

An assessment of various strategies in enhancing workers productive capacity in Nigeria's tertiary institutions

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses productivity enhancement in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It looked at the various strategies adopted to enhance workers' productivity in their workplaces. The paper contends that sincere application of specified motivational strategies, such as a good work environment, provisions of incentives as well as opportunities to develop employees' capacity will induce workers' optimum performance.

Keywords: Productivity, Workers' capacity, productivity improvement, employee motivation, tertiary institutions, tertiary education, national development.

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INTRODUCTION

Tertiary institutions remain an essential level of educational institution contributing towards the production of higher level manpower in relevant skills and competencies for national development. In Nigeria, tertiary education refers to the level of education acquired after secondary education in higher institutions of learning such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and other institutions of higher learning offering correspondence courses, diplomas and certificates (Famade et al., 2015). The goals of tertiary education in Nigeria as stipulated in the national policy on education (NPE, 2013) shall be to

- a) Contribute to national development through high level manpower training.
- b) Provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians.
- c) Provide high quality career counseling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work.
- d) Reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market.

- e) Promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service.
- f) Forge and cement national unity, and
- g) Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

It is in this regard that nations all over the world invest heavily on the development of higher education. Arikewuyo and Ilusanya (2010), quoting the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stated that universities worldwide stand on three major principles, which are:

- i. The right to pursue knowledge for its own sake and to follow wherever the search for truth may lead,
- ii. The tolerance of divergent opinion and freedom from political interference, and
- iii. The obligation as social institutions to promote, through teaching and research, the principles of freedom and justice, of human dignity and solidarity, and to lead mutually material and moral aid on an international level.

Emphasizing the importance of tertiary education in national development, Johnstone (2006) opines that higher institutions as an agent of change, national growth

and instrument for the realization of collective aspiration should contribute to the development of the entire education system through teacher education, curriculum development and educational research thereby providing the crucial mass skills and educated populace needed by any country to ensure genuine sustainable development.

PRODUCTIVITY IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

Productivity refers to the amount of output produced per work hour. According to Mali (1978), it is a measure of how resources are brought together in organizations and utilized in accomplishing a set of results. It is about reaching the highest level of performance with least expenditure of resources. The International Labour Office (ILO, 2005) opines that productivity rises when an increase in output occurs with a less than proportionate increase in inputs, or when the same output is produced with fewer inputs.

Productivity is a key source of economic growth and competitiveness in the globalized world. It serves as basic statistical information for international comparisons as well as country performance assessments. Productivity data are used often to investigate the impact of product and labour market regulations on economic performance.

Productivity improvement can be looked at from two angles: individual and institutional. While the productivity of individuals may be reflected in employment rates, wage rates, stability of employment, job satisfaction or employability across jobs; institutional productivity, in addition to output per worker, may be measured in terms of market share and export performance (ILO, 2008). An increase in productivity at any level can be a function of various factors such as new skills learned on or off the job, new capital equipment or organizational changes. At the individual level, productivity is affected by factors such as health, education, training, core skills and experience. However, at the institutional level, such affective factors might include management, investment in plant and equipment and occupational safety and health.

Productivity improvement in higher institutions is a promising strategy for containing costs in the effort to make tertiary education as affordable as possible. Without technology-driven and improvements in the delivery of service, the price of a university degree might be beyond the reach of a growing proportion of potential students. The quality of education provided might even erode under pressures to reduce costs.

Application of productivity metric to education might become a complex nut to crack. Applied to higher education, productivity metric might track the various kinds of worker-hours that go into producing a student credit hour or degree. The limitation of this approach, according to Sullivan et al. (2012) is that, because higher

education uses a wide variety of operational approaches, which in turn depend on an even wider variety of inputs (many of them not routinely measured), it may not be practical to build a model based explicitly and exclusively on physical quantities. They stated further that, "of even greater significance is the fact that the quality of inputs (students, teachers, facilities) and outputs (degrees) varies greatly across contexts".

Productivity of higher education can be thought of as how much individuals and the society are getting from education given the resources they put in. It also reflects whether the system is wasteful or not. The concept of productivity has two dimensions: efficiency and effectiveness. While efficiency is all about the level and quality of service delivery obtained from a given amount of resources; effectiveness relates to the extent to which the service provider meets the needs and demands of the various stakeholders. These stakeholders include the students, faculty members, local communities, industries and the nation at large.

With the above scenario, it becomes quite clear that productivity improvement is a multi-faceted concept linked with the goals, mission and vision of the institution under consideration. Thus Ruppert (1994) opined that the major objectives of higher education systems are the promotion of educational quality which includes: access, equity, efficiency, and contribution to state needs, as well as connection and contribution to other education sectors. Improving productivity in tertiary institutions, according to Gate and Stone (1997) involves:

- a) Defining the unit of analysis;
- b) Articulating the objectives of higher education system;
- c) Identifying measures of efficiency and effectiveness which relate to those goals; and
- d) Developing strategies for improving and monitoring productivity.

It is on these bases that this paper will discuss productivity improvement in higher institutions in Nigeria through personnel's motivation, manpower development, school plant and facilities planning and other sundry factors.

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING WORKERS PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY

The ultimate goal of every educational institution is to enhance productivity. Employees are the main driving force of any organization. Therefore, for improved productivity, growth and efficiency every organization must as a matter of necessity motivate and take good care of their workers. Employee motivation is an essential ingredient in the success of every institution. Therefore, understanding the factors that motivate employees for better performance is a sure way to productivity

improvements. The strategies that can be adopted to enhance workers' productive capacity include:

Personnel motivation

A workplace must be driven by efficiency and achievement manifesting in the form of tangible results for the organization and beneficial reward for the employees. It is instructive to note that employees are vital to productivity. It is imperative therefore for every organization to always have words of encouragement for their employees. Encouraging the workers helps them to move forward and do even better in their work/job and makes them feel happy. Rewards and other ways of keeping employees happy make them feel that their effort is being recognized and that they are needed by the organization.

The effectiveness and efficiency of organizations is usually dependent on employee motivation, commitment, job satisfaction and skills (Stephen, 2014). Motivated employees are expected to deliver higher productivity and also influence others to work harder. There is always a positive relationship/link between motivation and productivity. A motivated employee derives satisfaction from his job because his needs are met and thereby increases the level of his productivity in the organization. Motivation is therefore the driving force to pursue and satisfy one's needs while job satisfaction is an employee's emotional response to current job condition. Invariably, motivation and job satisfaction create confidence, loyalty and ultimately enhance employee and organizational productivity.

To attract and retain talented, knowledgeable and highly skilled personnel, the employees must be motivated for better and increased performance which translates to higher levels of productivity. Every employee, irrespective of their culture, religion or educational background has needs which they expect their organizations to help meet. Unmet or unfulfilled needs create tensions and apprehensions that influence the behavior of employees negatively.

For employees to be productive, they need to be satisfied with their job. Satisfaction is a term used by psychologists to describe the state of an animal with respect to a need when that need has been fulfilled (Cameron, 1973). It has also been described as the degree to which an individual feels positively or negatively about the various facets of the job tasks, the work setting and relationship with co-workers (Schermerhorn et al., 1985). Satisfaction therefore connotes happiness and a state of well-being as an outcome of need-fulfillment.

Maslow (1954) advanced a need hierarchy that is common to all normal people and which is pertinent to the understanding of human satisfaction. The basic argument of Maslow is that human beings are *wanting being*; they always want and want more, and that the

needs are arranged in a series of levels: a hierarchy of importance. Herzberg (1966) put forward a two-factor theory known as the motivation-hygiene theory. The theory shows that job satisfaction is determined by the feelings individuals have concerning the *content of the job* which include task achievement, recognition, advancement, responsibility and work. These are called motivators or satisfiers. On the other hand, job dissatisfaction is determined by the feelings of individuals concerning the *context of the job*, which include work condition, salary, job security, organizational policy, supervision, personal status among others. These are called hygiene factors. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory has implications for job satisfaction in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The hygiene factors tend to provide for the animal side of man's nature which needs to avoid unpleasant environment. Going by Herzberg's postulates it became clear that all efforts made by employers to improve the working conditions of staff, especially by increasing their salaries has only helped to reduce or eliminate their dissatisfaction but not necessarily leading to satisfaction. In fact, the trouble with most salary increases is that they are not large enough to motivate the receiver. They may keep the individual from being dissatisfied, but are not likely to be a strong motivator.

There is a compelling need therefore for managers of educational institutions to evolve various measures that would lead to job satisfaction of their workers. A satisfied worker will necessarily re-double its effort leading to more productive work; while a dissatisfied and discontented worker will contribute little or nothing to the overall institutional effort (Famade, 2002).

Manpower development

Manpower development has become an essential and necessary phenomenon in organizations. The reason being that manpower development is all about keeping employees current, vibrant and versatile to enable them perform their roles satisfactorily and effectively. Within the education sector, tertiary institutions in particular, development programmes for faculty members are considered very critical. This is because they are planned activities, which focuses on increasing and enlarging the capabilities, improving the technical and conceptual skills of lecturers so that they can possess the necessary abilities to handle complex situations and better perform their jobs. The need for the teaching personnel to improve their skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors while on the job is even more critical now than ever before. The faculty members need to keep abreast of the time and trends of knowledge development so as not to become obsolete and redundant. Emphasizing the importance of personnel training and development, Jones (1994) argued that manpower development of lecturers in tertiary institutions should be geared towards the acquisition of necessary skills required in performing

various obligations, tasks and functions associated with their expected roles.

Employees are always delighted whenever there are opportunities for them to enhance their skills and get additional learning opportunities sponsored by their organization. This helps them to learn, hone their skills and invariably feel indebted for the money spent on them by their employers; and felt obliged to perform better by applying all the knowledge gained during the course of the learning opportunities extended to them. Continuous learning is one of the best employee motivations for greater productivity. Investing in employees therefore help increase employee engagement and commitment to the organization.

The need for employers to invest in people and skills in their work cannot be over-emphasized. The more skills the personnel have, the more innovative they can be. They will also be more capable with new technology. Skilled workers generally require less supervision, accept more responsibility, and are better communicators.

Work environment

Work environment when appropriately designed, motivates employees towards higher productivity. What then, is a work environment? According to Opperman (2002), work environment is a composite of three major sub-environments: technical, human and organizational. Technical environment refers to tools, equipment, technological infrastructure and other physical/technical elements. The human environment refers to peers, others with whom employees relate, team and work groups, interactional issues, the leadership and management. Organizational environment includes systems, procedures, practices, values and philosophies.

A work environment can be conducive or toxic. Conducive work environment gives pleasurable experience to employees and enables them actualize their abilities and potentials. However, a toxic work environment gives unpleasant experiences and may de-actualize employees' behaviour. The factors that may bring about toxic work environment, according to Kyko (2005) are: opaque management, biased boss, company policies, working conditions, interpersonal relationships and pay.

There is the need for employers to create productive workplace cultures. A positive work environment motivates people and helps them commit to the organization. A well-organized workplace is able to get the best out of its workforce.

BUILDING LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY

Leadership effectiveness presupposes a clear vision about the way the organization should go. It is about

identifying new opportunities and inspiring the members/employees to pursue those opportunities.

Leadership behavior is a key determinant for production in an organization. Leadership is a behavioural characteristic that can either be acquired or inherited. The Trait Leadership theorist believes that leaders are born and not made. The basic idea behind the trait theorists is that leadership is an innate quality that a person possesses. So, it is this innate ability that propels efficient and superior performance on the part of the leaders. However, the behavioural theorists think otherwise. They believed that leaders are made because of certain behavioural characteristics they have internalized over the years. It is these behavioural tendencies that spur them to inspire their workers to greater productivity.

A good leader is an essential productivity factor, as they play critical role in defining the direction, purpose, priorities, goals and roles of the workforce.

CONCLUSION

An attempt was made in this paper to look critically at productivity and its impact on the entire workforce of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Tertiary institutions remain a critical institution in terms of the production of higher level manpower for national development.

Productivity enhancement in tertiary institutions could be promoted from two angles: through individual employee as well as the whole institution. The main strategy or tool of productivity improvement in tertiary institutions should include, but not limited to, personnel's motivation, manpower development, good and conducive work environment, and building leadership and management capability.

In addition to the above motivational strategies, regular payment of workers' salaries will go a long way to ensure optimum performance of the workforce.

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