

CAN ORGANISATIONS DO WITHOUT STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT?

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ABSTRACT: *The capacity of any organisation to function in line with its strategic objectives depends largely on its employees. But employees are not needed for themselves, rather, for their skills and competences which have limits but can be enhanced through training and development for efficient organisational performance. However, some organisations are reluctant to invest in staff training and development under the assumption that they can price skilled employees from their competitors to solve their immediate performance needs rather than invest long term in staff training and development. Consequently, the role of staff training and development tends to be downplayed. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to assess whether organisations can do without staff training and development. Using the exploration of secondary data from relevant previous studies in a mainly qualitative method, this study found sufficient evidences that strongly link staff training and development to employee and organisational performance. The study asserted that although organisations are at liberty to determine when, how and to what extent they embark on staff training and development, they inevitably have to in their pursuit of organisational success.*

KEYWORDS: training, development, employee, organisation, performance

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

The capacity of any organisation to function in line with its strategic objectives depends largely on its employees. However, employees are not important in themselves alone but in their capacity to carryout stipulated functions in the organisations. Therefore organisations do not need employees for who they are but for their ability to utilise their skills and competencies towards achieving organisational goals (Khan, Khan & Khan, 2011). It is within reason to suggest that organisations require skills and competencies to carry out their activities. However, skills and competencies are the end result of training and development (Kum, Cowden & Karodia, 2014; Firempong, 2020). Chhy (2019) defined training and development as "the process of improving the existing skills, knowledge, and abilities in an employed" (Chhy, 2019, p.42). Training and development is about equipping the employee to be better at current job while preparing the employee for future job expectations (Kum, Cowden & Karodia, 2014).

Critical review of these definitions indicates that training and development impacts three areas: skills and competences, knowledge, and attitudes. While training is finite, precise and immediate, development focuses on future competency. In other words, the efficiency of an employee at their role depends largely on their training and development which they may have acquired within or outside the organisation. More so, their function within the organisation is limited to their current skills and competencies. It therefore implies that if an employee must

carry out a task of which they lack competence, such employee is expected to undergo training to acquire the needed skills and later develop the competence. At that instance, it behoves on the organisation to fund the training and development of the employee towards productivity and competitive advantage (Redman & Wilkinson, 2013) or employ a new employee with the required skills set. While the latter is possible and immediate, continuous replacement of employees at the instance of employee inadequacy in skills may be unsustainable; therefore organisations should be open to the vital role of staff training and development. Instead, many organisations are yet to come to terms with the role of training and development, hence many researchers have attempted to put forward findings that support the essence of training and development. Evidences from some of these studies have shown that investment in staff training and development impacts positively on organisational innovation (Sung & Choi, 2014); employee performance (Chhy, 2019; Mahadevan & Yap, 2019). Within a developing economy like Nigeria, Goyal and Chhabra (2016) argue that employee training and development is beneficial to both the employees and the organisation. For the employees, the authors note that it leads to career competences, job satisfaction, and performance. The organisation gets market growth, organisational performance, competitive advantage, improved organisational image, and employee retention in return.

On the contrary, it has been argued that the benefits of staff training and development are largely intangible and difficult to measure and as such return on investment (ROI) is at best, vague (Tremlett & Park, 1995). In the same vein, human capital theorists argue that employee training and development leads to employee intent to quit, which leads to organisational losses in terms of the cost implication and competitive disadvantage as a result of employee-trainee choosing to work for competitors for a higher pay based on acquired skills (King, 2016). Consequently some organisations are more sceptical to invest in staff training and development.

Pointedly there are divergent arguments in the literature as to the role of staff training and development in an organisation. Adzido et al., (2015, p.644) raised a critical question: “if training and development is beneficial to firms and employees, why are some organisations and individuals/managers reluctant to invest in it?”. Adzido and others posited that some organisations are reluctant to invest in staff training and development as a result of the difficulty in justifying the costs and benefits. More so, that these organisations are focused on short-term performance, thus they are disinterested in the long-term investment that is employee training and development. One thing is evident from the debate in the literature thus far, some organisations seek some form of conviction that staff training and development is an investment worth making before implementing same in their organisations. The implication of this position is that these organisations tend to assume that they can always fill up their knowledge gap from fresh recruitment, poaching skilled employees away from their competitors or even investing in more machinery. This calls to question the role of staff training and development in an organisation. Against this background, this study seeks to answer the question: can organisations do without staff training and development? Although, the terms 'employee' and 'staff' may have slightly different meanings in various contexts, the terms have been used interchangeably in this paper to mean anyone who works for an organisation other than its owners.

METHODOLOGY

The essence of this study is to provide empirical findings on the role of training and development in an organisation to employers and to clarify whether or not organisations can do without it. On the other hand it seeks to inform employees of the need to seek industry relevant skills that their jobs require rather than certificate accumulation and non-transferable experience. Importantly, the study seeks to answer one broad research question: can organisations do without staff training and development? To provide sufficient insight to answer the proposed question, the researcher explored previous studies on the topic in the literature. Findings in this research are based on the secondary data sourced from mainly journal articles, academic papers and books reviewed. According to Gummesson (2002), the burden of research is not so much about generating new sets of data but drawing sufficient enough insight from existing data. Hence, this researcher subscribes to this assertion in the undertaking of this study to explain the phenomenon under investigation. Several authors (e.g Khan et al., 2011; Adzido et al., 2015; Goyal & Chhabra, 2015) have adopted similar approach to push forward their argument and providing a basis for new understanding of the subject matter (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The research approach is qualitative and based on a descriptive design to analyse data in providing insight into the role of training and development in an organisation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ANALYSIS

Training and Development

Training and development dates back to the beginning of education itself and has been a fundamental part of human existence from learning to survive to learning about antiquities, religion; to military training and strategy; to technical and scientific education; to the work related training inspired by the industrial revolution; to leadership trainings after World War II; and now to the training of individuals/employees, organisations and communities towards performing work-related activities in a technology-driven world (Torraco, 2016). This is to the extent that Kum, Cowden & Karodia (2014) argue that the importance of staff training and development is not in contention rather organisations are more concerned about the impact of training and development on employees and the organisation vis-a-vis the cost implication. Several studies have attempted to address these concerns and presented divergent findings on the impact of training and development on the employee as well as the organisation. Proponents of training and development (e.g. Madukoma, Akpa, & Okafor, 2014; Rothwell & Kazanas, 2006; Chhy, 2019), argue that training and development promises mutual benefit; that is, for the employee and organisation alike.

Impact of Training and Development on Employees

The importance of staff training and development is hardly debatable when compared to the impact it has had on employees (Khan et al., 2011). Sultana et al. (2012) in their study of the telecommunication sector in Pakistan found that variations in employees performance in an organisation is half the time caused by one form of training or the other. They also found that training is a good predictor of employee performance. Their finding builds on findings by Farooq and Khan (2011, p.29) that training is positively correlated with employee performance such that the more trained an employee is the more they perform at their respective roles.

Furthermore, Elnaga and Imran (2013) from their review of the literature suggest that for organisations to achieve higher ROI, they must make the most of their employees but that this is attainable if and only if the organisation is able to meet the job-related training needs of employees. Because according to the authors, “effective training is considered to be a key factor for improved performance; as it can enhance the level of employee and firm competency” (Elnaga & Imran, 2013, p.144). Similarly, Madukoma, Akpa, and Okafor (2014) in their study of library personnel in the University of Lagos attest that training of employees aids increased productivity, employee motivation, skills and reduce supervision. Additional evidence from a quantitative survey by Kum, Cowden and Koradia (2014) indicates firstly, that training improves employee performance by creating job satisfaction and reducing uncertainty regarding job security. Their survey showed that 72% of employees agreed that they are more certain and satisfied with their jobs after training because according to Nel et al. (2004, p.276) employees become effectively committed to an organisation when they sense that the organisation is interested in their career growth within the organisation. Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelley (2007, p.211) corroborate this position across gender lines revealing that women who were trained by their employers on job-related skills were unlikely to be dissatisfied with their jobs. Secondly, Kum, Cowden and Koradia (2014, p.95) further found that training increases employee confidence in undertaking role as well as motivate the employees to improve their performance, a finding in tandem with Madukoma, Akpa, and Okafor’s (2014) study. Thirdly, Adams (2002) found that training reduces mistakes in a knowledgeable workforce. Lastly, it was found that training helps employees achieve organisational targets (Kum, Cowden & Koradia, 2014).

The evidences so far have considered training as a singular entity and have shown that it indeed impacts on employee performance on the jobs. However other studies have considered the impact of training and development combined, on employees. Jehanzeb and Bashir (2013) from their conceptual review concluded that training and development builds career competences by improving skills, causes employee satisfaction through the sense that there is opportunity for growth within the organisation, and improves employee performance as a result. Empirical evidence by Tahir et al. (2014) from their assessment of the impact of training and development on employee performance and productivity revealed that training and development has significant positive relationship with employees’ performance and productivity. Tahir and others concluded that training and development is required for employees to acquire the knowledge and skills to perform organisational tasks. Adzido et al. (2015, p.649) in lending their voice to the existing debate alludes to the fact that training and development improves employees’ skills, knowledge and attitudes; and offers employees career development privileges in the competitive labour market. Consistent with the findings so far, Asfaw, Argaw and Bayissa (2015) investigated any likely causal relationship between training and development and employee performance as well as training and development with employee effectiveness. Taking training and development as the independent variable computed against employee performance as the dependent variable using linear regression, the researchers found statistically significant positive causal relationship between training and development and employee performance (Asfaw, Argaw & Bayissa, 2015, p.195). Furthermore, the authors found positive correlation between training and development, and employee effectiveness. Findings from their study “shows that a change of one standard deviation in predictor variable i.e., training and development will have a change in 0.25 times standard deviation for the dependent variable i.e. employee effectiveness. In a similar fashion, a one standard deviation

increase in employee performance will have resulted in a change of 0.42 times standard deviations in employee effectiveness. Hence, training and development have a positive correlation with employee performance and employee effectiveness. And this relationship is statistically significant at $P < 0.05$ " (Asfaw, Argaw & Bayissa, 2015, p.194). The implication of this finding is that the effect of training and development on employees is a likely improvement in performance and effectiveness in their job roles. It also implies that a slack in training and development will result in employees' ineffectiveness and poor job performance.

Cumulatively, evidence in the literature suggests that training and development causes employees to acquire new job-related skills, develop competences and improve their attitudes towards their work and the organisation. Consequent on these, employees' performance, productivity and effectiveness are enhanced through training and development. Therefore the impact of training and development on employees is largely positive and where it is negative, Kum, Cowden and Koradia (2014) noted that it is likely as a result of training and development that is not job related.

Impact of Training and Development on the Organisation

The preceding review has provided evidence to support the impact of training and development on employees. But Adzido et al. (2015), stated that investment in training and development holds mutual benefits for both employees and organisations. Thus, for organisations, Rothwell and Kazanas (2006) argue that rather than incur the high cost of replacing employees with better qualified and skilled employees every time there is a skills gap in the organisation, organisations can save cost by training valuable employees. Besides, cost savings, Sung and Choi (2014) found that corporate training expenditure has a strong positive effect on innovative performance consequently it is safe to conclude that training and development impacts positively on organisational innovative performance. In other words an organisation is considered innovative when its employees come up with innovative ideas or inventions. For instance the innovativeness of Apple Inc. as an organisation is hinged on the innovativeness of its employees which it trains and develops through its in-house training programme (Chen, 2014). Additionally, Kum, Cowden and Krodia (2014) found that training and development improves the productivity of the organisation through employee performance as a result of reduced supervision time and micromanaging after training. Earlier empirical findings by Khan, Khan and Khan (2011) on the impact of training and development on organisational performance revealed that training design has significant positive effect on organisational performance with sufficient evidence to suggest that organisations that design their trainings in line with the their needs and those of the employees record good ROI.

Furthermore, on the job training was also found to have positive effect on organisational performance because it is cost effective and allows the employees learn practically. The style of training delivered was also found to have positive effect on organisational performance. Khan, Khan and Khan (2011) concluded that training and development has significant positive effect on organisational performance. In the same vein, Shaheen, Naqvi and Khan (2013, p.495) found that training and organisation performance are highly positively correlated as employees' performance has been found to significantly correlate with organisational performance—a position in tandem with the works of Hameed and Waheed (2011), and several other authors that there is positive relations between training and development and competitive advantage. Jehanzeb and Bashir (2013) extended the findings to provide evidence that training

and development also guarantee market growth for the organisation, and employee retention. Additional evidence by Gunu et al. (2013) from an assessment of selected banks in Nigeria showed that training and development has a positive relationship with organisational Performance measured by the financial performance (share holders' satisfaction). They found that "organisational commitment to training and development of staff, frequency of training and development and reward for best performance during each period of training" improves employees' skills input which translates to organisational performance in the banking industry (Gunu et al., 2013,p.85). In a similar survey of commercial bank officers in Bangladesh, Rahman (2014) found that training and development is a significant causal variable to organisational effectiveness. The finding indicates that training and development which was found to be highly correlated with job satisfaction contributes to 69.5% of the variability of organisational effectiveness. In effect, the effectiveness of an organisation in terms of meeting the needs of its clients or customers is largely dependent on how trained and developed its employees are.

From the foregoing, the impact of training and development on an organisation begins with cost implication. However Adzido et al. (2015) considers this an investment and posited that organisations that have approached training and development as such have recorded positive results. Sung and Choi (2014) considers it wise spending as it guarantees organisational innovation if tailored to the skills gap of the organisation. The review of empirical evidences from various authors has also traced organisational performance, organisational effectiveness, organisational competitive advantage, market growth and employee retention to staff training and development. With the evidences of its impact on employees as wells as the organisation at large, can organisations downplay the role of staff training and development?

CAN ORGANISATIONS DO WITHOUT STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT?

While empirical evidences on the impact of staff training and development have been reviewed, this study argues that staff training and development retains an inevitable role in an organisation. Firstly, the literature points to the fact that employees are employed after recruitment assessment process because of their skills and competencies to carry out their designated jobs. Nonetheless, forward thinking organisations cannot do without some form of training or indoctrination of newly employed employees. Sometimes these trainings are so sacred their details cannot be divulged to the public as is the case with Apples Inc.'s training for new employees (Chen, 2014). Moreover, Nel et al. (2004) argue that investment in staff training and development is essential to the survival of an organisation in today's competitive marketplace; and Khan, Khan and khan (2011) asserted that organisations that ignore this are bound to suffer the consequences such as incurred losses from poor employee performance.

Secondly, employees are bound to reach the limits of their capabilities in carrying out their jobs as organisational growth and expansion is being attained. Therefore the need for training and development cannot be wished away. Organisations should devise a means to assess employees' training and development needs. Kulkarni (2013) proposes that employee training and development needs are determined by the employee's performance deficiency, computed as follows: "Training & Development need = Standard performance – Actual performance" (Kulkarni, 2013, p.142).

Thirdly, organisations cannot do without staff training and development because the alternative, which is to price skilled employees away from competitors, is not sustainable and may in fact be counterproductive in the sense that the organisation cannot guarantee the employee's retention as the employee may be open to better offers. However, evidences from the literature have shown that staff training and development increases job satisfaction and consequently employee retention. And to help organisations secure their training and development in their employees, Sung and Choi (2014) suggests that organisations enter into some form of bond or agreement that guarantees the employees commitment to the organisation, as well as improve the employees pay package to motivate the employee.

Fourthly, the ability of an organisation that competes on the basis of quality and technical expertise to stay competitive in its industry is strongly influenced by the numbers of highly skilled and competent staff on its employ (Sung & Choi, 2014). Therefore such organisations cannot do without staff training and development. However Adzido et al. (2015) makes the case for organisations that compete on the basis of cost by arguing that they may not be able to justify the cost of training and performance. But this does not override the overarching cost the organisation must incur when there is a skill gap with implications on their operations.

Lastly, although this study agrees with Adzido and others that staff training and development spend is a matter of policy and implementation with its attendant financial cost implications, and that organisations are at liberty to prioritise their expenditure; the overwhelming body of evidence suggests that organisations may only delay but cannot run away from staff training and development in the long run of their business operations. To this end, Elnaga and Imran (2013) assert that employees are an irreplaceable resource of the firm and the success or bane of any organisation rests on its employees' performance. And several studies reviewed have provided evidence to show that training and development improves, enhances and encourages staff performance.

CONCLUSION

This study has reviewed the role of staff training and development in an organisation. It sought to establish whether or not organisations can do without staff training and development. The review of literature revealed that firstly, training and development causes employees to acquire new job-related skills; develop competences and improve their attitudes towards their work and the organisation. Consequent on these, employees' performance, productivity and effectiveness are enhanced through training and development. Secondly, it found that staff training and development impacts positively on organisational performance, organisational effectiveness, organisational competitive advantage, and market growth and employee retention. However, the study argued that organisations may be at liberty to formulate policies and implement same at any time they choose, they cannot however do without carrying out staff training and development at one time or the other. Also because the productivity of any organisation is hinged on the performance of its staff in the use of their skills and competencies, and the inevitability of knowledge gaps that can be effectively covered by staff training and development compared to alternatives, this study concludes that the role of staff training and development is inevitable in an organisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has established that training and development is as important as education is to man and that employees as well as organisations cannot do without it. Therefore the following recommendations are raised accordingly:

Suggestions for employees

Findings in this study indicate clearly that training and development holds mutual benefits to both employees and organisations.

1. Employees are encouraged to communicate their role-related skills deficiency to the organisation.
2. Employees should be willing and open to training and development for their potential career growth as well as justify the organisation's investment in them.
3. In today's information world, employees are encouraged to seek less of certificates and pursue skills through self-training, as there are several work-related trainings online at almost no extra cost.

Suggestions for organisations

The following recommendations are put forward for organisations to maximise the benefits of staff training and development:

1. Organisations should have a deliberate, proactive policy with regards to employees' skills training needs assessment in order to mitigate a shutdown of their operations or losses as a result of skills deficiency.
2. Organisations should as a matter of policy motivate staff to engage fully in assigned training and development through promotions, increase in pay package and other incentives after training and post-training performance.
3. Organisations should have a post training assessment policy to guarantee ROI through employee and organisational target setting and subsequent evaluation with actual performances.
4. Organisations should ensure that to sign retention bonds or agreement with employees on account of expensive on and off the job training.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Staff training and development is vital to any organisation, private or public alike. Almost all the studies reviewed in this study focused on private organisations therefore there appears to be a research gap in the area of the impact of staff training and development in the public sector.
- Further research is required to shed light on this. Also, a quantitative approach in assessing the role of staff training and development will provide further insights into the inevitability of training and development in an organisation.

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