

The Training Process of Civil Servants Employees in Ministry of Economic Development in Kosovo: Effect of Training through the Prism of Participants and Interpretation of Employee Questionnaire Survey

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Abstract: The Institutions of Public Administration in the Republic of Kosovo are relatively new institutions. This Paper addresses the need for a more carefully specified training process for the civil servant employees of the Ministry of Economic Development [MED]. The paper has assessed the trainings provided during the period 2005-2011, focusing on the effects and results for increase of skills and knowledge of trained employees. Despite the large number of training topics it has never been clear how effective they were, what knowledge and skills the employees gained through these trainings and whether they have increased their skills and applied in their workplace. This study was conducted to improve the performance of MED employees and to design trainings that enable employees to gain new skills and knowledge. During the research activities, especially from the first survey conducted with MED officials it was noticed that there was a discrepancy between the organized training courses and shown results at work by the trained officers. It is recommended to design an effective evaluation process on training. MED, has not issued any report on how effective the previous training have been, what new skills and knowledge an employee has applied at his/her workplace. This lack not only faded the whole process of trainings, but it demotivated employees on taking seriously the training process

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1 Introduction

In parallel with the recruitment process there is also a need for training employees in order to accomplish their duties and responsibilities in more efficient way. The Law on Civil Service of Republic of Kosovo is the basic law for employees in the public sector which states that the civil service should be composed of professional employees, who would be politically independent, and be included in the system based on merit. The Law on Civil Service “sets the rules for the overall management and organization of a politically neutral and impartial Civil Service, the rules on the admission to the Civil Service, working conditions, the rights and

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obligations of staff, personal conduct, career progression and professional development of Civil Servants”.¹ Article 35, defines rules and obligations for the Civil Servant’s Capacity Building where it states that “all Civil Servants are eligible for and also required to upgrade and enhance their professional capacity through training in the Civil Service. Civil Servants may also be authorized to attend, outside the Civil Service, specialized educational programs, for their professional development, as long as relevant for the Civil Service of Kosovo.” Another issue that is worth to emphasize, which is also related with the training process, is the evaluation of the performance of the civil servants. This assessment, according to article 33, defines that the Performance Appraisal of the Kosovo CSL shall be conducted periodically at the end of each year, and the purpose of it is “to enhance work performance and to ensure the gradual improvement of the professional capacity and quality of administrative services”. The results of performance appraisal shall be used to identify training needs of each civil servant employee and their eligibility for career advancement.

2. The Training Process of Civil Servants Employees in MED From 2005-2011

There is no central planning for developing a training program or co-ordination of training activities for MED, despite the fact that training and capacity building is one of the main challenges and permanent tasks of the Ministry of Economic Development. Training and professional education is developed and implemented on department levels and sometimes on individual levels. As all civil servants in the Ministries of the Government of Republic of Kosovo, MED employees too can participate in a broad range of training courses on topics related to administration. An Executive Agency is established within the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) and its aim is to support Kosovo Public Administration through staff training in the field of good governance, management, administration, legislation, human resources, budget and finance, information technology and municipal issues. The MPA determines development policies of Kosovo Civil Service. KIPA, on the other hand, develops and implements training policies for KCS. The largest number of civil servant employees trained from 2005 until 2011 is during 2009, which expressed in percentage is 44%, while the lowest number of trained civil servants employees is in the first year of the Ministry’s existence in 2005, which expressed in percentage is 22%.²

Below are presented training courses on different fields held from 2005 through 2011. They are summarized in eight different fields (general management, legislation and administration, human resources, budget and finance, EU and

¹ Law No. 03/L-149 On the Civil Service of Republic of Kosovo.

² Personnel civil service database in MED.

human rights, English language, IT, professional trainings). Training topics during the period from 2005 up to 2011 were mainly on general management issues about 32%, while training topics on professional or specialized sectors as on energy or mining sectors were not sufficient, there were only 14% of overall trainings held during these years.

2.1. Why were Trainings Conducted?

The most important resources of the public administration are its employees, as it is a case with all organizations, and the key to their successful functioning depends on the results of activities and outputs of the employees. "The public administration is grounded in a strong desire to serve the public and solve its problems"(Starling, 1986, p. 7). Since its establishment, the management of MED is focused on training and developing its employees in order to accomplish the goals of Ministry. As it was noticed from the analysis of the training process from 2005 through 2011, MED management provided its employees with general trainings needs such as General Management and Administration, Information Technology, English Language, Finance, etc., which were designed and implemented mostly from KIPA.

The Ministry itself did not have any training program, designed according to the needs of employees. The Ministry trained its civil servant employees mainly according to KIPA's plan that existed for the whole Kosovo Public Administration and also by ad- hoc trainings that were offered to the employees through consultancy. So, MED did not have its training program for its employees and training topics were not in accordance to employees' needs. Also, training topics were not important and in accordance with policies of the Ministry. In the first year of the existence of the Ministry trainings offered in General Management and Administration were welcomed but, over time the offered training programs were not sufficient to employees. As a result each employee is faced every day towards new era, that of new technology and broader knowledge. So, the training needs rise from day to day because there was a need for progress, competition and training development for every employee.

In order to be successful in achieving its strategies, mission and goal, MED needs to develop various trainings that recognizes, supports, and promotes learning within the Ministry. This training development is very important, both for the ministry and for employees as well, because it impacts their performance and motivation. The Law on Kosovo Civil Service defines trainings as a right and obligation for civil servants and emphasizes the link between their performance and training. So, under this law, "Civil servants are entitled and obliged to increase their professional skills through training in the Civil Service. Results of performance appraisals should be used, inter alia, to determine individual or group

training needs of civil servants.”¹ Civil Servants employee shall be eligible to access training, which is relevant to their function and represents an advancement of their professional and/or academic career. The target is to build up the capacities of MED civil servants through qualitative trainings. Building up a powerful, accountable and professionalized public administration according to international standards is one of the Ministry’s needs.

2.2. Who Financed Trainings and How Much Budget was Spent?

The budget is important because through it the ministry implements its policy development. “Budgets can be a rich source of information on government programs, employment and performance, among other things”(Mussel, 2008, p. 2). The process of budgeting is always difficult. There are more demands from departments of the Ministry than those that can Ministry approve. Ministry approves only those projects that are necessary and fully justified and enables the Ministry to achieve its goal. The Ministry’s budget demands are always larger than government’s opportunity to receive and to finance them. Despite difficulties and dissatisfaction of all parties, the best budget is considered the budget which is allocated for the realization of basic programs development policies of our ministry. MED’s budget is divided into different categories. There is a category for salaries and wages, capital investments, subsidies, utilities and for goods and services. Within the category of goods and services there is a sub-category for educational and training services. The table 2-2 presents allocated budget for educational and training services through past six years. The overall budget of the Ministry was approximately 2 million Euros per year, while for the educational and training services has been allocated only 2%.² All trainings delivered by KIPA were financed from the budget of the Republic of Kosovo, which is allocated from Government for KIPA Institution under MPA to provide and implement training courses for all civil servant employees of the Republic of Kosovo, in the central and local level.

3. Effect of Training through the Prism of Participants And Interpretation of Employee Questionnaire Survey

In order to understand the impact of the past trainings, strengths and weaknesses, a survey was conducted with the civil servants of the MED. The method used is a questionnaire method. A questionnaire composed of six parts has been designed. The first part deals with background information of employee and the current

¹ Law No. 03/L-149 On the Civil Service of Republic of Kosovo, Article 35.

² Database of the Budget and finance division in MED.

position held. The second part deals with employee opinion on overall job satisfaction at MED. The third part of the questionnaire deals with MED management, especially with the treatment of employees at the Ministry. Through the questionnaire we also learn about the level of communication and teamwork building at the Ministry. A particular attention in the questionnaire was given to the past training process and the employees' recommendation for future trainings. The questionnaire has been sent by email to 119 MED employees out of whom 56 have positively responded to. The highest percentage of respondents fall in the professional level 68%, followed by managerial level with 27% and the lowest percentage is in administrative level 5%.

3.1. Job Satisfaction

The second part of the employee questionnaire deals with job satisfaction of employees. The employee overall satisfaction in MED, where 64% of respondents answered to be satisfied with their work. The percentage of 64% of satisfied employees is an important indicator to how satisfied are the employees with their work. Only 4% claim not to be satisfied. To the question which aspect of their job was the most challenging and enjoyable, respondents answered that the professional one is more so. About 77% answered that the professional part was the most challenging and enjoyable part of their job.

3.2. MED Management

The third part of the questionnaire deals with MED Management, where 37% of respondents agreed on fair treatment.

3.3. Communication and Teamwork

The questions of the fourth part of the questionnaire address the communication and teamwork relations of the employees at the Ministry and with given support for the application of the gained knowledge at the workplace. The respondents answer about their view for communication process in the Ministry. 34% agree that is a good communication, 29% strongly agree, while 30% were neutral and 7% disagree about it.

3.4. Past Trainings

The fifth part of the questionnaire is one of the two most important parts. In this part there are questions that directly deal with the past trainings of employees. Participants of the trainings responded to these questions on the benefits and

weaknesses of the trainings and the opportunities for applying the gained knowledge at their workplace, so we will treat each separately.

Only 4 % of respondents answered negatively to the first question of this part, more precisely, the trainings they attended did not enable them to perform better. The question had to do with the assessment by respondents of any benefit from the trainings, not implying the approval of the training they attended. The respondent answers to find out whether attended trainings enabled employees to perform better.

3.5. Recommendations for Future Trainings

In the last section of the questionnaire questions related to the duration of trainings and participants recommendations about the future trainings are included. This section is one of the second important sections of the questionnaire, which directly affects the essence of this capstone project; it will be treated separately one by one.

The duration of trainings is treated in the first two questions of Section F. The seventy seven (77%) percent of trainings lasted 2-4 days per year and fifty two (52%) percent of respondents think that the duration of trainings has been sufficient. A large number of participants, about forty eight (48%) percent of respondents think that the training they received was not sufficient.

About seventy nine (79 %) percent of respondents would prefer a training program that closely linked to the work they do at the Ministry.

Attended trainings are valuable, but not as much as for employees concrete work and those respondents want trainings that directly relate to their work.

The majority of the respondents have recommended training topics related to their work or an issue related to their department. So, most of them have required a specific training topic related close to their work at the Ministry. But some responses appear to be general training needs, such as training for English Language etc.

By reviewing the proposed topics for future trainings, we notice that very few topics are proposed by more than one official. The major change of topics can be understood as the tendency of officials to completely specific training for jobs that they do in the Ministry. Each job position requires some specific skills, thus gaining those skills requires specific training, with specific topics, that are not similar with other specific topics of other job positions. An illustrative example is the officers' demand for training in the field of software application. A large number of officers have required software training, but each application is different from another, based on the needs of their job position.

Officials are not sure that the length of training 2-4 days per year is enough for the work they do, so, most of them prefer a more specialized training for the work they do. Therefore, a more specific training for their work and their preferred topics are mainly closely related topics with the work they do in the Ministry.

4. Conclusion

To summarize the research, based on the analysis in this project of the MED past training programs and policies, of detail trainings courses for the period 2005-2011, surveys done with civil servant employees in MED, and directors of all departments of the ministry, detailed findings and recommendations are presented.

- Within the Strategic Development Plan of MED, a special attention should be given to the employee training process. This would create a policy base for future approaches for trainings and would eliminate the current ad hoc practices. In this direction a significant progress has been made by drafting the Strategic Development Plan of MED for period 2011-2014, in which training is considered but no special measures have been indicated. The ministry should clearly define its employees training needs and must see the training issue as a continuous process.
- The Ministry must draft an operational plan or a detailed plan for trainings in compliance with MED Strategic Development Plan. The plan should be draft annual to foresee training topics in detail, estimate the training budget, its participants, time and place of training.
- MED should set a mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of the training programs. First, at the end of the each training, the employee should compile a brief report about followed trainings in which he/she will emphasize what performance improvement will be generated and what knowledge and skills will be gained. Second, MED should also draft an annual report on evaluation of training programs which should be compiled by directors of departments and the general secretary of the ministry. The report should emphasize training policies and their concrete effects which derive from direct results of trained officials.
- For the purpose of exact determination of training topics and actual employee training needs MED must classify types of trainings into three groups: (1) General trainings which should be organized as a result of changes in laws that impact Ministry area of responsibility, (2). Systematic trainings or vocational trainings, dealing with a limited number of sectors, example European law that coincides with the MED area of responsibility] and (3) Specific trainings for a specific sector that requires specific expertise, such as trainings for the field of ICT, energy and mining. In its annual operational plan MED should include all trainings for each training category but a particular attention must be given to specific trainings because the employees' needs are specific for their work.

- MED should have the main role in setting each training agenda. This means that before any specific training, directors of departments should have the main role for preparations of trainings in compliance with annual training plan, including the appointment of adequate officer, time, and duration of training period.
- MED should create more favorable working environment for its trained employees in order to apply their gained knowledge and skills through trainings in their workplace. Also, the ministry should find methods and ways to motivate those officers which as a result of the followed training would achieve better job performance. Motivation could include finance rewards, appreciation certificates, or create more suitable condition for career advancement. This will drive MED towards a creation of a sustainable continuous learning environment.
- MED should create a database for employee trainings as a separate database for all held training and future trainings. Creation of this database enables that policy makers of the annual operational plan see and review past held trainings and the need for future trainings.

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