Staff Development: The Hallmark of Academic Performance and Professionalism.

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Abstract: The study focuses on the impact of staff development on academic staff performance and professionalism. The paper identifies the challenges facing academic staff in universities as a result of the absence or inadequate staff development which has cumulated to underperformance and unprofessional conduct. To investigate this, the paper employed descriptive research method with content analysis. Secondary sources of data collection were employed to gathered data for the study. The study is anchored on organisations education and training theory by Argyris & Schon, (1978). The study raised a host of questions: do staff development impact on academic performance? Whether staff development enhances academic professionalism? Finally, the study recommended thus; that there should be staff development to impact on academic staff performance, that there should be provision of adequate staff development in order to enhance academic staff professionalism.

Keywords: Staff development, Academic Performance, Academic Professionalism

1. Introduction

Staff in every organization are the main stay of such an organization. This is because they contribute immensely towards the attainment of organizational goals and objectives; without which organization may not achieve such lofty goals and objectives. Kodilinye (1972) in Onah (2003) share the same view when he stated that, staff are indispensable resource in ensuring the realization of an organization's goals and carrying out these functions is very important and necessary for the success of any organization.

NERDC (2004) in Peretomode and Chukwuma (2004) noted that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The staff of any organization especially the universities is that which is expected to bring about the competitive difference, since the success or failure of the university is basically dependent on the quality of these resource as well as its orientation. This is based on the notion that human resource is one of the competitive advantages of an organization. This is because while equipment, infrastructure, methods of production, packaging and distribution strategies could all be copied by other competitive organizations, the innate qualities, innovativeness, knowledge, abilities and skills of the human resource cannot easily be copied. Obikeze and Obi (2004) agree with this as they noted that, mere good organizational structure does not by itself guarantee good performance. When suitable job candidates have been selected and appointed, they should be given the appropriate orientation and in addition they should be developed to meet their career needs in the organization because more often, the newly employed do not have all the competencies usually required for successful or excellent performance on their jobs. So for employees to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently they should have the relevant skills, knowledge, values, attitudes and competencies and as well, understand their organizational culture. Staff development becomes a very important part of the human resource development activity for any organization. Employees need to be updated and knowledgeable; it is staff development that will help employees to acquire competencies they did not have at the time of appointment. Through staff development activities, academic staff avoids becoming rustic, obsolete and redundant. Bingilar and Etale (2014) agree with this view when they opine that, rapid changes in technology require that university academic staff should engage in continuous learning in order to remain current with technology to carry out these functions. Not all the lecturers have the ability and the technical skills required for dissemination of new knowledge. Staff development compensate for the inequalities created by background development.

On the other hand, performance of a staff is the employee contribution and input towards the collective goals and objectives of the organization. Mwita (2000) noted that, performance of human resource will ultimately increase the performance of the organization. Performance is a major multidimensional construct aimed to achieve results and has a strong link to strategic goals of an organization. Ideally, the more employees are develop, satisfied with their work, and environmental conditions, the more they can help enhance their organizations' performance. In the Universities, academic staff performance is thus central to the effectiveness of the institutions, in the same way that it is to all people-centered organizations.

The Nigerian Universities like every other organization is not an exception to this perennial absence or inadequate staff development. Ubeku (1975) in Onah (2003) capture it vividly when he stated that, of the traditional personnel management functions; recruitment, placement, wages, administration, employee welfare, discipline and industrial relation – staff development tend to receive far less attention than others herein mentioned. He further regretted this tendency when he noted that, there are many organizations in this country that regards staff development as expensive ventures and avoids them like the plague. What such organizations are interested in are the immediate returns. But in a changing world, of which Nigeria and importantly our Universities are a part, this attitude can no longer hold good. Often time's young academics are left to struggle on the job to acquire the rudimental knowledge of the job. Their efforts in most cases have not yielded much in their ability, capacity, effectiveness and efficiency in their performance and professionalism as academic staff. Riley & Baldrige (1977) in Bingilar and Etale (2014) observed that new employees are often uncertain about their roles and responsibilities, hence, job demands and employees capabilities must be balanced through staff development.

If these trends should continue in our Universities system, the problem of these Ivory Tower will become more apparent, it means that academic staff may be lacking in relevant skills and abilities required to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their job performance and professionalism in our University system. This development meant that academic staff teaching and research skills and abilities will be significantly affected by lack of adequate staff development. The consequences for the individual staff and the Universities communities as a whole may be devastating. Obviously academic performance and professionalism will continue to decline.

2. Statement of the Problem

Staff development enhances the skills of staff in any organization or institution. In the University system for example, it enhances the academic staff skills in terms of research and teaching. It is further believe that the development of an individual staff will positively bring about concomitant impact on the organization. As it is expected that, the staff should be able to come back with the knowledge gain from the staff development to impact on the organization through; improve service delivery, ability to take higher tasks and responsibilities, motivation and high morale, enhancement in teaching ability and research, ability to take and handle risk, ability to initiate new ideas, ability to impact knowledge and apply new methods and above all improve performance. Regrettably, such organizations still have course to be concern whether staff development has impact on the performance of academic staff vis -a - vis of the university or institution. Thom-Otuya, (1998) cited in Bingilar & Etale (2014) agree with this when they observe that, staff development enables employees to learn to do their job in a manner that fits the employer's specification; decision-making, management of students, management of classroom activities, communication, research and research reporting and teaching.

With everyday change in knowledge, characterise by technological innovations, introduction of modern equipments, new methods in scientific research, new teaching devices and aid, new applications, Information Communication Technology (ICT) and its e – applications, all demand specialized skills which makes an experienced lecturer different in the profession, hence the need for development of lecturers in order to make them highly experienced professionals in their fields of specialization. This will help each of the lecturers to be competent in their area of specialization and thus will offer qualitative services. Jones (1994) observes that staff in Universities should be geared towards acquiring or sharpening their capabilities required in performing various obligations, tasks, and functions associated with or related to their present or future expected roles. Staff development increases and enhances staff capabilities, improving their technical and conceptual skills so as to possess the necessary abilities to handle complex situations and better job professionalism. Unfortunately, as it been observed there has been absence or inadequate staff development in our institution of learning which seem to threaten the competence of the academic staff and affect their professionalism.

It is for this obvious fact that this research intends to answered the following questions; do staff development impact on academic performance? Whether staff development enhances academic professionalism?

3. Literature Review Staff Development

Organizations' source of competitive advantage was their physical capital, while human resources were regarded as a cost (Millmore, et al., 2007). The current global economic, social, political and rapidly accelerating rate of technological innovation has forced organizations to invest more in human resources as sources of comparative advantage (Ukpere, 2009). Organizations can only survive in the global market if their business strategy is designed around building a human resource foundation as people are the key drivers of today's business successes (Noe et al., 2006). Staff development involves "all activities, actions, processes, policies, programmes and procedures employed to facilitate and support staff to enable them to improve their performance that would result in the institution achieving its goals", (Webb, 1996).

Onah (2003), is of the view that, any organization that has no plan for the development of its staff is less than dynamic, since learning is a continuous process as acquired skills get obsolete when the environment changes. Ivancevich (2010) also note that, staff development is a process that attempts to provide employees with information, skills and understanding of the

organization and its goals. Staff development aids an employee to continue to make the necessary positive contribution to the success of the organization. Heathfield (2012) posits that the right staff development at the right time provides big payoffs for the organization to increase performance, productivity, knowledge, loyalty and contribution that aids in ensuring the realization of organization vision and mission. The focus of staff development tends to be on the organizational future staff requirements and on the growth needs of individuals in the workplace (Cole, 2002 in Onah, 2003). Beardwell (2001) observes that staff development covers not only those activities, which improve job performance but also those which bring about growth of the personality; helps the individual in the progress towards maturity and actualization of their potential capacities so that they become not only good employees but better men and women. Sarbeng (2013) posits that, giving the indispensability of staff development as a major force in the economic success of any institution, universities cannot afford but to develop the requisite manpower to support both the productive and service industries. Universities are required to produce strategic managers and leaders to support strategic decision making at all levels of the economy. The achievement of these feats requires that universities recruit and develop the capacity of high calibre staff that will facilitate the pursuit of the goals of the universities which are teaching, research and community service.

Kumari (2009) observe that, today in this new millennium, everyone is experiencing unprecedented changes in world economy due to new developments in science and technology, media revolution and internationalization. All these have revolutionized the education sector also. These rapid advances in technology brought about a knowledge explosion and knowledge revolution have made the importance of the role of the teachers as catalyst agent more critical. In this context of rapid changes, it is imperative that teachers must update their knowledge and skills and be conversant with the latest developments in their fields. Staff development then becomes a necessary option because teachers have multiple roles to perform like teaching, research, development of learning and coordinates programmes. These implies his growth in knowledge of his subject, in pedagogy and training techniques, in his love for students and for his institution, in moral and ethical values and growth of his desire to give his best to the world of learning and society.

It is true that, knowledge is not static, but dynamic, hence knowledge acquired today can become obsolete tomorrow. Thus, staff development becomes imperative. Fasanmi (1982) pointed out that staff development helps to recharge the teacher's intellectual battery with new electrolytes of knowledge and ideas. Eze (2014) posits that staff development is an ongoing training for all staff. It involves the training, education and career development of staff members leading either to specific new knowledge, or to the next level of expertise, encompasses several possibilities namely; graduate courses, attendance of conferences, fellowship, Doctoral and post-doctoral programmes, etc. Armstrong (2005) sees development as 'the growth or realization of a person's ability and potential through the provision of learning and educational experiences'. Chrude and Sherman (2004) argue that the development of employees should be viewed as beginning with orientation, and continuing through a wide variety of activities that are concerned with information, employees of the organization, policies and procedures, regardless of gender. Ijaduola (2007) believes that the need for staff development programme is to ensure employment mobility of the individual, and keep already trained people abreast of new changes in knowledge and technology which are essential to the continued high productivity in their respective fields. Itika (2008) posits that development sees the employees as adaptable resources with variety of skills and places within the organization and it is also concerned with giving the individual the right mix of skills, experiences, and contacts to enable them to achieve their full potentials. Stahl (1962) had argued that: the development of staff is the very essence of supervision and it clearly assumes a role of great significance to the quality of service and long range effectiveness of the organization

Staff Development Programmes

Conferences/ Workshop

As a staff development programme, an academic conference either local or foreign is an event for researchers to present and discuss their research work. Conference provides an important channel for exchange of information, ideas, new methods, innovations, technology and findings. Conference usually encompasses various presentations which are normally followed by a discussion. Some conferences also feature panel discussion, round tables, poster sessions and workshops, some take more interactive format. Employees are trained on a particular topic all at the same time in large audiences.

Master's Degree Programme

Master's degree programme is a staff development programme for an academic staff who is employed with a Bachelor's degree. A Master's degree is an academic degree awarded by Universities or Colleges upon completion of a course of study demonstrating mastery or a high – order overview of a specific field of study or area of professional practice. Such graduates are expected to possess advanced knowledge of a specialized body of theoretical topics, high order skills in analysis, critical evaluation, or professional application and think rigorously and independently.

PhD Degree Programme

PhD programme is also a staff development programme for academic staff in the University, it is a programme that is meant to train academic staff who are employed with Master's degree.

It is the highest University degree that is conferred after a course of study by universities in most countries. It is an earned research degree; which research is expected to be original to expand the boundaries of knowledge. The research normally is regarded as a thesis or dissertation and it is defended against experts in the field depending on the institution awarding the degree. Thus the holder of a PhD is someone who is recognized as an authority by the appropriate faculty and by fellow academics and scientists outside the university. In modern terms it is useful to think of this as becoming a fully professional researcher in your field.

A career in the academia generally requires a PhD. In Nigeria, a Professor is being required to have a PhD because the percentage of academic staff with PhD is used as a University rating measure and also for accreditation or approval of Universities programmes and courses both at Undergraduate and Post graduates programmes.

Academic Staff Performance

Performance in an organization is how effective and efficient managers use organizational resources to satisfy customers and achieve organizational goals and objectives. So organizations should invest huge amount on the human resource capital because the performance of human resource will ultimately increase the performance of the organization. Performance is a major multidimensional construct aimed to achieve results and has a strong link to strategic goals of an organization (Mwita, 2000). Ideally, the more employees are developed and are satisfied with their work, and environmental conditions, the more they can help enhance their organizations' performance. The organizational performance depends on the employee performance because human resource capital of an organization plays an important role in the growth of organizational performance. So to improve the organizational performance, and the employee performance, staff are to be developed. Staff development is responsible for employee's performance (Khan, et al, 2011)

Mwita (2000) agrees with the idea of staff development when he explains that performance is the key element to achieve the goals of the organization so performance increases the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization which is helpful for the achievement of the organizational goals. Kuma (1991) in Peretomode and Chukwuma (2004) also observes that in tertiary institutions where lecturers have the opportunity of development or self-renewal on the job, while such staff development efforts do not in most cases bring about automatic promotion, it however, does enhances such lecturers' performance. Employee performance is the important factor and the building block which increases the performance of overall organization. Employee performance depends on many factors like job satisfaction, knowledge and management but there is relationship between staff development and performance (Amisano, 2010). It shows that employee performance is important for the performance of the organization and so staff development is beneficial for the employees' improvement.

Staff development are aimed at improving the employees' performance and bridging the gap between the current performance and the desired performance. This team work enable employees to actively participate on the job and produce better performance, hence improving organizational performance. It is very difficult for an employee to perform well at the job place without any development (Thomas N. Garavan, 1997 in Khan, et al 2011). Developed employees perform well as compared to undeveloped employees (Partlow, 1996; Tihanyi et al., 2000; Boudreau et al. 2001 in Khan, et al 2011). It is very necessary for any organization to develop its employees to get overall goals of the organization in a better way (Flynn et al., 1995; Kaynak, 2003; Heras, 2006 in Khan, et al 2011). Staff development increases the overall performance of the organization (Shepard, Jon et al.2003 in Khan, et al 2011). Although it is costly to implement staff development but in the long run it gives back more than it took (Flynn et al., 1995; Kaynak, 2003; Heras, 2006 in Khan, et al 2011). Schultz, 1961, Davenport, 1999, and Adu, 1969 in Sarbeng (2013) argued that, the knowledge, skills and competencies which the staff bring to their jobs as a result of their education and development should be regarded as a form of capital which is capable of providing returns and therefore requires further investment to develop in order to achieve increased performance. Harris (1961) in Jepkoech (2012) was more specific in his correlation of staff development and performance when he argued that "certain types of performance are necessary to help the organization reach its objectives, and staff development - assists by providing organizational members with the tools to get the job done.

Academic Staff Professionalism

The professionalism of university academic staff have been a major concern in the 21st century. The quality of academic staff is key in quality teaching and learning process in our universities. It is a known fact all over the world, that academic staff have played a great role in teaching, research and consultancy (Fussy, 2018; Metcalf, Rolfe, Stevens & Weale, 2015; Enders, 2001cited in Luwavii, 2019). The relevant qualifications and skills of the academic staff are essential in facilitating learning and ensuring quality of education provided in our university system (Houston, Meyer & Paewai, 2006 cited in Luwavii, 2019). NERDC (2004) in Peretomode and Chukwuma (2004) noted that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. It is therefore plausible to assert that effective preparation of academic staff through staff development is what the universities need to provide adequate academic content knowledge and sound professional skills. In deed acquisition of adequate content knowledge and sound professional skills in universities depends on the calibre of academic staff. A lecturer with a PhD realize competence to deliver satisfactory research and teaching; while a senior lecturer need knowledge and skills to deliver more advanced satisfactory research and teaching. A professor needs to offer plausible

knowledge and skills with high level of creativity and productivity in teaching, research and consultancy as well as leadership in all academic and professional positions. He/she is an excellent researcher with enough experience and well known in his/her area/discipline (Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Enders, 2001 cited in Luwavii, 2019). Monahan (1996), Bateman and Organ (2003) and Locke (2004) in Ozurumba & Amasuomo (2015) observed that, staff attendance at conferences, seminars and their output found a significant relationship between conference attendance and academic staffs' productivity. Okeke (2000) in Ozurumba & Amasuomo (2015) stated clearly that, the environment of staff development through conferences is very imperative and has become noticeably with the challenging development in the society with the rapid rate of technological changes, training received by workers a few years ago is inadequate to meet the challenges of today's school system. Hence, according to him, academic staff need to attend conferences and seminars regularly to update their knowledge, expand their capacity to develop the skills, knowledge and professionalism needed for the new challenges.

Ozurumba & Amasuomo (2015) stated that, the quality of any education system depends on the way the professionalism and skills of the academic staff in the system are developed. However, the importance and quality of staff can only be noticed when they are involved in staff development programmes. This is so because staff development focuses on professional growth, bringing about change in individuals' knowledge, understanding, behaviour, attitudes, skills, values beliefs. The purpose of staff development is to further improve job performance, enhance the quality of work environment and foster personal growth and development (Boyel, 2004).

4. Theoretical Discuss

The study is anchored on organisations education and training theory by Argyris & Schon, (1978); Bakah, (2011) in Kasule & Neema (2014). This is rooted in the assumption that education and training as associated with effective planning, problem-solving, and experimentation (Weisbord, 1989 in Kasule & Neema, 2014). Likewise, education and training of academic staff has become more pronounced in the education literature and associated with the implementation of planned change (Fullan, 2007). This is mainly attributed to the fact that changes in the nature of academic staff's work, subject matter and student populations challenge prevailing beliefs and practices and require on-going development of knowledge and skills (Hiebert, et al. 2002). Bakah (2011) vehemently asserts that the key to better education practices and desired educational outcomes is to have a superior academic staff workforce. It is necessary to continually engage academic staff in the process of learning to become effective. Staff development in educational setting is described as those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of academic staff so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students (Guskey, 2000).

Ingvarson et al. (2005) advance that staff development of academic staff is now recognised as a vital component to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in educational institutions. Continued staff development of teaching staff is widely accepted as an essential ingredient to any educational reform (Fullan, 2007). Investment in human resource development is increasingly being seen as one of the most fundamental prerequisites for not only socio-economic development but also intellectual development (Kasozi, 2003; Kibwika, 2006 in Kasule & Neema, 2014). It is a process by which the staff of an institution are helped, in a continuous and planned way, to: acquire or sharpen capabilities required to perform various functions associated with their present or expected future roles; develop their general capabilities as individuals and discover and exploit their own inner potentials for their own and/or organisational development purpose; develop an organisational culture in which supervisor-subordinate relationships, teamwork, and collaborations among subunits are strong and contribute to the professional well-being, motivation, and pride of employees (Armstrong, 2006). An institution is no better than the quality and quantity of her staff in this present market driven economy (Kibwika, 2006). This realisation presses great concern on attracting, retaining and developing talented staff. This therefore implies that any institution that wants to grow continuously in this fast changing global economy where high quality products is the ultimate concern of clients, must design a systematic, coherent and comprehensive framework for developing people on a continuous basis (Kasule & Neema, 2014).

5. Conclusion

We are in a knowledge explosion era where people are required to replenish their knowledge and professional skills so as to remain competitive in the ever changing competitive knowledge driven world. Academic staff should therefore be assisted to develop personal development that is, further their education, attend conferences, seminars, workshop, induction, coaching and mentoring which is very important if they have to fulfilled their tripartise responsibilities of teaching, research and community service. And above all, if our universities are not only to thrive but also to remain relevant in the ever changing competitive global knowledge world.

6. Recommendations

The researcher thus recommends that;

- 1. That there should be staff development to impact on academic staff performance
- 2. That there should be provision of adequate staff development in order to enhance academic staff professionalism

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