"Investigating In-Service Training Methods and the Quality of Customer Services"

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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed at studying the in-service training methods and the quality of customer services, identifying in-service training methods, seeing which of them are more practical and applying them to organizations. In-service training refers to instructions taught to people when doing their jobs. From the onset of the work to the end of organizational services, any employee moves from one job to another, at the same time learns some instructions. The subject of service quality indicates that the quality of received services is derived from comparing what customers expect from the service provider to offer (customers’ expectations) with what the service provider really offers. The statistical population of this research includes 78 employees of Sepah Bank, Hamadan. According to the leading hypothesis, there is a correlation between planning and the quality of services offered to Bank customers. The second hypothesis confirms the correlation between implementation and the service quality. And finally, the third hypothesis also implies the correlation between valuing and the quality of services. The statistical analyses verified the leading and subordinating hypotheses.

INTRODUCTION

This research is aimed at studying the in-service training methods and the quality of customer services, identifying in-service training methods, seeing which of them are more practical, recognizing if there is any correlation between in-service training and the quality services, and considering how in-service training can affect service qualities. In-service training refers to instructions taught to people when doing their jobs. From the onset of the work to the end of organizational services, any employee moves from one job to another, at the same time learns some instructions. It is, thus, considered as the most common training method which is highly popular among organizations and plays an important role in teaching the required skills to employees. In many organizations, in-service training is not the only method, as employees are taught new skills and their job details by another experienced employee. In-service training methods include job rotation, workshop training, temporary replacement, and instructor and learner approach. The training method comprises of planning and evaluation [8].

The subject of service quality indicates that the quality of received services is derived from comparing what customers expect from the service provider to offer (customers’ expectations) with what the service provider really offers. According to Louis and Bumz, the service quality is a scale to assess how much the level of services matches with customers’ expectations. Highly qualified services mean regularly following customers’ expectations and offering physical, organizational and interactional qualities [9].

Research Literature:

In-Service Training:

In-service training has now a particular place in different organizations and has passed the highest advancement in the history of human, sciences and technology in last decades. The upheaval is to the extent that...
the current era has been called the half-life information era. This is a period in which a half of human information is abolished and replaced by new information every five years.

Around a half of jobs opportunities found currently in most countries did not exist fifty years ago. It is now more normal for people to change their jobs several times in their working life. It is less probable today for a young person to learn a skill and continues it four about thirty years. In a fast-changing society, in-service training is not only helpful but it is an activity for which all organizations should allocate a resource to it to enjoy informed and efficient human resources.

Studies have disclosed that training would result in organizational survival. A research study in Singapore showed that 17 percent of commercial and industrial companies had gone bankrupt. This was while this proportion was less than one percent for companies conducted training plans. According to statistical report released by US Management Association by 2000, 75 percent of all employees had needed retraining. To respond to such upheavals, Sweden adopted the policy of keeping human resources active and annually allotting 2 to 3 percent of its national production to retraining business owners. The traditional belief thinking of childhood, adolescence and youth as the best time of learning has been abolished and now we can keep up with the technical and occupational upheavals of our changing society only by continuing learning. According to studies, the productive life of engineering knowledge of educated engineers lasts for six month after starting to work. After that, they have to take part in complementary and in-service courses. In some research enterprises, the value of university scientific certificates just lasts for three to five years. If the holders of these certificates do not continue their education after this time, the scientific value of their previous learning decreases.

Training has always been a confident tool for improving evaluation and solving management problems and lack of training brings up a critical problem for organizations. To equip human resources and effectively improve it, training is undoubtedly one of the most important and practical approaches. Note also that training is an important organizational task and a continuous process and it is not contemporary. Employees, in any organizational level including simple or complicated jobs, managers or subordinates, need training and learning new skills and knowledge. They have to learn new methods and information to better carry out their tasks. In addition, when employees change their job, they need new knowledge and skills to successfully keep their positions.

In-service training can also satisfy the future needs to professional human resources and guarantee the solutions for problems relating to work force. Well-trained employees, therefore, can have a part in organizational advancement. In such case, supervisors and managers do not have to monitor their subordinates. They can also prepare them for higher and more complicated positions. Under correct training that, in fact, employees can perfectly carry out their missions.

**Reasons for Training Employees:**

As mentioned above, reasons for the necessity of training employees can be categorized as follows:

- Increasing speed of human sciences in all areas
- Increasing development of technology
- Organizational complications because of automation
- Changing job or replacement
- Human relations and problems
- Employees’ promotion
- Improvement of job evaluation
- Newly hired employees
- Reducing accidents at work
- Profession needs of human resource

**In-Service Training Aims:**

Different organizations and systems pursue some common purposes in implementing in-service training the most important of which are as follows:

- Coordinating employees with organization: this is especially important, in one hand, to meet organizational goals and achieve the determined policies and approaches. And on the hand, the occupational and professional advancements depend on informing of superior officials’ expectations and the way to carry out occupational tasks and obligations.

- Raising employees’ job satisfaction: the matter of motivating employees to do their missions has always preoccupied managers’ mind. To satisfy and motivate employees, there are various theories, including the Maslow's hierarchy of needs. According to him, meeting superior needs has an important role in heightening people’s job satisfaction.

- Reducing accidents at work: in many organizations, accidents at work are mostly because of lack of information and skills. This is especially true about those working with sensitive and dangerous machinery and equipment. In addition, work losses and escalated costs can be also attributed to human knowledge and skill
deficiency. Given what mentioned in this regard and the outcomes including punishment, reproach, discharge, etc., occurring as a result of lack of information from organizational policies and expectations and not informed of how optimally can do tasks, it is, thus, necessary for organizations to seriously take in-service training into consideration.

Updating knowledge and skills of human resources: the organizational productivity depends on the quality of human resources and preventing from outdating. Outdating means reduced efficiency over time and finally lack of new knowledge and skills. This occupationally wears down individuals and makes them unable to do organizational tasks. It is impossible to eliminate all factors of outdating through training; in-service training though plays an important role in their updating by improving and upgrading their knowledge and skills.

Facilitating organizational changes: organizational changes highly depend on preparation of employees and human resources. The most important point, however, is their resistance against changes. Many reasons, including concerns about information, concern, position, financial state in new situation, concerns about inability to do new tasks, etc., make employees to resist against any change. Beside strategies such as engaging them in planning for changes, training and justifying them are also important to have successful changes. Therefore, in-service training importantly contributes to realize changes.

Matching with social conditions: all contemporary organizations are work in an environment with particular cultural values and ideologies. The success of many of them depends on recognizing such social knowhow and optimally matching with it. The social environments of organizations, which can be called as their social hyper-system, mostly determine their field of action and activities. Recognizing and understanding such system is highly important for all employees, managers and decision-makers.

Reinforcing a sense of cooperation among employees: the organizational success in achieving goals virtually relies on confidence and mutual understanding at workplace, collaboration of employees with each other, collaboration between managers and employees, and most importantly on coordinating organizational affairs in different units. One way to reinforce the sense of cooperation is using in-service training which, on one hand, provides mutual communication among employees and on the other hand, creates common perceptions and interests by building up occupational knowledge and information.

Note that any stress on over-mentioned goals varies with conditions and over time. This means that in especial occasion, some goals may be preferred to the other ones.

In-Service Training Methods:

Having an overall look at this subject, we now study the methods of in-service training:

Job Rotation: one effective way to extend managers’ viewpoints, or anyone who is prepared for management, is job rotation. Accordingly, the specialists confining themselves to their specialized domain are converted to individuals with holistic insights viewing matters from wider perspective. Job rotation also builds up people’s knowledge and experiences [8].

Workshop Training:

In a location out of workplace, a workshop with the same features and materials and equipment, which are used in the real conditions, is set to create the real conditions and train learners. This is efficient when there are many employees that should be taught at the same time and place for a particular task. Moreover, theories are better explained for them when they are really working, because the emphasis is on teaching not on production and employees are not under work pressure.

Coaching:

Coaching is a method in which the manager acts as a teacher to train the required techniques to his/her employees, monitors them and directs them to the correct route. A good coach is one who provides individuals with constructive and effective criticisms and efficient suggestions and teaches them that human learns what is supposed to act upon [2].

Temporary Substitute:

When a position is lack of operator because of mission or discharge, a person, who is seemed to finally take that role, is temporarily appointed to that position. So it is a method by which people are prepared for higher positions.

Teacher and Student:

Instruction by the method of teacher and student is common in professions such as carpentry, plumbing, blacksmithing, and mechanic repair. According to this method, the student learns the work from a skillful master and after a while turns from a beginner to a fresh but proficient craftsman [10].
Quality of Customer Services:

The quality of services has turned a key marketing tool for achieving a competitive distinction and promoting customer loyalty. In different industries and sectors, companies seek to display their uniqueness and keep customers by offering superior services. Managers though face special challenges in handling and improving them. In contrast to commodities with tangible scales such as durability and the number of defects for assessing performances, services have intangible functions. The experience of services varies with customers and it is impossible to differentiate between the quality of service production and consumption. Services are produced by companies and consumed by customers [3].

What is Service Quality?

Customers evaluate service quality by comparing what they expect with what is really offered. So the quality of services is the difference of customers’ expectations and their true perceptions of the offered services. According to studies, customers evaluate the quality of services from five different perspectives:

1. Confidence: the employees’ knowledge and curtsy and their ability to restore consumer confidence
2. Understanding: the particular sympathy and care of a company toward its customers
3. Reliability: the ability of a company in offering certain services
4. Responsibility: the employees’ tendency to help customers and providing services
5. Tangible matters: physical facilities, equipment and communication tools

Reliability and tangible matters are the most and least important factors for customers respectively [5].

Service Quality Dimensions:

1. Physical quality which include physical aspects relating to building equipment
2. Organizational quality which refers to the perception of companies and services in customers’ mind
3. Correlational quality which encompasses the mutual communication between employees and customers and between customers [3].

Research Hypotheses:

Leading Hypothesis

It seems that there is a correlation between in-service training methods and the quality of services offered to customers of Sepah Bank.

Subordinate Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: It seems that there is a correlation between planning and the quality of services offered to customers of Sepah Bank.

Hypothesis 2: It seems that there is a correlation between evaluation and the quality of services offered to customers of Sepah Bank.

Hypothesis 3: It seems that there is a correlation between evaluation and the quality of services offered to customers of Sepah Bank.

Research Methodology:

This is a practical research study to see how in-service training affects customer services and how such effectiveness is and finally how they relate to each other.

According to this descriptive correlational research, there are two positive and negative correlations. The positive correlation exists when two variables changes in parallel. Put it differently, when a change is made in in-service training, the quality of customer services also changes. On the other hand, the opposite is true about the negative correlations. This means that any change in in-service training does not make any change in service quality. The statistical population includes 78 employees in Sepah Bank, Hamadan. The sample volume was calculated by the following formula at 66.

\[
 n = \frac{2\left(1 - \frac{1}{2}\right)}{\left(1 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{N}}\right)} = \frac{384/16}{78} - \frac{384/16}{78} = \frac{384/16}{576} = 65/61 \geq 66
\]

Data Analysis:

Hypothesis 1: It seems that there is a correlation between planning and the quality of services offered to customers of Sepah Bank.

H0: It seems that there is no correlation between planning and the quality of services offered to customers of Sepah Bank.
H₁: It seems that there is a correlation between planning and the quality of services offered to customers of Sepah Bank.

Table 1: Pearson test for the first hypothesis.

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<th>α</th>
<th>Pearson Value</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0.762</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to above table, the significance level is less than 1% (0.000). As the maximum of the acceptable error is 5%, it can be said that there is a significant correlation. H₀ is, then, rejected and H₁ is confirmed. On the other hand, since the error level is less than 1%, the confidence level is 99%. Therefore, there is a correlation between planning and the quality of customer services.

Fig. 1: the impulses of the correlation between variables of the first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: It seems that there is a correlation between evaluation and the quality of services offered to customers of Sepah Bank.

H₀: It seems that there is no correlation between evaluation and the quality of services offered to customers of Sepah Bank.

H₁: It seems that there is a correlation between evaluation and the quality of services offered to customers of Sepah Bank.

Table 2: Pearson test for the second hypothesis.

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<th>Pearson Value</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0.874</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to above table, the significance level is less than 1% (0.000). As the maximum of the acceptable error is 5%, it can be said that there is a significant correlation. H₀ is, then, rejected and H₁ is confirmed. On the other hand, since the error level is less than 1%, the confidence level is 99%. Therefore, there is a correlation between evaluation and the quality of customer services.

Fig. 2: the impulses of the correlation between variables of the second hypothesis.
Hypothesis 3: It seems that there is a correlation between evaluation and the quality of services offered to customers of Sepah Bank.

H0: It seems that there is no correlation between evaluation and the quality of services offered to customers of Sepah Bank.

H1: It seems that there is a correlation between evaluation and the quality of services offered to customers of Sepah Bank.

According to above table, the significance level is less than 1% (0.000). As the maximum of the acceptable error is 5%, it can be said that there is a significant correlation. H0 is, then, rejected and H1 is confirmed. On the other hand, since the error level is less than 1%, the confidence level is 99%. Therefore, there is a correlation between evaluation and the quality of customer services.

Table 2: Pearson test for the third hypothesis.

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<th>α</th>
<th>Pearson Value</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0.816</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>168</td>
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Fig. 3: the impulses of the correlation between variables of the third hypothesis.

Conclusions:

First Hypothesis:

Pearson’s correlation test was employed. According to this hypothesis, there is a correlation between in-service training and the quality of customer services.

According to table 4-4, the significance level is less than 1% (0.000). H0 is, then, rejected and H1 is confirmed. Since the error level is less than 1%, the confidence level is 99%. Therefore, there is a correlation between planning and the quality of customer services. The positive value obtained by Pearson’s test confirms the direct correlation between two variables.

Second Hypothesis:

Pearson’s correlation test was employed. According to this hypothesis, there is a correlation between evaluation and the quality of customer services.

According to table 4-5, the significance level is less than 1% (0.000). H0 is, then, rejected and H1 is confirmed. Since the error level is less than 1%, the confidence level is 99%. Therefore, there is a correlation between evaluation and the quality of customer services. The positive value obtained by Pearson’s test confirms the direct correlation between two variables.

Third Hypothesis:

Pearson’s correlation test was employed. According to this hypothesis, there is a correlation between evaluation and the quality of customer services.

According to table 4-6, the significance level is less than 1% (0.000). H0 is, then, rejected and H1 is confirmed. Since the error level is less than 1%, the confidence level is 99%. Therefore, there is a correlation between evaluation and the quality of customer services. The positive value obtained by Pearson’s test confirms the direct correlation between two variables.

Given what presented in this research and the statistical analysis, it is concluded that there is a correlation between in-service training and customer services. And it can be reinforced by planning, implementation and evaluation of the employees’ learning. This raises the quality of services and customers’ satisfaction. Some factors, including physical, organizational and interactional, directly affect the service quality and help us keep...
the quality at high level. Finally it can be said that there is a direct correlation between in-service training and the quality of services.

Suggestions:
1. Regarding the importance of in-service training, it is hoped to be taken into deep consideration by managers and plan for it.
2. Before in-service training, employees should be precisely evaluated to find their weaknesses and strengths. This helps them to be effectively trained. It can vary with different people in the same position and according to their needs.

REFERENCES