

Non-teaching Staff's Participation in Training and Development Programmes: A qualitative inquiry

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ABSTRACT: *The aim of the study was to discover the extent to which the Ghana Education Service (GES) ensures continuous upgrading of the competencies of the non-teaching staff of the service. The study was conducted in senior high schools in a district in the Central region of Ghana. The various non-teaching staff of the senior high schools constituted the population of the study. The study followed the qualitative approach using exploratory design to guide the conduct of the study. Interview guide was the main instrument used to generate data from the study participants. The study disclosed that the non-teaching staff of GES do attend training and development programmes, although not enough. The training and development programmes they attend mainly take the form of workshop. The participants indicated that the few training and development programmes they have attended have been beneficial to them and their service delivery. They however expressed some concerns with the programmes they attend which when addressed would help a lot. The study therefore recommends that GES should endeavour to regularly offer training and development programmes to the non-teaching staff of the senior high schools to help them upgrade their knowledge and skills to make them more effective in their service delivery.*

KEYWORDS: Training and development, non-teaching staff, senior high schools, competency, job performance, service delivery

INTRODUCTION

It is a common practice of organisations to make their employees or staff participate in different training and development programmes and activities to upgrade their knowledge and skills for their job responsibilities. The belief is that the knowledge and skills that staff come to the organisations with may not be enough for their responsibilities hence attending training and development programmes would let them acquire additional competencies for their jobs. It is also believed that the demand of work changes and that workers need to go through education and training programmes to learn new strategies, methods, techniques and skills to enable them perform creditably well all the time. Training and development activities help to make employees more skilled and productive (Barreto, 2020).

Training and development are activities that seek to offer staff the skills and knowledge of organisations and their goals (Ivancevich, 2010). Staff training and development programmes are the various means through which all kinds of staff working in a school, for example, participate to modify their capabilities and to be more effective in their responsibilities (Adi, Agbe, Odeh & Tyokyaa, 2019). They are regarded as activities that schools undertake to enhance the competencies of their staff to enable them increase their performance (Abu, 2012). Training and development programmes take the form of workshops, seminars, symposia, conferences, talks, presentations and fora. Organisers of training and development programmes consider the purposes of the programmes and choose appropriate forms that they should take. If they believe that organising the programme in the form of a workshop will help the participants to acquire the required competencies, they would use it otherwise they would have to choose another form.

In school, students do interact with both teaching and non-teaching staff for academic and non-academic purposes (Irungu, Namuswa & Namusonge, 2016) hence the professional development of both teaching and non-teaching staff ought to be taken seriously. The non-teaching staff of schools play a significant role in achieving the goals and objectives of the education service. According to Garaba (2022), non-teaching staff are pivotal in the contributions towards quality education delivery as well as providing safe and positive learning environments for students. Due to the work of non-teaching staff, the teaching staff spend less time on non-teaching activities such as bursary, store keeping and catering (Lawrent, 2019) which all contribute to creating conducive learning atmosphere for students. The author implies that had it not being the presence and services of non-teaching staff, the teaching staff of senior high schools, for instance, would have performed other non-teaching activities as well which would have been a huge burden to them which could probably reduce the quality of their service delivered to students. Also, non-teaching staff perform essential roles in the academic environment as they are in technical and support part of the educational institutions (Antiado, Castillo, Reblan & Tawadrous, 2020). Furthermore, non-teaching staff helps in the performance of teaching staff's daily activities in schools (Mwaisumo, 2016). In supporting this point, Garaba (2022) contends that non-teaching staff perform several administrative duties in school to staff, students, the community and other officials. Barreto (2020) also lists the services of non-teaching staff as library services, repairing of the teaching and learning facilities, procurement services, record keeping services, health services and safeguarding the surroundings etc. It is obvious that to effectively perform these services requires that the non-teaching staff undergo continuous professional training to sharpen their competencies for that.

Making employees participate in regular training and development activities is good for both employees and their organisations. The training and development activities that organisations come up with contribute greatly to enhance employees' level of performance (Situma & Iravo, 2010). Training and development benefits organisations regarding productivity, knowledge, loyalty and other contributions (Heathfield, 2012). Essentially, all kinds of training and development activities are given to staff to improve their work efficiency and increase their service delivery and productivity.

Statement of the problem

In view of the growing demands of staff in the education sector, more capacity building activities need to be made available to them. Ghana Education Service, as many other sectors, seeks to upgrade the knowledge and skills of their staff to enable them perform their duties well. Both teaching and non-teaching of GES are expected to be provided with the requisite knowledge and skills to perform their work as expected of them. Regular training and development activities are essential not only for teaching staff, but also non-teaching staff so as to help the service to achieve national educational goals. Since the demands of the staff of the education sector keep changing, all categories of staff ought to undergo continuous training to be able to live up to expectation. As Wright and Geroy (2001) noted, staff competencies change via participation in training and development programmes. So, continuously availing non-teaching staff of senior high schools to new knowledge, ideas and skills is non-negotiable as it aids greatly in training students to acquire the knowledge and skills that they need for work and further study.

Professional training and development activities ought to be given to both teaching and non-teaching staff of senior high schools. Mishra (2007) stresses on the need to continuously train non-teaching staff to enable them deliver their responsibilities expectedly. However, Garaba (2022) found that as compared to the teaching staff, non-teaching staff lagged behind in the continuous professional development activities provided for staff in schools. The situation with GES is not known as much research has not been directed towards training and development programmes of non-teaching of the education sector of Ghana. Whereas numerous studies have been conducted to disclose the extent to which the teaching staff of GES have been receiving training and development activities, same cannot be said of the non-teaching staff. Examination of literature revealed that researchers had not focused much attention on the professional development of non-teaching staff as much as they have been done on the teaching staff. Meanwhile, by convention, GES is supposed to offer training and capacity building activities for all categories of its staff. It was therefore unclear as whether the non-teaching staff of GES undergo training and development programmes and if they do whether they do that regularly. Besides, the issues of whether the training and development programmes the non-teaching attend benefit them and as whether they have concerns about them were unknown. The quest to find get information about these issues necessitated the study.

Research objectives

The following objectives were set for the study:

1. To find out the training and development programmes that the non-teaching staff of GES attend.
2. To assess the benefits that the non-teaching staff of GES derive from the training and development programmes they attend.
3. To discover concerns that the non-teaching staff of GES have for the training and development programmes they attend.

Research questions

The following questions were posed to guide the study:

1. What type of training and development programmes do the non-teaching staff of GES attend?

2. How do the training and development programmes the non-teaching staff of GES attend benefit them?
3. What concerns do the non-teaching staff of GES have for the training and development programmes they attend?

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Study design

The study relied on the qualitative approach to research as it sought to give the non-teaching staff the chance to give in-depth information about their experiences on training and development programmes the service renders for them. Exploratory design was then used to study the issues inherent in the research problem. Experts recommend that qualitative approach to research should be used to study issues that not much has been done on them (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2013). As the training and development programmes for non-teaching staff have not been researched much, the researcher deemed it expedient to adopt this approach so that more information could be derived to address the research problem.

Study Population

All the categories of non-teaching staff of the Ghana Education Service namely administrators, accounting staff, secretaries and others constituted the population for the study. These non-teaching staff of three senior high schools became the accessible population. The categories of staff who had worked with the service for more than two years qualified to be included in the study. Again, in each school where there was more than one such staff, the senior one was chosen to participate in the study. Purposive sampling technique therefore was used for the selection of the study participants.

The participants of the study from the three schools are the administrators (AD1, AD2 and AD3); the principal accountants and a senior accountant (PA1, PA2, PA3 and SA1); the secretaries and a typist (SE1, SE2 and TP2); and the matrons (MT1, MT2 and MT3) and two technical officers (TO1 and TO2). These pseudonyms were used to identify the direct responses of the participants that were quoted to support the main ideas provided by the participants.

Data collection

To ensure smooth data gathering exercise, permission was sought from the heads of the schools as well as the chosen participants. An arrangement was then made with the participants concerning when and where the interviews should come off. Following the agreements, a day was spent in each school to interview the participants and the interviews with the individual participants lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. The semi-structured interview guide had a few questions that were posed to the participants to elicit their responses. However, the nature of the interview gave room for follow-up questions to generate more and detailed responses to address the research questions. The participants also had the opportunity to seek for clarification of some questions that were not clear to them. The interview was conducted in English as all the participants were literate.

Before the start of the interview, the participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. This was done to make them feel comfortable to provide rightful responses to the questions posed to them. They were also informed that they had the right to discontinue participating in the interview if they so desired at any point in time and without any explanation. Permission was also sought from the participants to record the interview, which they gracefully accepted. After the interview with each participant, the recorded interaction was played back for them to know what they had said. This afforded them the opportunity to correct a few issues that they might have mistakenly provided. Essentially, ethical consideration was strictly adhered to throughout the research process.

Data Analysis

When the data was gathered, it was transcribed, interpreted, coded and analysed based on the research questions. The data was manually analysed and the results are presented in themes. Several steps were taken to ensure that the results generated were credible.

STUDY RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in two parts: Part A and Part B. Whereas the Part A presents information on the participants or the non-teaching staff in the senior high schools who participated in the study, Part B presents results that address the research questions that were posed to guide the study.

Part A: Personal Information of participants

The personal information of the participants that were sought include their sex, age range, highest educational qualification and work experience. The results of the data analysis on the participants' personal information are presented in the tables 1 to 5. Table 1 presents the sex distribution of the participants.

Table 1: Sex of participants

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	10	63
Female	6	37
Total	16	100

Source (Field work, 2022)

The responses provided by the participants show that 10 representing 63% of the non-teaching staff in the senior high schools who participated in the study were males while 6 representing 37% of them were females. This indicates that the male non-teaching staff of the schools are more than the females. The results imply that most of the administrative jobs in the senior high schools are performed by males.

Table 2 displays the age range of the participants of the study.

Table 2: Age of participants

Age rang	Frequency	Percentage
25-30	4	24
31-39	6	38
40-49	3	19
50-60	3	19
Total	16	100

Source (Field work, 2022)

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he responses in table 2 indicate that the majority of the non-teaching staff are within the age range of 31-39 (6/38%), followed by those within 25-30 (4/24%) year group, those within 40-49 (3/19%) year group and 50-60 (3/19%) year group respectively. The results show that most of the non-teaching staff of the senior high schools were relatively young as 10 of them were less than 40 years. It is believed that if these non-teaching staff are made to undergo training and development programmes continuously to build their capacities for their jobs, they would work for GES for long to contribute to the achievement of the educational goals of the country. The highest educational qualifications of the participants are shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: Highest educational qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma	7	45
Bachelor	4	24
Other	5	31
Total	16	100

Source (Field work, 2022)

From table 3, it is observed that seven (7) representing 45% of the non-teaching staff of the senior high schools have diploma certificate and 4 representing 24% of the non-teaching staff possess bachelor's degree in various academic disciplines. The results also show that 5 representing 31% of the non-teaching staff have other qualifications such as SSSCE and Typist Grade 2. The results imply that the majority of the non-teaching staff of the senior high schools possess low qualification which demands that they need constant training to improve their knowledge and skills for their respective jobs in the education service. In other words, most of the non-teaching staff do not possess higher qualification and that they need to be undergoing various training and development programmes to upgrade their knowledge and skills in their specializations and for their responsibilities. The training and development programmes that they attend would help them to perform their jobs well. If that does not happen, they may not be able to live up to expectations which can eventually affect the achievement of the educational goals of the country.

The number of years the non-teaching staff have had with the Ghana Education Service are presented in the table below.

Table 4: Working experience

Years of working	Frequency	Percentage
1-5 years	3	19
6-10 years	5	31
11-15 years	3	19
15-20 years	3	19
Above 20 years	2	12
	16	100

Source (Field work, 2022)

From table 4, it is realized that 5 representing 31% of the non-teaching staff had worked with GES between 5 and 10 years while 3 representing 19% respectively had worked with GES between 1 and 5 years, 11-15 years and 15-20 years. From the table 4, it is also observed that only 2 representing 12% of them had worked with GES for 20 years or more. The results generally show that the majority of the non-teaching staff who participated in the research had worked with GES for long and that they should have participated in more training and development programmes to build their capacity for their responsibilities.

Part B: Responses on the main issues of the study

The participants were made to indicate whether they had taken part in any training and development programmes since their appointment into the Ghana Education Service. The responses provided by the participants have been presented in table 5.

Table 5: Participation in Training and Development programmes

Participation	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	15	94
No	1	6
Total	16	100

Source (Field work, 2022)

The results in table 5 show that it is only one out of the 16 non-teaching staff, since his appointment, had not gone for any training and development programme to learn more things about his duties in the school. The rest of the 15 non-teaching staff had undergone one form of training and development activity or the other to acquire more knowledge and skills to build their capacities for their responsibilities in the schools.

It is a good development that most of the non-teaching staff had enjoyed some form of training since they were employed by GES. The belief that the changing demands of the work of the education sector staff seems to be embraced by GES hence availing its staff to participate in training and development programmes.

The participants were also requested to indicate the form that the training and development programmes they participated in took. As has been indicated already, training and development programmes and activities take several forms depending on their goals. The responses of the participants are presented in table 6 below.

Table 6: Forms of Training and Development programmes

Form	
Workshop	13
Conference	6
Seminar	3
Presentation	2
Forum	1
Talk	1

Source (Field work, 2022)

The responses as shown in table 6 demonstrate that 13 out of the 15 non-teaching staff had participated in training and development programmes through workshops. Six of the non-teaching staff had also attended conferences to acquire more knowledge on their jobs. Three of the non-teaching staff had also attended seminars to learn more for the performance of their work. One respectively had also attended forum and talk to acquire more knowledge for the performance of their jobs.

Generally, it is observed from the results that the non-teaching staff had attended only few training and development programmes to develop capacities for their responsibilities in the schools. This finding is in line with what a literature review by Garaba (2022) disclosed that most schools did not have enough training for their non-teaching staff and that most school leaders had a perception that non-teaching staff are not key to school functioning.

Frequency of attendance of such programmes

The responses provided by the participants show that the rate at which training and development programmes are organised for them is not encouraging as it is not frequently done. All the participants indicated that they do not participate in such programmes regularly. The following are some excerpts from the participants.

Such programmes are not frequently organised for us (AD2)

It is organised annually for conferences and quarterly for workshops (PA1, PA2)

We participate in training and development programme once a while (AC, PT2, SO2, MT2)

It is organised in every two years (TO1)

The responses clearly show that although the participants do have the chance to attend training and development programmes, it does not happen regularly. This would not make them to acquire current knowledge and skills they would desire for their jobs.

Contents covered in the programme

The participants indicated what they go through when they attend training and development programmes. They pointed out different contents of the programmes they enjoyed when they attended such activities. Some indicated that,

Capacity building on ICT tools necessary to facilitate work (AD)
Improving financial management in Ghana Education Service, Accounting principles and practices (SO, PA, PT3)
Stock evaluation (AC2, SK)
Principles and practices of typing (PT)
Food management and environmental cleanliness (MT1, MT2, MT3)

The responses demonstrate that the training and development programmes are tailor-made for the various categories of non-teaching staff of the education service. The contents of the programmes outlined clearly indicate that they were intended to upgrade the knowledge and skills of the non-teaching staff.

However, the participants did not seem to have been participating in training and development programmes that cover general administrative issues. It is expected that as non-teaching staff, their jobs entail administrative duties so they need to be educated on best administrative practices, from time to time, to enable perform their specialised duties as well as administrative functions expectedly.

Benefits of the programmes

During the interview, the participants also expressed their views on how helpful the training and development programmes have been to them. The various praises provided by the participants give a hint that the programmes they had participated in have been very beneficial to them. Excerpts of the benefits of the programmes they had participated in are the following:

It has equipped me with knowledge on creation of some software application to send parents messages (AD).

It has helped me to acquire new knowledge in the Accounting field. How to use GIFMIS and the components (AC, AC); Helps to improve the use of GIFMIS and its components (PA4)

My understanding on public finance management has been improved. It has also exposed me to financial management accounting (PA)

It has helped me to work efficiently and being abreast with new principles and practices in accounting (SO)

It has enabled me to know and identify the amount of resources the school has and what should be added to (AC2)

It has made me know resources available in the school and the ones that needs to be acquired (SK)

Improved my competence in typing (PT)

The workshops have helped to improving my efficiency. It has helped me to improve on my competence for work (SO, CK).

It has helped me to calculate the value of usefulness of an asset (S2O)

It has helped me keep the environment clean and avoid food contamination; Assist us to keep our surroundings clean (MT2) (MT)

It makes you exposed to other areas of work (PA2)

It has helped me to work effectively in practical aspect of my responsibilities. Since the training was very practical, I have acquired more practical skills to perform many aspects of my work (TO, SA2).

Obviously, the responses as provided by the participants speak volumes about how helpful the training and development programmes have been for them. The programmes have been useful for the participants, probably because the training and development activities were tailor-made in line with their job responsibilities. It cannot be far-fetched that if such programmes are made available to the non-teaching staff more continuously, they would be more efficient and effective at their respective jobs.

Concerns for the programmes

The participants also poured out some concerns that they have for the training and development programmes that have been organised for them by their employers. In as much as they have been glad in taking part in such competence enhanced activities, they had concerns that, if addressed by the relevant authorities, would help make the non-teaching staff of GES gain more enviable knowledge and skills from subsequent programmes to enhance performance of their responsibilities as enshrined in their respective job descriptions.

The following are the concerns that the participants had for the various training and development activities they had participated in:

No follow ups; duration was short; cost of funding by the school and individuals (AD).

Lack of funds; time was limited for effective learning; and accommodation not decent (AC).

Handout are usually not given to be used after the programmes. They should have given handouts to us for references (PA).

They do not fulfil their promise of providing resources which schools are lacking (AC2)

Such programmes are not organised frequently for use. They must be organised frequently for us to learn more (SK).

There should be regular workshops; More of such programmes should be organised regularly (PT, MT).

Cost involved was incurred by the school (CK)

Adequate food needs to be served: there should be refreshment for staff; food should be served (TO, PA2, TP).

Such programmes should be frequent to enable us to understand simple hygiene as well as its importance (MT 2).

Difficulty in applying the knowledge acquired at the workplace (SO)

Transportation was a problem (SO 2).

Lack of funds; accommodation problems and time limit for learning purpose is too short (PA 4).

There should be follow ups to provide assistance where necessary (SA)

The various concerns provided by the participants ought to be taken seriously by GES and school leaders and consider them in future training and development programmes. Failure to do that would not help make the non-teaching of the education service to derive maximum benefits from such programmes. This will also not be in the interest of the education service, the senior high schools, students, teaching staff, the communities and other stakeholders who benefit from the services of the non-teaching staff. As Garaba (2022) posits, non-teaching staff perform several administrative duties in school to staff, students, the community and other officials. In view of that if the knowledge and skills of non-teaching staff are sharpened and enhanced, they would perform well for the various stakeholders and vice versa if they do not acquire new knowledge and skills required to perform their responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

The research was conducted to bring to limelight the training and development activities that the non-teaching staff of GES are being exposed to in order to make them efficient and effective in their responsibilities. This study became necessary as the non-teaching staff also need to attend different kinds of training and development programmes due to the ever-changing work environment, they find themselves. In order to offer the non-teaching staff who served as participants of the study adequate opportunity to talk about their experiences concerning training and development programmes they undergo; qualitative approach to research was used. Again, interviews were conducted with the participants which also offered them the chance to freely express their ideas on the issues concerning their participation in training and development programmes since they joined GES.

The results of the study revealed that the non-teaching staff of GES do attend some training and development programmes from time to time. They however added that the programmes are scarcely organised for them. The results seem to suggest that since their recruitment into the service, much training and development activities had not been given to them to enhance their performance or service delivery. Authorities and school leaders offered less opportunity for the non-teaching staff to attend enough training and development programmes to build their capacities for their respective responsibilities.

The participants however indicated that the training and development programmes they had enjoyed so far been beneficial to them and that accounts for their desire for more of such programmes to be provided for them and on regular basis. They prefer that more of such programmes should be organised for them to enhance the development of their competencies to enable them perform their work more efficiently and effectively. GES and school authorities need

to play vital role in ensuring that the non-teaching staff participate in a lot of professional development programmes and activities to make them alive with their responsibilities in the schools. GES authorities ought to also develop policies that would make it clear for all non-teaching staff to undergo professional development programmes on regular basis to help improve their service delivery.

It is suggested that authorities and school leaders need to do needs assessment and also know the concerns that the non-teaching staff have concerning the training and development programmes they organise for them to improve future organisation of such programmes. Organising and participating in more of such programmes will be more beneficial, if the concerns they have raised are considered in future ones. GES, school authorities and facilitators ought to improve on such programmes for the non-teaching staff to enable them to live up to expectation. Lastly, it is suggested that the contents of future training and development programmes for non-teaching staff of GES should include general administrative practices as well. In other words, the contents of training and development programmes for non-teaching staff of the education service ought to cover both specialised knowledge and administrative practices to help build them well for their respective jobs. As they more or less perform dual roles (specialised duties and administrative functions), their continuous professional development programmes ought to take cognizance of both. This is the only way the non-teaching staff of GES can be equipped to be sufficient for their job.

Suggestions for further research

Based on the results of the study, it is suggested that the study should be replicated in all senior high schools in the country to give a national picture of training and development programmes and activities for non-teaching staff of GES. That would then inform the service on what to do to upgrade the competencies of the non-teaching staff with the education service to help them contribute their quota to the secondary education delivery in Ghana.

It is also suggested such future studies could be conducted using the mixed method approach in order to capture more non-teaching staff and their views on the issues to disclose the extent of the situation. Lastly, the heads of senior high schools could be included in future study to solicit their views on the training and development programmes and activities rendered for the non-teaching staff of GES.

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