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HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS: SAM JONAH LIBRARY IN FOCUS

Abstract

The contribution of human capital to the survival of libraries cannot be underestimated, this necessitates their regular training and development for increased performance. The aim of the study was to assess the extent to which human capital development in the Sam Jonah Library improves performance of staff. The qualitative method was used, where interview was used to solicit information from senior management. Six out of the eight senior management members were interviewed. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data from the interviews conducted. The findings of the study showed that though there were training programmes organized in the library and outside the library, they were not adequate for the number of staff who required training. It was also found out that some staff had training in other fields other than library related programmes. Further, there was no improvement in the performance of staff who received training especially those who undertook professional library studies. Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended among others that the library should regularly measure the performance of trained staff in order to identify gaps in their skills which will enable the library to design relevant training programmes to boost staff performance. The Library should also develop and document a training policy to be used as a guide to training so as to select programmes that will be constructive to all staff from all sections of the library.

Key words: Human capital, human capital development, performance, performance measurement

Introduction

The most valuable asset in an organization is the Human resource. This is because it assimilates the other functional areas of the organization. Human capital is the backbone to the success of all organizations including libraries. For this reason libraries have shifted their attention to developing human capital as a key to addressing the information needs of their clients especially in this era of information overload and technological advancements.

Rastogi (2000) indicates that human capital is a necessary input for all organizations that want to achieve and maintain competitive advantage. Organizational wellbeing is dependent on the inborn and learned abilities that human beings possess (Fitz-enz, 2000). To support this statement by Fitz-enz, Martinez (2013) point out that all large institutions the world over are recognized by the behaviors and capabilities or talents of their human resource.

Igun (2006) defines HC as the overall stock of knowledge, skills, competencies, and creative abilities that a population possesses. Organizations play a great role in positioning the employees to perform effectively through a continuous development of human capital. Okereke et al., (2011), defines human capital development as “job enrichment that has an intrinsic mechanism to motivate an employee to accept and play challenging organizational tasks”.

Provision of quality service is very essential in all libraries. Poll and TeBoekhorst, (2007), argue that qualified professional librarians are needed to cope with the frequent changes in technology in order to provide prompt and accurate services to library patrons. Having skillful, experienced and capable employees is imperative to the survival of libraries all over the world. Generally, there

have been several researches on human capital and organizational performance. A great portion of these researches deals with human resource management and demonstrates the vast debate on the relationship that exists between Human Capital Development and productivity or performance of employees (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2009). The growing attention being given to the human capital concept is as a result of its importance to organizational development. As a result, Human Capital Development has been tagged as being very essential to organizational performance. It has been observed that formal education systems of several institutions in the world do not provide specific skills for specific positions in the job environment (Malaolu et al., 2013). Essentially, it is mandatory for all organizations to train their employees according to the specific duties that are performed because limited number of individuals in an organization may possess the required skills, competencies and knowledge to undertake specific jobs or functions whilst a greater number may require extensive staff training in order to equip them with the needed skills to be able to fit into their job functions Malaolu et al., (2013).

In the view of Gratton (2000) investing in an organization financially and technologically is capable of bringing improvement in an organization but this improvement cannot be sustained in the long run. The attitudes, skills and capabilities of people are very essential to sustaining the competitive advantage of the organization. This is why efficient and effective development of human capital is crucial in libraries.

Sam Jonah Library of University of Cape Coast

Sam Jonah Library was established in 1962 and it is one of the largest academic libraries in Ghana. The staff strength of the library is two hundred and two (202) which is made up of eight (8) senior members, eighty eight (88) senior staff and one hundred and six (106) junior staff (Staff Directory, 2015). These categories of staff help to drive the mission of the library which is to provide timely and adequate information to the library's patrons.

The goals of the library cannot be achieved without human capital. Human capital is the tool that is used to drive organizational success and as such must be effectively managed in libraries. Library staff should be well equipped in terms of training for high productivity. However, staff training has not yielded the expected productivity from beneficiaries in Sam Jonah Library. Training programmes are not regularly evaluated to ascertain how useful they have been. Again promotion in the university including the library is dependent on certification rather than performance. Staff tend to concentrate more on their studies whilst on duty rather than on increased performance. This situation greatly affects work performance in Sam Jonah Library.

Statement of the problem

Developing human capital is an essential tool for goal achievement in libraries. Several studies have been conducted on human capital development in libraries. However, these studies hardly paid attention to evaluating the impact of training programmes on staff performance. Meanwhile, Ninh et al (2010) state that one of the most important management activity in libraries and information centers is performance measurement. Performance of staff in libraries should be measured after training in order to ascertain the effectiveness of training programmes.

Training programmes organized in libraries aim at bringing significant improvement in the performance of beneficiaries. Whilst there may be rationalization for continuous implementation of such programmes, limited research exist on the actual effect of these development programmes on performance of beneficiaries and the library at large. Again, personal observation by the researchers indicates that no assessment has been done to find out the extent to which these training activities are meeting the objectives of both the library and the library staff. The need for such assessment has become crucial. This study will therefore assess the training programmes of Sam Jonah Library and how these programmes are bringing improvement in the performance of library staff.

Objectives of the study

1. Find out the available training programmes
2. Ascertain the effectiveness of available training programmes
3. Find out the effect of human capital development on performance of staff
4. Proffer recommendations based on findings

Literature review

Human capital development in Academic libraries require adequate attention due to the recent continuous application of information technology in almost all facets of librarianship. Also, patrons of Academic libraries recently prefer electronic resources to print resources and a greater aspect of service provision in libraries in the developed world are undertaken electronically. Librarians in Africa, particularly Ghana need to be trained and retrained to cope with the changes to be able to

manage information equipment, package and repackage information, market, digitize and adopts to the current trend of organizing library materials (Mabawonku, 2005). Alemna (2012) indicates that, for libraries to function effectively and efficiently, training is very essential to increase productivity, reduce supervision and improve performance. He further emphasized that library services cannot be improved without appropriate personnel.

Procedures that are used to build on the capabilities and skills of staff in Academic libraries include; seminars, conferences, short courses in libraries, library schools and exchange programmes with other internal as well as international libraries. All these training avenues are aimed at bringing improvement in staff performance and professional librarians must have training in order to remain germane in the changing technological world.

Performance in libraries has been defined by Hiller and Kyrillidou (2008) as the degree to which goals and objectives pertaining to a particular library in terms of information provision are achieved. In all instances, there should be a standard by which a given task will be measured. Ninh et al (2010) state that, one of the most important management activities in library and information centers is performance measurement. The performance of individuals who receive training in libraries should continually be measured in order to comprehend the impact that these training might have had on the staff performance. Again, it also helps to reward or further build on the capacity of staff for expected increase in performance. According to VanScotter (2000), even though there are exceptions to career development, high performers are promoted more easily than low performers. For this research, performance of an employee is conceptualized to be the behaviors that are very relevant to the attainment of the library's goals. This suggests that employee

performance should always be continually assessed in order to fix problems of deficiencies as and when necessary.

Several organizations construe performance of their staff to be a way of appraising employee effectiveness. Boateng (2012) posits that performance measurement is a way through which an accomplished task is determined and special recognition given. Performance measurement is therefore a system of rating the performance of employees whether in a group or individually. There are several indicators used by different organizations to measure performance of their employees. Some of these include; quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost effectiveness of the work as indicators to determine the level of employee performance against a set of standards within the performance appraisal process.

Human capital development procedures should include mechanisms that will adequately equip the individual to perform effectively. Dessler (2003) intimated that employee performance can only be improved through recruiting, screening, training and appraising. All organizations must strive to equip employees with the needed skill and level of commitment so as to increase organizational productivity. Developing human capital for increased performance deals with providing learning opportunities, skill development and training in order to provide the individual with up- to- date knowledge to effectively perform. A study conducted by Josan (2013) revealed a relationship between human resource and organizational effectiveness. She stated further that organizations should invest in education, health and training of staff so that performance can be increased.

In a research conducted by Brenya (2014) on the effect of HCD on employee commitment in Ghana, it was indicated that activities undertaken by organizations to increase the effectiveness of an employee should be given adequate attention. Brenya stressed that organizations believe they do not own human assets therefore they stand a high risk of investing in them and as such prefer to invest in capital assets. However, if organizations continue to dwell on this notion, they will not be able to realize the exceptionality of human, since it is the humans who co-ordinates the other factors of production to yield maximum output and attain and sustain competitive advantage (Brenya, 2014). On the contrary, research conducted by Saka and Haruna (2013) in the University of Maiduguri Library found out that library staff who had requisite skills after training were not committed to their duties. The university was also unable to insist on discipline to check the negative attitude of staff who fail to perform even though they have gone through the necessary training. Saka and Haruna (2013) suggest that management of libraries should compel staff to perform effectively after receiving the necessary training.

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was the descriptive survey design. The qualitative method was used to collect data from respondents. Interviews were conducted with senior members (who form the library management) of Sam Jonah Library. In all six management staff out of the eight were interviewed. Semi-structured and one-on-one interview schemes were used in order to obtain first-hand information from interviewees. This type of interview ensures homogeneity and makes room for the exceptionality of the many individuals and circumstances from which information is sort. Because the total number of senior members was eight, using the interview helped to get first-hand information on policy issues. An Infinix hot note five phone was

used to record responses which were later transcribed. Transcriptions of the interviews were sent to participants to ensure that the content and contexts had been correctly recorded by the researcher. Not only did this allow for corrections and additions, but it also increased construct validity. Responses were therefore analyzed for emerging themes. Direct quotes were used where necessary.

Findings and discussion

Analysis was based on the interviews conducted with management. Six interviews were conducted. The results were organized and discussed according to the objectives of the study.

Available training programmes

In the view of Gary (2001), training techniques are the means through which knowledge is imparted to learners. These techniques may either be on-the-job or off-the-job training programmes. As the first objective of the study, the researchers wanted to find out the available training techniques or programmes used in building the capacity of staff of Sam Jonah Library. Interviews with library management revealed that there were both training programmes organized for staff internally and those that staff had to acquire externally.

The internal programmes were identified to include; seminar programmes, workshops on specific areas of library work and orientation for new staff members. It was indicated that the library regularly organized series of training workshops for staff. It was however added by one senior management member that these training programmes were most times skewed towards one particular aspect of library work identified to be cataloguing.

“There were a lot of in-service training programmes organized for cataloguers at the expense of the other sections such as clients’ service, digital library and acquisition”
.Internal training opportunities should be made to incorporate all staff at all sections of the library not only on cataloguers”.

Further, it was revealed that there were opportunities for staff to undertake formal professional training programmes outside the library which included professional library studies or information studies and other programmes relevant to information science. Nonetheless, these training were mostly acquired from University of Ghana, Legon. It was also revealed by some (3) members that staff also had the option of obtaining programmes which were ICT related, yet demand always outstripped supply. This situation compelled some staff to enroll in programmes that were not library related.

This finding is in line with the findings of Saka and Haruna (2013) who conducted a study in the branch libraries in University of Maiduguri and found out that limited opportunities for staff development was a great challenge in those libraries. If staff who are ready to be trained are unable to acquire the opportunity to do so, their performance is affected because some may end up enrolling in programmes that may not be directly related to their field of work. It was therefore not out of place for management members to indicate that inadequate training opportunity was one of the factors hindering performance in the library which led some staff to enroll in programmes which were not library related.

Staff development is very useful and necessary in all libraries. It is one of the tools used to improve the effectiveness of an employee. In the view of Creth (2004), the achievement of success in

academic libraries is dependent on the quality of staff and for that matter, staff development should always be geared towards the objectives of organizations. Based on this, the researchers sought to find out whether or not there was a documented policy on staff training in the library.

The results of the interviews revealed that there was no documented policy for staff development in the library. One respondent was blunt to say that;

“There is no policy on staff development in the library, even though several training is organized in the library”.

It was also indicated by another management member that

“There is no documented procedure to follow for developing staff of the library”

However, one senior member mentioned that

“The university as an institution had a documented policy for staff development which has been instituted by the Training and Development section and the library conforms to the general policy of the university”.

Again, another senior member indicated that the librarian was making efforts to design a policy for staff development for the library since the library provided special services which required constant staff training. Management indicated that on-the-job training was a tool they were using to develop the human capital in the library; however, these processes were not documented. The absence of documented policy on training shows that even though there are training programmes in Some Jonah Library inadequate attention has been paid to it by the library. It is however indispensable for the library to document and use a training policy.

Effectiveness of available training programmes

It was essential to find out from management how effective the available training programmes (both on-the-job and off-the-job) had been. One management member indicated that:

“On-the-job training programmes have not been very effective in the library because it was mostly skewed to only one area of library work”

Another management member stated categorically that

“Even though there are lots of in - service training programmes being undertaken in the library, they have not been very effective and productive as expected. This is because training equipment such as computers and adequate internet connectivity are sometimes lacking.”

It was further added that, the inadequate training equipment made it difficult for all training participants to have “hands-on” experience during training. This makes it difficult for trainees to apply the knowledge that they acquire during training in performing their normal library duties.

Also, another reason that was attributed to the ineffectiveness of the training programmes was that resource persons were mostly from within the library which to some extent affected the seriousness that trainees attached to the training programmes. This also affected the effectiveness of the programmes because majority of the trainees always left the training room not having proper grip of what had been taught. Further revelation was that the library had not been able to properly document the training programmes that were undertaken in the library. This, as explained by management, made it difficult for tracking the effectiveness of the programmes. This conforms to

the findings of Ezeani (2008), who undertook a study in libraries of Nigeria and found out Nigerian libraries did not have training policies or document to guide the training activities in the library and even those who had, did not use them. Interview revealed that Training programmes that were offered by institutions such as University of Ghana and the Ghana Library Association were very effective. University of Ghana for instance offers professional training for library staff who desire to become professional librarians. Because it is a formal education and staff had to pass examinations to become professionals, a lot of seriousness is attached to the programme. Further, five out of the six respondents specified that since staff may also be promoted after having this formal education, seriousness is always attached to it. Workshops and seminars organized by the Ghana Library Association were also very effective. The reason given was that, these workshops are most times made up of programmes that are very necessary for the library work. Staff who are selected to attend are expected to train other library staff after receiving the knowledge and this led to the seriousness attached to the programmes.

Effect of Human Capital Development on performance

Performance is one of the elements that can be evaluated in all organizations. Mathis and Jackson (2009) outlined that performance is about “quantity and quality” of output, timeliness of output, presence, efficiency and effectiveness of work complemented by employees. The success of libraries is dependent extensively on the capabilities and expertise of the human capital. In the view of Gratton (2000), investing in an organization financially and technologically is capable of bringing improvement in the organization. This however cannot be sustained in the long run. Only the attitudes, skills and capabilities of people are very essential to the sustainability of the competitive advantage of the organization. It is anticipated by every manager that after equipping

the individual with the necessary skills, their performance is to be positively affected. It was therefore not out of place for the researchers to find out the effect that human capital development in the library has on performance.

Most of the interviewees (5) agreed during the interview that individual performance is expected to improve after the acquisition of the requisite training and development. However, findings revealed otherwise;

“Staff who acquired the requisite skills were not ready to perform their duties and that affected performance of the library.”

Another management member was blunt to say that ;

“Especially those who have had training in professional librarianship were not ready to work effectively”

In the quest to further find out the reasons why staff did not perform effectively after having professional training in the library field, it was found out that

“Staff who expected to be promoted to higher levels after training refused to work effectively when they were not promoted to the level they required.”

Again, it was revealed that majority of the staff had to settle for training which are not library related. This was the case especially with the Junior Library Assistants who wanted to become Senior Library Assistants. This category of staff did not need to have any professional qualification in the library profession before being promoted to the next step. Majority of them therefore enrolled in programmes that were not related to the work they did in the library. Performance was therefore compromised, because they did not have the required training for increased performance.

Management also indicated that, some staff studied whilst on duty and this affected their performance.

Another reason that was assigned to staff not performing effectively after receiving training was that,

“promotion in the entire university was based on certification rather than performance.”

“Staff do not care about increased performance because they know that is not what will be used for their promotion.”

The importance of performing effectively even after receiving required training is lost on staff. If trainees continue not to perform effectively, it could be possible that their promotions will not be granted because VanScotter (2000) asserts that high performers are promoted more easily than low performers. It was further revealed through the interview that some staff who had in-service training did not have enough equipment to work with in their various sections. Training requires constant practice towards perfection, however, due to insufficient equipment makes this constant practice impossible leading to retraining after adequate equipment had been made available.

Lastly, it was found out during the interview that no proper system had been laid down to measure the performance of staff after training and this made it difficult to frequently assess the effectiveness of the training programmes. Performance measurement is very essential in rating the performance of the individual, whether in a group or individually. It could be deduced from the findings that human capital development in the library did not lead to increased staff performance due to the earlier mentioned limitations.

Conclusion

It could be concluded based on the findings of the study that libraries see the worth of continually measuring the impact of training programmes or human capital development on work performance of trainees. It is evident that placing premium on continually measuring the impact of training programmes lead to increased performance of library staff. This is because the measurement will help to either add more training programmes or improve the already existing ones. It is however unfortunate that most libraries in Ghana do not lay emphasis on the assessment of available training programmes which has resulted in lapses in the training needs of staff. It is incumbent on libraries to try as much as possible to effectively and regularly assess the impact of any available training programme on staff performance and for that matter the productivity of the library at large.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made.

It was revealed that on the job training programmes were mainly skewed towards one area of library work identified to be cataloging and off the job training programmes were also not enough to meet the training needs of staff. It is recommended that library management ensures that in-service training programmes organized in the library incorporates the requirements of all staff from all sections of the library. Staff should be made to indicate their training needs. This will ensure the training needs of all sections of the library are captured and taken care of. Additionally, management should document all the training programmes organized and those that are yet to be

organized in order to be consistent. This will help in the effective evaluation of each training programme after its implementation.

It was observed that on the job training in the library had not been very effective. Also, products of such programmes did not have enough equipment to effectively carry out their duties after training. It is therefore recommended that library management seeks funding from stakeholder organizations and philanthropists to enable them acquire relevant equipment for trainers and trainees for their use. It is again recommended that library management engages resource persons from outside the libraries. This will engender some seriousness on the part of staff during training.

The research revealed that development of the human capital in the library had not yielded the expected performance. Performance standards should be set by the library for every category of staff and staff must be made aware of its existence. Again, the library should outline and circulate the problems that they face in terms of performance to the entire university management so that performance and certification will both be used as criteria for promoting staff of the library. Management should also re-examine the reward system in terms of promotion of staff who have received professional training in the library field, to help reduce the demotivation of staff who have had the required qualification.

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