

Effects of Staff Training on Efficient Stores Operations in Kenya Tea Development Authority

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Abstract: An efficient store operation is concerned with ensuring that all activities involved in storekeeping and stock control are carried out effectively and economically. Despite KTDA managing factories being one of the major contributors to the Kenya economy, the sector continue to face many challenges arising from stores departments in the factories for instance there are constant inventories shortages experienced affecting the production process, inadequate trained staff in the store operations and inaccurate stock record management negatively affecting the overall revenue . Therefore the study sought to determine the factors affecting efficient stores operations in KTDA managed factories. The study populations were 112 employees working at KTDA factories in zones 4 and 5. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research in its data analysis. According to the analysis of findings, the respondent indicated that KTDA factories do not offer regular training to stores personnel on store management and this has affected store operations negatively. The study recommended that there was need for the factories to offer regular training programs to the employees in order to improve their skills and knowledge.

Keywords: Staff Training, Stores Operations, Kenya Tea Development Authority.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tea industry is one of the world's largest capital intensive industries. Tea is one of the most important non-alcoholic beverage drinks worldwide and has been gaining further popularity as an important 'health drink' in view of its purported medicinal value. It is served as morning drink for nearly 2/3rd of the world population daily. Governments in tea exporting countries acknowledge the significance of the tea industry in their economies as a source of export earnings, job creation, rural infrastructural development and income generation for rural population. Tea processing factories located in rural areas contribute to control of migration to urban areas. Depending on the tea farming environment, a good price of tea creates opportunities for better wellbeing of millions of farmers and tea agribusiness companies worldwide (Shamsuddoha, Tasnuba Nasir & Mohammad, 2011). Global tea production reached 3.5 million tons in 2006. While tea is produced in more than 35 countries, only a handful - China, India, Sri Lanka and Kenya – are responsible for almost three-quarters of production. More than half of the world's tea is produced in China and India alone. Tea production have doubled over the past three decades, demand is lagging behind, creating a situation of oversupply and production cost is raising with these challenges countries such as India and china have focused more on effectiveness in stores management in their industries to mitigate increase in production cost. Tea was introduced into Kenya from India in 1903 by a European colonial settler Mr G. Caine who planted the first tea plants in Limuru area. The early settlers and the colonial government restricted tea growing to large scale farmers and multi-nationals to lock out the Locals (Africans). When Kenya attained independence in 1963, such laws were changed which allowed Africans to grow tea as small scale farmers. The Special Crops Development Authority (SCDA) which managed the tea industry before independence was converted into Kenya Tea Development Authority (KTDA) in 1963. This divided the tea industry into two sectors namely the small scale sector managed by the KTDA and the large scale sector managed by the Kenya Tea Growers Association (KTGA). The large scale tea sector is owned mainly by large multinational companies with big plantations under tea with a processing factory within the farm.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From the year 2011 production cost in the tea factories have increased by 11% contributing to low revenue hence low payment to the farmers (KTDA, 2013). One of the major contributions to this increase is the problems in the efficiency of factories stores operations activities. According to (Maeba, 2013), the research on effect of inventory control on operational performance of tea processing firms found out that inadequate skill by employees in store was one of the major factor affecting efficiency of inventory control more so the tea factories relies on untrained casual labor to carry out stores activities which have contributed to theft, breakages and distribution errors, this an indication of poor staff training. According to annual stock taking conducted on July, 2013 in the KTDA Zone 4 and 5 factories, the stock taking report revealed that some critical items were out of stock, leading to hasty buying because of low stock levels. The annual stock taking report claimed that the problem might have been attributed to poor stores operations and management. The report also revealed that there were cases of inaccurate recording or poor entering of some data information, which was a good indication of poor record management. A study by (Elias Kiarie Kagira, Sarah Wambui Kimani & Kagwathi Githii, 2012) revealed that KTDA factories have not fully automated their stores operations besides them replacing obsolete IT equipment with modern ones, thus there is low improvement of employees productivity, challenges in information sharing among all stakeholders and in stock reconciliations. This indication of low utilization of information technology. Workforce efficiency is greatly affected by improper scheduling processes in most KTDA managed factories (Maeba, 2013) this has increased labor cost, assignment of wrong people to perform a task leading to inefficiency in stores operations. Inefficient store operations have contributed to increase in production cost leading to low payment to the tea farmers, in this view the study proposed to assess the factors affecting efficient stores operations in KTDA managed factories.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Training refers to a planned effort by a company to facilitate employees' learning of job related competencies. These competencies include knowledge, skills, or behaviors that are critical for successful job performance. The goal of training is for employees to master the knowledge, skill and behaviors emphasized in training programs and apply them to their day to day activities. For a company to gain competitive advantage, its training has to involve more than just skill development (Raymond Noe, 2008). According (Angelo & Brain, 2008) training refers to upgrading skills of technical and operational employees. It refers to educating technical and operational employees on how to better do their current job, training as the process of increasing knowledge and skills of an employee for doing a particular job. It is an organized activity designed to create change in the thinking and behavior of people and to enable them to do their jobs in a more efficient manner. In industry, it implies imparting technical knowledge, manipulative skills, problem solving ability and positive attitudes. Staff training is a work activity that can make a very significant contribution to overall effectiveness and profitability of an organization. The purpose of training is to enable employees get acquainted with their present or prospective jobs and also increase their knowledge and skills. To use training to gain a competitive advantage, a firm should view training broadly as a way to create intellectual capital. Intellectual capital includes basic skills (skills needed to perform one's job), advanced skills (such as how to use technology to share information with other employees), an understanding of the customer or manufacturing system, and self-motivated creativity. Employees will be required not only to understand the service or product development system but also to share knowledge and to creatively use it to modify a product or serve the customer (Adeyami S.L, 2010).

Many companies have adopted this broader perspective which is known as high-leverage training. High leverage training is linked to strategic goals and objectives, uses an instructional design process to ensure that training is effective and compares and benchmarks the company's training programs against training programs in other companies. High leverage training practices also help to create working conditions that encourage continuous learning. Continuous learning requires employees to understand the entire work system, including relationships among their jobs, their work units and the company. The emphasis on high leverage training has been accompanied by a movement to link training to performance improvement. According to (Jessop & Morris, 1994) to get the best from any machine, and to minimize damage to equipment, buildings and materials, the drivers and other concerned with the operation of any mechanical handling facilities must be both efficient and careful. Therefore, they should be adequately trained and instructed in their duties and in the need for safety precautions at all times. Equipment is expensive, and time taken to instruct operators properly will be well repaid in improved performance. It is not wise to be casual about training. Operators should not be taught the business simply by learning how to do it from a workmate on the same job. A proper training instructor should be available. The person should of course have practical experience and be able to operate the machine himself. He should have training skills and theoretical as well as practical knowledge. It is much better to be taught by a professional.

Training may take place at a suitable training center or on employer's own premises. Basic training should be given off-the-job, and the lessons should be dedicated to training only, not interspersed between completing operational needs. Suitable classroom training accommodation should be provided, along with appropriate aids such as projectors or models. Training should be essentially practical, and gives an indication of the length of time required, and the ratio of trainees to instructors. Appropriate continuous assessment should take place and that tests are set. Records of each trainee's performance and progress should be kept. According to (Raymond Noe, 2008) recognizing that learning is part of all employees' responsibilities, both managers and peers along with training professionals are actively involved in helping other employees gain new skills and perspectives. This helps to reinforce the value of learning and its importance for business. There is both direct and indirect link between training and business strategy and goals. Training that helps employees develop the skills needed to perform their jobs directly affects the business. Giving employees opportunities to learn and develop creates a positive work environment which supports the business strategy by attracting talented employees as well as motivating and retaining current employees. Training plays an important role in organization store department of equipping employees with skills, in a study on the relationship between inventory operations and human capital, (Maria.L, 2011) found that inventory operations depends highly on the skills of the human resources handling them, it was observed that every task and action required to be carried out by the operatives will impact the inventory as well the delivery lead times and parameters. Employees who do not know why they are carrying out a task what is required to be done and the consequences are prone to carry out wrong inventory operations and in the long run lead to ineffective stores operations. According to (Awuor, L. N, 2013) trained employees make better and economical use of materials and equipment. When the performers are well trained, industrial accident and damage to machinery and equipment will be minimum. Training helps to reduce the need for close and constant supervision of workers; it also helps to improve job satisfaction and morale of employees and makes employees more cooperative and loyal to organization. Training facilitates delegation and decentralization of authority. Trained and skillful employees are willing to accept new and challenging assignments.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive research that employed a case study research design. The target population of this study included managers, store supervisors and stores staffs of the eight factories. This included: Kangaita, Mununga, Ndima, Ragati, Chiga, Gathuthi, Gitugi, Iriani. A total of 112 respondents was targeted. The study adopted a simple random sampling which allows generalizability to a larger population with statistical determinable margin of error (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). The research instruments used in this study were questionnaires. Data of this study was collected through questionnaires distributed among managers, stores supervisors and other store staffs in the factories. The filled-in and returned questionnaires were edited for completeness, coded and entries made into Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

5. FINDINGS

The study sought to find out the effect of Staff Training on efficient stores operations in the KTDA managed factories with specific reference to factories in zone 4 and 5. The findings of the study were as discussed below:

Effect of staff training on stores operations:

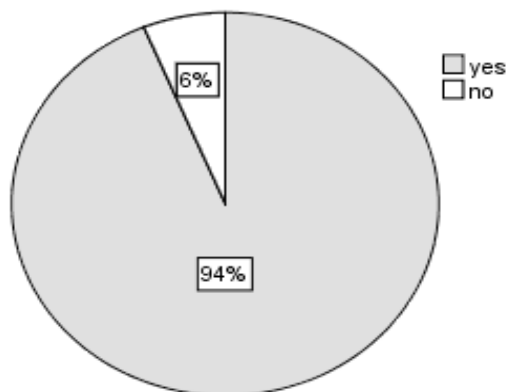


Figure 1. Staff training effect on store operations

The respondents were asked to indicate whether staff training affects stores operations in the factories. Majority (94%) were for the opinion that training affects the efficient of stores operation while minority (6%) disagreed. From the finding of the study based on majority training has affected stores operations in the KTDA managed factories.

Training in the area of store management and operation:

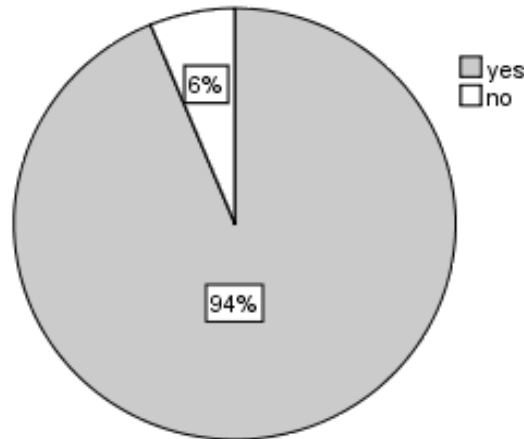


Figure 2. Training in the area of store management and operation

The respondents were asked to indicate whether factories’ employees in store departments are occasionally trained in the area of store management and operations. The findings of the study were illustrated in figure 2 above, from the results, it has been established that majority of respondents disagreed while minority agreed. According to the analysis of the finding, KTDA managed factories in zones 4 and 5 do not offer frequency training to their staffs, lack of frequency training program to stores employees have played a role in problems of inefficiency in factories ‘stores departments. Frequent career specialty provides employees with the opportunity to enhance knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform jobs beyond the minimum level and that it also allows employees the opportunity to explore new areas of interest and specialization that will enhance abilities and skills in other specialized jobs (Tas, 2008).

Table 1. Improving Performance of Store Department

Statement	Very important	Important	Fairly important	Not Important
A strategic leadership programs/ management course (training program) for stores personnel are very important in improving performance of stores operation.	28(88%)	2(6%)	0(0%)	2(6%)
Quality of staffs needed to run a store is very important.	20(63%)	10(31%)	0(0%)	2(6%)
Trained and skillful staffs with wide experience of challenging assignments play a crucial role in improving performance of stores operations.	27(84%)	3(9%)	0(0%)	2(6%)
Mentoring by seniors play a major role in improving performance of the stores operation in the factory	17(53%)	13(41%)	0(0%)	2(6%)

The researcher sought to find out ways of improving performance in store departments. The respondent were presented with statement which were required to rate. The finding of the study were as shown in table 1. From the findings it can be observed that majority 28(88%) of respondents indicated that strategic leadership/management courses for stores personnel was very important in improving performance in store departments, 2(6%) indicated that it was important while 2(6%) indicated not important. The majority of respondent 20(63%) also indicated that the quality of staffs needed to run a store was very important with 10(31%) rating it as important. The study further indicated that trained and skillful staffs

with wide experience of challenging assignments play a crucial role in improving performance of stores operations was very important as indicated by majority 27(84%),3(9%) as important while 2(6%) rated it as not important. The study also revealed that mentoring by seniors played a major role in improving performance of store operations with 27(84%) indicating that it was very important while 3(9%) rated it as being important. These findings agree with those of (Awuor, L. N, 2013) who stated that staff training play an important role in improving the overall effectiveness of store activities in manufacturing firms, she further stated that through training the quality of employees are improved and their skills are sharpened either through be mentored by seniors or through training seminars.

From the findings, it can be deduced that stores personnel need to be well trained because the quality of staff needed to run a store affects overall efficient store operations.

Table 2 Effect of staffs training on stores operations

	Frequency	Percent
Motivation of Employees	9	28
Enhancement of employees' skill have led to effectiveness in stores operations	19	59
Safety in operations	2	6
Increase employees' productivity	2	6
Total	32	100

The respondents were asked to write down other ways in which staffs training have affected the stores operations in the factories. The findings of study are displayed in table 2. According to the analysis of the findings, majority of respondent 19(59%) identified that staffs training have enhanced employees' skills leading to effectiveness in stores operations.9(28%)identified employees motivation as one of effect of them been offered training by the factories and management agency(KTDA). Safety in operations in stores departments was also one of the effect of offering staffs training to stores staffs especially training on stores' equipment and machines handling as identified by 2(%) .Other effect identified was increase in employees' productivity.

The finding of the study concurs with(Jessop & Morris, 1994) who stated that to get the best from any machine and minimize damage to equipment in stores ,the staff concerned with the operation of machine handling must be efficient ,he/she should adequately trained in their duties and in the need for safety precautions. The study by (Maria.L, 2011)also revealed that staffs training gives employees opportunity to learn new skills and motivating them. From the findings it can be revealed that staffs training play an important role in enhancing efficiency in stores operations.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that KTDA managed factories in zones 4 and 5 do not offer frequent training to their staffs especially on store operations hence a major contributor to inefficiency in stores operations. Due to lack of frequency training program to stores personnel the factories faces numerous problem in skills and on knowledge in jobs performance leading to inefficient , in his study (Tas, 2008) recognized that career specialty training provides employees with the opportunity to enhance knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform jobs beyond the minimum level and that it also allows employees the opportunity to explore new areas of interest and specialization that will enhance abilities and skills in other specialized jobs.

7. RECOMMENDATION

The study recommended that KTDA managed factories in zones 4 and 5 should occasionally offer training in form of workshops, seminars or training sessions to their employees so as to enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform jobs especially employees handling stores operations. The study also recommended that proficiency in service training as a component of the career development initiative must be closely coordinated with the organization's training efforts, this will benefits both the organization and its employees by keeping them up-to-date on duties with present job assignments as stores personnel.

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