

Evaluating Training and Development Features of Human Resource Management Practices in the Nigerian Construction Industry

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Abstract: The construction industry depends on the combined efforts of various individuals or human resources (HRs) who are closely associated to the firms' productivity and performance. To maintain a necessary competence in the HRs, effective training and development human resource management practices (HRMPs) for HRs become imperative. Therefore, this study assessed training and development (TND) features of HRMPs in Nigeria with a view to improving HRs activities in the construction industry (CI) as well as analytically influencing their performance. The study employed a quantitative research approach using Delphi and questionnaire approaches for data analysis. The Delphi study was used to determine the influence of the identified TND features of HRMPs, and data retrieved were analysed using mean item score (MIS). Findings from the study revealed that out of the twenty-one (21) TND attributes evaluated, acquiring new skills and knowledge as well as the usage were ranked high among the TND attributes for HRMPs. Hence, the study recommended adequate usage on newly acquired skills and knowledge of HRMPs by CPs and HRs for greater productivity and performance.

Keywords: Construction Industry, Human Resource Management Practices, Training and Development, Delphi Study, Skills and Knowledge

1. Introduction

Construction contracting is regarded as a very competitive business in the industry. To gain competitiveness, HRs in an organisation need to update their skills, knowledge and required capacity and perceived organisational performance (Naveed, Adnan, Ullah & Sohail, 2017). This could be achieved through TND that constitute the subsystem within the broad spectrum of the personnel function (Kadiresan, Selamat, Selladurai, Ramendran & Mohamed, 2015). TND is one of the factors of HRMPs influencing HRs and organisational performance for strategic goals (Zainon, Ismail, Ahmad, Shafi, Misman, Nawi & Kadir, 2020; Babalola & Aigbavboa, 2022). According to Kadiresan et al. (2015); Ameh and Daniel (2017), training is a systematic development of knowledge, skills and abilities that guides worker's behaviour and attitudes in line with organisational objectives, that brings about HRs performance. On the other hand, development involves planning and preparing HRs for future changes in relation to an unfamiliar jobs and responsibilities (Kadiresan et al., 2015). TND significantly improves HRs and organisational performance (Zainon et al., 2020). TND benefits HRs in relation to better position and better career life (Shafiq & Hamza, 2017).

Studies carried out by Wulandari, Maharani, Young and Winoto (2020) and Zainon et al. (2020) show that providing employees TND programmes, on-the-job training, apprenticeship training, career development, HRs leadership development, coaching, training programmes among other factors are attributes influencing TND of HRMPs in the CI. In response to this, this study reviewed previous literature on attributes of TND of HRMPs in the NCI. The outcome of this study will be of great importance to CPs and HRs by increasing their capability in their assigned tasks or responsibilities. Therefore, this paper is divided into sections including the TND features of HRMPs, methodology, discussion of findings and research conclusion.

2. Training and Development Features of Human Resource Management Practices

To maintain a necessary competence in the HRs, combined efforts of varied individuals are imperious, thus suggesting the need for effective HRs training and development. TND of the HRs depends on /influenced by different factors. However, the training and development factors are activities undertaken by HR to determine their capability in their assigned tasks efficiently and effectively (Kadiresan et al., 2015). In this study, TND referred to processes of bridging gaps between current and desired performance and acquiring additional knowledge beyond employees' current jobs to optimize performance and gain a competitive advantage. TND measures vary from one firm to another. According to Jalil, Shaikh and Alam (2014); Wulandari et al. (2020), the TND factors influencing HRMPs in Nigeria is the use of on-the-job training method. Organisation should understand that incurring additional cost on training new staff can be offset by encouraging job rotation and mentoring by experienced employee on the job. A study carried out by Boohene & Asuinura, 2011; Jalil et al., 2014 exhibited that the successive are TND attributes of HRMPs: leadership development programmes, employment of newly acquired skills on the job, coaching or supervisor training, and mentoring.

Based on the assertion of Alzyoud (2018), Gope, Elia and Passiante (2018), and Hee and Jing (2018), the TND of HRMPs is influenced by exposure to new knowledge and skills. Through training, HRs prepare for a new skills and additional knowledge that enhances development for future assignment. Likewise, it was revealed that exposure to new knowledge and skills are among TND attributes (Alzyoud, 2018, Gope et al., 2018, Hee & Jing, 2018). A study carried out by Meyer and Smith (2000) and Amin, Ismail, Rasid and Selemani (2014) highlighted measure to include training programmes. Accordingly, other factors as highlighted include investment in the workforce and timely training (Hee & Jing, 2018), career development (Gope et al., 2018; Zainon et al., 2020), and continuous training (Boohene & Asuinura, 2011; Gope et al. 2018) were mentioned as specific variables of training and development. Likewise, a number of other factors for TND that are considered to enhance HR performance and productivity were mentioned as distance training method, job rotation, technical training, and breakout meetings (Gope et al., 2018).

3. Methodology

The features of TND of HRMPs in the Nigerian construction industry (NCI) were assessed using a mixed method research design. The literature review assisted in identifying the TND features which necessitated a qualitative assessment (Delphi study) of these features' suitability to the NCI. The Delphi survey was conducted among fifteen (15) experts, including professionals such as engineers (4), builders (2), project managers (2), architects (2), quantity surveyors (2) in the built environment, and the HR/personnel managers (3) in the NCI. The experts were selected from across Southwest cities in Nigeria; Lagos (5), Osun (1), Ogun (2), Ondo (4), Oyo (1) states including the Federal Capital Territory (2). This assist in enriching the study by seeking varied opinions and knowledge across these cities in Nigeria. According to Mazzucca, Weatherly, Morshed and Tabak (2018); Babalola and Aigbavboa (2022), the Delphi survey is a method that involves the use of a copy of sets of questionnaires to gain consensus and produce feedback to participants who are experts in key areas. It is also based on a group rather than individual judgment (Ameyaw, Hu, Shan, Chan & Le, 2016). These experts are selected based on the following requirements among others: must be knowledgeable in the field of construction/ project management, HRM and its practices; should possess at least a national diploma, a higher national diploma, a postgraduate diploma, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree or doctorate.

The Delphi was conducted over two rounds. In the first round, only closed-ended questions were used in the Delphi study. The responses from round one of the Delphi were analyzed, and the results formed the basis of round two. In the second round, the Delphi questions allowed the expert panelists to review and comment on TND features of HRMPs in the NCI, which the expert panelists proposed in round one of the Delphi study. In the second round of the Delphi study, open-ended questions were used to investigate the expert panelists' comments expressing agreement, disagreement, or clarification concerning proposed TND features that determine HRMPs in the NCI. In both rounds,

median and interquartile deviation (IQD) were used to determine the degree of consensus amongst the expert panelists' responses. For each response, the group median was calculated. The group median was the appropriate measure of central tendency utilized in this study because it was found to be more suitable for the type of information collected. The results from the first round Delphi survey formed the second and final survey round questions. Hence, in the second round of the survey, the group median for each element was computed and sent back to expert panelists; they were asked to maintain the first-round response or change it as informed by the group median of the first round. In all, fifteen (15) experts completed two rounds of the Delphi process as against nineteen (19) that started the Delphi survey. The size of the experts was sufficient based on the recommendations from scholars who have previously employed the Delphi techniques in previous studies (Delbecq, Van de Ven & Gustafson, 1975; Aigbavboa, 2013, Babalola, 2023). The experts' opinions were analysed using Microsoft Excel and calculated using the median, mean, standard deviation, and interquartile deviation with the adopted scale for measuring consensus (Aigbavboa, 2013). The experts' credentials were kept confidential throughout the study. Both rounds of the Delphi established twenty-one (21) features of TND out of twenty-six (26) pertinent identified from literature to the NCI.

For the second part of the analysis, a quantitative research approach was adopted because of the study flexibility in relation to data collection through quantitative methods that can be statistically analysed to generalise both explicit and implicit claims (Creswell, 2013). The questionnaire was developed based on the valuation from the Delphi study (qualitative strand). The questionnaire was administered amongst HRs and construction professionals (CPs) in Lagos state, Nigeria. This helps to create a balance between HRs and CPs result in the Delphi study. This study deployed the convenience sampling technique. This was utilised based on the study peculiarity, population, cost and time limitations. The targeted respondents were architects, engineers, builders, quantity surveyors, personal managers (HRs), project manager in Lagos state. Lagos state was considered ideal because of its proximity and possession of both human and material characteristics pertinent for this study. A total of two hundred and fifty-five (255) copies of a closed-ended questionnaire were distributed to the target professionals in contracting firms, consulting firms, government agencies, and academia. One hundred and seventy-two (172) copies of the questionnaire were returned, representing 67.5% response rate. The google form was utilised through the snowball technique to reach a larger part of the sample within the shortest time and convenience. The retrieved questionnaire was screened and cleaned to confirm their fittingness for analysis and show that the 172 responses were suitable. The questionnaire is made up of two sections. Section A assessed the respondents' background information to ascertain the level of their suitability for the study. Section B evaluated the level of influence TND features have on HRMPs on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 5- very high influence to 1- no influence. Before the commencement of the analysis, the research data gathered were cleaned and screened. The frequency analysis for the raw data was achieved using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 27). Also, the mean item score was used to show the outcomes for Likert questions. This was done by calculating the sum of all weighted responses on specific aspects. This was based on the claim that respondents' scores on the whole selected standards are the empirically decided indices of relative importance. The background information was analysed using descriptive statistics and ranked the TND features in the order of which they influence HRMPs and presented in Table format as depicted in the discussion section of this study.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Demographic information of the respondents

Table 1: Respondent and company demographic characteristics

Characteristics	Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	155	90.0
	Female	17	10.0
	N	172	100.0
Level of education	OND	5	3.0
	HND	10	6.0
	PGD	18	10.0
	Bachelor's degree	45	26.0
	Master's degree	88	52.0

	Doctorate	6	3.0
	N	172	100.0
Current profession	Engineer	53	26.0
	Architect	29	17.0
	Builder	32	23.0
	HR/Personnel manager	17	10.0
	Quantity surveyor	22	13.0
	Project manager	19	11.0
	N	172	100.0
Years of experience	Less than 12 months	10	5.8
	1-5 years	13	7.5
	6-10 years	15	8.7
	11-15 years	39	22.7
	16-20 years	45	26.2
	Above 20 years	50	29.1
	N	172	100.0
Organisation's status	Contracting firm	20	11.6
	Construction firm	89	51.7
	Consulting firm	13	7.6
	Government	40	23.3
	Consortium	10	5.8
N	172	100.0	
Business specialization	General construction works	29	16.9
	Building and civil works	60	34.9
	Road works	58	33.7
	Maintenance works	15	8.7
	Other	10	5.8
	N	172	100.0

Gender, level of education, current profession, year of work experience, organisation specialisation, and type of organisation status in the construction industry are the specific demographic characteristics of respondents analysed under this section. Gender analysis in this study showed that 90.0% of the respondents are males and 10.0% are females. The finding is in line with the work of Babalola and Ojo (2016) that revealed that the number of men in construction works is more than women. Also, the analysis indicates that 51.7% of the total respondents make up the respondents working in a construction firm. At the same time, those in government agency, contracting, consulting, and consortium firms consist of 23.3%, 11.6%, 7.6%, and 5.8% respectively. Further, analysis of respondents' current profession revealed that the majority (26.0%) of respondents are Engineers, while Builders followed, making up 23.0%, Architect followed, making up 17.0%. Quantity Surveyors came next, followed by Project Manager and personnel manager completing the list at 13.0%, 11.0%, and 10.0% respectively.

Analysis of respondents' level of education revealed that 52.0% of the respondents have master's degrees, followed by 26.0% of the respondents with a bachelor's degree, while Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) followed, making up 10.0%. Higher National Diploma (HND) holders came next, followed by Ph.D., and Ordinary National Diploma (OND) completed the list at 6.0%, 3.0%, 3.0% respectively. Thus, indicating that majority of the respondents are relatively educated. Further analysis showed that 34.9% are engaged in building and civil works, 33.7% are into road works. This is followed by general construction works, maintenance works, and other works, making up 16.9%, 8.7% and 5.8% respectively. The analysis further revealed that only 86.7% of the respondents had above five years of work experience while 13.3% having below five years.

4.2. Delphi study

From Table 2, out of the twenty-eight (28) listed variables for the TND construct, twenty-five (25) of the items had a high impact (HI:7.00-8.99), while three (3) remaining variables scored a medium impact (MI: 3.00-6.99). Conversely, none was found to have a very high impact or not having an impact on the determination of HRMPs. Moreover, the IQD scores revealed that a strong consensus was achieved for twenty-one (21) items as they obtained scores ranging

from 0.00 to 1.00. However, an agreement was not reached for seven (7) elements, including the availability of employees' job formal and informal training.

Table 2: Training and Development Attributes

Sub-attributes	(M)	(\bar{x})	(σ_x)	(IQD)	(R)
Sufficiency of training programmes received	8	7.93	1.22	0.50	1
Use of mentoring	8	7.87	1.88	1.00	2
Exposure to new knowledge	8	7.80	1.82	1.00	3
Employment of newly acquired skills on the job	8	7.73	1.79	1.00	4
Breakaway session / workshop section / breakout meeting	8	7.73	1.71	0.50	4
Timely training	8	7.67	1.76	0.50	6
Availability of training programmes among firms	8	7.67	1.76	0.50	6
Exposure to new skills	8	7.67	1.76	0.50	6
Use of coaching or supervisor training	8	7.67	1.76	0.50	6
Use of technical training	8	7.67	1.76	0.50	6
Use of job rotation	8	7.67	1.76	0.50	6
Use of understudy training method	8	7.67	1.72	1.00	6
Availability of development programmes	8	7.60	1.84	0.50	13
Satisfaction with training programmes	8	7.60	1.76	1.00	13
Appropriate training programmes	8	7.60	1.76	1.00	13
Investment on workforce	8	7.60	1.76	1.00	13
Promote skills development	8	7.60	1.88	1.50	13
Continuous training of employees	8	7.53	2.00	0.00	18
Availability of employees' job formal training	7	6.53	1.41	2.00	18
Use of on-the-job training method	8	7.47	1.77	1.00	20
Use of distance training method	8	7.40	1.84	1.00	21
Promote career development	8	7.33	1.76	1.00	22
Use of apprenticeship	7	6.33	1.63	3.00	22
Use of induction/orientation job training method	6	6.33	1.59	2.50	22
Promote leadership development programmes	8	7.33	1.63	1.00	22
Availability of employees' job informal training	5	6.20	1.82	2.00	26
Feedback on the performance of training programmes	7	6.20	1.90	3.50	26
Use of off-the-job training method	6	6.20	1.70	2.50	26

M = Median, \bar{x} = Mean, σ_x = Standard deviation, IQD = interquartile deviation, R = \bar{x} ranking

Others include feedback on the performance of training programmes, promoting skills development, use of off-the-job training method, use of apprenticeship, and use of orientation job training method. They obtained an IQD score of 1.50 and above, which was beyond the cut-off ($\text{IQD} \leq 1$) for the present study. In terms of their respective values for standard deviation (σ_x), it was revealed that there was inconsistency and variability in the responses of the experts owing to the fact that their respective (σ_x) values were more than one. In addition, the mean score ranking showed that the sufficiency of training programmes received was ranked first. However, three characteristics were jointly ranked last out of the twenty-eight variables. These include the use of off-the-job training methods, feedback on the performance of training programmes, and availability of employees' job formal training.

4.3. Questionnaire survey

The questionnaire was developed based on the valuation from the Delphi study (Table 2) that revealed a strong consensus for twenty-one (21) items as they obtained scores ranging from 0.00 to 1.00. Respondents ranked TND features to measure their level of importance in influencing effective HRMPs in the NCI. Table 3 presents the importance ranking of twenty-one (21) variables that affect TND in the CI. This was attained on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = 'To no extent' to 5 = 'Very large extent.' Based on the mean item scores (MIS) and the standard deviation scores (SDs), the variables were ranked to ascertain their level of importance. Respondents agree largely that 'usage of newly acquired skill on the job for HRMPs' was very important, hence was ranked first (1st) with MS = 3.50 and SD of 1.053 and followed by 'acquiring new skills for HRMPs' also obtaining a MS = 3.49 and SD of 1.037. With a MS of 2.86 and SD of 1.097, the 'use of distance training method' in the NCI was ranked last (21st).

Table 3: Factors affecting training and development in HRMPs

Variables	N	MS	SD	R
Usage of newly acquired skill on the job	172	3.50	1.053	1 st
Acquiring new skill	172	3.49	1.037	2 nd
Acquiring new knowledge	172	3.43	1.062	3 rd
Career development programme for employee	172	3.20	1.096	4 th
Training programme which provides satisfaction	172	3.19	1.036	5 th
Establishment of training programme	172	3.18	1.135	6 th
Appropriate training programme development	172	3.17	1.039	7 th
Leadership development programme for HR	172	3.17	1.091	7 th
Technical training programme for HR	172	3.15	1.045	9 th
Development programme establishment	172	3.14	1.043	10 th
Employee continuous training programme	172	3.13	1.049	11 th
On-the-job training programme for HR	172	3.12	1.085	12 th
Sufficiency in training programme received	172	3.10	1.093	13 th
Practice of workshop for HR	172	3.10	1.048	13 th
Recognition of timely training programme	172	3.09	1.079	15 th
Workforce investment programme	172	3.06	1.100	16 th
Coaching or supervisor training programme for HR	172	3.06	1.027	16 th
Practice of mentorship programme for HR	172	3.03	1.048	18 th
Practice of understudy training method for HR	172	3.02	1.060	19 th
Practice of job rotation for HR	172	2.94	0.994	20 th
Use of distance training method	172	2.86	1.097	21 st

MS- mean score, SD- standard deviation, R- rank

Thus, the results suggest that most of the included factors in Table 3 have a significant effect on HRMPs. These effects are in line with findings claimed in previous studies (Boohene & Asuinura, 2011; Jalil et al., 2014; Hee & Jing, 2018; Wulandari et al., 2020; Zainon et al., 2020). These findings suggest that training and development features are a significant determinant of human resource management practices. Hence, the lower the level of training and development features, the lesser the satisfaction of HR with HRMPs in an organisation. The finding of this study is in line with the work of Boohene and Asuinura (2011); Jalil et al. (2014) who ascertained that newly acquired skills on the job should be employed and implemented by HRs and CFs in the CI. The study finding is also significant in that it exposes CFs and HRs to new knowledge and skills (Alzyoud, 2018; Gope, Elis & Passiante, 2018; Hee & Jing, 2018). The study result also suggests that CPs and HRs career development are significant factors of training and development. The finding of this study also corresponds with the work of Meyer and Smith (2000) and Gunu, Oni, Tsado and Ajayi (2013) who found that satisfaction in training programmes established in an organisation influence the implementation of HRMPs. This finding corroborates the conclusion of Amin et al. (2014), whose study presented a significant relationship between training and development and effective human resource management practices in an organisation.

Findings from the current study strongly correspond with establishing a development programme, implementing a training programme that provides satisfaction, sufficiency in training program received, and appropriate training programme development as found in the previous studies (Gunu et al., 2013; Emeti, 2015). Similarly, Hee and Jing (2018) also reported the corresponding result. They find that the most causative factor of HRMPs regarding training and development is recognition of timely training programme in an organisation. Thus, the findings were significant in that it provides the NCI and stakeholders with the knowledge that training and development are beneficial in influencing effective HRMPs implementation. These findings imply that overall HRMPs is a product of the direct influence of training and development. Hence, the NCI can be enhanced through the improvement of the firm's training and development features, such as usage of newly acquired skills, acquiring new skills and knowledge, the training programmes used by the firm, training program received in the firm, and timely training programmes adopted. Further, the findings will form the basis for future studies relating to TND and HRMPs.

Similarly, it will inform policymakers in the NCI in formulating policies that seek to enhance HRM practices in the CI. Thus, training and development in HRMPs is important to enhance the performance and productivity of HR. Therefore, it can be argued that training and development has a significant relationship with the effectiveness of HRMPs and was found to be statistically significant.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate TND features of HRMPs in the NCI. This study outcomes revealed that a strong consensus was achieved for twenty-one (21) items out of the twenty-five (25) as they obtained IQD scores ranging from 0.00 to 1.00. Further, the study specified usage of newly acquired skills on the job, acquiring new skills and knowledge, career development programmes, satisfaction with training programmes among others as the features of TND of HRMPs. However, it can be stated that this study objective has been achieved. It is recommended that CPs and HRs should utilise the newly acquired skills and knowledge on the job so as to increase their capability in their existing and future unfamiliar jobs.

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