



HUMAN RESOURCE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVED EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS: SOME CRITICAL POLICY OPTIONS

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Abstract

Training and development of staff build their capacities to sustain their various organizations. Employee training plays a vital role in improving performance as well as increasing productivity which places organizations in better positions to face competitions. It is noted that for organizations to do well, it must engage its staff in one form of training and development program or the other. Public organizations in Nigeria however are performing poorly due to poor or total lack of training and development programs of staff. In tat regard, training and development of staff in our public organizations is a critical policy option and crucial. This paper however discusses other critical policy options that will aid or enhance employee performance and productivity in public sector organizations in Nigeria.

Keywords: Training, Development, Human resources, Public Sector organizations, Policy options.

Introduction

Public organizations in Nigeria are facing difficulties that are dire and sometimes in danger of extinction due to bad performance. The economy is in recession today due to low production and general poor performance of companies both public and private. This is invariably a culmination of poor or total lack of training and development programs of staff that could have built their capacity to sustain their various organizations and the nation's economy. Employees are major assets of any organization and the active role they play towards an organization's success cannot be underestimated (Nassazi, 2013, p.1). Organizations are facing increased competition due to globalization, changes in technology, political and economic environments (Evans, Pucik and Barsoux, 2012, p. 32) and therefore training and developing employees by these organizations are the sure way to guaranteeing competitive advantage. According to Edralin (2004) Lynton & Pareek (2000) and Vemic (2007), the survival of any organization in the competitive society lies in its ability to train its human resource to be creative, innovative, inventive, which will invariably enhance performance and increase competitive advantage.

Training and development is an aspect of human resource practices that help in enhancing employees' skills, knowledge and competence capable of improving employees' ability to perform more effectively (Palo & Padhi, 2003). Training and development play a vital role in the effectiveness of an organization (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). It is one of the most pervasive techniques for improving employees' performance, enhancing organization productivity in the work place (Gupta & Bostrom, 2006). Employees are the indispensable asset and key element of gaining competitive advantage of any organization and training is essential tool for its actualization (Houger, 2006).

Public sector organizations in Nigeria however have not tapped into the benefits of training and development. This has direct consequences of poor work attitude, poor performance and low productivity. The general objective of this paper therefore, is to examine the role of training and development in relation to improved employee performance and advance some critical policy options that can help buttress employee performance in Nigeria public organizations. The specific objectives are to (i) assess the nexus between human resource training and development and employee performance and, (ii) propose policy options for an improved employee performance in public sector organizations in Nigeria. The methodology for the study is the critical mode of research.

Conceptual Clarification

Training and development involves training and developing workforces and managers (Briscoe, 1995). Training and development are often used to close the gap between current performances and expected future performance (Nassazi, 2013, p. 16). And where performance is involved, human resource has a stake. In that regards, Well & Woodall (2005) opine that training and development falls under HRD (Human Resource Development) function which has been argued to be an important function of HRM (Human Resource Management). Training is a learning activity directed towards the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills for the purpose of an occupation or task (Ampomah, 2016). Cole (2002) analyzed this assertion by writing that the focus of training is to have efficiency and safety in the operation of particular machine or equipment or efficiency in the overall task or job of an employee. According to McGhee (1996) training therefore can be explained as a planned and systematic effort by management to gear employees towards being focused at attaining organizational goals. In that direction, the management makes effort to provide employees with opportunities to acquire job-related skills, attitudes and knowledge.

Krietner (1995) conceptualizes development as a systematic process of training and growth by which individuals gain and apply knowledge, skills and attitude to manage work organizations effectively. Development in the perspective of Ampomah (2016) examines the current environment, the present state, and helps people on a team, in a department and as part of an institution identify effective strategies for improving performance. In some situations, there may not be anything “wrong” at the present time, the group or manager may simply be seeking ways to continue to develop and enhance existing relationships and job performance (Ampomah, 2016). The author concludes by stating that in other situations, there may be an identifiable issue or problem that needs to be addressed; the development process aims to find ideas and solutions that can effectively return the group to a state of high performance. Development therefore, implies creating and sustaining change (Ampomah, 2016).

In his contribution Noe (2005) states that training and development belongs to the field of human resource management. Training and development, he postulates is the field concerned with organizational activity with the aim of bettering the performance of employees. Training and development are often used interchangeably. While training is the proactive means for developing skills and expertise to prevent problems from arising and can also be an effective tool in addressing any skills or performance gaps among staff, development creates solutions to workplace issues before they become a concern or after they become a concern (Ampomah, 2016). The two variables therefore deal with identifying problems, providing skills to solve the problems and filling the gaps created by shortfall in performance.

Training and development therefore according to Ampomah (2016) describes the formal, ongoing efforts that are made within organizations to improve the performance and self-fulfillment of their employees through a variety of educational methods and programmes. Training denotes planned activities to improve the current employee situation of work (Shem, 2005) while development is the ability to grow either through learning experiences or through self-directed learning (Armstrong, 2009). For Banfield and Kay (2008) development covers a wide range of learning experiences including mentoring and coaching. Some researchers have argued that training encompasses a tactical approach to acquisition of skills, knowledge, rules, concepts or attitude that will result to improved performance (Goldstein & Ford, 2001; Sadler-Smith, 2006). Any approach used for training and development must be effective for result to evolve. In that regard, Bagul (2011, p. 98) emphasized that “effectiveness in training and development is an essential ingredient for the success of every organization and concerns increasing, improving, enhancing and modifying employees’ skills, abilities, capabilities and knowledge”.

In general, training can be seen as a systematic and well planned technique to learning, skills, attitude and ability. Training involves aid in adjusting to work environment which is designed to increase the capacity of individual or group

contributing to the realization of organizational objectives (Babaita, 2010). On the other hand, development is seen as the growth or realization of the potentials and abilities of individuals through the availability of learning and educational experiences (Armstrong, 2009; Marchinton & Wilkinson, 2008). Armstrong (2009) specifically sees development as a form of learning activities that prepare people to exercise wider responsibilities. Development therefore occurs as a result of training, learning, education and other workplace based human improvement activities (Ugorji et al, 2014). Development from this conceptual analysis is the growth in human capacity of an employee gotten through training, knowledge and skill accumulation. Ugorji et al (2014) views development therefore as those learning opportunities that are designed to assist employees to grow especially in the long run. Effectiveness of development of human resources the authors continue depends on the ambition of organizations towards training, learning and education and the individual's personal drive.

From our discussion so far, it is clear that there exist a distinction between training and development. Ugorji et al (2014) drew a sharp contrast between the two variables. They viewed training as short-term while development is long-term. They continued that development is achieved after a series of training and learning as well as education has taken place. In a short sentence, Ugorji et al (2014) opine that training leads to development.

Concept of Performance Measurement

Performance is measured by the output of employees resulting from both training and development. Performance measurement according to United States Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) (N.D) is a fundamental building block of total quality management (TQM) and a total quality organization. Historically according to DTI, organizations have always measured performance in some way through the financial performance. However, it continues that traditional performance will measure based on improvements seen by customers as well as by the results delivered to other stakeholders, such as shareholders. Measurement can mean appraisal which means evaluation of performance of the employees working in the organization (Khan, 2015). Appraisal or measurement is one of the most mishandled aspects of management. It has also been said to be one of the most problematic components of human resource management and can be a source of tension between employees and supervisors (Steers and Black in Khan, 2015). No organization can do without measuring performance of staff especially when much investment has been put into training and development of those staff. Performance measurement is therefore a sine qua non in organizations as it regularly measures outcomes, results, effectiveness and efficiency of staff.

Outcomes of Training and Development

Every organization intends to achieve growth. Organizational growth and development is a result of efforts put by management towards enhancing organizational resources especially human resources. In that line, Nassazi (2013) asserts that during the development of organizations, employee training plays a vital role in improving performance as well as increasing productivity. This in turn "leads to placing organizations in the better positions to face competitive and stay at the top" (Nassazi, 2013, p. 29). Performance improvement of employees is the major outcome of training and development of employees and the difference between an organization that does well and the ones that are lagging behind. Wright & Geroy (2001) supported the above assertion by noting that employee competences change through effective training programs. It improves therefore not only the overall performance of the employees to effectively perform their current jobs but also enhances the knowledge skills and attitude of the works necessary for the future job, thus contributing to superior organizational performance (Nassazi, 2013, p. 29).

Other literature studied have different angles to the outcomes of training and development of employees. Swart et al (2005) led in this perspective by stating that training is a means of dealing with skills deficits and performance gaps. These authors elaborated by stating that training intervention occurs for the stake of developing particular skills and moulding their knowledge, attitudes and skills to meet organizational needs. According to Wright & Geroy (2001) outcome of training and development of employees lie strongly in the generation of competencies for the employees to face the future commitments of their organizations. Through training, "the employee competencies are developed and enable them to implement the job related work efficiently, and achieve firm objectives in a competitive manner" (Wright & Geroy in Nassazi, 2013, p. 30). Further still, Pigors & Myers (1989) explained that dissatisfaction, complaints or delinquencies like absenteeism and turnover can be greatly reduced when employees are put through training. Employee training and development programmes that range from certification to education reimbursement have a certain cost to the organization that can easily be considered a benefit to the employee (Kum et al, 2014). When organizations invest huge sums of money

on developing employees, the employer and the employee enjoy proportionate levels of benefits. In that regard, Kum et al (2014) opine that such awareness or development, on the part of the employee can lead to job satisfaction and on the part of the employer, greater loyalty by the employee. Taylor (2000) added another dimension to the benefits or outcomes by stating that training and development can be added to the employees' resumes and are a big ticket items in terms of compensation plans.

Frost et al (2000) contributed by suggesting that employee development limits organizational liability. Writing in a research paper by Kum et al (2014, p. 75) Frost and his team wrote that "Certain jobs require training and certification in order for an employee to successfully execute the minimum job requirements related to that position. The proper documentation of employee development before or during the employee's completion of their job cannot only help follow and develop training, but also limits liability". Frost et al (2000) again made it clear that although employee training and development will almost never completely protect an employer from legal liabilities in case of injuries or unfortunate circumstances, training and certification can hopefully reduce legal costs and reputation damage for the organization.

Training and Development and Nigeria Public Sector Organizations

The importance of training and development is more obvious given the growing complexity of the work environment, the rapid change in organizations and advancement in technology, among other things. Training and development help to ensure that organizational members possess the knowledge and skills they need to perform their jobs effectively, take on new responsibilities, and adapt to changing conditions (Jones, George & Hill, 2000). It is further argued that training helps in improvement of quality of workers, productivity, morale, management succession, business development and profitability (Okotoni & Erero, 2005). Despite the litany of gains of training and development, empirical studies show that the experience of manpower training and development in Nigeria public service has been grossly inadequate. Okotoni & Erero (2005) found out that Nigeria public service has a general guiding principle on training that is excellent in theory but problematic in practical aspect. In practice they enthused, deployment of personnel in the various ministries has not always taken into consideration their areas of specialization and expertise. There are officers that are sponsored for training based on their connection to some powerful and influential individuals in the service or/and in the society.

Induction courses which are organized for newly recruited staff is an element of training in public service. Induction helps to introduce the new recruits into their new environment and their new job schedules. However, Okotoni & Erero (2005) discovered that organizing induction courses for newly recruited officers in public service is hardly adhered to. The officers in that sense are set out to work in the wrong footing with its consequences. According to guidelines for training in the public service, there is need for the service to provide necessary equipment, materials and facilities for trained officers to perform as trained. In practical terms, Okotoni & Erero (2005) also found out that these are grossly lacking in most ministries and departments. Where some of the equipment and materials are available they observed, they are in dilapidated conditions.

Funding of training and development in public service has become an issue. Government has a funding policy where each ministry or extra-ministerial department is enjoined to make annual recurrent budgetary provision of a sum equal to at least 20 percent of its personnel costs for training and staff development (Okotoni & Erero, 2005). However, these are not adhered to or scantily adhered to. Again, most of the training schools and centres established by government are poorly funded which renders them impotent to effectively perform their functions (Okotoni & Erero, 2005). There is also the issue of poor staffing for most of the public service training centres (Okotoni & Erero, 2005). They discovered that the quality of the staff available in these training schools will to a large extent determine the quality of training given to the personnel that are sent there for training.

There is also poor state of training facilities in most of the public service training centres. Again, Okotoni & Erero (2005) found out that most of these training centres do not have modern training facilities such as computers, laboratories, libraries, vehicles. There is also evidence of the use of quack consultants by the service and high cost of training (Okotoni & Erero, 2005). They stated that the use of quack consultants by government has grossly affected the quality of training by public servants. In many instances, government prefers to contract training programmes to party loyalists rather than competent and experienced specialists in the higher institutions and consulting firms. On the other hand, Okotoni & Erero (2005) discovered that high cost of training has been occasioned by lack of honesty and transparency. The cost of bribe is

often built into the training costs when signing the contract with consultants. The result is spiraling cost of governance and reduction in money to be used for genuine social services.

Nexus between Human Resource Training and Development and Employee Performance

Training and development have assumed a very important place in the existence of organizations. According to Vinesh (2014) training and career development are very vital in any organization that aims at progressing. This according to him includes decision making, thinking creatively and managing people. Training and development aid performance of employees in the sense that:

- Help in addressing employee weaknesses
- Improvement in worker performance
- Consistency in duty performance
- Ensuring worker satisfaction
- Increased productivity
- Improved quality of service and products
- Reduced cost
- Reduction in supervision (Vinesh, 2014, p. 215).

Vinesh (2014) also highlighted more nexus between training and development and performance in organizations. He opined that training and development is an essential part of every business because the value and potential of workers are harnessed and grown. He submitted that “the image of an industry and of individual employers is also influenced by the extent and quality of staff training and development” (Vinesh, 2014, p. 127). Vinesh (2014) concluded by asserting that training and development in organizations help enrich the working environment with higher levels of staff retention as well as increased productivity and performance.

Niazi (2011) commented further that training and development play crucial roles towards the growth and success of businesses and organizations by ensuring that employees possess the right skills required to succeed. He contended also that “the need for developing our employees is compelling because a sound training and development plan has its contributions to increase productivity and quality of work and reduces staff turnover and absenteeism and also helps in improving motivation among the employees” (Niazi, 2011, p. 44). Tahir et al (2014) argue that training and development benefits both the organization and the individuals. For the organization, “training and development lead to improved profitability while cultivating more positive attitude toward profit orientation. For the individuals, training and development improve job knowledge while also helping in identifying with the goals of the organization” (Tahir et al, 2014, p. 87). In another perspective, McClelland (2002) opines that training and development are essential not only to increase productivity but also to motivate and inspire works by letting them know how important their jobs are and how best to approach them. “When training needs are verified and training channeled appropriately resulting in development of employees, those employees can become the biggest asset of organizations” (McNamara quoted by McClelland, 2002, p. 7).

Suggested Critical Policy Options on the way Forward

According to Okeke (2014, p. 814) “a major problem of state policies in the Nigerian state is in their verbose documentations. Hence, we intend to avoid wordiness in our own propositions”. We suggest in this paper as a first policy option the prompt payment of workers’ salaries in public organizations especially public service and the enhancement of their conditions of service. Engagement of staff in various training and development schemes without adequate conditions of service or prompt payment of their salaries will achieve nothing. Empty stomach leads to confused state of mind and no confused person can achieve maximally. No training/development arrangement under this situation is meaningful. We suggest therefore that staff pay packages must be adequate and punctual and in the words of Okeke (2014) payment of living wages, as and when due. We suggest also as policy option in this paper, the passage of enabling law on minimum wage increase. Minimum wages we suggest should be increased every five years as it is in developed world and government should endeavour to make it legal by pushing a bill to that effect to the National Assembly and respect such law when passed. When this is done, the welfare of workers is not only elevated but also their status.

Public sector organizations especially those owned by the government should place high priority on the provision of equipment and facilities required for training schools and centres. In that regard, there should be devotion of more funds to training and development in public sector organizations. The importance of funds to this area cannot be overemphasized. Additionally, offices should be equipped with modern technology equipment that will facilitate work and bring about change. Change in both attitude to work and productivity. There should also be a way of ensuring staff commitment to trainings and development schemes. We critically suggest the option of using certificates obtained by staff during trainings for promotion appraisal. This definitely will ensure staff commitment and interest to training and development programmes.

Concluding Remarks

Human resource training and development is investment organizations make to position itself and its employees to take greater control of its future challenges and competitions. In public service, the sole aim is the provision of social service to the people. The provision of this service or lack of it mainly determines the performance of public sector employees. However, this study agrees with Okwueze (2011), cited in Okeke (2014, p. 815) that development should be man-oriented not institution-oriented. Hence, he opined that if we focus on the individual citizen, we can then think of what he needs at a particular time. What a public servant needs is important also in the configuration of training. Attention to workers' needs will definitely lead to the workers paying much attention to training programmes and the endpoint of this symbiosis will be unprecedented performance. In as far as training and development are important and cannot be done without, the welfare of those undergoing the trainings must also be adequately taken care of. Only this can guarantee improved employee performance in the midst of training and development.

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