Full Length Research Paper

Forms and scope of employee motivation techniques in the Nigerian education sector

*[1]Ulabor Ehimen, [2]Chima Mordi and [3]Hakeem Ajonbadi

*[1]University of Wales
[2]Univeristy of Brunel
[3]Kwara State University

*Corresponding authors e-mail: ehimena@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study seeks to critically examine the various types of motivation techniques utilized by managers and assess employees' perception of the significance of the techniques for incentivising employees in the Nigeria education sector. The study utilises one hundred and eight interviews which was undertaken among academic staff members and administrative middle and senior managers in six selected Polytechnics in the Nigeria. The findings indicate that the most dominant motivation techniques include providing better financial benefits, promotion, medical, job security etc. The paper suggests policy implications which would aid the implementation of motivational policies in the Nigerian Polytechnic sector and suggests directions for future research.

Keywords: Educational sector, academic staff, motivational techniques.

INTRODUCTION

Motivation has been at the forefront of research for over ten decades and continues to generate interest amongst academics and practitioners because of the changing structure of work attributable to globalisation, the change in society and work demography (Kuvaas, 2006; Keller, 2008; Bouregard, 2011; Ankli, 2012). The issue of how best to enable workers to render their best mental and physical energies towards organisational labor – production processes and profit accumulation and maximisation sit at the center of managerial dilemmas (Mason et al, 2008; Mehta et al, 2003; Amar, 2011). This managerial quandary is founded on the fact that there is a direct relationship between organizational performance and individual job satisfaction and performance (Tella et al, 2007; Mason et al, 2008; Kuvaas, 2006; Kuvaas and Dysvik, 2009; Aworemi et al, 2011). The research on motivation techniques was required in the management of human resources in the Nigerian education sector as intense industrial discontent on the issue has led to many strikes and litigations (Obioha and Ayilara, 2009; Ebrahimabadi et al, 2011; Oke, 2012). The research on

motivation has advanced greatly in western countries; this cannot be said for developing economies like Nigeria (Ituma et al, 2011; Aworemi et al, 2011; Mordi et al, 2012). Motivation energises people to put real effort and energy into what they do (Kleinginna and Kleinginna, 1981; Wright, 2002; Siddique et al, 2011; Srivastava and Barmola, 2011; Sahoo et al, 2011). This view of motivation aligns with Ford (2009) and Clark (2010) view of motivation as a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being influencing work-related behaviour and determining its forms, direction, intensity and duration. Motivation is a basic psychological process along with perception, personality, attitudes, and learning (Tella et al, 2007; Aworemi et al, 2011); Motivating is the management process of influencing behaviour based on the knowledge of what make people encouraged to work (Luthans, 1998). Effective motivation is way of stimulating people such that they become satisfied with and committed to their jobs (Tella et al, 2007; Ellerslie and Oppenheim, 2008; Beauregard, 2011; Inyang, 2011). To that extent,

this study examines the various forms of motivation tools utilised by managers in Nigeria and evaluates the relevance of the various types of motivation techniques used by managers in the Nigerian Education Sector. It utilises 108 interviews of academic staff as well as middle level administrative and senior managers in Nigerian Polytechnic education sector. It is hoped that this study would provide a good starting point for serious discussion about improved employee motivation management in the Nigerian education industry and beyond. In the first section, there is a brief review of the various theories and models related to motivation. The second section examines the aspects of the Nigerian education; the next sections provide details of the methodology and the findings. Finally, the results are discussed, leading to recommendations for policy makers and suggestions for further research.

Review of Motivation Literature

Over the last century there have been various studies that have influenced the study of motivation and affected the realities for workers within the work place. In their study Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939) and Dickson (1973) argue that performance feedback and pay-for-performance were the specific conditions that increased and maintained the high levels of worker motivation and performance. Maslow (1954) in his hierarchy of needs, from a content theory perspective summed up the human needs in to five basic hierarchical levels from lower level needs of Physiological need to Self -actualisation need at the peak of the pyramid. Other levels in his need pyramid include Safety, Social, and Ego/Esteem needs. He postulated that once a lower level needs has been satisfied, it ceased to be a motivator, and the next level of need sets in as motivator. However, the theory has been criticised for its limitation of focussing on human needs and being environmentally bias (Sahoo et al, 2011). Skinner (1953) proposed a better way to predict and control behaviour; he opined that this is to examine a person's history and current environment. For him behaviour is a function of environmental contingencies of reinforcement, establishing operations such as deprivation or satiation. Establishing operations and past consequences determine the direction, effort, and persistence of behaviour. For Douglas McGregor (1960) in his theory X and Y, he posits that humans are generally unwilling to give up their best mental and physical energies at work to that extent he proposes that workers be penalised or forced to get results and rewarded when they love their work and give their best. Vroom (1964) in expectancy theory approaches the issue of employees' motivation in quite different ways from the ways of Maslow and Herzberg. He holds that people will be motivated to pursue the achievement of a desired goal if they believed in the worth of the goal and they equally believed in their actions in ensuring the attainment of the

goal. Vroom (1964) believed that a person motivation to perform will depend on the value the person places on the outcome of his efforts integrating his confidence that the efforts will actually helped to achieve the desired goal (Awoyemi et al, 2011).

More broadly, there are several factors that influence the productivity of workers. This includes intrinsic/extrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Deci and Ryan, 2006). For instance, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are aimed at strengthening the employee pro-social motivation and produces outcomes such as persistence, productivity and performance. Highly intrinsically motivated employees feel that performing well is beneficial to their own self-selected goals, as they enjoy their work and value the outcome of helping others (Deci and Ryan, 2006). Gungor (2011) opines that pro-social motivation should be pleasure-based rather than pressure-based, because employees feel volition, autonomy and free choice in their efforts to benefit others by way of in-role and extra-role work performance. When intrinsic motivation is low, it results in stress and role overload and other psychological costs that may impede or diminish any positive effects on work performance (Kuvaas and Dysvik, 2009). Extrinsic motivation is also important in performance of workers. Extrinsic motivation like pay, wages, bonus and other incentives play a significant role in productivity of workers (Aworemi, et al, 2011). There is no doubt that people who are well motivated performed better than those who are not and ultimately this leads to increases in efficiency and productivity (Tella, et al, 2007; Strivastava and Barmola, 2011). The consequences of a de-motivated workforce are numerous, these includes a high level of absenteeism, low work, pace and unwillingness to take responsibility, reduced levels of creative contributions, ultimately low production and profits (Aworemi et al, 2011; Salisu, 2012; Ankli, 2012).

Nigeria Polytechnic Education Sector

The Nigerian polytechnic education sector refers to non-university tertiary institution offering a variety of technician, technological/business programmes at the National Diploma and Higher National Diploma levels (Yakubu, 2010). The Nigerian national council on education adopted the nomenclature "Polytechnic" in 1987 for the purpose of harmonisation for all post-secondary technical education institutions offering two-year and four-year programmes leading to the award of the National Diploma (ND) and the Higher National Diploma (HND). The first Polytechnic tertiary educational institution in Nigeria was established in 1932. There are currently more than seventy six registered and accredited Polytechnics in Nigeria. The Nigerian national policy on education (1998:34) entrenched the following as the goals of Polytechnic education in Nigeria these includes to provide full-time and part-time courses of instruction

and training in engineering, other technologies, applied science, business and management leading to the production of trained manpower. It also provides the technical knowledge and skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development of Nigeria. The polytechnics were set up to give training and impact the necessary skills for the production of technicians, technologists and other skilled personnel (Oke, 2012). Furthermore, polytechnics train people who can apply scientific knowledge to solve environmental problems for the convenience of man; notwithstanding the foregoing lofty essence of setting up the polytechnic education in Nigeria, the current realities within the sector is inauspicious. This is due to the fact that the enabling environment for the attainment of these goals with regards to physical facilities, infrastructures, staffing, students enrolments, funding and relevant curricular etc are not available for attainment of these goals (Yakubu 2000; Oke 2012).

RESEARCH METHODS

The overall research approach was investigative rather than hypothesis testing. The rationale for this methodological position is that it provides an appropriate framework for the development of an in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). This approach has also been taken as a result of the shortage of research studies which have been done to understand the concept and perception of motivation policies and practices in the African work environment. The total sample used in this study was one hundred and eight semi-structured interviews of senior staff in six selected Polytechnics in the Nigerian Education Sector in Nigeria and seven focus group discussions (one apiece each Polytechnics and two in Federal Polytechnic). The demographic representations of the respondents are portrayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic representations of the respondents

Demographic Factors	Range/Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
Sex:			
Male:	79	73	73
Female:	29	27	100
Age:			
20 – 35:	25	23	23
36 – 55:	62	57	80
Above 56:	21	20	100
Qualifications:			
BSc/HND	11	10	10
Masters	72	67	77
PhD	25	23	100
Years of Experience:			
0 – 5	14	13	13
6 -10	32	30	43
Above 10	62	57	100
Total Respondents	108	100	100

Source: Field Study Survey 2012.

The sampling technique adopted was purposive as it focussed on six Polytechnics in the western part of Nigeria. The interview questions were mainly open-ended while interviews were conducted in English. Each semi-structured interview lasted between thirty to fourty-five minutes. Interviews were done and collected over three months. The interviewees were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The interviews were conducted at the respective organisation's site or another preferred location. The interviews were tape-recorded with the consent of the interviewees using a predetermined but flexible interviewing protocol. After each interview, a contact form was used to summarise the main themes, concepts, issues or questions that emerged. The data were simultaneously analysed.The data analysis began at the outset of the data collection process and continued throughout the study. This proved particularly helpful in providing information used in revising the initial interviewing questions and formulating new questions as the interviews progressed. It also provided us with the flexibility to conduct follow-up interviews and to probe deeper into some interesting emergent themes. In addition to the primary sources, we also used secondary sources which were gleaned from books, periodicals and journal articles. These documents were used to investigate patterns, employers' overt and subtle policies, and non-verbal views of the population being investigated. Reflection, interpretation and analysis of the detailed notes yielded the findings reported in this study. The next section provides the findings of this study.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The key research question of this study sought to evaluate from the employee perspective the relevance of various types of motivation tools being used by managers in the Nigerian Polytechnic Education Sector.

Financial Motivation

Many employees are fascinated with wealth and employees indicated their desire to earn fair wages and salaries; It is important to note that the Nigeria economy is an expensive economy and the increament in salary has often been seen as a key motivational tool (Akintoye 2000). Many of the respondents alluded to the importance of money and incremental rises in salaries in their responses: For instance one of the senior lecturer asserted that:

A good job should be able to make you drive one of the latest range of cars, make your children attend good schools, make you extremely comfortable. You are also able to build a good house, meet reasonably other family members needs, and hopefully to be looked to as one of the best among your colleagues

and family. Good salary that commiserates adequately with present economic conditions of the country remains a very good source of achieving these. (Senior Lecturer, Private Polytechnic).

To very large number of employees and respondents, money motivation and pay raise is needed to provide the required and needed security their family needed. The state of insecurity in the country is very alarming and everybody has to design a way of protecting their lives and property; this can come in form of paying extra to provide additional security in hiring private security personnel, buying more security gadgets in cars and homes, house fencing with security wires among other security measures. One of them iterates and emphasised it thus:

We can't be asking for too much in terms of money motivation and pay raise. The state of the country security is very fearful and we need to make extra supports for our own security. In the part of the town where I lived, I employed a private guard 'megard' to watch over the house and look after it when we are not around, and work is ongoing in fixing electrical barb wires on my fence. These are ordinary things that am not suppose to pay for, but I seem to not have a choice and have to get them done. All these come down on money". (Senior Lecturer, State Polytechnic).

Tella et al (2007) and Ubeku (1989) are of the opinion that the findings of studies carried out in Europe and America which tend to play down the importance of wages and salaries as a motivating factor may not very well apply in the Nigerian context because wages and salaries in Nigeria are a large motivating factor. For Salisu (2012) and Ulabor and Mordi (2013), money plays an important role in motivating employees to work hard in Nigeria and monetary motivations tend to attract Nigerian workers more than the non-monetary ones. If employees are not compensated fairly then they will become de-motivated and dissatisfied with their job. Salaries, wages and working condition stimulates employees to work effectively in an organisation (Tella,et al 2007). Similarly Sinclair, Tucker, Cullen and Wright (2005) have demonstrated that money has the motivational power to attract and retain employees and direct them toward higher performance. Financial rewards are important in institutions where the appraisal policies are wholly dependent on financial rewards (Weibel et al, 2009). Therefore some managers use monetary rewards to encourage their employees and their withdrawal as a punishment for them depending upon the power of reward for employees.

Several studies (Judge, et al 2010; Houran and Kefgen, 2011; Siddique et al, 2011; Sahoo et al, 2011; Ulabor and Mordi, 2013) have consistently showed that

money and materialistic focus in life is associated with a lower level psychological well-being.

Promotion

The prospect for promotion and having desire for such is motivational on its own. Tella et al (2007: 4) puts it that '*the desire to be promoted and earned enhanced pay may also motivate employees'.* Therefore, employees' craved for promotion to enhance their status, improve their pedigree, command more authority and exerting more power, satisfy their inner urge of symbolic societal acceptance and self-actualisation, and most importantly (in the Nigerian context), make more money. Olajide (2000) further pointed out that employees' promotion are motivating factors and strategies used by managers in motivating their employees.

In the words of some of the respondents, they asserted that:

Promotion is another good means of motivation by its own right, this is because it gives you insights into more organisational needs, access to more power and authority, decision making and you command more respect. Importantly, you get more salary and financial benefits than you used to get before. (Senior Lecturer, Federal Polytechnic).

Your career advancement is measured by the height you reached in your profession and career; therefore, people viewed you as successful in terms of your career when you continually progressed from the bottom to the top in the organisational hierarchy. If I can reach the top then that means a lot to me and give me a lots of feeling of satisfaction. Everybody want to make it to the top and to the apex of the pinnacle of their career because that is where 'things' happen; a lot of priviledges comes with any promotion up the hierarchy and to any higher managerial level. This may come in form of official car, private driver, home stewards and so on; it also exposed you the more and therby giving you more connection and dinning with the who-is-who in your industry. (Senior Lecturer in Accounting Department, State Polytechnic)

The interest in promotion was found more in the male respondents which possibly reflect patriachally oriented gender norms in Nigeria (Ovadje and Ankhomah, 2001). Like wise, the importance accorded to promotion can also be related to high power distance in Nigeria as detailed by House et al (2004).

Medical Allowances and Facilities

Nigerian employees place value on employers who grant

medical grants, incentives or have high quality medical facilities to cater for their staff (Obalum and Fiberesima, 2012). It is important to note in Nigeria quality medical facilities are scarce and expensive (*op cit*, 2012). Employers therefore see offering medical incentives as means of motivating employees. Employers sometimes send employees to the to the UK and USA to access world class medical services where the ailment to be treated can best be attended to by experts abroad. With regards to the issues of medical bonus the following quotations depict the employees' feelings:

What is the essence of money you are earning in the first place when you are going to spend them all on medical bill? Any organisations that are willing to look after ones' health is really worth working for.(Senior Accountant, State Polytechnic).

*The importance attached to medical health care by Nigerian workers was clearly demonstrated by workers acceptance when the Federal Government came with the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS); though with lots of teething problems, yet the workers welcomed it believing that it's really going to ameliorate their long medical problems in terms of access and funding. (*Registrar, Private Polytechnic)

My utmost regards for medical healthcare is one of the many reasons why I envy my colleagues in the Federal Polytechnics. Here, we have to pay for all our medical bills and accessing them is equally very difficult as most of our state hospitals are just consulting centers to meet the doctors, so we patronised mostly the private hospitals where you have to pay for everything. Those in the Federal Polytechnics are enjoying the NHIS and counting their benefits about this. The state government is just trying to bring this in as a means of employees' motivation and only God knows when this will come to fruition, though some state institutions were said to have started registration for using it anyway.(academic member of staff, polytechnic)

The importance of the medical allowance has been strongly re-echoed in this study. However, only handful employers in Nigeria have really implemented the use of the medical allowance. There is a need to consider it much more seriously.

The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) is a body corporate established under Act 35 of 1999 by the Federal Government of Nigeria to improve the health of all Nigerians at an affordable cost. Given the general poor state of the nation's health services and the excessive dependence and pressure on Government owned health facilities, with the dwindling funding of healthcare in the face of rising cost of living, the Scheme is designed to facilitate fair financing of health care costs through pooling and judicious utilisation of financial risk protection and cost-burden sharing for people, against high cost of health care through institution of prepaid mechanism, prior to their falling ill. This is in addition to the provision of regulatory oversight on Health Maintenance Organisations (HMOs) and Health Care Providers (HCPs). Several health insurance schemes exist around the world and well grounded in the western and developed countries like the United Kingdom and the United State. In Africa we have success stories in Rwanda, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa to reduce the burden of healthcare on the populace. The Obasanjo's led administration stated the implementation of this scheme in 2005 and the Scheme was officially launched on 6th June 2005 while commencement of services to enrolees started in September 2005. Till date, over 4 million Identity Cards have been issued, 62 HMOs have been accredited and registered. Presently, 5,949 Healthcare Providers, 24 Banks, 5 Insurance Companies and 3 Insurance Brokers have also been accredited and registered (Obalum and Fiberesima, 2012).

CONCLUSION

This is an on-going study into motivation in the Nigerian education sector and conclusions can only be tentative. This study highlights the perception of employees about foregoing benefits. Employers must think about creative ways of accommodating and improving this benefits for their employees. In summary, this study investigated the various forms and types of motivational tools utilised by managers in Nigeria to motivate employees. The research question sought to identify and evaluate the relevance of and the various types of motivational tools being used by managers in the Nigerian Polytechnic Education Sector. The findings indicate that the most dominant motivational category is achieving better financial payment, promotion, medical, job security etc. It is important to note that employees' motivation in the NPES is not as smooth as glass; it does have its own associated problems and challenges. Some of these challenges ranged from funding through budgeting, organisational policy issues, centralisation and decentralisation of power and authority, the human nature of man that is insatiable, and employees turnover/drifting. These challenges and barriers as they affect the Nigerian Polytechnic Education Sector were seen from the views of the participants themselves. The paper suggests policy implications which would aid the current realities with motivational structures in the Nigeria Polytechnic education sector.The institutional dynamics for the management motivational techniques or motivational regimes are weak in the Nigerian education sector and this has led to various and frequent strikes within the sector. There has been an apparent reluctance by government, employers and policy makers in Nigeria

to enact policies which protect and enhance the use of favourable motivational tools. There is therefore a need to put in place regulatory structures to help managers redesign work in such a way that it will be more helpful in creating motivational structure that meet global HRM best practices. For future research, the authors of this study suggest that it would be interesting to investigate the notion of motivation in Nigeria and the factors that facilitate or mitigate favourable motivational structures in Nigeria. Some methodological limitations must be acknowledged though. The study focuses on only one sector the educational industry within one geographical region i.e. South-West Nigeria. Moreover, the social desirability bias of respondents cannot be ruled out: participants may respond in a manner that favours their personal interest. In spite of these limitations, this exploratory study has contributed to the scarce literature on motivation of workers within an African context by identifying context-specific variables in Nigeria.

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