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Special Libraries: A Pilot Study

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Introduction

Training is a process of acquiring specific skills. It is a continuous process after basic education. Antai (2002) defines training as the systematic development of employees' knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are required for an organization to meet its goals. Training gives employees inspiration and guidance to perform their jobs effectively. Cowling and Mailer (1992) see training as the development of knowledge required to perform adequately a given task or job (Schermerhorn 1989).

Craig (1976) lists nine reasons for training. They are:

- Increase in productivity
- Improvement in the quality of work and morale
- Development of new skills, knowledge, understanding, and attitude
- Correct use of new tools, machines, process methods, or modification thereof
- Reduction of waste, accident, turnover, and other overhead costs.
- Fighting of obsolescence in skills, technologies, methods, products, markets, and capital management
- Bringing incumbents to a level of performance for the job
- Development of replacements, preparing people for advancement, improving manpower development, and ensuring continuity of leadership
- The survival and growth of organization.

Training includes more than formal classes, workshops, or programs (Street and Street 2006). Gaps between desired and actual organizational outcomes, unit achievements, employee performance levels, or other employee characteristics can become training objectives (Milkovich and Boudreau 1991) for an organization to meet technological changes, it must train and retrain employees to keep abreast of changes in technology and productive in their jobs.

Training can be carried out in many ways. Beardwell and Holden (1997) group training into two primary areas: on-the-job training and off-job training. The former is the training in which the supervisor or another co-worker teaches the individual to do a job, while the latter is the case in which the individual is sent to a vocational school or institute where training is provided. Holt (1993) groups training into four areas: on-the-job training, off-job training, vestibule training, and institutional training.

In-service training allows employees to develop and enhance their skills, which include socialization in different forms. Newly recruited staff need training before beginning work, while more experienced staff require retraining to keep up with the demands and challenges of their present job. The success of any organization depends on its workforce, and to get the best from the workforce, it must be continuously trained and developed. Ubeku (1970) states that money spent on training and development

of employees is well- invested. Staff are motivated to work harder when given the opportunity to develop their skills by training.

The Petroleum Training Institute has undertaken a number of training efforts. This study is a pilot project using a small population at one institution to assess the types of training programs available and the impact of training on the employees, the purpose and benefit of training to both staff and management of the Petroleum Training Institute.

Methodology

This is a pilot study using a small population at one institution. It gathered data using the survey method and employing a questionnaire. The Petroleum Training Institute library has 26 employees. This study is a census of the entire population. Egbule and Okobia (2001) observe that an entire population can be used as a sample when it is not large, when there is time to conduct the study, and when the sole objective of the study is to provide an accurate account of the population. Twenty six copies of questionnaire were administered, and fifteen were returned, a 57 percent return rate. Analysis is based on frequency counts.

Findings and Discussion

Demographics

| Gender | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Male | 9 | 60 |
| Female | 6 | 40 |
| Total | 15 | 100 |
| Age | Frequency | Percent |
| 21 – 30 | 2 | 13 |
| 31 – 40 | 10 | 67 |
| 41 – 50 | 3 | 20 |
| Total | 15 | 100 |
| Educational qualification | Frequency | Percent |
| First school leaving certificate | 2 | 13 |
| WASC/GCE/OL certificate | 5 | 33 |
| Diploma certificate | 4 | 27 |
| HND/Bachelor degree | 2 | 23 |
| Masters/ PhD degree | 2 | 13 |
| Total | 15 | 100 |

Questionnaire Data

The responses show that there is an awareness of the availability of training in the library. About half the respondents have experienced long-term formal training, and nearly 70 percent have experienced short seminars and workshops. All those who were sent to formal training had the expenses paid by the institution. In nearly all those cases, the expenses paid were more than merely the tuition for the course. Nearly three quarters of respondents felt that they had acquired new skills that helped them with their

work, and the same portion agreed that training helped motivation. More than half the respondents felt that lack of funding did not have a negative effect on the training programs.

| Question | Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Have you been involved in-service program? | Yes | 9 | 60 |
| | No | 6 | 40 |
| | Total | 15 | 100 |
| Question | Responses | Frequency | Percent |
| If yes, was it a long-term course such as school or travelling abroad? | Yes | 7 | 47 |
| | No | 8 | 53 |
| | Total | 15 | 100 |
| Question | Responses | Frequency | Percent |
| Was it a short course such as a seminar, symposium, workshop, conference, etc.? | Yes | 10 | 67 |
| | No | 5 | 33 |
| | Total | 15 | 100 |
| Question | Responses | Frequency | Percent |
| For a long-term course, were you sponsored by your institute? | Yes | 7 | 47 |
| | No | 0 | 0 |
| | Total | 7 | 47 |
| Question | Responses | Frequency | Percent |
| Did the sponsorship take the form of paying school fees alone? | Yes | 7 | 47 |
| | No | 0 | 0 |
| | Total | 7 | 47 |
| Question | Responses | Frequency | Percent |
| Did the sponsorship take the form of paying your fees, salary, and allowances like transport? | Yes | 7 | 47 |
| | No | 0 | 0 |
| | Total | 7 | 47 |
| Were you expected to work while on holiday or break? | Yes | 7 | 47 |
| | No | 0 | 0 |
| | Total | 7 | 47 |
| Question | Responses | Frequency | Percent |
| Which of the following were sponsored by your institution? | Conference/workshop/lunch | 12 | 80 |
| | Transportation | 2 | 13 |
| | Hazard allowance | 1 | 7 |
| | Total | 15 | 100 |
| Question | Responses | Frequency | Percent |
| Did you acquire new skills that helped improve your | Yes | 11 | 73 |

| | | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| work? | | | |
| | No | 4 | 27 |
| | Total | 15 | 100 |
| Question | Responses | Frequency | Percent |
| Do you agree that training motivates staff to perform better? | Yes | 11 | 73 |
| | No | 4 | 27 |
| | Total | 15 | 100 |
| Question | Responses | Frequency | Percent |
| Does lack of funds affect the training program? | Yes | 6 | 40 |
| | No | 9 | 60 |
| | Total | 15 | 100 |

Respondents were asked to make suggestions for improving their institution's training program. The suggestions for improvement reflect an issue of timely payment

| Suggestion | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Institution should pay salaries on time | 2 | 13 |
| Fees should be given on time | - | - |
| Emolument should be paid on time | 1 | 7 |
| Total | 3 | 20 |

Conclusion

Staff development is essential for every organization. Organizations must realize that it is crucial to train staff to achieve increases in productivity. Oyibo (1995) states that training helps meet technological changes, contributes to organizational development, and leads to greater satisfaction while motivating employees.

Training allows better use to be made of human resources, by giving employees mastery over their work. Staff development is especially urgent in libraries because of the challenges posed by modern technology and the resulting information explosion. Technological advancement has rendered old skills obsolete. Training is necessary to update obsolete skills and pave the way for higher productivity.

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