

Review

The training and development of housekeepers in Nigerian Universities

C. A. AKINFOLARIN* and O. S. ALIMÌ

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria.

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Training and development of individuals in the University system provides favorable climate for carrying out teaching, research and services. This paper suggests appropriate approaches for the training and development of housekeepers. It also identifies the engagement of professional housekeepers as a means of effective realization of goals. It discusses qualities of good housekeepers, the skills and knowledge to be acquired, training ground for staff development, management implication for training needs analysis. Recommendations were equally made for more structured, consistent and systematic training and development programme for housekeepers in Nigerian Universities.

Key words: Housekeeper, training, skills, management.

INTRODUCTION

University environment comprised of individuals from different sociological, economical and cultural background. Despite these differences, there are common phenomenal that bind everybody together within the system. Federal Republic of Nigeria (N.P.E) (2004) stated that the main functions of higher education are teaching and research. The Universities are therefore the best means for developing national consciousness. Hence, the aims and objectives of higher education include the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value-orientation for the survival of the individual and society; the development of the intellectual capacities of individual to understand and appreciate their environment; and the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community and the acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environments. If the aforementioned aims and objectives of the University are realistically met, the environment ought to be conducive in terms of cleanliness and aesthetic. Farrant (1976) stated four major rules for making the best use of the school, thus; keeping the school clean, beautifying the school and looking after

what the school got.

Ajayi (2007) emphasized the importance of school mapping as that which an inventory of existing educational facilities is taken, with a view to revealing the extent of adequate and inadequate distribution, under-utilization or over-utilization of the existing facilities, so that appropriate actions can be taken to ensure proper distribution and optimal utilization of such facilities. He further expatiates that school mapping is the process of planning the location and spacing of educational institutions which takes into consideration the demographic, economic, geographical, political and social factors. In the light of the aforesaid definition, a professional housekeeper is expected to maintain and sustain all the factors. Despite the fact that Nigeria Government subsidizes her education sector; it appears that maintenance culture is not practiced and cultivated into the learners and the teachers (lecturers). It was also observed that the housekeepers are probably not trained to meet the challenges of the nature of their work. It could also be that the necessary tools and equipment needed to carry out this work were not provided. Other observable point could be that most of the employed personnel are over-qualified and accept the appointment reluctantly for the sake of being employed. Unemployment could be reduced in the country, if government introduces training and development of individuals

*Corresponding author. E-mail: ajoro123@yahoo.com.

within an organization or train students especially to be self reliant in their area of study or give a general or vocational training that is necessary for human development such as housekeeping, health education, and other relevant courses that could help human development positively.

Training and development is an aspect of human resource management process. Other basic and related activities include: human resources, planning, recruitment, selection, socialization, performance appraisal and promotions, transfers and demotions and, separations (Stoner and Freeman, 1992). Universities in Nigeria run a departmental system, such as Bursary, Registry, Library, Works and Maintenance. The Works and Maintenance Department have different units of which housekeeping is a unit. This housekeeping unit of the maintenance department could be said to be the most sensitive section, because the ineffectiveness of this section is easily seen and felt. The ineffectiveness could result to very dirty, stuffy and filthy environment which could be hazardous to both the students, lecturers and non academic staff of the university. Fitzpatrick and Kappos (1999) stated that environmental health comprises of those aspects of human health, including quality of life, that are determined by physical, chemical, biological, social and psychological factors in the environment. It also refers to the theory and practice of accessing, correcting, controlling and preventing those factors in the environment that can potentially affect adversely, the health of present and future generation. It could therefore be concluded that people engaged in this sector of environmental health need to be acquitted with environmental health factors and practices.

TRAINING FOR CAREER IN HOUSEKEEPING

Training for a career in housekeeping especially in Nigerian Universities could be at two levels; para-professional and professional or academic. In the recent time, elementary technical education was introduced into the school curriculum; the 6-3-3-4 system of education, which was modified to 9-3-4 under the U.B.E programme in 2000, this exposes pupils to use their hands in making, repairing and assembling things. Courses in technical schools are broadened to embrace certain basic fields which are relevant to the present and future needs of the society. Such courses include; food processing and preservation, clothing manufacturing, housekeeping and others. Junior secondary school leavers who want to make a career in vocational and technical education, especially in housekeeping and other related courses are expected to undergo a certificate course with the National Board for Technical Education [N.A.B.T.E.C] or other related bodies. There are opportunities for further advancement to the diploma level after some years of working. Certificate holders work as junior staff while

diploma holders are classified as senior or middle level personnel. These constitute the para-professional staff. The certificate courses are still recognized, especially in technical schools, local government areas and in private organizations such as the non governmental organization (NGO).

At the academic level, candidates who have good senior secondary school certificate with relevant subjects especially sciences, are admitted to read Home Economics, Hotel Management, and other relevant courses in Nigeria Universities and Polytechnics. It would therefore appear that candidates with B.Sc Ed. and H.N.D. (Higher National Diploma) remain professionally qualified for housekeeping in Nigeria. From the observation made with the calibre of personnel used for housekeeping, it is high time for the institution to replace or retain the lower cadre with more qualified personnel, using appropriate tools and equipment to carry out their duties diligently. Looking critically into courses offered in Universities and Polytechnic especially, in Home Economics, Hotel Management and other related courses, it appears that relevant places where these services are needed are probably not related to what is being taught in schools. In addition, the managements of some parastatals are equally not taught, this is probably due to the fact that not all professionals or specialist could progress to top positions in their careers. But it is important to recognize that although not all graduates would be employed into management position or may have subordinates working under them, all of them might work within groups or organizations and also interact with people. Acquisition of management and administrative skills is therefore essential.

Writing on employment opportunity and vocational training for housekeepers in academics, it appears to be a greater need than hitherto for skills that has not traditionally been associated with housekeeping. Looking grossly into housekeeping, it is believed that most managers depend on traditional or informal way of carrying out housekeeping duties with little formal education in reading and writing skills. Isiaka and Dacosta (2001) stated the need for Vocational Education in Nigeria as a requirement to conserve and develop our national resources. Vocational Education therefore should develop individual skills and knowledge, with well organized and use of appropriate instructional methods with reasons to achieve predetermined aims and goals. Nigerian Universities are dynamic and are becoming sophisticated. Many changes take place over time. Currently, bigger Universities such as the University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, University of Ife, University of Nigeria, Nssuka, Ahmadu Bello University and others contract the housekeeping job to private bodies for efficiency.

It is therefore necessary to adopt new policies and strategies to keep pace with the changing times. It has been observed, for example, that the need for technical

training is emphasized in most Local Government Councils in Nigeria. It is about time to introduce more areas of vocational training in Nigeria Universities, especially that which will make the individual self-reliant. It is hoped that the review of Vocational Education curriculum at the department of Vocational Education be made to cover a wider area and that Vocational Education be taught to all Nigerian students in addition to entrepreneurship course. One confirms the need to review programmes of Vocational Education periodically, training and staff development as a means of increasing personal satisfaction and productivity should be vigorously pursued.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD HOUSEKEEPER

It would be useful to know at this stage what qualities a trained housekeeper should possess. First, he or she should have acceptable personal characteristics, should be intelligent, drive and possess good interpersonal communication skills. Second is a requirement for knowledge of the particular office / establishment or established room itself, the furnishing and care, and the individuals to be served. The housekeeper must also have the knowledge of managing the resources (human and non human) available to him or her. Most importantly, the housekeeper must be a good representative of whoever is the head of the establishment in terms of being honest, industrious and vigilant. He / she must constantly be on the watch to detect any wrong – doing on the part of any of the domestics, making sure he/she observes all that goes on in the establishment, and will see that every department is thoroughly attended to, and that the sub-ordinates are comfortable, at the same time that their various duties are properly performed.

Cleanliness is said to be next to godliness. Another quality of a good housekeeper is cleanliness, punctuality, order, and method. Without cleanliness, no establishment especially the University can be well managed. Punctuality which is usually referred to as the soul of business is equally important, for those who are under the housekeeper will take their “cue” from him/her, and in the same proportion as punctuality governs her movement, so will it be for the sub-ordinates. Order, again is indispensable, for by it understanding of individuals is effective hence “there should be a place for everything, and everything in its place.” Method too is most necessary for when the work is properly continued and each part arranged in regular succession, it will be done quickly and effectively. In a physical point of view, a housekeeper should be healthy and strong, and be particularly clean in his/her person, and hands, although they may show a degree of roughness, from the nature of some of her/ his employments, yet should have a nice inviting appearance. In his/her dealings with the various

tradesmen, and in her behaviour to the subordinates, the demeanour and conduct of the housekeeper should be such as, in neither case, to diminish by undue familiarity, his/her authority or influence.

A good housekeeper will have the houselooking spotless, but will rarely be seen cleaning, or be in your way. She will speak English well, communication is key. She/he must be honest, you do not want to be wondering if he/she is stealing your valuables. A good housekeeper will be personable, and seem as if they enjoy the job. A good housekeeper must have an outstanding background that includes honesty, years of experience in cleaning, positive feedback from others, respect, open-mindedness, and caring for others. The housekeeper must be able to remain confidential in regard to the client. A good housekeeper is one who has prior experience in the caring of a household. The housekeeper must be dependable, and able to perform required tasks. They show up when they say they will. They do not steal from you. They are not upset if supervised. They do not snoop through papers.

THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO BE ACQUIRED

- 1) Training in application of sciences, that is, the use of appliance for example the chemical composition of a type of cleaning agent to be used on a particular surface or material. The physics knowledge on how light and heat can be transformed to the benefit of an individual.
- 2) The use of appliances to the correct national voltage specifications for example; the use of electrical gadgets to the specifications of national voltage uses. Nigeria uses 220-voltage regulation.
- 3) Correct posture for carrying out a task without stress or discomfort. Paul (1998) was of the opinion that it would be inconceivable for any person to be endowed with all good qualities and skills. Instead, such individual however underscores the need for continuous professional training and good team works.

TRAINING GROUND FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Within limited financial resources, opportunities exist for training and staff development within the Universities and Polytechnics in Nigeria. Some tertiary institutions that run core courses in Housekeeping include Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; University of Nigeria, Nussuka; Lagos State University; Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo; Ibadan Polytechnic and others which can be gotten in the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board Brochure (JAMB) (2007). Other opportunities suggested by Paul (1998) include:

- (a) Induction / orientation on first appointment,
- (b) In-service/ on the job training,

- (c) Study visit,
- (d) Staff meetings,
- (e) Informal discussion with colleagues,
- (f) Seminars/ workshops/ conference,
- (g) Job rotation,
- (h) Participation in activities of professional associations,
- (i) Study leave/ sabbatical leave and leave of absence,
- (j) Consultancy,
- (k) In-house Journals,
- (l) Organized departmental research/ individual research.

The lack of opportunities does not therefore, appear to be the major limitation on the training and development of housekeepers. It would seem that the major problems rather relate to a lack of co-ordination, the unsuitability of courses, poor incentives and reward system for individual learning effort as well as cost consideration. By far the biggest limitation seems to be lack of training needs analysis (Paul, 1998).

MANAGEMENT IMPLICATION FOR TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

A training need according to Cole (2004) is any shortfall in terms of employee knowledge, understanding, skill and attitudes against what is required by the job, or the demands of organizational change. There are many ways of carrying out performance analysis. These could be manager-centered method such as observation, tests and sample and analysis of records or staff approaches like questionnaires and interviews. Through a training needs analysis, it is possible to identify the unique development of personnel at various levels in an organization to ensure that their training needs are appropriately met. David (2002) stated that training is an enormously complex area and what follows highlights some of the key areas that need to be considered by any team leader, supervisor, manager, or an individual who aspire to this level of responsibility. A good training and development programme according to Paul (1998), should address the following five steps; 1) assessment, 2) setting objectives, 3) selecting methods, 4) implementation and 5) evaluation of the programmes. Cole (2004) suggested that a good training development programme should have the following: 1) planning and organizing activities; 2) determining and managing activities; 3) direct training activities and 4) consulting advisory activities. It could be observed that one major reason why very little impact is made through training and staff development programmes is that not much effort goes into the assessment of the needs of both the individual and the organization. The following classic training cycle model was suggested by Stewart (1994),

- 1) Identify performance shortfalls (current and potential);
- 2) Identify ways in which training might rectify this;

- 3) Implement appropriate training;
- 4) Evaluate result; then
- 5) Repeat the process continuously.

There are many ways of carrying out performance analysis. These could be manager-centered method such as observation, tests and sample and analysis of records or staff centered approaches like questionnaires and interviews. Through a training needs analysis, it is possible to identify the unique developmental requirement of personnel at various levels in an organization to ensure that their training needs are appropriately met. Staff of the Universities in Nigeria has been categorized into junior staff, senior staff, and management or senior members. The requirement and training needs of these categories of staff are different. Paul (1998) identified three types of skill needed at different levels of work force namely: 1) technical skills, 2) human skills and 3) conceptual skills.

Technical skills

Imply a mastery of specific kind of activity such as those involving methodology procedures or techniques and may be more important at lower levels of the organization. It is more appropriate with the cadre of housekeepers or cleaners.

The human skills

Involve acting effectively as a group member (or leader) and building cooperative effort.

Conceptual skills

Involve the ability to see the enterprise as a whole and assume greater importance at top management level.

The experiences acquired on the job and introduction of some electrical gadget, call for special skills at the various levels of the organization. It was observed that the technical trained personnel are promoted into supervisory position, making the chain of work force longer. The supervisors tend to push the bulk of work they are trained for to the junior workers who probably do not possess the technical knowledge of carrying out the work effectively.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRAINING

Two broad areas of responsibility for training can be identified; 1) the employee and 2) the superior officer. The employee have a responsibility for their own training

and development. The responsibilities of a housekeeper include;

- 1) An honest self-assessment of training needs;
- 2) Taking initiative to pursue training and to improve performance;
- 3) Taking active part in managing career interests;
- 4) Reading professional journals to update one self;
- 5) Looking for appropriate courses /seminars; and
- 6) Applying for sponsorship (include self sponsorship) where necessary.

The superior officer ultimately has the responsibility for training and development for a subordinate. The superior officer in the University setting may be defined as the head of department. The head of department is ultimately responsible for describing what is expected for effective performance and identifying areas where improved skills could enhance performance and providing access to the best ways of developing these skills (Schermerhorn, 1984). It is therefore important to emphasize that neither the responsibility of the individual nor that of the head of department should be delegated to personnel departments training officers or other specialist whose duty is to assist or facilitate the development and implementation of overall training policies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Keeping the University environment conducive for teaching and learning, is a task that must be done by using the correct measure of trained housekeepers with appropriate gadgets and body postures. Good qualities of a housekeeper must be maintained. Training and re-training grants should be provided for staff development. Responsibility for training should be jealously guided so as to make the training meaningful and successful. For effective training and staff development, Universities should re-examine the training procedure and

development of housekeepers, in line with suggestions made in this article. Management procedures should be adhered to in the selection and training of housekeepers. Students should be engaged through students work study scheme where interested students are employed gainfully.

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