

Training Programs that add value to the work of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary

Oring Gom

Abstract

Many professional training activities have been undertaken by police officers in the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) over the last decade. This means that many police officers have attended training programs and a lot of money has been spent on these activities. Nevertheless, there has been little evaluation to establish whether those training programs were value for money and applicable to their workplace situations. This research project was carried out on a small scale as an attempt to herald the need for respective authorities to consider carrying out formal evaluations to account for the resources invested in various training programs and to facilitate strategic directions for training in their organizations. The results of this research study indicated that most training programs for RPNGC officers were value for money especially computing, management and conflict resolution programs.

Key words: education, training, evaluation, Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC), professional development

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to identify the types of professional development programs that police officers had attended and how those programs had added value in executing their duties in their respective workplaces. It was undertaken as there had been little done to evaluate the benefits gained in terms of improved workplace practices despite the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary having invested heavily in training programs of different kinds over the previous ten years. This article reviews literature relevant to training and professional development, discusses how data were collected, presents the results, highlights the major findings and concludes with some recommendations.

The questions which guided the research were:

1. What types of training programs were attended by the police officers?
2. How do participants feel those programs benefited them in their workplaces?

Literature review

Education, training and development

There are three specific concepts associated with professional development programs. These are *education*, *training* and *development*. Looking at each more specifically, education involves acquisition of broad generalized knowledge. Training means the acquisition of specific, detailed and routine skills and techniques. Megginson (1997, p. 275) defines development as 'the systematic process of education, training and growth by which a person acquires and applies information, knowledge, skills, attitudes and perceptions'.

But looking at them at generally, they all have something in common. This common characteristic is that they all have something to do with acquisition and increasing of skills, knowledge and attitudes of people. Having these concepts in perspective, let us understand what professional development is.

Professional development

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines professional as 'showing that somebody is well trained and extremely skilled' (2000 p. 930). Development, as seen above, is a process of education, training and growth. Nadler (1984 p. 133) defines it clearly in which he states:

Professional development is a process of keeping current in the state of the art, keeping competent in the state of practice, and keeping open to new theories, technologies, and values. It is related to present and near future positions and usually is based on work objectives.

Thus professional development programs refer to education, training and development of employees through continuous acquisition of skills, knowledge and attitudes that improve work practices to maximize productivity in organizations.

Purposes of professional development

Attention to professional development by organizations happens for a number of purposes. Randall Schuler (1984, pp. 388-389) identified four purposes of professional development: to remove performance discrepancies of employees, to make current work more flexible and adaptable, to increase employees' positive perceptions, and to increase employees' level of commitment.

Importance

Training has current and future implications for the success of an organization. It is a learning process, whether its focus is on orientation, initial job training, developing employee potential or retraining employees because of changes in technology or job assignments.

Training can contribute to higher production, fewer mistakes, possibly greater job satisfaction, lower turnover of staff, and the ability to cope with organizational, social, and technological change. Effective training is an investment in the human resources of an organization with both immediate and long-range returns.

Benefits

Training has many benefits to organizations. First, training improves employees' work performance. Cole (1998 p. 652) supports this argument when he states that:

Training can also improve the job performance of employees in their current jobs. It can cut down on waste, reduce accidents, minimize customer complaints and update skills. It can show people more efficient ways of doing the job and better ways of working together.

In this sense, it means that training can have a positive impact on quality, speed and overall productivity.

Second, training minimizes learning costs. If training is not undertaken by an organization over a number of years, this increases the number of staff needing new skills and also increases costs for their learning. To avoid this, training needs to be done continuously whenever the need arises.

Third, continuing training of staff increases knowledge and skill levels. It then places the organization in a flexible position to address staff success planning, relieving staff and staff turnover with less strain and cost in terms of recruitment. Stone (1998 p. 320) warns that 'if top management does not insist that employees continually improve their skills and knowledge, the organization competency and overall competitiveness will decline'.

Fourth, training develops positive cultures in organizations. Training enables people to be more committed, value other staff contributions and increases the quality of customer service. For example, the Diploma in Management program enables participants to develop knowledge and skills in team building, innovation, risk management, customer service and positive approaches to work.

Method of collecting data

The method of collecting data in this research study was through a class brainstorming session. It was held with twelve students in the Advanced Diploma in Management Research program at the Divine Word University's Tertiary Distance Education Centre in Madang. The students were instructed to name programs they had participated in during the previous four years and to indicate how they had been able to apply knowledge and skills to their workplace practices.

The twelve students worked in different sections within the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary. Of the twelve students, four were females and eight were males. Their job status and ranks ranged from Senior Sergeant to Superintendent. They had job experience ranging from seven years to 25 years with the police service.

Results

Figure 1: Number of respondents by gender

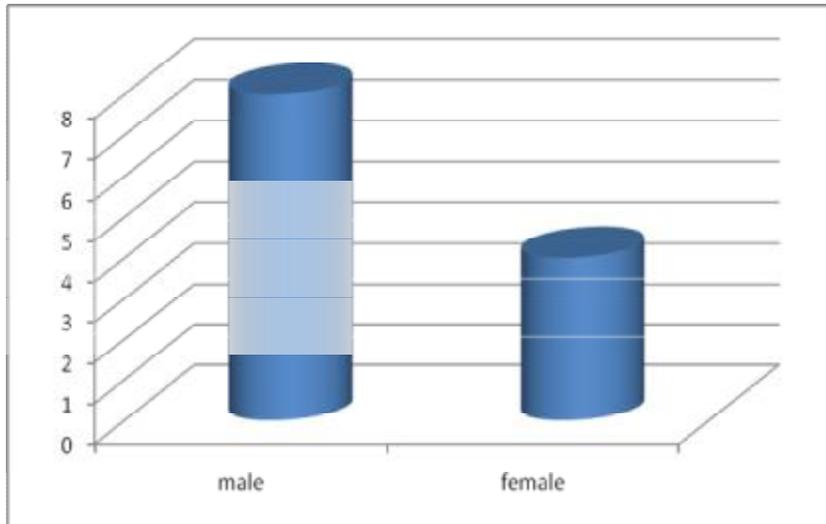


Figure 1 shows that there were four [33%] female and eight [67%] male respondents. With more males than females, the results may have a male bias.

Figure 2: Rank of respondents

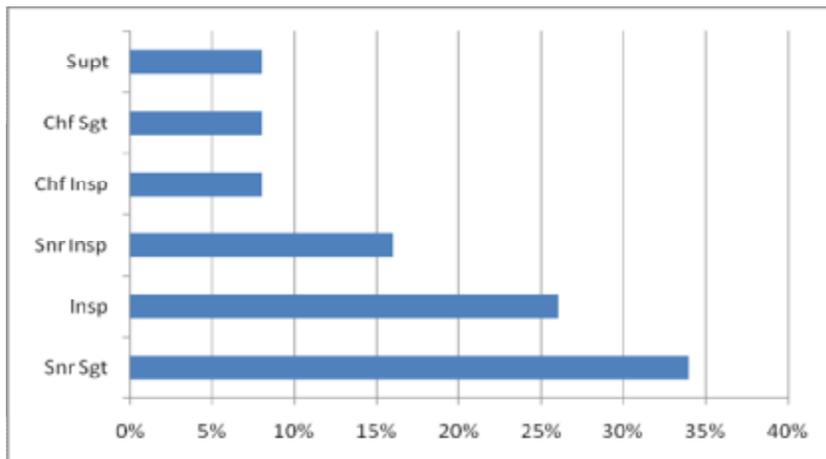


Figure 2 shows different ranks of respondents ranging from Senior Sergeant to Superintendent. The police officers were both Non-Commissioner Officers [NCO] and Commissioned Officers [CO]. The results reveal that there were more respondents at the rank of Senior Sergeant [34%] than officers at other ranks. However the results are representative of officers from a range of ranks in the police force.

Table 1: Jobs of respondents

Job	No.	%
Special Project	1	8.3%
Police Station Commander	1	8.3%
Corporate Planning	3	25%
Training	5	42%
Supply	1	8.3%
Investigation	1	8.3%
Total	12	

Table 1 shows the kind of jobs the respondents were doing. This represented six different job areas. The majority of respondents, which represented 42% [5], were from the training area, followed by corporate planning with 25% [3] and the others with 8.3 % each. The table is an indicator of areas the RPNGC was prioritising for staff professional development.

Table 2: Types of programs attended by 12 police students

Programs	No. of respondents
Trainer Training	3
Monitoring and Evaluation	3
Computer Skills	8
Diploma in Management	8
Diploma in Human Resource Management	4
Conflict Resolution	5
Theological Studies	1
Leadership Management	3
Risk Management	1
Advanced Diploma in Management Research	2
Basic Investigation	1
Advanced Investigation	1
Diploma in Physical Education	1
Strategic Planning	1
Cadet Training	2
Creative Thinking	1
Job Attachment	4

Table 2 shows the types of programs attended by the twelve police respondents. The results reveal that the respondents had attended a total of 17 different types of programs during their service. It further showed both the Computer Skills and Diploma in Management programs had the highest number of students which eight [8] respondents had attended.

Table 3: Category of programs

Category	Job Attachment	Certificate	Diploma	Advanced Diploma	Total
No.	4	30	13	2	49
%	8%	61%	27%	4%	100%

Table 3 shows different categories of training that the respondents attended. The majority of programs (30 or 61%) attended by respondents were at certificate level. Some programs (13 or 27%) were at diploma level and only a couple of programs (2 or 4%) were at an advanced diploma level. In addition, some respondents had been placed on job attachment programs (4 or 8%) for further experience. It could be expected that in time, the respondents will have the required entry levels to enroll in bachelor degree programs.

Table 4: Benefits of programs

Practical Benefits	No. of Respondents
<i>Trainer Training</i>	2
Perform instructional duties	1
Develop & design training packages	3
<i>Monitoring and Evaluation</i>	2
Corporate planning	1
Use Gantt charts, project cycle & management	3
<i>Computer Skills: word, excel, PowerPoint</i>	1
Computer tasks	4
PowerPoint presentations	2
Produce training materials	3
Use graphs in my reports	10
<i>Diploma in Management</i>	1
Research issues at Research Section	5
Prepare action plans/budget	5
Manage section	1
Impart knowledge to subordinates	1
Instill confidence in self	13
<i>Diploma in Human Resource Management</i>	5
Human resource management	5
<i>Conflict Resolution</i>	5
Resolve conflicts	5
<i>Theological Studies</i>	1
Counseling	1

<i>Leadership Management</i>	1
Impart knowledge to members	2
Developed business plan for section	3
<i>Risk Management</i>	
Developing new strategies for organisation	1
<i>Advanced Diploma in Management Research</i>	
Use creative thinking	2
<i>Basic Investigation</i>	
Techniques of investigation & arrest procedures	1
<i>Advanced Investigation</i>	
Identifying serious & less serious crimes	1
<i>Diploma in Physical Education</i>	
Physical education programs for police	1
<i>Strategic Planning</i>	
Developed strategic plans for HR, Management Services & NGI	1
<i>Cadet Training</i>	
Police commissioned officer	1
<i>Creative Thinking</i>	
PMI, CAF	1
<i>Job Attachment</i>	3
Supervision & leadership	1
Use of sophisticated equipment	1
Training skills	5

Table 4 shows practical benefits gained from having attended those programs. Many officers benefited from Diploma in Management [13] and Computer [10]. Others benefited from Diploma in Human Resource Management, Conflict Resolution and Job Attachment all with five each. For other programs, there were also practical benefits to their work.

Discussion

The research was guided by the two questions. Firstly, it aimed to find out what types of programs had been attended by the respondents. Secondly, it wanted to find out from the respondents how those programs had benefited them at their workplaces. With this in perspective, let us discuss in some details the results of this research.

This study was a case where twice as many men were receiving training compared to women. A total of four policewomen officers and eight policemen officers were involved in the research. It was necessary to include both females and males in the research to highlight the extent of gender participation in professional development programs. Second, it was important to present the reality that the more disadvantaged group of female officers were also acquiring skills and knowledge that build their capacity to progress in their working career.

Rank was no barrier to accessing professional development programs. The participants were from ranks ranging from senior sergeant to superintendent, both non commissioned officers and commissioned officers. The results showed that there was 58% of officers and 42% of other ranks. However, the research does not show first constable to sergeant ranks being participants in the program in which the data for this study was collected.

Both female and male officers attended different categories of programs and expressed workplace benefit from these. Although they attended many certificate programs, they also derived benefit from job attachment, diploma and advanced diploma programs. This infers that there are benefits from attendance in different categories and having gained qualifications at lower levels provides eligibility and motivation for pursuing studies at higher levels.

The police officers represented six different work areas of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary who had benefited from different training programs. However, 42% of the officers were from the training area, whilst 58% were from the five other work areas. There was obviously an imbalance in the selection of people for this Advanced Diploma in Management Research program. It is suggested that organizations need to select eligible candidates for programs to maintain equity and balance across all work areas and spread benefits.

The police officers attended a total of 17 different types of programs. Just over half of the group had attended Computer and Diploma in Management programs. The second highest was the Conflict Resolution program. From the group of twelve respondents, they had participated in 49 different programs, averaging around four sponsored opportunities each for formal professional development.

The police officers who had attended different types and categories of programs benefited from the practical application of knowledge and skills in their workplaces. Many officers benefited from Diploma in Management [8] and Computer programs [8]. Others benefited from Diploma in Human Resource Management, Conflict Resolution and Job Attachments. It is important that choices of programs are matched to the needs of individuals in relation to their workplace duties.

Conclusion

This research project was a case study to investigate the types of programs police officers had attended and how they felt those skills and knowledge were used in their respective workplaces. The study was limited to the experiences of twelve members of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary who were participating in the Advanced Diploma in Management Research program at Divine Word University. First, the research looked at gender participation. There were four females and eight males, which shows twice as many males as females accessing this particular program. Second, police members of different ranks, both other ranks and commissioned officers, had attended different types

of programs and benefited from them. Third, it was revealed that both females and males had attended different types of programs. Many were certificate programs but also there were job attachments, diploma and advanced diploma level programs. Fourth, the police officers represented only six different work areas of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary. This showed an imbalance in work areas from which participants were selected for this particular program. It is important that all sections of an organization have opportunities for selection to attend programs relevant to their professional development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended:

1. That professional development opportunities continue to be provided for RPNGC human resource through different categories of training programs.
2. That ranks of First Constable, Senior Constable and Sergeant be included in selections for different types of training programs.
3. That equal numbers of females and males be selected to participate in all professional development programs
4. That people from all areas of the Constabulary have the opportunity to participate in the Diploma in Management and Computer programs.

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Author

Oring Gom is a lecturer in the Faculty of Flexible Learning at Divine Word University, delivering programs to adult learners. He is a specialist in the field of Human Resource Management, having worked in this area for many years with the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary. He has a Bachelor of Management (DWU), Advanced Diploma in Management Research (DWU) Diploma in Management (DWU) and Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching and Learning at DWU.

Email ogom@dwu.ac.pg