Organizational barriers to employee training and learning: evidence from the automotive sector

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Introduction

Organizational training is about equipping workers with skills, knowledge, new capabilities, and work attitude to enable them to perform their current job very efficiently and more effectively. It is generally accepted that effective training and development programs are major determinants of corporate effectiveness. Prior studies (Abugre and Adebola, 2015; Anlesinya et al., 2014; Kampkötter and Marggraf, 2015) largely focus on the outcomes of employee training and learning such as performance, retention, and commitment.

However, the factors that facilitate or inhibit employee training and learning are largely neglected by researchers in the automotive industry of Ghana. Meanwhile, there is a view that training and learning flourishes in a situation where there is an “existence of a cordial atmosphere in organizations that encourages employees to add value to themselves to enhance their current and future goal attainment in a cost effective way” (Anlesinya et al., 2014, p. 285). In response to this claim and gap in the literature, this study examines organizational barriers to employee training and learning in an automotive organization.

Research context

The automotive industry in Ghana is currently being affected by constant technological advancement and increased customer awareness of various brand choices. As a result, most of the industry players are expected to encourage their workers to constantly build their capacity to adopt new technologies in their operations to meet the changing needs of their customers.

Research design and methods

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. The study targeted employees of a large manufacturing company in the automotive industry in Ghana. The company has 125 employees and 103 were selected based on the following criteria:

- permanent company employees;
- previously participated in the company’s training programmes; and
- have more than one year in organizational tenure.
The number of usable questionnaires was 89, representing a response rate of 86.41 per cent. A four-item scale was measured on 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test were used to present the findings by testing the significance of the mean scores. The univariate tests of normality (skewness and kurtosis, and graphical methods) showed that the variables were normally distributed, and hence appropriate for one-sample t-test analysis.

Results and findings

The results are presented in Table I below. To obtain meaningful interpretations of the results, the following mean (M) intervals: “1.0 ≤ score < 1.8: strong disagreement; 1.8 ≤ score < 2.6: disagreement; 2.6 ≤ score ≤ 3.4: not sure/low agreement; 3.4 < score ≤ 4.2: medium agreement; 4.2 < score ≤ 5.0: strong agreement)” were adopted from Gravetter and Wallnau (2009, pp. 278-302).

From the results, the respondents strongly agreed that lack of transparency and fairness in trainees’ selection is a barrier to employee training (M = 4.31). The findings further show that: organizational culture not being supportive of employee training (M = 3.78), poor management commitment to training employees (M = 4.00), and lack of prospect for career advancement and promotion (M = 4.18) are major barriers to employee training.

Discussions

The results identified four common barriers to employee training and learning: First, the culture of the organization does not encourage employees to participate in decision-making. This suggests that employees who have benefited from a training program are not encouraged to apply their new skills and knowledge effectively by making vital inputs to management decisions that affect their jobs.

Second, poor commitment of top management to training was also indicated as a major barrier to employee training. This implies that top management does not provide the necessary resources to support employee training. It could also mean that management does not create the requisite atmosphere for employees to learn or upgrade themselves (Anlesinya et al., 2014).

Third, lack of promotion and career prospects discourage most employees to participate in training activities. This indicates that when employees do not see any opportunity of being promoted to a role that will require them to apply their knowledge and skills, they may not be motivated to learn.

The final barrier was lack of transparency and fairness in the selection of trainees. When the selection of beneficiaries is not fair, it could be a challenge to such an important exercise in organizations. These results confirm Antonacopoulou’s (2000) claim that these factors may not motivate employees to participate in training initiatives in organizations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training barriers</th>
<th>Mean (M)</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>L.C.I-U.C.I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisational culture</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>7.25***</td>
<td>(1, 88)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.56-0.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor management commitment</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>9.54***</td>
<td>(1, 88)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.79-1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of prospects for promotion</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>14.90***</td>
<td>(1, 88)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.02-1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No transparency and fairness</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>20.83***</td>
<td>(1, 88)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.19-1.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Sample size (N) = 89; t-value = 3; ***significant at 0.1% (0.001); L.C.I = lower confidence interval; U.C.I = upper confidence interval
Recommendations

The study recommends that:

- Top management should provide necessary resources to support training and learning initiatives by creating training fund(s), and networks of experienced employee coaches and mentors.
- They should encourage training beneficiaries to apply new skills and knowledge by involving them in decision-making or by enlarging their jobs.
- The procedures for selecting trainees should be transparent and fair. This can be realised through proper use of training needs assessment results, and involvement of both supervisors and employees.
- Management should encourage cultural practices that inspire continuous learning motivation among their employees. This may be achieved by instituting award schemes to reward employees’ whose initiatives and improved performance can be linked to their training. Aside, employees can be made internal consultant to other employees on issues related to their training.

References


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