



Journal Homepage: - www.journalijar.com
**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
 ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)**

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/6546
 DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/6546>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

UTILIZATION OF UNZASEDA SHORT COURSES BY PURSUERS.

Salinyinga Stephen and Liswaniso Christopher Tabo.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 15 December 2017
 Final Accepted: 17 January 2018
 Published: February 2018

Key words:-

utilization, pursuers, short-course,
 UNZASEDA.

Abstract

Short course provisioning is one of the most dynamic features of the emerging education and training system in the world of late. This kind of provisioning is particularly associated with 'just in time', and 'just enough' learning to meet a specific need in workplace environments. With the new approach to education and training, short courses provisioning has a very particular place in the system and has an important role to play in the development, up skilling and multi-skilling of human resources. At the University of Zambia, short courses are conducted under different schools; School of Humanities and Social Sciences as well as School of Education. In the School of Education these short courses are conducted by student association known as "University of Zambia School of Education Association (UNZASEDA)". Thus, the purpose of this study was to assess the utilization of The University of Zambia School of Education Association (UNZASEDA) short courses by pursuers. Therefore, the research findings reviewed that there were a spectrum of utility of the knowledge and skills acquired through short courses ranging from job opportunity in terms of being employed and promoted, improved work performance, earned income, problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills and career development.

Copy Right, IJAR, 2018,. All rights reserved.

Introduction:-

Short course provisioning is one of the most dynamic features of the emerging education and training system in the world of late. This kind of provisioning is particularly associated with 'just in time', and 'just enough' learning to meet a specific need in workplace environments. With the new approach to education and training, short course provisioning has a very particular place in the system and has an important role to play in the development, up skilling and multi-skilling of human resources.

At the University of Zambia, short courses are conducted under different schools especially School of Humanities and Social Sciences as well as School of Education. In the school of education these short courses are conducted by student association known as "University of Zambia School of Education Association (UNZASEDA)". The University of Zambia, School of Education Association (UNZASEDA) was established in 2008 with the aim of promoting professionalism among students in the school of education. The main goal of UNZASEDA is to promote professionalism in education and it does this through:

- i. providing financial assistance in form of loans to students belonging to School of Education;
- ii. giving medical assistance to vulnerable students;

- iii. support the keep UNZA clean campaign in many ways such as buying materials needed for litter picking which include gloves, reflectors, spikes and plastics; And
- iv. the association further conducts maintenance and rehabilitation of lecture theatres and other university infrastructure.

In order to realize these objectives, UNZASEDA conducts short courses to raise funds for above activities in addition to students' subscriptions.

Statement of the Problem:-

These short courses are pursued by many people from different walks of life. This is due to the fact that, in recent years, many individuals have realized that in order to survive in a world which is changing very fast with new technologies, acquiring skills is essential for new types of job and new forms of working which require a different combination of skills. However, it is not yet established the functional roles or the utilization of these short courses to pursuers. In other words, this study was premised to assess how these short courses are responding to demographic and economic transitions of pursuers.

Purpose of the study:-

The purpose of this study was to assess the utilization of the University of Zambia School of Education Association (UNZASEDA) short courses to pursuers.

UNZASEDA Short Courses:-

UNZASEDA short courses are purely non-credit courses. Non-credit-bearing short courses include a variety of short learning programmes for which no credits is awarded. The courses have no entry qualifications, no formal examinations, and usually no requirement for previous subject knowledge is needed. The entry into short course learning is purely based on individual discretion. The table below shows the list of short courses that are offered by UNZASEDA.

Table 1:- UNZASEDA Courses

COURSE	GOAL
Monitoring and Evaluation	The aim of this course is to equip pursuers with a sound knowledge of the underlying principles of monitoring the project and to provide them with the skills needed to analyse and evaluate different projects.
Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)	The purpose of this short course is to provide an introduction to practical aspects of conceptual database design. This covers the implementation of database in a software package where students learn the skills of creating database, forms, reports, queries, analysing and maintaining database.
Project Planning and Management (PPM)	This course on project management is intended for both first-time project managers and project managers wanting to expand and formalise their knowledge. The course aims to provide students with the basic skills, knowledge and competence to effectively understand and plan and manage projects.
Community Development	To equip pursuers with the theoretical knowledge and practical information, community skills to enable them to understand and create the infrastructure needed to do community work.
Business Entrepreneurship	This unit standard provides participants with an understanding of how to conduct business. It is useful for individuals interested in examining ways in which their businesses can gain competitive advantage by improving their business performance as well as starting new businesses.
Psychosocial Counselling	The purpose of this unit is to empower pursuers with the advance knowledge and skills regarding the body of knowledge of Psychosocial Counselling. The main aim of this course is to ensure enrolled students understand the technical aspects regarding counselling within the social environment

Literature review:-

This study was guided by the theoretical framework called knowledge communication and translation theory. Knowledge utilization is often assessed by comparing how well learners spontaneously transfer knowledge they possess or have acquired recently to a new problem context [1]. According to many researchers [2]; [3]; [4]; [5], "knowledge application is the most significant stage during a knowledge transfer process. It is the phase in which the acquired knowledge is brought to bear on the problem at hand. Every other step in the knowledge transfer process such as awareness, acquisition, transformation and association, does not lead to improved performance, nor do they create value. According to [2], the perspective on knowledge as a state of mind focuses on enabling individuals to expand their personal knowledge and apply it to the organization's needs.

In a country where there is serious unemployment even amongst matriculates and people with tertiary qualifications, people are realising more and more that it is essential to have marketable skills. One sector of the job market where it is possible to get employment related skill is through short course learning. Even when a person is fortunate enough to have a job, promotion opportunities may depend on the related skills and the qualifications that one has. On the other hand, not everyone can afford to study full-time and most students would like to get at least some qualification quite quickly so that their careers can benefit as soon as, which becomes obsolete within a short period of time [6].

Short courses learning place pursuers at the centre of the educational experience, enabling them to actively participate in their communities and in society, and to be resourceful and confident learners in all aspects and stages of their lives. Short courses are inclusive of all pursuers that is students, non-students, non-workers and workers and contributes to equality of opportunity, participation and outcome for all pursuers to make a strong connection with learning by focusing on the quality of learning that takes place and by offering experiences that are engaging and enjoyable for them, and relevant to their lives [7].

Employers are now expecting a higher level of skills from their employees. Studies have concluded that the long term shift away from unskilled to highly skilled jobs will continue in many countries throughout the world. However, despite this increasing requirement for higher skilled employees, there is evidence that the skills gap in many countries is widening with a growing deficit in key or core skills, which does not bode well for the future. The development of employee capacity through education and training is becoming more important due to a range of changes affecting organizations: increasing organizational complexity, technological advances, legislation, employment levels, need for higher productivity and the application of behavioural science knowledge, together with changing social values and employee expectations [8].

The pursuers engage themselves in short courses with a view of obtaining several other benefits. This acts as the motivation of enrolment in the short course learning. There are copious reasons or purposes of short learning programmes which could be any, or a combination. [9], observed that the following could be the purposes of short courses:

1. provide learners with practical (hands-on) learning where appropriate;
2. increase employability, self-employment possibilities and mobility within a work-place and a sector;
3. contribute towards closing the skills gap; And
4. update learners on new developments and insights in their professions

[10] propounded about reflective learning in short courses. The problem with many short courses and workshops is that they are divorced from their context. They are located somewhere other than the workplace, they may not relate directly to a person's actual work circumstances, and other participants may not be colleagues. In one sense, reflection could be seen to act as the cement, bringing the current practice onto the course, relating it to the new learning, and thus enabling a consideration of how the two relate to future changed practice. However, we also need to explore what we mean by reflection.

Methodology:-

This study was a tracer study. Tracer studies can be defined as retrospective analyses of graduates through a standardised survey, which takes place sometime after graduation (normally between 6 months and 3 years). Tracer studies are also known as graduate surveys, alumni surveys, or graduate tracking. Normally, the target population is a homogenous group of students / trainees who finished their studies at the same time (generation or graduation cohort). Tracer studies are common in higher education, but are becoming more and more popular in vocational

education. The general objective is to evaluate medium to long-term impact of education programmes. Tracer study questionnaire topics can vary considerably, but often include questions on study progress, the transition to work, work entrance, career, use of learned competencies, current occupation [11].

In this study, the universe population meant a group of individuals that had the same characteristics from which the sample was drawn. Consequently, the universe population for this study comprised of all the graduates that pursued UNZASEDA short courses for the period of two (2) years between 2015 and 2017. However, during field survey the methodologies employed captured other graduates outside the initial sampling frame. This was considered a positive development since it gave an even broader picture on the utilization of short courses by pursuers. The total sample was six one (61) that was accessed.

Identification of graduates/pursuers for the administering of the questionnaire involved the use of multi-stage sampling techniques, within which purposive sampling and snow ball sampling sufficed. Thus, three sampling procedures were used in this study. These included purposive sampling, convenient sampling and snow ball sampling procedures.

Snow ball sampling as a sampling technique involves using the first identified subject to identify others. In this case, the respondents identified through purposive sampling were asked to assist in identifying their former colleagues for UNZASEDA short courses. The information provided was used to locate and identify other graduates. Telephone interview and emailing became the main focus of questionnaire administering using acquired databases from the provider UNZASEDA office. In other words, self-completed questionnaires were emailed to respondents who were discovered and those respondents who happened to live within institution reach were called to come forth and complete the questionnaire.

Convenience sampling procedure was also used to sample thirty (30) pursuers. According to [12] “Convenience sampling – or, as it is sometimes called, accidental or opportunity sampling –involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained or those who happen to be available and accessible at the time. . . .” This sampling procedure was appropriate to this segment of the sample due to the fact that data were collected when pursuers were visiting the UNZASEDA office to collect their certificates and were asked to answer the self-completed questionnaires. These questionnaires were administered through email and physically to respondents.

Quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). On the other hand, qualitative data were analysed by processing the data into a form that allows common themes or patterns. This means that the data are not coded sentence by sentence or paragraph by paragraph but for meanings. Themes which are outstanding were kept in their form [13].

Results and Discussion:-

In this study, the findings were based on the responses expressed by six-one (61) respondents. The initial target of respondents was 100 which was the 10% of the estimated number. However, because the methodological problems of tracing pursuers respondent to the questionnaire. This represented a response rate of 61% which is comparable. The relatively low response rate could be attributed to what appears to be tracing difficulties of respondents. Other studies have recorded even a lower response rate for tracer studies that were repetitive. The Joint [11] study reported a 42.9% and 11.9% response rates for the first cohort and repeat respectively. [14] conducted a study on career outcomes of University of Malta graduates and reported a response rate of 55.65%, 49% and 45% for the studies conducted in 2000, 2002 and 2004 respectively. The discussion was guided by research objective which was: ‘to assess the utilization/usefulness of UNZASEDA short courses’

Utilization of short courses:-

The main objective was to assess the utilization of University of Zambia School of Education Association (UNZASEDA) short courses. In this study utilization refers to a measure of how the acquired skills and knowledge from the short courses is being used by the pursuer. Pursuer refers to any individual who enrolls in short courses. As for short course is a type of short learning programme which runs for less than four (4) weeks through which a learner may not be awarded credits.

The findings of this study showed that the majority (25=41% strongly agreed and 20=32.2% agreed) of pursuers agreed that the short courses were very useful to them. In other words, there was a recognition that short courses are put into use (short course utility). This is in tandem with a theoretical framework that guided the study called knowledge communication and translation theory.

This theory states that knowledge utilization is often assessed by comparing how well learners spontaneously transfer knowledge they possess or have acquired recently to a new problem context. Therefore, "utilization" refers to what happens when knowledge arrives at its destination. It speaks to the question of how knowledge is received, transformed, and consumed once it has arrived at point B [1].

The research findings reviewed that there were a spectrum of utility of the knowledge and skills acquired through short courses ranging from job opportunity in terms of being employed and promotion, improving work performance, earn income, problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills and career development.

On the contrary to these findings, [10] discovered that the problem with many short courses and workshops is that they are divorced from their context. They are located somewhere other than the workplace, they may not relate directly to a person's actual work circumstances. However, UNZASEDA short courses had revealed that they met pursuers' expectations and were within context.

Utility of short courses in improving work performance:-

With regard to utilizing skills acquired to improve work performance, the research results (23=37.7% agreed and 15=24.6% strongly agreed) shows that the pursuers do utilize skills and knowledge gained from short courses by improving their work performance. The workers who usually dominate the number of short course attendants as reviewed (30=49.1% workers) by this study, clearly confirms that they do benefit from the UNZASEDA short courses. The interpretation made here is also in line with [8] observation;

...the development of employee capacity through education and training is becoming more important due to a range of changes affecting organizations: increasing organizational complexity, technological advances, legislation, employment levels, need for higher productivity and the application of behavioural science knowledge, together with changing social values and employee expectations.

Employers do expect that the workers that are hired should perform according to the organisation demands, so that they do not become liabilities for the organisation. This exerts pressure on the workers to improve their abilities to perform or face redundant. This pose a challenge to them because they have to balance between work and improving their skills and knowledge. Therefore, the only alternative to achieve this, is enrolling into short courses that are conducted in afternoon that is after working hours and short in duration. On the other hand, not everyone can afford to study full-time and most workers would like to get at least some qualification quite quickly so that their careers can benefit as soon as possible or they become obsolete within a short period of time [6].

Utility of short courses in Job opportunities (employment and promotion):-

The study also unearthed that the pursuers of short courses (33=54%) utilize the skills and knowledge gotten for job opportunities; to those who are unemployed it increase chances of employability while to already employed it increase chances of promotion. The above findings conform to [9] who observed that *the purposes of short courses increase employability, self-employment possibilities and mobility within a work-place and a sector*. The pursuers usually have some objectives as to why they do engage themselves in short courses which is not far from being promoted or getting an employment. This acts as a positive reinforcement to pursuers, every individual want to be rewarded to any endeavour or pursuance especially work related aspects. This may lead to improved workplace practice, improved employability and mobility of the employee.

Utility of short courses in income generation:-

The study also established that UNZASEDA short courses were useful by graduates in that it gives them opportunity to earn income as the majority (31=50.8%) responded in affirmative. This entails that graduates of short courses utilize knowledge and skills in different ways not only hunting for employment nor promotion but also using same knowledge to create their own work. This is imperative especially in our country (Zambia) where employment is scarce, so other pursuers venture into businesses using business entrepreneurship competencies gained while others form their own organisations and start running different projects, in the process income is generated. This is what

makes short courses useful and attractive to all categories of people as reviewed by this study (workers-30, housewife-2, students-17, both worker & student-6 and retired-6). All these individuals do come to build their capabilities to survive.[16] builds upon the capability view by suggesting *that knowledge is not so much a capability for specific action, but the capacity to use information; in addition, learning and experience result in an ability to interpret information and to ascertain what information is necessary in decision making*[2]

Other utilities of short courses:-

It also emerged from the study that short courses are utilized in various aspects of life. This ranges from enhancing knowledge to develop problem-solving skills at work, develop communication skills in an organisation, interpersonal skills and that short courses act as an impetus to pursuers to engage in future career development. Short courses learning place pursuers at the centre of the educational experience, enabling them to actively participate in their communities and in society, and to be resourceful and confident learners in all aspects and stages of their lives. These findings seem to validate [4] standpoint who suggested that:

Knowledge association recognizes the potential benefit of the knowledge by associating it with internal organizational needs and capabilities. Only then it becomes knowledge that is usable for the receiver. This useful knowledge can then be applied to the organisation, i.e. knowledge application.

It is futile to gain knowledge and skills and only to pack it. The question of whether short courses are useful is not here nor there. Therefore, "utilization" refers to what happens when knowledge arrives at its destination. It speaks to the question of how knowledge is received, transformed, and consumed once it has arrived at point B [1].

Conclusion:-

The study findings confirmed that short courses are very important because are able to change people's lives. Therefore, the organisers of short courses should take it with the seriousness it deserves. The results shows that the majority (25=41%) of pursuers identified by this study agreed that the short courses were very useful to them. Generally, the pursuers of short courses (19=31.1%) utilize the skills and knowledge gotten for job opportunities especially to those who are unemployed and promotion to those in employment. With regard to utilizing skills acquired to work performance, the results show that the pursuers (23=37.7%) do utilize skills and knowledge gained from short courses by improving their work performance. This study also established that UNZASEDA short courses were useful by graduates in that it gives them opportunity to earn income as the majority (24=39.5%) responded in affirmative. It was also established that majority pursuers were of the view that short courses are utilized in various aspects of life. This ranges from enhancing knowledge to develop problem solving skills at work, develop communication skills in an organisation, interpersonal skills and that short courses act as impetus to pursuers to engage in future career development.

Reference:-

1. Voss, et al, "Problem-solving skill in the social sciences. Academic Press: New York (1983), pp. 165-213.
2. Alavi, M. and Leidner, D. E. "Review: Knowledge management and knowledge management systems: Conceptual foundations and research issues". *MIS Quarterly - Minneapolis*. 25(1). (2001) pp. 107-137.
3. Cohen, W. M. and Levinthal, D. A. "Absorptive Capacity: A New Perspective on Learning and Innovation". *Administrative Science Quarterly*. 35(1): (1990). pp. 128-152.
4. Trott, P. et'al. "Inward technology transfer as an interactive process". (1995). *Technovation*. 15(1): pp. 25-43.
5. Ortiz-Laverde, et'al. "Knowledge Processes: On Overview of the Principal Models" 3rd European Knowledge Management Summer School. (2003).San Sebastian: Spain.
6. Pinnington, A. & Edwards, T. "Introduction to Human Resource Management", (2000).Oxford University Press: Oxford.
7. Urquhart, C. "David Willetts: older people should return to higher education". (2013).Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/feb/21/david-willetts-old-people-university> Accessed 27/12/2017.
8. Hunt, J. W "Managing People at Work", (3rd ed), McGraw-Hill book Company: .(1992). England.
9. Dept of Labour, (2001). *The National Skills Development Strategy*.
10. Marton F, Hounsell D, & Entwistle N. The experience of learning (2nd ed). Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press,(1997). understanding in revising for degree examinations. Learn Instruct 1992; 2:1-22.
11. World Bank. (2007), Joint Tracer Study Japan/World bank Graduate scholarship Program.

13. Cohen.L, Manion.L. & Morrison, K. “Research Methods in Education(6th Ed)”. *British Journal of Educational Studies* (2007) 55 (4):469-470. *Routledge: London*.
14. Stake, R.E. *Multiple Case Study Analysis*. New York: .(2006). The Guilford Press.
15. Debono M. e’tal, “Career outcomes of graduates 2002 and 2004”. (2004), Retrieved from; <http://home.um.edu/sas/research>. On 05/01/2018.
16. Watson, R.T. “Data Management: Databases and Organizations (2nd ed.)”, (1999). John Wiley, New York.