

MOTIVATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In every organization, whether large or small, governmental or non-governmental, employees work enthusiastically or with zeal and cooperate amongst themselves and with the leadership to achieve the laid down objectives. This is primarily due to the job satisfaction they derive in the conduct of their routine activities. The local government system, within the so-called three tiers of governmental structure in Nigeria, is the neglected step-child in the entire governmental arrangement. The nexus between motivation and employees in the local government has been a neglected theme of study in Nigeria. In most cases, the condition of employment in the local governments has always been taken as given within the prevailing orthodoxy of governance. This paper therefore, attempts to explore the kinds of motivations which the employees of local government should be provided with: This is done within the context of institutional claims by these employers and how the validity of such claims, or the lack of it impact upon employees spirit and performance against set down goals, mission and vision of the organization.

Keywords: Local government, Employees, Nigeria

Introduction

In order to achieve a maximum output or productivity, employers in any organization should, as a matter of policy and necessity, motivate their staff. Motivation of staff is a highly relative matter since it varies in degrees, dimensions and places of employment. Thus, the policies formulated in any organization cannot be enthusiastically and successfully implemented when the employees are very apathetic with the conditions prevailing in their workplace. Hence, lack of motivation of employees in any organization is *sine qua non* to the failures in the achievement of the desired or designed goals or objectives. Invariably,

motivation is inextricably tied with job satisfaction and the employee's realization of his competence as well as the opportunity to apply new ideas. These issues, therefore, constitute the primary assumptions in this study and hence become the preconditions in achieving the laid down organizational objectives.

The condition of employment in Nigerian local governments is not fundamentally different from other organizations in the country. There should be comprehensive, attractive and tempting conditions of service, staff regulations and scheme of service in the local government system that are adequately comparable with relevant organizations in Nigeria, like job security and absence of all forms of job hazards. This is with a view to making the employees of the local governments not only motivated but also satisfied with the work they perform. Apart from these conditions, however, there should also exist workplace environmental requisites in forms of social amenities in the local governments to relatively attract, retain and amuse the employees. Transparent and transformational leadership in the local governments must be the strategic key in employee motivation and achievement of objectives.

Motivation: A Theoretical Perspective

Motivation of employees is one of the greatest challenges leaders are confronted within organisations. How are employees in organizations motivated to work as a team in order to achieve organizational goals? The role or importance of motivation must not be underestimated, particularly in the attainment of organizational objectives. Again, the links between motivation and organizational objectives as well as the roles leaders play are inseparable. In other words, leadership and motivation are intricately tied together. Different employees in different organizations are motivated differently with varied motivational devices by leaders who inspire them to act towards achieving organizational goals.

There are numerous theories of motivation. The expectancy impact on motivation, for instance, particularly McGregor's (1960) model, suggests that when employees are treated reasonably and well motivated, they will invariably act in a reasonable and motivated fashion. In Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation, recognition is placed more on the degree of individual's feelings in practically attaining or accomplishing the laid down target through the influence of motivation. With regard to the role of transformational leadership in motivation, employees are automatically inspired to achieve organizational goals beyond the set out frontiers due to the expectations of the leaders on the employees and indeed the belief of the leaders that employees are capable of achieving greater goals than

expected. The essential thing is to trust and repose confidence in the employees with a motivational stimulus of information thus using them wisely for the general good of the organization.

The Maslow's (1943) and Herzberg's (1968) job satisfaction theories emphasize how employees should be motivated in order to seek and achieve satisfaction in the workplace environment. These include how the existence of opportunities for achievement develops in organization; with enhanced job recognition and enlargement, responsibility of action, autonomy of decision, challenges and dynamics of the tasks as well as opportunities for growth and development. In addition, other aspects are addressed in the perspectives of how jobs are delegated, of course, with enhanced decentralization of authority. However, employees in organizations would need to be directly involved in meeting targets and challenges, breaking new frontiers, and therefore, contributing in fashioning new organizational vision, mission and values.

Social needs are affiliations of motivational theories as expressed by Maslow (1943), Mayo (1953) and McClelland (1971). All these theories show or express deep concern for the people with specific designs to motivate them towards self actualization and optimal organizational accomplishments. Leadership impacts on employees through mentoring and coaching are crucial. This also centers on team work and team spirit through the established learning process and acting collectively in the interest of the organization by all the stakeholders.

Social influences on motivation suggest that motivations are socially and culturally determined which leaders must not ignore. It should be stressed further that leadership and motivation are intrinsically connected with and dependent on each other. Another theory however, stresses the need for recognizing and motivating different people for different things. In other words, different categories of employees have different things with different motivational inclinations. In the process of motivating employees, only those things the workers value should be pursued to inspire them. Put differently, what will spur the employees' needs must be the cornerstone of every transformational leader if organizational objectives must be achieved. Thus, all those specifications of employees must be coordinated from their different perspectives as well as motivational traits in order to make the organizational work efficiently coordinated through sharing of information, with give-and-take scenarios as well as respect for employee differences and competencies.

Whereas some employees are less internally energetic to drive others and also less in need for growth, there are, however, other employees with high level of energy and

propensity to drive others and satisfy the desires of the workplace environment. Furthermore, employees can be motivated externally even though the greatest motivational stimulus is generated within the organization. Leaders, more often than not, enhance employees' motivational psyche by the way they are treated and valued.

Local Government Staff and Condition of Service in Nigeria

In every state of the Nigerian federation, Local Government Service Board/Commission (LGSB/C) has been duly established and constituted (Nigeria, 1976). Thus, staff in the local government service are employed by the LGSB except for a specific number and cadre who are directly employed by the local governments concerned. In other words, local governments in Nigeria are delegated to exercise certain powers, on behalf of the Board, with regard to staff appointments, transfers, postings, discipline, dismissal, etc. of the specified cadre of employees in the system.

The establishment of the LGSB/C was sequel to predicaments within which the local government employees found themselves over a long period of time. The LGSB/C was, therefore, established, among other factors, to relatively separate employees of the service from the conventional public service structure with a view to distinctively motivating and developing them. The functions of the Board and the powers to execute the functions are all enshrined in the 1976 Guidelines for Local Government Reforms as well as other enactments made thereafter by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and respective State Governments (Nigeria, 1976). Hence, the LGSB is empowered to perform the following responsibilities:

- (a) Employment, posting, discipline of all members of the local government service.
- (b) Delegation or internal postings within the local government areas
- (c) Delegation of disciplinary matters to establishment committees of local government with the right to appeal to the LGSB.
- (d) Capacity and method to organize, consult and advise the Directorate for Local Government Affairs in all matters relating to Local Government Establishment, Conditions of Service, etc. (Nigeria, 1976)

In Nigeria, there is the general perception which justifies the non existing future prospects for employees of local government due to the poor condition of service in the system. It is further perceived that the local government system is an institution where the old, the unskilled and unprofessional employees constitute the main labour force. The local

government system is, therefore, considered as an organization where it is totally under the whims and caprices of the traditional nobility, and that semi feudal settings which, more often than not, operate side by side with the official civil service regulations. It is nevertheless not surprising that a career pursuit in the local government service had not for a long time been contemplated by the young and highly educated Nigerians.

Motivational factors in job situation in Nigerian local government system as well as the relationship between morale and productivity have, therefore, produced some kinds of barriers, overtime, that have continued to keep employees in apathy and despair. In most cases, factors that influence job satisfaction and performance in the local government system have become a mirage. Since productivity is a product of convergence and interaction of personal and organizational goals, the accomplishment of one goal automatically accomplishes the other. A positive motivational climate in the local government system has to exist in order to bring about positive job satisfaction, job feeling and associated job commitment on the part of the employees.

Despite all the negative features which have continued to characterize the Nigerian local governments, the contemporary Nigerian local government system is, perhaps, to a large extent, guilty of most of the previous shortcomings. The number of educated, competent young Nigerians taking up careers in the local government service is not very encouraging. Since the reforms on local government, most graduates still loathe the idea in taking up appointments with local governments, because of the *unattractiveness* in the career of the local government service, primarily due to lack of motivation of employees.

It should be stated that the effective and efficient performance of local government councils depends, to a large extent, on the productive capacity, quality and adequacy of the employees. These are in turn commensurate with the expenditure used in maintaining them. The bulk of the local government recurrent expenditures is always portrayed as being utilized as administrative overhead; as personal emoluments in form of salaries and allowances. Whereas the Establishment Committees of the local governments deal with the appointments, disciplines, dismissal, etc of the permanent but junior and intermediate staff, the LGSB is, therefore, directly involved with matters relating to the exercise of control over the approval of appointments and dismissals or termination of senior and management staff.

A major weakness of the local governments has always been focused on the sources of revenue without due consideration on the conditions and capacities of the staff. Hence, personnel weakness in the local government as regards general lack or inadequacy of sufficient number of trained staff has constituted serious threats to face the very challenges in

the local government. This endemic problem has therefore, made the operation of the local government not only difficult but impossible. All these have direct correspondence with revenue base, job satisfaction and commitment that can be attained by deliberate managerial strategy to motivational factors.

The employees of the local governments, like others in public organizations, are the public personnel whose responsibilities are to successfully implement the laid down policies. Therefore, for a local government to function effectively and efficiently, its employees have to be involved in the entire processes of the formulation and execution of policies. Furthermore, the successful execution of the functions of the local government would have to be measured in terms of the staff motivation and commitment to duty. These motivation and commitment to duty can only come about and be achieved if the local government is administered by motivated, highly qualified, competent, dedicated and experienced staff who are also reputed for their sense of integrity and commitment to their assigned responsibilities.

Accordingly, if there is a sufficient number of the desired staff in the local government with all the necessary infrastructural facilities to work with, they should, at least, be in a position to comfortably provide basic or necessary services to the community. The questions are why is it that despite the various attempts to reform the system of local government in Nigeria, the problem confronting the system still remains? Do high morales in organizations necessarily mean employees in the organizations will be highly productive with goals achieved? Part of the answer lies precisely on the inability of the local governments to attract and employ, let alone retain, a competent caliber of staff, while at the same time, the existing staff have not been motivated enough to remain in the service for effective service delivery. This inability of the local governments to motivate the existing staff has its multiplier and detrimental consequences on the morale and effectiveness of the staff. There are, however, other important factors demoralizing employees of local governments.

Motivation and Local Government Employees in Nigeria

Motivation of local government employees should begin with a complete package or provision of enhanced working environment contained in the local government staff regulations and condition of service. Consideration should also be taken as regards the operating or existing scheme of service for the local government as well as other provisions made from time to time, which affect the entire public service of the Nigerian federation. This is with a view to bridging certain gaps and correcting anomalies between the local government and conventional public services. Apart from the official provisions, local

governments should also take into consideration the desperate needs and peculiarities of the employees with a view to achieving twin objectives simultaneously, viz: sensitizing the employees to put in their optimal output or productivity as well as making the people practically benefit from the services provided by the local government.

Since the local government service has demonstrably been characterized by ineffectiveness and inefficiency with corruption and other forms of mismanagement, this picture is hardly removed when viewed from the financial resources placed at their disposal compared with the level and degree of performances. Hence, despite the huge amount of funds poured on local governments, overtime, empirical achievements in various sectors of local government activities have not been plausibly remarkable, especially on the physical and living conditions of the communities. Invariably, the basic functions which the local governments are expected to execute have only remained lamentably elusive. That is why the term *local government* has always depicted bad or negative psychological feelings and perceptions among the generality of the people in Nigeria as a *government* where virtually nothing in the system functions properly.

Employee expectations in the local government system are largely directed towards specific motivational incentives in the workplace environment. Thus, when there are attractive working conditions, they, nevertheless, become the motivating forces and drivers to satisfy employees to achieve the local government organizational goals. In other words, incentives put at the disposal of the local government employees provide them with a rare window of opportunity to satisfy both their official and personal motives and purposes in self-actualization with efficiency and effectiveness in output or productivity.

At this point, it is necessary to focus on some fundamental issues in motivating local government employees. The first issue is therefore on recruitment or appointment of staff of the local government. In most cases, the recruitment of employees into the local government service in Nigeria is usually based on patronage. Thus, only persons with necessary *connections*, in one way or the other, are favoured. It is pertinent to note that a lot of struggle exists amongst the officials of the state and Local Governments in the sharing or allocation of quotas within themselves whenever vacancies exist in the local governments. Jobs are largely secured by those related to the political elites or political party in power on the one hand and those who are susceptible to provide services or are likely to be the praise singers on the other. Skills or competence are mostly sacrificed or jettisoned.

Hence, this *mixed grill* kind of recruitment in the local government composed of the so-called *sons of the soil* and others bring serious *disaffections* and conflicts as each group feels

protected by the god-fathers. These categories of staff, more often than not, frustrate others and invariably jeopardize the activities of the local government because they have access to the *power house*. This kind of action usually constitutes a serious demoralizing effect on other employees of the local governments. Since the recruitment system in the local governments is all characterized by all sorts of political malpractice, god-fatherism and personal mischief, employees of the local governments cannot, therefore, be expected to have the essential or needed motivational attitudes to work and achieve designed objectives.

A very closely related issue on recruitment of staff in the local governments is the evolution of inter-service transfer popularly known as secondment. As far as local governments are concerned, staff secondment has largely been a lopsided matter. In the Nigerian local government circles, it is expressed that the practice of seconding staff to local governments from the public service has an immense impact on the entire system of local government. In the first place, loyalty, sincerity and commitment of the seconded staff are seriously questioned. Secondly, the morale or motivation of the serving local government employees is adversely reversed since they see the seconded staff as threats to the positions which the local government employees aspire or the vested interest they usually protect and project.

The poor or weak managerial activity and inefficiency in the local governments cannot be expected to boost the morales of their employees when the policy or practice of transfer of staff and posting conflicts with personal mischief, aggrandizement and accumulation of wealth. When staff are transferred in order to give space for the preferred, when staff are promoted without due consideration to seniority, dedication to duty and achievement of objectives, it is very certain that the motivational spirits of the local government employees will be weakened. This is in view of the fact that such employees who perform satisfactorily are not usually commended and rewarded. The result is that the affected staff will completely be demoralized and hence impossible for the local government to retain any person in its service let alone attract others of higher caliber.

In order for the local governments to achieve their objectives, they should, as a matter of deliberate policy, motivate their employees to carry out the functions assigned to them. This motivation should also be in forms of prompt payments of salaries, capacity building and other forms of compensations. To attract and retain high caliber of employees into the local government service, it is imperative to offer them attractive salaries and other conditions of service which are comparable or commensurate with the ones prevailing in the Nigerian public sector with regard to qualifications, experience and grade level. However, there has to

be an adequate and regular update of infrastructural facilities and other personal emoluments as motivation devices. Prevailing circumstances indicate that local governments cannot promptly pay staff salaries let alone issue out other allowances. All these trends in the local government system must be addressed and resolved.

Notwithstanding the role of local government in the development of human and material resources, their contribution to the overall development process, especially in capacity building and other motivational methods or devices have not been striking to attract and retain quality employees. For instance, there is no challenging job in the local government that provokes or inspires the feelings of the employees' achievement, responsibility, growth and satisfaction with, of course, corresponding earned recognition from the superior officers that can be associated with motivating the employees' productivity. Thus, there should exist, in the local governments, organic relationships between the superior officers and subordinate employees as well as the needed transformational and inspirational leadership that can influence and determine the extent to which motivational factors can be expressed in job situations; irrespective of monetary and non-monetary incentives on employees.

It should be recalled that the Federal Government issued an explicit directive stating that each local government must make appointment as and when required subject to proven need and due budgetary process. However, the ability of the local government to pay its staff without jeopardizing its capacity to undertake development projects and provide the essential services for which it was established should not be compromised. It should be stressed that salaries and allowances paid promptly to employees are not enough to motivate and raise their morales. Added to these also is the provision of material resources. Therefore, the procurement, utilization and management of material resources to work within the local government services; for example, office tools and equipment, stationary items, office and house furniture, vital parts for general maintenance and repairs, means of transportation and communication, etc. are very crucial to motivate the employees and give them the necessary job satisfaction.

Since the local government service comprises and embraces a variety of professional cadres with a wider range of professional interests and articulations, it is crucial to emphasise that motivation of those employees is very complex because it must depend on, among others, the job satisfaction of the different components of the professions in the local government system. Therefore, improvement of the conditions of service and inducements rendered to the *employees* of the local governments must be matched with and reinforced by job satisfaction

as well as other opportunities necessary for the employees to realize their competence and expertise in the service. This is with a view to identifying themselves with the objectives of the local governments they serve as well as attracting and retaining new qualified entrants. Furthermore, it should be stressed that:

Job satisfaction is not simply dependent on the reward system of the organization. It is indeed related to the officer's subjective assessment of his contribution to the development of the organization. In local government, job satisfaction can be attained if condition of service allows for discretionary power, for initiative and for creativity (Kumo&Aliyu, 1979:57).

Whereas paragraph 37 of the Guidelines for Local Government Reform of 1976 provides that uniform salary scales should prevail in all the three tiers of government civil service, the material problem has been the deficiency or lack of a comprehensive package of local government scheme of service. This problem has led to a poor career progression of the local government employees. This consequently depressed employees' morale and therefore, reduced their productivity and efficiency in self actualization and achievement of the laid down objectives. Local government organizational situations should be specifically guided by well developed and enhanced motivational designs and programmes where the employee performance to achieve institutional objectives is strategically directed toward achieving or indeed accomplishing the goal in the local government workplace environment.

In 1988, for instance, the national scheme of service for the local governments was introduced by the federal government. In spite of this development, expectations in the local governments have not matched the *fire-brigade* policy since the same debilitating effects have continued to feature prominently in the local governments. Invariably, staff pension scheme is inherently part of the scheme of service but the employees who finally disengage from service still find it difficult to receive their rightful retirement benefits from the Pension Commission (PENCOM). This development does not bring an encouraging spirit in the motivation of employees. Local governments should use this issue to strategically propel the motivational instincts and induce their employees as a good design to attract and retain them by removing all those bottlenecks.

Another important area, which brings about mental and physical inertia of the local government employees, is the lack of adequate recreational and sporting facilities necessary to energise and motivate them. In most of the local governments, this is one of the factors that dehumanizes and retards the thinking ability of the employees and contributes negatively to the performance and achievement of duties and objectives respectively. Leadership in the local governments should look seriously into this issue.

Side by side with these recreational activities are the entire welfare schemes in the local governments. These welfare schemes should include housing for the staff, functional clinic to address their medical care, staff cafeteria, loan schemes, etc. Welfare schemes operated in the local governments will, in no small measure, motivate employees since they will not be completely deprived of the amenities available in the cities. Furthermore, career pursuits in the local government for many educated Nigerians will no longer be dull. Again, trade union activities should be allowed to operate with a view to stimulating employees and sensitizing them on their rights and privileges so as to develop healthy relationships with the authorities of the local governments.

Another central issue surrounding the motivation of local government employees is formal and informal training. It is, therefore, in realization of the value of trained and skilled manpower and how this essential commodity can be practically utilized for productive output in the provision of services, that most or all local governments concentrate and emphasise on the training of the local government staff. Since there is a great need to improve the qualifications and quality of local government staff, the objectives of staff training would be to:

- (a) Raise the minimum educational standards of the local government staff for the requirements in the local government service.
- (b) Improve the status and quality of the local government staff
- (c) Introduce equal pay in comparable posts in the civil service.
- (d) Improve on the performance of the local government staff in discharging their functions(administrative, professional and technical staff).

Formal training of the local government employees is, therefore, aimed at enhancing their capacity and sharpening their awareness as well as managing the delivery of services and resources. This form of training also includes induction courses for all the cadres of new entrants into the service to familiarize them with the structure, functions and organization of the system. Another form of training is the refresher courses geared towards keeping the employees abreast with the current developments in the various fields of activities relevant to their work. However, short seminars, conferences and workshops may be mounted for the political and policy decision makers in the local governments aimed at awakening their thinking capabilities. Other specific seminars may also be arranged for the management cadre, for example, the Councilors, Heads of Department, Secretaries, etc of the local governments.

It is ironic to observe that the bulk of those selected for training in the local governments has been in the administration and finance sectors. Other employees like teachers, nurses and the likes are, in most cases, completely left on their own. There cannot be any magical transformation of any organization without the strategic training of its staff. This training should, as a matter of deliberate policy, be a continuous process of all the categories of local government employees. In this process, the local governments should draw up training programmes/schedules for all the staff so that each employee is designed to attend relevant training. Training funds and other entitlements should be paid without unnecessary delays. Again, the institution of local government should be administered without unnecessary bureaucratic practices to reduce menace of corruption. After a successful training, staff should be commended and a practical evidence of fair placement (promotion) be accompanied.

Motivated local government employees will always be satisfied, happy and zealously ready to be engaged in any challenging task the the organization places on them. Employees will therefore, strive to achieve such organizational objectives based on the degree of motivation categorized into physical, socio-economic and psychic dimensions (Kazmier, 1981:331). Thus, anything that contributes to the physical wellbeing, comfort and security of the employee has a direct relevance to this dimension. In addition, the socio-economic dimension of employees' motivation relates to the nature in which workers establish and maintain friendly relationship with their boss and colleagues. This also includes acceptability and friendly association that the employees enter with other groups in the environment with jobs being assigned based on competence. In this regard, the degrees of perception and aspirations of the employees are vital in the motivational dynamics of the employees which, invariably, influence the employees' productivity. However, the psychic dimension of motivation of employees is a specific or peculiar category related to employees' self-worth, appreciation or understanding of their capabilities and skills. This is a situation whereby the employees feel proud and concerned to put corrective measures in the wrong things done in the organization. All these are therefore, hinged on the employees' inclination and determination to accomplish worthwhile job, help others and work with minimal supervision to accomplish set targets.

Conclusion

Motivation of employees is both a prerequisite condition for any organization to achieve its objectives and greatness. In the local governments, however, due to the dearth of

the required number of competent personnel, appropriate policy guidelines and infrastructural facilities, it is difficult, if not impossible, to motivate employees in the local government service. It is, therefore, imperative to motivate the existing staff with a view to achieving the primary aim and objectives of local governments. As such, certain facilities should be provided to energise the commitment of the staff so as to satisfactorily perform their assigned jobs. The continuous training of local government employees cannot be overstressed. This training, however, will enable local governments to eliminate waste and redundancy in the utilization of human resources. It will further make the local governments conveniently draw up job description, job enlargements and specifications for the various levels and categories of the employees. With trained and motivated local government employees, local governments will achieve not only effective utilization of all the available manpower resources at their disposal, but at the same time achieve the primary objectives of improving the living and physical conditions of the communities. All these can be realized when there exist inspiring and transformational leaders, with commitment to provide selfless service.

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