REDRESSING SENIOR STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES - IMPLICATION TO MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of the study was to investigate challenges senior staff encounter with the implementation of training and development programmes received. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Population for the study was all senior staff of the College of Technology Education, Kumasi Campus (COLTEK). Participants were chosen through purposive sampling technique. Sample size of 100 senior staff was used for the study. Questionnaire was the main instrument used to elicit responses from participants. Reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained from the pilot test. The results of the study revealed that on-the-job training was predominantly organized for senior staff. The support to implement knowledge and skills acquired from training and development programmes were reported to be lacking. It was recommended that Management of COLTEK should provide senior staff the opportunity to attend off-the-job training to enable them tap the experiences, of employees in other institutions. It was again recommended that Management of COLTEK should provide the necessary support to enable senior staff implement the skills and knowledge gained from training and development programmes.*

KEYWORDS: needs assessment, off-the-job training, on-the-job training, staff development, staff turnover.

INTRODUCTION

Staff training and development are important variables that promote institutional growth. Institutions which give limited attention to these variables render their staff ineffective. Training and development equip staff with broader knowledge to effectively utilize new technologies in daily activities**.** Therefore, institutions which fail to take key interest in current training programmes are rendered ineffective. Training by definition is "the heart of a continuous effort designed to improve staff competency and organizational performance" (Mondy, Noe & Premeaux, 2002). Training involves an expert transferring certain skills and knowledge to improve staff current performance on the job. Development is a broad ongoing multifaceted set of activities to bring staff up to another threshold of performance often to perform a job or new role in the future (Carter & McNamara, 2010). It should be emphasized that development involves learning that goes beyond the knowledge needed for the current job. It is a long term activity which enables staff to keep up with the organizational changes and growth.

Staff training and development are organized when performance appraisal indicates the need for performance improvement creating a pool of readily available personnel as part of an overall

professional development programme. According to Huselid (1995), providing training and job security by organisation are important determinants of employees' retention. Wan (2007) shared similar view that the only strategy for institutions to improve workforce productivity and enhance retention is to optimize the workforce through comprehensive training and development. The quality of staff and the kind of development they receive through training and education are major determinants of long term profitability of an institution. If an institution hires and keeps competent staff then it is also imperative to invest in their training and development to increase productivity. Research has shown that specific benefits such as reduced staff turnover, high productivity, increased efficiency and less supervision are accrued from training and development. Staff often develop greater sense of self-worth dignity and well-being as they become valuable to the institution and the society (Iman, 2002).

Institutions have different approaches to training. Some do not give much attention to training of staff since they view the whole programme as unnecessary cost. Others also see staff training as strategic investment which can lead to an increase in staff productivity and reduced human error. (Mondy et al.,2002).Training and development bring about cost in such areas such as facilitator's fee, course materials and rental facility**.** Against this background, the paper was designed to investigate senior staff training and development challenges with view of devising strategies to manage the situation.

Statement of the problem

The College invests more resources in training and developing senior staff with the expectation that they would be equipped with the requisite skills to help the College attain its goals. Despite this effort, staff performance seems to be less encouraging. The skills senior staff acquired from training programmes are probably less effectively applied. Research has shown that, training provides employees with specific skills or correct deficiencies in their performance while development is an effort to provide employees with abilities the institution needs in the future (Chew, 2004). The questions that arise are that what training and development programmes are provided to staff? What challenges are associated with the training and development programmes senior staff receive? There is the urgent need to answer these and other questions that could come up in the course of the study.

Justification of the Study

There has been a growing interest in training and development of senior staff in tertiary institutions. The reason for this increasing interest is the reality that the effectiveness of these institutions is largely dependent on performance of administrative staff. Implementation of Training and Development Programmes was a gap identified in the field of Training and Development research. Literature searched on Training and Development programmes shows that not much has been done by individual researchers, though few works are available
(Kyeremeh, 2010, Noe, 1999, Kirkpatrick, 1996.). Training and Development research using senior staff to identify challenges of implementing training and development programmes received is non-existent in the College of Technology Education, Kumasi. This paper sought to fill this gap.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate challenges senior staff face in the implementation of training and development programmes. The study was designed to ascertain strategies to overcome senior staff training and development challenges.

Research Questions

The paper was guided by the following questions:

1.   What training development programmes are provided to senior staff of the College of Technology Education in Kumasi?

2.   What major challenges confront senior staff training and development programmes at the College of Technology Education in Kumasi?

3.   What strategies could be adopted to overcome senior staff training and development challenges in the College Technology of Education in Kumasi?

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design was used for the study to find out the existing characteristics, attitude, ideas and opinions of staff on training and development programmes provided in the College. Gay (1987) describes descriptive survey as involving the collection of data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the problem. The study attempts to investigate challenges of training programmes as pertains in the College of Technology Education in Kumasi.

Population

The target population comprised all administrative staff of College of Technology Education. The accessible population consisted of senior staff in the College. Data compiled by Human Resource Unit of the College put administrative staff at 276 comprising 155 junior staff and 121 senior staff.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling method was used to select senior staff in the College. Purposive sampling according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), is non-probability sampling and it is used because those selected are considered to have the requisite information. A total of 121 senior staff representing (44%) percentage of administrative staff formed the sample size for the study.

Instrumentation

The study employed the use of questionnaire as the main instrument to collect data. One set of questionnaire was used. Questionnaire was used because participants were literates. Questionnaire was used because according DeVaus (2002) as cited in Saunders et al. (2009) the instrument can avoid bias in data collection process. Gay (1997) stressed that in descriptive research, data are usually collected by administering questionnaire. Close ended type was used because it allows responses to be ranked and it is easy to construct (Sarantakos, 1998).

Pilot Testing

According to Bell (2005) as cited in Dakoah (2010), additional information about problems can be obtained by giving respondents a further short questionnaire during pilot testing. In order to get accurate data, the instrument was pilot tested at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. This institution has similar characteristics as that of the College of Technology Education. The purpose of the pilot test was to establish reliability of the questionnaire items and also to find out whether the items were good enough to guide respondents to answer the questionnaire. Cronbach Alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the items because the items were mostly multiple scores. The overall reliability coefficient obtained was .83.

Data analysis

Data from the questionnaire were edited for consistency. The items were coded and fed into the computer for analysis with the help of analytical software known as Statistical Product for Service Solution. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. All the three research questions were answered using percentages and frequencies and the results were presented in charts and tables.

RESULTS

The presentation of results was directed by three research questions stated earlier. Attempt was made to determine the training programmes provided to senior staff in College of Technology Education. Responses provided by senior staff relating to training programmes are provided in fig. 1.
Source: Author's Field Data, 2018.
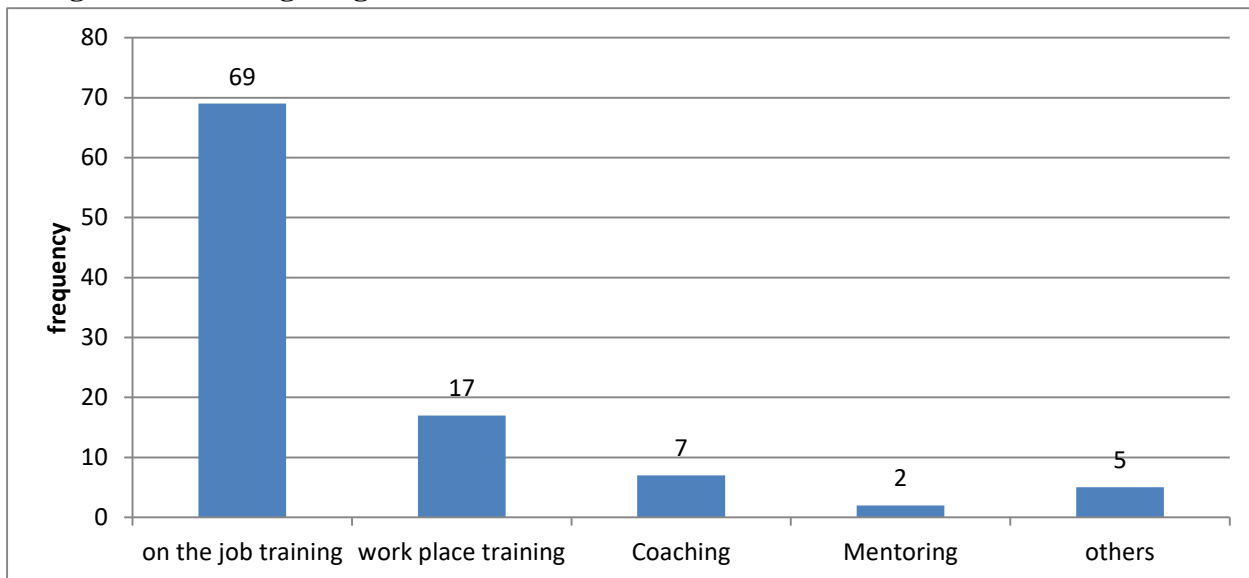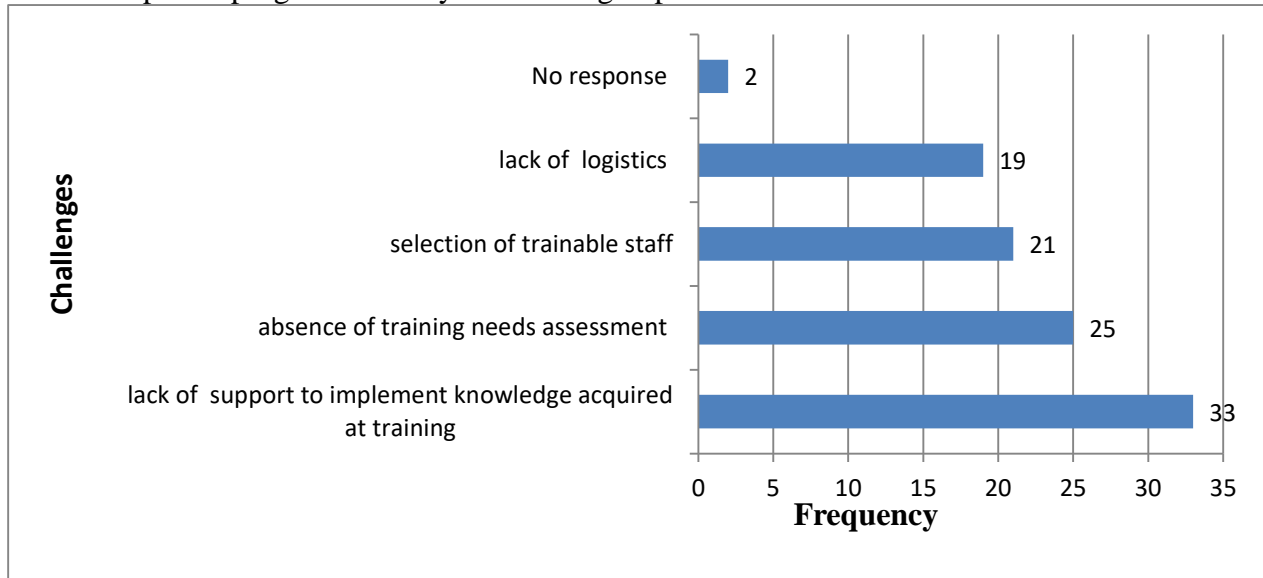
Figure 1: Training Programmes received

Figure 1, showed that 69% of respondents received 'on the job training' whilst 17% participated in work place training. About 7% received training through coaching. About 5% received other training programmes. Only 2% of the respondents which constituted the minority received training

through 'mentoring'. The results mean that majority of the senior staff receive on-the-job training programme.

Challenges of implementing Training and Development programmes received
Senior staff were requested to indicate challenges they face regarding implementation of training and development programmes they receive. Fig: 2 provides the results.

Source: Author's Field Data, 2018.
Figure 2: Challenges of training programmes

As indicated on fig. 2, the study recorded various findings relating to challenges of training and development in the College of Technology Education. On the issue of support to implement knowledge and skills acquired from training, 33% of senior staff answered in affirmative. However, 25% of senior staff indicated absence of training needs assessment as a challenge to them. On selection of trainable staff, 21% reported this to be a challenge whilst the least percentage of senior indicated lack of logistics to be a challenge. The results means that majority of the senior staff do not receive support to implement knowledge acquired from training and development programmes.

The third research question sought to determine the possible strategies to overcome training and development challenges senior staff face. Table 1 presents the details in descending order.

Table 1: Strategies to overcome training and development challenges

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Training programmes should relate to job	30	30.0
Relevant training needs should be identified	32	32.0
Training period should be relatively long	19	19.0
Adequate manuscripts should be provided	8	8.0
Structures for staff training should be strengthened	6	6.0
Training should be periodic	5	5.0
To Total	100	100.0

Source: Author's Field Data, 2018.

Information in Table 1 revealed that the highest percentage (32%) of senior staff suggested that relevant training needs should be identified before training is organized in order to achieve the goals of training and development programmes. The next highest percentage (30%) of senior staff suggested that training programmes should be related to the job being performed. About14% of staff emphasized that training period should be relatively long. Again, 8% of senior staff suggested the need to provide adequate manuscript to trainers. Few respondents (6%) indicated that the structures for training should be strengthened. The least percentage (5%) of senior staff suggested that training should be periodic. The analysis mean that the identification of relevant training needs is the main strategy that could help manage training and development challenges.

DISCUSSION OR FINDINGS

The first question examined training and development programmes senior staff receive in the College of Technology Education. Findings indicated that senior staff had received on-the-job training. It could be inferred from the finding that the College gives priority to on-the-job training rather than other types of training including off-the-job training. On-the-job training is most often specifically geared towards task that needed to be performed more efficiently, relevant to the job, and organizational goals. The implication is that, employees performance on the job is likely to improve as trained personnel become efficient and are able to make better use of the institutions resources. Moreover, employees are able to learn and at the same time integrate into their everyday work environment. This is in support of Decenso and Robins (1996) statement that institutions rely more on the use of on-the-job training than off-the-job training. Other aspects of training programmes which were found to be provided, included workplace training, coaching and mentoring which was in the minority. Although the institution has a variety of training programmes, the focus was on on-the- job training. This finding is in line with Pratt and Benett's

(1990) suggestion that in choosing the type of training, institutions should choose a training method that motivates the trainee to improve upon performance, clearly illustrates the desired skills, provides for active participation by trainee, provides opportunity for practices and also provides timely feedback on the trainee's performance.

Findings on research question two indicated that generally, the support needed to implement knowledge and skills acquired from training was lacking. It could be deduced from the finding that senior staff are not supported to apply the required knowledge and skills gained during training in their respective faculties. The implication is that staff efficiency and effectiveness will not be achieved and this will adversely affect productivity, also the realization of the overall goal of the College may not be achieved. The finding is in consonance with Wexley and Latham (1991) view point that the extent to which staffs are able to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during training to the job context is a key challenge in staff training and development.

The study came out with indication that absence of training needs assessment was not conducted to identify areas needed for training. It could be said that participants are just selected for training as to whether the training satisfies their needs or not. This implies that a lot of resource as well as time will be wasted since the content of the training may not satisfy the interest of participants. This is likely to affect institutional goals and efficiency in administration. This finding is consistent with Armstrong (1995) assertion that training needs analysis should cover problems to be solved as well as future demands based on whether the institution must acquire new skills or knowledge or must improve existing competencies.

The study found that selection of trainable staff for the training was not practiced. This means that required staff are not presented for the training. There is the tendency to waste resources since these staff may already possessed the skills and knowledge and not need training. Hence, the paper established that right staff should be selected.

On strategies to promote effective training and development programmes. The suggested strategies for effective training were ranked in descending order. They included; training should be related to job being performed. This means that effectiveness and commitment on the part of the staff will be achieved since the needed knowledge on the content of the job is provided. The implication is that staff performance will be improved and quality service will be provided as well. This finding is in agreement with Jennings and Banfield's (1993) assertion that training should be a powerful agent of change, enabling institutions to grow, expand and develop its capabilities.

Moreover, identification of training needs also emerged as strategy to manage training and development challenges. The finding means that the institution needs to conduct needs assessment to know the skills and knowledge employees require to enable them demonstrate knowledge and skills expected of them. This will enable senior become efficient and make better use of the institution's resources and also support the institution achieves its target. If training is carried out on the basis of routine training rather than on specific needs, challenges faced by the institution would persist and the institution will not experience any improvement in performance. This finding is in support of Noe's (1999) statement that, the goal of training is for employees to master the

knowledge, skills and behaviors in training programmes and to apply them to their day-to-day activities.

However, it was disclosed that training periods should be relatively long. The finding implies that senior staff need adequate time to cover more areas to equip them with the necessary information to enhance performance of assigned duties. The finding corroborates with Bartol and Martin's (1994) submission that training facilitates employee learning of job related behaviours in order to improve employees performance.

Implications
It was revealed from the study that on-the-job training was given priority. This requires senior staff to grab the opportunity to learn more from the training received to manage daily issues confronting their routine activities. It would be necessary for senior staff to welcome the idea which demands improvement and view them as normal. This would greatly reduce stress and anxiety as a result of lack of knowledge on some aspects of the work. The less provision of coaching and mentoring implies that senior staff are denied of these opportunities which could help explain changes in their work life and improve performance in administration. Staff initiative are killed since they are not stimulated during work. They may lack knowledge on some specific areas, therefore they need to be mentored and coached on how best to apply skills and knowledge received from training and development programmes.
The presence of challenges such as absence of identification of training needs, selection of trainable staff, lack of logistics implies that senior staff probably may not be effective in their work since these may pose constraints on performing their duties.

CONCLUSIONS

A number of findings emerged from training and development programmes offered to senior staff at the College of Technology Education. The findings indicated that on-the-job training was given priority in the institution than other types of training. Coaching and mentoring were not given much attention in the institution.
The study revealed that senior staff faced challenges of obtaining management support to implement knowledge and skills acquired from training. It was found that absence of identification of training needs, selection of staffs that are trainable and inadequate logistics posed a challenge to staff efforts to improve on their performance.
On strategies to overcome the challenges, it was suggested that training programmes should be related to the job senior staff perform, relevant training needs should be identified and training programmes should to be long enough to sustain possible development.

Recommendations for Practice
1.   In order to ensure effective training and development programme, Management should reinforce the use of training programmes to cater for different needs of staff. Off-the-job training programmes should be organized in addition to On- the -job training to offer staff opportunity to attend conferences and workshops at different locations to enable them share ideas with other employees in other institutions.

2.   The selection of the type of training should be deemed most appropriate for the institution to satisfy the needs of staff.

3.   Information from performance appraisal report should be used as the basis for selection of staff for training and development programmes since the report provides adequate information on performance of employees. This will ensure that employees are given appropriate training towards the attainment of institutional goals.

4. Management should support staff to implement the knowledge and skills acquired during training and development programmes in their respective faculties and departments for example staff could be given opportunity to perform task with less supervision after training or assigned new task after training.

5. During the design of training and development programmes, management should provide enough logistics needed for successful training programme of the university. It is also recommended that, training needs assessment must be conducted before training   programme is carried out.

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