INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY BASED TRAINING PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES AT SELECT HOSPITALS

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Abstract:

The history of training in business organizations is as old as business itself. It has been pointed out by various scholars that training is a process through which the skills, talent and knowledge of an employee is enhanced .It is also observed that training and development foster the initiative and creativity of employees. As the competition is changing the modern healthcare organizations are becoming more dependent on technology enabled service as a competition tool that is drawing huge investment in new computer systems and applications. Hospitals present a unique opportunity to study the IT training process under the most taxing conditions. The broad spectrum of various forms of training falls under on-the -job training and off- the -job training. The present study is exploratory and qualitative in nature and focuses on IT related training procedures & practices, training duration, types of training that are carried out in hospitals. The Participants were the part of convenient sampling which included IT managers, Human resource managers and hospital administrators, who offer their full time services to the hospital. The data was analyzed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. It has been found out by research the following types of training that is practiced included Induction training, On-the-job training, Foundation training and other types. The research also concentrates on the importance and Focus in Training and the role of training faculty.

Key words: - Training, Healthcare, Information Technology, Computers

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Introduction:

The history of training in business organizations is as long as the whole history of business organizations (Miller, 1996).However academic study of various forms of training did not start until about a century ago (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001). According to Obisi (2001) training is a process through which the skills, talent and knowledge of an employee is enhanced and increased. He argues that training should take place only when the need and objectives for such training have been identified. Arnoff (1971) observes that training will foster the initiative, creativity of employees and help to prevent manpower obsolescence, which may be due to age, attitude or the inability of a person to adapt him or herself to technological changes.

In order to remain competitive, health care organizations have made huge investments in new computer systems and applications.   As a result, it is estimated that, in 1999, 95% of organizations in United States involved in health services had their users trained in new computer applications (Industry Report, 1999). Hospitals present a unique opportunity to study the training process under the most taxing conditions: number of employees to train, cost and time constraints and criticality of employee's work, actions for involving patient care. The latest applied research on training methods has focused mostly on the cost benefits of using technology to provide training and on the effectiveness of computer-based teaching/training methods. Experimental research has explored the influence of individual differences such as learning styles on user performance and, in doing so, has defined effectiveness boundaries for specific training methods (Bostrom, R.P.et al, 1990)

(Alo, 1999) has focused on two major types of training, on-the -job training and off- the -job training. On-the-job training, is normally handled by colleagues, supervisors, managers, mentors' to help employees adjust to their work and to equip them with appropriate job related skills Armstrong (1995) argues that on-the-job training may consist of teaching or coaching by more experienced people or trainers at the desk or at the bench. It may also consist of individual or group assignment, projects and the use of team leaders and managers. According to Armstrong (1995), on-the-job training is the only way to develop and practice the specific managerial, team leading, technical, selling, manual, and administrative skills needed by the organization and it has the advantages of actuality and immediacy as the individual works, learns and develops expertise at the same time. The main disadvantage is that the effectiveness of the learning is strongly
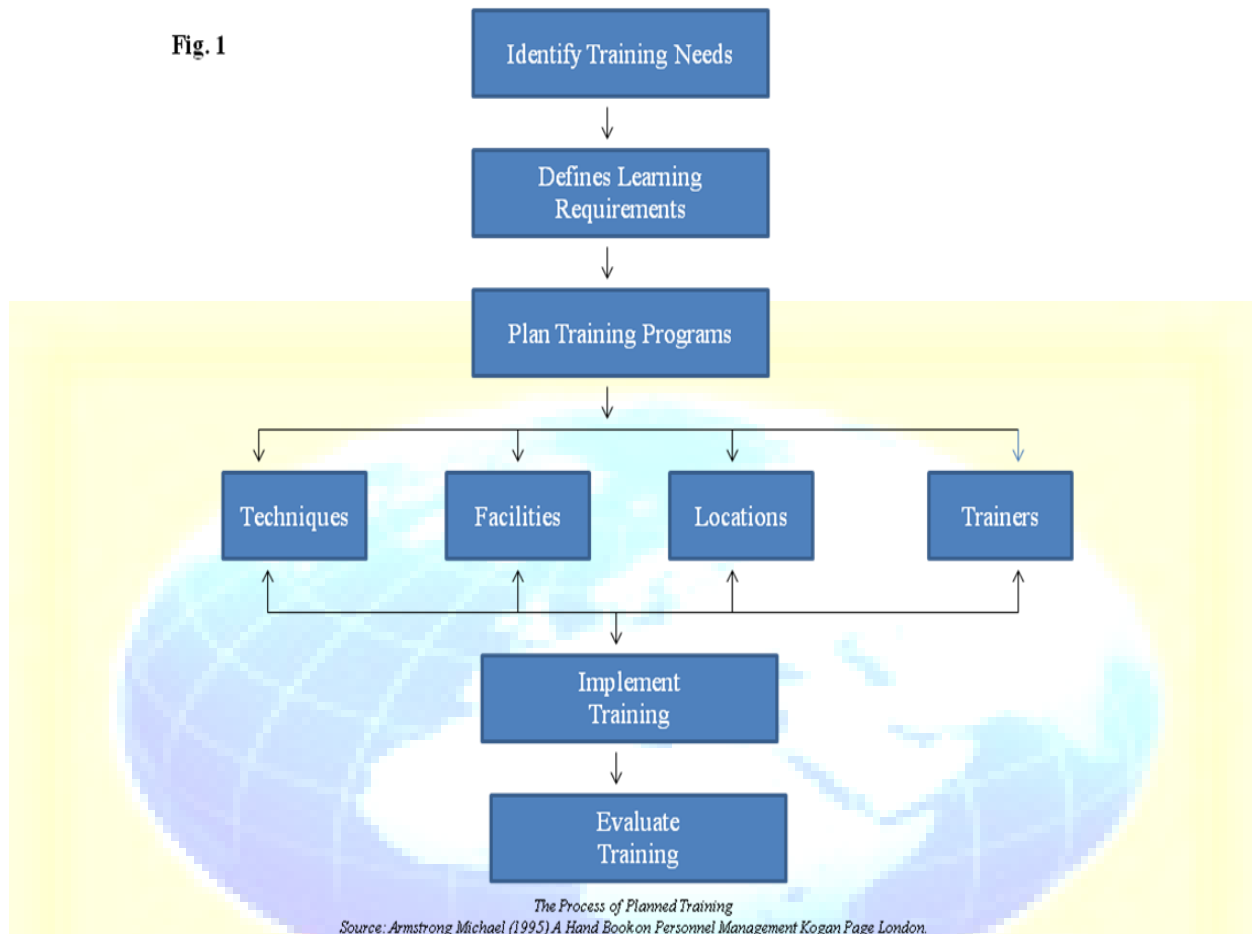
influenced by the quality of the guidance and coaching provided on the job. Many managers and team leaders are unskilled at training and disinclined to carry it out or to encourage it. Furthermore, relying on fellow employees in "sit by me" training has obvious disadvantages as instruction may be inadequate and the training may perpetuate bad habits. Again, the learner may be distracted by the same environment and find it difficult to acquire basic skills quickly. According to (Ejiogu 2000) Off-the-job Training includes lecture, vestibule training, role playing, case study, discussion and simulation Armstrong (1995) listed group exercises, team building, distance learning, outdoor and workshops as part of off-the-job training. He further explains that off-the-job training may be provided by members of the training department, external education and training establishments, or training providers, training consultants or guest speakers. He encourages line managers to be closely involved to bring reality into the classroom, to ease the transfer of learning, and to make sure that those involved in off-the-job training are carefully selected, briefed and monitored so as to ensure that they make the right contribution.

According to Kenneth D. B. (1995) planned training is the deliberate intervention aimed at achieving the learning necessary for improved job performance. Planned training according to Kenney and Reid consists of the following steps:

- Identify and define training needs
- Define the learning required in terms of what skills and knowledge have to be learnt and what attitudes need to be changed.
- Define the objectives of the training
- Plan training programs to meet the needs and objectives by using right combination for training techniques and locations.
- Decide who provides the training
- Evaluate training.
- Amend and extend training as necessary

Armstrong (1995) presents a clearer understanding of what is meant by training needs. He writes that the gap between what people know and can do and what people should know and be able to do is called training need. Therefore when an organization observes that there is a gap between what is happening and what should happen, there is a training need.

Fig. 1

Identify Training Needs

Defines Learning Requirements

Plan Training Programs

Techniques | Facilities | Locations | Trainers

Implement Training

Evaluate Training

The Process of Planned Training
Source: Armstrong Michael (1995) A Hand Book on Personnel Management Kogan Page London.

According to Chris Obisi (2011) the ultimate aim of every training program is to add value to human resource. Any training program that would not add value should be abandoned. Organizations should therefore make training and development of their employees a continuous activity and consider Training to be an integral part of the management and development process.

Methods

The present study is exploratory in nature as it focuses on information technology related training procedures & practices, training duration, types of training that are carried out at the hospitals. It is largely descriptive and categorized as a non-experimental qualitative study. A structured interview was conducted for a sample of 30 participants which was taken using convenient sampling. The sample was taken from 13 hospitals that have bed strength more than 100 and corporate in nature. The Participants were IT managers, Human resource managers and hospital administrators who offer their full time services within the hospitals. A prior appointment was

taken from the participants they were briefed about the study and encouraged to expel information relating to IT training procedures and practices, training duration, types of training. The data was collected by face to face interview after the recording from the entire 30 participants data was analyzed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The study is restricted to hospitals of Hyderabad and Secunderabad

Discussion

The study revealed the following

- The Total number of Employee training programs that were carried out between March-2011 to March-2012 at the study hospital was for various groups of employees like training programs for doctors were on Emergency Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Pediatrics, Surgical Specialties and other clinical areas. Training programs for nurses were on Safe Injection Practices, Emergency Management, Biomedical Waste Management and others domain areas. The programs that were for all the employees included programs for improving communication skills, Health management, time management, leadership skills, stress management, Computers and IT skills, Customer Service, disaster management, fire and safety, accreditation, quality management and so on. In 2011 there were about 173 training programs in total conducted at the study hospital out of which 21 were on computers and information technology.

- When the HR manager was asked how you analyze training requirement the answer was Analysis of training need was based various means out of which the major means are.

  - Analysis of jobs
  - Feedback
  - Performance appraisal
  - Based on training surveys
  - Performance analysis
  - Attitudinal study
  - Error rate
  - Absenteeism
  - Human resource analysis

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The various types of training at the study hospital are as follows

- Induction training

  o All the participants of the research agreed on Induction training highlighted its importance and said it enables new recruit to become productive as quickly as possible. Human Resource managers commented that proper induction training can avoid costly mistakes by a new recruiter by not knowing the procedures or techniques of their new jobs. The duration of induction training varies from job to job and depends on the complexity of the job, the position of the job within the hospital, the past experience he has about the system and his edification advantage. The induction training in the research hospitals focus on learning about the duties of the job and meeting new colleagues, seeing the layout of the system, learning about the core values and aims of the business, learning about the internal workings and policies of the business. The IT induction training related to introduction with orientation of the enterprise resource planning system and its various applications that are used by the hospitals, about the hardware and network layout, about the security issues, about website and communication system, about intranet application, about backup and recovery system. The IT induction training can be for 3 to 7 days and is provided by a team which includes IT manager, application specialist, DBA and Network Engineer.

- Foundation Training

  o Out of 13 hospitals seven hospitals emphasized on foundation training which is in-service training for newly recruited personnel. Besides technical competence and routine instruction about the organization, newly recruited personnel need some professional knowledge about various rules and regulations of the government, financial transactions, administrative capability, communication skills, leadership ability, coordination and cooperation among institutions and so on. Foundation training is made available to employees to strengthen the foundation of their service career. This training is usually provided at an early stage of service life. The IT department provides foundation training on various ERP application, rules and regulation regarding genuinely of the software, importance of licensing software, protocols, layouts and sensitive areas.

- Refresher Training

  o Changing IT trends and technology in healthcare made refresher training a part of core IT training practices. This training is offered to update and maintain the specialized subject-matter knowledge. Refresher training keeps the administrators, application specialists, supervisors, frontline employees updated and enable them to add to the knowledge, skills they already have. Refresher training usually deals with new information and new methods, as well as review of older materials. This type of training is desired to keep employees at the peak of their possible production and to prevent them from getting into a rut.

- On-the-job training

  o The other type of training that all the hospitals agreed was On-the-job training by which employee receives training whilst remaining in the workplace. On- job- training at various hospitals include demonstration with instruction showing the trainee how to do the job, coaching a more intensive method of training that involves a close working relationship between an experienced employee (which can be called as super users or application specialist) and the trainee. The On-the-job training lasts till the employee learns the application and is a continuous activity. The application specialist who provides training is either from vendor or in-house. Usually a demo system is provided with a demo sever and then the employee is made to work on that system assuming it to be live along with the employee application specialist assist whenever a difficulty arises.

- General IT training

  o Apart from all the above training methods ,fundamental orientation training was recommended by all the IT mangers on web based application including sending and receiving emails, using the internet for browsing the information, use other application software for job purpose like spread sheet to carry out simple to complex calculations and Statistics, word processing to create documents, presentation software for creating presentations, using antivirus software, training about operating system uses like copying a file, deleting a file , renaming a file and so on, use database to store, retrieve data.

o   The IT managers strongly recommended that this kind of training should be given to each and every employee of the hospital in from of batches i.e. about 15 to 20 in a batch (batch of doctors, nurses and other staff).On further investigation it was found out that the participation of the staff was poor and the IT Manager was planning for a cookbook method of training for the staff.

- Strategic Focus in Training

o   All the hospital administrators that participated in the research considered training activities as an important element for organizational development and should be a continuous process. As it is an ongoing process for new, old, transferred, promoted employees strong measures should be taken by management to improve it. The important recommended issues were on allotment of training budget, in advance information regarding training areas, the full year layout on training programs and participants, strong involvement of top management and make it a part of organization culture. As the technology is consistently changing training is the best available option that can make employees well equipped for future growth and challenges. The administrators of the hospital commented that Training should be an integral part of the management process which in turn requires managers to review regularly with their teams and the individuals reporting to them, performance in relation to agreed objectives.

- Training Faculty

o   When the focus was on the Training faculty i.e. who will carry out training all the participants agreed training faculty should be a competent instructor in his or her areas of specialization and should have the personality to convey competence and ability. The research also highlighted that the training faculty should be aware in details of planned changes in policy, structure or process within the organization, as regards training. They should work more from within than from outside and be conscious of the need for continuity of training plans and activities. The growing complexity of healthcare industry and its problems makes increasing demands on the training faculty members to improve the quality of the workforce at all levels. The training faculty should also have credibility with the trainees and should be able to use the chosen learning methods to meet learning
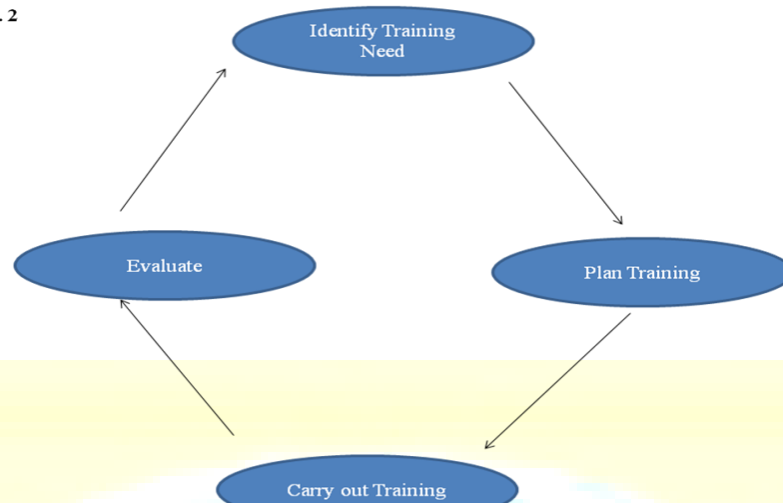
objectives and they should be available whenever they are needed. In the final analysis training faculty members should not only come from within the organization but external consultants should also be encouraged to be faculty members so that they can bring independence, experience, expertise , the external faculty members can bring a useful 'extra pair of hands' to the training activities. The training facilitators that were used by the hospital sample included in-house staff, consultant hired as an expert advisor and application specialist from the vendor

- Information and Logistics

  o   The Human Resource managers believed that training programs can be effective if information is readily available to the trainees. Extensive discussion with the trainees would go a long way to prepare them on various issues like reasons for the training and the benefit of the training to the trainees and the organization. The inability to provide timely information and poor logistics can ruin training programs. At times the participants in a training program coming late or even not coming on the first day and this may not be unconnected with lack of logistics. Good transport, accommodation, infracture and flexible timings can make training interesting. The right location for the training should be conducive to help the participants relax and concentrate on the training activities. Few problems and the challenges that were raveled as barriers were as time constrains, accessibility, financial issues, staff motivation, education regarding training and marketing.

  o   When asked on training cycle a similar model of Imanyi (2002) systematic training cycle was recommended by few HR managers that included identifying training needs, planning the training, carrying out the training and evaluating the training to know whether the training program is worthwhile.

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Fig. 2

Source: *Imanyi G.U (2002) Participants Training Manual C.M.D Management Trainers Development*

Conclusions

Training is a process through which the skills, talent and knowledge of an employee is enhanced and increased it also foster the initiative, creativity of employee. Health care organizations should strive and Focus on Training as a strategic objective. There are two major types of training, on-the-job training and off- the -job training that are practiced commonly. A clearer understanding of training needs can make training process more productive. The aim of every training program should be to add value to human resource. The study focuses on information technology related training revealed in-depth details about training programs, Logistics and management focus. There were 173 training programs in total conducted at the study hospital out of which 21 were on computers and information technology. The various types of training at the study hospital were Induction training, Foundation Training, Refresher Training, General IT training and the study also emphasized on training faculty, focus on training and training cycle.

List of Abbreviations

DBA -   Data Base Administrator

ERP-   Enterprise Resource Planning

HR-   Human Resource

IT -   Information Technology

IS-   Information Systems

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