

**FREQUENCY OF ON-JOB TRAINING (OJT) OF ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF
AT MMUST: A HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICE AND PROMOTIONAL TOOL
FOR ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE**

Molly Awino

School of Human Resource Development, Moi University

P. O. Box 3900, Eldoret, Kenya

Email: mollyawino5@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: *Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) is one of the institutions that sponsors its administrative staff to a variety of trainings, including on-job training programs. The university's Human Resource Development (HRD) policy of On-Job Training (OJT) aims at ensuring that staff can cope with the dynamics of a competitive higher education environment. Like most public universities, once trained, an employee would require to be placed in a job that requires the newly acquired knowledge and skills. However, in most organizations, non-placement of trained employees persists. This phenomenon leads to high turnover as they leave to look for positions that suit their training elsewhere. Those employees that do not leave may under-perform due to a feeling of under-utilization or non-recognition. This paper is an investigation into the frequency of OJT in the institution and how this relates to individuals' current jobs as well as transformation to their future appointments and promotions. The study employed a case study design and targeted 149 administrative staff. Since the target population was small, census sampling approach was used thus it formed the sample size. Data was collected using structured questionnaire and an interview schedule. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically while quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using percentages and frequency distribution techniques. The results revealed that most staff often attend OJT and indicated quite a number having received training while on their current job.*

KEYWORDS: Performance, On Job Training, Non-placement, Skills, Knowledge, Behaviour change.

INTRODUCTION

How often should On-Job training be conducted in organizations? The question of training frequency should not be taken lightly. To help answer this, a training needs assessment is useful for making a data-informed decision about how often staff should train. Additionally, in many jurisdictions, some organizational policies dictate a minimum requirement for how often staff should attend training. This can also be considered based on how the return on investment in training can help guide an organization on the decision about how often to train, moreover what can be found in research literature about learning retention can dictate how often a training is done.

Perhaps the most important facet of knowing who needs training and how often the OJT should occur is having a system in place to conduct an ongoing needs assessment. Needs assessments are tools that can be used to identify gaps in skills/knowledge/attitude, and they can be used within any part of the training process. They basically tell where an

organization is and where it wants to be in the process of implementing and applying training. The possibility of identifying where there may be gaps in staff performance and which elements of an OJT will help bridge those gaps, needs assessments can help an organization maximize its efforts before and after training (CPI, 2015).

Training refers to a planned effort to facilitate the learning of job related knowledge, skills, and behaviour by employees. It aims at changing behaviour at workplace in order to increase efficiency and attain higher performance standards. Training effort is one of the most useful litmus test of reality of adoption of HRD policies in an organization. As Keep (1992) points out, if training is not seen as a vital component of HRD then it is hard to accept that such an organization has committed itself to HRD. The training process, in HRD, entails analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation. Perhaps the phenomenon of failing to correctly place employees following OJT may be a manifestation of failure in managing the process of training. It is the notion of this study that non-placement is a symptom of failure in developing human resources. In particular, it is posited that failing to place trained staff is a pointer to failure to analyze training needs, design appropriate programs, implement and evaluate them, which may have dire consequences on job performance of an employee.

On-the-job training on the other hand, is teaching the skills, knowledge, and competencies that are needed for employees to perform a specific job within the workplace and work environment. On-the-job training uses the regular or existing workplace tools, machines, documents, equipment, knowledge and skills necessary for an employee to learn to effectively perform his or her job. It occurs within the normal working environment that an employee experiences on the job. It may occur as the employee performs actual work, or it may occur elsewhere within the workplace using training rooms, training workstations, or training equipment.

OJT is provided internally by both experienced coworkers and managers. While the goal of OJT is often to teach basic workplace skills, it also instills aspects of the workplace culture and performance expectations in a new employee. At its essence, Return on Training Investment, according to the ROI Institute, is a ratio based on how much benefit the organization receives divided by the training costs (CPI, 2015).

LITERATURE UNDERPINNING

It is acknowledged that there is positive relationship between HRD practices and employee performance (Gould-Williams, 2003; Park *et al.*, 2003; Wright *et al.*, 2003; Tessema and Soeters, 2006) and organizational performance (Qureshi *et al.*, 2010). For instance, it has been established that HRD practices such as training influence the performance of employees (Shahzad *et al.*, 2008; Tessema and Soeters, 2006). However in developing country contexts some specific challenges restrict and affect the role of HRD practices. For instance, Ghebregiorgis and Karsten (2006) found that in Eritrea, economic conditions, political instability and environmental uncertainty affect HRD practices. On the other hand, Anakwe (2002) observes that in Nigeria HRD practices, such as training and development, are mostly exercised by HR professionals.

In Kenya, public universities have embraced HRM practices, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology not being left behind. Kipkebut (2010) found that private

universities have more superior HRM practices than public universities. Not much is known about the effect of their HRD practices on performance of administrative staff. In particular, little is known about the effect that their HRD function of training and placement of trained administrative staff has on performance.

For this study administrative staff are those that support academic staff, deal with students on non-academic matters or work in administrative function such as finance, human resources and marketing. Recruiting and selecting high potential administrative staff does not guarantee that they will perform effectively. People who do not know what to do or how to do it cannot perform effectively even if they want to (Kipkebut, 2010). Therefore there is need for organizations to train employees in order to ensure that they know what to do, and how to do it. Training is an expensive venture and organizations need some assurance of return on investment on training, in the form of enhanced productivity.

The question of whether training increase job performance within universities has preoccupied academics recently. For instance, Munjuri (2011) examined the effect of HRM practices in enhancing employee performance in Catholic institutions of higher learning in Kenya. Although this study did not focus on placement of the on-job trained employees, it established that training and employee empowerment had the effect of increasing employees' level of performance. It established that 48.5% of the respondents found the training useful in helping them perform their tasks better and did not address the issue of whether the trainees were placed in appropriate positions after their training.

With the current global competition, intensity of technological change and the unfolding of demographic change, training has become a forefront debate for any organization that aims at remaining relevant. Non-placement of trained employees is a widespread phenomenon in most organizations (Cedefop, 2010). Mismatch between the skills required and the type of skills possessed also affects earnings mainly because the untrained receive more wages. Such employees lack the incentive to move, while the overqualified get caught up in low-level jobs (McGuinness, 2006). Therefore, this means that the overqualified typically suffer a wage penalty relative to those with similar qualifications. The wage effects tend to be dependent on a number of socio-economic and demographic characteristics that include race, level of education and age (Battu& Sloane, 2002).

Non-Placement of trained employees should be of concern to policy makers, trade unions, employers' associations and citizens (Cedefop, 2010). Skill mismatch that is permanent or takes a long time to resolve implies social and economic losses though it is unrealistic to assume that the labour market can work without temporary imbalances. Cedefop (2010), states that over-qualification means underutilization of skills and abilities or lack of job satisfaction, which has a negative effect. According to Alba-Ramirez (2003), non-placement is a temporary phenomenon that later disappears as employees labour market prospects improve due to occupational mobility or with experience and age. However, Battu *et al.*, (2000) argue that non-placement poses a long-term problem because there is no evidence of convergence over time in the job satisfaction, earning gaps and promotional prospects of non-placed employees relative to those in matched employment.

Sloane *et al.* (1999), argue that the over-educated are more likely separated from their jobs involuntarily, therefore, their status perpetuates even in job mobility and they end up succumbing to low-level occupations. However, this only happens if they are over-

qualified in their first job (Dolton & Silles, 2003). Non-placement may not be genuinely related to under-utilization of abilities or skills because additional investments are being made in education to compensate for the lacking ability among non-placed individuals (Green *et al.*, 1999; Chevalier, 2003). Therefore, it would be highly informative for organizations to understand the effects of non-placement on productivity (Hartog, 2000). To deduce the consequences of non-placement on productivity, researchers have relied on examining earning effects or exploiting a number of dimensions of employee behaviour like turnover and absenteeism because they act as productivity correlates. If workers skills do not match the job requirements, the firm may have to incur additional costs in training.

Hiring overqualified employees may be a firm's strategy of ensuring the uninterrupted and continuous supply of high-skilled labour during periods of adverse labour markets, or a way of exploiting cyclical downturns in order to improve the workforce average skill level (Gautier *et al.*, 2002). Universities all over the world have the prime aim of improving and impacting knowledge through teaching, community services and research. However, these objectives cannot only be achieved by the academic staff because administrative staff of a university carries out the administrative work which will positively contribute to the aforementioned objectives. The university must provide the training required to develop a base of knowledgeable and skilled administrative staff. Training may be on the job or off the Job.

On-the-job training (OJT) has been a training method used for almost all types of learning throughout history (Kelly, 1994). OJT, simply stated is two people working closely together so one person can learn from the other (Levine, 2007, p. 1).

This form of training is most useful when the work environment is rapidly changing, complex, or highly technological, and thus creates a need for highly skilled workers. OJT is also best used in situations in which the employee does not know how to carry out his or her job due to a lack of knowledge, skills, and/or experience, where job procedures are new or have changed, and in which the equipment or tools are new. OJT is not a useful solution when the employees do not possess the mental or physical capabilities to perform the job, when employees have motivational or attitudinal problems, or when the environment has a high degree of constraints or is very chaotic (Lawson, 1997).

Aguinis (2009) described that "the definition of performance does not include the results of an employee's behavior, but only the behaviours themselves. Performance is about behaviour or what employees do, not about what employees produce or the outcomes of their work". Perceived employee performance represents the general belief of the employee about his behavior and contributions in the success of organization. Employee performance may be taken in the perspective of three factors which makes possible to perform better than others, determinants of performance may be such as "declarative knowledge", "procedural knowledge" and "motivation" (McCloy *et al.*, 1994).

HR practices have positive impact on performance of individuals. Huselid (1995) argued that the effectiveness will transfer on the behaviour of employees as a result of HRM, which also proves a positive association. Carlson *et al.* (2006) proposed five HRM practices that affect performance which are setting competitive compensation level, training and development, performance appraisal, recruitment package, and maintaining morale.

Tessema and Soeters (2006) have carried out study on eight HR practices including recruitment and selection practices, placement practices, training, compensation, employee performance evaluation, promotion, grievance procedure and pension or social security in relation with the perceived performance of employees. They concluded that these HR practices have positive and significant associations with the perceived performance of employees. While OJT has potential to improve performance of administrative staff in universities, its influence on performance of staff in public universities in Kenya has not been given adequate attention. In this study, we focus on establishing the frequency of OJT of administrative staff at MMUST.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out at the main campus of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), Kakamega County. MMUST has absorbed trainees through interviews as university employees. As technology advances, employees undergo OJT to remain relevant in the job market. Employees who have undergone OJT are expected to be promoted to positions congruent to their knowledge, skills and qualifications to increase efficiency and attain higher performance standards. The university has a total of 1066 employees of which 149 are administrative staff (Strategic Plan, 2015 – 2020).

Ogula (2005) describes a research design as a plan, structure and strategy of investigation to obtain answers to research questions and control variance. A case study design was used for this study. A case study determines factors and relationships among the factors that have resulted in the behaviour under study and makes a detailed examination of it (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This method was important in giving detailed information and emphasizing the effects of non-placement of trained employees on their job performance.

The target population for this study consisted of all the 149 administrative staff at MMUST who were in position by the end of the first semester of the academic year 2013/2014. This was obtained at the main campus of MMUST from the registrar – administration. The target population comprised various categories of administrative staff as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Target Population

Category of Administrative Staff	Target Population
Registrar	3
Deputy registrar	4
Senior assistant registrar	11
Assistant registrar	25
Senior administrative assistant grade 1	3
Senior administrative assistant grade 2	20
Administrative assistant	83
Total	149

Source: author, 2015

For the purpose of this study, all the 149 administrative staff of MMUST participated. The study employed questionnaire and interview schedule as the main tools for collecting data.

The selection of these tools was guided by the nature of data to be collected, the time available as well as by the objectives of the study. The study was mainly concerned with the views, opinions, perceptions, feelings and attitudes. Such kind of information can be best collected through the use of questionnaire and interview techniques (Cohen & Manion, 2003).

The collected data was then thematically organized. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data. In descriptive statistics, percentages and frequency distribution techniques were used to show the particular frequency of respondent's preferences. Quantitative data was presented graphically and in tables while further explanations were offered from the qualitative data.

FINDINGS

Frequency of on Job Training

To establish the frequency of OJT of administrative staff in MMUST, the study sought to find out whether the respondents had received training while in their current job. The responses are shown in figure 1.

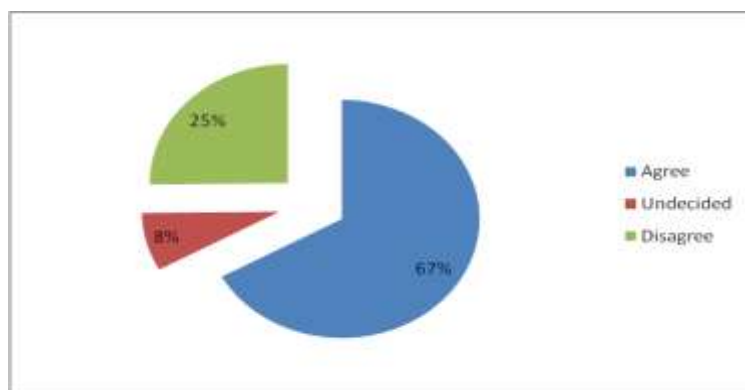


Figure 1. Received Training while on Current Job

Source: Author, 2015

A majority (67%) of the respondents agreed that they had received training while on their current job while 25% disagreed. Only 8% of the respondents were undecided about the matter of On Job Training. This may be due to lack of information on the existence of the OJT programmes in the institution. OJT helps the employer know their business and staffing needs. By using the OJT program, employers have the opportunity to train their staff precisely according to institutional needs, while gaining a reliable and dependable workforce.

Attendance frequency

The respondents were also asked to state how often they attended OJT and their responses are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency of OJT attendance

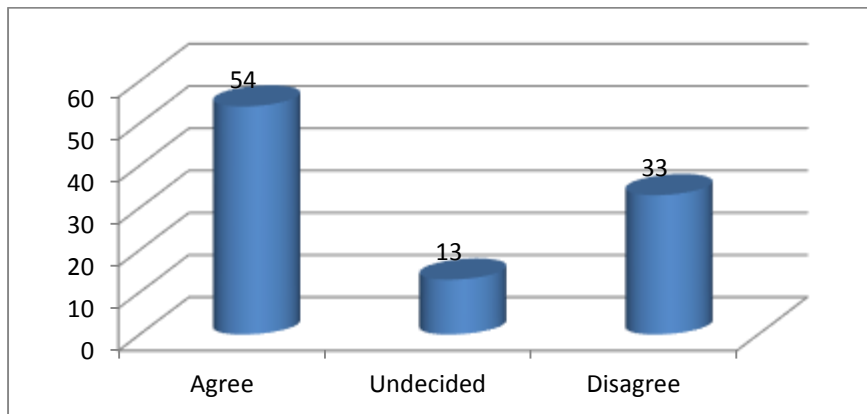
Statement	Always		Mostly		Rarely		Never		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Response	54	38.9	42	30.2	31	22.3	12	8.6	139	100

Source: Author, 2015

Table 2 shows there were 54(38.9%) of the respondents who stated that they always attend OJT whereas 31(22.3%) of the respondents rarely attend OJT. However, 12(8.6%) stated that they have never attended OJT. This implies that majority of the employees attend OJT, however for others who dislike going to training because it is a disruption in their normal routine, the OJT programmes may just seem a waste of time. For most employees, there is a certain level of comfort in a routine that they develop in the performance of their regular duties. Employees, therefore, will resent having to stop their work to go to a mandatory training session, or there may have been other reasons as to why some rarely attended while others never attended the OJTs.

Aware of A Colleague Who Have Received OJT While Working at MMUST

The responses in figure 2 depict awareness of the employees about receipt of OJT by their colleagues.

**Figure 2. Aware of Colleagues who have received On-Job-Training**

Source: Author, 2015

Figure 2 shows that while 54% of the respondents indicated that they had had about some form of training while on job, only 33% disagreed. However, a significant number of respondents, 13%, were undecided about this issue. This is indicative of the fact that either some employees go for training privately, or that fellow workers would not want to meddle in their colleagues affairs.

Own sponsorship of On-Job training

To find out if the respondents sponsored their own trainings, the responses in table 3 were recorded.

Table 3. Sponsored own On-Job-Training

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	35	25.2
Agree	38	27.3
Undecided	24	17.3
Disagree	38	27.3
Strongly Disagree	4	2.9
Total	139	100.0

Source: Author, 2015

From table 3, 38(27.3%) of the respondents agreed that they sponsored themselves in the training that they undertook, 35(25.2%) strongly agreed while 4(2.9%) strongly disagreed. However, the remaining 24(17.3%) were undecided about the same. Most people in recent times opt to sponsor their own training while working to fast track their career development. The attachment that such employees have on their employing institutions is weakened and they may not hesitate to change the employer if an opportunity availed itself.

Training sponsorship by the current institution

The respondents were further asked if the current institution had sponsored their training. Table 4 shows their responses. .

Table 4. On-Job-Training sponsored by current institution

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	13	9.4
Agree	29	20.9
Undecided	15	10.8
Disagree	48	34.5
Strongly Disagree	34	24.5
Total	139	100.0

Source: Author, 2015

A 34.5% of the respondents disagreed that they had been sponsored for training by the institution they were working for while 24.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed. Only 10.8% were undecided over the matter while 9.4% strongly agreed that they had been sponsored for training by the institution they were working for. This agrees with the above findings, where most of the staff indicated that they had sponsored themselves for training.

Relationship between On-Job-Training programme and current position

The respondents were asked if the OJT participated in was always related to their current position. Their responses are presented in table 5.

Table 5. On-Job-Training is always related to Current Position

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	27	19.4
Agree	48	34.5
Undecided	9	6.5
Disagree	43	30.9
Strongly Disagree	12	8.6
Total	139	100.0

Source: Author, 2015

Results from Table 5 show that 34.5% of the respondents agreed that their OJT was always related to their current position, 19.4% strongly agreed while 8.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that their training was always related to their current position. This is a significant percentage and raises the question as to why the OJT would not be related to the position one is holding. Another 6.5% respondents were undecided on this assertion. This indicates that there are some employees who have undertaken training that does not relate to their current responsibilities, either: they want to change their duties/work; or were forced to go for an irrelevant training; or just training for the sake of it. These factors may negatively affect employee performance.

Relationship between OJT and Promotion at the Workplace

The respondents were asked to relate their OJT participation and promotion at the workplace, overwhelmingly of which most agreed that the two were related as shown in figure 3.

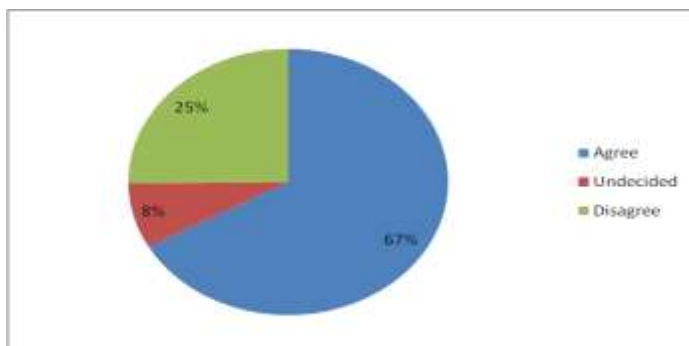


Figure 3. More On-job Training translates to Higher Chances of Promotion

Source: Author, 2015

A majority of 67% agreed that the more training one gets on-job, the higher the chances of promotion, 25% disagreed while 8% were undecided. This indicates that OJT has an overall impact on job placement, and that some placements are made based on the OJT one has received.

DISCUSSION

From the above findings, it emerges that most of the respondents have had training while working, and that this training has an impact on their placement. This means, the more the training, the higher the chances of promotion, thus better placement. Moreover, findings of this study show that most employees have adequate knowledge and skills to execute their duties thus agrees with Cedefop (2010) who asserts that over-education can have some productivity advantages for firms. He also asserts that there is a positive relationship between over-skilling and firm productivity. Individuals with 'surplus' educational credentials may still receive a wage premium relative to appropriately educated colleagues in similar jobs. This is as a result of OJT which enables employees to improve their knowledge and skills through Training Needs Assessment (TNA). Employee training plays an important role in improving performance as well as productivity which in turn places an organization in a better position to face its competitors and remain at the top. This agrees with the studies conducted by (Purcell *et al.*, 2003 & Hutchinson, 2003), who stated that employee performance influences the general organizational performance. Moreover, this study further agrees with the studies carried out by Wright and Geroy (2001) who observed that employee competencies change through effective training programs which not only improve the overall performance of the employees to effectively perform their current jobs but also enhance the knowledge, skills and attitude of the workers, thus contributing to superior organizational performance.

In addition, the findings of this study show that most people in recent times opt to sponsor their own training while working to fast track their career development. This is agreement with the findings of Swart *et al.* (2005) who stated that bridging the performance gap refers to implementing a relevant training intervention with an aim of developing particular skills and abilities of the employees and enhancing employee performance. From this study, findings show that some employees have attended OJT to develop and improve their skills and abilities to enhance their performance and keep abreast with advanced technology. These employees however, have either received scholarships from the university or have sponsored themselves so that they remain relevant in the job performance. This study concurs with the studies carried out by Cedefop (2010), who asserted that evidence suggests that those who are overqualified exhibit a higher turnover rate compared to individuals who work in jobs matching their educational qualifications. This disagrees on whether over-education is a transitory or permanent phenomenon. As employees attain more knowledge and skills through training, either by self or employer sponsored, they expect to be placed in positions congruent to their education levels. When they are not placed accordingly, they opt to look for greener pastures which suit their level of education, thus the organizations suffers a great penalty.

IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Training is essential to the growth and economic well-being of a nation. This need for training pervades all levels of industry, for a national level where a country's well being in

enhanced by training, to each company where productivity is improved, down to the individual whose skills are enhanced and as a result improve their position in the workplace. Organizations need to radically change policies for training of employees to ensure that the training is and at delivering key strategic goals of the organization no matter how frequent their trainings are done.

The findings in this paper are significant to the management boards of universities. The paper provides an empirically derived understanding of the frequency and extent of OJT required by HR managers to improve performance of administrative staff. Thus the results are geared towards improving the management of administrative staff at universities.

CONCLUSION

Most staff have undertaken some form of training while in their current positions at work. Further training is usually healthy for employees in organizations. It helps expand expertise, knowledge and skills in order to optimize performance. If most of the respondents agreed that they had undertaken some form of training after employment, then the assumption is that this was good for the organization. From the findings, most employees attended OJT. This shows that most employees, after acquiring their first degree, still undertook Masters and Ph.D degrees. Due to dynamic changes in technology, employees also need to undergo OJT to remain relevant in the job market.

RECOMMENDATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

First, there is need for MMUST to ensure that it sponsors employees for training as indicated in their TNA. The practice of sponsoring employees for any course of choice should be replaced with a policy that ensures an employee only trains to fill a documented need in a particular section of the university.

When considering how often On-Job training should occur, organization must assess the needs of the learner, staff so that employees are trained on the correct/relevant skills and knowledge. The study thus recommends a TNA before conducting any training.

There is need for a similar study to be conducted in a wider scope for better generalization in both public and private universities.

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