
Effects of Workforce Training and Alignment on Organizational Performance – A Study of Anambra – Imo River Basin Development Authority (Airbda)

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ABSTRACT

Training inadequacy has always been a cog in the wheel of progress of most organizations. Anambra-Imo River Basin Development Authority is not left out of this. This work carefully used Needs Assessment to determine and address needs or gaps between what is happening in the organization and what it is expected to be. A “SWOT” model (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis was also applied to ascertain the actual training requirement of the organization. The researcher relied on interview of personnel for accurate information. Actual experience as suggested by the interviewees are very useful. Five staff from Senior, Middle and Junior cadres were randomly selected to help in the collection of data which were processed in order to arrive at the findings of the research. It is proved that positive effects of workforce training in Anambra-Imo River Basin Development Authority have increased staff skills and reduced time previously wasted to complete assignments. Finally, it was established that workforce training and alignment leads to organizational high performance.

Keywords: *Workforce training, workforce alignment, organizational performance, AIRBDA, manpower utilization, Needs assessment.*

INTRODUCTION:

Globally, organization’s need to train employees is continuously increasing. Thus, training aims to improve current work skills and behaviour of employees. When training is aligned in a workforce, organizational performance is usually enhanced. Training becomes more problematic when it involves experienced employees who require additional training to make their performance more efficient especially when such employees feel aggrieved when asked to change their established ways of doing their jobs (Stoner 1978). Training therefore is defined as “the use of systematic and planned instruction activities to promote learning.” (Armstrong, 2012).

The scenario in Anambra–Imo River Basin Development Authority, a Parastatal of the Federal Ministry of Water Resources established by Decree No. 25 of 1976 with regard to staff productivity and management control, was that of management trying amidst all odds to enhance its staff productivity for improved and effective organizational goals. This was initially not achievable because most staff lacked training skills and management on its part was late in realizing the need for training and development of its staff. Stoner (1978) opined that “the process of training and development aimed at increasing the ability of individuals and groups to contribute towards organizational effectiveness. Training as it stood, is designed to improve job skills while development programmes are designed to educate

employees beyond the requirements of their present position so that they will be prepared for promotion and able to take a broader view of their roles in the organization.” However, the Anambra-Imo River Basin Development Authority as an agency of government had a mandate and which must be achieved through effective workforce training and retraining of their staff. Thus the emerging workforce training and its alignment to her performance have a consequential effect which hitherto had marred the basis and basics for its establishment.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Human factor in organizations is deemed as drives and magnifier of organizational factors and provider of its effectiveness. Related literature to the study of phenomena showed that there is need to study phenomena, environment and organizations variables. Suffice it to say that workforce training is regarded as a necessity for workforce alignment on organizational performance and basic means for the creation of social realities and achievement of highest level of organizational performance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to investigate the effects of workforce training and alignment on organizational performance of AIRBDA.

- i. Explore the relationship between workforce training/alignment and organizational performance.
- ii. Find out the training needs of staff of AIRBDA;
- iii. Determine the effects of workforce training and workforce alignment in relation to organizational performance.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions tend to address the objectives:

- i. Do you think merit was adopted in selecting staff for training in the Authority?
- ii. What are the training needs of staff of AIRBDA?
- iii. Are staff sent on training for improvement of skills and performance?
- iv. Does workforce training and alignment have any effect on organizational performance.

HISTORICAL BASIS OF ANAMBRA/IMO RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

This organization was established by Decree No. 25 of 1976. Its operations covered three geographical areas comprising – Anambra, Imo and Benue States. The original objectives were among others to undertake comprehensive development of both surface and underground water resources for multipurpose use, to undertake schemes for the control of floods and erosions and for water-shed management, to construct and maintain dams, dykes, polders, wells, boreholes, irrigation and drainage systems and other works necessary for the achievement of the Authority’s objective (Decree 25, 1976).

Since inception, government’s various policies have changed the objective course of River Basin Development Authorities in the country. These policies at one time or the other necessitated changes in name and activities of the organization such as River Basin and Rural Development Authority, removing direct Agricultural activities. Therefore, the present Anambra– Imo River Development Authority covers five states in the South-East Zone that is, Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu and Ebonyi States. - Decree No. 39 (1986)

In carrying out set objectives of the Authority as mandated by government, Management of Anambra - Imo River Basin Development Authority observed that hitches occur in the implementation of its goals due to cogs in the wheel of its administration. This was traced to inefficiency and low productivity in its workforce in areas such as effective construction of

small earth dams, drillings of boreholes, consultancy to farmers with a view to recommending high yielding crop varieties on the one hand and problem of record keeping such as cases of loss of files, mutilation of staff records, random creation of temporary files and other related problems. All these lapses necessitated the intervention with Needs Assessment to determine and address needs or gaps between what is happening in the organization and what it ought to be.

Needs Assessment

Needs assessment is usually applied to ameliorate discrepancies between current conditions and wanted conditions which must be measured to appropriately identify the need. It can be applied to improve current performance or to correct a deficiency. In a bid to properly come down to immediate need of the organization, a model “SWOT” analysis was used. SWOT analysis which stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats was applied. A fifteen-man research group was recruited from the staff of the organization. They came out with the zeal to contribute effectively to the way forward in achieving high productivity in Anambra – Imo River Basin Development Authority. They were able to generate a list of successes and failures of the organization over years. Through the findings of the research group, strengths and weaknesses including opportunities and threats of the organization were identified hence the urgent requirement for training and re-training of most existing staff in departments affected by the observed administrative anomalies. One of the critical points arising from the Needs Assessments process was the need to align workforce with performance through training and retraining of members of staff in the AIRBDA.

TRAINING:

According to Byers (1995), “If people of an organization, and if it is true that the people in an organization are what really make the difference, then the development of people and creation of organizational conditions for full utilization of their developed talents will be of the highest priority and concern to the governing body, and the top management of a public organization. This will be their most effective means ultimately to solve or ameliorate their problems and achieve more and better results even within the limits of scarce resources.”

“Training is a process by which the aptitudes, skills and abilities of employees to perform specific jobs are increased.” – (Ogunna 1999).

With all the changes going on from time to time in the Authority, it is not surprising that record-keeping has become an essential part of the whole infrastructure, but due to lapses here and there, and lots of technical differences, the methods and level of record keeping in the Authority has not kept pace with changes. These led to low productivity, inefficiency, frustration and even corruption. These anomalies no doubt jeopardized the administrative functions of the Authority generating lukewarm attitude among rank and file of staff resulting to improper control of files, delay in retrieving information and delay in dissemination of information. Acts of this nature consume time which could be used in treating some other important jobs effectively.

Naturally, any organization with such administrative lapses tends to slip into bottle-necks in the sphere of its duties – a problem which if not nipped in the bud can dampen the management of the organization. As noted, by Armstrong (2012), “Training is the systematic development of knowledge, skills and attitude required by an individual to perform adequately, a given task or job.” Thus, the Authority’s Management approved training of some staff to redress the unfortunate situation and enhance efficiency and effectiveness. It is believed that training enables systematic acquisition of skills, rules, knowledge and attitudes that have specific or narrow applicability to a limited set of situations in a specific job environment – the job in which one works. Middlemist (1983) posited that some jobs are

complex and requires several skills but one must be careful in the application of broad conceptual skills so that the required skills can be specified. The focus of training on the specific applications of relatively narrow set of skills, rules, knowledge and attitude will compose the basic and predominant activities allowing one to function effectively in the job environment. The primary purpose being to achieve a positive change in the behaviour of employees in the performance of their assigned duties. Therefore, Staff training inadequacies seem most likely to be a problem and a cog in the wheel of progress of most organizations. The term Training has been used most often to refer to the teaching of technical skills to personnel, while staff development usually refers to programmes that attempt to improve the technical human relations and conceptual skills of personnel. In line with the approval of Management to train some Registry Staff, development programmes were designed for staff in the Registry. Prior to the approval by management to train Registry Staff, most of them lack basic skills required because they were not exposed to short or long term training. Based on this premise, it was then necessary to sharpen the skills of these staff whose effectiveness is most desired to galvanize administrative flow of activities in the Authority. Their ignorance did not even allow them to keep abreast with managerial techniques of record-keeping. As such, the resultant effect was poor record-keeping-methods and facilities prevalent in the organization and its sour consequences.

WORKFORCE TRAINING FOR EFFECTIVE MANPOWER UTILIZATION

Despite the great awareness on the need for training, the Anambra – Imo River Basin Development Authority was able to send only ten staff to Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) Badagry Lagos (1989) for short courses ranging from three months to six months. Six staff were also sent to National Centre for Economic Management and Administration (NCEMA) Ibadan (1998). The investment in training staff yielded a lot of dividend. On return from the in-service training, these staff organized in-house training for other staff groups in the Authority. In each of the five-day in-house training for three categories of staff in the Authority, that is, Top Management, Middle Management and Junior Staff, it was glaring that training is rooted in the preposition that skill for staff performance is a function of the aptitude, knowledge and motivation of a worker.

Every staff of the Authority was encouraged and given the opportunity to participate and learn to develop skills and knowledge acquired from those that went for in-service training. The aim was to produce a coherent and comprehensive framework for developing people through promoting high performance towards the achievement of organizational goals. After the training, staff improved tremendously on their current schedule of duties and their performance was encouraging. In addition, the programme helped chart a more positive and effective future for the Authority. This is because it did not only enhance their performance on present job, but also gave them confidence to perform higher responsibilities. With the increasing use of sophisticated and complex technical facilities by many Organizations and Institutions, the demand for staff training has assumed a more urgent need.

However, given the obvious internal and external constraints within which organizations are expected to perform in Nigeria, business creativity is likely to be successful when the organizational structure is organic and result-oriented (Anugwom 2012). With good training, employees know what to do, how to do it, who should do it and when to do it. Fairbrothers and Gorla (2011) recognized this when they asserted that

“So many of us walk and walk and walk, but find we’re never getting anywhere. All along we wanted to be SOMEWHERE, but we never thought enough about where that should be. Where do you want to go? What do you want to achieve? Do you think about significance, or is the act of achieving a goal in itself? Who

do you want to become? Who do you want to be tomorrow? What can you do to get there?."

In this context, it is worthy of note that jobs are frequently redesigned by organizations to take advantage of new technological developments hence the need for adequate training and human resource utilization. This will enable employees to maintain the match between job requirements and individual characteristics and abilities, in that, the obvious goal of any training programme is to achieve more effective employee job performance and satisfaction. Training creates room for competition. Employees of the Authority after undergoing organized workshops, seminars and in-service training of different cadres, are now proud to compete with other River Basin Development Authorities in areas of increased yield of agricultural products, effective performance in manpower development, record-keeping and strategic human resource management. In effect, the impact of some learning strategies and changes in employee-skills, attitudes and knowledge are important for effective performances as one moves through series of jobs. It enhances loyalty, objectivity, commitment, integrity and probity within the context of maintaining high standard of efficiency and competence. Consequently, the process of training and development should be a continuous exercise. This presupposes that more emphasis should be laid on systematic training and development. It will in effect not only serve as motivational factors to employees, but also instill confidence to an enthusiastic worker in originating ideas on how best to carry out the tasks of a given job. This statement is confirmed by Mmobuosi (1988) who asserted that: "when personnel are sent for training or development courses, their performance improvement is an objective, when from the training, personal improvement change flows to affect organizational or work group benefit, organization development is the result." From whatever perspective people might view it, organisations are dynamic and capable of keeping to the developmental pace as such, training and development have become an integral part of organizational processes in Nigeria.

WORKFORCE ALIGNMENT ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Aligning workforce and strategy as posited by Ericksen (2016), can be the difference between winning and losing in an organization. There are many ways of improving workforce alignment. Among them is making sure that everybody understands the purpose and objectives of the organization, as well as their holistic role in it. Sharing objectives is the first step toward aligning workforce. In Anambra-Imo River Basin Development Authority, definition of organizational clarity to all concerned contributed positively to the alignment of workforce in the Authority. This is because initiatives and priorities were made clear to the workforce with the evolving strategies of the organization. Organizational clarity exposes the level of comprehension an individual has about his or her organization. Ericksen (2016) findings show that workforce alignment is a step toward organizational performance.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

According to Middlemist (1983) "Career development is the process of planning the series of possible jobs one may hold in the organization over a period of time and development strategies designed to provide necessary job skills as the opportunities arise." As stated above, career development is greatly affected by job mobility in an organization. It is the same as job mobility itself affected by the organization size, technology and structure. Consequently, the size, structure and new technologies introduced in Anambra - Imo River Basin Development Authority has relatively affected career development in the Authority. It is therefore necessary to note that the matching of skills, attitudes, and knowledge required by the job and those of the individual is crucial in career development, hence the importance of training.

The emerging technologies are fundamentally transforming our society by influencing what to do, the way we do it, the way we live, play and interact with others. Moreover, all these things are expected to be changing as the technology and knowledge infrastructure around us continues to change with high speed, control, judgment and precision. These changes have effects on the nature and mixture of jobs available. Therefore, Human Capital Management (HCM) of an organization is surely short-sighted to ignore these technological challenges in their manpower forecasting and planning.” (Anugwom 2012). Thus, in Anambra - Imo River Basin Development Authority, the case of emerging technology is not different from the others. Solar boreholes are being introduced, small hydro-powered dams are in the increase including other new innovations in the field of engineering and agriculture. Plans are under way to utilize available manpower to advance the emerging technologies for higher productivity and effective performance over other organizations. Training of existing staff therefore will help to prevent misuse and underutilization, which is attributable to thoughtless and reckless handling of new equipment.

Nonetheless, there is need to systematically acquire required skills, knowledge and attitude geared towards improving staff potentials to the actualization of the organizational objective. Operational challenges within the water resources sector will equally be addressed with a view to ascertaining and exploring opportunities for possible participation in the water resources management sector in attainment of effective irrigation and food security in Nigeria. To actualize the above objective, high performance culture which is the use and management of people within the organization to achieve a set objective is very necessary. This is expected to be done through combination of values, norms and human resource practices of an organization to create a climate in which the achievement of high level performance is realized. In this regard, workers are made to know what is expected of them, that understands their goals and accountabilities. They feel that their jobs are worth doing, and there is a strong fit between the jobs and their capabilities. People are empowered through training to maximize their contributions aligning processes to goals in order to ensure that people are engaged in achieving agreed objectives and standards. Therefore, workers capacities are developed through learning at all levels to support performance improvement by providing them with opportunities to make use of their skills and abilities, in a climate of trust and team-work aimed at delivering a distinctive service (Anugwom 2012).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, Anambra-Imo River Basin Training schedule from the period year 2001 – 2010 was reviewed. Within the period, we examined the procedure used in selecting staff for training. Primary and secondary data were used in the study. The primary data was obtained by interviewing staff of the headquarters in Owerri and Lower Anambra Irrigation Project, Omor whereas secondary data was gathered from the Administration and Planning departments of the Authority. The interview was done on one-on-one bases to guard against bias and prejudice and cut across both junior and senior staff. The study adopted a survey research design to evaluate the effects of workforce training and alignment on organizational performance in AIRBDA. Survey enable researcher to obtain data about practices, situations or views at any point in time through interview and observation.

The target population was two hundred employees being one-third of the entire population of Anambra-Imo River Basin Development Authority. The researcher interviewed four groups numbering forty staff in each group and twenty selected individuals totaling one hundred and eighty people. The research instrument comprised of interview schedule. Thereafter interview were conducted with the assistance of management staff.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

The importance of theoretical framework in a research is paramount as it is said that research untutored by theory may prove trivial and theory unsupported by data futile. In organizing this study, we adopted Systematic Approach as our framework of analysis. Our choice of theory is based on our belief that undertaking empirical and systematic operation and enquiry into phenomena of problem will proffer remedies and solutions to problems. We adopted systematic approach because it seeks to get information and understand a phenomenon through determining its processes of growth and internal dynamics, including trends from past events such as how training were organized in AIRBDA and the basis of how such trend make reasonable extrapolation about the future.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

TABLE: AIRBDA estimated staff strength January 2001 – December 2010 and number of staff trained within the period of study.

Location/ Project	Staff strength	Period of % training of (2001-2005) trained Snr Jnr the period			Period of % training of (2006-2010) trained Snr Jnr the period			Performance (in %) Before after	
		HQ Owerri	300	12	20	10.7	60	30	30.0
LAIP Omor	240	6	14	8.3	35	14	20.4	36	92
Igwu	36	2	6	22.2	15	10	69.4	30	88
Isiuzu	24	1	5	25.0	10	6	66.7	38	95

It was observed that selection of staff for training had two dimensions. There were combination of competence, resource view and job preview

FINDINGS:

- ❖ The study indicates that the introduction of training in the Authority positively redressed the functions of management and heightened staff productivity.
- ❖ Management's neglect of staff training schemes nearly marred the achievement of the Authority's goals.
- ❖ Staff performance after training improved tremendously presupposing that training and alignment of workforce has positive effect on the organizational performance of AIRBDA.
- ❖ Prior to the institution of training programmes, AIRBDA lacked target setting and enabling physical work environment for its staff. New ideas and innovations were introduced and injected into the system after training which gave rise to higher productivity.

CONCLUSION:

Considering the effects which workforce training and alignment play in organizational performance, the researcher is of the opinion that there should be an improved relationship in terms of human and material resources if training is given its rightful place in the programmes of the Authority. Therefore, Anambra-Imo River Basin Development Authority as an agency of government had a mandate which must be achieved through effective workforce training and retraining of their staff. Consequently, training has a strong

correlation with organizational performance. Suffice it to say that, by sending staff for training, organizational level of performance will be successfully achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that the Administration Department of Anambra/Imo River Basin Development Authority be properly guided on the importance of training to the achievement of organizational objective. Training should be based on need of the organization and committed staff should be selected for training. It is therefore relevant that staff be adequately trained in specific fields so as to match current conditions with needed conditions of the establishment. Periodic seminars such as those organized by Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), conferences and workshops are essential to update staff knowledge in all spheres of the Authority's programmes and projects. This would prepare them for higher responsibilities if the need arise. Summarily, the study showed that workforce training and alignment is a necessity for organizational performance.

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