

An Appraisal of Strategies for Management of Staff Training and Development Activities in Nigerian Polytechnics*

R. A. Oloyo

Department of Science Laboratory Technology
The Federal Polytechnic, P. M. B. 50, Ilaro

Abstract

This paper is aimed at ascertaining the adequacy or otherwise of the strategies for the management of staff training and development in Nigeria Polytechnics. A critical analysis of staff development activities and strategies adopted indicated that there exists in the Polytechnics, a gap between the present level of staff development activities and what the polytechnics ought to be doing if staff development will be a means of achieving effective curriculum development, student learning, and overall institutional development. The writer, therefore, calls for a new approach to staff development in staff training strategies, suggestions for improvement in staff development activities in the polytechnics are also made.

Introduction

The ultimate goal of staff training and development is organizational success achieved through people. For a continuous and satisfactory overall performance of the organization, therefore, the establishment of the facts about the present and future manpower situations of the organization is required. Mumford (1971) predicted that firms are likely to be faced with the need to assess training requirements in the following situations: the recognition that performance in existing jobs is not satisfactory; the decision to change the content of existing jobs; the recruitment of green staff; the actual or intended promotion of staff; and the creation of totally new jobs. These situations are relevant to educational institutions when:

- a. there is the need to train lecturers on the new teaching skills to cope with the challenges of higher population and new learning orientation;
- b. newly employed lecturers have to train in teaching and assessment skills; and
- c. when experienced lecturers have to be trained in management skills in preparation for assuming administrative positions.

The above circumstances therefore, necessitate establishment of a structured, well-managed staff training, and development programme in the polytechnics. This paper gives an outline review of the existing staff development situations in Nigerian polytechnics and then appraises adequacy or inadequacy of the strategies for staff training and development in the institutions.

* Proceedings of the National Conference on Sustainable National Development: Problems and Prospects at the School of Management Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. October 2001. Vol.1 pp 123-127

Review of Staff Development Activities in Nigerian Polytechnics

An examination of staff development activities in the polytechnics revealed that:

- a. All the polytechnics in Nigeria have policy statements on staff development. While the Federal Polytechnics operate on common policy guidelines published in the government approved staff manual and scheme of service, the state government owned polytechnics have different policies specified for them. However, little or no difference exists in the staff development activities in the two categories of Nigerian polytechnics.
- b. Policy guidelines on staff development highlight staff development/training activities such as study fellowship; study leave granted for the purpose of study, training, research, and acquisitions of higher degrees or professional qualification; sabbatical leave; conference /seminar participation; courses on teaching skills for newly employed lecturers; and industrial attachment for staff.
- c. Staff development committees are set up by all the polytechnics to perform roles that support the Management in achieving the institutional objectives.
- d. Only recently Staff Development Officers were appointed in the various polytechnics on the directive of National Board for Technical Education, NBTE.
- e. Staff granted study-leave-with-pay are required to enter into a bond to serve the Polytechnic for two years for every one year of sponsorship up to a maximum of five years.

Staff Development Activities in Nigerian Polytechnics

Oldroyd & Hall (1991) suggested that effective practice in staff development and its management requires that staff development should: have clear objectives; be based on identification of staff training needs and institutional needs; start from staff's current levels of knowledge and skills; offer high-quality training focused on practice; be carefully monitored and evaluated; be carefully costed and ensure value for money; have support of heads of department to follow-up in practice after training; and be part of continuing process of professional development. Applegarth (1991) also suggested that in order to achieve the objectives of training in an organization, it is important that: all employees are well informed about the organisation's policy on staff development and means of achieving staff development; a staff training department is set up with specific roles of assisting the management in achieving its staff development objectives; and there are an effective means of evaluating and validating training, and the means of establishing training needs are defined.

Policy

It is observed that staff development policy of all the Nigerian polytechnics is as dictated by the various funding bodies. While it is desirable to give consideration to the needs of the funding bodies in their staff development policy, the polytechnics must also take into account the needs of their customers and the skills and potentials of their staff, because

these three elements interact in the determination of the services i.e. curriculum, research and consultancy to be delivered by the institutions. It is observed that the policy on staff development in the polytechnics does not indicate whether the institutions should have training plans. It is desirable to make the preparation of such plans mandatory for polytechnics

Staff Development Committee

The composition of the committee varies widely from Polytechnic to Polytechnic. However, the committees draw membership from across all the academic and learning support services in the institutions. Some of the major functions, which the committee performs, are:

- a. consideration of staff for study leave, leading to the acquisition of higher degrees;
- b. advising the management on all staff development matters;
- c. acting as a channel for consultation;
- d. offering advice and support for staff development management; and
- e. assisting with key steps in needs identification and establishing priorities and review of programmes and policy; and

Staff Development Officer and Staff Training Department

In all Nigerian polytechnics, training is seen as an integral part of personnel management; hence Establishment Officers combine the duties of personnel and training officers. This development is not desirable because:

- a. the Establishment Officer is usually pre-occupied with the day-to-day problems, hence, less pressing training issues are relegated to the bottom of the pile;
- b. proficiency in training management requires practical knowledge and certain skills and attributes in addition to academic knowledge.

Since the polytechnics do not have established staff training departments, it is necessary to propose one here. Although generalization about the line of responsibility is difficult, it is highly desirable for the training department to be represented at the board or top management level.

Staff Development Activities

Oldroyd and Hall (1991) grouped staff development activities in schools highlighted below:

- a. Professional Education: This is the widening and deepening of a teacher's theoretical perspectives by advance study, e.g. diploma and higher degrees
- b. Professional Training: This training is the development of a lecturer's knowledge and skills in relation to his daily work e.g. workshops.
- c. Professional Support: These are activities that aim to develop on-the-job experience e.g. job rotation, peer coaching or collative action research.

These authors were of the opinion that although professional education leads to personal growth and development of the individual, it is the broad knowledge, which is often not directed at the development of skills used by staff on the job. Professional training and

support are achieved through different forms of in-house training and support programmes. It is necessary to introduce more in-house and on-the-job training in the activities so that professional training and support can be achieved. Job rotation, a spread of committee membership to all members of staff, monitoring and collaborative research activities should be encouraged. It is pertinent, at this point, to note that it is virtually impossible to do any meaningful research work in our polytechnics not because the lecturers are incompetent and/or lacking in ideas, but because they are overloaded with many lecture contact hours among other factors. If research will be a means of staff development in Nigerian polytechnics, issues highlighted below must be addressed:

- a. Lecture contact hours for lecturers must be redefined to accommodate teaching, administrative duties, and research activities.
- b. Senior and experienced staff should be given time off for research activities.
- c. Institutional Research Committees (IRC), of each polytechnic, must spell out in clear terms:
 - i. how much fund is available for research every academic session,
 - ii. how much money (maximum) can be granted per staff in a session for research'
 - iii. type, scope, and priority areas of research that can be funded by the institution.
 - iv. In addition to these, the committee should be able to encourage and support financially collaborative research (i.e. within and outside the polytechnics).
- d. Polytechnic libraries must be funded adequately to enable them to subscribe to academic journals and other relevant periodicals in the research priority areas specified by the IRC. In addition, research information service of the libraries must be strengthened via full development of inter-library lending service. This will enable lecturers to have access to more and/or latest information.

To facilitate professional training, it is necessary to review staff development activities in relation to study leave granted for the acquisition of higher degrees. Such training usually satisfies individual needs and in most cases do not meet institutional needs. However, individuals have objectives based on their experience, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, home background, and outside interests. Their objectives may, however, be in conflict with those of the institution.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing, it may be concluded that there exists in the Nigerian polytechnics, the structure for the management of staff training and development; and there is a gap between the present levels of staff development activities and means for achieving effective curriculum development, student learning, and overall institutional development. In order for staff development programmes in Nigerian polytechnics to achieve the goals of motivating staff, developing staff and improving their performance on the job, the polytechnics need to make a shift in policy in the following ways:

- a. The shift from provision-led/supply-led training to consumer-led/demand-led training;
- b. The shift from menu-base training to needs-based training;
- c. The shift from externally provided training to institution-based training;

- d. The shift from off-the-job training to on-the-job training;
- e. The shift from ad-hoc planning to systematic management;
- f. The shift from courses/training to diversified staff development activities;
- g. The shift from the focus on the individual to the focus on the institution; and
- h. The shift from accredited courses to practical short courses.

References

1. Adegboro, T. (1991) Developing new strategies for staff development at the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and polytechnics in Nigeria. Staff College, Blagdon, Bristol, UK.
2. Applegarth, M. (1991) How To Take Training Audit. The Kogan Page Practical Trainer Series. London: ITD Kogan Page Ltd.
3. Mumford, A. (1971) The Manager And Training. Pitman Publishing.
4. Olageru-Olagbegi, S.A. (1992) Concepts and strategies for the academic and physical development of Polytechnics in a depressed economy: A case study of The Federal polytechnic, Nassarawa (1983-87) and Ilaro (1987-92). A paper presented at the National Workshop for COHEADS, Kaduna.
5. Oldroyd, D. and Hall, V. (1991) Managing Staff Development: A handbook for secondary schools. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.