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Effective Motivation of Paraprofessional Staff in Academic Libraries In Nigeria

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Introduction

Most libraries have a mission to offer a high quality service to all of their customers. The performance of paraprofessional staff determines to a large extent the quality of the customer satisfaction and has a significant impact on the contribution that libraries can make to their communities. They have a major role to play in achieving the objectives of the library. Rowley (1996) states that staff are a key resource and account for a significant component of the budget of libraries.

Paraprofessional staff are the chief agents in customer service and frequently act as the interface with the customer. Consequently, their motivation is crucial in determining the quality of this interface. Motivation, then, is critical in the establishment and further development of quality service. It would appear as if money, and more money, is what workers ever ask, recently, the Federal Government announced an upward review of the minimum wages in the civil service. Almost, immediately after the announcement, there was a nation-wide agitation by workers in the states and local government bureaucracies to benefit from the largesse.

There is a general notion that if only management can identify other things that can motivate the workforce apart from money, perhaps there will be a dramatic reduction in the demand by workers for pay rise because money only plays the role of common denominator of all things. Less time will be spent on the annual ritual of management/workers union negotiation meetings.

This paper argues that the effective manager needs to recognize that different motivators are appropriate for different staff and that different staff will demonstrate differing inherent levels of motivation in setting their own targets and striving towards them.

Good management consists of recognizing and working with those individual differences. Motivation has continuously been an area of interest to managers of different types of organizations including profit and nonprofit based organizations

Statement of the Problem

It is imperative to recognize that factors that affect the library employee as an individual can impact his or her performance as a service provider as well. Motivation is key to librarians as to any other profession.

Various criticisms have been leveled against the Nigerian workers. Fashina (1984) observed that despite the various demands of Nigerian workers for better conditions of service, the situation still remains the same. Nigerian workers are still performing very much below expectations. Workers productivity remains below average, morale is still low. This criticism may have risen from the out dated belief that the Nigerian worker does not nurse any sense of commitment to his job.

The inherent problem identified is that many employers have attempted several programs to motivate their employees, yet they have not worked for every category of staff in the library. Aziagba (2009) therefore emphasized that it is high time to stress on staff development with a view to improving library services as a whole.

In view of this, this study attempts to identify the key factors of motivation for paraprofessional library staff.

Significance of the Study

The study will be useful in explaining the meaning and underlying concept of motivation, useful for management of higher institutions and establishments responsible for reviewing and updating policies and legislation. The paper will attempt to proffer answers to the question of what to do to adequately motivate workers to contribute their optimal quota to their library's productivity and growth.

Finally, it is expected that this study will serve as a basis for improved working relationship between management of the organization and staff.

Who is a Paraprofessional?

In 1970, the American Library Association (ALA) adopted a policy statement that categorized and described the responsibilities of library personnel at the professional and support levels. This document reinforced the concept of the library paraprofessional.(Makinen and Speer 1993). The term paraprofessional designates library positions with entrance-level requirements that are distinctly different from those of librarians.

They are also known as library officers. They commonly perform their duties with some supervision by a librarian. Oberg (1992) defines paraprofessional library staff as personnel classified as library assistants, associates, technicians, and technical assistants. Examples of paraprofessional position titles include: interlibrary loan assistant, catalog assistant, periodicals supervisor, reference assistant, etc. A paraprofessional is a trained worker who is not a member of a profession but who assists a professional.

Motivation and Behaviour Modification of Workers

The word motivation is derived from motiv, which is an active form of a desire, craving or need, which must be satisfied .It is a common phenomenon often talked about by people in any given organization. Allan , Gadon and Willits (2001) define motivation as an inner state of mind that causes a person to behave in a way that endures the accomplishment of stated goals. To them motivation is something which impels a person to act, a reason of behavior. They further stated that motivation is not manipulation of people but understanding of needs, wages which prompt people to do things.

There is need for an understanding of the fundamental drives, urges, needs and desires of the peoples which can be manipulated and stimulated and a sense of

communication and methodology that would provide stimulation to these urges. Some of the methods used for this purpose may be the provision of financial incentive, cordial working environment, challenging work and responsibility, personal accomplishment, recognition for such accomplishment and an opportunity for growth and advancement.

Halepota (2005) conceives motivation as a person's active participation and commitment to achieve the prescribed results. He averts that the concept of motivation is an abstract construct because different strategies produce different results at different times and there is no single strategy that can produce guaranteed favorable results all the times.

It can be observed from the above that motivation in general, is more or less basically concerned with factors or events that moves, leads, and drives certain human action or inaction over a given period of time given the prevailing conditions. Furthermore the definitions suggest that there needs to be an invisible force to push people to do something in return.

Motivation and Performance

Human motivation studies aim to discover what it is that triggers performance. Cole (1996) opines that motivation is the term used to describe those processes, both instinctive and rational by which people seek to satisfy their basic drives, perceived needs and personal goals which trigger performance .

Motivation is a human psychological characteristic that contributes to a person's degree of commitment. It is very important in the consideration of the performance and output of employees in organizations. Motivation is essential to organizational effectiveness and is a predictor for performance of employees (Stoner, 2002)

Many organizations want their employees to perform to the best of their abilities, yet motivation remains a difficult factor to manage. Mullins (1999) observed that employees' aspirations and target do not always match with what their employer can provide. It has been suggested that proper motivation can significantly influence the attitude of workers towards their jobs and hence affect the performance of such employees on the job. For employers who successfully motivate their staff, it often translates to less absenteeism and turnover, greater satisfaction and commitment and ultimately higher productivity or performance in the work place.

There is need to understand why people choose to perform satisfactorily; why some people appear to be committed to their jobs and others are often absent. There is also need to find out what rewards and incentives individuals value so that where possible, it could be provided. People are usually willing to work harder when they expect to benefit by doing so.

In other words, people exert effort when the effort help them meet some personal needs. Commitment is a product of motivation (Stoner 2002). Obisi (1996) stated that human resources being the major essential element of an enterprise need to be handled with care, for they are the key to higher productivity. One of the basic and major needs in any organization is to evaluate its employee's performance continually to find out whether they improve or not .

Types of Motivation

There are basically two types of motivation, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation: this motivation is induced by external factors which are primarily financial in nature. These incentives and reward have been a subject of debate, whether they really motivate the employees or simply move them to work. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), the term, "extrinsic motivation" is the

attainment of a separable outcome from the performance of an activity. Extrinsic motivation encourages staff to complete their task in order to receive the reward. In other words, rewards motivate people to get rewards.

Intrinsic motivation: this involves the performance of an activity for the inherent satisfaction of the activity. Intrinsic motivation is personal, “internal” responses, such as satisfaction or pride in an accomplishment. Intrinsic motivation is synonymous with a desire to work hard solely for the pleasure of task accomplishment. According to mallaiah and Yadapadithaya (2009), compliments, public recognition, and professional opportunities are motivators and can be as effective as extrinsic rewards such as monetary reward and gifts. Intrinsic motivation results from an individual’s need to be competent and self-determined irrespective of possible external rewards.

Extrinsic vs Intrinsic Motivation for Paraprofessionals

Luthans and Stajkovic (1999) observed that recognition and attention may have as strong an impact on performance as pay. Their research indicated that extrinsic rewards can undermine an individual’s intrinsic motivation. Herzberg (2003), and Frey (1997) emphasized that the values and the mission of an organization are an important source of motivation. In the same line of argument, Almer, Higgs and Hooks (2005), and Etzioni (1988) all argue that there are factors other than pay that motivate individuals to work in organizations.

Contrary to the latter, Olorunsola & Bamijoko (2005) suggest that extrinsic motivators such as good pay, retirement benefits, overtime allowances, and good working conditions are often significant factors to attract and retain best people and cannot be ignored. They further stressed that extrinsic rewards encourage risk taking and make people do extraordinary things.

Abimbola (1997) in his investigation of the level of motivation among librarians and para-professionals in Nigerian university libraries reveal a general dissatisfaction with training opportunities, professional development, work environment, sabbatical leave, communication, and management style.

In all, Rewarding excellent work is essential to reinforce and maintain employee motivation.

Maslow’s Hierarchy Of Needs

For the purpose of this paper, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs would be adopted. Abraham H. Maslow [1943] a professor at Brandeis University was dubbed as the Father of Humanist Psychology He based his theory on the idea that individuals work to satisfy human needs, such as food and complex psychological needs such as self-esteem. He coined the term Hierarchy of Needs to account for the roots of human motivation.

He came out with an exciting treatise on needs of the individuals, he pointed out that motivation depends on the realization of needs. He stated that if the needs and desires of individuals are realized, they will be motivated. He however, stated that needs are of hierarchy and priority and he classified them into five [5] levels.

1) Physiological Needs – needs required to sustain life such as: air, water, food, and sleep. These are needs that are basic to existence.

2) Safety and Security – Once physiological needs are met, one’s attention turns to safety and security in order to be free from the threat of physical and emotional harm. Such needs maybe fulfilled by: living in a safe area, medical insurance, job security, and financial reserves.

3) Social Needs – Once lower level needs are met, higher level motivators awaken. Social needs are those related to interaction with others and may include:

friendship, belonging to a group, and giving and receiving love.

4) Esteem Needs – After a person feels that he or she belongs, the urge to attain a degree of importance emerges. Esteem needs can be categorized as both external and internal motivators. Internally motivating esteem needs are those such as self-esteem, accomplishment, and self-respect. External esteem needs are those such as reputation, social status, and recognition

5) Self-Actualization – is the summit of Maslow's motivation theory. It is about the quest for reaching one's full potential as a person.. They are said to have frequent occurrences of peak experiences, which are energized moments of profound happiness and harmony. According to Maslow, only a small percentage of the population reaches the level of self-actualization

Strategies for Motivation of Paraprofessional Library Staff: Applying Maslow's Needs Hierarchy

In order to adequately motivate workers to contribute their optimal quota to their library's productivity and growth, the management of universities, the Nigerian library Association (NLA), and even the paraprofessional library staff of academic libraries in Nigeria have various roles to play. To pattern after Maslow's theory, the following could be provided:

Physiological Needs: There is need Provide ample breaks for lunch and devise a salary scheme that would enable the paraprofessional library staff to buy life's essentials. There enough work space, ergonomically-designed workstations, appropriate temperature, convenient and reasonable foodservice facilities, etc. According to Maslow, organizations must provide employees with a salary that enables them to afford adequate living conditions.

Safety Needs: Paraprofessional library staff cannot reach maximum effectiveness or efficiency when they feel the need to constantly check their backs and scan their surroundings for fear of potential threats. Physical threats in the work environment can be alleviated by security guards, cameras, and responsive management personnel. Managers should also provide the paraprofessional library staff relative job security, retirement benefits, safe workplace, stable wages and salaries, health insurance, and the likes. There is also need to provide paraprofessionals with safety working equipment e.g. fire protection etc. The rationale is that employees working in an environment free of harm do their jobs without fear.

Social Needs: There is need to generate a feeling of acceptance, belonging, and community by reinforcing team dynamics, planning team-based projects and social events. Social activities, Friendships, Sense of belonging, affection. To meet these needs, organizations need to encourage paraprofessional library staff participation in social events such as picnics, etc. Provide opportunities for them to socialize. Socialization is one of the factors that enable the paraprofessionals to work as a team.

The Nigerian library Association (NLA), needs to consider the paraprofessionals and consequently, start up a forum for them. In 1985, paraprofessional library staff from Kwara, Imo and Kano states attended the annual conference of the Nigerian library Association (NLA); indicative of the need for an organization for this category of staff their need for belonging (Agumanu 1989).

Esteem Needs: It is imperative for organizations to recognize achievements, assign important projects, and provide status to make employees feel valued and appreciated. recognizing employee's accomplishments is another way to make them satisfy their esteem needs. This could take the form of awards, prestige, plagues, participative Management etc.

Certification for Paraprofessional Staff: For the last few years the topic of a

national certification, for library paraprofessional or support staff, has been on the minds of several who considered themselves in this category (Abimbola, 1997). A cue could be taken from the American Library Association (ALA). ALA's Education Committee is trying to work on this idea with enough support from thousands of paraprofessional staff. (Kathy, 2007) The move towards certification could prove to be another positive influence on library services.

Chief among these esteem motivators, is the management style of university librarians. There is need for them to go round to see what is going on in the various sections of the libraries. By this, university librarians will be able to observe their staff at work, talk to them in their various offices on a regular basis and be able to carry out on-the-spot assessment, listen and praise staff as the case may be. This type of recognition would lead to a more confident and more educated staff in the library.

Self-Actualization Needs: This entails the provision of opportunities that would allow employees to reach their full career potential. Self-actualization occupies the last level at the top of the triangle. This refers to the Need to become all that one is capable of being, to develop one's fullest potential. The rationale here holds to the point that self-actualized employees represent valuable assets to the organization's human resource.To meet staff need for self actualization, the following should be considered:

Training Staff: Organizations today face the task of creating a positive and motivating work environment for its employees. The library world is certainly no different in this aspect. The techniques used from organization to organization are somewhat similar, due in large part to technology. Since the role of the paraprofessional in the library is becoming more service-oriented , and in some ways very similar to that of the librarians, then their training must change as well. Some of the methods of trainings include and is not limited to:

Attending professional development programmes associated with colleges and universities i.e., schools with graduate library programmes: Continuation of professional education as reported by Dawha and Atimo (1999) is vital and a right support to staff. One way a director or manager can encourage paraprofessional staff towards advancement, is to allow for them to pursue a degree if they wish

On the Job Training: libraries of all types routinely do on-the-job training focused only on skills and knowledge that library assistants need to perform the task specific of their jobs. Ajidahun (2007) reports that on–the–job training is the most popular training method employed by most Nigerian universities he surveyed. He attributed this to the fact that university libraries could not afford to release their staff to go back to school either for part– or full–time studies. He further stressed that it has cost implications for the university system. According to him, "One wonders how many can be released at a time to go for formal education. An average library manager will be concerned with who will carry out the duties of such staff while they are away. Thus it is far easier to allow on–the–job training.

Attending training programmes organized by library assistant associations: these groups should offer ad hoc, short term training programmes for library assistants such as one day programme or conference which could last for some days.

Olaniyan and Ojo (2008) highlighted some of the benefits to be derived from training staff in any organization as follows: Increase productivity, improve the quality of work and raise morale, develop new skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes etc.

Advancement for Staff

Olorunsola and Bamijoko (2005) advised organizations to make it a point to promote paraprofessional library staff when due from level I position to a level II or III. They should be given additional responsibilities. This type of positive re-enforcement can benefit the organization, as well as, the individual

Recommendations and Conclusion

All organizations, regardless of size, sector or industry require motivated employees to function effectively. Human resources are an indispensable asset that ensures the productivity, performance and prosperity of the organization. Motivated employees are contented, dedicated and and work enthusiastically.

The outcome of a motivated workforce includes employee retention, loyalty and harmony. These are the factors that contribute significantly to the development of the organization. Poor employee motivation in the workplace predispose parties in a work place to resort to behavior such as strike, picketing, boycotts, intimidation, lockout, low team morale, lack of initiative, lack of energy, mistakes and high staff turnover. e.t.c. Each of the above actions have grim consequences on the productivity of an organization. (Obisi 1996)

Motivated employees are needed in our rapidly changing workplaces. They help organizations to survive, and are more productive. To be effective, management needs to understand what motivates the paraprofessional library staff within the context of the roles they perform.

The paraprofessional staff must have the right perception, develop positive self–concept of his or her career and show readiness to perform optimally on the job. It is also their duty to identify relevant and appropriate workshops, conferences, seminars and formal educational programmes where they can receive training.

There is a prevalent myth among many managers that it is usually best to hire self motivated employees because they don't require much attention or feedback; that they feel good about themselves and the hard work they do. That may be true, but even the most self-motivated employees need to know that what they do matters. Even a cactus needs water to thrive.

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