

**IN-SERVICE TRAINING STRATEGY AND EMPLOYEE ADAPTABILITY OF
MULTINATIONAL OIL COMPANIES IN RIVERS STATE.**

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between in-service training strategy and employee adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State. The work adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. The population of the study was 10,238 employees of the 5 multinational oil firms operating within Rivers State, comprising of Shell, Exxonmobil, Chevron Texaco, Agip, and Total Exploration Nig. Ltd. The sample size of the study was 384 employees, determined using Taro Yamen formula. After validation by the supervisors and two other experts in the Department of Employment Relations and Human Resource Management, Cronbach alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument. Out of 383 copies of the questionnaire administered, a total of 350 copies were retrieved. Mean and standard deviation were used for the univariate analysis, Spearman Rank order Correlation Coefficient was used for the bivariate analysis. The findings revealed that a significant positive relationship exists between in-service training and measures of employee adaptability in multinational oil companies in Rivers State in terms of affective adaptability, behavioural adaptability, and cognitive adaptability. The study concluded that in-service training is a viable tool through which organizations can strengthen the adaptability of their employees, among others. Therefore, it was recommended amongst others that multinational oil companies in Rivers State should design training programmes that cover technical skills, leadership development, safety protocols, and industry-specific knowledge, thereby boosting their cognitive and affective adaptabilities, and as well as the overall performance of the organization.

Keynote: In-Service Training Strategy, Employee Adaptability, Affective Adaptability, Behaviourial Adaptability, Cognitive Adaptability

INTRODUCTION

Like other variables, the adaptability of employees is very pertinent for the performance of the organization. Employee adaptability is concerned with the ability to adapt to change, such as personality traits, cognitive abilities, and learning styles. Workforce development strategies focus on the methods organizations use to enhance employee skills and competencies through training, education, and career development programs (Salas *et al.*, 2012). As technology advances and industries evolve, organizations must ensure that their workforce is equipped with the necessary skills and capabilities to adapt to these changes effectively. This background study aims to provide an overview of workforce development strategies and employee adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State highlighting their importance and exploring various approaches to enhance them (Smith & Johnson, 2020). Workforce development strategies refers to the process of improving the skills, knowledge, and abilities of employees within an organization. It involves a systematic approach to identify skill gaps, design training programs, and implement initiatives that enhance employee performance and productivity. Effective workforce development strategies are essential for organizations to remain competitive, attract top talent, and foster a culture of continuous learning.

One key aspect of workforce development is identifying the skills that are in high demand in the current job market. This requires organizations to conduct thorough research on industry trends, technological advancements, and emerging skill requirements. By understanding the evolving needs of the labor market, organizations can align their workforce development strategies with the

demands of the industry (Brown, 2018). Another important element of workforce development is providing employees with opportunities for continuous learning and professional growth. This can be achieved through various means such as training programs, workshops, and mentoring, coaching, and educational partnerships. By investing in employee development, organizations not only enhance their employees' skills but also increase their job satisfaction and retention rates.

Research Hypotheses

To provide tentative answers to the research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- Ho₁:** There is no significant relationship between in-service training and affective adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State.
- Ho₂:** There is no significant relationship between in-service training and behavioural adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State.
- Ho₃:** There is no significant relationship between in-service training and cognitive adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State.

In-Service Training

The terms continuous professional development (CPD) is defined to include all activities related to the expanding and updating useful knowledge and skills to enhance a career performance (Lessing & Witt, 2007). CPD appears in all types of occupations. In education, the needs for in-service training has been analysed in details by Shaw (1995), whereby the importance of teacher training in England has been recognized since 1944. The main purposes for teacher training are both to meet the continuous changes from social needs and to improve the effectiveness of teachers in schools. Dean (1977) and Gaible and Burns (2005) emphasise that, although the subjects of professional development are the teachers, the ultimate beneficiaries are the students and it is important to evaluate how the training programmes affect practice in schools and classrooms.

According Gaible and Burns (2005) define teacher CPD as training programs for teachers to improve professional, pedagogical and technical skills. Occasionally, through these programs, radical educational requirements and policies from the higher levels are communicated to the teachers. The authors also emphasize that teacher training is a long-term and continuous process, and hence we have the terms 'in-service training' and 'continuous professional development'. Teacher career development includes not only courses to update knowledge but also other forms such as sharing teaching experiences (Gaible & Burns, 2005). The importance of teacher training has been paid much attention in developed countries. In the UK, primary and secondary school teachers each have five days to foster themselves at school. These are called INSET days, where the acronym comes from the initials of the phrase 'in-service training'. According to Bradley, Conner and Southworth (1994), the INSET model of training dates back to 1978. On these days, students do not come to the school so that teachers and the school administration team and other staff can conduct the training programme. According to a survey conducted by Hustler, McNamara, Jarvis, Londra and Campbell [HMJLC] (2003), the main contents of a teacher training programme include planning to develop the curriculum (being allocated about 28% of the total training period), teaching methods (27%), professional knowledge (20%), and management issues (17%). There are also other contents such as helping students, the process of grading and returning exams etc.

In-service training, a crucial facet of workforce development strategies, embodies the ongoing process of providing educational opportunities, skill enrichment, and professional development to individuals already employed within an organization. It is rooted in the recognition that continuous learning is indispensable for maintaining a skilled and agile workforce, capable of meeting the demands of dynamic job roles and ever-evolving industry requirements (Clarke, 2019).

In-service training plays an integral role in equipping employees with updated competencies. The rapid advancement of technology and the shifting landscape of market trends necessitate constant skill upgrading. In-service training ensures that employees remain adept at harnessing the latest

tools and techniques, enabling them to contribute effectively to their organizations' growth (Hoffman & Grossman, 2018). Engaging in continuous learning opportunities through in-service training can foster a sense of professional growth and personal fulfillment among employees. Such engagement positively correlates with job satisfaction and can act as a powerful retention tool. Employees who perceive their employers as invested in their professional development are more likely to stay committed to their current roles (Allen & van der Velden, 2001). In a labor market characterized by fierce competition for skilled talent, investing in in-service training can be a cost-effective strategy. While recruiting new employees incurs recruitment, onboarding, and training expenses, nurturing the potential of existing employees can lead to substantial savings over time (Cappelli & Tavis, 2016). Effective in-service training programs are designed to address specific skill gaps prevalent within an organization. By conducting thorough needs assessments, organizations can tailor training content to align with their unique requirements, ensuring relevance and applicability (Powers, 2020). Incorporating a blend of diverse learning modalities such as workshops, online courses, webinars, seminars, and experiential learning opportunities contributes to a comprehensive learning experience. This approach accommodates varying learning styles and preferences, enhancing overall effectiveness (Graham, 2006). Acknowledging and rewarding employees who actively engage in in-service training initiatives can serve as a motivational factor. This recognition not only celebrates learning accomplishments but also cultivates a culture of continuous improvement and dedication to personal growth (Dulebohn et al., 2012).

Concept of Employee Adaptability

Adaptation or adaptability is a concept related to living organism whether they are human, animals or other living species or realms. On a general note the concept pertains to the survival of living organisms, how they adjust to a changing and/or demanding environmental conditions and how such conditions contribute to their survival and resilience (King et al, 2006). In the context of work, adaptability centers on the adaptive behaviour and performance of each individual at work and the organization in general (Griffin et al., 2010). While there is no generally acceptable definition of adaptability, it is important to note that authors like Ploy hart and Blaise (2006) see employee adaptability as an individual's ability, skill, disposition, willingness, and/or motivation, to change or fit into different task, social, and environmental features while van Dam (2013) notes that employee adaptability refers to the various potential effect of an employee as derived from the cognitive, affective and behavioural resources that are applied to enable them effectively participate in task-related activities, adjust to work environmental and/or vocational demands. It follows that employee adaptability is the ability of an individual worker to be able to acclimatize, adjust and integrate his/her mental and psychological well-being into any work condition in any work ecosystem they find themselves thus committing their active work-life to productivity and growth of that work-system. This adaptation becomes a response of the employee to changes in the new work environment, life style, or relationship with other employees by the individual employee and serves as a means of modification or change in the individual behaviour that helps both the individual and the organization to survive environmental impacts.

Thus in the workplace, employee adaptability indicates how well an employee places his or her self an employee is able to work under current job requirements and conditions and whether this person can efficiently respond to competition caused by othere employees. According to Kokemuller, (2012) adaptability is a sought-after job skill as employers increasingly rely on flexible job descriptions and rotate employee's into different roles. Employers value employees that can successfully manage changes in the workplace, and this gives them an edge to be productive. According to (Van Dam, 2009) employee adaptability at work refers too employee underlying potential as derived from cognitive, affective and behavioural resources that can be applied to effectively adjust and/or anticipate to task-related, environmental and vocational demands (Ashford & Taylor, 1990).

As noted by Martin et al., (2013), employee adaptability encompasses cognitive, behavioral, affective and general emotional adjustments and attachment of the individual worker to organization

which displays the level of commitment. Furthermore, a compendium of the collection on employee adaptability by Sony and Mekoth, (2016) from the research works of other scholars from 1984 to 2015 revealed that EA is made up of interpersonal adaptability comprising which is exemplified in verbal, nonverbal and emotional adaptive behavior exhibited by the employees towards meeting customers' requirements and satisfaction through interpersonal communication. Service offering adaptability (SOA) which is concerned with ability to produce the desired level of service by an employee. It includes professional adaptability, skill variety adaptability, creative problem solving adaptability and dealing with uncertain and unpredictable situations adaptability towards achieving manufacturing effectiveness of a particular service. Political adaptability (PA) which deals with the ability of the employee to adapt to the legitimate/illegitimate demands of the type of organizational politics playing out in the system. Social adaptability (SA) which is defined as the consciousness or competency of the employee to adapt to the society and societal demands while being engaged in the services of an organization. It includes adapting to the local culture, language and social consciousness of that society. SA is a set of formal/informal values and norms and subjectively felt obligations that employees perceive about the particular society the organization is operating and which are instrumental in shaping the employee adaptability in the organization. Physical aspect of adaptability (PAA) which denotes the level of competency exhibited by employees in adapting to the physical factors of the job. These include how the employees adapt to the physical working conditions in terms of heat, noise, weather, electricity availability, working long hours, odd days, standing for a long time or a carrying weight etc. Group adaptability (GA) which is concerned with how the employee adapt to work groups within the organization and those external to organization and lastly organization adaptability (OA) which is anchored on employees exhibiting capability to adapt to organizational culture, rules, and policies which serves as standard operating procedure in the organization.

In-service Training and Employee Adaptability

In-service training, also known as on-the-job training or workplace training, is a type of professional development that aims to enhance employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities within their current job roles. Employee adaptability, on the other hand, refers to an individual's capacity to adjust and respond effectively to new situations, tasks, technologies, or organizational changes.

In-service training plays a crucial role in developing and improving employee adaptability. It provides employees with the necessary knowledge and skills to handle new challenges and changes in the workplace. Through training programs, employees can acquire updated information about industry trends, technological advancements, and best practices. This knowledge equips them with the ability to adapt quickly and efficiently to changing circumstances.

Training programs also enhance employees' problem-solving and critical thinking skills, which are essential for adapting to new situations. By providing opportunities for employees to learn and practice these skills, in-service training enables them to approach unfamiliar tasks or challenges with confidence and flexibility. Moreover, in-service training fosters a learning culture within organizations. When employees are encouraged to engage in continuous learning and development, they become more open-minded and receptive to change. This mindset promotes adaptability by creating a positive attitude towards new ideas, processes, and approaches.

Research studies have highlighted the positive relationship between in-service training and employee adaptability. For instance, a study conducted by Jiang et al. (2018) found that in-service training significantly improved employees' adaptability in Chinese manufacturing firms. The authors concluded that providing regular training opportunities enhanced employees' ability to cope with changes in their work environment.

Another study by DeSimone et al. (2002) examined the impact of various types of training on employee adaptability in the United States. The findings revealed that both technical and interpersonal skills training positively influenced employees' adaptability, enabling them to handle new tasks and responsibilities effectively.

Human Capital Theory

The term "Human Capital" was first introduced by economist Theodore Schultz in the 1960s. In his book "Investment in Human Capital: The Role of Education and of Research", Schultz argued that education and training are investments that increase an individual's productivity and earning potential. He proposed that individuals make decisions regarding their human capital investment based on the expected returns they will receive in terms of higher wages or better job opportunities. Another influential figure in the development of human capital theory is Gary Becker. In his book "Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education" (Print), Becker expanded on Schultz's ideas and provided a more comprehensive framework for analyzing human capital. He argued that individuals make rational choices about investing in their own education and training based on the costs and benefits involved.

The relevance of human capital theory lies in its ability to explain the relationship between education, skills, and economic outcomes. It highlights the importance of investing in human development as a means to improve productivity, increase competitiveness, and foster economic growth. By understanding how individuals acquire and develop their skills, policymakers can design effective strategies for workforce development.

One way in which human capital theory has contributed to workforce development is through its impact on education policy. The theory suggests that investments in education can lead to higher levels of human capital, which in turn can result in improved labor market outcomes. This has led to increased emphasis on educational attainment as a means to enhance employability and economic success.

Furthermore, human capital theory has also influenced training programs and policies aimed at improving the skills of the workforce. By recognizing that skills are an important form of capital, policymakers have focused on providing training opportunities to individuals to enhance their human capital and increase their productivity.

The human capital theory views individuals as assets that can be invested in to increase productivity and economic growth. It emphasizes the importance of education, training, and skill development in enhancing the productivity and earning potential of individuals. According to this theory, investing in human capital leads to higher levels of economic development and improved standards of living.

Research Design

The research design adopted for the study was the cross-sectional survey research design because the study examined several variables, and sought ways to collect data at a particular point in time and analyze the data to generate findings.

Population of the Study

The population of the study was 10,238 employees of the 5 multinational oil firms operating within Rivers State, comprising of Shell, Exxonmobil, Chevron Texaco, Agip, and Total Exploration Nig. Ltd as obtained from the Respective HR Departments (2023) and the firms were extracted from Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (2023), Nigeria. The units of measurement for the study therefore comprised of a total of 10,238 staff of the oil companies.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The respondents in the study were the staff at all levels in the firms. The sample of the study was 384 employees. This was determined by the use of the Taro Yamen formula. Random sampling techniques was used in this study because it cut-across different multinational companies from different locations.

Instrumentation and Measurement

The instrument used in the study was questionnaires. The questionnaire was arranged in a manner to collate relevant information that helps provide answers to research hypotheses postulated.

Method of Data Analysis

The study made use of mean and standard deviation for the univariate analysis, while the bivariate analysis was carried out using Spearman rank order correlation in SPSS Version 22.0. Multivariate analysis was carried out using Partial Correlation. Hence, Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was computed.

Bivariate Analysis

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between in-service training and affective adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State.

| | | | In-Service Training | Affective Adaptability |
|----------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Spearman's rho | In-Service Training | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .852** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 |
| | | N | 350 | 350 |
| | Affective Adaptability | Correlation Coefficient | .852** | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | | N | 350 | 350 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results reveal that there is a significant relationship between in-service training and affective adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State (where rho = .852 and p =0.000) and based on the decision rule of p < 0.05 for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis: that there is a significant relationship between in-service training and affective adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State. The rho = .852 implies that there is a very strong positive relationship between in-service training and affective adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between in-service training and behavioural adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State.

| | | | In-Service Training | Behavioural Adaptability |
|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Spearman's rho | In-Service Training | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .746** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 |
| | | N | 350 | 350 |
| | Behavioural Adaptability | Correlation Coefficient | .746** | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | | N | 350 | 350 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results reveal that there is a significant relationship between in-service training and behavioural adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State (where rho = .746 and p =0.000) and based on the decision rule of p < 0.05 for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis: that there is a significant relationship between in-service training and behavioural adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State. The rho = .746 implies that

there is a strong positive relationship between in-service training and behavioural adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between in-service training and cognitive adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State.

| | | | In-Service Training | Cognitive Adaptability |
|----------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Spearman's rho | In-Service Training | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .692** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 |
| | | N | 350 | 350 |
| | Cognitive Adaptability | Correlation Coefficient | .692** | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | | N | 350 | 350 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results reveal that there is a significant relationship between in-service training and cognitive adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State (where rho = .692 and p =0.000) and based on the decision rule of p < 0.05 for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis: that there is a significant relationship between in-service training and cognitive adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State. The rho = .692 implies that there is a strong positive relationship between in-service training and cognitive adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State.

In-Service Training and Cognitive Adaptability

The result of hypotheses three reveals that there is a strong positive relationship between in-service training and cognitive adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State (where rho = .692 and p =0.000) and based on the decision rule of p < 0.05 for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis: that there is a significant relationship between in-service training and cognitive adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State. Similarly, Oladimeji, (2018) did an evaluation of the effect of staff training on organizational performance (A case study of first Bank of Nigeria, PLC. Wuse II Abuja). The study was prompted by the problems associated with staff training and its effect on organizational performance. From the data analysis, the finding showed that the training needs were well identified ahead of training programmes, applicability of the training on the job is very vital in order to make positive impact on performance and growth of the bank and employees who have been trained have more confidence on the job they do which motivates them to do more and derive job satisfaction. The analysis further revealed that there was a significant reduction in possible errors, accidents and material waste after been trained and that there was improvement in production and service delivery which was relatively commensurate to the price paid for the training exercises. Thus, for organizations to become more productive and remain in business, especially in this era of increased global competitiveness and growing complexity of the work environment, adequate training and assessment should be conducted by the Human Resource (HR) department for employees training in organizations.

Mentorship and Affective Adaptability

The result of hypotheses four reveals that there is a strong positive relationship between mentorship and affective adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State (where rho = .648 and p =0.000) and based on the decision rule of p < 0.05 for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis: that there is a significant relationship between mentorship

and affective adaptability of multinational oil companies in Rivers State. Similarly, Victor and Uchenna (2022) examined the relationship between mentoring and organizational effectiveness and revealed that mentoring enhances organics organizational effectiveness. Mentoring in the workplace is a comprehensive business strategy that utilizes the skills and expertise of more experienced employees as resources to those who are new to the company or those who are less experienced in certain areas within the company. The paper after a critical review of the available literature revealed a significant relationship between mentoring and organizational effectiveness. Based on the above conclusion, the paper recommend that: There should be more organized formal corporate mentoring programs supported by relevant policies and management will power; Management should develop a program advisory team on mentoring with defined objectives, regularly evaluating their performance against set standards and correcting unhealthy deviations from standards where such exist.

CONCLUSIONS

From the empirical analyses engaged in the study, it suffices to conclude that workforce in-service training is viable tool through which organizations can strengthen the adaptability of their employees, among others. These strategies empower employees to improve their affective adaptability by managing emotional responses to organizational changes, behavioral adaptability by adjusting actions to new environments, and cognitive adaptability by fostering innovative problem-solving capabilities. Through consistent mentorship and coaching, employees gain personalized guidance that enhances their ability to navigate complex industry challenges, while in-service training equips them with the technical and soft skills required to stay competitive. This finding of the study underscores the strategic importance of investing in comprehensive workforce development programs as a means to build a resilient, agile workforce capable of adapting to the evolving demands of the oil sector, ultimately driving organizational success and sustaining competitiveness in a volatile industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. Multinational oil companies in Rivers State should design training programmes that cover technical skills, leadership development, safety protocols, and industry-specific knowledge, thereby boosting their cognitive and affective adaptabilities, and as well as the overall performance of the organization.
2. Multinational oil companies in Rivers State should establish formal mentorship programmes to facilitate knowledge transfer, career guidance, and personal development, hence promoting the adaptability capacity of their employees.
3. Multinational oil companies in Rivers State should encourage the use of coaching techniques to support employees in achieving their goals and enhancing their performance.

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