

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Evaluation of the University of the Philippines Manila “Awakening Seminars”

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ABSTRACT

Background: Staff development is essential in sustaining organizational efficiency. In 2016, the University of the Philippines Manila started conducting the “Awakening Seminars” among administrative personnel to foster smooth interpersonal relationships and operational efficiency.

Objectives: This study was commissioned to determine the value of the seminars. It evaluated the trainees' perceived reactions, learning, and overall change in behaviors towards their work at the university.

Methodology: Out of 321 personnel who completed the seminars, 96 were calculated as sample size. Participants accomplished a survey questionnaire and 67 valid responses were collected. Data were analyzed using means and standard deviations according to Kirkpatrick's Evaluation Model from Level 1: Reactions, Level 2: Learning, to Level 3: Behavior. Different ratings were compared with selected variables using analysis of variance.

Results: Seven seminars were conducted from March 2016 to January 2017. Mean ratings showed that the seminars were well organized, relevant, and helped them appreciate their work, colleagues, and their workplace environment. Participants have high morale and felt privileged being in UP. Analysis of variance tests showed that evaluation ratings did not differ significantly with monthly take-home pay, tenure, performance, and job category. While these ratings are not directly translated as operational efficiency, results suggest participants' commitment to the university's goals.

Conclusion: UP Manila personnel appreciated the “Awakening” staff development program and can be replicated to all support personnel of the colleges.

Keywords: Staff Development Program, Awakening Seminars, UP Manila as a workplace

Introduction

As the University of the Philippines (UP) Health Sciences Center, UP Manila offers degree programs in the health, natural, physical, and social sciences, arts, and humanities. It is composed of nine colleges, the Philippine General Hospital (PGH), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The UP Manila Central Administration leads and manages the colleges and the NIH while the PGH has its own independent organizational set-up.

At present, UP Manila has a total human resource complement of 1,349 faculty members; 96 research, extension, and professional staff (REPS); and 438 administrative personnel. Among the non-teaching administrative staff, 151 belong to the

Central Administration that caters to the general human resource operations outside the specific colleges and units [1]. Starting 2016, the Human Resource Development Office (HRDO) conducted a series of “Awakening Seminars” as part of staff development program. The three-day seminar dealt with relationship building, communication processes, and conflict management in the workplace. The overall philosophy of the program was that with clear and standard office procedures, communication processes, and smooth interpersonal relationships among personnel, productivity and improved performance can be achieved.

The Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Administration allocated a total of PhP 1, 433,488.50 from 2016 to 2017 to

finance the Awakening Seminars Series except the one conducted on 27-29 July 2016 which was sponsored by the University Library. The 321 employees who completed the seminar represented a 90 percent coverage of Central Administration personnel. Dividing the total budget with the number of personnel trained, UP Manila has actually spent PhP 4, 465.70 per employee to be able to complete the Awakening Seminars.

UP Manila is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN] University Network (AUN). In 2016, AUN formulated a vision to make all its members the leading advocates of health promotion within the universities and beyond [2]. The framework introduces two principles namely Systems and Infrastructure, and Thematic Areas. Health determinants under the first principle include the development of healthy university policies, health promotion services like counselling and advisory support, and capacity building and health promotion. Determinants under Thematic Areas include zero tolerance, such as alcohol and tobacco and health promotion areas, mental well-being, social interaction, and work-life balance (integration) and healthy ageing. UP Manila signed the joint declaration embracing the AUN Health Promotion in Universities Framework. The conduct of a series of staff development programs like the "Awakening Seminars" reflects UP Manila's commitment to its personnel and its advocacy of health promotion in universities [3].

Makhbul, in his study of non-managerial workers at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, reported the significant effect of the physical workplace environment on health and productivity [4]. Danna and Griffin, in their systematic review, reported the strong associations of health and well-being in the workplace translating to productivity [5]. Increased productivity means that personnel are delivering expected services more quickly at a more rapid rate than before. In most workplaces, productivity is compromised when there is poor management from the overall administration, outdated systems, dissatisfied employees, and personnel with personal problems that affect their performance [6]. In the local scene, Loquias and Sana, in their study of faculty members in pharmacy, reported that organizational and institutional policies, among others, are crucial factors that affect their decision to stay or leave the academe [7].

From 2016 to 2017, the UP Manila HRDO conducted eight "Awakening Seminars" for 321 personnel with a total budget of PhP 1, 433,488.50 [8]. As the UP Manila administration was given another mandate beginning November 2017,

evaluating the seminar can be a vital consideration in deciding future staff development programs.

Evaluation refers to the determination of the worth of any educational or training intervention or product through a systematic, formal and scientific collection, organization, and interpretation of data [9]. Evaluation should be a built-in component of any educational program not only to ensure organizational and operational efficiency but also to help identify structural problems that need to be addressed.

This study used Kirkpatrick's Levels 1 to 4 Program Evaluation Design [10]. This framework evaluates a training program based on four areas. Level 1 refers to Reaction Evaluation referring to the description of the overall perceptions of participants on basic program components. Level 2 means Learning Evaluation referring to how much participants have learned in terms of knowledge gained, skills developed or improved, and attitudes changed. Level 3 is Behavior Evaluation which focuses on how much participants are applying those they learned from the program to their actual workplaces. The highest stage is Level 4: Results Evaluation which focuses on institutional changes and improvements, overall productivity, and operations efficiency practices that can be associated with the program.

This study evaluated the Awakening Seminars conducted among administrative personnel of the Central Administration and selected colleges of the University of the Philippines Manila. Specifically, it (1) described the overall reactions of the participants to the Awakening Seminar in terms of the conduct of the program, resource persons, logistics, and overall administration; (2) determined how much learning in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes the participants of the seminar learned from the program; (3) evaluated the behavior change, if any, of the participants and whether these were applied to their actual workplace; and (4) established the association between behavior evaluation ratings and the participants' performance ratings, tenure, job descriptions, and actual monthly take-home pays.

Methodology

This study used the Program Evaluation Model developed by Donald Kirkpatrick [10]. This design evaluates the Awakening Seminars by asking participants their perceived reactions (Level 1), learning (Level 2), and behavior change if any (Level 3). Level 4 (results) could not be performed because the seminar series is not yet ripe for institutional and long-term impact evaluation.

The HRDO's total target participants for the Awakening Seminar was 567. This included the 96 Research, Extension, and Professional Staff (REPS), 438 administrative personnel including the 151 employees belonging to the Central Administration, as well as the eight selected deans, 25 directors and heads of units of UP Manila [14]. From this total, 321 were able to attend the Awakening Seminars and comprised the accessible population. Using a computer-generated calculation, the total sample size was determined at $n=96$. The final sample was chosen using offices of respondents as stratum for selection. From this number, four did not consent to participate, 14 did not return the accomplished questionnaire, seven did not attend but were included in the list, three resigned, and one was no longer in the Philippines. The final respondents totaled 67.

A survey questionnaire was constructed for this study. It was validated with selected employees from the colleges and administered both online and manually. Revisions were made on the items that respondents found difficulty in answering and additional questions were recommended. The final questionnaire included 31 questions distributed according to the demographics of the respondents, their workplace, and Levels 1-3 evaluation indicators. The tool asked evaluation questions that requested respondents to choose a location in a four-point agreement scale. Options ranged from 1: representing Strongly Agree, 2: Agree, 3: Disagree, and 4: Strongly disagree. All statements were constructed positively so that a mean rating close to 1.00 was a favored score.

Aside from the questionnaire, records and pertinent documents such as the printed program, attendance sheets, Certificates of Attendance, accomplished feedback forms, performance ratings, and financial reports were used. Phone interviews with selected key informants were also conducted to verify their responses they wrote in the questionnaire.

Data were organized according to frequency counts and percentage distributions. All other quantitative data were processed and analyzed using means and standard deviations. To explore the differences in respondents' ratings at Levels 1, 2, and 3 evaluations, the means were compared against selected variables using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test. Confidence level was set at $p=0.05$. Data were encoded in Microsoft Excel v2013 and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences v21.

This study was registered with the UP Manila Research Grants Administration Office (RGAO) with Identification

Number 2017-0561. The study was also submitted to the Research Ethics Board (REB) and given a Certificate of Exemption (UPM REB 2017-448-01).

Results

Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents according to demographic characteristics composed of sex, gender orientation, civil status, number of children, age, years of service, monthly salary range, status of employment, place of residence, seminars attended, and overall performance ratings. The number of respondents totaled 67 but valid data varied depending on their accomplished questions. There were 28 (41.8 percent) males and 38 (56.7 percent) females. Sex was distinguished from gender orientation and the biggest group were 37 feminine (55.2 percent). There were twenty-seven single respondents, 36 married, 2 widowed, and 1 separated. There were 38 (56.7 percent) who have children ranging from 1 to 5 with mode equal to 2. The mean age of respondents was 42.08 and the standard deviation (SD) was 11.95. The youngest employee was 21 years old while the oldest was 64. The mean number of years in the university was 4.65 and $SD=5.48$.

Participants came from 22 offices and units of the Central Administration. In this study, the actual take-home monthly pay of the respondents was grouped according to seven intervals. There were two participants who indicated "0" and 27 who did not respond at all. Cumulative percent reveals that 71.6 percent of employees received a monthly take-home pay of below P 30, 000. From the 63 valid responses, 42 employees were permanent (62.7 percent) and respondents reported a time range of 10 minutes to 3.5 hours one-way with a mean of 1 hour and 55 minutes in travelling to their work.

Respondents represented the various dates that the Awakening Seminars were conducted. In 2016, one session each was held in March, July, August, September, October, and November. The seventh was held in January 2017. There were 4 to 10 participant-respondents for each batch. Performance ratings are done twice a year from January to June and from July to December. Based on the official targets set by the employee's designations and job descriptions, supervisors evaluate each personnel's performance using a 5-point system where 1 means Poor, 2: Unsatisfactory, 3: Satisfactory, 4: Very Satisfactory, and 5: Outstanding. Results were obtained from actual HRDO records and showed an overall rating of Very Satisfactory.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents (n=67 but valid answers varied per variable)

Variables	Number	Percent
Sex	Male: 28 Female: 38	41.8 56.7
Gender Orientation	Masculine: 26 Feminine: 37 Gay/Lesbian: 1 each	38.8 55.2 1.5
Civil Status	Married: 36 Single: 27 Widowed: 2 Separated: 1	
Personnel with children	With children: 38 No children: 27	56.7 40.3
Age range	Youngest: 21 years old Oldest: 64	Mean age: 42.08 Standard deviation: 11.95
Mean number of years in UP	4.65 years	SD: 5.48 years
Monthly salary range	No answer: 2 1 (<P5,000): 2 2 (5,001-10,000): 1 3 (P10,001-20,000): 28 4 (P20,001-30,000): 15 5 (P35,001-40,000): 9 6 (P40,001-50,000): 4 7 (>P50,000): 6	3.0 3.0 1.5 41.8 22.4 13.4 6.0 9.0
Type of appointment	Permanent: 42 Job order: 10 Casual: 5 Contractual and Temporary: 2 each	62.7 14.9 7.5 3.0
Mean performance ratings	January-June 2016: 4.6 (n=43) July-December 2016: 4.53 (n=46) January-June 2017: 4.58 (n=47)	

Reaction Evaluation

Table 2 presents the mean ratings of respondents on the overall conduct of the program, resource persons, logistics arrangement, and overall administration. The mean ratings ranged from 1.44 (communication to participants) to 1.89 (duration of program). Respondents "Agreed" to "Strongly Agreed" that the Awakening Seminar was well organized and timely. The very small values of standard deviations confirm that such ratings are generally homogeneous.

The lowest rating was on the duration of the seminar where respondents suggested to shorten the program to one or two days. Participants also commented on the choice of days, speakers, and venues for the seminars.

Evaluating Learning

The Awakening Seminar officially refers to a "training-workshop centered on attitude change and relationship

enhancement. It is a group dynamics-oriented program and is heavy on experience-based learning and sharing" [15]. The general objective of the seminar was to contribute to the (1) development of the organization through the enhancement of its office personnel in terms of aptitude and attitude towards work; (2) acquisition of interpersonal skills for better service relations, intra-personal growth for their own persons; and (3) development of more social commitment to the organization as a whole.

Table 3 presents the mean ratings, standard deviations, and comments of participants on the Awakening Seminars at Level 2 Evaluation. The mean ratings for Level 2 questions ranged from 1.42 to 1.74 with SDs that did not exceed 1.00 indicating fairly homogeneous perceptions. Evaluating learning refers to participants' ratings on how they perceived they have met the seminar objectives.

Participants "agreed" to "strongly agreed" that there were clear and relevant objectives. During the program, they explained that they took turns sharing most pressing concerns, and all officemates prayed for each other. Active interactions among the participants took place and everybody had the chance to open up. It was a getting-to-know exercise but on a much deeper level; resolution of problems was encouraged. The transactional analysis made participants understand themselves and others better and resolved to keep communication lines open at all times.

Respondents reported that they were able to handle conflicts and interpersonal problems in the workplace, and they understood their roles and the contributions to their office. Overall, highest rating (Mean=1.42) of the participants was commitment to operational efficiency.

Evaluating Behavior

Table 4 shows that the mean ratings at Level 3 ranged from 1.56 to 1.67 with the smallest SD from 0.74 to 0.80. As this study was only a cross-sectional survey, respondents reported only their perceived change in behaviors towards their work. The Awakening Seminars featured actual group activities that involved participants to deal initially with their personal issues and then explored them with their co-workers. Each was asked to share these issues and let off steam especially if they thought these affected their concentration in their work. Respondents clarified that there were several issues unleashed, some even happened many days, weeks, months, and years ago that actually strained the interpersonal relationship of some employees. Employees

Table 2. Means, SDs, and Comments on Reaction Evaluation

Particulars (n=valid responses)	Mean	SD	Comments
<i>The seminar was well organized and timely in terms of the following:</i>			
a. Communication with participants (n=62)	1.44	.99	They (referring to HRDO) are all approachable
b. Transportation (n=52)	1.58	.94	Respondent 1 (R1): Difficulty of going home due to heavy traffic; R2: I used my personal vehicle
c. Choice of venue (n=52)	1.65	.83	R3: Clean and organized; R4: a new venue would be nice; R5: <i>nakakatakot iyang door ng CR</i> near the venue (The door to the toilet was scary); R6: convenient
d. Basic services like food, Wi-Fi, access to services & utilities (n=52)	1.67	.83	R7: Perfect, especially the Wifi! ♥ R8: Weak Wifi; R9: excellent
e. Choice of speakers and resource persons (n=54)	1.59	.84	R2: Instructions were not clear prior to the event; R9: refreshing; just fine
f. Duration of the seminar (n=53)	1.89	.93	R10: Maybe 2 days and 1 night would be enough; R11: one day is enough; could be compressed to 2 days; R2: I felt it was too long; for the number of activities, <i>ginabi na kami noon</i> ; long time (the program was too long and we got home late)

Table 3. Means, SDs, and comments on evaluating learning

Particulars (n=valid responses)	Mean	SD	Comments
<i>The Awakening Seminar:</i>			
a. Had relevant, clear objectives (n=48)	1.69	.80	R13: This should be held on a regular basis; R9: Everything was processed but not given a resolution
b. Helped me build open communication lines with my co-workers: my colleagues, subordinates, and supervisors (n=48)	1.69	.80	R14: Here in our office, communication is always open for all of us; we were given an open line for communication
c. Featured sessions that strengthened my appreciation of my work and co-workers (n=48)	1.54	.82	
d. Taught me how to handle conflicts and interpersonal problems in my workplace (n=48)	1.60	.89	R9: (I learned about) bridging leadership, how to rebuild, and resolve conflicts
e. Made me understand my role and the contributions I make in our office (n=47)	1.74	.89	
f. Encouraged me to commit myself to contribute to operational efficiency (n=45)	1.42	.89	

were also in control of their circumstances and that they did not let their current personal circumstances affect their performance at work. Respondents expressed that the seminars boosted their morale as UP Manila employees.

Comparison of behavior evaluation ratings with selected variables

The long-term objective of the Awakening Seminars was to improve operational efficiency. This can be achieved beginning with changes in attitudes and actual behaviors of personnel at the workplace. To reinforce Level 3 evaluation, actual performance records of participants were also analyzed. First among these were verifications with HRDO if formal incident reports or complaint about the participants were filed. During the time of the study, there were no

formal incidence reports mentioned by the respondents that were filed against them and HRDO records confirmed this.

To determine if behavior evaluation ratings can be attributed in any way to operational efficiency, the mean ratings were compared to selected productivity indicators. Respondents' job categories were regrouped according to those that require a license (n=14), those where license was not required (n=49), and technical/vocational (n=4). Salary range from Table 1, status of employment, and three performance ratings were also compared against participants' behavior evaluations using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests at $p=0.05$.

Table 5 shows the ANOVA results comparing mean behavior evaluation ratings and the four variables. Based on all sum of squares that are greater than the mean squares and

Table 4. Means, SDs, and comments on behavior evaluation

Particulars of Performance in my work (n=valid responses)	Mean	SD	Comments
a. I competently finish the tasks that are assigned to me daily (n=57)	1.56	.78	R15: Except liquidation reimbursement of travel
b. I am able to handle stress and conflict in the workplace gracefully (n=60)	1.57	.77	
c. I work well with my co-employees (n=60)	1.60	.74	
d. I don't bring my personal problems to work (n=60)	1.67	.75	
e. There are no incident reports or complaints about my performance in my records (n=60)	1.62	.80	R15: I am not perfect. There are verbal complaints about me relayed to my boss. R9: Probably no incident reports but the UL told me that my immediate supervisor has been complaining about me
f. Encouraged me to commit myself to contribute to operational efficiency (n=61)	1.56	.79	
g. Boosted my morale as a UP Manila employee (n=61)	1.56	.85	

Table 5. Tests comparing behavior evaluation ratings with selected variables (p=0.05)

Variables	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Squares	F	Sig (p-value)
Job descriptions 1. Between groups 2. Within group	2.07 37.33	2 44	1.047 0.85	1.22	0.31
Monthly take-home pay 1. Between groups 2. Within groups	0.58 38.29	4 41	.14 .93	0.15	0.96
Status of appointment 1. Between groups 2. Within group	2.56 36.85	6 40	.43 .92	0.46	0.83
PES 1: January-June 2016 1. Between groups 2. Within group	2.07 37.33	2 44	1.047 0.85	1.22	0.31
PES 2: July-December 2016 1. Between groups 2. Within groups	0.58 38.29	4 41	.14 .93	0.15	0.96
PES 3: January-June 2017 1. Between groups 2. Within group	2.56 36.85	6 40	.43 .92	0.46	0.83

p values >0.05, there is statistical evidence to accept the null hypothesis that participants' behavior evaluations do not differ significantly with actual monthly take-home pays, status of employment, tenure type, and performance of participants in their workplace.

Discussion

The profile of UP Manila Central Administration personnel includes spending an average of 1.55 hours going to the university, 71.6 percent of them earning a monthly take-home pay below PhP 30,000, with 53.7 percent of them married and with a mode number of children equal to 2. These present a not-so-ideal picture of government personnel. Yet, participants reported to have a generally high level of morale as UP Manila employees, remained committed to help the university achieve its vision, and appreciative of the staff development program provided for them. Results were presented according

to Levels 1 to 3 Evaluation Model developed by Kirkpatrick. There was generally favorable feedback according to reactions, learning, and behavior evaluations. Results further revealed that employees have episodic to chronic challenges and difficulties while at work. A significant share of these challenges came from their colleagues and workplaces. Respondents agreed that the Awakening Seminars gave them a safe opportunity to unleash these issues and challenges, work to resolve them, and build stronger and more committed human resource in the university. Such kind of workers in any setting, sustained in a continuously conducive and nurturing environment, can be potentially dynamic and efficient.

The Kirkpatrick Levels 1-4 Program Evaluation Model is one of the most popular evaluation designs. From determining the participants' perceptions on the organization and management of the training, to identifying what competencies were learned, and which among these are actually carried out to their

workplaces, Levels 1-3 evaluation provides managers vital feedback on how else to improve their programs. Steinert, Mann, Centeno, *et al.* used this model in evaluating faculty development initiatives designed to improve teaching effectiveness [12]. In a systematic review of 53 articles from 1980 to 2002, they reported that Levels 1 to 3 evaluation were easily achieved compared to Level 4. Participants appreciated the programs they attended and reported being able to transfer their learning to their actual handling of courses, variety of teaching-learning activities and assessment, and more favorable attitudes toward teaching. The study also explained that there is a need for further and clearer organization of these initiatives to ensure social accountability not just on the side of the organizers but also on the trainees as well. Yoon, Boupvahn, Shin, and Kang used the same Levels 1-4 Evaluation model in evaluating the effectiveness of continuing professional development programs for physicians and physician assistants in hospitals in the Lao Democratic Republic from 2014-2015 [13]. They reported that the programs were highly appreciated and caused favorable changes in the participants' level of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The final indicators used were the number of patients admitted and the quality of care delivered which were achieved based on the pre- and post-documentations used in the study.

Mean behavior ratings were tested against type of job, status of employment, salary range, and PES ratings. Based on p value=0.05, results showed that these productivity indicators were not statistically sources of variation of behavior evaluation ratings. This is a commendable proof that even from the beginning, UP Manila Central Administration personnel are already focused on their work regardless of their personal, economic, and professional circumstances. Additionally, the slow turn-over of those leaving the service and the very minimal to no reported grievance and incidence of irreconcilable conflicts in the workplace are strong supporting evidence of this job satisfaction. As cited by Loquias and Sana, job satisfaction in the workplace can be inferred if longevity in service of personnel is observed [7]. It is, therefore, the job of UP Manila to sustain this intrinsic motivation and high morale to remain truly faithful to its mandate as the Health Sciences Center of the University of the Philippines System.

Conclusion

Participants had generally favorable reactions, learnings, and behavior evaluations of the Awakening Seminars. They appreciated this seminar series that was well-organized, interactive, relevant, and participative. The seminars

provided them with a continuing professional development program where they were able to thresh out their personal and professional issues and challenges, they did not know consciously affected their performance at the workplace. They were able to participate in several small group discussions as members, listeners, opinion givers, and harmonizers. Finally, at the behavior level, respondents also favored the Awakening Seminars for reminding them of their accountability to the university that made them admit their source of pride being in UP Manila.

Recommendations

Results suggest that the UP Manila Central Administration should consider the conduct of the Awakening Seminars to the colleges, especially its technical and support staff. However, the participants themselves suggested to reduce the seminar time into two days and schedule them on regular working days rather than on Saturdays as the weekend is for their respective families. In the succeeding seminars, the organizers should also consider revising the focus of the program to advance from interpersonal and relationship building to improving productivity in the workplace. The direct link to social accountability and performance ratings should be built-in in this advanced program.

These evaluation results are in synch with the principles of AUN Health Promotion Conference. Being UP's Health Sciences Center, it is therefore incumbent to UP Manila to continuously pursue development programs that will promote the health, wellness, and safety of its personnel. Efforts should also be sustained in improving the physical and psychosocial workplace environments for all faculty, staff, and students. For the individual employees, results also suggest that they should actively help themselves in joining the university's various programs that reach out to clients and communities like in the Volunteer Corps, medical and dental missions, teaching in geographically isolated and depressed areas as outreach programs of the university especially during summer and semester breaks. Self-regulating their respective performance ratings as the metrics of their accomplishments are clearly identified in their respective individual performance commitment records. Participating more actively in the governance of their units and offices, such in the form of regularly giving and receiving feedback, accomplishing such forms and reporting them to the appropriate offices. Such offices should clearly designate personnel to collect, store, and analyze these data not just for reporting sake but more importantly for accountability and quality assurance.

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