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Examining the Effects of Job Training-Fit on Employee Creativity and Performance

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Abstract:

The importance of having a job different from the one for which one is trained for has become very important in recent times given the huge costs organizations incur with regards to training of their staff. Generally, there is a consensus within the literature that, there might be high level of employee creativity when the training given them fits their job descriptions. This conceptual paper investigates the link between job training-fit and employee creativity as well as the effect this may have on staff performance. The extant literature was reviewed on key constructs like job training-fit, employee creativity and performance. The paper further analyzes the theoretical framework related to the main constructs to understand the nature of relationship among them. Evidence that adequately shows a direct link between job training-fit and employee creativity and performance is limited. Consequently, empirical research is therefore needed in the future to assess the discussed proposition in this paper. Ultimately the paper concludes with recommendation on directions for future research. Apparently, there appears to be a need to apply different levels of analysis to explore the effect of job training-fit on employee creativity and performance.

Keywords: Job training-fit, employee creativity, performance, training

1. Introduction

For organizations to improve their output and efficiency level in the current dynamic business environment; they need to progressively find ways of improving the efficacy and performance level of their employees. Programs instituted by organizations to train and develop the skills of their employees could be regarded as tools designed for achieving organizational goals. Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2012) contended that, organizations undertake training programs to help improve the knowledge, skills and competences of their employees. More importantly, work demand on employees is becoming understandably complex in a highly globalized and dynamic business environment. This suggests the need for a precise training approach to be used when training employees. Using the precise approach to train employees leads to an upsurge in the job-related skills and competences of the employees; eventually resulting in high job performance (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2012). According to Robinson and Robinson (1995), the most important benefits of training is the improvement in the accuracy level of an employee's job and task obligations as well as a surge in competency levels.

Theoretical literature submits a positive link between training and employee creativity (Amabile, 1988; Gervais et al., 2012 & Spreitzer et al., 1999). Essentially, when organized training fits the job of the employees, it helps them in the acquisition of practical and social skills as well as the required knowledge needed to perform on the job (Eldridge & Nisar, 2006). Earlier research had revealed the level of fit existing between an employee and his job could influence both employees' productivity level (Rousseau & McLean, 1992). Even though some researchers (Afshari et al., 2011; and Jansen et al., 2006) have offered various theoretical frameworks on employee creativity; there is still limited empirical evidence. This notwithstanding empirically, the parts leading to greater employee creativity is limited (Karatepe, 2012)

Several studies reveal the existence of a relationship between personal features and creativity of employees (such as Adler and Chen, 2011; Avey, et al., 2012; Backes-Gellner and Veen, 2013 & Chen et al., 2011). Nevertheless, few of them (such as Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013; Jiang et al., 2012 & Thompson and Heron, 2006) focused on empowerment and employee creativity. Besides, there is still ambiguity surrounding the link between human resources practices and employee effectiveness (Guest, 2011 & Thompson, 2011). Previous studies in human resource examined other proportions of employee performance but overlooked the link between employee creativity and human resource practices (Knies & Leisink 2013; Wright & McMahan, 2011). When constant specialized training that fit the jobs of employees are given, it enables them to deliver excellent work results plus job commitment, performance and satisfaction (Raigama, 2010; Cole, 2011; Swart et al., 2005). Limited researches have explored the effect of job training-fit on employee creativity though majority of research on

training has addressed these topics. Shalley & Gilson (2004) contended this is unfortunate looking at how vital employee creativity has become in the dynamic business environment of today. Therefore, this paper aims at examining the nexus between job training-fit, employee creativity and performance.

Also, this paper attempts to explore any existing empirical evidence to link job training-fit, and employee creativity. Ultimately, the paper may fill a gap in research through the proposition of a model that will theoretically give a better insight into the complex relationship between job training-fit, employee creativity and performance. Specifically, this paper is based on a review of prevalent literature (Drexler & Lindell, 1981; Schmidt, 2007) on creativity and training as well including work on how training fit affects the satisfaction of employees. The paper also explains why greater job training- fit leads to creative employee behaviors resulting in better organizational performance. Consequently, the antecedents relating to employee creativity and job training- fit are discussed. Besides, there is a discussion on how job training-fit can help in the development of employee creativity.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Employee Training

Employee performance has emerged as a very important issue both among the scholars and practitioners of management. To increase the performance of employees most organizations invest in their training to enhance organizational output (Mwita, 2000). Performance is thus a necessity for the success of every organization; a strategic multidimensional concept intended at realizing outcomes due to the connection it shares with the tactical goals of an organization. Furthermore, performance is a vital ingredient for organizations towards the achievement of corporate goals, increasing efficiency and helping in the attainment of sustainable growth and profitability (Mwita, 2000).

The continuous existence of any organization in a turbulent and volatile environment depends on its capability to provide effective employee training which allows for employee creativity, improve performance and help sustain the competitive advantage of the organization (Edralin, 2004; Lynton & Pareek, 2000; Vemić, 2007). Employee training is therefore an important input needed by organizations to achieve competitive advantage in this modern era. For instance, Woolf (2007) explains that for an organization to preserve its position (market share) and further solidify its competitive advantage within the market. The reliance on old knowledge should be avoided plus a well thought out plan to facilitate new knowledge creation. It is important to mention that employee training and development offers the right platform through which this can be achieved. Furthermore, training and development does not only promote transfer, creation and application of novel knowledge but equally positions an organization as an employer of choice for highly skilled talents in a competitive labour market (Love & Singh, 2011; Sutherland, Torricelli & Karg, 2002). The importance of employee training and development to maintaining advantage in a competitive marketplace makes it obligatory for organizations to develop a thorough understanding of the changes that take place for employees during organizational learning (Woolf, 2007).

Mullins (2007) argued that training is vital in safeguarding the right supply of skilled and competent staff who are to work in a way to achieve the goals of the organizations. Hence it is significant that adequate consideration is given to the nature of training when in developing staff given that is quite an essential component of the entire employee development cycle. Khan et al. (2011) also explains that with training, there is an increase in the efficacy and competence of both organization and the employees. Although many factors influence employee performance, training is regarded as a vital element of employee performance; as it enhances their capabilities to perform better at work due to the resulting increase in both their competencies and skills. Furthermore, Wright and Geroy (2001) argued that training improves the knowledge, abilities, and attitude needed by employees to meet the current and future demands the jobs they do.

2.2. Training-Fit

Job training is defined by Landy (1985 p. 306) as “a set of planned activities on the part of an organization to increase the job knowledge and skills or to modify the attitudes and social behavior of its members in ways consistent with the goals of the organization and the requirements of the job”. Training is a systematic development of the skills, knowledge and expertise vital for the effective performance of a given task (Patrick, 2000). One aspect of training is acquiring skills to qualify for a job; however, another part is improving the skills needed for the job to be performed (Amirault, 1991). The two crucial factors concerning training that have positive impact on employee creativity and performance are the training level and the type of skills that the job requires of the employee (Drexler & Lindell, 1981). Clarke (2002) also contended that when it comes to obstacles to the use of training on the job, both task and work environment as major factors. Additionally, congruence should exist between the type of training (fit) and the job as this may to a considerable extent determines the creativity and performance of the employee. Therefore, it is obvious from literature that when training is provided for a job, it helps the employees to build the skills required for the job and also provides opportunities for their development. This is particularly important as having a training which does not capitalize on the job to be done lead to poor employee creativity and mediocre performance.

Lawrence (et al., 2004) defines fit as the congruence between need, values or abilities of an individual and the culture or the environment of an organization or the job. Synthesizing the definition of fit and job training (Landy, 1985; Lawrence et

al., 2004; Patrick, 2000), job training-fit is hereby defined as the capacity of an employee training program to enhance the expertise, behaviour and motivates employees to satisfy their job demands.

Findings from Bartlett (2001 p. 349) established better link between organizational commitment and workplace training and recommended that organizations "adopt new research methods to demonstrate to organizational decision makers that training that fit the jobs that employees do contributes to desired workplace attitudes which may in turn influence behaviors such as creativity and turnover". Hence in determining the most efficient training method, there is the need for organisations to consider characteristics like skill, attitude and the intrinsic motivation (Wexley & Latham, 2002).

Training can induce positive or negative impressions and attitudes that trainees carry with them into the workplace (Tannenbaum & Colleagues, 1991). Bartlett (2001) argued that these attitudes are vital as they could even be considered as training outcomes. Lowry et al (2002) concluded there was significantly higher score for employees who received training that fit their jobs scored than those who had not during a job satisfaction surveys. Conversely, the willingness of employees to leave an organization is adversely influenced by organizational learning culture and job satisfaction (Egan, et al., 2004). Given these arrays of impact that training has on employees, there is a dire need for organizations to ensure the introduction and entrenchment of training packages that aligns with not only their corporate goals but with the individual career ambitions of their employees. Also, the impact of training on attitudes suggests that it possess the ability to influence creativity and other innate skills among employees. Understanding the extent of such an influence is needed both from the academic and practitioner's viewpoint.

2.3. Effect of Job-Training fit on Employee Creativity

In Weisberg (1999), the author found vital link between training and creativity. The questions of whether there is a relationship between learning-related actions (employee job training) and higher levels of employee creativity need to be asked. The social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) attests to the fact that knowledge and skills are acquired through job training. Training orientation (Dweck, 1986, 2000; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; VandeWalle et al., 1999) is an internal mindset that motivates employees to develop their competence.

Ames and Archer (1988) contended that when training fit the jobs of employees, it enables them to pursue challenges that afford them learning opportunities. Consequently, employees may not want to stay in organizations where there are less relevant training programmes for staff. Further research (see for example, Brett & VandeWalle, 1999; Kozlowski et al., 2001) suggests job-training fit is beneficial when it comes to acquiring knowledge and skills. Training that fit an employee's job improves multicultural adjustment, which includes the gaining of culturally innovative skills and behaviors (Gong & Fan, 2006). This is critically important in a highly interdependent and globalized business community where cultural intelligence is now becoming a prerequisite for employees; especially those working in multinational enterprises (MNEs).

When employees acquire knowledge and skills, there is enhancement in their level of creativity (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987; Gardner, 1993; Hayes, 1989). With reference to the social exchange theory, improving the performance of employees suggests that their welfare needs are also considered. Findings by Nawaz, et al., (2014) contended that when employees are engaged with their jobs they become creative. The crux of their findings suggests that training that fit the jobs of employees, makes them feel the sense of belongingness which leads to employee engagement eventually resulting in employee creativity and possibly improved performance.

2.4. Job Training- Fit and Intrinsic Motivation

A crucial factor in employee creativity is intrinsic motivation orientation (Amabile, 1990; Barron & Harrington, 1981). Intrinsic motivation as defined by Amabile (1996) is the motivation that comes from the interest an individual has and participation in the task itself. It centers on competence, relatedness and the need for autonomy (Gagné & Deci, 2005), or the characteristics of the design of the work leading to creative psychological states (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

In the job training-fit context, current reviews have shown that more studies need to be done on how perceptions of training relevance to a job and the willingness to learn affect motivation (Chen & Klimoski, 2007; Kraiger & Ford, 2007). An understanding of how intrinsic motivation impacts the desire of workers to be trained could help in the formulation of pragmatic policies that effectively positions an employer as a learning organization and as employer-of-choice. Roca and Gagné (2008) stated that when job training-fit is highly perceived it could contribute to need fulfillment. Additional, the necessity of creativity and capability might be achieved through the encouragement of employees to pursue challenges ideal for the development of their respective capacities. Therefore, due to the essential aspects of the work employees perform, they are likely to enjoy their work when motivated intrinsically. Amabile, (1996) defined creativity-relevant skills and processes as "a person's abilities, both innate and developed, to generate creative ideas and to creatively identify, explore, and solve problems". The capabilities of attending to thought that are creative and participating in prior creative experiences are the processes related to creativity.

2.5. Job Training-Fit and Task-relevant Skills and Knowledge

There is the likelihood to have employees with significant repertoire of knowledge, skills, and task-relevant skill to perform their jobs when job training-fit with an organization is high (Amabile, 1983). Hastie & Dawes (2001) argued that individuals have the tendency to observe and comprehend events based on what they know and believe. Hence with relevant,

right values and orientations about the job employees, there is the likelihood organizational event and work-related issues will be better understood by the employees.

Employees may recognize their expertise and knowledge in an area within an organization by clearly understanding the procedures one employs at work (Amabile, 1988; Sawyer, 1992). This enhances understanding, and in turn, allows employees to further obtain related, right knowledge and information to perform the job. Likewise, it also aids in the identification of successfully areas that might need further improvement in performance. This helps direct the attention of the employees and help to acquire valuable knowledge and abilities to change their behaviour and help them fit into their jobs.

2.6. Relationship between Employee Creativity and Performance

Creativity refers to generation of original idea which is about novel, unanticipated and valuable thoughts (Amabile, 1983; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Shalley, 1991). Baldwin (2008) defines performance as undertaking actions efficiently and effectively for the achievement of agreed job objectives. It is evident that creativity is considered as an important competency for both organizations and employees (Gino & Ariely, 2011; West, 2002); as it effectively facilitates problem solving by employees (Mumford & Gustafson, 1998) and allows flexibility on the job (Flach, 1990). Furthermore, creativity enables employees to accept and exploit new opportunities within their workspace (Runco, 2004). Hence, creativity is needed to maintain the competitiveness and survival of organizations to meet customers' demands (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; West, 2002).

Shalley et al., (2004) contended that the application of fresh or useful idea can help improve the work of employees for better organizational performance. Meaning when employees become creative in an organization, it makes the organization have an edge over its competitors and may in turn increases the financial performance of the organization (Deshpandé et al., 1993). Apart from the increasingly key role of creativity in improving performance on the job, employees may also need to create an enabling and supportive culture that encourages worker creativity as it has also been recognized as a key enabler of firm innovation (Dul & Ceylan, 2014; Miron-Spektor & Beenen, 2015).

Also, the exhibition of creative behaviors by employees helps in the generation of competitive advantages and better returns for the organization (Woodman et al., 1993). Various researches have argued that competitive advantage leads to revenue growth (Barney, 1986; Porter, 1985). Findings from Von Nordenflycht (2007), provides empirical support for the effect creativity has on revenue growth rates. Besides, Geroski (2000) proposed that there is an increase in profit when organizations encourage creative behaviors in their employees. Thus, there appears to be in the literature, a semblance of a positive relationship between employee creativity and performance. However, what is lacking is empirical evidence that supports such a relationship.

3. Theoretical Background

When employees are taken care of by their organizations, according to the social exchange theory, there is an exchange relationship which promises to improve the performance of the organizational (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). When employees receive socio-emotional and economic resources from the organization, there is the feeling employees will pay back the organization. For instance, employees dedicate their emotional and physical cognitive resources when they are given training that fit their jobs; an, this help improve their performance on the job (Karatepe, 2012).

Campbell et al., (1993) argued that the theory of performance concerns what needs to be done by a person to effectively undertake the job assigned by an organization. Based on this theory, procedural and skills knowledge, motivation and declarative knowledge are factors that influence employee creativity and job performance. Campbell et al., (1993) further contended that knowledge about facts, self-knowledge, goals and principles which signifies an understanding of a specified task is regarded as declarative knowledge. They also said psychomotor abilities, cognitive abilities, self-management abilities, physical abilities, and interpersonal abilities are considered as practical knowledge and ability. When these three are combined, it leads to employee motivations (Campbell et al., 1993). Therefore, the three are closely linked to the competency of employees. It is therefore believed that when there is competency, it leads to the possession of the knowledge about requirements of core task and the necessary capabilities that reflect the abilities, attributes and intention of an employee's creativity (Boyatzis, 1982).

The congruence theory of job design according to Barrett's (1978), expresses the importance of job fit between individual preferences and the job requirements or the knowledge skills and ability. Both components are widely believed to be essential to the satisfactory identification of individual's creativity and retention level. When there is congruence existing between the employee and their job, it leads to positive creativity and motivational outcomes (Barrett, 1978; Edwards, 1991). Hence, the theory of performance, Social Exchange theory and the theory of Congruence are the theories underpinning this paper.

4. Theoretical Framework

Employees may be considered as intellectual property and a reliable source of gaining competitive advantage within an organization (Houger, 2006). Thus, giving them training that fit their jobs is the only way of building their competencies which helps in the development of the organizational intellectual property. Consequently, the review of the extant literature in this paper suggests that there might be positive impact on employee performance and creativity if employers organize

training that fit the job employees. It therefore means that training must be implemented to fit the needs of employees; as this might lead to a greater effect on performance. Employee commitment, skills and attitude are the variables that can be affected by job-training fit. This is depicted in Figure 1 which shows the theoretical framework underpinning this paper.

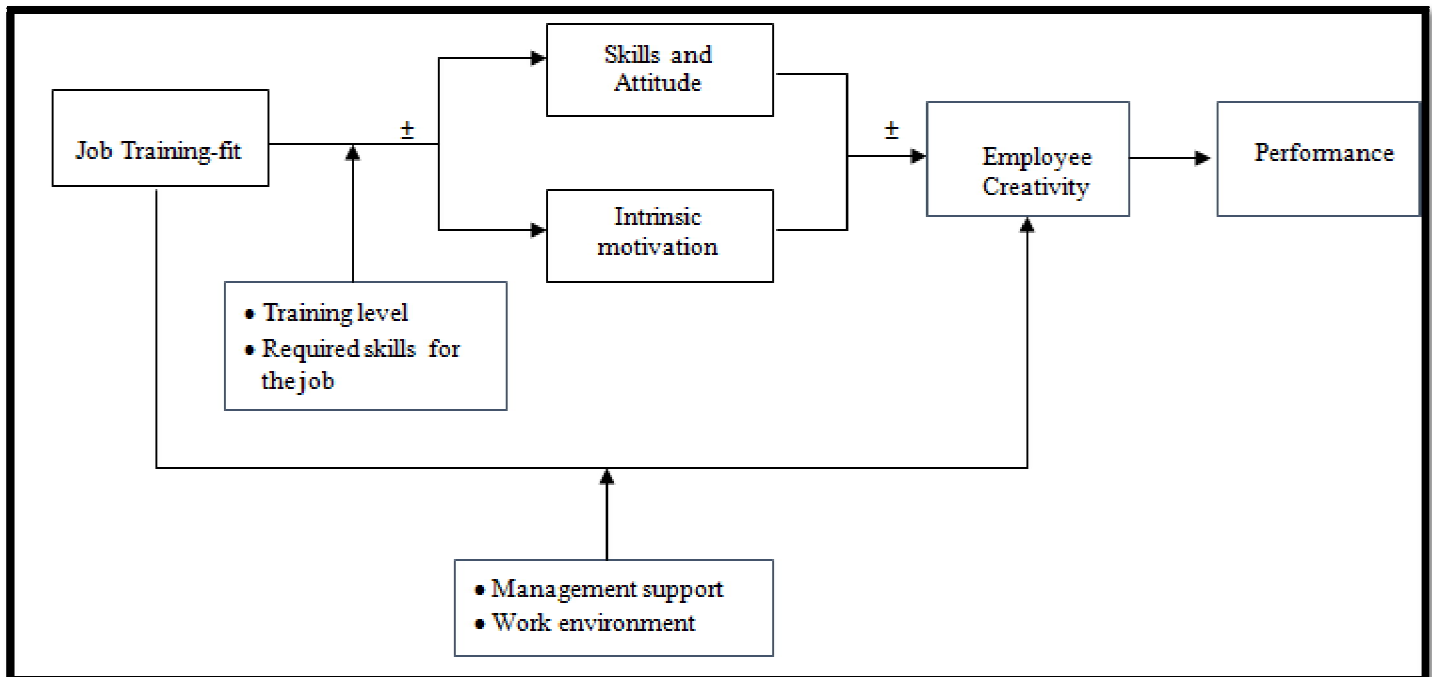


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework Formulated for This Study
Source: Author

The resulting hypotheses from the literature review and discussion on the theoretical perspective of the work is shown below:

- H1: Employee job training-fit is positively related to employee creativity
- H2: Employees job training-fit is positively related to skills and attitude.
- H3: Employees job training-fit is positively related to intrinsic motivation.
- H4: Work environment moderates the relationship between job training-fit and employee creativity
- H5: Management support moderates the relationship between job training-fit and employee creativity
- H6: Employee's training level Mediates the relationship between job training-fit and employee creativity
- H7: Type of skill the job requires of the employee Mediates the relationship between job training-fit and employee creativity
- H8: Skills and Attitude are positively related to employee creativity
- H9: Intrinsic motivation is positively related to employee creativity
- H10: Employee creativity is positively related to organizational performance

5. Research Methodology

This conceptual paper is based exclusively on the analysis and understandings drawn from existing literature from numerous studies, linked to the topic to help examine the relationships between job training-fit and employee creativity and performance. A total of 45 separate studies relating to diverse range of topics on job training fit, employee creativity, and employee performance were undertaken over the period. This served as a means that aided in acquiring valuable information about the subject area. Drawing on existing literature for this paper, there was also the formulation and discussion of the proposition that helped in the illumination and discussions of some ways organizations can understand job training-fit and its effect on employee creativity and performance. According to Gummesson (2002, p. 283), the challenging task with all research is about how to interpret and combine what is already there and make some sense out of it but not how to generate more. The researchers submit to this statement and made the best out of the insights acquired from the existing literature to address the phenomenon for this paper.

6. Conclusion

According to Arnoff (1971), training increases the ingenuity capability of employees and facilitates the avoidance of obsolescence in human resource. Logically, training processes increases the repertoire of abilities, knowledge and

assertiveness, hence when it fit the job of employees; it leads to satisfactory job performance (Obisi, 2001). He further discussed that when offering training, organizations should identify the need and objectives of the training and ensures that these needs and objectives fit the needs of their employees.

To makes employees more efficient and effective, training should be used as it is the heart of better organizational management (Scott, Clothier & Spriegel, 1977). There a solid bond human resource practices and training exercise (Mamoria, 1995); it aids self-employee development inside the organization and increase the market value of the organization. Well-trained employees have the ability of making a best use of organizational resources and minimizing wastages (Mamoria, 1995). When training fit the jobs of employees, it enables the delegation of authority and responsibility to employees with full confidence to ensure success in the organization. Training helps to stimulant employee to enable them to improve their capabilities and performance. Designing training should therefore be based on a fit between the training and the job to be done.

This paper confirms that a strong link that exists between job training-fit and employee creativity, occasioning in increase in the performance of organizations. Future research on training-fit and organizational performance should focus on empirically testing the hypotheses shown in this paper. A better understanding of the intricate relationship among the various could be known through a quantitative study.

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