

INFLUENCE OF TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES ON STAFF JOB PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of training opportunities on staff job performance in public universities in Benue State of Nigeria. Two research questions were asked for the study and two hypotheses formulated to be tested at 0.05 level of significance. Ex-post facto design was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised all 1,250 academic staff (630 from University of Agriculture, Makurdi and 620 from Benue State University, Makurdi). Simple random sampling was used to sample 250 staff (126 from University of Agriculture, Makurdi and 124 from Benue State University, Makurdi). The sample fraction of 0.2 was used to select the sample from each university. The instrument that was used to collect data for study was titled: Influence of Training Opportunities on Job Performance Questionnaire (ITOJPQ). In order to ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by four experts: two experts each in Educational Management and Test and Measurement from Benue State University, Makurdi and Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi respectively. The questionnaire was trial-tested on academic staff of Kogi State University and Cronbach Alpha was used to determine its reliability, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.85. Data collected were analysed using mean scores and standard deviation to answer the research questions. A 4-point rating scale was used to score the responses. The hypotheses were tested using chi-square at 0.05 level of significance. The study found that training and discipline do not significantly influence staff job performance in public universities in Benue State. It was recommended among others that management of universities should use the resources of the school to train the staff. Management should not relent in the discipline of their staff as well as staff and on their part, staff should develop self control.

Key words: Training, On-the-job, Off-the-job, Job performance

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Introduction

The university education system occupies an enviable position such that it houses egg heads who give in their energy, intelligence, time and other resources to see that the goals and objectives of the institution are achieved maximally. According to Binglar and Etale (2014), the most important roles of the university system in any society apart from teaching are development of new knowledge, research work and community services. The staff of the universities may not just make this happen easily. It may also depend on how well they are prepared or encouraged. It goes therefore to say that staff job performance depends on how best the staff are trained. According to Okpanachi and Okpara (2014), the university plays a pivotal role in human, institutional and national development. No individual, corporate organisation or government can afford to toy with it without consequences. The centrality of the role of the university in development is conveyed by this simple image: If the universe has shrunk into a global village (as has been often asserted) the university by its mandate, is the village headmaster to give it direction, purpose, and to light its way to progress (Adebayo & Adeoye, 2012). The primacy of the university warrants that its staff have to be given enough training so that they can do their best.

Public universities in Nigeria depend on funds provided by the government to run their programmes. Training of university staff too requires funds. However, funds allocated to public universities in Nigeria continue to dwindle. Omole (2018) notes that the Buhari-led administration has put allocation to education on a reverse gear, with an unimpressive yearly reduction to the education sector. Aremo in Adesulu (2017) avers that funding is a causative factor to quality education. Training of staff of the university is equally a way of craving for quality in the system. The worry here is that not much attention seems to be paid to training as observed by relevant stakeholders (students and the community). For the university system to yield maximum result, staff training must be given optimum attention. Emechebe (2009) defines training as the process of equipping staff with the necessary skills required to perform their jobs satisfactorily. Management Study Guide (2013) sees training as an endeavour aimed to improve or develop additional competency or skills in an employee on the job one currently holds in order to increase the performance or productivity. According to Wise GEEK (2013), management training includes courses and workshops that prepare managers to face the wide array of challenges involved in supervising people and managing systems and projects. Onah (2014) sees training as an organised and coordinated development of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed by an individual to master a given situation or perform a certain task within an organisational setting.

Universities in Nigeria can offer their staff on-the-job and off-the-job training opportunities to improve their job performance. On-the-job training refers to training given to staff while they are still doing their normal duties. According to Heathfield (2018), on-the-job is teaching the skills, knowledge, and competencies that are needed for employees to perform a specific job within the workplace and work environment. On-the-job training uses the regular or existing workplace tools, machines, documents, equipment, knowledge, and skills necessary for an employee to learn to effectively perform his or her job. On-the-job training can be done through the following ways; job rotation, peer mentoring, coaching, orientation, induction programmes and so on. On the other hand, off-the-job training can be done through sending staff on in-service, conferences, seminars, refresher courses, programmed instruction and so on. Off-the-job training on the other hand is offered outside the usual workplace, employees have the

opportunities of interacting and exchanging ideas with colleagues from other organisations as well as being exposed to external facilities and resources. It takes the form of lectures, conferences, case studies, visual training and simulated programme instructions, day release, short term and long term courses among others (Abosede, 2015).

The university system exists such that changes and innovations are needed to maintain excellence. Usen (2009) avers that insufficient provision for training opportunities to acceptable standards constitutes one of the major sources of the poor quality of education in many schools. According to ZeroMillion.com (2013), training is often considered for new employees only. This is a mistake because ongoing training for current employees helps them adjust to rapidly changing job requirements. According to Wise Geek (2013) specific benefits accrue from training and developing workers which include increased productivity; reduced employee turnover; increased efficiency resulting in financial gains and decreased need for supervision. They went further to state that employees frequently develop a greater sense of self-worth, dignity and well-being as they become more valuable to the firm and to society. Staff of the university system needs training continually so as to keep with the challenges of the work, improve research and create changes that might foster quality education. It is evident that there are training gaps which have to be filled. In trying to fill these gaps, Halidu (2015) cautioned that academics will discharge their designated responsibilities effectively if the academic system/environment fosters academic fellowships, workshops, seminars and conferences. To also prove that training opportunities are not consistent, Halidu's study showed that, Tertiary Education Trust Fund should improve on its training policy in its entire ramification because in recent times academics are being faced with innovations and techno- scientific developments so as to meet up with the changing trends and circumstances.

Job performance of a staff in any organization is of paramount importance in achieving organizational goals. The success or failure of any organization is dependent on the extent of its performance (Tinuke, 2014). The researchers observe that no organization can exist unless its workers are highly productive. McShane and Glinow (2005) opine that performance is goal directed behaviour under an individual control that supports organizational objectives. Olorunsola (2012) argues that the un-committed attitude of staff is an indication of lack of job satisfaction. This unhealthy attitude to work, he observes, is common when newly employed staff are not trained to fit into their new jobs. According to Bingilar and Etale (2014), workers who are aware of current development in their profession including new knowledge acquisition are positively in position to boost their productivity index. The essence of training is to reduce obsolescence to the barest minimum. Hence development programmes are used productively. In a rapidly-evolving job landscape, employees need to be trained and taught about new technologies and their applications. With training and development, employees can stay up-to-date, use new technologies and give up on the old ways of performing a task. They can finish a task faster and show improved results with the right training. It will also give them confidence and enable them to adopt new and better ways to achieve their goals and objectives (www.whatishumanresource.com, 2018). The university system is a conglomeration of eggs that need to be trained and retrained so that they can impact on their students and the society at large through quality research. The training so acquired can boast their productivity and by extension help to improve that of the students they teach. Every effort has to be made to sustain the training opportunities of the staff of the university.

Statement of the Problem

It is perceived that universities that experience higher job performance may be due to adequate training opportunities given to the staff of the institutions. It is further observed that most public universities in the North Central Zone do not seem to train their staff as they should. For instance, full fellowship is not always granted for lecturers to go for higher degrees especially abroad, and many staff are not sponsored to attend national and international conferences. According to Halidu (2015), disparities exist in training opportunities staff in science and arts. Evidence shows that out of the 45 PhD admissions of the ten universities, only three came from arts and social sciences which is about 6% of the total admission recorded. These issues if allowed to continue may affect the job performance of the staff in the affected fields of study since they may lack in contemporary innovations and research in their fields. Consequentially, the effects of all these is poor job performance. The problem for the study therefore is to investigate the influence of training opportunities on staff job performance in public universities in Benue State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study.

1. How do on-the-job training opportunities influence job performance of staff of public universities in Benue State?
2. What is the influence of off-the-job training opportunities on job performance of staff of public universities?

Hypotheses

The researcher formulated the following hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. On-the-job training opportunities do not significantly influence job performance of staff in public universities in Benue State.
2. Off-the-job training opportunities do not significantly influence job performance of staff in public universities.

Methodology

Ex post facto design was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised all 1,250 academic staff (630 from University of Agriculture, Makurdi and 620 from Benue State University, Makurdi). Simple random sampling was used to sample 250 staff (126 from University of Agriculture, Makurdi and 124 from Benue State University, Makurdi). The sample fraction of 0.2 was used to select the sample from each university. The instrument that was used to collect data was titled: Influence of Training Opportunities on Job Performance Questionnaire (ITOJPQ). In order to ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by four experts: two experts each in Educational Management and in Test and Measurement from the Benue State University and Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi respectively. The questionnaire was trial tested on academic staff of Kogi State University, Ayingba and the Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded a coefficient of 0.85. This showed that the instrument was high to achieve its purpose. Data collected were analysed using mean scores and standard deviation to answer the research questions. A 4-point rating scale was used to score the responses as Strongly Agree (SA)=4, Agree (A)=3, Disagree (D)=2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1. The

implication of this rating scale shows that an item that has a mean that is greater than the cut-off point of 2.50 influence on the job performance in public universities in Benue State but the one that is below the cut-off point does not. The hypotheses were tested using chi-square at 0.05 level of significance.

Result/Findings

Analysis of Research Questions

The two research questions posed for the study were answered as follows:

Research Question One

How do on-the-job training opportunities influence job performance of staff of public universities in Benue State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Respondents on On-The-Job Training Opportunities on Job Performance in Public Universities in Benue State.

Item No.	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	S.D	Decision
1.	Public universities in Benue always use job rotation to enhance the performance of their staff.	62	73	66	47	2.60	1.06	Agree
2.	Universities in Benue State always use peer mentoring to improve the job performance of their staff.	62	69	71	46	2.59	1.06	Agree
3.	Staff meetings are often held in the university to discuss on how best staff can do their jobs.	63	67	68	50	2.58	1.08	Agree
4.	Public universities give orientation to their staff for improved performance.	62	68	70	48	2.58	1.07	Agree
5.	Public universities in the state constantly embark on internship training for their staff for improved performance.	44	59	84	61	2.35	0.54	Disagree
Cluster Mean and S.D.						2.54	0.96	

Table 1 showed that items 1, 2, 3 and 4 have mean ratings of 2.60, 2.59, 2.58 and 2.58 with corresponding standard deviations of 1.06, 1.06, 1.08, and 1.07; all mean are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implied that public universities in Benue State always use job rotation to enhance the performance of their staff. Universities in Benue State always use peer mentoring to improve the job performance of their staff. Staff meetings are often held in the university to discuss on how best staff can do their jobs. Public universities give orientation to their staff for improved performance. Item 5 however has a mean of 2.35 and a corresponding standard deviation of 0.54. The mean of 2.35 is lesser than the

cut-off point of 2.50 which implies that, public universities in the state do not always use internship to train their staff for improved job performance. The cluster mean of 2.54 which is above the mean cut-off point of 2.50 implies that on-the-job training opportunities in public universities influence job performance in Benue State.

Research Question Two

What is the influence of off-the-job training opportunities on job performance of staff of public universities?

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Respondents on Off-On-Job Training Opportunities in Public Universities in Benue State.

Item No.	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	S.D	Decision
6.	Staff of universities are always granted scholarship for further studies improve their performance.	75	60	63	50	2.65	1.11	Agree
7.	Staff of universities is always sent on international conferences to improve their performance.	64	78	62	44	2.65	1.05	Agree
8.	Staff of universities are always sent on seminars to enhance their performance..	64	80	54	50	2.64	1.08	Agree
9.	Public universities in Benue State often organize refresher courses to build staff capacity.	81	62	65	40	2.74	1.09	Agree
10.	Public universities in Benue State often use programmed instruction to improve staff performance.	64	79	64	41	2.64	1.04	Agree
Cluster Mean and S.D.						2.66	1.07	

Table 2 showed that items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 have mean ratings of 2.65, 2.65, 2.64, 2.74 and 2.64 with corresponding standard deviations of 1.11, 1.05, 1.08, 1.09 and 1.04. All mean scores are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implied that staff of universities are always granted scholarship for further studies to improve their performance. Staff of universities are always sent on international conferences to improve their performance. Staff of universities are always sent on seminars to enhance their performance.. Public universities in Benue State often organize refresher courses to build staff capacity. Public universities in Benue State often use programmed instruction to improve staff

performance. The cluster mean of 2.66 which is greater than the cut-off point of 2.50 shows that off-the-job training opportunities influence job performance of staff of public universities in Benue State.

Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses formulated for the study were tested using the chi-square test at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One:

On-the-job training opportunities do not significantly influence job performance of staff in public universities in Benue State.

Table 3: Chi-square (χ^2) Analysis of On-The-Job Training on Job Performance of Staff of Public Universities

Responses	Observed Freq	Expected Freq	Df	Level of Sig.	Cal χ^2	Crit χ^2	Decision
Disagree	142	119	1	0.05	8.83	3.84	Rejected
Disagree	96	119					

$P=0.03<0.05$; $df=1$; Critical $\chi^2=3.84$

Table 3 showed that chi-square (χ^2) calculated value of 8.83 is greater than the critical chi-square (χ^2) value of 3.84 checked at 0.05 level of significance and at 1 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is rejected. The implication is that training opportunities significantly influence staff job performance of public universities in Benue State.

Hypothesis Two:

Off-the-job training opportunities do not significantly influence job performance of staff in public universities.

Table 4: Chi-square (χ^2) Analysis of Off-The-Job Training Opportunities on Job Performance in Public Universities

Responses	Observed Freq	Expected Freq	Df	Level of Sig.	Cal χ^2	Crit χ^2	Decision
Agree	140	119	1	0.05	7.74	3.84	Rejected
Disagree	98	119					

$P=0.17>0.05$; $df=3$; Critical $\chi^2=5.03$

Table 4 showed that chi-square (χ^2) calculated value of 7.74 is greater than the critical chi-square (χ^2) value of 3.84 checked at 0.05 level of significance and at 1 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is rejected. The implication is that off-the-job training significantly influences job performance of staff of public universities in Benue State.

Discussion

The study reveals that on-the-job training opportunities significantly influence the job performance of staff of public universities in Benue State. This finding is in agreement with that of Bingilar and Etale (2014) that workers who are aware of current development in their profession including new knowledge acquisition are positively in position to boost their productivity index. Further, ZeroMillion.com (2013) found that training is often considered for new employees only. This is a mistake because ongoing training for current employees helps them to adjust rapidly to changing job requirements. The implication of this finding is that more has to be done in the area of on-the-job training through rotating jobs, peer mentoring, staff meetings, orientation and internship for subordinate workers to learn. If this is pursued with vigour, the mandate of the university will be achieved. This is because the staff of the university depends on research and innovations to cope with the trends of events in their areas of discipline. On-job-training is therefore an imperative for them.

The study has also revealed that off-the-job training significantly influences job performance of staff of public universities in Benue State. This finding is in line with that of Halidu (2015) that academics will discharge their designated responsibilities effectively if the academic system/environment fosters academic fellowships, workshops, seminars and conferences and so.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that training and discipline do not significantly influence staff job performance in public universities in Benue State. The implication is that if the situation is allowed to continue, the university system may lose its glory and the development that we are craving for may not be achieved. Staff of the universities can build their capacity through training and self discipline for enhanced job performance.

From the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. The university management can always charge those in higher ranks to initiate their subordinates to work ethics and proficiency through job rotation, peer mentoring, orientation and internship. This is an easy way of training the younger ones on the job. The benefit of on-the-job training at this point is that, it saves cost of sending the university staff out of university which requires more money for sponsorship. It also serves the purpose of convenience since it is done internally.
2. Management of the universities should source for money internally through consultancy services, philanthropy, and sponsorship of training programmes by non-governmental organizations and so on. Proceeds from such areas can be used to train staff off-the-job mostly by granting them scholarship for further studies; sending staff on international conferences and seminars; organizing refresher courses to build staff capacity and educating their staff on changes and innovations in the institutions.

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