

## Enhancing the Training and Development of Technicians as a Tool for Effective Performance in a Selected Enterprise in the South West, Cameroon

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### Abstract

This study had as objectives:

- To examine the training practices of the selected enterprises as concerns its technicians
- To assess the impact of training on the performance of technicians within these enterprises
- To investigate the factors hindering training and development of technicians within the same enterprises

The study used a multi-stage sampling techniques involving purposive, stratified and simple random sampling to identify participants from whom information had to be collected through the use of questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. The study limited respondents to include only technicians who handled heavy equipment repairs and out of a total of 245 technicians in the mechanic section of these enterprises, 120 of them were the target for this study. However, due to unavailability of some staff for reasons of other duties, the sample size dropped to 92 technicians which were still found significant enough to represent the study population. This work adopted a case study design in the sense that, it narrowed its focus to a particular sector within selected companies and tried to describe it deeply. Findings from the study showed that, training practices at these enterprises for its technicians is not very inclusive of most technicians with low level of education. However, further findings still revealed that, training provided to a few staff that had undergone the activity was very effective as it resulted to improved work performance for the trainees. Additional findings also divulged that, there are a lot of hindrances to the training and development of technicians within the selected enterprises because many of them had been trained throughout their period of work so far. Some of these hindrances include; inadequate budget, lack of management support for training, lack of equipment, fear of career development and favouritism. It was therefore recommended for management to fully support training and address the identified constraints to training so as to ensure many more technicians are involved in training and therefore make technicians very effective and more confident in work performance.

**Keywords:** Training; Development; Effective performance

### Introduction

In the earlier era of the industrial revolution, factory owners were more concerned with making profits and did not give much attention to workers' needs. Workers' were viewed mainly as a source of production, working conditions were deplorable, and workers were easily laid off due to the mass available supply of labor. Lussier and Achua [1] posits that, Robert Owen's propagation of the need for organizations to include the human relations factor into their work system made most factory owners to reconsider the welfare of their workers. To Owen, employees will be more productive if workers' welfare was made a priority. This, therefore, led to the inculcation of employee training and development. The machines of the industrial revolution soon became sophisticated and more workers were needed to run these machines. The factory owners began to train their employees because of the need to make them more efficient in the handling of machines so as to quickly produce goods which were required in high demand. From this, contemporary organizations have therefore found the need to constantly invest in their human resources which are the stronghold for any organization.

Today, even in the developed and industrial nations of the world where the use of machines and technology is at an advanced stage, manpower is still very essential [2]. In 2013, organizations spent \$1.208 per employee on training and development, and this was a small 1% increase over the previous year, with an additional \$13 more per employee and the number of learning hours used per employee has slightly increased from 30.3 hours to 31.5 hours [3].

This American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) State of Industry Report 2013 shows that, companies are investing more in human capital. Furthermore, in April 2014 World Economic Outlook by the IMF reported that, global activity is strengthening and predicted improvement in 2014-2015 from 2.33% to 3.33% respectively which became true. This information supports the above fact that, organizations' investment in training and development are healthy compared with previous years as it increases performance and consequently productivity and growth. Training, therefore, holds the key to unlocking potential growth and opportunities to achieve a competitive edge. Organizations thus train and develop their employees to the fullest to enhance effectiveness [4].

Bahal et al. [5], in their work postulated, that, there is a huge deficiency in knowledge, skills, and abilities among employees, particularly those of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. They further

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**Received** January 10, 2018; **Accepted** January 21, 2019; **Published** January 28, 2019

**Citation:** Mfondo M (2019) Enhancing the Training and Development of Technicians as a Tool for Effective Performance in a Selected Enterprise in the South West, Cameroon. J Entrepren Organiz Manag 8: 260. doi: [10.4172/2169-026X.1000260](https://doi.org/10.4172/2169-026X.1000260)

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continue by stating that organization around the world and particularly those in Africa are facing challenges due to fast pace global and technological development. Technological advancements have therefore moulded the need for capabilities and competencies required to perform particular tasks and to cope with these challenges; all organizations need more improved and efficient training programs. Organizations nowadays exist in turbulent and competitive environments and are faced with more challenges than ever before. To this, Beardwell and Holden [6] emphasizes that, the recognition of training in recent years has been influenced by the intensification of competition and the relative success of organizations where investment in employee development is considerably emphasized.

To maintain sustainability, organizations, however, must see continuous training and development of employees as valuable. This investment is done due to the need to ensure that employees are very productive in every task they handle. To enhance effective performance, managers can use diverse training approaches depending on the degree to which an employee lacks in a particular skill needed to facilitate performance [7]. This ranges from on the job training to classroom training. Training and development is, therefore, important for all employee levels because, skills erode and become obsolete over a period and have to be reinforced [8].

CDC, owning a TSD as a support service to its primary business needs to understand that, the world is evolving and technical knowledge is equally advancing. New equipment is designed every day and skills possessed by technicians need to be updated through proper training so as to meet up with the recent knowledge needed for the handling of modern equipment. According to Pfeffer [9], organizations that fail to invest in employees risk their own success and even survival. Furthermore, the right employee training, development and education at a good time would increase productivity, knowledge, loyalty and contribution and enables the organization to grow. Training and development is faced by every organization, even though the quality and intensity of the training carried out varies from one organization to the other.

The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) at its Technical Services Department (TSD) has as practice to employ the services of experts from supplier companies (TRACTAFRIC, SOCADA, CAMI and many more) upon the breakdown of certain heavy equipment despite the many technicians which this department has. Some of these heavy equipment/vehicle includes; graders, fork lift, trucks, tippers. The employment of expert services seems to be as a result of the inability of TSD's technicians to detect some complex faults and provide the needed solution as repairs. This may be an indication of two things; either the Corporation's technicians are not receiving the training necessary to improve their skills, or the training they get is insufficient. Due to this, the technicians may, therefore, fall short on the necessary competence needed to perform certain tasks. The question that comes to mind then is, if all these technicians are given the necessary skills and abilities to perform their job, why then do the corporation need to employ the services of experts to handle repairs of certain faulty heavy equipment? This is therefore, a problem as CDC cannot own a technical services department with several technicians and yet still employ the services of experts from supplier companies to handle repairs on certain faulty heavy equipment. In a world where every organization is striving to develop its workforce, CDC should rather invest to improve the quality of its workforce which will be beneficial to her in the long term than relying on the know-how of experts from supplier companies which entails cost, limits technicians' chances of training and causes delays

to workflow. This problem, therefore, leads us to the objectives of this research.

## Objectives of the Study

This study has as main objective to assess the extent to which CDC enhances the skills of its technicians through adequate training and development and how it affects the performance of the enterprise.

More specifically the study sought to:

1. Examine the training practices of CDC for its technicians within the technical service department (TSD);
2. Assess the effectiveness of training in improving work performance for technicians within the C.D.C;
3. Investigate the factors hindering training and development of technicians within TSD.

## Research Questions

This study sought to respond globally to the question; what is the extent to which CDC enhances the skills of its technicians through adequate training and development and how it affects the performance of the enterprise?

More specifically, the study had to provide answer to the following research questions:

1. What training practices are putted in place by CDC for its technicians within the technical service department (TSD)?
2. How effective is the training received by technicians in improving work performance?
3. What factors hinder training and development of technicians in this enterprise?

## Methodology

The research adopted the case study design because it targets the variables to be analyzed in a specific area and gives a detail analysis of their relationship. Moreover, it is cost effective and time efficient as data is collected within a particular area and respondents usually are not scattered over a broad surface area. The study used a multi-stage sampling techniques involving purposive, stratified and simple random sampling to identify participants from whom information had to be collected through the use of questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. The study limited respondents to include only technicians of CDC in TIko, South West region, who handled heavy equipment repairs and out of a total of 245 technicians in the mechanic section of these enterprises, 120 of them were the target for this study. However, due to unavailability of some staff for reasons of other duties, the sample size dropped to 92 technicians which were still found significant enough to represent the study population. The instruments were validated and its reliability insured using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient. The Data gathered was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), and Microsoft excels. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics, while the qualitative data was analysed using the content analysis.

## Findings

### Research question 1: What are the Training practices used by CDC for her technical staff?

As shown on Table 1, findings revealed that most of the technicians

Indicator	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Training Upon Joining the Organisation	Yes	34	37%
	No	58	63%
	Total	92	100%

**Table 1:** Training received since joining the organisation.

Indicator	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
A Training needs assessment prior to training	Yes	64	69.6%
	No	28	30.4%
	Sometimes	0	0%
	Total	92	100%
B Reasons for training	Company Policy	30	32.6%
	To improve performance deficiencies(gap)	50	53.4%
	Pressure from trade unions	8	8.7%
	Management decisions eg. promotion, salary	4	4.3%
	Total	92	100%
C Criteria used in selecting employees for training	Performance appraisal records	20	21.8%
	Supervisor's recommendation	26	28.2%
	Employee's request	0	0.0%
	Compulsory activity for employees	46	40%
	Total	92	100%

**Table 2:** Responses on training needs assessment and trainee selection criteria.

have not received training since they joined the organisation. Those who had not received training comprised 63% of the respondents. 37% of the respondents however said they have received training since they started work at TSD. The implication of this data is that the corporation does not make training a vital aspect of work life for all employees. This may create a feeling of biasness for employees who have never been selected for training. Tension, strive, jealousy and division may become the outcome consciously or unconsciously in this kind of situation. It therefore becomes important to make training of staff fair and transparent based on the principle of equality and necessity.

When the researcher encountered some staff for the interview, he first wanted to know the opinion of these staff with regards to the procedure for training selection. This is what they had to say:

*"I will not want to talk on things like this in the company. But If I can say anything, then permit say here that, only the field supervisors know why they will select Mr. "John", Mr. "Paul" and will not take Mr. "Hans" for training even though all have the same years of experience and are in the same group".*

Again, another employee further explained this aspect but attributing it to luck and the hand of God. He said:

*"It's the favour and grace of God for you to be peaked for training. As for me, I remember how I fasted and prayed for God to answer my prayer before I was sent for one-month training program. Since then my life has never been the same. I tell you God is great".*

To the researcher, this could be the reason why a significant proportion of up to 56.5% respondents had not received training and 21.7% of the respondents could confidently attest to the fact that, they don't know if a training policy exist in C.D.C. Such situations may call for attention because injustice at work greatly impacts productivity (Table 2).

Seeking to know from Table 2 'A' if training needs is made through skills assessment before selection for training, a large proportion of respondents 69.6% gave a positive response on this aspect. Just a minority of 30.4% of the respondents were of the opinion that skills assessment is not made prior to training. Interviews with other

respondents equally confirmed this positive answer as one employee stated:

*"Training is conducted based on the need for it and this training need is often assessed by the manager in collaboration with supervisors".*

By implication it can be said that CDC is very much aware of the necessity to conduct a needs assessment so as to ensure training is made relevant.

Table 2 'B' reveals findings on why CDC trains technicians at TSD, responses from 53.4% of the respondents revealed that in their opinion, training and development is carried out within their section as a mean to improve performance deficiencies. 32.6% of respondents said training is conducted for company policy reasons. 8.7% of respondents mentioned reason for training to be as a result of pressure from trade unions while a very little proportion of the respondents (4.3% of respondents) divulged reason for training to be management decisions. It is therefore implied that CDC engages its technicians in training as a mean to improve on their work performance. A certain management staff held a similar view when he stated that:

*"Lapses in performance are detected by me and the immediate supervisors, and with this, I identify the need to improve skills and include in my yearly budget for training".*

Findings from Table 2 'C' above indicate responses on the criteria which were used to select technicians for training. 21.8% of the respondents said they were selected for training based on performance appraisal. 28.2% of respondents revealed again that, their selection for training was based on supervisor's recommendation. No employee was selected based on a personal request. Could it be that no employee had ever made a personal request for training or their request has never been approved by management? This can be a potential area for further studies, but for the sake of this research, the scope limits us to understand that no employee was selected based on a personal request. On another criteria for selection, 41.8% of respondents indicated their selection was as a result of training being a compulsory activity. Interviews further revealed that, those who were selected for training because it was a compulsory activity were persons whom due

to redeployment joined mechanical engineering service at TSD. One technician in his interview further expatiated by saying:

*“When redeployment is launched and people are selected, CDC makes training a compulsory activity for all who are selected. At this point we are considered as new recruits and the training we receive is to ensure we are equipped with the skills necessary for performing on the new job”.*

CDC’s practice of training new recruits confirms the opinion which states that new employees cause a great deal of wastage especially with time due to lack of required skills. Training therefore helps to reduce work errors of employees. However, this gives the impression that after training upon redeployment technicians at TSD hardly receive any further training from the corporation again.

In addition to recommendation and appraisal, one management staff added:

*“I take into consideration additional criteria such as the level of education, level of interaction, ability to communicate and share knowledge derived from training with co-workers after training. I believe such persons possess the ability to grasp training material very fast as compared to those with a lower level”.*

A majority of staff who have never been selected for training during focus group discussions on their perception about trainee selection practices did not seem very satisfied with the organisation. Most of them mentioned the existence of malpractices when it comes to selecting persons to be trained. Many held this remark:

*“Selection practices of people to partake in training are not transparent. A lot of malpractices exist. Those recommending for training often want only their own people to benefit which is not good as all staff should be considered equal. There is so much tribalism and favouritism in all aspects within the enterprise”.*

When asked about the last time respondents undertook any form of training from the corporation, most of them said it has been as far back as 2008 and 2010. No technician gave a positive response of partaking in any serious training in recent years. The manager on his part confidently told the researcher that, some technicians were trained in 2016. In this words

*“Technology is advancing and when we acquire modern fleet of equipment, we invite experts from supplier companies to come train the technicians. This was the situation in 2016 and I was also part of the training which ran for two weeks within TSD”.*

This conflict of information above may imply that training in the past twelve months seem to be limited to top level management staff as the manager himself confirms to have been a part of the training in 2016.

There’s however the tendency for employees to perform at a certain optimal levels due to the experience they have acquired on the job over the years. From focus group discussions between the researcher and employees, all of the employees still expressed their desire for further training so as to upgrade their skills despite the fact that most of them mentioned their skills in equipment repair was good. Most technicians remarked:

*“We technicians still need further training to make us more effective in performing our jobs. Technology with regards to fleet repairs evolves all the time and we too need to upgrade our skills to meet up and make work easy. In addition, CDC has been acquiring modern equipment with*

*more advance operating systems so ultimately our knowledge and skills needs to be updated”.*

## Research question 2: How effective is the training received by technicians in improving work performance?

Results on the improvement of work performance after training on Table 3 showed a unanimous 65.2% and 21.8% positive response as all respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the quality of work performed after training improved as employees became very efficient in completing their assigned tasks. It thus appears that through training the quality of work done is improved as testified by the majority of employees who have received training.

Responding to the quality of the content of training as indicated in Table 4 ‘A’, a majority of the respondents representing 52.2% said the training content was very good. To the training content being excellent was the opinion of 34.8% of the respondents. Very few people constituting 13% of the respondents said the content of training was average. The quality of trainers was also ascertained on Table 4 ‘B’. Data obtained from the field showed that 65.2% of respondents held the opinion that the training facilitators were very good. 26% of respondents said the trainers were of excellent quality in delivering training while 8.8% said it was average. It can therefore be inferred that CDC carefully selects trainers as well as relevant training modules.

Table 5 shows opinion on employees’ autonomy in their job after training. Majority of the respondents (41.3%) agreed while 30.4% of the respondents strongly agreed that supervisors spend a reduced amount of time supervising employees after training. 15, 3% of the respondents

Indicator	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Improvement of quality of job performance after training	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	0	0%
	Neutral	12	13.8%
	Agree	20	21.8%
	Strongly Agree	60	65.2%
	Total	92	100%

**Table 3:** Training effectiveness and performance.

Indicator	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
A Content of Training	Excellent	32	34.8%
	Very Good	48	52.2%
	Average	12	13%
	Poor	0	0%
	Very Poor	0	0%
	Total	92	100%
B Trainers	Excellent	24	26%
	Very Good	60	65.2%
	Average	8	8.8%
	Poor	0	0%
	Very Poor	0	0%
	Total	92	100%

**Table 4:** Quality of training content and trainers.

Indicator	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employees’ autonomy in their job	Strongly Disagree	4	4.4%
	Disagree	8	8.6%
	Neutral	14	15.3%
	Agree	38	41.3%
	Strongly Agree	28	30.4%
	Total	92	100%

**Table 5:** Responds on employees’ autonomy in their job after training.



were neutral representing 15.3% while a lesser proportion constituting 4.4% and 8.6% of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed to this respectively. Looking at the results, one can say that training seems effective as after training technicians have more job autonomy as they carry out tasks effectively with very little supervision from their immediate supervisors. This shows that, the skills acquisition brought about by training is visible to supervisors. Noe [10] Noe et al. [11] state that the unwillingness of supervisors to delegate responsibility upon employee competence can lead to employee dissatisfaction with their work. However this is not the case at the T.S.D as 41.3% of respondents agreed while 30.4% of respondents strongly agreed that supervisors spend a reduced amount of time supervising employees after training [12-15]. This indicates therefore that, supervisors at the T.S.D are willing to delegate responsibility to employees, thereby improving job satisfaction of respondents [16-18].

### Research question 3: What factors hinder training and development of technicians in this enterprise?

'A' divulges information on respondents' opinion as to factors hindering the implementation of training and development within their section. In finding out if low level of staff education hinders training of staff, most of the respondents mentioned that they strongly agree representing 54.3% (Table 6). Similarly, 28.2% of the participants held the opinion that they agree. Some other respondents (11%) were neutral indicating they had no idea on the issue meanwhile 6.5% of the respondents disagreed to this factor being a hindrance to staff training [19]. Interviews further reveal that most often those with high educational qualification are preferred for training thus providing very little opportunity for others with lower education to be part of training and development. One management staff however divulged that:

*"Despite the fact that more educated technicians are preferred for training, staff with little education as first school living certificate with much experience are often included in training as well once such training is necessary".*

Results from Table 6 'B' also showed that 80.4% of the respondent's ranked inadequate budgetary allocations as the main stumbling block to enhancing staff training and development [20]. Interview from the manager revealed:

Indicator	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
A Low level of staff education limit the effective implementation of training within your organization	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	6	6.5%
	Neutral	10	11%
	Agree	26	28.2%
	Strongly Agree	50	54.3%
	Total	92	100%
B Inadequate budget for training limit the effective implementation of training within your organization	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	18	19.6%
	Neutral	0	0%
	Agree	0	0%
	Strongly Agree	74	80.4%
	Total	92	100%
C Over aged staff limit the effective implementation of training within your organization	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	92	100%
	Neutral	0	0%
	Agree	0	0%
	Strongly Agree	0	0%
	Total	92	100%

**Table 6:** Opinion of respondents on the factors hindering training and development.

*"Sometimes training is planned but due to inadequate budget to implement the period for training and number of trainees may be cut down. For example, sometimes training which may run for a month is cut down to two weeks or less due to budget constraints".*

To opine that, the continual cutting of money from the employee training budget signifies that training is not as valued as it should be in an organisation [21-23].

A slight minority of the respondents representing 19.6% strongly disagreed this factor hindered training. One of the technicians who disagreed on this issued stated:

*"CDC complains of financial constraints when it concerns training technicians but the finances spent on third party know how is overwhelming. This amount or even less can be invested in improving the knowledge and skills of its technicians".*

Another technician voiced out his disagreement to lack of budget being a constraining factor to training when he said:

*"I believe there is enough money in this corporation. The thing is that, those at the top do not want those at the bottom to grow. Every end of year CDC makes millions of profits and sometimes top management is rewarded heavily in what is known as ex-gratia. I sincerely think some of this huge sums of money rewarded to top management sometimes can be sacrificed for the promotion of our own growth in CDC".*

According to Table 6 'C' the issue of over aged staff being a hindrance to training and development of technicians got a unanimous disagreement from all 46 respondents [24]. The age demographics lend credence to this point as this department does not have a lot of aged workers who can be deemed unfit for training due to fear of possible retirement [25]. The management agreeing to this added:

*"This would have been the case years back but due to change of CDC'S policy overage staffs are redeployed due to inability to handle high risk jobs within the mechanic section".*

## Conclusion

It appears management does not make the training and development of its technicians a priority to the organisation. Even though CDC to an extent has enhanced the skills of some of its technicians through training, the number however seems to be very minimal. Furthermore, technology for Moto repairs is advancing and there is no such same advancement of technicians' skills with tools to meet up with this recent technology and become more effective in work performance coupled with their experience over the years. Employees need to be provided training on a continuous basis during their work life within the organisation as this will improve their skills and not just upon redeployment to new jobs as revealed by 40% of respondents.

Training and development therefore becomes a necessity for technicians at TSD operating heavy equipment enhancing skills and boosting morals. The technicians seem to be managing based on skill experience derived from work over the years. However, it is apparent that employees do not remain competent forever as skills erode and new skills have to be learned. It is thus pertinent for CDC to address the identified organisational factors constraining training and development of its technicians so as to enhance training and development practices in the organisation and boost operational efficiency of its technicians.

## Recommendations

The foregoing results from the study requires the researcher to

outline recommendations which will address the challenges identified and subsequently help the corporation enhance the training and development of its mechanical staff.

### Policy recommendations for objective one

It is recommended for selection practice of trainees for technicians to be adjusted. The criteria for high level of education for most trainees should not be overemphasized as some employees even without such educational qualification may be very competent for training programmes. The organisation should also discourage selection malpractices so as to offer every technician equal opportunity for training. CDC as an equal opportunity employer should not deviate from that policy in terms of training and development.

As a recommendation, management and especially the HR department should create awareness yearly for employees with regards to content of company policy. The lack of knowledge by most employees on the existence of an annual training policy makes the human resource duty on staff education of company policy questionable. The HR office should therefore reassess its sensitisation policy on organisational issues.

### Policy recommendations for objective two

It is recommended for CDC to foster a culture of frequently training its technicians so as to improve their skills and abilities. It is also recommended for CDC to step up the number of trainees at TSD. This will help enhance employees' competencies and upgrade their skills enabling them adapt fast with technological changes in relation to their job performance. The more the number of trained staff the greater the individual task accomplishment as well as overall organisational performance.

It is recommended for CDC to adopt strategies that will encourage employees to undergo training such as increased sponsorship, announcement of training vacancies, permission for training purposes and promotion to trained employees. All this will have a positive effect in improving staff skills and overall organisational performance.

Additionally the researched recommends that management of CDC should provide support and be open to technicians' individual training initiatives aimed at self-improvement and career advancement for example granting study leave and granting education loan may act as a major benefit to the individual and the organisation as well since skilled workers are more productive.

### Policy recommendations for objective three

Another important recommendation is that section heads as decision-makers and HR managers should recognise the actual benefits of staff training and hence accord it the right priority it deserves. This entails not withholding funds as well as increasing the allocation of resources for staff training, which in turn would increase its contribution towards enhancing the organisation's performance.

The study also recommends that CDC work out strategies to accrue more funds for staff training. On the whole, staff training annual budgets should be clearly spelt out and stated. Doing so will enable the staff training function effectively to accommodate more trainees than under current practices.

CDC is recommended to acquire modern equipment for detecting fault and train its technicians on its use. Acquiring knowledge and skills on the operation of this equipment will facilitate work and upgrade technician's skills in meeting up with latest technological systems. The

availability of these diagnostic kits will prevent work delays arising from break downs necessitating the use of it. Similarly, the amount of money spent on experts for such advance knowledge will be minimised thus building a more competent technical work force for the corporation.

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