

Training and Development Practices at National Highway Authority in Pakistan is Myth or Reality

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Abstract

Trained and skilled employees play a pivotal role in the sustainable development of any firm. This research is focusing training and development practices at NHA. To objectively analyze the potential capability of the existing human resource of the firm, a mixed-modular approach has been adopted. Extant barriers and stringent policies of the company have been analyzed through questionnaires to quantitatively gauge the issues and qualitative analysis was investigated by extensive literature review. Based on a sample of NHA employees, we find that firm performance is positively related to the degree of training provided to their employees, while existing practices of the firm has reduces the positive effect of training and development on the firm performance.

Key Words: Mixed-Modular, Extant Barriers, Stringent.

Introduction

The National Highway Authority is responsible for building and maintaining highways and motorways in Pakistan. The objective of the NHA is to plan, promote and organize programmes for construction, development, operation, repairs & maintenance of National Highways, Motorways & strategic roads (Sarkis, Gonzalez-Torre & Adenso-Diaz, 2010).

History of the Organization

In 1978, the Government of Pakistan (GoP) decided to federalise five important inter-provincial roads named, 'National Highways' and created the National Highway Board for monitoring the development and maintenance of these federalized roads by provincial Highway Departments. The National Highway Authority (NHA) was established in 1991, through an Act of the Pakistani Parliament, for planning, development, operation, repair, and maintenance of National Highways and Strategic Roads specially entrusted to NHA by the Federal Government or by a Provincial Government or other authority concerned. The total length of federalized roads under the NHA now stands at 8,780 km, account for 3% of the entire road network and 75% of the commercial road traffic in the country (Chatzoglou, Sarigiannidis, Vraimaki & Diamantidis, 2009).

Pakistan National Highway Authority

Pakistan National Highway Authority engages in the planning, development, operation, repair, and maintenance of national highways and strategic roads. Its activities include construction, maintenance, improvement, and operation of national highways and motorway network of Pakistan. The company is headquartered in Islamabad, Pakistan with regional offices in Lahore, Multan, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, and Abbottabad.

This paper explores the training and development of the personnel owned by the Pakistan National Highway Authority and questions the HRM practices followed by the organization in this respect (Blume, Ford, Baldwin & Huang, 2010).

Research Objectives

The main aim that this paper concentrates on is the HRM practices of the Pakistan NHA pertaining to the training and development of its employees and its positive effects on the internal and external processes of the organization.

This paper will focus on the objectives:

- To determine whether the Pakistan NHA has sufficient procedures for the training and development of the employees
- To identify the steps taken by the Pakistan NHA for the training and development of its employees
- To determine how and to what extent is that training beneficial for the employees and the organization
- To evaluate the effects of the training and development efforts of the employee on the projects undertaken by the Pakistan NHA
- To make appropriate recommendations in respect of increasing the training and development efforts of the Pakistan NHA.

Research Questions

This paper will determine answers to the following questions:

- Does the Pakistan NHA have sufficient procedures for the training and development of the employees?
- What are the steps taken by the Pakistan NHA for the training and development of its employees?
- How and to what extent is that training beneficial for the employees and the organization?
- What are the effects of the training and development efforts of the employee on the projects undertaken by the Pakistan NHA?
- What are the recommendations for the increasing the training and development efforts of the Pakistan NHA?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study within the context of Pakistan is the development of the employees that work with the Pakistan NHA and as a consequence the internal and external processes that they have to deal with. The employees can have many benefits if they are properly trained by the organization. The employees feel more loyal towards their organization and their own career grows. The organization sustains many benefits as well such as that the employees' productivity increases, the existing employees feel motivated to do better and the cost of the business is saved in terms of recruitment and selection of new employees (Avolio, Avey & Quisenberry, 2010).

Literature Review

Key Developments for Pakistan National Highway Authority

Government of Pakistan Plans to sell 47 Entities under PRSP-II: Under the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper II (PRSP-II), the government of Pakistan has sketched an ambitious privatization plan to sell-off 47 public sector enterprises. The government would liquidate its remaining shares in a few big banks, and the public sector corporations. They would also opt for strategic sale of majority of the corporations. Under the proposed privatization plan 2008-2011, major entities that would be put on sale include: Pakistan Steel Mills Corporation (Pvt.) Ltd. which will be divested through an IPO, Pakistan International Airlines Corporation (PIAC), Pakistan Railways, Port Qasim Authority, Karachi Port Trust, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Ltd. (SNGPL), Sui Southern Gas Co., Ltd. (SSGC), Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority, Pakistan National Highway Authority, Oil and Gas Development Company Limited along with other public sector entities (Haugh & Talwar, 2010).

Overview of the HR Practices at National Highway Authority

The Authority's Human Resources Unit believes that the best results are provided through professional competences and an open framework. The Human Resources Units functions include the processing of employment decisions, recruitment and promotions, transfers, compensation, human resources development and training, employee relations, and industrial relations (Tooksoon, 2011). Equal opportunities shall be provided for all persons throughout the Authority in recruitment, appointment, promotion, payment, training, and other employment practices without regard to sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnic origin, national origin, color, creed, religion, age, or political belief (Devi & Shaik, 2012).

Training & Development

The Authority recognizes a responsibility to enhance the employees and provide them with an opportunity to develop skills and abilities for full performance within their position and for career advancement within the Authority. The Human Resources (HR) Unit has a responsibility to assist in the professional development of employees. The HR Unit assists in the professional development process by evaluating the recommendations of Unit Heads as well as employee requests for sponsorship through the Training and Development policy that the Authority has adopted. The HR Unit also assists departments by developing and presenting training courses. Unit Heads are encouraged to recommend to the HR unit any training and development, which would benefit the department or the employee. Upon approval of the Unit Head, a staff Employee may attend a training program conducted by HR or other designated providers (Sekerka, 2009).

Training Practices at National Highway Authority (NHA)

Environmental and Social Trainings

NHA has engaged LEAD Pakistan to conduct separate trainings for environmental and social issues associated with its Highway Rehabilitation Project. The assignment will involve development of two trainings modules, one each for environmental and social issues, and their delivery in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta.

The training modules will be developed on the basis of the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) and Environmental Impact Assessment developed by NHA for the Highway Rehabilitation Project, and the relevant requirements of the World Bank, which is funding the project. The Bank's specialists will also conduct a training of the people hired for the trainings, prior to the module development. The two- to three-day social and environmental trainings will be conducted twice in each of the five cities (Jenkins, 2009).

Workforce Development

From 160 million today, the Pakistan population is expected to reach 200 million by the year 2020. The number of licensed drivers is nearly 110 million and there are more vehicles per household than licensed drivers. The rate of vehicle miles traveled continues to grow and creates increasing demands on the capacity of the Nation's roadway system. The transportation workforce of the future must address highway safety, traffic congestion, land use, environmental policies, as well as the aging driving population. But there are key workforce challenges facing us (Gruman & Saks, 2011): 40-50% of the transportation workforce will retire in the next 10 years, Fewer people are entering key transportation fields, and Competition for workers is systemic (Truitt, 2011). Increasing demand, limited resources, and greater expectations will be major concerns for transportation managers and policy makers into the new century. Resource limitations on every front will drive the need for improved efficiencies. Technology innovation is the essence of efficiency and it is only through the application of technology by a skilled workforce that transportation can hope to close the gap between growing demand and available resources (Jacobs & Park, 2009).

Human Resource Challenges for NHA

250 NHA Employees to Lose Jobs

According to a press release, more than 250 contractual employees of the National Highway Authority (NHA) across Pakistan will lose their jobs in a few weeks. The press release said that more than 250 employees did not have their contracts renewed. Some NHA employees said that they had passed departmental exams for their rank and were recommended by their superior officers for confirmation or renewal, but management did not agree. The NHA employees said that it was unjust that people from outside were being inducted instead of regularizing those on contract. They asked the government to register those (Choi & Dickson, 2009).

Lying off employees is not considered as a good practice rather training the employees to bring them into the position where they can handle the rough spots provides benefit to the organization (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2009). In effect the National Highway Authority has taken very positive initiatives pertaining to the training and development practices in order to motivate their employees and improve their on the job performance by providing them such training programs to enhance their skills and expertise in their relevant fields. This will mutually benefit the employees as well as the organization and will help to create and maintain a highly professional and friendly work environment. However, as with all the organizations NHA will also have to face some future Human Resource challenges resulting from the economic and business situation within the country and internationally as well (Hurtz & Williams, 2009).

Methodology

This paper has adopted a mixed research methodology. It has made use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods for the purposes of this paper. For the collection of data in the quantitative method the paper has adopted primary sources of data collection. And for the qualitative method the paper has collected the secondary source of data collection. A survey questionnaire has been distributed for primary data collection and a review of relevant literature has been carried out for the secondary data collection. The questionnaire is distributed to the employees of the National Highway Authority Pakistan randomly.

Sampling Method

The sampling method adopted for the purpose of this paper is that of probability sampling where each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. The sampling technique adopted in the probability sampling is that of simple random sampling.

Sample Size

A total of 50 samples had been distributed all of which were received completely filled and accurately so.

Data Analysis

The data collected for the purpose of this paper has been analyzed using the simple method of graphs and charts that is applied in quantitative analysis. Other than that, a theme based discussion has taken place in the paper in order to analyze the data collected from the review of literature.

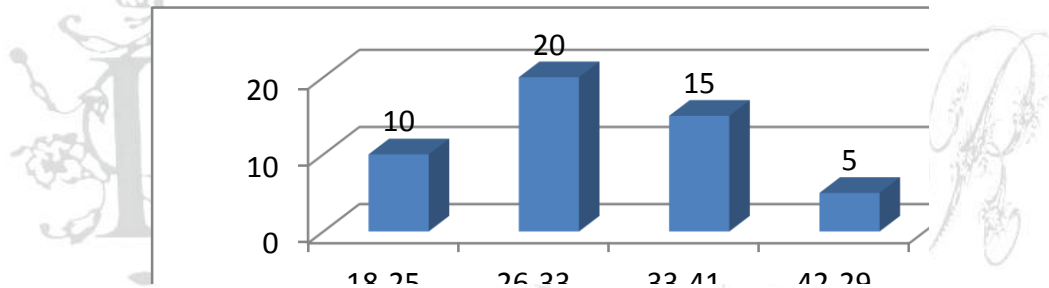
Analysis and Results

This paper has used graphs and charts in order to analyze the quantitative data. These have been expressed as below:

Demographic Information

Age of the Respondents

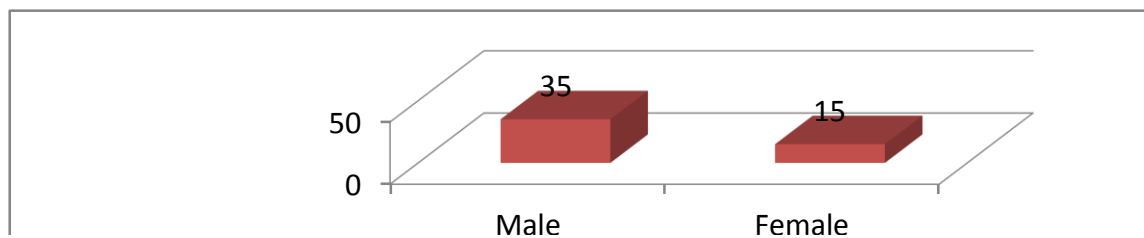
18-25	10
26-33	20
33-41	15
42-29	5



The above results show that most of the respondents are from their late twenties to their early forties. That means that most of them have been working for a long while now, they are experienced, they understand the importance of employee training and development.

Gender of the Respondents

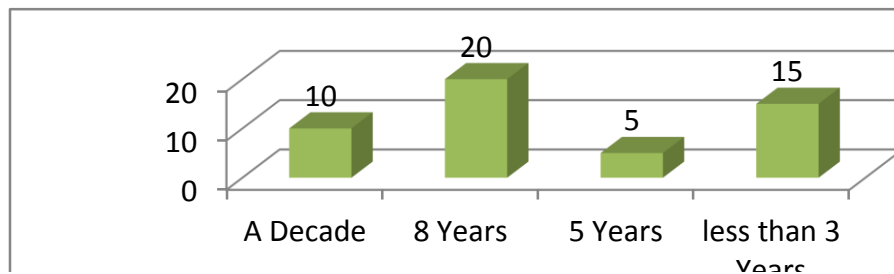
Male	35
Female	15



A majority of the sample comprises of men as is the case in most of the organizations in Pakistan which is generally a male dominated society when it comes to the corporate sector.

Years of Experience with the Organization

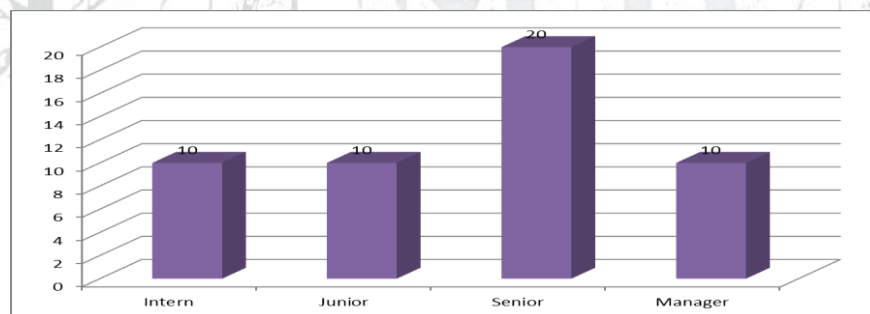
A Decade	10
8 Years	20
5 Years	5
Less than 3 Years	15



30 of the total sample have been with NHA for 8 to 10 years. That shows that these employees would by now be well aware of the practices that NHA follows in order to maintain the training and development activities in the organization for the employees.

Designation of the Respondents within the Organization

Intern	10
Junior	10
Senior	20
Manager	10



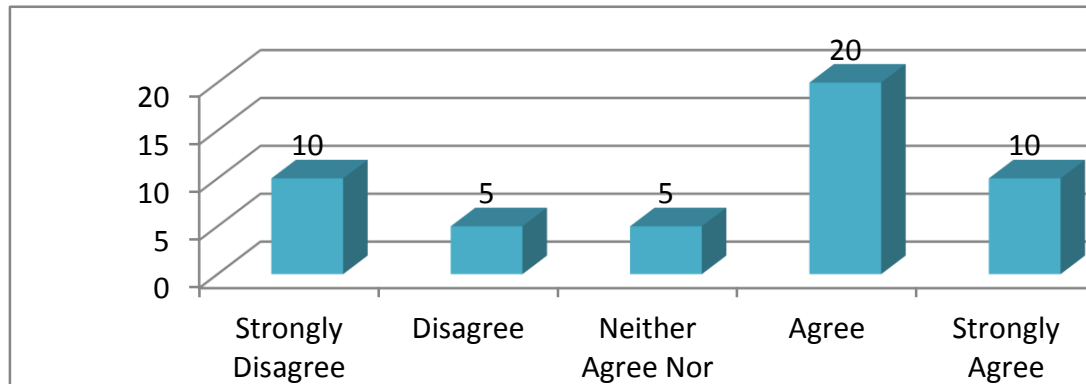
Majority of the employees that form part of the sample are seniors and managers. That gives the study a chance to explore the population that has experienced the policies and procedures of the organization for a long time.

The objectives that are under study in this paper have been analyzed using the primary data as shown below:

To determine whether the Pakistan NHA has sufficient procedures for the training and development of the employees

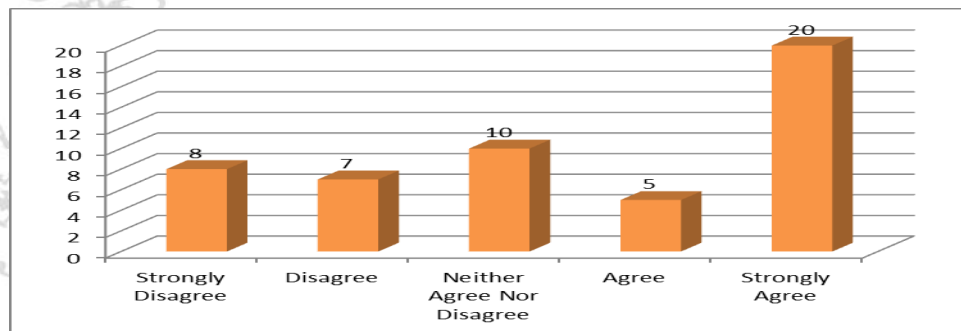
For the evaluation of the above objective the following questions have been analyzed on a likert scale. These questions have been developed keeping in mind the notion that the employees have improved in one way or another as a result of the procedures applied by the organization. That has helped the researcher in determining whether the procedures adopted were adequate.

Q1. You are well aware of the practices adopted by the NHA for improvement of Highways and Motorways.



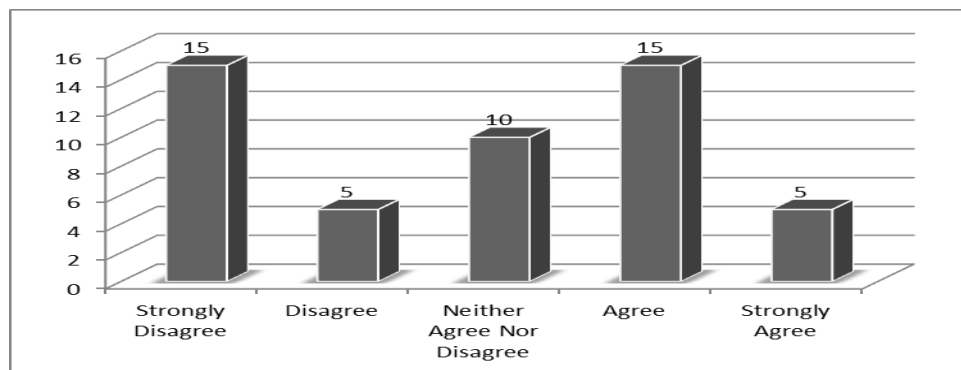
The above result shows that the majority of the employees are in fact aware of the improvements that the NHA has been making for the motorways and the highways. That shows the level of employee involvement in these projects which is an essential tool for employee training.

Q2. You know how to use most of the machinery and equipments that NHA uses.



This result is rather strange. Half the sample feels that they feel well equipped while the other have either disagrees or has no idea whether to agree or disagree. That shows that perhaps the organization is not able to train all the employees equally well to handle the machinery and equipment that they utilize.

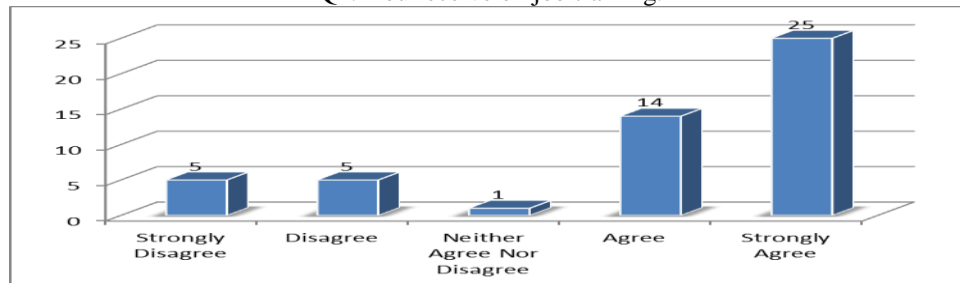
Q3. You have participated in many projects initiated by the NHA for the improvement of the organization.



Here again, the majority of the sample has not participated in any events that would create improvement in the organization. That shows that senior members and managers that form a majority of the sample have had not a huge participation in the plans for improvement in the new employees. Their efforts are not very loud in this respect.

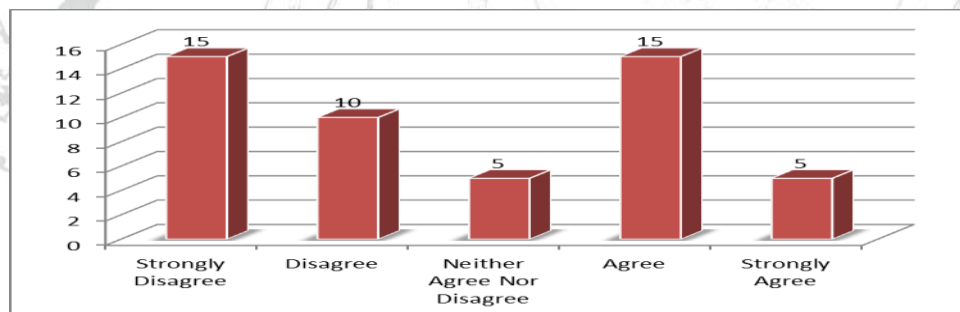
To identify the steps taken by the Pakistan NHA for the training and development of its employees. For the evaluation of the above objective the following questions have been analyzed on a likert scale.

Q1. You receive on job training.



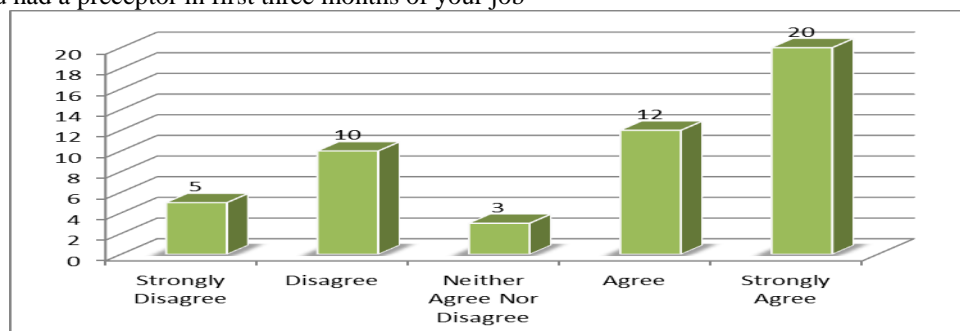
These results show that many of the employees in the organization are provided on job training which is not only a necessity for the regular accuracy of the job assigned but also important for the personal and professional development of the employee.

Q2. You are regularly invited to seminars and workshops relevant to your job.



As per the above results, the NHA does not organize many workshops and seminars for the benefit of the employees. If they take place, these workshops can help the employees gain some academi or theoretical knowledge about their assigned jobs.

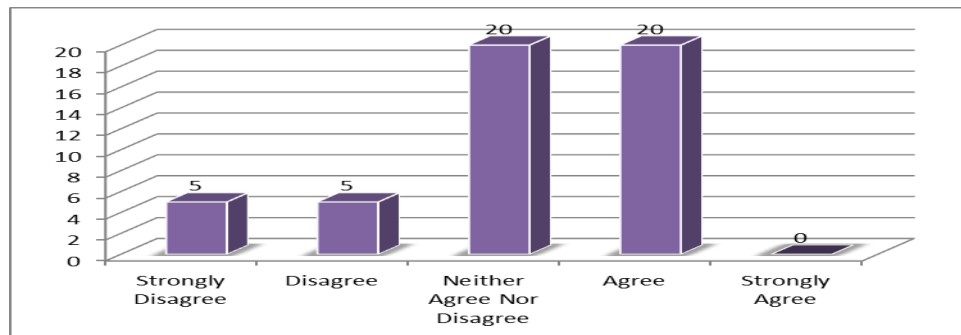
Q3. You had a preceptor in first three months of your job



These results show that majority of the employees in the organization had been assigned to a preceptor when they had joined for the first time and had been kept with the preceptor for a period of three months for initial training which is an essential step in training.

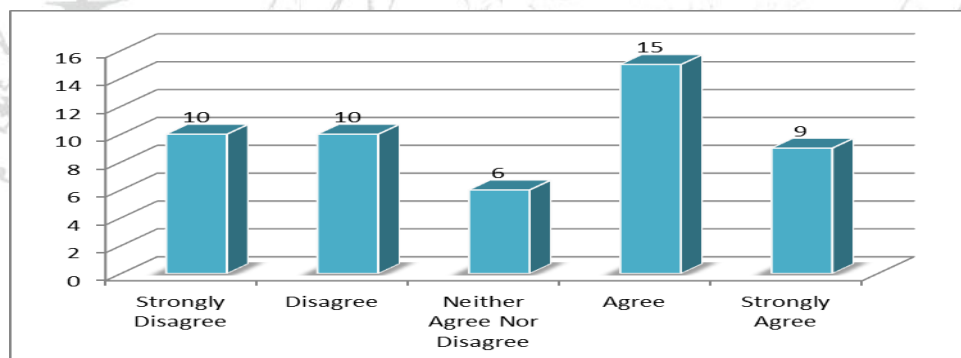
To determine how and to what extent is that training beneficial for the employees and the organization.

Q1. You feel like an expert in your field.



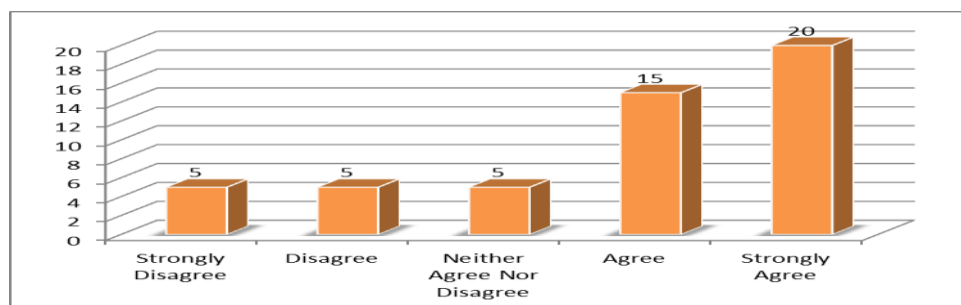
Only 20 of the employees find themselves experts at their jobs. That shows that the employees do not feel confident in their own jobs probably because of the lack of training that they have had to deal with.

Q2. You can deliver the best services to the public.



In this result also, the employees hardly feel confident that they can give their best to the public partly because of the lacking they have been facing in respect of training.

Q3. You feel better equipped with the skills needed for your job.



Here, a majority of the employees feel very well equipped with the skills that they need for their jobs. That shows that it in terms of teaching how to work the NHA is providing appropriate training to the employees only otherwise does the training become a bit lenient.

The following remaining objectives of the study have been discussed in the light of the review of literature carried out in respect of this paper.

To evaluate the effects of the training and development efforts of the employee on the projects undertaken by the Pakistan NHA

Pakistan National Highway Authority and National Database & Registration Authority, Pakistan Introduces E-Toll System on Motorways:

Pakistan National Highway Authority and National Database & Registration Authority, Pakistan have jointly introduced an automatic electronic toll system on motorways to facilitate travelers. In the first phase, this quick and efficient system has been made available for motorists using Peshawar, Islamabad and Lahore toll plazas for both entry and exit. In near future the NHA would extend the system to all toll plazas located on Peshawar-Islamabad Motorway (M-1), Islamabad-Lahore Motorway (M-2) and Pindi Bhattian-Faisalabad Motorway (M-3). Electronic tags are now available free of cost from Peshawar, Islamabad and Lahore Toll Plazas. Those who want to purchase the chip are required to submit full particulars about their person, details of bank account and other information.

The computerized system of the NHA will automatically read the chip when they pass through the toll plazas, letting them pass by lifting the bar and giving a green signal. The new system deducts the toll amount electronically from the bank accounts of the motorist. The e-toll system also has a fast tracking system installed which detects wrong information givers. As such, in case there is no amount in the account of the concerned person the NHA electronic system will recognize it and give stop signal by flashing the red light and not lifting the bar. The newly-introduced e-toll system will provide motorists and travellers a number of facilities. It will save time, spare motorists and transporters from standing in long queues for obtaining entry cards and payment of toll and also enable vehicles pass through toll plazas without stopping at the time of entry and exit on the motorways (Avey, Luthans & Jensen, 2009).

The deployment of the above mentioned project can be anything but easy. The installment of automatic machinery with the latest technology and controls to ensure that the machines work well, receive regular repairs and stay maintained for a long period of time definitely needed employees that could keep the project up and running. The NHA has prepared entire teams just for the purpose of this project. Therefore, it is apparent that the more NHA initiates developmental projects in the country, the more facilitation will be available for employee training and development (Obisi, 2011).

To make appropriate recommendations in respect of increasing the training and development efforts of the Pakistan NHA.

There can be many things that NHA can do in order to improve the training and development of its employees. One of the most essential of these is to initiate a country-wide internship program.

Country-wide Internship Program

The National Highway Authority also provides internship programs for students pursuing professional education, in order to help them gain practical exposure in addition to academic knowledge. This enhances their professionalism by working under the guidance of senior professionals at NHA who enable them to explore their horizons by applying their acquired knowledge into the professional work area. In order to encourage the young professionals, the internees are paid a stipend of Rs. 1500 per week. The standard

internship tenure is 6 weeks as per NHA policies. The NHA derives the following benefits from the hiring of interns (Anis, Ijaz-ur-Rehman & Safwan, 2011).

Recognition as a Progressive Company: Businesses that recruit students as interns are recognized as leading companies in the region. These firms understand the importance of recruiting talent for their company's future growth.

Exposure to a Pool of Talented, Motivated Prospects: Participation in the internship program provides the company immediate exposure to future business leaders. Rather than recruiting through traditional methods, the organization can have direct access to highly educated, qualified candidates.

Knowledge Transfer: Business students are educated in advanced business skills. The company can gain directly from their knowledge and from sharing current business practices with other members of their team (Salas, Tannebaum, Kraiger & Smith-Jentsch, 2012).

Discussion

This paper explores the training and development practices of the NHA. The paper has identified that in this respect the NHA does not have sufficient procedures to accommodate employees with the training. Also, the paper points out that the NHA utilizes only three ways by which it trains its employees and those are on job training, training with respect to their skills and development of new projects that need a well-trained workforce.

The paper understands that the lack of training that the employees have to deal with reduce their confidence in respect of the service that they can provide to the customers as well as in respect of their own expertise. This lack of confidence can be rather uncomfortable and mentally harmful for the employee.

The paper discovers many benefits that training and development can have for the employee and for the organization both. These are:

For the Employee

Increase in Employee Loyalty: The employee feels that the organization is investing on him. This increases the loyalty of the employee towards the organization. **Career Growth and Development:** It also provides prospects for potential career growth and employee development.

For the Organization

Saves Recruitment and Selection Costs: The organization prefers internal hiring as its own employees are very well trained, therefore, they do not find it necessary to hire someone from the outside. Organization saves financial, human and time resources as it can fulfill its workforce requirement through internal hiring.

Improvement in Employee Productivity

The training of the employees is on the job, so they can directly gain from the skills and experience of those around them. That enhances their productivity vastly.

Motivation for Workforce

When training is available to both new and current employees all of them are highly motivated and eager to know more. The extra responsibility also makes them feel more valued and they are easier to retain in the long term (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

This paper has explored the effects that training and development has on the employees and their performance at the National Highway Authority Pakistan. The paper has carried out a mixed research taking both quantitative and qualitative analysis in order to explore the training and development practices that exist at NHA. The paper has taken responses from 50 employees at the NHA and discovered through graphs, charts and discussion that the NHA employee training and development facilities are not sufficient. These practices need improvement in terms of more effort, time and resources. The paper has also explored the consequences that take place due to the lack of resources being the lack of confidence in the employees. The paper concludes on the note that the NHA training and development practices should be improved and also identifies the first step of improvement as being the introduction of country-wide internships. This study has made it quite clear that the only way in which the human capital can be successful is by its training and development.

Recommendations

This study makes the following recommendations in respect of the subject matter of the paper:

The NHA should involve employees more frequently in the several projects that it undertakes for the improvement of the organization.

The NHA should arrange for workshops and seminars for the employees so that their theoretical knowledge can also be improved in addition to their skills.

The NHA should develop standards and protocols that should assist in the development of training and development policies for the employees.

The NHA should bring in expert professionals from abroad who can assist it in establishing employee training and development procedures.

This study makes the following recommendations in respect of future research in this area:

The paper can consider analyzing data from a private organization as well and then compare the standards of practice that vary between the public and the private organization. The paper can also consider making a comparison between the practices followed by NHA and a public organization from another country. The paper can also take into account the practices that are being followed for training and development of employees on a global scale and make a comparison of it with the practices of the NHA. Comparative studies would be better able to clarify the intents and purposes of the topic under study.

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Appendix

Demographic Questions

- Q1. How old are you? 1) 18-25 2) 26-33 3) 34-41 4) 42-49
- Q2. For how long have you been working with NHA? A decade 2) 8 years 3) 5 years 4) less than 3 years
- Q3. What is your gender? 1) Male 2) Female
- Q4. What is your designation in the Organization? 1) Internee 2) Junior 3) Senior 4) Manager

Adequacy of Procedures for Training

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
You are well aware of the practices adopted by the NHA for improvement of Highways and Motorways	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
You know how to use most of the machinery and equipments that NHA uses	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
You have participated in many projects initiated by the NHA for the improvement of the organisation	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

Steps Taken by NHA to Train its Employees

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
You receive on job training	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
You are regularly invited to seminars and workshops relevant to your job	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
You had a preceptor in first three months of your job	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

Benefit of the Training to the Employees

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
You feel like an expert in your field	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
You can deliver the best services to the public	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
You feel better equipped with the skills needed for your job	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>