

A REPORT ON THE EXPERIENTIAL TRAINING CARRIED OUT AT THE KENYA POWER TRAINING COLLEGE FOR AKAD EDUCATION GROUP ON 27TH - 28TH AUGUST 2015.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The experiential training was a process intervention aimed at improving the interpersonal relations and social interactions of the AKAD mentees through team building activities hosted by ANGAZA. The activities we used were aimed at developing the best practices for achieving results, meeting goals and accomplishing tasks which were time bound. Teams engaged in diverse activities in order to change and impact on the context at hand (Engineering as a career option), composition (present situation- student life) and team competencies to improve their general performance.

The training was carried out in a non-formal nature. We mainly targeted the theory and practice of organizational development through four approaches:

1. Goal setting
2. Interpersonal relationship management
3. Role clarification
4. Problem solving

They proved to impact positively on the mentees cognitive and effective processes as well as their general team performance outcomes.

APPROACHES USED DURING THE EXPERIENTIAL TRAINING IN VIEW OF ENGINEERING

As earlier stated, we used the following approaches:

- **GOAL SETTING:** this intervention emphasized on setting objectives and developing individual and team goals. Team members were involved in action planning to identify ways to achieve the goals. It was designed to strengthen team member motivation to achieve the team goals and objectives. By identifying specific outcome levels, teams determined what future resources are needed. Individual characteristics (e.g. team member motivation) were also altered by use of this intervention. The relevance it had was to allow them to picture themselves in a situation in the future as an engineer working in an organization. Most organizations insist on teams negotiating a team charter between the team and responsible managers (and union leaders) to empower the team to accomplish things on behalf of the organization. Successful goal settings help the teams to work towards the same outcomes and make them more task and action oriented.
- **ROLE CLARIFICATION:** this intervention emphasized on increasing communication among team members regarding their respective roles within the team. Team members improved the understanding of their own and others' respective roles and duties within the team. This intervention defined the team as comprising a set of overlapping roles. In relation to the life of an engineer, these overlapping roles are characterized as the behaviors that are expected of each individual team member. It was aimed at improving team and individual characteristics (i.e. by reducing role ambiguity) and work structure by negotiating, defining, and adjusting team member roles. It focused on understanding of the talent that exists on the team, and how best to use it, and allowed members to understand why clear roles are important. The members should also realize that they are interdependent and the failure of one team member leads to the failure of the entire team.

- **PROBLEM SOLVING:** this intervention emphasized on identifying major task-related problems within the team. Team members became involved in action planning, implementing solutions to problems identified, and evaluating those solutions. They practiced setting goals, developing interpersonal relations, clarifying team roles, and working to improve organizational characteristics through problem-solving tasks. This added benefit of enhancing critical-thinking skills. It showcased relevance in an engineer's life as one needs to be excellent at problem-solving. That way, they are less likely to need external interventions to solve their problems.[15]
- **INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS MANAGEMENT:** this intervention emphasized on increasing teamwork skills (i.e. mutual supportiveness, communication and sharing of feelings). Team members developed trust in one another and confidence in the team. This was based on the assumption that teams with fewer interpersonal conflicts function more effectively than teams with greater numbers of interpersonal conflicts. It required the use of a facilitator to develop mutual trust and open communication between team members. As team members achieve higher levels of trust, cooperation and team characteristics can be changed as well.

CHALLENGES FACED DURING THE EXPERIENTIAL TRAINING

On the first day, teams showed a lack of teamwork skills in their activities, which showed the inability to work together effectively for one common goal in a team environment. However, the mentees picked the pace and encouraged each other to work not only individually for a higher grade and success, but also to collaborate with each other for best results. This cancelled out the option of emphasis on self-interest- rather than an orientation to collaborate with others for successful teamwork.

Team members' also experienced issues regarding negative affect, such as lack of cohesion or trust. Although this was streamlined after roles were clarified and futuristic situations put in place.

RELEVANCE OF THE ACTIVITIES TO THE ENGINEERING MENTEES

The experiential training was very effective in guiding and teaching the mentees the relevance of team building. It aimed at training them to be outstanding engineers but working in a team of highly interdependent engineers, performing high ended tasks, highly knowledgeable and experienced in the tasks to be accomplished.

It focused on training organizational leadership which actively establishes an engineer and ensures his/her effective delivery of a team to incorporate awareness of the ultimate objective of the task.

It showed them how to develop goals, roles and the procedures needed to achieve a task successfully.

It also aimed at teaching problem solving in a group context and building trust among members in order to have the willingness and ability to speak up about their needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE EXPERIENTIAL TRAININGS

We would like to recommend the following for future experiential trainings:

- Time. Time was a constraint during the training. We recommend more time to be allocated, in order to impact more practical skills which will purpose to assist the mentees in their future prospects as budding engineers.