

Bridging the Gap for Effective Staff Training Management in the Public Sector: Reviewing the Critical Role of Training Evaluation at the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF)

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Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of training interventions at Tanzania's National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF), with particular emphasis on training evaluation mechanisms, the adequacy of evaluation tools, and the extent to which evaluation results are integrated into organisational decision-making. The study was conducted at the NHIF Dodoma and Dar es Salaam Regional Offices and adopted a qualitative research approach. Data were collected from 15 managers and supervisors and 40 technical staff through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary review. Data collection procedures were ethically guided, validated, and triangulated, while data analysis was conducted using thematic content analysis. The findings reveal that NHIF largely relies on informal, ad hoc training evaluation practices, with minimal application of systematic evaluation models, such as Kirkpatrick's framework. Key challenges identified include inadequate post-training follow-up, excessive reliance on self-reported outcomes, and limited utilisation of evaluation findings to inform future training programmes and organisational decisions. The study concludes that the existing training evaluation system at NHIF is fragmented and insufficiently aligned with the organisation's strategic objectives. The study therefore recommends adopting comprehensive, evidence-based evaluation frameworks to enhance accountability, support continuous improvement, and strengthen the linkage between training interventions and organisational performance.

Keywords: Training Evaluation, Public Service Delivery, NHIF, Tanzania, Human Resource Development, Kirkpatrick Model.

1.0 Introduction

In Tanzania, capacity-building efforts have gained momentum through national policies and sector-specific strategies. However, despite increased investment in training, evaluation practices remain fragmented. Institutions like the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) often prioritise immediate feedback over comprehensive, evidence-based evaluations (Komba & Lwoga, 2024; Mussa & Mbonde, 2023). This gap undermines organisations' ability to use training as a strategic tool for improving public services.

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This study examines the training evaluation process at NHIF, including how evaluations are conducted, the tools and methods used, and how results inform future training planning. The paper responds to growing calls for rigorous empirical studies on the effectiveness of training in public sector institutions across sub-Saharan Africa (Wamalwa & Wekesa, 2023).

Training and development are crucial strategies for strengthening human capital and enhancing institutional performance in both the public and private sectors. In the contemporary knowledge-driven economy, the effectiveness of training is increasingly judged not only by its delivery but also by its outcomes, how well it improves employee competencies, job performance, and contributes to organisational goals (Noe et al., 2021). To ensure accountability and positive impact, effective training evaluation systems are essential as they determine whether training objectives are met, identify gaps, and refine future programs (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2019). Evaluating the outcomes of training programs is crucial to determine whether they meet institutional objectives and enhance employee performance. In the public sector, training evaluation is crucial in ensuring accountability, informing strategic HR decisions, and enhancing service delivery outcomes (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2019). Effective training evaluation helps organisations justify training investments, track learning transfer, and measure performance impacts (Salas et al., 2020).

Globally, structured training evaluation frameworks such as Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Model, Phillips' ROI Model, and the Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) Model have become widely accepted as best practices for evaluating learning effectiveness and return on investment (Phillips & Phillips, 2020; Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017). For example, in the United States and Canada, public and private organisations use these models to link training outcomes with employee performance and broader strategic outcomes (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2022). Similarly, in Europe and parts of Asia, training evaluation has shifted from assessing participants' satisfaction to measuring behavioural changes, skill application, and institutional impact (Reio et al., 2020). However, challenges persist in evaluating training effectiveness systematically due to resource limitations, weak institutional capacity, and inadequate mechanisms for integrating feedback (Salas et al., 2020; Hamdani et al., 2021). In countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia, structured training evaluation frameworks, including Kirkpatrick's model and the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model, have been widely adopted to enhance decision-making and ensure accountability (Nugent et al., 2022).

In Africa, however, training evaluation practices remain underdeveloped, as public sector institutions focus on the quantity of training delivered rather than its effectiveness (Ngure & Wambua, 2019). Studies from Nigeria, Ghana, and Zimbabwe reveal that training evaluation is often informal, limited to post-training feedback forms, with no systematic follow-up to assess learning transfer or performance improvement (Kanyongo & Gudyanga, 2020; Okoye & Eze, 2020; Appiah-Mensah et al., 2021). In most cases, training programs are evaluated based on attendance rates and participants' satisfaction, rather than on structured models or organisational returns. A study by Wamalwa and Wekesa (2023) revealed that many East African public organisations still rely on participants' satisfaction surveys but lack institutional frameworks to evaluate behavioural change or impact. Similarly, research in Kenya and Nigeria highlights the gap between training delivery and post-training evaluation, particularly in capturing long-term organisational results (Muriithi & Makokha, 2022).

In East Africa's public sector, efforts to improve human resource development through training are evident, despite the fragmentation of evaluation practices. Research by Mugisha and Tumushabe (2021) in Uganda's Ministry of Health revealed that while training is frequently conducted, little attention is given to post-training evaluation, and existing mechanisms focus more on administrative completion than on learning outcomes or performance indicators. Similarly, in Kenya, many public institutions lack a standardised approach to evaluating training outcomes, with evaluation often relegated to a procedural formality (Okumbe, 2019; Mugisha & Tumushabe, 2021).

In Tanzania, the government has prioritised public service transformation through various reforms, including capacity development via training, hence requiring NHIF to play a central role in implementing Universal Health Coverage (UHC), which requires skilled personnel to manage service delivery, claims processing, and health financing systems (URT, 2021). The NHIF provides frequent training to its staff; however, anecdotal evidence suggests that training evaluations are often conducted informally and rarely inform future decision-making (Wambura, 2022). The Public Service Training Policy (URT, 2013) emphasises the importance of linking training to performance. However, there is a lack of institutionalised frameworks to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of training across many agencies.

Furthermore, preliminary assessments at NHIF indicate that most evaluations rely on reaction-level feedback (e.g., satisfaction surveys) without systematically assessing behavioural changes or organisational results. The absence of structured models such as Kirkpatrick's or Phillips' ROI Model in NHIF's evaluation approach may hinder effective feedback, resource optimisation, and strategic learning (Luhwago & Kalolo, 2023).

Despite the widespread implementation of training programs in Tanzania's public sector, empirical research on how such training is evaluated remains limited, particularly in strategic institutions such as NHIF. Most existing studies focus on training delivery or need assessment, overlooking the critical process of post-training evaluation and its integration into organisational learning and planning. There is a lack of research on the use of scientific models, tools, and feedback mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of training in public institutions (Mdee & Mashauri, 2022).

This study is timely and necessary for several reasons. Firstly, it supports ongoing efforts under Tanzania's Public Service Reform Program and the Health Sector Strategic Plan by promoting evidence-based decision-making in training and human resource development. Empirical Contribution: It fills a notable research gap by providing data-driven insights into training evaluation mechanisms within NHIF, with implications for broader public sector performance management. Organisational Value: The study aims to help NHIF and similar institutions institutionalise structured evaluation practices that enhance learning outcomes, resource utilisation, and service delivery. Alignment with National Goals: The findings will contribute to Tanzania's Vision 2050 and SDG Goal 3 on good health and well-being by strengthening institutional capacities for effective health service delivery.

The findings of this study will be valuable to policymakers, training managers, and development partners seeking to ensure that public-sector training evaluation efforts yield tangible, measurable outcomes. Ultimately, the research contributes to the national agenda

of building a competent, efficient, and responsive public service aligned with the National Vision 2050 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The ADDIE Model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) is one of the most widely applied instructional design frameworks in training and development (Branch, 2009). Its systematic and cyclical approach makes it especially relevant in organisational contexts, such as in the public sector, where accountability and efficiency are key. In this study, the ADDIE Model provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how training evaluation interacts with the broader training management cycle. The analysis stage focuses on assessing organisational needs, identifying performance gaps, and determining training requirements (Molenda, 2003). At NHIF, this involves diagnosing deficiencies in staff skills and aligning them with the organisation's mandate in health financing and insurance. Without a robust analysis, subsequent training evaluations become irrelevant, as they depend on clearly identified training needs (Gagné, Wager, Golas, & Keller, 2005). Design involves translating identified needs into measurable learning objectives, instructional strategies, and evaluation criteria (Reiser & Dempsey, 2018). In NHIF, this would mean ensuring that training content is structured around key competencies in health insurance administration. Crucially, evaluation should be embedded during design by defining key performance indicators and success measures (Dick, Carey, & Carey, 2015). This phase involves producing learning materials, manuals, and resources. According to Aldoobie (2015), development also integrates tools for assessing learning outcomes, ensuring that evaluation is built into training resources. At NHIF, this might include customised training manuals and digital resources that are tested and refined before implementation.

Implementation is the delivery of training, whether through workshops, coaching, or digital platforms. Effective implementation involves monitoring and formative evaluation to ensure smooth delivery and to capture challenges in real time (Allen, 2006). In the NHIF context, formative evaluation during implementation can help track participant engagement and identify gaps in facilitation or content delivery. Evaluation is both summative and formative, assessing whether training objectives were met and whether performance improved (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). In public sector institutions like NHIF, evaluation is especially critical because it ensures that public funds invested in training lead to measurable improvements in service delivery. Importantly, evaluation results feed back into the analysis stage, supporting continuous improvement in training management (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2022; Branch, 2009). The ADDIE Model underscores that training evaluation is not an isolated activity but an integral component of the training management process. For NHIF, evaluation provides evidence of return on investment, ensures accountability, and informs future training interventions. This theoretical lens demonstrates that strengthening training evaluation bridges the gap in staff training management, thereby improving performance and service delivery in Tanzania's public sector.

2.2 Empirical Review

Studies across developed countries reveal a strong alignment between training design and evaluation practices. Reio et al. (2020) reported that in the USA public organisations, the use of ADDIE and Kirkpatrick's models significantly enhanced training alignment with performance metrics. Similarly, Phillips and Phillips (2020) found that companies integrating ROI and Kirkpatrick evaluations improved decision-making regarding learning investments. Training evaluation is increasingly recognised as essential for evidence-based human resource development. For example, a study by Armstrong and Taylor (2021) in Australia highlighted that comprehensive evaluation mechanisms, guided by the ADDIE and Kirkpatrick models, significantly improved employee performance and institutional efficiency in public health institutions. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, Hasson et al. (2022) found that training programmes incorporating structured post-training evaluations were associated with stronger links to behavioural change and service delivery improvements.

Training challenges also affect developed countries. and they include: a lack of managerial support for long-term evaluation, insufficient resource allocation for follow-up studies, and difficulty linking training outcomes to performance metrics. These barriers are often magnified in developing countries (Nkwama, 2021).

Across Africa, empirical studies reveal that while training is a popular intervention in public institutions, evaluation mechanisms are weak or non-existent. In Kenya, Muriithi and Makokha (2022) found that public-sector training primarily focuses on inputs (e.g., the number of staff trained) rather than on outcomes (e.g., service improvements). Evaluations are often limited to satisfaction surveys conducted immediately after training. Osei (2021) documented the absence of systematic training evaluation in Ghana's government ministries. Most training efforts were donor-driven and lacked sustainability plans or impact assessments. Moreover, political interference and the absence of national evaluation policies further hindered effectiveness. Mugisha and Tumushabe (2021) found that many public organisations in Uganda lacked dedicated training evaluation units. As a result, training outcomes remained anecdotal and rarely informed future training designs. Moreover, empirical evidence shows that training evaluation is often underutilised. For example, in Ghana, Appiah-Mensah et al. (2021) found that public institutions primarily focus on immediate feedback and fail to evaluate behavioural or results-level outcomes. In Nigeria, Okoye and Eze (2020) found that public agencies lack clear frameworks for training evaluation, resulting in minimal integration of training outcomes into future planning. Kanyongo and Gudyanga (2020) in Zimbabwe reported that even when training is frequent, evaluation is rarely systematic or linked to performance outcomes. In many African countries, the lack of structured frameworks such as ADDIE or Kirkpatrick is a recurring problem. In Uganda, Mugisha and Tumushabe (2021) observed that health-sector training programs are rarely evaluated beyond attendance and satisfaction forms. In Kenya, Okumbe (2019) highlighted that most government departments lack trained personnel and tools for systematic evaluation.

In Tanzania, training evaluation remains a significant bottleneck in the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives. According to Chonjo and Lwehabura (2022), NHIF's training evaluation is informal, focusing mainly on trainee feedback rather than behavioural

changes or outcomes. Evaluation reports are often descriptive, lacking standard indicators or benchmarks for performance improvement. Komba and Lwoga (2024) analysed training practices across various public health institutions in Tanzania, including the NHIF. They found that while institutions conducted post-training workshops and seminars, there was minimal evidence of structured outcome evaluations. This contributed to poor knowledge retention, weak skill application, and unmeasured return on investment. Furthermore, Mussa and Mbonde (2023) noted that limited financial resources constrained NHIF's training evaluations, the absence of trained evaluation personnel, and weak alignment between training objectives and institutional performance metrics. Their findings suggest the need for a more structured evaluation framework that integrates staff feedback, institutional goals, and client outcomes. Luhwago and Kalolo (2023) found that public organisations' training assessments are mostly informal, with limited post-training follow-up. Wambura (2022) noted a lack of alignment between training outcomes and employee performance due to the absence of evaluation frameworks. Mdee and Mashauri (2022) argue that the limited use of models such as ADDIE and Kirkpatrick in Tanzanian institutions hinders effective feedback, reduces accountability, and affects strategic planning.

The reviewed theoretical and empirical literature reveals consistent gaps between training implementation and evaluation, especially in the public sector. While models like ADDIE and Kirkpatrick provide robust frameworks for effective training cycles, their application, particularly the evaluation component, is often weak or absent in practice.

3.0 Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design, utilising a case study approach, to examine the effectiveness of training evaluation practices at the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) in Tanzania. The qualitative method enabled in-depth exploration of evaluation tools, processes, and participants' experiences. The research was conducted in two key NHIF regional offices, Dodoma and Dar es Salaam, which were selected for their central roles in training coordination and policy implementation. The study targeted NHIF staff involved in training design, delivery, and evaluation, including managers, HR officers, training coordinators, and general employees who had recently undergone training. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 55 participants (15 managerial staff and 40 operational employees) with relevant experience.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants and three focus group discussions with trained staff, each comprising 8-10 respondents and lasting 40-60 minutes. Internal documents, including training manuals and evaluation reports, were also reviewed. Validity was ensured through expert review of tools and triangulation of data sources. At the same time, reliability was enhanced through pilot testing, consistent data collection procedures, and verbatim transcription of audio-recorded interviews. Ethical clearance was obtained, and all participants gave informed consent. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data, involving transcription, coding, and theme generation through both inductive approach. NVivo 13 software was used for data management, and basic descriptive statistics were applied to summarise participant demographics and training-related patterns.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Information of Respondents

A total of 55 respondents participated in the study, comprising 15 managers and 40 employees drawn from NHIF offices in Dodoma and Dar es Salaam. The demographic distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 55)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	32	58
	Female	23	42
Age Group (Years)	20–29	10	18
	30–39	22	40
	40–49	18	33
	50 and above	5	9
Education Level	Certificate/Diploma	11	20
	Bachelor's Degree	30	55
	Master's and above	14	25
Work Experience	Less than 5 years	13	24
	6–10 years	26	47
	Over 10 years	16	29
Position	Managerial	15	27
	Technical Staff	40	73

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in the study. A total of 55 participants were drawn from NHIF offices in Dodoma and Dar es Salaam, comprising 15 managers and 40 non-managerial employees. The gender distribution shows a moderate balance, with males accounting for 58% and females for 42%. In terms of age, the majority of respondents were aged 30–39 (40%), followed by those aged 40–49 (33%). Participants aged 20–29 years constituted 18%, while only 9% were aged 50 years and above. Regarding education level, more than half of the respondents (55%) held a bachelor's degree, 25% had postgraduate qualifications (master's degree or higher), and 20% held a diploma or certificate. Regarding work experience, nearly half of the respondents (47%) had served for 6–10 years, 29% for over 10 years, and 24% for less than 5 years. The inclusion of both managerial and non-managerial employees ensured that diverse perspectives across different levels of responsibility were represented in the study.

4.2 Evaluation of Employee Training at NHIF

4.2.1 Overreliance on Self-Reported Feedback

The research findings highlighted a gap in evaluating training practices at NHIF, with a significant number of managers acknowledging that their evaluations were limited to

immediate assessments of trainers and training programmes upon completion. One of the participants conveyed that;

“Evaluation is done mainly by our trainers immediately after the training. The trainers use specific forms to gauge trainees’ satisfaction with the training and the knowledge and skills they have obtained. The aim is to assess the relevance of training and if there is any way we can improve the future training” (Interview, November 2023).

Moreover, some employees reported a lack of feedback regarding the impact of training programmes on their performance. Some participants from the focus group discussions commented that;

“Neither the trainers nor the HR department provides feedback on the evaluation conducted. They only try to evaluate or detect impediments to performance and improve them when they fall short of the expected standard” (FGD November 2023).

It is essential that even successful training programmes be evaluated and their outcomes communicated to employees, as this enables management to recognise high performers, which, in turn, helps reduce turnover. A programme must be continuously evaluated to ensure the strategy is on course to achieve the desired objectives. This correlates with findings by Msuya & Munisi (2023), who state that evaluation enables organisations to defend the financial investment in training and allows the training department to improve future training courses and make better decisions. Similarly, Nassary (2020) observed that practical training evaluation is crucial for determining whether training objectives are met and refining future training initiatives. Training evaluation enables organisations to conduct a cost-benefit analysis comparing training outcomes with predetermined objectives. Kirkpatrick’s (1996) four-level model of training evaluation, encompassing reactions, learning, behaviour change, and results, underscores the importance of assessing not only trainees’ perceptions but also their actual learning and on-the-job behaviour changes.

The evaluation of training at NHIF primarily relies on feedback forms completed immediately after each training session. While this level of evaluation offers insight into participants’ satisfaction (Kirkpatrick’s Level 1), it does not assess knowledge retention or performance improvement. One participant remarked;

“We collect feedback after training but do not follow up to see whether people apply what they learned.” (Interview November 2023)

This mirrors findings by Muriithi and Makokha (2022), who argued that relying solely on reaction-level feedback limits an organisation’s ability to assess the actual impact of training.

4.2.2 Inadequacy of Evaluation Tools

The organisation lacks a structured model for evaluating training effectiveness. Most evaluations do not extend beyond Levels 1 (reaction) and 2 (learning). There is no consistent assessment at Level 3 (behaviour) or Level 4 (results). One participant stated;

“We rarely measure long-term impacts or organisational benefits. It is more about whether people liked the session.” (Interview November 2023)

Komba and Lwoga (2024) observed similar limitations in East African institutions, calling for the adoption of comprehensive ROI models like Kirkpatrick's or Phillips'.

Inadequate post-training follow-up emerged as a significant challenge affecting the effectiveness of training evaluation at NHIF. The findings suggest that little attention is paid to assessing whether employees apply newly acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace. This weak emphasis on learning transfer reduces the likelihood that training will result in sustained behavioural change or performance improvement.

4.2.3 Weak Linkage Between Evaluation and Training Design

Feedback from training evaluations is seldom used to inform future training plans. Documents revealed no standardised system for tracking the impact of training over time. One senior staff member noted;

"Even when employees suggest improvements, these do not always influence the next round of training because there is no system to process the information." (FGD November 2023).

This disconnect arises from poor alignment between training delivery and organisational needs, as Hamdani et al. (2021) echo.

It was observed that, even when evaluation data are collected, they are rarely analysed systematically or used to guide strategic planning, resource allocation, or training redesign. As a result, training evaluation at NHIF appears to have minimal influence on organisational learning and decision-making processes. This finding highlights a disconnect between training activities and organisational strategy, a challenge commonly reported in public sector human resource development. The limited use of evaluation findings suggests that training is not fully recognised as a strategic investment, but rather as a routine operational function. This weakens accountability and reduces the potential of training to contribute to institutional reform and improved service delivery.

4.2.4 Limited Post-Training Follow-Up and Weak Learning Transfer

Inadequate post-training follow-up emerged as a major challenge affecting the effectiveness of training evaluation at NHIF. The findings suggest that little attention is paid to assessing whether employees apply newly acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace. This weak emphasis on learning transfer reduces the likelihood that training will result in sustained behavioural change or performance improvement.

The literature consistently identifies follow-up and supervisory support as critical factors in facilitating training transfer (Chonjo & Lwehabura, 2022). The absence of structured follow-up mechanisms at NHIF may therefore explain the observed gap between training participation and observable improvements in work practices. This finding reinforces the argument that training effectiveness cannot be achieved through isolated interventions but requires supportive organisational systems, including monitoring, coaching, and reinforcement.

5.0 Conclusion

This study examined the effectiveness of training interventions at Tanzania's National Health Insurance Fund by focusing on training evaluation mechanisms. The findings indicate that training evaluation at NHIF is mainly informal and fragmented, characterised by limited application of systematic evaluation models, heavy reliance on self-reported measures, and inadequate post-training follow-up, which together constrain the assessment of learning transfer, behavioural change, and organisational impact. These shortcomings reflect a broader misalignment between human resource development practices and organisational performance management within public sector institutions. Overall, the study underscores the need for NHIF and similar organisations to adopt comprehensive, evidence-based training evaluation frameworks that integrate evaluation throughout the training cycle and explicitly link training outcomes to organisational objectives, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of training investments and improving organisational performance and service delivery.

6.0 Recommendations

To enhance training evaluation at NHIF, the following recommendation is proposed: NHIF should institutionalise a structured evaluation framework, such as Kirkpatrick's four-level model or the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model, to assess trainee satisfaction, behavioural change, and organisational outcomes (Salas et al., 2020). Training evaluation must be planned as an integral part of the training cycle, with dedicated resources, including a budget, tools, and staff, to ensure effectiveness. Evaluation findings should be systematically documented and reviewed to shape future training programs. To professionalise this process and strengthen internal capacity, NHIF must enhance the skills of HR personnel and trainers through workshops, coaching, and collaboration with academic institutions or training experts (Wamalwa & Wekesa, 2023). Additionally, training evaluation results should be more closely integrated into strategic HR planning, creating feedback loops that ensure insights directly inform decisions on training needs, content, methods, and timing. Leveraging digital tools, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS) and mobile feedback platforms, can further enhance the efficiency and reliability of evaluation processes by enabling real-time tracking and data analytics to support informed strategic decision-making.

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