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**Human Resources Management in
the Local Government System in
Nigeria**

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Management in the Local Government System
in NigeriaFab. O. Onah

Introduction

It is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine an organization that is not composed of human beings. An organization is, in its most elementary form, a system of co-operative human activities (Barnard, 1938). Individuals create organizations to accomplish specific purposes. In turn, the organization attracts other individuals who wish to become members so they can satisfy their needs for money, interesting work, personal recognition, and so forth.

Ideally, the organization should accomplish all of its objectives, and its members should satisfy all of the needs that have drawn them to it. However, this ideal is rare if ever attained. For instance, it is ordinarily not feasible to promote every member of the organization, even though almost everyone wants a promotion. For this reason, motivation is important in an organization. Motivation basically means an individual's needs, desires, and concepts that cause him or her to act in a particular manner. It is the manager's task to direct individuals so they can satisfy their needs as much as possible while they strive to accomplish the objectives of the organization.

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describe the actual factors motivating an individual, such as pay and interesting work. However, sometimes, it is possible to classify a particular theory as both process and content in nature, as the distinction between them is not always clear-cut.

Other authors distinguish between needs theories and cognitive theories. Needs theories describe the specific needs that an individual possesses which propel him to pursue a particular course of action; for example, the desire for interesting work, pay and fringe benefits. Cognitive theories emphasize practical purposes. Content theories and needs theories are interchangeable; the same position can be taken for process and cognitive theories. We have adopted a fused approach in this chapter.

Motivating Staff for Effectiveness

Motivation can be defined as the forces that cause people to behave in certain ways. The student who stays up all night to ensure that his term paper is the best it can be, the salesman who works on Saturday to get ahead, and the Doctor who makes follow-up phone calls to his or her patients to check on their conditions are all motivated. Of course, the student who avoids her term paper by spending the day at the beach and the salesman who goes home early to escape a tedious sales call are all motivated. They are simply motivated to achieve different types of things than the first three. From the manager's viewpoint, the objective is to motivate people to believe in ways that are in the organization's best interest.

One of the manager's primary task is therefore to motivate people in the organization to perform at high levels. This means getting them to work hard, to be at work regularly, and to make positive contribution to the organization's mission. But the job performance depends on the ability and environment as well as motivation. The relationship can be stated as follows.

$$P = f(M, A \text{ and } E)$$

Where P = Performance

M	=	Motivation
A	=	Ability
E	=	Environment

To reach high levels of performance, according to Moorhead and Griffin (1989), an employee must want to do the job (motivation), be able to do the job (ability) and have the right materials to do the job (environment). A deficiency in any of these areas will hurt performance. A manager should thus strive to ensure that all three of these conditions are met (Vroom, 1964).

Theories of motivation are numerous. But central in all the theories is the need issue. Current thinking on motivation rests on the concepts of need deficiencies and goal-directed behaviours. Human beings come to the workplace with their individual needs. A need is accomplished by a state of drive and tension that results in a behaviour being directed towards a goal that will satisfy the need and thus reduce the drive or tensions. In the first category of needs are the physiological needs including hunger, thirst, rest, etc. There are other higher needs like friendship, status, achievement, challenging job, etc. The key to the understanding of human behaviour is on understanding of the human needs which most of the time differ from one individual to the other.

In order to motivate people to put in their maximum efforts, it is essential that these needs be satisfied as far as practicable. The implication of this, as many writers feel, is that no one object or item can serve as a perfect motivator. For instance, pay alone has been proved not to be an effective motivator of good performance. For practical purpose, the following and their combinations are ways of motivating employees at work.

(i) **Competitive Salaries**

The need to satisfy the basic needs is very relevant in developing countries, especially Nigeria of this time. There is no doubt in the

writer's mind that in Nigeria, wages and salaries with a competitive character has a huge motivating element. There is a limit to which salaries could be increased given the harsh economic environments within which organizations exist in Nigeria., but, it should be remembered that these employees depend heavily on the salaries and that they also exist under harsh economic environments. Competitive salary is a potent source of motivation. It can influence action and encourage extra effort. Moreover, if the project requires that staff put in extra hours, they should be compensated for those hours.

(ii) Clarification of Project Goals and Objectives

The project objectives (both long-term and immediate) should be made very clear to project staff. This will enable them to appreciate the objectives and begin to associate themselves with them. When staff are unsure of what the objectives are, they are unlikely to put in their best. This is especially so in Nigeria, where the level of patriotism is low. In some local governments, regular and career staff are no longer used for the jobs they are employed for. Rather, sycophants and touts are all over the place. This makes staff uncertain of what the objectives and directions are.

(iii) Working Materials

The provision of adequate working material does a lot in respect of employee motivation. These include ultra-modern equipment, uniforms, befitting office paraphernalia, conveniences, etc. They relate to and are all part of the working environment. The absence of some of these can cause frustration and negative work attitude. Some extreme conditions exist in some local governments where many staff do not even have desks. What zeal will the worker have to attend work regularly.

(iv) Promotion and Staff Advancement

Employees want to see a change for better in their place of work. A

nurse would like to become a staff nurse. The prefix 'senior' is always desirable even if the financial implication is insignificant. Thus, workers enjoy to be called for instance, senior cleaner, senior nurse, senior technical assistant, etc. Promotion brings along with it not just more money but more recognition of the individual's performance. Consequently, in order to justify this recognition, the employees promoted put in more efforts in their work. Promotion and advancement put new life in the individual and activate his knowledge, skills, etc. He feels challenged and in consequence, strives harder to be effective in his new job.

(v) Delegation of Authority and Responsibility

It does no harm for managers to delegate authorities to subordinates. A number of managers have the irrational fear (phobia) delegating responsibilities because they believe, sometimes wrongly, that their subordinates will not be able to do the jobs. From time to time, it is good to allow staff of sufficient seniority to perform some functions which belong to management, but, which are not strictly of professional nature. Such actions throw challenges to staff and give the impression that their worth is being recognised.

(vi) Periodic Discussion with Staff Members

Management should make it a routine to hold discussions with staff jointly and individually, periodically. During such discussions, management is afforded the opportunity to gain insight in the problems of the staff and the individual in particular. It is from such that the right incentives can be determined. Employees, as we have earlier indicated, have different problems that militate against their performance. It could arise from strained relationship between supervisors and subordinates; it could be personal family problems; career problems; health problems, etc. The solution to these problems, if provided, makes the staff feel confident in the organization and its goals.

People are different and must be treated differently. In treating people differently, especially with regards to their needs, one must understand them as individuals. It is also necessary to appreciate their abilities, goals and interest. Unless this is done, through private chats, management may be employing the wrong incentives and the desired results would be far fetched.

(vii) Welfare Schemes

Staff welfare scheme is generally a park of incentives which shows an organization's concern for the whole quality of working life of its employees and an identification at ensuring employee well-being (Adjileye, 1992). Staff welfare schemes involve the best ways which identification with the Local Government can be achieved by an employee and his family. Some of these schemes include:

- ◆ eating and recreational facilities;
- ◆ medical and health facilities;
- ◆ transportation and accommodation facilities;
- ◆ training and development opportunities;
- ◆ pensions and gratuity;
- ◆ communication and encouragement of inter-personal relationship;
- ◆ prompt management show of concern and involvement in the event of employee demise or the demise of a close one.

Equity

One of the advanced concepts concerning motivation is equity. First articulated by Adams (1963: 422-436), equity theory is based on the simple premise that people want to be treated fairly. The theory defines equity as the belief that we are being treated fairly in relation to others. It is an important factor in social comparisons which involves evaluation of our own situation in the context of the situation of others.

An employee who perceives that there is equity in management's

actions and processes feels motivated and maintains current situation and is in high spirit. On the other hand, if inequity is perceived, there is the motivation to reduce inequity by changes in inputs, outcomes and alterations in perception of self and others.

For managers, the most important implication of equity relates to organizational rewards and reward system. It also has to do with punishment. Rewards should be extended to all employees if in the management's eye, they have contributed positively towards the goals of the organization. On the other hand, punishment, if necessary, should be meted to staff who infringe the regulations fairly and consistently. Everyone in the organization needs to understand the basis for the rewards or punishment. If people are to be rewarded more for high quality work than for quantity of work, the fact needs to be clearly communicated.

Conclusion

All activities of an organization such as the Local Government Council are initiated and determined by the persons that make up that organization. Plants, offices, computers, automated equipment, and all that a modern organization uses are unproductive except for human effort and direction.

Human beings design or order the equipment; they decide where the technology is employed; they secure the capital needed and decide on the accounting and fiscal procedures to be used. Every aspect of the Local Government activities is determined by the competence, motivation, and general effectiveness of its human organization. Of all the tasks of management, managing the human component is the central and most important task, because all else depends upon how well it is done. It is only a well-articulated personnel management policies based on the understanding of the full knowledge of man in the organization, his attitudes, values and interests, that can ensure the success and impact of projects.

To get the best out of a staff, the manager has to understand him.

Needs and abilities are never the same for different individuals. Incentives should also be based on that understanding. Employees remain motivated so long as their needs at different levels are met, and so long as they perceive equity in the administration of rewards and punishment. Finally, staff should not be left in doubt of the objectives and benefits of any project on the ground. If staff understand these properly, the likelihood of their identifying themselves with the Local Government will be high. This would in turn make for their effectiveness and productivity.

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