

**LIFELONG LEARNING FOR CAREER ENHANCEMENT AND
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG SECRETARIAL STAFF OF
UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT**

Dr. Melvins Enwuvesi Hanachor & Dr. Rex Aduvo Needom

Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education.

University of Port Harcourt Nigeria.

ABSTRACT: *This paper examines the institutional framework for Lifelong Learning opportunities of secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt and their career development efforts. The study adopted descriptive survey design, with a population of 420. The sample size was 50% of the population (210) drawn through a proportionate sampling method. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit response from the respondents. The instrument has a reliability index of 0.70. Results shows that the institution provides Lifelong opportunities for secretarial staff, and the staff also makes attempt to develop their career. The study also found that there is a significant relationship between provision of Lifelong opportunities and career development of staff. The paper concludes that institutions and organizations should provide enabling environment for the career development of their staff.*

KEYWORD: Lifelong learning, Career enhancement, Professional development and Secretarial staff.

INTRODUCTION

Learning as an act is part of the nature of all humans. After birth, we begin by learning how to seat, walk, talk etc. This learning continues until adulthood and beyond. It could take the form of formal, informal or non-formal learning. This idea of learning how to do things from birth to death or from cradle to grave is what brings us to the concept of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning, is learning activities which continuous throughout an individual's life time, irrespective of age, social status, initial level of culture and background. Lifelong learning is necessary because of technological advancement, leading to new discoveries and techniques of doing virtually everything. The need to learn these new ideas, and unlearn the old ones becomes vital given the era of knowledge we are in. New discoveries make old skill obsolete and if the trend is not followed, we may find ourselves not fit to do so many things because of new methods and techniques.

According to Longworth & Davies in Okukpon (2005), *Lifelong learning is the development of human potentials through a continuous supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the Knowledge, values skills and understanding they will require throughout their life time, and to apply them with confidence, creativity and employment in all roles, circumstances and environment.*

Through lifelong learning, we can enhance the understanding of our environment and develop our knowledge and acquire skills that will help us improve our quality of life. It involves the creation and maintenance of positive attitude to learning, for career and professional development.

Long-life learning is conceived as a process of learning which meets the need of each successive phase of life. Atchoarena cited in Okedara, Anyanwu, & Lanreomole ed. (2011) sees lifelong learning as an integral way of considering the learning processes from early childhood to old age. It is indeed a system of education that meets the different needs of both the modern industrialized society and those of the developing world. In the views of Adewale (1998), lifelong learning implies an institutional provision of opportunities to continue learning, through such systems as recurrent education, which enables individuals to come back to education at various stages of live, or continuous education which enables it's recipients not only to refresh their knowledge and skill but to acquire new ones to cope with the daily demands of their professions.

Career development means developing one's self and skills to add value to an organization and one's own career. Continuous learning and development skills require identifying the skills needing advancement and successfully seeking out training or on the job opportunities for developing those skills. According to university of California, Berkeley, cited in Adewale (1998), career development begins with assessing which skills are important for your desired career development. They recommended that career development should follow the ratio of 70:20:10.

On-the-job activities and action learning should take 70%. This should take the form of project managing, serving on a cross-functional team, caring out new task, job shadowing and job rotation. Interaction with others should take 20%. This includes having a mentor, coaching, participating in communities of practice, serving as a leader in a staff organization. Training should take 10%. This should cover such areas as seminars, webinars, podcasts and conferences. Identification of desired skills is the wheel to the achievement of career development, and these could be achieved through education and training. Career development is the process of organizing one's life, learning and work, involving the development of skills and knowledge that enables informed decisions about one's career.

UNESCO report cited in Nzeneri (2002) recommended lifelong learning as a global approach to education, emphasizing that education be lifelong considering its roles in the full development of human personality, in view of the trend of change in science, technology, occupation, communication, social, economic and political institutions, adding that for individuals to be current they must up-date their knowledge and skills. This view is further buttressed in Okukpon (2006) that lifelong education emphasizes the development of the whole individual and this signifies that new ideas, new knowledge, new values and practices have to be adopted to suit these developmental change.

According to Wikipedia, personal career development is the total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic and chance factors that combine to influence the nature and significance of work in the total life span of any given individual. It is against this background that this paper seeks to examine the institutional framework for lifelong learning of secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt and how the staff members are developing careers to enhance their psychological, social, physical and economic life.

It is worthy of note that many years ago in Nigeria, the use of type writers were major in business centers and offices. Today one cannot find any of these been prominent. Computer and other digital word processors have now replaced typewriters. It therefore requires learning to remain relevant. This is a typical example of Lifelong learning practice. This situation is not different in University of Port Harcourt. All secretarial staff employed in the 70^s were typists but today they all have knowledge of computer operation.

Statement of Problem

A close examination of the concepts of lifelong learning and career development reveal that both the individuals seeking to be developed and the organizations, in which they work, have roles to play in successful lifelong learning and career development. Whereas the organization are required to create the opportunities for staff development, through on-the-job trainings and learning opportunities, the staff desiring career development should create and maintain a positive attitude to learning.

The question therefore is, can lifelong learning and career development be effective and successful in the absence of one of these components? If the staff is willing and desirous to improve skill and develop career but the institution or organization do not provide the enabling environment, could lifelong learning and career development be achieved? To give explanations and answers to this question is the problem of this s

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to ascertain if the secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt are provided with lifelong learning opportunities and how they have been developing their careers.

Specifically, the study is set to achieve the following objectives

- i. To find out the various lifelong learning opportunities for secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt.
- ii. To ascertain if the secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt undertakes career development of themselves.
- iii. To find out if their career development is gender sensitive.

Research Questions

The following research questions are state to guide the study.

- i. What are the lifelong learning opportunities available for the secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt?

- ii. What are the career development efforts of secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt?
- iii. Do more men embark on career development than women in University of Port Harcourt?

Hypothesis

One null hypothesis, testable at 0.05 level of significance is formulated for the study.

HO1: There is no significance relationship between lifelong learning opportunities for secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt and their career development

HO2: There is no significant difference between the career development of Male to that of the Female secretaries.

METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted the descriptive survey design, since it is aimed at collecting data from respondents and reporting findings in their natural state. The population of the study comprises of all the 420 secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt as at October 2016. A sample size of 210 representing 50% of the population was drawn through a random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Lifelong Learning and Career Development Questionnaire (LLACDQ). The instrument has ten items, five for each section (Employer career opportunity section and Employee career development effort). The instrument has a reliability index of 0.70; obtained through a test-retest reliability method. Data was analysed with the use of descriptive statistics and presented in tables. The hypothesis was tested with Pearson product moment correlation statistic, at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

The results obtained from the analysis of data from respondents are presented below in the following tables;

Research Question One:

What are the lifelong learning opportunities available for secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt?

Table1: Analysis of Lifelong Learning opportunities of secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	N	\bar{x}	REMARK
	Do your employer create opportunity for the following:							
1.	Education off the job.	-	20	160	30	210	1.9	Disagree
2.	Training on the job.	-	80	95	35	210	2.2	Disagree
3.	Seminars	130	100	80	-	210	2.8	Agree
4.	Conferences	52	130	28	-	110	3.0	Agree
5.	Mentoring/job rotation.	-	125	70	15	210	2.5	Agree

In table 1, respondents disagree with items one and two. Their mean scores are less than 2.5 which is the criterion mean for four points response scale. The rest three items have their mean equal and above 2.5 and were agreed as available opportunities.

Research Question Two:

What are the career development efforts of secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt.

Table 2: Analysis of career development efforts of secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	N	\bar{x}	REMARK
	You have attended any of the following career development programmes							
1.	Education off the job.	-	70	80	60	210	2.0	Disagree
2.	Training on the job.	50	100	40	20	210	2.9	Agree
3.	Seminars	35	120	48	7	210	2.9	Agree
4.	Conferences	55	140	15	-	210	3.1	Agree
5.	Mentoring/job rotation.	40	125	30	15	210	2.9	Agree

.Table 2 shows that one out of the five items in the table was disagreed to. The item has a mean score of 2.0 which is below criterion mean. Four of the items in the table have their means above 2.5 and were agreed.

Research Question Three:**Table 3: Mean analysis of career development efforts of Male and Female secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt.**

Aggregate Mean and		MALE				FEMALE			
		2.9	0.77			2.6	0.82		
S/N	ITEMS	X	SD	N	Remark	X	SD	N	Remark
	You have attended any of the following career development programmes								
1.	Education off the job.	2.4	0.98	105	Disagree	1.7	0.78	105	Disagree
2.	Training on the job.	2.6	0.80	105	Agree	3.1	1.04	105	Agree
3.	Seminars	3.3	0.69	105	Agree	2.1	1.00	105	Disagree
4.	Conferences	3.3	0.60	105	Agree	3.0	0.53	105	Agree
5.	Mentoring/job rotation.	2.9	0.79	105	Agree	2.9	0.77	105	Agree

Standard deviation

Table 3 shows that four out of the five items were agreed to by Male secretaries. The only item which was not agreed to had its mean as 2.4 which is very close to the criterion mean of 2.5. The Female responses agree with three out of the five items, and disagree with two. Despite the negative responses of both the Male and Female secretaries, the aggregate mean the two sets (2.9) and (2.6) are still greater than criterion of 2.5. This by implication means that both the Male and Female secretaries have made significant efforts in their career development but at varying levels.

Hypothesis

HO1: There is no significant relationship between the availability of lifelong learning opportunities and career development of secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt.

Table 4: PPMCS test of relationship between life long learning and career development

Variable		N	Df	Sign level	re-cal	r-table	Decision
Lifelong learning opportunities	Career development efforts	210	208	0.05	0.85	0.195	Reject Null

At 208 degree of freedom, and 0.05 level of significance, r-table is 0.195 while r-calculated is 0.850. Since r-calculated is greater than r-table, the null hypothesis of no significant

relationship is rejected. Therefore the alternate is accepted, which means, that there is significant relationship between the availability of lifelong learning opportunities in University of Port Harcourt and the career development of the secretarial staff member of the university. This implies that given the provision of opportunities of lifelong learning in institutions and organizations, employees will be motivated to develop their knowledge and skills for career enhancement.

Hypothesis

HO2: There is no significant difference between the career development of Male to that of the Female secretaries of University of Port Harcourt

Table 5: Z test of difference between Male and Female secretaries..

Variable		N	Df	Sign level	Z-cal	Z-table	Decision
Male (105)	Female(105)	210	208	0.05	2.74	1.96	Reject Null

At 208 degree of freedom, and 0.05 level of significance, Z-table is 1.96 while Z-calculated is 2.74. Since Z-calculated is greater than Z-table, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is therefore rejected. The alternate is accepted, which means, that there is significant difference between career development effort of Male and Female secretarial staff members of University of Port Harcourt. Analysis shows that the Male secretaries made more effort than the Females. This may not be unconnected with the roles of the Female as home makers and supporters. Most men may not allow their wives to stay away from house weeks in the name of attending seminars or conferences. Most females marring well to do husbands, may be working for fun. To this category of workers, career development will be of no use.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Findings from table one show that there are lifelong learning opportunities for secretarial staff of University of Port Harcourt, though responses to the items in table 1 were not all positive, the entire table has a pool mean of 2.8 which is regarded as positive. All items were considered available, except off the job training or education. This may be as a result of the fact that since the University offers such services, they would not expect that any staff of the institution will need to go outside for educational programmes. The table reveals the availability of training programmes such as, on the job, seminars, conferences, job rotation and mentorship.

Findings in table 2 show that though there are opportunities provided by the authority for their Lifelong learning, many of them only attend seminars and conferences. Responses to items one and two confirm this assertion. The two items have their means lower than the criteria mean of 2.5, hence considered disagreed.

Findings on table 3 show that there is a positive relationship between Lifelong Learning and career development among secretarial staff of the University of Port Harcourt. Based on the calculated value of “r”, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate accepted. This by implication means that under normal condition, that everybody desire to advance in whatever career or profession he or she is identified with. This finding agrees with the position of Adewale (1998), that Lifelong Learning involves institutional provision of opportunities, Lifelong Learning no matter the form it takes, has a direct positive relationship with the interest and ability of individuals to embark on career development.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is clear that career development is key to professionalism and job satisfaction fulfillment. Career development enhances the ability and capability of individuals, making them efficient and effective in their areas of endeavor. The paper maintained that the creation of career opportunities by institutions or organizations, stirs the employees to advance in their areas of specialization.

REFERENCES

- Adewale, L. (1998). *Elements of Adult Education*, Lagos Benjasprint Limited.
- Nzeneri, I.S. (2002). Meaning and Scope of Adult and Non-formal Education in *Introduction to Education* Kosemani, J.M. (ed) Port Harcourt. University of Port Harcourt.
- Okedara, J.J. Anyanwu C.N., & Lanreomole, M.A. (2011). Rethinking Adult and Non-formal Education. *A Book of Reaching in Memory of Professor Ayo Ogunseye*. Ibadan Sterling Horden Publishers (Nig).
- Okukpon, L.A. (2005). Lifelong Learning in Nigeria: *Nigerian Journal of Adult and Lifelong Learning* (NJALL) 1,(1), 13-19.
- Okukpon, L.A. (2006). *Lifelong Education: A Panacea for the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs).
- www.Wikipedia.org/careerdevelopment. Retrieved 2nd of October, 2016.