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Talent Acquisition, Employee Training and Succession Planning at Amref Health Africa in Kenya

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Abstract: This paper examines two dimensions of talent management and their relationship with succession planning at Amref Health Africa in Kenya: talent acquisition practices and employee training practices. It draws on a completed research project that used a descriptive research design and questionnaire data from 137 respondents at the organisation's Kenya Country Office. The analysis is restricted to the first two specific objectives: assessing the influence of talent acquisition practices on succession planning and determining the effect of employee training practices on succession planning. Descriptive results indicated generally favourable perceptions of talent acquisition (overall mean = 4.18) and employee training (overall mean = 4.14). Workforce planning and prioritising internal employees were among the highest-rated talent acquisition elements (mean = 4.38). For training, job rotation received the highest rating (mean = 4.38), followed by professional skills enhancement (mean = 4.21) and career development opportunities (mean = 4.10). Pearson correlation analysis showed positive, statistically significant relationships between succession planning and talent acquisition ($r = .644$, $p < .001$) and between succession planning and employee training ($r = .534$, $p < .001$). In a multiple regression model containing four talent management practices, talent acquisition remained a significant positive predictor ($B = .400$, $\beta = .302$, $p < .001$), while employee training also made a smaller but statistically significant positive contribution ($B = .148$, $\beta = .143$, $p = .044$), controlling for the other predictors. Because the design was cross-sectional and based on self-reports, the results support association and statistical prediction rather than definitive causal claims. The paper recommends linking recruitment to future competency needs, formalising internal talent pools, and aligning training, mentorship, job rotation and career development with documented succession plans.

Keywords: *Employee Training; Kenya; Succession Planning; Talent Acquisition; Talent Management*.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Organisations depend on people with the knowledge, skills, judgement and institutional experience required to deliver services and sustain operations. Leadership and specialist vacancies can disrupt performance when employees are not prepared to assume greater responsibility. Succession planning therefore involves more than replacing a departing employee: it is a continuing process of identifying critical roles, developing potential successors, transferring knowledge and maintaining organisational continuity. Talent management contributes to this process by helping an organisation attract suitable people, develop their capabilities and create conditions in which they can progress into future roles (Rothwell, 2021; Collings et al., 2022).

These issues are particularly important in non-governmental organisations (NGOs), where specialist expertise, programme continuity and relationships with communities, government and funders may be essential to mission delivery. Health-focused NGOs such as Amref Health Africa operate in a knowledge-intensive environment involving health professionals, researchers, programme managers, technical specialists and support staff. The loss of experienced personnel or a vacancy in a critical role may affect institutional knowledge and programme implementation. Strategic recruitment and continuous employee development can help create a workforce capable of meeting both current requirements and future leadership needs. Talent acquisition is the systematic process of workforce planning, attracting applicants, assessing competencies, selecting candidates and onboarding

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employees. For succession planning, recruitment is strategically relevant when it considers future as well as immediate needs, uses transparent and competency-based selection, and identifies candidates whose capabilities can develop over time. Recruiting qualified employees does not itself guarantee succession readiness; however, recruitment aligned to a longer-term workforce plan can establish a stronger foundation for an internal talent pool (Collings et al., 2022).

Employee training refers to planned activities that strengthen job-related knowledge, technical skills, leadership capability and readiness for additional responsibilities. Training may include formal courses, mentoring, coaching, professional development, job rotation and experiential learning. When these activities are linked to competency gaps and future role requirements, they can support employees' progression from current roles into more complex positions. Training that is not connected to organisational needs, succession criteria or opportunities to apply new skills may have a weaker contribution to succession planning (Rothwell, 2021; Collings et al., 2022).

➢ *Statement of the Problem*

Amref Health Africa in Kenya relies on skilled employees and continuous workforce development to implement its health programmes. However, having qualified employees does not automatically ensure that suitable individuals are available to fill future leadership and other critical positions. Effective succession planning requires appropriate talent acquisition practices to identify and recruit suitable candidates, as well as employee training practices to develop the competencies needed for future responsibilities. Previous studies in Kenyan NGOs have highlighted the importance of recruitment, talent management, career development, and employee training. However, limited organization-specific evidence exists on how talent acquisition and employee training practices influence succession planning at Amref Health Africa in Kenya. Although Amref invests in workforce development, it remains necessary to establish whether these practices effectively prepare employees for future organizational roles. Therefore, this study examined the influence of talent acquisition practices on succession planning and determined the effect of employee training practices on succession planning at Amref Health Africa in Kenya. The findings aim to provide evidence on how these two practices contribute to identifying and preparing potential successors for critical organizational positions.

The research project on which this paper is based identified a specific evidence gap: although talent management and succession planning had been discussed in the wider NGO and Kenyan contexts, organisation-specific evidence relating to Amref Health Africa was limited. The present paper narrows the scope to the first two objectives in the original project and does not treat the remaining objectives—performance management and employee retention as separate subjects. Their role is mentioned only where necessary to interpret the multivariable statistical model.

➢ *Objectives*

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between talent acquisition practices, employee training practices and succession planning at Amref Health Africa in Kenya. The first objective is to assess the influence of talent acquisition practices on succession planning. The second objective is to determine the effect of employee training practices on succession planning.

The corresponding research questions are:

- How are talent acquisition practices related to succession planning at Amref Health Africa?
- How are employee training practices related to succession planning at Amref Health Africa?

The paper is significant for human resource practitioners and organisational leaders because it considers how recruitment and development systems may be linked to leadership continuity. It may also inform NGO workforce planning by highlighting practical indicators—competency-based selection, internal talent sourcing, job rotation, mentorship and professional skills development—that can be incorporated into succession frameworks. The paper is bounded by the single-organisation setting and the cross-sectional, self-reported nature of the data. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of respondents' perceptions and statistical relationships, not as proof that either practice alone causes successful succession.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

➢ *Theoretical Literature Review*

- *Human Capital Theory*

Human Capital Theory, associated with Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964), conceptualises education, training, skills and experience as investments that can increase an individual's productive capacity. In organisational settings, the theory suggests that recruitment and employee development are investments in the capabilities needed to achieve organisational objectives. For succession planning, it provides a rationale for identifying people with suitable foundations and developing their competencies before critical roles become vacant. The theory supports both objectives examined in this paper. Talent acquisition is relevant because an organisation's future capability depends partly on the knowledge and potential of the people it brings into the workforce. Employee training is relevant because current employees may require additional technical, managerial and relational capabilities before they can perform more complex roles. The theory does not imply that every investment produces a guaranteed return: employees may leave, training may not match future needs, and funding or organisational conditions may constrain implementation. Nevertheless, Human Capital Theory provides the principal explanation for why recruitment and development can contribute to succession readiness.

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- *Resource-Based View*

The Resource-Based View (RBV) argues that organisational capabilities can be strengthened by resources that are valuable and difficult for competitors to reproduce (Barney, 1991). Employees' specialised expertise, relationships, experience and tacit knowledge can form part of this capability. From this perspective, recruiting people with relevant competencies and developing them internally can strengthen the organisation's pool of human resources. Succession planning can help preserve this capability by preparing employees to take on important roles and by reducing dependence on emergency external recruitment.

- *Person–Organisation Fit*

Person–Organisation Fit Theory emphasises compatibility between employees' characteristics and organisational values and goals. In talent acquisition, this extends assessment beyond technical qualifications to include whether candidates can work effectively within the organisation's mission and culture. Fit should not be interpreted as recruiting only people who resemble existing staff; rather, it requires fair, job-related assessment of the values and behaviours needed for the role while preserving diversity and inclusion. Appropriate fit may support employee engagement and development, but it cannot guarantee retention or promotion.

➢ *Empirical Literature Review*

- *Talent Acquisition Practices and Succession Planning*

Talent acquisition supports succession planning when recruitment decisions are informed by strategic workforce planning and future competency requirements. Transparent selection criteria and competency-based assessment can help organisations identify people capable of meeting current role requirements and developing into future responsibilities. Internal talent sourcing and internal mobility can complement external recruitment by creating visible pathways for existing employees to progress. The research project's literature review describes studies in nonprofit and healthcare settings that associate structured recruitment with leadership continuity and succession readiness, while noting that findings from well-resourced organisations may not transfer directly to NGOs operating under donor constraints.

The local context makes the question practically important. NGOs may face short funding cycles, project-based contracts and competition for qualified specialists. These conditions can encourage recruitment focused on immediate programme delivery rather than long-term capability. A succession-oriented approach would therefore connect job descriptions and selection criteria to a workforce plan, maintain records of critical roles and competency requirements, and assess whether new hires and internal candidates can be developed for future roles. These practices should be implemented with transparent processes to avoid favouritism or unsupported assumptions about an employee's potential.

- *Employee Training Practices and Succession Planning*

Training can support succession planning by closing competency gaps and providing employees with experience that prepares them for broader responsibilities. Formal learning may build technical or leadership knowledge; while mentoring and coaching can help employees understand organisational processes and develop professional judgement. Job rotation and stretch assignments expose employees to different functions, decision-making contexts and cross-departmental relationships. Career development plans can help connect these opportunities to the competencies required for future roles.

The research project reviews studies that identify training, mentoring, job rotation and experiential learning as relevant to leadership preparation. It also notes that training budgets and donor priorities can limit continuity in NGO development programmes. The implication is that training should not be measured only by attendance or the number of courses completed. More useful succession-related indicators include competency improvement, application of learning, readiness assessments, completion of development plans and evidence of knowledge transfer. Development opportunities should be accessible and linked to clear criteria so that succession planning remains fair and credible.

➢ *Research Gap and Synthesis*

The source project identifies a contextual and empirical gap concerning the relationship between talent management and succession planning in a large, health-focused NGO in Kenya. The present paper addresses a narrower part of that gap by examining two practices at Amref Health Africa: talent acquisition and employee training. It uses the descriptive and inferential results reported in the project rather than generating new observations. The evidence is organisation-specific, but its cross-sectional design means that it cannot establish whether stronger recruitment or training preceded changes in succession planning.

➢ *Conceptual Framework*

The framework focuses on two independent variables and one dependent variable. Talent acquisition is represented by competency-based recruitment, transparency of selection, attraction of qualified applicants, strategic workforce planning and internal talent sourcing. Employee training is represented by the frequency of training, leadership mentorship, career development, job rotation and professional skills enhancement. Succession planning is reflected in leadership continuity, employee readiness for promotion, knowledge transfer, career progression and organisational sustainability.

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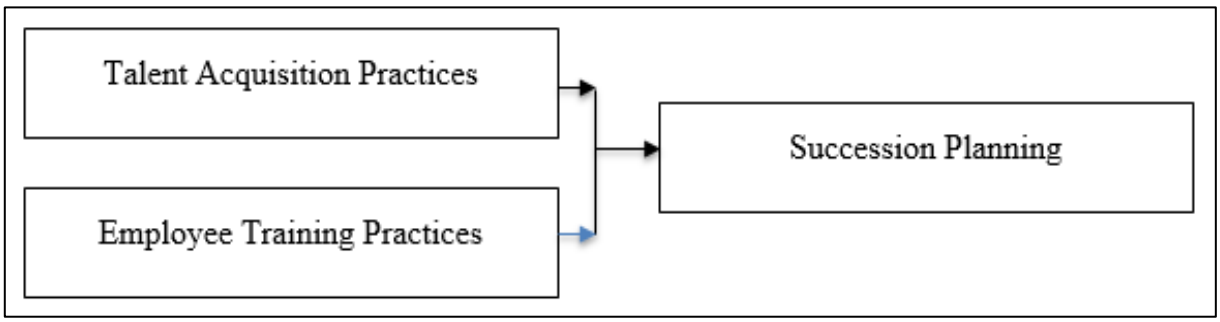


Fig 1 Conceptual Framework

The framework proposes positive relationships between each independent variable and succession planning. These relationships are examined using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation. The original project's multiple regression model is also considered as a secondary check of whether the two variables make independent statistical contributions when the other talent management dimensions are controlled.

III. METHODOLOGY

The overall study examined talent management practices and succession planning at Amref Health Africa in Kenya. This paper reports only the evidence relevant to the first two specific objectives: talent acquisition and employee training. The source project adopted a descriptive research design, appropriate for describing employees' perceptions of organisational practices and examining associations among study variables at one point in time. The study context was Amref Health Africa's Kenya Country Office, with the target population reported as 300 employees across managerial, supervisory and professional roles and relevant departments.

The source project reported a sample of 171 selected using stratified random sampling. Questionnaires were distributed to the selected employees, and 137 usable responses were returned and analysed, producing an approximately 80% response rate. The questionnaire used Likert-type items to assess talent acquisition practices, employee training practices and succession planning. The talent acquisition indicators included competency-based recruitment, transparency, qualified applicants, workforce planning and internal sourcing. Training indicators included training frequency, leadership mentorship, career development, job rotation and professional skills enhancement.

Data were analysed in SPSS Version 30, as reported in the project. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, summarised respondents' perceptions. Pearson's product-moment correlation assessed the direction and strength of the bivariate relationships between each focal practice and succession planning. Multiple regression results from the original project were used to assess whether talent acquisition and employee training retained statistically significant contributions when performance management and employee retention were included in the model. Statistical significance was assessed at the 5% level. The reported p-value of .000 is expressed in this paper as $p < .001$.

The source project reports that reliability coefficients for all study variables exceeded .70, which it interpreted as acceptable internal consistency. Ethical procedures are understood to include voluntary participation and confidentiality as described in the source project. This paper does not independently verify the raw data, the original SPSS output or the completeness of the source project's reference list. It therefore reproduces the reported summary statistics and interprets them cautiously. Since the design is cross-sectional, the word "influence" in the objectives is treated as the study's framing; statistical associations alone do not establish causation.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

➢ *Findings for Objective One: Talent Acquisition Practices*

The first objective was to assess the influence of talent acquisition practices on succession planning at Amref Health Africa. The source project reported an overall mean of 4.18 for talent acquisition practices, indicating generally favourable responses to the recruitment and workforce-planning indicators. Workforce planning and giving priority to internal employees received the highest reported mean scores, each at 4.38. The pattern suggests that respondents particularly recognised the value of anticipating workforce needs and considering internal candidates when filling roles.

Table 1 Summary of Reported Talent Acquisition Results

Indicator/result	Reported value	Interpretation
Overall talent acquisition practices	Mean = 4.18	Generally favourable perceptions
Workforce planning	Mean = 4.38	Among the highest-rated indicators
Priority to internal employees	Mean = 4.38	Internal talent sourcing was strongly endorsed
Correlation with succession planning	$r = .644$; $p < .001$; $n = 137$	Positive, statistically significant relationship
Regression coefficient in four-predictor model	$B = .400$; $\beta = .302$; $t = 4.028$; $p < .001$	Positive independent contribution after controls

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The correlation of r = .644 indicates a moderately strong positive association between talent acquisition practices and succession planning. Respondents who reported stronger recruitment and workforce-planning practices also tended to report stronger succession-planning outcomes. The result was statistically significant at $p < .001$, providing evidence against a null hypothesis of no linear association in the study sample.

Talent acquisition also remained statistically significant in the original project's multiple regression model (B = .400, $\beta = .302$, $t = 4.028$, $p < .001$), with the other three talent management predictors held constant. This strengthens the conclusion that talent acquisition was not merely associated with succession planning because it overlapped with the other measured practices. It does not, however, establish causality: both measures were collected in the same survey and may reflect shared perceptions or unmeasured organisational conditions.

The finding has a clear practical interpretation. Succession planning starts before a vacancy occurs. Workforce planning can identify critical positions, estimate future competency needs and guide recruitment priorities. Competency-based selection can then bring in people whose skills match role requirements and whose potential can be developed. Internal sourcing and fair internal mobility can also make existing talent more visible and support career progression. These processes should be governed by transparent criteria, documented role profiles and equal-opportunity principles rather than informal nomination alone.

The result is consistent with the source project's review of literature associating structured recruitment and selective hiring with stronger talent pools and leadership continuity. It also fits Human Capital Theory: organisations acquire the human capabilities on which future performance depends. From an RBV perspective, strategically recruiting and developing employees can build organisational capability that is not easily replaced. The result should nevertheless be understood in context. The high mean reflects respondents' perceptions at one organisation and does not independently verify recruitment records, the fairness of every hiring decision or actual successor performance.

- *Findings for Objective Two: Employee Training Practices*

The second objective was to determine the effect of employee training practices on succession planning at Amref Health Africa. The source project reported an overall training-practices mean of 4.14. Job rotation recorded the highest mean (4.38, SD = 0.678), followed by professional skills enhancement (mean = 4.21, SD = 0.872) and career development opportunities (mean = 4.10, SD = 0.919). Regular employee training and leadership mentorship programmes each recorded a mean of 4.00 (SD = 0.858). The overall pattern indicates generally favourable perceptions of training and development, with job rotation particularly well rated.

Table 2 Summary of Reported Employee Training Results

Indicator/result	Reported value	Interpretation
Overall employee training practices	Mean = 4.14; SD = 0.848	Generally favourable perceptions
Job rotation	Mean = 4.38; SD = 0.678	Highest-rated training indicator
Professional skills enhancement	Mean = 4.21; SD = 0.872	Strongly rated development practice
Career development opportunities	Mean = 4.10; SD = 0.919	Generally favourable assessment
Training and leadership mentorship	Mean = 4.00; SD = 0.858 (each)	Positive ratings, with scope to strengthen
Correlation with succession planning	r = .534; p < .001; n = 137	Positive, statistically significant relationship
Regression coefficient in four-predictor model	B = .148; β = .143; t = 2.037; p = .044	Positive independent contribution at 5% level

Employee training practices had a positive and statistically significant correlation with succession planning ($r = .534$, $p < .001$). This indicates that respondents who perceived training and development practices more favourably also tended to perceive succession planning more favourably. The relationship was positive but smaller than the reported talent acquisition correlation. That comparison should not be taken to mean training is unimportant; the two correlations describe different bivariate relationships and do not by themselves show which intervention would be more cost-effective.

In the original multiple regression model, employee training remained a statistically significant predictor after controlling for talent acquisition, performance management and employee retention (B = .148, $\beta = .143$, $t = 2.037$, $p = .044$). The coefficient was smaller than the coefficient for talent acquisition, but it was statistically significant at the conventional 5% level. The finding suggests that training contributed information about succession planning beyond the overlap shared with the other practices. Because $p = .044$ is close to .05, the estimate should be interpreted with appropriate caution and not as evidence of a large effect.

Job rotation's high rating is important because it can expose employees to different teams, systems and operational demands. Such experience may help employees develop a broader understanding of the organisation and practise decision-making outside their usual responsibilities. Professional skills enhancement and career development were also rated favourably, suggesting that respondents recognised opportunities to improve capability and progress. However, regular training and leadership mentorship had the lowest means among the listed training indicators. Although the ratings remained positive, this pattern identifies an opportunity to make structured training and mentoring more consistent and explicitly connected to future roles.

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These results align with Human Capital Theory, which treats training as an investment in employee knowledge and capability. They are also consistent with the literature summarised in the source project, including studies of training as a succession-management tool and research identifying mentoring, job rotation and experiential learning as methods for preparing potential successors. A practical implication is that attendance at a course should not be treated as sufficient evidence of readiness. Development should be connected to role-specific competencies, observed application, feedback, coaching and a subsequent readiness assessment.

- *Joint Interpretation of the Two Objectives*

The two objectives point to complementary rather than interchangeable practices. Talent acquisition helps determine who enters the organisation and whether the organisation has access to the competencies it needs. Employee training develops and broadens the capabilities of employees after entry. Recruitment without development may produce a workforce that meets immediate requirements but lacks preparation for future roles. Training without workforce planning may build skills that are not aligned to critical vacancies or future organisational needs. Integrating the two practices is therefore more defensible than treating them as separate HR activities.

The original project's regression results provide additional context: talent acquisition ($\beta = .302$, $p < .001$) and employee training ($\beta = .143$, $p = .044$) both made statistically significant positive contributions in a model that included four talent management practices. The model as a whole reportedly explained 59.0% of the variation in succession planning ($R^2 = .590$; adjusted $R^2 = .578$). This overall R^2 belongs to the full four-predictor model and must not be attributed to the two variables alone. The remaining variation may reflect other organisational, employee or external factors that were not included in the model.

Taken together, the evidence supports the conclusion that succession planning at Amref Health Africa is positively associated with both talent acquisition and employee training. The data do not establish that either practice independently causes improved leadership continuity, and they do not establish the actual rate at which trained or recruited employees later assumed critical roles. Such conclusions would require longitudinal data, documented succession outcomes and ideally multiple sources of evidence.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first objective found that talent acquisition practices were positively and significantly associated with succession planning at Amref Health Africa ($r = .644$, $p < .001$). The overall talent acquisition mean was 4.18, with workforce planning and priority to internal employees among the highest-rated indicators. Talent acquisition also remained a significant positive predictor in the original four-predictor regression model ($B = .400$, $\beta = .302$, $p < .001$). These results support aligning recruitment and selection with long-term workforce requirements and making internal talent visible through transparent processes.

The second objective found that employee training practices were positively and significantly associated with succession planning ($r = .534$, $p < .001$). The overall training mean was 4.14. Job rotation was the highest-rated indicator, while regular training and leadership mentorship had comparatively lower—though still favourable ratings. Employee training remained a significant positive predictor in the full model ($B = .148$, $\beta = .143$, $p = .044$). The results support a structured development pathway that connects training opportunities to the competencies required for future roles.

- *Recommendations for Practice*

First, Amref Health Africa should maintain a workforce plan identifying critical leadership and specialist roles, likely vacancy risks and the competencies required for each role. Recruitment plans and job descriptions should be reviewed against this plan so that talent acquisition addresses both current programme needs and future succession requirements. Second, the organisation should strengthen transparent, competency-based recruitment and document how selection criteria relate to role requirements. Internal candidates should have fair access to opportunities, and internal recruitment should be balanced with external recruitment where specialist skills or new perspectives are required. Potential successors should not be selected solely on informal reputation; decisions should use evidence, clear criteria and appropriate safeguards against bias.

Third, employee development plans should be linked to succession requirements. For employees identified as potential successors, plans may combine formal training, mentoring, coaching, job rotation, acting assignments and cross-functional projects. Development should include measurable competencies, timelines, accountable supervisors and reviews of progress. Fourth, the organisation should review the comparatively lower ratings for regular training and leadership mentorship. A structured mentoring programme, supported by trained mentors and protected time, could help transfer tacit knowledge and provide practical guidance. Training needs should be reviewed periodically and evaluated through demonstrated skill application and readiness assessments rather than course attendance alone.

Fifth, talent acquisition and training data should be integrated into a succession dashboard. Useful indicators include the proportion of critical roles with at least one identified and development-supported successor, completion of development plans, internal fill rates for critical vacancies, competency gaps closed, mentoring participation and documented knowledge-transfer arrangements. Results should be reviewed periodically by HR and senior leadership.

- *Contribution to Theory and Policy*

The findings are consistent with Human Capital Theory because recruitment and employee development were associated with succession planning. They also align with the Resource-Based View by emphasising the strategic

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importance of recruiting and developing employees who can sustain organisational capability. For practice and policy, the results suggest that NGO workforce planning should be treated as part of organisational continuity and risk management, rather than as a stand-alone administrative function. Any policy should preserve transparent selection, equal opportunity, data privacy and appropriate employee consultation.

- *Areas for Further Research*

Future research could use longitudinal designs to examine whether employees identified through recruitment and development systems subsequently fill critical roles and perform effectively. Comparative studies across several Kenyan NGOs could assess whether the relationships observed at Amref Health Africa also occur in smaller organisations or those with different funding structures. Further work could investigate whether mentoring quality, training transfer, leadership support, organisational culture and donor funding stability moderate the relationships. Qualitative interviews with employees, line managers and HR practitioners could also explain why mentorship and routine training received lower ratings than job rotation.

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