

Training Needs in Instructional Supervision

Anne Rose L. Calimlim

Abstract: *This paper aims to review the relevant training needs of supervisors and faculty in the academe. A focus group discussion, consisting of 1 facilitator and 5 participants was conducted to explore the participants' views and perspectives on three particular questions regarding instructional supervision in fiscal year 2021. From the discussion, the researcher was able to summarize and classify two themes, which are 'hard skills' and 'soft skills'. The participants of this focus group discussion are students taking up Doctor of Philosophy major in Nursing Education at Holy Angel University, Angeles, Pampanga. The subthemes for hard skills include proper training of faculty in their roles, standardized assessment and evaluation, and mentoring of students. The subthemes for soft skills include training in emotional competency, effective communication, and power dynamics. The study results suggest that further training in instructional supervision must be pursued, and members of the organization should develop both hard and soft skills. However, it is equally important to first analyze faculty and supervisors' performance to ascertain their training needs. Conducting a training needs assessment (TNA) can determine whether there is a training requirement, ensure the training will be linked to organizational needs, and identifies the content and scope of training, including examples of what works (Zahid and Khan, 2011). In the light of the foregoing findings and conclusions of the focus group discussion, the following recommendations were advanced: Train members of the organization in training needs assessment; Create a committee for faculty recruitment and develop selection procedure policies; Duplicate the study with more participants to attain greater saturation of data with longer time restraints; Duplicate the study with local participants or within the Philippines to derive faculty/supervisors' training needs within the country.*

Keywords: Focus Group Discussion, Training Needs, Instructional Supervision, Nurses, Nurse-Educators

1. Introduction

Training needs assessment (TNA) is an ongoing method of collecting data to determine what training needs occur so that training can be created to help the organization achieve its mission and vision. Conducting needs assessment is the key to success when developing a training program. Often, organizations will create and execute training without performing a needs analysis. These organizations run the risk of over-training, under-training, or missing the point entirely.

In today's fast-paced world of change, many of the performance bottlenecks found within organizations are caused by a lack of worker skills and training. By acquiring new skills, the performance of employees will increase and develop possible future leaders. Goldstein and Ford (2002) assert that training is an organized method of learning and development, which expands the individual, group, and organization's efficiency. This study aims to determine which type of training may be beneficial for faculty and supervisors in the academe.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted with a qualitative method using a focus group discussion. The design allowed participants to describe in their own words, their experiences centered on factors that may be beneficial to the training needs of supervisors and faculty. Key participants in purposeful sampling consisted of (1) facilitator and (5) participants, of which all were post-graduate students. All participants have varying degrees of academic ranks, work experiences, and geographical location.

The focus group discussion was centered on three main questions, which are listed as follows and the participants were asked to share from their personal experiences and perceptions. What are the supervision training needs of the faculty? What are the training needs of instructional

supervisors? How do you supervise online instructions?

Follow-up questions were also used to deeply explore conditions, processes, and other factors that participants recognized as significant. In the study process, after obtaining permission from the participants, the focus group discussion was recorded. The focus group discussion was conducted online via Zoom on February 6, 2021 from 2:00pm to 4:00pm, however the duration of the formal session averaged around 1 hour and 30 minutes. Another data collection method was done through a private group chat, where the participants' demographic data were also shared and recorded.

To analyze the data, the researcher watched the recording several times, and verified the existence of certain words and concepts in the text for giving structure and discipline to the data. The similar categories were summarized and classified into 2 main themes and subthemes.

3. Results and Discussion

The participants of this study included 3 males and 2 females. Three of the participants are based in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and 2 are based in the Philippines. Three participants have more than 5 years of clinical experience, 4 members have more than 5 years of teaching experience, and 3 members have more than 3 years of supervisory experience. The main themes of data included training needs in "hard skills" and "soft skills" in instructional supervision.

Hard Skills

Training needs in hard skills (technical skills) was one of the important results mentioned by the participants. The subthemes emerging in this category are based on the participants' personal experiences and perspectives, including proper training of faculty in their roles, standardized assessment and evaluation, and mentoring of students.

a) Proper training of faculty in their roles

One of the problems emphasized by other participants is that most faculty members are not educated to be teachers. At best, they have earned a course of pedagogy specific to their specialty and have been trained only in their disciplines. They are thrown into classrooms to rely only on their experience as students to inform their practice as teachers.

...I was transitioning from a public health nurse to a nurse educator. There was a lot of formal training that I missed out on, so again that's the classroom management, designing a syllabus, construction questions for an exam, TOS, item analysis, how to make a module, teaching and learning methodologies, coaching and mentoring and even effective communication. (Participant 5)

It's different to supervise students from teachers. For example, I have 3 Clinical Resource Nurse in the operating room and they don't know how to teach the students. Of course I have to follow the tools that we made in the upper institution to evaluate the clinical resource nurse. Of course, I have to improve them in how to teach. (Participant 1)

b) Standardized assessment and evaluation

The participants in this study repeatedly confirmed that there was a need for training in designing a standardized assessment and evaluation. Unfortunately, conflict between faculty cannot be helped due to diverse backgrounds and varied educational attainment and work experiences.

In regard to assignments or case study, we should have a designed rubrics or evaluation tool. The problem here is the unification of how to mark the assignments...the students are smart. They submitted the same NCP in different subjects, but they got different marks...This is where conflict rise between faculty. (Participant 2)

We come from different schools, so if we apply what we learned in how we teach, we also have different manners in how we grade. So it's really important to have tools, like rubrics. (Participant 3)

c) Mentoring of students

Most of the participants stated that mentoring is an important aspect of their work, especially when students are failing. However, mentoring failing students can lead to hardship and is contributed as a failure of the faculty if progress cannot be seen with the students.

If they don't pass your subject, you will fail them from your class. But over here in the Philippines, we have what you call walangiwanan (no one gets left behind). Unless they really didn't attend your class, etc...you can't really fail them. (Participant 5)

The concept of walangiwanan, you're going to do a lot of intervention, a lot of remedial class, so that the student will pass the subject. (Participant 4)

My first semester here was very hard for me, because I failed so many students. It was a big deal, because no one ever failed before until we came here. It was a big deal, and the dean asked me why I failed so many and what are the

factors? I showed them the evidence. We have the same program, but its not called a remedial program, its special classes for those who have poor performance from the previous evaluation. You can trace back their performance, but at the end of the day I told the Dean, "Do you want this student nurse to become your nurse one day for yourself or your family?" That's when failing the students became popular. (Participant 2)

When you see the students failing, it's the responsibility now for the teacher or adviser to do something about it. (Participant 3)

Soft skills

The participants in this study stated the importance of training with soft skills. The subthemes include training in emotional competency, effective communication, and power dynamics.

a) Emotional competency

Lack of training in emotional competency was one of the concerns discussed by the participants. The emotional nature of the teaching process is a critical issue not often talked about but experienced by many.

..of course we have a different attitude and personality and we cannot control our emotion during stressful time or difficult situation. (Participant 1)

...I wish they had training on how to manage my feelings in order how to manage other people's feelings. (Participant 5)

b) Effective communication

Lack of communication, either verbal or non-verbal was among one of the influential factors affecting supervising process. Based on the participants' views, one of the reasons why communication was difficult to attain was due to cultural differences.

..the communication skills are important, because we have a language barrier between the other races and nationalities. (Participant 1)

...especially here in Saudi Arabia, you are now in a diverse environment, your faculty will be coming from different nationalities, different perspectives, different educational cultures. You should be able to understand them, especially their different personalities. Because when it comes to dealing with Filipinos, I can be straightforward, but when I am dealing with Arabs, I have to use a different approach in regard to their feedback. With Filipinos we can joke around even in formal terms but dealing with Arabs or other personalities you should be careful with them and their ego. (Participant 2)

...also need to consider the cultural sensitivity of the organization or school. It was hard especially when we were new because the students were wearing hijabs and we cannot see their facial expressions. (Participant 3)

It was also identified that problems arise when a supervisor cannot clearly communicate with their subordinate. In this situation, conflict may arise due to misunderstanding and

decrease employee productivity and organizational performance.

I have one supervisor who does not have effective communication...This is a Dean with 6 years' experience as a dean and has a Ed.D. But when he talks to you, he mumbles his words. So, there's no clear understanding, translation is lost and everything is misunderstood. (Participant 5)

c) Power dynamics

Lack of training in dealing with power dynamics was also an important issue in this study. The shift of power dynamics occurred through their workplace, regardless of age, experience, or rank.

...if their rank is higher, then they expect you to see them as the reference. If you are a professor and you have the highest rank, you cannot monitor them. Its difficult on my part, because I only have the position, but I do not have the rank. (Participant 2)

It's a transition from a university instructor to instructional supervisor. So it's a credential based hiring. So its not based on your experience. So it was a challenging experience as the youngest supervisor, I was 24 years old way back then. So I entered the department as a young supervisor and catering this faculty from a different age group. So you need to immerse yourself first. You cannot say I am the supervisor so I know everything. You learn from your subordinates as well. Relationship building is important. (Participant 4)

This study revealed some complexities and similarities in training needs, regardless of years of experience, rank or institution. The major themes included training needs in hard and soft skills in instructional supervision. Laker et al. (2011) defined hard skills as specific abilities or capabilities that an individual can possess and demonstrate in a measured way. Deepa et al. (2013), on the other hand, defined 'soft skills' as an umbrella term encompassing diverse survival skills, such as communication and organizational skills, emotional intelligence, characteristics of leadership, time and stress management.

For the first theme, the weak structure of hard skills emerges from proper training of faculty in their roles, standardized assessment and evaluation, and mentoring of students. Based on the participant's views, challenges in hard (technical) skills are more related to systemic dilemmas. It stems from inadequate faculty recruitment and selection procedures. The participants emphasized that the screening process for recruiting faculty members should require the supervisor's prior intervention since they are more informed about the department's needs. It was also strongly stressed that empty vacancies for supervisory roles require a dynamic quest for the right mix of skills and experiences. Inadequate faculty recruitment implies the need of formal training of faculty in their roles to familiarize themselves with the technicalities of their job description.

Faculty plays a massive and central role in the delivery of a world-class student experience. In this regard, Roehrig et al. (2008) highlighted that teachers not only be content experts

of the subject but also be experts in their delivery. As such, faculty must have formal training in pedagogical practices such as developing standardized assessment and evaluations, as well as being able to mentor students.

For the second theme of soft skills, subthemes of emotional competency, effective communication, and power dynamics were clustered together. Based on the results of the study, the participants put great significance in human relations. A supervisor who supervises faculty or faculty supervising students is required to perform interpersonal skills because they are directly concerned with groups of people.

Emotional competency is a significant component of interpersonal skills especially in conflict management and problem resolution (Laker et al., 2011). In conflicts between individuals or groups, normal feelings of anger, fear, hurt, and frustration are typically present. These feelings can cause an individual to react in the fight or flight stress response and instinctively prepare to protect themselves by taking an offensive/defensive stance. Factors of ineffective communication and power dynamics based on role, position, and personality only aggravate these situations.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

According to McEwen (2007), training plays a vital role in developing a productive workforce and helps people and organizations manage change. The study results suggest that further training in instructional supervision must be pursued and members of the organization should develop both hard and soft skills. However, analyzing performance first is increasingly essential to ascertain faculty and supervisors' training needs within the organization. Conducting a training needs assessment (TNA) can determine whether there is a training requirement, ensure the training will be linked to organizational needs and identifies the content and scope of training, including examples of what works (Zahid and Khan, 2011).

In the academe, the institution must provide effective training and development opportunities to help the organization achieve its objectives and goals. Training and development aims to raise employees' performance level and provide them learning opportunities for further growth.

In the light of the foregoing findings and conclusions of the focus group discussion, the following recommendations were advanced: Train members of the organization in training needs assessment; Create a committee for faculty recruitment and develop selection procedure policies; Duplicate the study with more participants to attain greater saturation of data with longer time restraints; Duplicate the study with local participants or within the Philippines to derive faculty/supervisors' training needs within the country.

References

- [1] Brown, J. (2002). Training needs assessment: A must for developing an effective training program. *Public personnel management*, 31(4), 569-578.

- [2] Deepa, S., & Seth, M. (2013). Do soft skills matter? - Implications for educators based on recruiters' perspective. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, 7(1), 7.
- [3] Laker, D. R., & Powell, J. L. (2011). The differences between hard and soft skills and their relative impact on training transfer. *Human resource development quarterly*, 22(1), 111-122.
- [4] Gusdorf, M. L. (2008). Recruitment and selection: Hiring the right person. *USA: Society for Human Resource Management*.
- [5] Roehrig, A. D., Bohn, C. M., Turner, J. E., & Pressley, M. (2008). Mentoring beginning primary teachers for exemplary teaching practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(3), 684-702.
- [6] Zahid Iqbal, M. and Khan, R.A. (2011), "The growing concept and uses of training needs assessment: A review with proposed model", *Journal of European Industrial Training*, Vol. 35 No. 5, pp. 439-466. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090591111138017>
- [7] Sleezer, C. M. (1993). Training needs assessment at work: A dynamic process. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 4(3), 247-264.
- [8] McEwen, T. (2007). Communication training in corporate settings: Lessons and opportunities for the academe. *American Journal of Business*.