

TRAINING NEEDS IDENTIFICATION OF NURSING STAFF – A CASE STUDY OF A HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The delivery of valuable health care depends on an expanding team of trained health care professionals. As people are critical assets for the organization, the development of this asset is essential for the continued health and prosperity of the organization. The training needs assessment is a critical activity for the training and development function. It is against this backdrop the paper is addressed to study training needs identification of nursing staff in a Health care organization. The study was conducted through a survey among 110 nursing staff and 30 DMOs using structured questionnaires. The findings of the study revealed that the training need gap is relatively more for enthusiasm in learning followed by Team Spirit and clinical skills. The training need gap is the least for communication, followed by planning & organizing skills. There should not be any compromise in the quality of services to be provided to the patients as the health care organizations deal with the valuable life of the people and the need for trained professionals in health care sector can hardly be overemphasized.

KEYWORDS: Health care, Training needs assessment, Training need gap, Training and development.

INTRODUCTION

Today the health care industry is considered one of the largest industries throughout the world. It includes thousands of hospitals, clinics and other types of facilities which provide primary, secondary and tertiary levels of care. Delivering this care requires health care workers, including physicians, nurses, and other allied health professionals, as well as community-based health workers especially to provide services in medically-underserved area.

There is increasing acceptance of the idea that value is the key to success for practically all organizations, including health care organizations. Proponents of this idea emphasize that only the delivery of superior value can create customer loyalty, and only loyalty can optimize profitability. Promising value is what attracts customers and delivering value, is what keeps them coming back. The delivery of valuable health care depends on an expanding interdisciplinary team of trained health care professionals.

SIGNIFICANCE OF TRAINING

With the increasing demand for improved productivity and quality of service in organizations, strategies for improving the work performance of personnel have become increasingly important. If an organization's greatest asset is its people, then the development of this asset is critical to the continued health of the organization. The need for improved productivity has become universally accepted and that it depends on efficient and effective training is not less apparent. Thus the role played by staff training and development can no longer be over-emphasized.

Usually, before training or development programs are organized, efforts should be made through individuals and organizational appraisals to identify the training needs. The training needs assessment is a critical activity for the training and development function. It is against this backdrop the paper is addressed to study training needs identification of nursing staff in a Health care organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizations that develop and implement training without first conducting a needs assessment may end up over training, under training, or just missing the point all together. Training can be expensive; therefore it is critical that training be tailored to meet the specialized needs of the organization and the individual trainees (Brown, 2002). Training needs assessment can provide important data on the training needs of an organization. Salas and Cannon-Bowers (2001) felt that needs assessment is the most important step in deciding who and what should be trained. In addition to justifying the costs of training and providing important data for the organization, taking part in a needs assessment can actually improve employee's (participants) satisfaction with training.

Identification of training needs, design and implementation of training programmes, transfer of training, and evaluation of programme benefits are key activities (Krishnaveni & Sriprabaa, 2008) in addition to studying general training variables such as types of training, selection of trainees, selection criteria, evaluation instruments, etc. The Training Need Analysis is a significant first step in the successful designing and implementation of training programmes. TNA is a primary phase in the designing and development of training programmes (Dierdoff & Surface, 2008). Conducting systematic needs assessment can significantly impact the overall effectiveness and quality of training programmes (McGehee & Thayer, 1961).

In a training needs analysis for a specific company employee, the person conducting the analysis (who will usually be a qualified trainer) should be able to describe what that employee is able to do in the job in sufficient detail to be understood by all those concerned with the training process, such as the trainees themselves, the eventual trainers and the company management (Freeman, Jean M, 1993.) Staff working in the companies sometimes requires individualized training to accomplish their duties more effectively. The form and content of any tailor made training for them will depend on their special training needs. To determine those needs, an analysis should be made in each case of the tasks that the person concerned already carries out in his or her work, and the additional skills and knowledge required to reach a higher standard of work. The gap between the two can then be filled by appropriate training. (Cellich, Claude; Roberts, Alan, 1993)

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To highlight the significance of training to the organizations
2. To study the importance of training needs assessment
3. To identify the training needs of nursing staff in a health care organization

METHODOLOGY

In order to identify the training needs of nursing staff two structured questionnaires – one for the nursing staff and another for DMOs -were designed and administered. The inputs for preparing the questionnaire were taken from the following:

1. The performance appraisal format of the nursing staff from the department of HR.
2. The observations being made on the main points suggested by the trainer.
3. Certain studies that were conducted in the same area.

One questionnaire was administered to a sample of 110 nursing staff out of 600 population. The sample was chosen using stratified random sampling technique. Another questionnaire was administered to a sample of 30 DMOs.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Nursing and DMOs responded on a scale of 7-1. The responses of nurses indicate the perception of their skills whereas the responses of DMO's indicate their perception of skills possessed by nurses.

LEVEL OF PATIENT CARE

The patient is the centre of the nurse's concern. Nurses care for patients continuously, 24 hours a day. They help patients to do what they would do for themselves if they could. Quality has become a major focus within health care, especially in the areas of quality assurance and patient safety. As this focus increases, nurses' involvement in quality improvement activities is likely to expand in coming years. The patient care in the present study includes different dimensions like to listen attentively to the patients, being pleasant and polite with the patients, establishing a relationship with patients, assessing patient's physical needs, bed side manners, adherence to doctors' orders and handling emergencies.

It is observed that 14% of the nursing respondents perceived that their level of patient care skill is outstanding and remaining respondents perceived as very good/good. Whereas DMOs perceived that the nursing staff have good/very good patient care skills. Though it is a healthy sign, there is always scope for strengthening the skill as patient care is the core function of the nurses.

ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES:

The nursing staff also perform certain administrative duties like inputting data into written or computerized records, using technical equipment and undertake other administrative duties. Though performing administrative duties is not the main part of their job, still they need to be proficient in these duties. Majority of the nursing respondents (70%) felt that their skill in discharging administrative duties is only good. It appears that there is some scope for improvement in this skill which can be taken care of by the training programme. DMOs feel that the nursing staff are either good or very good in performing the administrative duties.

MANAGERIAL/SUPERVISORY SKILLS:

The staff very often needs to train junior staff or students and also feel responsible and accountable. They should also have managerial/supervisory skills. 27% of the nursing respondents felt that their managerial/supervisory skills are outstanding while DMOs did not perceive them to be outstanding in this dimension. Rest of them have perceived to be either very good /good in this skill.

CLINICAL SKILLS:

Clinical skills include interpreting patient data, interpreting results from clinical investigations, undertaking clinical examination of patients and writing clinical, shift and other reports. Majority of the nursing respondents and DMOs perceived that the clinical skills are good but not outstanding. This area deserves attention because the clinical skills are very important for the nursing staff in order to perform their functions effectively.

PLANNING & ORGANIZING SKILLS

We need to be planned and organized to produce good results. It applies in any profession. The dimensions that are included in planning & organizing skills are prioritizing work according to patient's needs, organizing skills, cost awareness, having consciousness and planning patient's discharge. The level of planning and organizing skills of the nursing respondents are considered to either very good or good by majority of both nursing and DMO respondents.

ENTHUSIASM IN LEARNING

Knowledge has no bounds. Learning is a continuous process. People who are enthusiastic learners can perform well and grow fast. Enthusiasm in learning here includes taking initiative in learning, participation in academic program and ward teaching. The observation is that majority of the nursing and the DMO respondents feel that their enthusiasm in learning is good but not outstanding.

PERSONAL BEARING

The importance of personal bearing in nursing profession cannot be undermined. They need to properly groom themselves, have positive attitude and pleasant manners, disciplined in work, maintain punctuality and maintain regularity. For nursing professionals personal grooming is

very important. Surprisingly neither nursing respondents nor the DMO respondents perceived them to be outstanding in personal bearing.

COMMUNICATION

The nursing staff should be able to communicate well with patients, attendants, superiors and other staff. Many times the problem arises because the nursing staff fails to understand what the patient or the attendant is communicating and vice-versa. This is a major problem. The nursing staff should have good communication skills and have command over language. A significant percentage (41%) of the nursing respondents felt that their communication skills are outstanding. But none of the DMOs perceived the same. They considered the nursing staff communication skills to be either very good or good.

TEAM SPIRIT

The order of the day is team work as it will have synergy. People can perform better as a team. One needs to be a team member and should also know how to lead the team in certain situations.

The perception of team spirit is just similar to communication skills. Many of the nursing respondents considered themselves to be outstanding team players but the perception is not the same by DMOs. They considered them to be just good team players.

TRAINING NEED GAP

Training need gap is calculated not just based on the skills possessed by the employees. It takes two dimensions. One –the importance of a skill for successful performance of the job and second the extent to which the employee has that skill. Certain skills are more important when compared to others. If the skill is more important and the employee does not have that skill, the training need gap will be more. On the other hand if the skill is less important and the employee does not have that skill the training need gap will be less. The respondents were asked to rate the importance of a skill and the extent to which they have that skill. Based on this, the training need gap for different skills is calculated and the mean scores are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

MEAN SCORES OF TRAINING NEED GAP OF DIFFERENT SKILLS

Sr.No.	Skill/Knowledge	Training need gap mean score
1	Patient care	0.88
2	Administrative duties	0.69
3	Managerial/supervisory skills	0.76
4	Clinical skills	1.01
5	Planning & Organizing skills	0.58
6	Enthusiasm in learning	1.20
7	Communication	0.50
8	Personal bearing	0.76
9	Team Spirit	1.06

(Source: Survey)

It is observed from the table that the training need gap is not much for all the skills. Of all the skills, the training need gap is relatively more for Enthusiasm in learning followed by Team Spirit and clinical skills. These areas need more attention from training point of view. The training need gap is the least for communication, followed by planning & organizing skills.

CONCLUSION

Training helps the employees to equip themselves with better knowledge and skills. The training needs for the nurses have to be properly identified and they could be sent to some workshops and increase their awareness on the new updates in the technology in the field of medicine. They should also be trained internally. There should not be any compromise in the quality of services to be provided to the patients as the health care organizations deal with the valuable life of the people and the need for trained professionals in health care sector can hardly be overemphasized.

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