

Lifelong Learning and Workers' Productivity in Public Service Organizations in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper investigated the relationship between lifelong learning and workers' productivity in public service organizations in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Ex-post Facto research design was adopted for the study. A population of 800 respondents were used in the study and a sample of 400 representing 50% of the population was randomly selected using the stratified random sampling technique. The Lifelong Learning and Workers' Productivity Questionnaire (LLAWPQ) was the instrument used for data collection. 389 copies of questionnaire administered were successfully completed and retrieved for analysis. The reliability of the instrument was established with Cronbach Alpha Reliability Method with an internal consistency of 0.86. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was adopted to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance with relative degrees of freedom. The result of the analysis revealed that, on- the- job training and self- directed learning significantly relate with productivity. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended amongst others that employees should be trained and developed regularly as the most important asset of the organization by exposing them to modern training facilities and lifelong learning programmes to enable them acquire skills and knowledge that will enhance their productivity.

Keywords: Lifelong learning, Workers' productivity, Public service organization

Introduction

The efficiency of any organization depends to a large extent on how effectively its human resources are utilized and also on the productivity of its workforce. It is the human resource that determine the success or failure of any organization. This is so because it is through human beings that other resources are organized and utilized to achieve desired results. This implies that all organizations depend on their human resource for the supply of the needed physical labour, technical skills and professional skills which are germane for effective and efficient running of its operations. A highly productive workforce is a valuable strategic asset for the organization. Thus,

when human resources are optimally utilized and maximum output is realized, the resultant outcome is the attainment of the goals of the organization associated with higher productivity.

Workers' productivity is an important factor and the building block which increases the overall performance of the organization. It is of fundamental importance to the individual worker, the organization and the nation at large. It is a measure of how well the resources and skills are utilized for accomplishing a set result. It implies reaching the highest level of performance with the least expenditure. It is also the achievement of specified task by an employee which is measured against predetermined or identified standards of accuracy, completeness, cost and speed. (Zamuto, 2010). It is very vital because it goes a long way in determining the success of the organization. It helps in the achievement of organizational goals, higher production, improvement in the standard of living of employees, elimination of wastage of resources, reduces level of poverty and unemployment, increases economic growth and attainment of sustainable development goals. It contributes to the assessment of how valuable an employee is to the organization, help employees to measure their growth, meet performance deadline and create a positive work environment.

Over the years, the level of workers' productivity in public service organizations in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State seems to have declined and fallen below standard. Observation indicates an increasing and consistently low level of productivity. Some employees of this organization do not meet performance deadline of tasks assigned to them, some are careless in the performance of tasks, some report to work late. Perhaps, due to lack of skills and knowledge necessary for the effective and efficient performance of tasks. Some of the employees lack enthusiasm, zeal, the briskness and the momentum of proficiency. The issue of low level of workers' productivity in public service organizations in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State has been a matter of great concern to the managers of these organizations, the Government and researchers. The managers of these organizations have attempted to solve this problem by the application of various management techniques, by organizing conferences and workshops. The Government on its part have invested huge amount of money in the maintenance of this organizations but, the problem still persists.

Most worrisome is the negative impact of this low level of workers' productivity on the organization, the employees, the government and the economy at large. It results in unwarranted

loss of funds invested by the government, loss of job by some of the employees, slows down economic activities and loss of public confidence in the Agency.

To tackle this problem, the independent variable of this study which is lifelong learning is discussed using its sub- variables which are; on- the- job training and self- directed learning. Employees who undergo regular and proper on- the- job training and self-directed learning are more creative and highly productive than those who do not. Without proper training, employees do not possess the skills and knowledge necessary for accomplishing their tasks at their maximum potentials and this affects their productivity. It is against this background that the researcher investigated whether any relationship exist between lifelong learning and workers' productivity in public service organizations in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Innovations and changes in technological advancement in today's world require individuals to constantly evolve which has resulted in the need for lifelong learning throughout society. In the 21st century where knowledge is constantly changing and expanding exponentially, it is expected that individuals should move along in the changing world of knowledge and technology so as to enable them contribute to national development, operate successfully and confidently in a technologically driven society. People seek a wide variety of educational goals that can only be provided by lifelong learning. Individuals require lifelong learning in order to be updated with the changes in the world, acquire occupational skills, technical skills, professional skills and improve their personal skills in different areas which contribute immensely to higher productivity. (Jedikowska, 2014).

Preece (2013) opined that lifelong learning is the process that includes a rapid change through which individuals acquire skills, knowledge and competencies in different areas during their lives which enable them perform tasks effectively, thereby resulting in higher productivity. Every individual needs lifelong learning for both their occupational and individual needs. It is essential for all and it contains all life processes from birth to death. The rapid change which is brought about through lifelong learning enhances high level of performance by individuals in organizations as a result of the acquisition knowledge and skills which make them self- reliant and relevant in their societies thereby contributing their quota towards national development.

Similarly, Klug and Schober (2014) asserted that lifelong learning constitutes one of the most significant factors influencing economic growth and social development which leads to sustainable development. Adults require lifelong learning to stimulate or enhance intelligence, growth potentials, creative and productive capacity for sustainable development which plays a major role in economic growth and development. Furthermore, emerging trends in the application of modern technology in the performance of tasks at the workplace makes lifelong learning imperative for adults to continue in learning and consistently renewing knowledge, skills and attitudes throughout their life time which equip them to handle challenges that involves job performance at the workplace and also equip them for higher level of productivity through effective performance of tasks.

Furthermore, Fang (2014) supported that lifelong learning equip adults with employability skills which make them relevant in their professions. It creates and maintains a positive attitude towards knowledge acquisition for personal and professional development. It is the voluntary and self – motivated pursuit of knowledge for personal and professional purposes. The positive attitude towards knowledge acquisition for personal and professional development make lifelong learners more active than passive learners since the learning is self- motivated. They plan and evaluate their learning processes, learn in different settings and diverse contexts from others. This help them to integrate knowledge from different subject areas using a multitude of strategies when required. This promotes productivity.

Knapper and Cropley (2010) noted that lifelong learning involves the continuous pursuit of knowledge and skills throughout an individual's lifetime. It is a never ending process and is not limited to formal education but includes various learning experiences such as self-directed learning, on-the-job training and personal growth activities. The continuous pursuit of knowledge and skills by individuals enhances capabilities, develop personal, occupational and professional skills which help them contribute meaningfully to the development of the society, it also improves critical thinking and enhances overall productivity of employees in organizations which results in both personal and organizational growth.

Zhou and Zhimm (2014) observed that lifelong learning is a significant approach in constantly improving a competent workforce that enhances productivity. It is the development of human

potentials through a continuously supportive process that stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetime and to apply them with confidence and creativity in all roles, circumstances and environments. Lifelong learning provides opportunity for skills acquisition, promotion, self - improvement, improved job satisfaction through better job performance, a chance to learn new things and greater ability to adapt and cope with changes. To achieve a competent workforce that promotes higher level of productivity in organizations, on- the- job training should be encouraged in organizations.

On- the- job training has been recognized as one of the managerial tools that enhances productivity. It is basically the process through which knowledge, skills and experiences are developed and inefficiencies are overcome. It involves the acquisition of skills and knowledge by employees while on the job for better job performance. It helps to improve competences such as technical, human, conceptual and managerial for the furtherance of individual and organizational growth. Bakare (2012) described on-the-job training as a regularly scheduled training provided by the superior officer to the subordinate staff. It includes formal presentations, informal discussions and opportunities to try out new skills and knowledge in the field. The superior officer or administrator must play a role in providing on-the-job training to staff while conducting the day-to-day normal activities. It provide employees with knowledge, skills and attitudes required by them in order to effectively perform a given task or job.

Raja and Mohammed (2011) posited that on-the-job training is a necessity in the workplace and without it, employees do not have a firm grasp on their responsibilities or duties. When employees recognize their organization's interest in them through offering on-the-job training, they in turn apply their best efforts to achieve organizational goals and show high performance on the job which leads to higher productivity. Employees who undergo proper and regular on – the- job training are more creative and highly productive. In the same vein, Moore(2011) agreed that on-the-job training promotes the professional growth of individual's strength, while on the job and increases the capacity to gain knowledge and mastery of technology. Within every organization, on-the-job training occurs at all levels of personnel. It is an activity which deliberately attempt to improve a person's skills at a task or job. It is linked with innovations. Thus, employees should be

provided with on-the-job training to enable them cope with the latest development and technological changes that increases productivity.

Adeyemi (2014) conducted a study on the relationship between staff training and work performance among Nigerian banks employees in Osogbo metropolis , Nigeria. The research design adopted for the study was the survey research design. The questionnaire was the primary source of data collection. The total population for the study was all employees of Nigerian banks in Osogbo metropolis South West of Nigeria. The sample was made up of 30 employees from the eight selected banks in Osogbo, Nigeria. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to analyse the data collected. The result of the findings showed that staff training has positive relationship with work performance with $r = 0.700$. This implies that trained employees are more productive in their jobs. The study recommended that employees should be exposed to training programmes that will update their knowledge and skills thereby equipping them for better performance of tasks assigned to them.

Atif and Nadeem (2011) affirmed that by acquiring a diverse range of skills and knowledge while on-the-job through lifelong learning, employees become more adaptable to changes in their organization and can confidently take on various roles or responsibilities which leads to higher productivity. On-the-job training is an avenue to acquire more, new knowledge and develop further the skills and techniques to function effectively. It improves an employees' skills at a task and it is also a work activity that can make a very significant contribution to the overall effectiveness and profitability of an organization. In the continuous changing scenario of business world, on-the-job training is an effective measure used by employers to supplement employees' knowledge, skills and behavior. Through on-the-job training, employees can expand their skills and competencies which enhances productivity.

Rosen (2012) stated that self-directed learning is a process in which people take responsibility for their own learning, set goals, choose the resources and strategies to achieve them. This type of learning requires motivation, discipline and time management skills. Example include; on-line courses, tutorials, reading books, reading articles, reading research papers, watching educational videos, documentaries, participating in on-line forum and discussion groups. This helps to develop innovative ideas and creativity which increases productivity. Furthermore, when employees take

responsibility for their lifelong learning, they develop a positive mindset towards their jobs and this gives them self fulfilment, builds self confidence in them and boost their morale for higher productivity. Employees with growth mindsets are committed to learning, utilizing every opportunity to try something new and willing to take risks to gain knowledge in order to improve their performance in their jobs. Employees' willingness to learn determine to a large extent how they apply the knowledge gained in order to be effective in the performance of tasks. (Robert, 2012).

Haritha (2020) conducted a study on the impact of self- directed learning on workers performance in telecom sector in India. The study adopted the Ex -post Facto research design and took a sample of 395 respondents from a population of 35,386. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents and the questionnaire was the primary source of data collection. Data was analysed using the descriptive statistics. The result indicated that employees' exposure to self-directed learning recorded a mean score of 3.90 and a standard deviation of 1.28 respectively. This means that majority of the respondents agreed that their exposure to self- directed learning increased their job performance. The study recommended that employees should be encouraged to take responsibility for their learning in order to enhance their job performance.

Lynn and Gurel (2014) opined that self-directed learning is based on the personal and occupational needs of the employee. It is also based on the interest and learning requirements of an employee. It contributes to the development of skills and talents of employees since they engage in the area of learning in which they have developed interest on. Self-directed learning involves becoming aware of and managing one's own process of learning. It includes developing dispositions that support motivation and self- learning. It is a process in which individuals take the initiative to diagnose their own learning needs and formulate their learning goals. Here, a learner can arrange, manage and evaluate his/her learning opportunities. In a self-directed learning environment, learners decide what, how and when they learn as well as who they learn from. Tis autonomy makes employees happy and this reflects in the effective performance of tasks assigned to them which leads to improved productivity.

Statement of the Problem

Employees in public service organizations in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State are expected to put in their best in the performance of their duties in order to achieve the aim of establishing this agency which is quality service delivery. But contrary to this, employees' productivity have fallen below expectations thereby resulting in low level of productivity which is evident in the poor attitude of these workers towards their jobs. It is observed by the researcher that some employees of these organizations exhibit a nonchalant attitude towards their jobs, tasks assigned to them are not completed on time, some are careless in the performance of tasks, the quality of services rendered by these employees do not meet standards set by their employers.

The effect of this low level of productivity of workers on the organizations, employees and the government is very devastating resulting in wastage of scarce resources, loss of job by some of the employees, loss of funds invested by the government and loss of public confidence on the these organizations. Over the years, there have been concerted efforts by the government and managers of these organizations to improve workers' productivity such as; organizing workshops, seminars, conference, setting of monitoring / supervision teams to monitor the performance of these workers, provision of merit awards to employees who have distinguished themselves in terms of work performance and provision of end of year party to deserving employees. However, in spite of all these efforts, the problem still persists. Based on the foregoing, this study sought to investigate whether there is any relationship between lifelong learning and workers' productivity in public service organizations in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain the relationship between on-the-job training and workers' productivity as well as determine the relationship between self-directed learning and workers' productivity.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested

1. There is no significant relationship between on-the-job training and workers' productivity
2. There is no significant relationship between self-directed learning and workers' productivity

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was the Ex-post Facto research design. The area of the study is Cross River State. It is one of the 36 states in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The population of the study is 800 which consisted of all the workers in public service organizations in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State. Stratified random sampling technique was used in the selection of 400 as sample for the study. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire titled Lifelong Learning and Workers' Productivity Questionnaire (LLLAWPQ) designed by the researcher. The instrument had three sections A, B and C. Section A was designed to collect respondents' personal data. Section B consisted of 10 items on lifelong learning with respect to on-the-job training and self-directed learning. While section C consisted of 15 items that were used to gather information from the respondents on productivity. A four point Likert type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used. The instrument was duly validated and its reliability estimate established at .86 using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Method. The copies of questionnaire were administered personally by the researcher with one research assistant trained for the purpose. At the end of the exercise, 389 copies of questionnaire were retrieved for analysis. Codes were assigned to each item and a coding schedule was prepared. The data collected was analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis. Each of the hypotheses was tested at .05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between on-the-job training and workers' productivity. The independent variable in this hypothesis is on-the-job training; while the dependent variable is workers' productivity. To test this hypothesis, on-the-job training and workers' productivity was correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between on-the-job training and workers' productivity (N=389)

Variables	\bar{X}	SD	r-value	Sig
On-the-job training	17.51	2.17	0.65*	.000
Workers' Productivity	17.84	1.70		

* Significant at .05, critical $r = .062$, $df = 387$

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 1 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.65 is higher than the critical r-value of .062 at .05 level of significance with 387 degree of freedom. With the result of this analysis, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between on-the-job training and workers' productivity was rejected. This result implies that, on-the-job training has a significant relationship with workers' productivity. The positive r implied that the higher the on-the-job training, the higher the workers' productivity tends to be. On the other hand, the lower the on-the-job training, the lower the workers' productivity tends to be.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between self-directed learning and workers' productivity. The independent variable in this hypothesis is self-directed learning; while the dependent variable is workers' productivity. To test this hypothesis, workers' productivity was correlated with self-directed learning using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between self-directed learning and workers' productivity (N=389)

Variables	\bar{X}	SD	r-value	Sig
Self-directed learning	18.40	1.31	0.41*	.008
Workers' Productivity	17.84	1.70		

* Significant at .05, critical r = .062, df = 387

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 2 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.41 is higher than the critical r-value of .062 at .05 level of significance with 387 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between self-directed learning and workers' productivity was rejected. This result indicated that, self-directed learning has a significant relationship with workers' productivity. The positive r implied that the more positive self-directed learning is, the higher workers' productivity tends to be. On the other hand, the lower self-directed learning, the lower workers' productivity tends to be.

Discussion of Findings

The result of hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant relationship between on-the-job training and workers' productivity. This result is in consonance with Bakare (2012) who stated that on-the-job training provide employees with knowledge, skills and attitudes required by them to effectively perform a given task which enhances their productivity. This result is also in line with the assertion made by Raja and Mohammed (2011) that without on- the- job training, employees do not have a firm grasp on their responsibilities or duties. When employees recognize their organization's interest in them through offering on-the-job training, they in turn apply their best efforts to achieve organizational goals and show high performance on the job which leads to higher productivity. Employees who undergo regular on-the-job training are more creative and highly productive. This outcome also support the views of Moore (2011) who reported that that on- the-job training promotes the professional growth of individual's strength, while on the job and increases the capacity to gain knowledge and mastery of technology. Within every organization, It is an activity which deliberately attempt to improve a person's skills at a task or job. It is linked with innovations. From this finding, it can be argued that some organizations do not place importance on regular on-the-job training and this affect job performance of workers which in turn affect their productivity. Thus, employees should be provided with on-the-job training to enable them cope with the latest development and technological changes that increases their productivity

The result of this study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between self-directed learning and workers' productivity. This result collaborates with the opinion of Rosen (2012) who agreed that self-directed learning helps to develop innovative ideas and creativity in employees which increases their productivity. When employees take responsibility for their lifelong learning, they develop a positive mindset towards their jobs and this gives them self fulfilment, builds self confidence in them and boost their morale for higher productivity. This findngs also support the views of Lynn and Gurel (2014) who agreed that self- directed learning is based on the interest and learning requirements of an employee and contributes to the development of skills and talents of employees since they engage in the area of learning in which they have developed interest on. This makes employees happy and this reflects in the effective performance of tasks assigned to

them which leads to improved productivity. The result also in agreement with the opinion of Robert (2012) who supported that when employees take responsibility for their learning, they develop a positive mindset towards their jobs and this builds self confidence in them and boost their morale for higher productivity. Employees with growth mindsets are committed to learning, utilizing every opportunity to try something new and willing to take risks to gain knowledge in order to improve their performance in their jobs. Employees' willingness to learn determine to a large extent how they apply the knowledge gained in order to be effective in the performance of tasks resulting in higher productivity. Thus, employees in organizations should be encouraged to undertake self- directed learning in order to be productive.

Conclusion

Lifelong learning is relevant to work and professional development. It is indispensable to the development of human capital (knowledge, skills and attitudes) for performance of tasks. It plays a major role in enhancing increased and sustained productivity. Due to changes in technological advancement and changes in the workplace, lifelong learning is required in order to equip employees with the necessary skills and knowledge required for effective performance of tasks. Since employees are the key to productive output and are responsible for converting inputs to useful output, they should be trained regularly on the job and encouraged to undertake self-directed learning as this will equip them with professional skills and boost their morale for higher productivity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Management of organizations should train and re-train employees regularly by exposing them to modern training facilities and lifelong learning programmes that will update their knowledge and skills thereby equipping them for better performance of tasks assigned to them.
2. Employees should be encouraged to undertake self-directed learning to enable them acquire skills, knowledge and competence for work efficiency and effectiveness

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