Table 5, 146(72.6%), 142(70.6%), 135(67.2%), 112(55.7%), 106(52.7%), 106(52.7%), 105(52.2%), 90(44.8%), 81(40.3%), and 42(20.9%) of respondents

reported lack of budget/financial resource, lack of leadership commitment and support, lack of transparency in selection process, lack of organized data on human resource development needs, lack of employees' involvement in needs assessment and selection process, inaccessibility of training institutions, lack of human resource development professionals, insufficient time duration and poor timing, high cost of training and development, and low interest of employees to participate in training and development as challenges of training and development in the district, respectively.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This study aims at investigating human resource training and development practices in some selected public organizations of Konso district in south Ethiopia. The practice of employees training and development needs assessment was found to be either meager or non-existent in the public institutions of the Konso district chiefly due to low attention paid by higher officials or bureau heads, and because of lack of skilled manpower in the area, along with the negative attitude of expecting training and development from regional line bureaus and/or NGOs. Moreover, public managers in the district are not seriously considering training and development matters as their crucial responsibility and have failed to create favorable environment in an effort to plan, implement and evaluate training and development programs.

Public institutions of the district lack a transparent system and procedure of selecting candidates for training and development and failed to provide equal opportunity for employees to participate in training and development programs. Consequently, the majority of the employees are dissatisfied with the whole processes and practices of training and development. Public institutions of the district do not have clear systems of monitoring and reporting on training and development activities and programs, as well. In general, the practice of training and development in the district is poor and, as a result, there is no significant improvement in skills, knowledge, and attitudes of employees. Moreover, in most cases, training and development is unsuccessful in improving the performance and productivity of individuals and organizations.

5.2 Recommendations

- ***Strengthening practices of training and development needs assessment:*** training and development initiatives should be planned in systematic ways and be supported by meticulous needs assessment and analysis of individual as well as organizational performance. Public managers of the district should create a clear system for training and development needs assessment and carefully conduct training and development needs assessment in a participatory manner and identify the gap between current competence of the workforce and the required type and level of competence; explore the causes and reasons for the gap, and devise appropriate intervention to close the gaps.
- ***Due attention by higher officials as well as bureau heads to training and development:*** bureau heads of the respective public institutions and other higher officials of the district should pay due attention to training and development activities, support and create favorable environment for planning, implementation and evaluation of training and development programs. They should carefully decide on issues of the right location, facilities, accessibility, comfort, equipment or timing of training and development in advance. They

should install transparency system of selecting trainees and link this system with needs assessment systems, as well.

- **Strengthening the follow up mechanisms:** public managers of the respective bureaus should establish a clear follow up mechanism and give an opportunity to the returnees from training and development programs thereby encouraging the returnees to try out the knowledge and skills they acquired, and ease the pain or pressure of work for a short time so that employees can get a chance to practice the new knowledge and/or skills that are gained.
- **Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms:** every employee should be monitored and evaluated during and after the program by comparing his/her newly acquired skills and knowledge with the skills and knowledge defined by the goals of the training and development program. Timely monitoring and evaluation of training and development programs could enable the public managers to take a timely record of the developments (improvements achieved, and problems faced), and take timely measures so as to enhance organizational effectiveness. Therefore, all public managers should establish a clearly articulated system that would enable them to effectively monitor and evaluate training and development initiatives.
- **Strengthening Human Resource Department:** all concerned bodies of the district should take the problem of lack of human resource development department in to consideration and, at least, establish a department at a central level (under the civil service bureau of the district) that could carry out the function of HRD effectively and efficiently. Adequate budget should be earmarked to the department and training and development programs as well. This requires a high level of commitment and support from high ranking officials and stakeholders (governmental and non-governmental) working in the district.

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