



**TRAINING NEEDS IN FACILITIES MANAGEMENT A
STUDY AMONG LOCAL AUTHORITY OFFICES IN
MALAYSIA**



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TRAINING NEEDS IN FACILITIES MANAGEMENT: A STUDY AMONG LOCAL AUTHORITY OFFICERS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

All local authorities provide facilities to household owners who are rate payers. All of these facilities need to be provided in the first place and managed efficiently to enhance the services provided by them. With high expectations from rate payers (high quality services at low cost), there is an urgent need for qualified and professionally trained Facilities Managers to manage these facilities in the local authorities. The research will identify existing job specifications among Local Authority (LA) officers involved in Facilities Management (FM). This research involves data collection with the LA personnel department through questionnaires and personal interviews of officers involved in FM/property management. It is expected that a professional link and database with most of the LA could be developed. This database could be used later to promote courses & CPD activities and other collaborative work made available at the Centre of Excellence for Facilities Management (CEFM).

Keywords : Facilities Management, Local Authorities, Training Needs

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We know for a fact that Local Authorities provide a number of services and facilities to household/property owners in a designated area. These facilities/services could be in the form of garbage collection services, cleaning of drains and streets, maintenance of playing fields, provision of street lightings and public utilities such as libraries and wet markets and so forth. All of these facilities need to be firstly, provided and secondly, managed efficiently to enhance the services provided by them. With high expectations from rate payers (high quality services at low cost), there is an urgent need for qualified and professionally trained Facilities Managers to manage these facilities in the local authorities. The officers who are expected to manage these facilities need to be trained and exposed to a high standard of FM best practice and other form of continuing education in this field. Officers who are properly trained would be able to carry out their responsibilities effectively and efficiently.

Training and continuous professional development are part of the objectives of the establishment of CEFM. Under the Training and CPD Programs, CEFM will provide customized short courses, CPD activities and continuing education in this field. In order to realize this, the research will study and identify the training needs among those involve in managing the Local Authority's facilities and also the courses that can be provided through CEFM.

The research will try to identify existing job specifications among Local Authority (LA) officers involved in Facilities Management (FM). This is important since without a proper job description and specification, officers will not able to perform effectively in carrying out their duties. Once their job specification is clearly stated, it will be easier to identify their training needs in order to improve their knowledge and skills in FM. We will then assess these needs and provide the necessary training and continuing education through short courses and CPD programs run by Centre of Excellence for Facilities Management (CEFM).

2.0 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study will be focused on a selected number (sampling) of Local Authorities in Malaysia (population) and a survey will be carried out among officers who are specifically involved in managing facilities provided by the respective local authorities where they are working.

In order to carry out this research scientifically, data collected would be in the form of personal interviews with senior officers, while questionnaires which will be distributed to other officers involved in FM/property management. Personal interviews of officers involved in FM/property management will also be carried out during the preliminary study.

As highlighted, the initial stage of research is to discover the entire nature of work within local authorities' officer including job specification (knowledge, skill, attitude), job description, job activities, performance indication (performance standard), facilities, and others related. Later it provides a detail description of the data and information used, which includes instruments used and processes involved for data and information gathering. Finally, this chapter reveals the initial findings in establishing the key priorities for the organization and understanding the goals and targets. As a result, training and development needs can be viewed through any existing data from research analysis carried out.

At the end of the research, we hope to develop a professional link and database with most of the LA that we have worked with in Malaysia. This database could be used later to develop staff training and short courses & CPD activities for LA officers and other collaborative work made available through the Centre. Thorough this kind of links, we hope to promote CEFM through courses provided by us especially in FM and other related field. We would also develop contacts and networking for future Industrial Training for FM students from KUiTTHO. Collaboration in research projects to enhance the understanding of FM could also be arranged with interested partners among the LA where we expect the outcome to be in a win-win situation.

3.0 FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DEFINED

3.1 Facilities

There are different types of facilities and they vary according to different core business but ultimately they can be grouped into real estate, people, finance and technology & equipment. Facilities are those activities that facilitate/support the core business activities. If buildings and other facilities are not properly managed, they would give negative impact on the Local Authorities performance. On the other hand, if they are effectively and efficiently managed by implementing facilities management techniques, they could enhance Local Authorities' performance by contributing towards provision of the optimum working and business environment.

3.2 Facilities Management

The common definition of facility management is "the practice of coordinating the physical workplace with the people and work of the organization; integrates the principles of business administration, architecture, and the behavioral and engineering sciences" (Cotts, 1998). It is often simplified to mean that facility manager integrate the people of an organization with its purpose (work) and place (facilities).

The International Facility Management Association, USA (1986) defines Facility Management as " a distinct management function and as such, involves a well defined and consistent set of responsibilities. Simply stated it is the management of one of the organization's vital assets – it's facilities"

The British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM) defines facilities management as the practice of coordinating the physical workplace with the people and work of an organisation. Facilities management is also seen as an integrated approach to operating, maintaining, improving, and adapting the buildings and infrastructure of an organisation in order to create an environment that strongly supports the primary objectives of that organisation (Barret, 1995). Thus it can cover real estate management, financial management, change management, human resources management, health and safety and contract

management in addition to building and engineering services maintenance, domestic services and utilities supplies (Atkin & Brooks, 2000).

The latest definition by International Facilities Management Association (IFMA) (2003) defines FM as “the practice of coordinating the physical workplace with the people and workplace of the organization. It integrates the principle of business administration, architecture and the behavioral and the engineering science”.

All the definitions seem to point out to the major issues in Facilities Management and that is the people who are suppose to plan, strategize and carry out the work for the organization they are working for.

4.0 FACILITIES MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Recent developments have put FM in a different perspective. Firstly, there is a major concern regarding the maintenance of services and facilities provided for the people, be it public amenities as well as privately provided goods and services. The Prime Minister, during the past few months has conveyed his concerns regarding the maintenance culture mentality or rather the lack of it, among Malaysians. Malaysia spent millions of Ringgit on building world class facilities and services but fall short on maintenance which saw these facilities becoming obsolete after just a few years. During the tenure of the former Prime Minister, he too chided the Malaysian citizens of the world class facilities but third world mentality. As for public facilities for the local consumption, it is up to the Local Authorities concerned to ensure that they are in the first place provided for, and secondly, they are properly maintained in the long run for the benefits of the rate paying citizens specifically and the ordinary citizens generally.

Facilities within the contact of Local Authorities range from public buildings like the wet markets, libraries, food courts and facilities provided by them such as landscaping, street lighting, garbage collection, recreational activities and so forth. From these observations, there is undoubtedly a dire need in the implementation of FM strategies and what better place to start with, if not the Local Authorities themselves who managed properties and facilities within the public sector. Without question, the people who manage these

facilities need to have the right skills and training to enable them to carry out their tasks effectively and efficiently.

5.0 TRAINING NEEDS IN FM FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES PERSONNEL

Training Needs Analysis (TNA) can be considered as the process for gathering and interpreting data to enable the identification of both personal and organisational performance improvement. The challenge for any organisation intending to carry out a TNA exercise, is to obtain complete and accurate needs data, which amounts to answering the fundamental questions of: who, what, when and why as well as how.

A TNA can be considered to comprise of six subordinate analyses within four major categories as shown below:

- Customer Requirements
- Operational Analysis
- Training Suitability Analysis
- Evaluation

Identifying training needs is a key stage in training administration. What actually is the training need? Training Needs Analysis (TNA) is concerned with designing training programs and delegate attendance to ensure that the investment in training achieves both individual and business objectives. It should also be concerned with defining objective measures on which the success of the training can be assessed

The analysis of training needs is the process of examining training needs to determine how best they might actually be met. In this process such considerations as organizational priorities, costs, resources, and the precise nature of the learning involved come into play. Note here that some training needs might end up not being directly addressed for such reason as cost, impact limitations, or changing organizational goals.

What specific knowledge areas, skills, or work attitudes need to be provided to the workers so that they can achieve the targets and work objectives set for them?

The training needs analysis may focus on the needs of individuals, work groups or even the whole work force. Individuals often need training when:

- they first join the organization;
- they are transferred or promoted; or
- they are identified as performing poorly.

In the case of the Local Authorities, we do not intend to carry out a full TNA exercise since this will involve time, money and personnel, which the researcher does not have. What this paper will do is to carry out interviews and surveys among those involve in the property and facilities management and real estate, regarding their work and their need for specific courses and skills.

6.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims at:

- Identifying job specifications among Local Authority officers involve in the management of facilities
- Identify their training needs in order to improve their knowledge and skills to enable them to carry out their responsibilities
- Assess these needs and come up with plans for staff training and continuous professional development

7.0 THE PRELIMINARY SURVEY

Preliminary surveys in the form of personal interviews with senior officers from selected local authorities were conducted in May 2004. The officers are predominantly involved in property management and property valuation works. Local Authorities selected were from Melaka (1), Negeri Sembilan (2), Selangor (2) and Perak (2). Questionnaire used were the same as the ones distributed later in the survey.

8.0 FINDINGS FROM THE PRELIMINARY SURVEY

The findings are tabulated as in Table 1, in the Appendix. From the Table, it can be seen that the majority of those interviewed were keen in getting their staff some form of training related to Facilities Management and Real Estates. Other forms of knowledge sharing and skills enhancement were also suggested. These include seminars and conventions, work attachments and study visits to other local authorities.

As the proper survey is still ongoing, we hope to compare whether the interests shown in the preliminary survey are widely spread among the Local Authorities throughout Malaysia. Once the findings are analyzed and finalized, we hope to come up with a training strategy to improve the quality of services and personal development among the Local Authority officers.

9.0 CONCLUSION

We believe learning is a long term and continuous process. At CEFM we are committed to provide quality staff training and development to ensure quality work force within the organization we are focusing on. Hence, we would like to work closely and assist the Local Authorities to plan and organize courses for their staff to improve work related skills. Courses will be carried out according to the scope of training below:

- Facilities Management
- Real Estate & Valuation
- Building Management
- Estate Management/Project Management
- Environmental Management
- IT Application in Facilities Management
- Municipality Management

Other areas of training will be explored according to requirements and training needs of our clients and this could be done after the study has been completed. Levels of training could be determined and planned according to the outcome of the survey and this could be at certificate and diploma level and where appropriate, up to Master's degree level.

CEFM, in its capacity as a training and CPD provider, will assist in organizing and running of courses deemed critical to Local Authorities' staff, in the immediate future. Other courses will also be considered after a proper analysis of training needs have been carried out to determine the training requirements of the Local Authorities' staff.

10.0 RECCOMENDATIONS

It is suggested that a basic course in Facilities Management be carried out in the near future:

- A short course in basic Facilities Management be carried out for the Managers (Valuation Officers)
- A basic course be carried out for intermediate level officers (Assistant Valuation Officers and Valuation Assistants)
- An awareness talk in Facilities Management be carried out for Senior Managers (Secretaries and Head of Municipality)
- A platform is provided to allow Middle Managers and Senior Managers to sit and discuss current issues and problems. This could be in the form of national level seminar or symposium.

The above recommendations will be made available and presented to the top level management at the Local Authorities, together with the detailed plan to carry out the courses. Further recommendations will only be available after the surveys are completed and analysed.

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