

Effects of motivation and promotion on Nigerian civil servants

Abstract

Effort towards developing a motivated workforce for the purpose of improving productivity remains the single most crucial function of heads of institutions in recent times. Kreisman (2002) argues that the most valuable and volatile asset of any institution is a well-motivated and stable workforce which is competent, dedicated and productive. Interestingly, what motivates employees' changes constantly, explaining the dynamic nature of motivation, Kovach (1987) cites the example that as employees' income changes, money ceases to be a motivational factor; and as employees grow older, interesting work becomes a motivational factor by Homans (1950). Hence, the declaration by Lindner (2004) is justified to write that of all the functions a manager performs, motivating employees is the most complex, as employee motivation is a never ending challenge.

Promotion on merit is adopted by many organizations as a way of motivating their employees to perform better. It is seen as a fair method of rewarding those whose performance is considered exemplary and in the process encourages everyone to strive and perform better.

The underlying principle of merit promotion is the identification, qualification, evaluation and selection of candidates which will be made without regard to political, religious, labour organization, affiliation, marital status, race, colour, sex, national origin, non-disqualifying physical or mental handicap or age. Merit promotion shall be based solely on job related criteria in accordance with legitimate position requirements. The machinery to regulate appointments and promotion should attract and retain the best personnel as well as maintain the morale of civil servants. The procedure for promotion should be based on the criteria for merit (Wilson, 1994). According to Atoi (2011), job satisfaction is an emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job and attitude towards work. Mathis and Jackson (2004) maintain that job satisfaction is a position resulting from evaluating one's job experiences. Arnett et al. (2002) define job satisfaction as an employee's general affective evaluation of their job. Weiss (2002) argues that job satisfaction is an attitude which describes how content an individual is with their job.

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I. Motivation

Among the earliest and well-known researchers in the motivation domain were Homans (1950) and Maslow (1954). The former identified three key elements (activities, interactions and sentiments) as the controlling factors of members in an informal group. Homans (1950) defines activities as the task performed by the members of an informal group. He refers to interactions as the relationship among the members; and explains sentiments as the individual and collective attitudes of these members. Homans regards these three elements as independent because, according to him, a change in any one of them affects the other two elements. Maslow (1954) on the other hand developed the need-hierarchy theory. In his theory, Maslow postulated that people's (employees') needs are arranged in a hierarchy in which basic needs generally have to be satisfied before higher needs come to play. Maslow's idea did not escape criticisms and has hence been modified by other theorists notably Alderfer (1969) who introduced the idea of need along a continuum rather than in a hierarchy. Herzberg et al (1987) view motivation with different lenses. Their idea is today known as the Herzberg two-factor theory as it reduces the factors of motivation to two namely intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The former, which includes achievements and recognition, produces job satisfaction, whilst the latter comprising Pay and Promotion and job security is often a source of lack of motivation on the part of employees.

Correlation between motivation, promotion and job satisfaction

The term motivation has been defined variously by different authorities in the study of Psychology, Management and allied disciplines. According to Cole (2009), motivation is essentially about what drives a person to work in a particular way and with a given amount of effort. To Buford et al (1995), motivation is a pre-disposition to behave in a purposive manner to achieve specific needs. Obviously, there are divergences in these definitions, though some common threads seem to exist. What is common to the foregoing definitions, among others, is that something has to trigger an employee to perform in an exceptional way. Hence, motivation can be defined as a set of indefinite factors that cause a person (an employee) to perform his or her duties in a

special way. The factors are described as indefinite because they constantly change with time, as pointed out by Kovach (1987).

Job satisfaction is a general attitude towards one's job (Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn 1997; Robbins, 2001). Robbins (2001) asserts that promotions create the opportunity for personal growth, increased levels of responsibility and an increase on social standing. Similarly, the recognition which is a central point towards employee motivation honours an employee through appreciation and assigns a status at individual level in addition to being an employee of the organization.

Motivation is a process of satisfying employees' different needs and expectations; therefore, administrators have to be aware of and analyze those unique, individual needs. Administrators have the difficult task of actualizing performance above the current level of employees' and colleagues' performance. They have to increase employees' attention towards organizational targets and direct their behavior towards the achievement of corporate targets.

Promotions in civil service

An important reason that promotions are sources of incentives is worker reputation, or "career concerns" Suppose that a worker's ability is not publicly known, and the labor market pays wages based assessments of ability (reputation). If effort and ability are substitutes at producing output or ability signals, then the worker has an incentive to improve reputation by increasing effort. Often it is the worker's history of positions or promotions which provides the greatest evidence on productivity and potential (Waldman 1984). Thus promotions can play a key role in incentives, even when firms do not intend them to.

A second reason that promotions may be important motivators is that they can be self-enforcing incentive schemes (Malcomson 1984). Assume, for example, that the firm attaches wages to jobs, not to individuals, and fills slots by promoting the best performers. If this is done, then the firm's wage bill is fixed, regardless of who is promoted. In order for this system to provide incentives, the firm needs to credibly promote good performers rather than poor performers. Because the wage bill is fixed, the firm has no reason not to; thus, the incentive contract is self-enforcing.

Civil service motivation

Motivation describes a reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way. Typically a desire and willingness or enthusiasm is implied. It is these positive attributes that energise, direct and sustain the relevant behaviour. People are motivated by many different considerations to work for and in government. As noted by Perry and Hondeghem (2008), the public sector has traditionally offered some strong extrinsic motivators that might attract people, such as security of tenure, career and development opportunities and the pension system. Vandenabeele (2008) has also identified 'quality of life' as an attraction of public sector work, with people having the impression that the public sector affords better flexibilities for those combining work with family or other commitments. However, these extrinsic or rational considerations, which might lead a person to seek public sector employment lie outside what is widely understood by the terms 'public service motivation' (PSM). Rather PSM relates only to the notion that 'individuals are oriented to act in the public domain for the purpose of doing good for others and society' (Perry, Hondeghem and Wise, 2010).

Job motivation and Satisfaction in civil service

Civil service is confronted with growing demand to show its efficiency and cost effectiveness, resulting in an increased interest in the quality of its performance (Osborne and Gaebler 1992; cited in Vermeeren, Kuiper & Steijn 2005). Although the direct impact of promotion on performance or productivity has received relatively mixed reviews, its effect on turnover, absenteeism, citizenship behavior, and other organizational attitudes and behaviors is well established (Harrison 2006). A number of studies have found that civil service professional are less satisfied with their extrinsic rewards and task environment than those of their private counterparts (Cherniss & Kane, 1987; cited in McCue & Gianakis 1997).

McCue and Gianakis (1997) found that local government public finance officials appear to be satisfied with their job but dissatisfied with organizational system for recognizing and rewarding outstanding performance. They concluded that satisfaction is a function of correspondence between expectations, aspirations, needs, and the degree to which the organization fulfills these needs and matches the expectations and aspirations.

Performance appraisal in civil service

Performance appraisals provide the basis for making selection and promotion decisions, determining salary increases, and they are a vehicle for feedback between supervisors and employees (György, 2004; McCourt & Foon, 2007). Performance evaluation enables organizations to adjust with a view to improving on its services for the enhancement of its survival and growth. Furthermore, it helps management to ascertain whether

their organizations are improving, deteriorating or stagnant (Boyne et al., 2003). Gaster (2001) advances that the local approach, self-evaluation technique puts considerable emphasis on the workforce/organization to measure their work and the opportunity to reflect and learn from it. Performance appraisal may also have positive effects beyond the strict “mechanistic” effect on material motivation that of clarifying goals and having workers being aware of the importance of performing (Robinson, 2007). Robbins (2001) asserts that promotions create the opportunity for personal growth, increased levels of responsibility and an increase on social standing. Similarly, the recognition which is a central point towards employee motivation honors an employee through appreciation and assigns a status at individual level in addition to being an employee of the organization.

Effect on staff

Regardless of which theory is followed, good salaries, promotion, and Good working conditions appear to be important links to higher motivation of employees. An employee would not be motivated by good salaries if his/her colleagues receive high allowances when he/she does not. Such a condition has a spread effect on employees who feel they are caught in the inequity trap find no affection or love from the authorities; neither do they feel to belong to the civil service staff. Their presence is therefore is only influenced by the increasing unemployment situation in the country. Lukewarm attitude by such employees is obvious, and the damage their attitude can do to others cannot be under-estimated. It behooves the authorities to avoid any inequities in the reward system in order to maintain a high level of motivation among all staff.

However, government must be willing to design rewards systems that motivate the employees. While seeking to know what motivates employees; the authorities should also identify those factors that are likely to cause some dedicated employees to budge civil service. For example, an employee who is motivated by a high degree of appreciation of work done is likely to resign if whatever he/she does is met with contempt. Similarly, an individual who is motivated by Tactful discipline is likely to resign if he/she is not acknowledged for a good work done. It is important for the super-ordinates to motivate their subordinate staff by giving them feedback on their performance.

The authorities should further motivate their subordinates by treating them with dignity and respect, and by giving them recognition, which enhances their self-esteem, and encourage them to continue to work effectively and efficiently.

II. Conclusion and Implications

Promotion based on merit, increases staff motivation and teamwork if only conducted in fairness. Promotion on merit exercise was may not necessarily be a success in civil service ministries. Though promotion of civil servants is implemented by the public service commission, they believe the public service scheme on promotion is not uniform across the ministries. The commission is responsible for stagnation of employees at one level for too long. The civil service commission depends on information about performance appraisal results to promote their employees. This can be detrimental to a hardworking employee who may be appraised negatively.

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