

Workforce Capacity Building and Competency Development in The Department of Agrarian Reform in Masbate

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Abstract

This study examined workforce capacity building and competency development initiatives in the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) in Masbate to assess their implementation, level, and relationship with employees' demographic profiles. Anchored on Human Capital Theory, Competency-Based Theory, and Systems Theory, the study employed a descriptive-survey research design. Data were collected from forty DAR employees using a structured questionnaire covering demographic characteristics and key dimensions of workforce development, including training, skills enhancement, leadership development, performance management, knowledge management, career development, values formation, and digital competencies. Statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, and Pearson correlation were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that respondents were predominantly young, female, bachelor's degree holders with moderate work experience. Workforce capacity building and competency development initiatives were generally implemented and rated as "Agree" and "High," indicating effective institutional practices. Strong areas included training relevance, continuous skills improvement, leadership capacity, performance evaluation, knowledge utilization, employee retention, ethical practices, and digital technology adoption. However, some aspects such as equal access to training, structured leadership preparation, and system updates require further enhancement. The analysis showed a weak positive but not statistically significant relationship between respondents' demographic profiles and their assessment of workforce development initiatives, suggesting consistent perceptions across employee groups. The study concludes that DAR effectively implements workforce development initiatives that contribute to employee competence and organizational performance. It recommends strengthening training specificity, performance systems, knowledge-sharing mechanisms, career pathways, ethical reinforcement, and digital capacity development. This study aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by promoting continuous learning, workforce productivity, and effective public governance. It contributes to institutional and socio-economic sustainability by enhancing public sector capacity, improving service delivery, and supporting long-term organizational resilience.

Keywords: Capacity Building, Competency Development, Department of Agrarian Reform, Human Resource Development, Leadership Development, Performance Management, Public Sector, Training and Development

1. Introduction

Workforce capacity building and competency development are critical for enhancing public sector performance amid increasing administrative complexity, technological change, and service demands. Global and local literature consistently highlight that systematic human resource development—through training, leadership, performance management, and digital competencies—improves employee effectiveness and institutional outcomes. In the Philippine context, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) plays a vital role in rural development, requiring a highly competent workforce. Despite extensive literature, limited studies assess workforce capacity building comprehensively within DAR, particularly in relation to employee profiles and multiple competency dimensions. This study addresses this gap by examining workforce capacity building and competency development initiatives in DAR Masbate to inform policy and institutional improvement.

1.1 Workforce Capacity Building and Competency Development among DAR Employees

Workforce capacity building and competency development are essential priorities in public sector organizations facing complex governance demands and rapid technological change. Public institutions that invest in skills development, performance management, and competency-based systems demonstrate higher efficiency and resilience (OECD, 2021), while strengthening human capital improves governance and policy implementation (World Bank, 2020). Modern organizations require employees with technical, cognitive, and interpersonal competencies to adapt to evolving roles (Noe, Clarke, and Klein, 2021). Competency-based frameworks align workforce capabilities with organizational and national goals (OECD, 2022), while institutional capacity, leadership, and accountability are crucial for effective service delivery

(UNDP, 2021). Competency-driven human resource systems further enhance organizational performance (Brewster, Chung, and Sparrow, 2022). In the Philippines, the Department of Agrarian Reform operates within a complex mandate involving land redistribution and rural development, requiring strong technical and leadership competencies. Competency-based human resource practices improve employee performance and service quality (Kim and Park, 2023), while leadership and motivation sustain workforce engagement (Rainey and Chun, 2023). Investments in skills, leadership, and career development are vital for institutional transformation (ILO, 2024). Reforms in training, evaluation, and knowledge systems strengthen public sector capacity (OECD, 2024) and contribute to inclusive growth (World Bank, 2025).

1.2 Training, Skills, Leadership, and Digital Competency Development in DAR: Insights from Literature

Literature emphasizes that workforce capacity building requires integrated human resource strategies. Training, leadership development, and performance systems enhance competencies and organizational effectiveness (Berman et al., 2020; Van der Meer et al., 2020). Competency frameworks improve accountability and align skills with job requirements (Hondegheem and Vandermeulen, 2021), while motivation and values formation strengthen engagement in learning. Leadership development and career planning sustain workforce competencies and organizational adaptability (Day et al., 2022; Garavan et al., 2022). Digital human resource systems and continuous feedback mechanisms support ongoing learning and performance improvement (Bondarouk and Brewster, 2023; Pulakos et al., 2023). Collaborative learning and knowledge sharing further enhance institutional capacity (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2025). Local studies reinforce these findings, showing that competency enhancement improves productivity and service delivery (Mamino-Bayot and Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2025; Estrella, 2024; Reyes et al., 2025). Training needs assessments and structured programs address gaps in technical, leadership, and soft skills (University of the Philippines Manila, 2024; Besana, Palmares, and Diocos, 2025; Sanchez and Pascual, 2025). Digital competencies and policy-driven workforce strategies are also critical (Villaseñor, 2024; NTESDP, 2023–2028; PIDS, 2025; Civil Service Commission, 2025). Overall, workforce capacity building is a multidimensional process involving training, leadership, performance systems, ethical values, and digital competencies, all aligned with organizational goals and policy frameworks.

1.3 Workforce Development Context of DAR in Masbate: Local, National, and Global Perspectives

Globally, workforce development is recognized as essential for effective governance and service delivery, with reforms focusing on skills alignment, digital transformation, and inclusive growth (OECD, 2025; World Bank, 2025). International studies show that training, competency frameworks, and evaluation systems enhance public sector performance (Nor, 2025; Frost, 2025). In the Philippines, workforce capacity building is supported by national policies such as TESDA's National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan (2023–2028) and Civil Service Commission initiatives promoting competency-based systems. Studies highlight the importance of training, soft skills, and demographic factors in influencing employee performance (Badeo et al., 2024; Dulnuan, 2025; Quinto, Maninang, and Bonifacio, 2025). At the local level, the study focuses on DAR in Masbate, a province with diverse socio-economic and geographic characteristics. DAR plays a central role in agrarian reform, which has evolved historically from colonial land systems to modern policies such as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (RA 6657). The agency remains critical in promoting equitable land distribution, rural development, and social justice, requiring a competent and adaptive workforce.

1.4 Theoretical Foundations of Workforce Capacity Building and Competency Development in DAR

This study is anchored on Human Capital Theory, Competency-Based Theory, and Systems Theory. Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) explains that investment in education and training enhances employee productivity and organizational performance. Competency-Based Theory (Boyatzis, 1982) emphasizes aligning employee competencies with job requirements to achieve effective performance. Systems Theory (Katz and Kahn, 1978) views organizations as interconnected systems where workforce development components collectively influence outcomes. Together, these theories explain that workforce capacity building in DAR results from the integration of training, competency alignment, and organizational systems, leading to improved employee competence and institutional effectiveness.

1.5 Gaps in Assessing Workforce Capacity Building and Competency Development in DAR Employees

Existing studies largely examine workforce development components independently and focus on general public sector or private organizations. There is limited empirical research specifically assessing workforce capacity building and competency development in the Department of Agrarian Reform. Notably, gaps exist in the comprehensive evaluation of training programs, technical skills, leadership development, performance systems, knowledge management, career planning, values formation, and digital competencies within a single institutional context. Additionally, the relationship between employee demographic profiles and perceptions of these initiatives remains underexplored. This study addresses these gaps by providing a holistic assessment of workforce capacity building and competency development in DAR Masbate, generating evidence for improving human resource strategies and institutional performance.

1.6 Workforce Capacity Building in DAR and Its Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This study aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals. It supports SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by enhancing workforce competencies that improve productivity and institutional effectiveness. It contributes to SDG 4

(Quality Education) through continuous learning, training, and professional development initiatives. It also aligns with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by strengthening public sector capacity and governance through competency-based human resource systems. By focusing on workforce development in DAR, the study contributes to sustainable public service delivery and inclusive rural development.

1.7 Multidisciplinary Sustainability Importance of Workforce Capacity Building in DAR

The study contributes to socio-economic and institutional sustainability by improving workforce competencies that support effective governance and rural development. It enhances public administration sustainability by informing competency-based human resource policies and training systems. It also supports educational sustainability through continuous professional development, technological sustainability through digital competency enhancement, and community sustainability by strengthening DAR's capacity to deliver agrarian reform services. Overall, the study provides multidisciplinary value by linking workforce development to improved service delivery, policy effectiveness, and long-term institutional resilience.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-survey research design to address the research problems. This design was used to gather and analyze relevant information regarding workforce capacity building and competency development initiatives in the Department of Agrarian Reform in Masbate City. The study focused on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the implemented workforce capacity building and competency development initiatives, the level of these initiatives as assessed by the respondents, and the relationship between respondents' profiles and their assessments. The collected data were analyzed, tabulated, and interpreted accordingly.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the Department of Agrarian Reform located in Masbate City, Province of Masbate.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were employees of the Department of Agrarian Reform in Masbate City. A total of forty employees participated in the study.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study utilized convenience sampling to select respondents based on their availability and willingness to participate during the data collection period. This approach allowed efficient data gathering given time and resource limitations, while still providing relevant insights from individuals directly involved in the organization. Although it does not ensure full representativeness, it was considered appropriate for the study's objectives.

2.5 Research Instrument

The primary data collection tool was a survey questionnaire designed to assess workforce capacity building and competency development initiatives in the Department of Agrarian Reform. The instrument consisted of two parts: the first part gathered demographic information such as age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, position, and length of service, while the second part assessed workforce capacity building and competency development in terms of training and development programs, skills enhancement and technical competencies, leadership and management development, performance management and evaluation, knowledge management and learning systems, career development and succession planning, values formation and professional ethics, and technology and digital competencies. It also measured the level of these initiatives and examined the relationship between respondents' profiles and their assessments. The questionnaire used Likert-scale items to quantify perceptions and experiences. To ensure validity, the instrument was reviewed by experts in educational research, while reliability was established through pilot testing and the use of statistical measures such as Cronbach's alpha to determine internal consistency. These procedures ensured that the instrument produced accurate and dependable data.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The study followed a systematic procedure that included the development and approval of the research title and proposal, followed by the design and validation of the research instrument. Permission to conduct the study was obtained through a formal letter submitted to the Office-in-Charge of the Department of Agrarian Reform in Masbate. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents with clear instructions, and sufficient time was provided for completion before retrieval. The collected data were then recorded, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted. The findings were used to draw conclusions and formulate recommendations, after which the manuscript underwent revision and final preparation for defense.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The study employed frequency count and percentage to describe the demographic profile of the respondents. Mean was used to determine the numerical representation of workforce capacity building and competency development initiatives and their level as assessed by the respondents. Pearson correlation was utilized to examine the significant relationship between respondents' profiles and their assessment of workforce capacity building and competency development. These statistical tools enabled systematic analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Workforce Capacity Building and Competency Development Findings

3.1.1 Demographic Profile of DAR Employees

The results show that the majority of respondents were aged 21–30 years (50.00%), followed by 31–40 years (25.00%), while smaller proportions were aged 41–50 and 51 and above (12.50% each). In terms of sex, most respondents were female (72.50%) compared to males (27.50%). Civil status was evenly distributed between single and married employees (50.00% each). Most respondents held a bachelor's degree (85.00%), with some having master's degrees (10.00%) and Juris Doctor degrees (5.00%). In terms of position, half of the respondents were Agrarian Reform Program Technologists (50.00%), with others distributed across administrative and supervisory roles. Regarding length of service, most employees had 6–10 years (40.00%), followed by 3–5 years (25.00%) and shorter or longer tenures. These findings indicate a relatively young, predominantly female, and well-educated workforce with moderate experience levels. The diversity in age and tenure suggests a balance between new and experienced employees, supporting knowledge sharing and collaboration. The results align with Dulnuan (2025), who found that demographic factors such as age influence competency levels and engagement in development activities, and with Becker (1964), emphasizing the role of education in enhancing productivity.

3.1.2 Implementation of Training and Development Programs

The results show that respondents generally agreed that training and development programs were implemented, with an overall weighted mean of 3.03. High ratings were given to encouraging participation and improving competence, while lower ratings were observed in providing equal access to training and aligning programs with job functions. This indicates that while training initiatives are present and contribute to workforce development, improvements are needed to ensure inclusivity and alignment with employee roles. The findings support Nor (2025), who emphasized that structured training programs enhance civil servants' performance and competency development.

3.1.3 Implementation of Skills Enhancement and Technical Competencies

The results reveal that respondents agreed on the implementation of skills enhancement initiatives, with an overall mean of 3.03. Strong areas included continuous skills improvement and efficiency through training, while weaker areas involved skills upgrading opportunities and addressing skill gaps. This suggests that technical competency development is supported but requires further strengthening in targeted training and gap identification. The findings are consistent with MacKay et al. (2024), who reported that competency-based training enhances technical adaptability and efficiency.

3.1.4 Implementation of Leadership and Management Development

The results indicate that leadership and management initiatives were agreed upon by respondents, with an overall mean of 2.86. Stronger areas included decision-making and ethical leadership, while weaker aspects involved formal leadership programs and preparation for supervisory roles. This implies that leadership development exists but requires expansion and stronger institutional support. The findings align with Day et al. (2022), who emphasized that leadership training enhances managerial competence and organizational effectiveness.

3.1.5 Implementation of Performance Management and Evaluation

The results show that performance management practices were effectively implemented, with an overall mean of 3.14. Respondents strongly agreed on the presence of clear evaluation systems and measurable standards, while lower ratings were given to recognition and motivation aspects. This indicates strong institutional performance systems, although improvements in feedback and recognition are needed. The findings support Frost (2025), who highlighted that systematic evaluation enhances competency development and performance outcomes.

3.1.6 Implementation of Knowledge Management and Learning Systems

The results reveal that respondents agreed on the implementation of knowledge management systems, with an overall mean of 3.07. Strengths included access to information and documentation of best practices, while weaker areas involved information exchange across units. This suggests that knowledge systems support learning and service delivery but require improved coordination and accessibility. The findings align with Frontiers in Public Health (2024), emphasizing that structured knowledge systems enhance organizational learning and workforce planning.

3.1.7 Implementation of Career Development and Succession Planning

The results indicate that career development initiatives were generally implemented, with an overall mean of 2.98. Strong areas included employee retention and career growth opportunities, while weaker aspects involved clear career paths and succession planning strategies. This implies that career development exists but needs clearer structure and communication to strengthen workforce continuity. The findings support OECD (2025), which highlighted the importance of clear career pathways in sustaining workforce capacity.

3.1.8 Implementation of Values Formation and Professional Ethics

The results show that respondents agreed, and in some cases strongly agreed, on values formation initiatives, with an overall mean of 3.24. Strong emphasis was placed on professionalism, integrity, and ethical decision-making, while addressing unethical behavior received relatively lower ratings. This indicates a strong ethical culture within the organization, though continuous reinforcement is needed. The findings align with Mhaske et al. (2025), who emphasized the role of ethical orientation in developing a future-ready workforce.

3.1.9 Implementation of Technology and Digital Competencies

The results reveal that digital competency initiatives were implemented, with an overall mean of 3.16. Respondents strongly agreed on encouraging digital technology use, while lower ratings were given to formal training and system updates. This suggests that digital adoption is evident but requires more structured training and system improvements. The findings are supported by Van der Meer et al. (2020), who emphasized the importance of aligning professional development with organizational goals to enhance competency growth.

3.2 Level of Workforce Capacity Building and Competency Development

3.2.1 Level of Training and Development Programs

The results indicate a high level of training implementation, with an overall mean of 3.06. Strong areas included relevance to work tasks and competence improvement, while equal access to training received lower ratings. This suggests effective training systems that enhance workforce competence, though inclusivity and responsiveness to needs require improvement. This finding supports Nor (2025), emphasizing the role of structured training in improving performance.

3.2.2 Level of Skills Enhancement and Technical Competencies

The results show a high level of implementation, with an overall mean of 3.04. Continuous improvement and efficiency were highly rated, while technical expertise strengthening showed relatively lower emphasis. This indicates strong competency development but highlights the need for sustained skill upgrading. The findings align with MacKay et al. (2024).

3.2.3 Level of Leadership and Management Development

The results indicate a high level of leadership development, with an overall mean of 2.95. Strengths included leadership capacity building, while preparation for supervisory roles was weaker. This suggests that leadership systems exist but require enhancement in succession readiness. The findings support Day et al. (2022).

3.2.4 Level of Performance Management and Evaluation

The results show a high level of implementation, with an overall mean of 3.19. Strong performance assessments and fairness were evident, while motivation aspects were lower. This indicates effective performance systems that support accountability and development. The findings align with Frost (2025).

3.2.5 Level of Knowledge Management and Learning Systems

The results indicate a high level of implementation, with an overall mean of 3.12. Strengths included knowledge use and learning culture, while coordination across units needs improvement. This suggests effective knowledge systems that support learning and service delivery. The findings align with Frontiers in Public Health (2024).

3.2.6 Level of Career Development and Succession Planning

The results show a high level of implementation, with an overall mean of 3.04. Employee retention and growth were strong, while leadership preparation requires improvement. This indicates positive career development practices with opportunities for strengthening succession planning. The findings support Garavan et al. (2022).

3.2.7 Level of Values Formation and Professional Ethics

The results indicate a high level of ethical practices, with an overall mean of 3.22. Integrity and accountability were emphasized, while sustaining ethical culture requires continued effort. This suggests a strong ethical foundation within the organization. The findings align with Mhaske et al. (2025).

3.2.8 Level of Technology and Digital Competencies

The results show a high level of digital competency implementation, with an overall mean of 3.12, and very high encouragement of digital technology use. This indicates strong digital adoption, though training and system updates require further attention. The findings align with Mhaske et al. (2025).

3.3 Relationship Between Respondents' Profile and Their Assessment

The results show a computed Pearson r-value of 0.29, indicating a weak positive relationship between respondents' profile and their assessment of workforce capacity building and competency development. However, since this value is lower than the critical value at the 0.05 level of significance, the relationship is not statistically significant. This implies that demographic characteristics such as age, position, and length of service do not significantly influence employees' perceptions of workforce development initiatives. The consistency of responses suggests equitable implementation of programs across different employee groups.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study revealed that the Department of Agrarian Reform employees in Masbate are predominantly young, female, bachelor's degree holders, and moderately experienced, with most occupying technical positions. Workforce capacity building and competency development initiatives across training, skills enhancement, leadership development, performance management, knowledge management, career development, values formation, and digital competencies were generally implemented and rated as "Agree" and "High," indicating effective institutional efforts in strengthening employee competence and organizational performance. Key strengths included training relevance, continuous skills improvement, leadership capacity, performance evaluation, knowledge utilization, employee retention, ethical practices, and digital technology use. Furthermore, the findings showed that there is a weak positive but not statistically significant relationship between respondents' demographic profile and their assessment of these initiatives, indicating that perceptions of workforce development programs are consistent regardless of demographic differences.

The Department of Agrarian Reform should continue enhancing training programs by providing more job-specific, hands-on, and leadership-oriented activities to further improve employee competencies. Performance management systems and knowledge-sharing platforms should be strengthened to ensure alignment between evaluation and development while promoting organizational learning. Clear career pathways and structured succession planning should be established to support employee growth and leadership readiness. Initiatives that promote integrity, professionalism, and ethical decision-making should be sustained to maintain a values-driven organizational culture. Additionally, digital competencies should be further developed through improved access to updated tools, continuous training, and integration of technology into daily operations to enhance efficiency and productivity.

The study was limited to employees of the Department of Agrarian Reform in Masbate and relied on convenience sampling and self-reported data, which may not fully represent the entire organization or other agencies. It focused only on current workforce capacity building and competency development initiatives without comparing them to other institutions or examining long-term outcomes, thereby limiting the generalizability and scope of the findings.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study followed standard research procedures consistent with its methodology, including obtaining permission from the appropriate office before data collection, administering questionnaires with clear instructions, and ensuring systematic handling, analysis, and reporting of data.

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