



Development of the Concept Framework for Participation in Training Programmes for Academic Staff at Public Universities in Malaysia

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Abstract: Training and development are formal activities and are also ongoing efforts by organizations to improve the performance and quality of staff's work. Staff's participation in training programmes is crucial in enhancing the employees' ability and confidence to carry out their assigned tasks. In line with these requirements, this study aimed to explore the factors that influence the participation of academic staff of the public universities in Malaysia in the training programme. This study used a qualitative method where a total of seven (7) administrative officers in charge of training had been interviewed. This research had also interviewed a total of (28) twenty-eight academic staff of the public universities in Malaysia. Semi-structured interviews and 'probing' methods were used to obtain information in depth. The data obtained were analysed using Nvivo10 application. This study findings will be beneficial to various stakeholders, especially for the public universities in Malaysia and the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (KPTM) which is the parent body of the Malaysian Institute of Higher Learning.

Keywords: Training and Development, Job Performance, Training Program

1. Introduction

Education development is an important aspiration for determining success as a developed nation. In line with that, in the year 2000, beginning in the 21st century, Malaysia has planned to achieve its goal as a developed nation by 2020. Human capital management has been given the priority to achieve this agenda. It aims to provide Malaysia with the opportunity to compete globally (Abidin, 2007). Efforts for effort have been made by the authorities to respond to the country's aspirations to make Malaysia a regional education hub. This is because the National Higher Education Institution is the primary choice of students to further their studies and is also an international intellectual referral center by 2020.

In order to realize this aspiration, the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (KPTM) has enhanced its function and role to compete internationally. KPTM has introduced the National Higher Education Development Plan in 2007 namely the National Higher Education Startup Plan (PSPTN). The PSPTN has been introduced to address the nation's aspiration and country's education philosophy at that time. In this PSPTN, all state institutions of higher learning are a major component of the country's ecosystem and training to produce psychiatrists, scientists, scholars, skilled workers and semi-skilled workers (KPTM, 2007). Subsequently, in 2013, KPTM has embarked on the 2015 Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education). This plan is better known as PPPM (PT). The latest PPPM (PT) was officially published in 2015 which is aimed to drive Malaysia into a high-income nation (KPTM, 2015). Among the new policies introduced are to propose major changes to the transformation of higher education in the country. These changes involve the needs of students in which the Malaysian government has improved the quality of national education based on international standards. In addition, PPPM (PT) also provides space for public and private institutions of higher learning to intensify research and innovation to enhance institutional excellence. PPPM (PT) was also created to improve the existing education system. It is aimed to develop talented learners which can contribute to national development.

In order to realize the aspirations of PSPTN and PPPM (PT), the Public Service Department (PSD) has also enhanced its function and role in producing labor force to meet the needs of the country. This aspiration is realized through Service Circular No. 6, 2005. This Circular is the Public Sector Human Resource Training Policy. This policy has made it mandatory that all civil service personnel be required to follow seven training days a year (PSD, 2005). This policy setting seeks to increase the competence of public service personnel and it is also a continuous learning process. The policy also aims to promote self-development, knowledge acquisition, skills upgrading as well as enhance creativity and innovation.

In order to realize the aspirations of PPPM (PT) and PSPTN by KPTM and Public Sector Human Resource Management Policy by the PSD, public universities in Malaysia are stakeholders by providing their own circulars and guidelines. Among the individual guidelines that have been developed are that all staff are required to attend training activities at least seven days a year.

2. Literature Research

Training and development is a formal activity and is a continuous effort by the organization to improve the performance and quality of the work of an employee (Alawneh, 2008; Nassazi, 2013; Tannenbaum & Yuki, 1992). In addition, training is also being provided to meet the needs of self-development of employees through continuous learning (Cheng & Hampson, 2008; Divya & Gomathi, 2015). It is to enhance the skills, knowledge and ability of a person to compete in a challenging development trend to weather the latest technological changes (Batoool & Batoool, 2012; et al., 2014; Velada et al., 2007). Training is a process provided to improve the knowledge and skills of workers (Clements & Josiam, 1995; Nassazi, 2013; Nawaz, Pangil, & Bhatti, 2015). Hence, it is a process that aims to change one's behavior in improving the quality and performance of the organization (Noe & Schmitt, 1986; Sahinidis & Bouris, 2008; Shah et al., 2011). The increase can be measured through changes that apply to social knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors (Altarawneh, 2016; Brown & McCracken, 2009).

Training and development are seen as an important tool for organizational needs. Many organizations now tend to emphasize the aspect of training and development as a way to promote the development of workers to achieve a highly skilled workforce (Cheng & Hampson, 2008; Georgellis & Lange, 2007; Towler et al., 2014). In fact, the quality of workers and the continuous improvement in skills and productivity through training are now widely recognized as an important factor in ensuring long-term success in an organization (Choong et al., 2011; Hills, 2000; Stone et al., 2007). Hence, employees need to have access to training based on the required requirements. In fact, the success of a training programme depends on the ability of the organization to develop training plans based on the needs of workers (Authors, 2010; Cootes, et al., 1995; Xiao & Tsang, 2004).

In addition, training can also affect the transfer of knowledge that can enhance the skills, competencies and relationships between participants and instructors (Alawneh, 2008; Bertram et al., 2015; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Donovan et al., 2001; Sankey & Machin, 2014; Stanica & Peydro, 2016). This also has a positive impact

on employees to implement what they learned to be practiced in their daily work (Chang, 2012; Vermeulen, 2002; Windows et al., 2014). Training has the greatest potential to transfer information, especially for the latest technical knowledge, on-going career development, leadership development, human resource development through group change and others which are key components in human resource development (Alawneh, 2008; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Donovan et al., 2001; Stanica & Peydro, 2016; Yamnill & McLean, 2001).

In addition, training is seen as a continuous learning process that affects one's behavior (Sanders, Oomens, Blonk, & Hazelzet, 2011). It is an application of knowledge to improve the worker's performance at the workplace on all the tasks given (Harris et al., 2014; da Cunha et al., 2015). (Brad Harris et al., 2014) Exercises are created for the purpose of focusing on specific work skills improvement (Aminah Ahmad, 2009; Hahn et al., 2015; Noe, 1986). Therefore, the actual concept of training is aimed to develop people as an individual to be more confident and competent in their lives and in their work (Dodd et al., 2002). This learning process is the core of the training that is created as well as providing an opportunity for someone to learn through continuous learning methods (Sanders et al., 2011).

Today, many organizations are more likely to invest in training programmes (Choo & Bowley, 2007; McKinlay, Grogan, Sedakat, & McKinlay, 2010; Thijssen, 2014). This shows that the participation of employees in the training programme can increase the level of skills and experience in the flow of economic development (Hahn et al., 2015; Noe, 1986). It is a major factor in determining the success of an organization by achieving the required standards. Participation in training programmes is seen as an important component in skills development (Baharim, 2008; Mcdowall & Saunders, 2010). Obviously, the result of involvement in training programmes can benefit both parties (Grabowski & Jankowski, 2015; Kulik et al., 2007; Thomas & Qiu, 2012; Yang et al., 2012). However, the effectiveness of this training programme depends on the selection of the programme, the involvement of a person in the training programme and the organization's ability to provide training to the workers based on the needs (Alawneh, 2008; Donovan et al., 2001; Huka & Njehia, 2015; Mcdowall & Saunders, 2010; Schuchter et al., 2015).

Participation in training programmes, learning programmes or any development activities is considered as a key strategy for the development of employees and organizations (Beidas et al., 2014; Tharenou et al., 2007). Basically the selection of appropriate training programmes is a basic thing in improving the skills and knowledge of an employee. However, it does not mean that one does not fully participate in the training programme provided. Without the participation of workers in the training programme can lead to failure and also affect the return on investment (Bartel, 2000). This is because for a successful training programme, it involves a lot of financial allocation. If a person does not attend, it will cause loss to the organization (Görlitz & Tamm, 2016).

In addition, participation in training programmes also has a great impact on individual workers. This is because there are a handful of individuals who underestimate the training provided. Such an attitude should be avoided because it has a great impact on the influence of friends and the individual itself (Edmunds et al., 2014; Noe, 1986). This is because if an employee is not motivated to participate in the training programme, the employee will not attempt to achieve what the organization needs (Alawneh, 2008). This will inhibit the development of the organization. It is even more unfortunate if this worker has influenced other workers to equally not participate in the training programme (Sanders et al., 2011). It should be noted that serious enforcement and action must be taken against those who are in default with the prescribed instructions.

Staff engagement studies in training programmes need to be improved to identify the real factors that influence a person to attend training programmes (Kyndt et al., 2014; Mansor et al., 2015). Although there has been a previous study in Malaysia, it is very limited and is still in the early stages of the study (Fardaniah & Aziz, 2013). Specific studies on the involvement of academic staff at the public universities in Malaysia in specific training programmes have not been conducted. Therefore, this study is very suitable to look at the issues and problems faced.

3. Methodology

The selection of case studies is a very important element before a study is conducted. Through this approach, researchers can look closely at how the process or events occur. With this method the information obtained will be deeper. This is because the information obtained is from individuals who are directly involved. This is also explained by the previous researcher that the selection of case studies is based on the problem statement identified at the beginning of the study (Kaufman, 2001). As a result, the information obtained is very high quality, transparent and has a very high value.

In a conducted study, detailed information was obtained from academic staff at public universities in Malaysia about their involvement in the training programmes provided. During the research, the investigator acted as an important instrument for obtaining the necessary data. This is because in this way researchers are able to appreciate the real situation that enables the desired information to be obtained in greater depth (Creswell, 2003). In this way, researchers can also interact with study participants more comfortably. It has been described by previous researchers in which researchers act as instruments, researchers are able to understand the real situation faced by the study participants and both sides can communicate face-to-face where it will have a positive impact on the information obtained (Cabrera-Nguyen, 2010). Through this process, researchers can also explore the real issues and problems with each study participant in depth (Krefting, 1991; Love et al., 2000; McNichols, 2000).

In the conducted study, several criteria of selection of research participants were set to obtain the required information. This criterion affects the information and data obtained. In qualitative studies, the selection of sample surveys is very important to ensure that quality information is obtained (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Reeve et al., 2016). The selection of the study participants can address all issues and issues raised (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). For the study conducted, the first phase interview was conducted with seven (7) administrative officers who conducted training at public universities in Malaysia. In this study, the selection of research participants was determined by using purposive sampling technique. Through this method, the selection of study participants is based on academic staff at the public universities in Malaysia regarding their involvement in the training programmes provided. This study has interviewed a total of twenty-eight (28) academic staff at the public universities in Malaysia to assist in the conduct of the research conducted.

This study uses a semi structured interview method which is the main method in collecting the required data. It is also supported by the Academic Staff Training Hours Report for the year 2015 which has been a supporting document. This was stated by the previous researcher in which support and observation documents can improve understanding of the interviews conducted (Creswell, 2003).

The data obtained should be analyzed to get the results of the study. Analyzing data is a process that has an impact and can affect the findings of the study (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). The researcher acts as a very important instrument in determining the effectiveness of the data obtained (Basit, 2010; Denzin et al., 2000). This is clearly seen when the analysis process is carried out where the quality of the data required depends on how the investigator conducts the interview. Hence, all data collected should be analyzed simultaneously with the time of data collection (Basit, 2010; Sandelowski, 1995). This is because if the data obtained are immediately analyzed, the researcher still remembers and understands what has been discussed.

This study has been using a special application to analyze the data obtained by Nvivo10 software. This application greatly helps researchers in analyzing data especially in determining key themes and supporting themes. This was supported by previous researchers where in qualitative research, there is no specific method proposed to analyze but it depends on the researchers (Srivastava, 2009). This is also supported by past researchers where in qualitative research, there is no debate or question criticizing the method of analyzing data (Denzin et al., 2000; Sobh, Perry, & Sobh, 2014). This means that in qualitative research, the process of analyzing the data is subject to the justification of the method selection to analyze the data used by researchers. That is why the data collection process is very important to produce high quality data. By using Nvivo10 software, the data obtained are clear and categorized according to certain themes. Obviously using the Nvivo10 software method, the process of analyzing the data becomes more and more systematic.

There are a number of recent studies that have outlined the conceptual framework for participation in training programmes. Each of the studies conducted has a significant difference especially for the case study background. The selection of case studies for each study has shown that every research conducted is important. The conceptual framework developed by past researchers has looked at the individual factors which are the main factors in participation in training programmes (Ra Bates, 2001; Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014; Ho et al., 2011; Quesada-pallarès et al., 2015; Robinson, 2014; Sankey & Machin, 2014). However, there is a unique past study where it only looked at demographic factors that contribute to participation in the training programme (J. K. Offerhaus, 2014). Overall, each study has been using different variables. However, the objective of the study is to look at the relationship between the variables that involve the involvement in the training programme. Overall, the explanations provided by the study participants reinforce the understanding of the factors affecting the academic staff of the public universities in Malaysia in the training programmes provided by the university.

4. Conclusion

This study is basically aimed to enhance the understanding of factors affecting the participation of academic staff of the public universities in Malaysia in the training programme provided. Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to assist the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (KPTM) in preparing the policies and regulations related to training management at public universities in Malaysia. In addition, the Training Division of the public universities in Malaysia can also plan strategic human resource development. The preparation of training programmes to academic staff needs to be clearer and directed to the needs of academic staff. In addition to the system, functions, policies and procedures introduced by the universities need to be aligned with the direction to achieve the mission and vision set. It is hoped that this study will contribute to human resource development. Human resource development needs to be upgraded from time to time. All training programmes need to be carefully planned to achieve the objectives and goals set. Training strategies need to be carefully planned to attract academic staff to attend the training programmes provided.

Finally, further studies are recommended for the Proposed Concept Framework for Participation of Academic Staff of the Malaysian University of Malaysia In Training Programme to be tested at public universities in Malaysia. It is to see the effectiveness of the suggested proposed framework. If appropriate, it can be used and practised at the public universities in Malaysia taking into account the needs and actions of each proposed factor and sub-factor. This is a great success for this research where the results obtained can be practised and implemented in real situations today.

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