

THE EFFECT OF EMPLOYEES' COMMITMENT ON THE PRODUCTIVITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILS IN NIGERIA

Odidika Theophilus Ekene

Department of Sociology

Legacy University Okija, Anambra State, Nigeria

Odidika.te@legacyuniversity.edu.ng

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to discuss and analyze the implications of employees' Commitment on the productivity and performance of the Local Government Councils in Nigeria. The failure of Local Government system in the area of service delivery has made the citizens loose trust in the third tier level of government as an institution. The challenges facing Local Government Councils in Nigeria point towards the need for greater level of commitment, motivation and manpower development. The employee's lack of commitment and poor attitude to work has been acknowledged to be a growing problem. There has been an increasing concern about making the Local Government Councils more productive and responsive to the needs and problems of the people at the grassroots. Factors such as la lack of well trained, visionary leadership, lack of training, bad management style, poor motivation and financial remuneration, Lack of cordial relationship between the employees and management, as well as poor monitoring and supervision are identified to be largely responsible and militating against the effort of the Local Government to achieve improved performance and render efficient services to the people. This paper therefore recommended that the general welfare and working conditions of the Local Government employees should be enhanced through effective leadership, training, supervision, communication, adequate motivation and reward to elicit commitment for greater output.

Keywords: Employee commitment, Productivity, and Local Government

Introduction

Nigeria has 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs) spread across 36 States and Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs), each administered by the Authority consisting of a chairman, who is the chief executive, and other elected

members, who are referred to as councilors. Each LGA is further subdivided into a minimum of ten and a maximum of twenty wards. The Local Government Service Commission (LGSC) is the statutory body of appointees of the State Government used to regulate Local government activities and policies. The Local Government Service Commission performs the following functions: recruitment, promotion, deployment, discipline and transfer of Local Government Employees from Grade Level 01 to 17 and monitoring of activities of each Local Government/Local Councils to ensure that the guidelines are strictly and uniformly followed. The Chairmen and Councilors work alongside with the employees recruited by the Local Government Service Commission headed by the Director of Administration and General Services to perform the Local Government functions,

The Local Government Councils in Nigeria are faced with the challenges of providing the basic needs of the people at the grassroots which centered on improving the standard of living through provisions of essential services, infrastructural facilities, achieving the basic socio-economic welfare and security. To achieve these, the Local Government Management and employees need to be not only committed and dedicated to their duties but must as well work as a team.

Employee commitment

Employee commitment is very crucial for every organization to achieve its set goals. The concept of employees' commitment plays important part in Human Relations movement philosophy. As define by Armstrong (2009), commitment refers to attachment and loyalty. According to him, it is associated with the feelings of individuals about their work organization. Employee commitment is a strong desire to remain a member of a particular organization and willingness to exert high level of effort on behalf of the organization (Fred,1992). It is tied to how well an employee is motivated and the feeling of the employee about the organization.

Employee commitment is an attachment where the employee has for their own organization from their experiences. It will indicate the level of satisfaction, and engagement among employees. It is also a crucial to assess employee commitment since it is a key element in organizational success (K.Princy, E.Rebeka, 2019). Employee commitment defines the extent to which a worker is ready or willing to continue on his job or any other type of job in an organization for the fulfillment of goals and aspirations. It is a concept used to refer to the overall attachment of the workers to the work organization. It also entails workers involvement. It indicates internal work motivation and the willingness of an employee to invest personal effort for the sake of the

organization (Agba, Nkpoyen and Ushie, (2010). Employee commitment is a positive and consistent attitude of the employee towards organizational goals and aspirations.

The key factors that determine the levels of employee commitment are; punctuality and regularity to work, obedient to rules, willingness to carryout orders and instructions, participation in organizational group activities etc. Studies have shown that an employee with high level of commitment usually record low level of absenteeism where as high level of absenteeism is a function of poor commitment. High rate of absenteeism is a threat to the survival of an organization as it has a direct negative effect on output or productivity. According to Anugwom (2010), ‘workers who show a persistent high level of absenteeism or who use the slighted excuse to obtain themselves from work are almost likely unhappy and dissatisfied workers’.

Productivity

Productivity is a critical factor for socio-economic development and growth of every organization and creating a work environment in which employees are productive is very essential. Every work Organization like local Government should be interested in overall productivity of the employees and how well they perform the required tasks, cost per unit of output and so on. A productive individual is a progressive individual. Any organization that has such productive manpower will experience high growth rate.

Productivity implies efficiency and effectiveness in individual and organization. Productivity is the relationship between output of goods and services and the input of resources, human and non-human. Alternatively, productivity is the measure of the performance of a work or operation system relation to resource utilization. According to Obikeze, Obi and Aboyi(2005). People are enjoyed and paid in organization because they are productive and can help the organization achieve its aims which is turning out output for the society. Singh(2009) puts productivity to mean goods and services produced in a specified period of time in relation to the resources utilized. Business managers view productivity as a measure of overall efficiency, effectiveness and performance of an organization. Babalola, Akpa, Ayeni and Adedeji(2007) viewed productivity as the relationship between what is produced and the amount of resources used in production. They regard productivity as a measure of what is received in return for what is given and takes into cognizance both quality and quantity of the result achieved.

Heinz and Harold (2005) have provided a formular for productivity. The formular can be represented as follows:

$$\text{Productivity} = \frac{\text{Outputs}}{\text{Inputs}} \text{ (over a period of time)}$$

The above formula indicates that productivity can be improved by

- (i) Increasing output with the same inputs
- (ii) Decreasing inputs but maintaining the same outputs
- (iii) Increasing outputs and decreasing inputs to change the ratio favourably.

The Wikipedia's report defines productivity as a measure of the efficiency of production. It further states that productivity is a ratio of what is produced to what is required to produce it. Usually, this ratio is in the form of an average, expressing the total output divided by the total input. At the national level, productivity growth raises the living standard because more real income improves peoples' purchasing power, improving housing and education as well as contributes to social and environmental programmes. Productivity growth is important to the firm because it means that the firm can meet its obligations to the customers, suppliers, workers, shareholders, government and still remain competitive and even improve its competitiveness in the market place. Productivity growth means more value is added to the production and this means more income is available to be distributed.

Local Government Councils in Nigeria and Employees' Level of Commitment

The Local Government employees' lack of commitment has been acknowledged to be a serious problem as it generally affects the effort of the Local Government toward performing their statutory functions. Many of the employees have been severely criticized for lacking the desired attitudes of hard work, commitment and dedication to duty. In recent times, the constitutional functions of Local Government Councils are not optimally performed due to lack of commitment by employees, as majority of them work with the notion that Government work and properties belong to nobody.

Consequently, the people are seriously denied the benefits of the existence of Local Government Councils. The failure of the Local Government Councils in the area of service delivery and performance has to an extent made the citizens to lose confidence in government as an institution generally. Unfortunately, Local Government Council officials are best known for harassment of citizens than service delivery, showing their inability to address a range of different needs such as environmental protection, provision of primary health care services, loans to rural farmers and traders, portable water, qualitative education, good roads and security of lives and properties etc. Most Local Government Council are filled with employees who want to earn salaries without performing their official duties. This is one of the reasons Nigeria is not making progress as nothing is as depressing and frustrating as having someone that is not committed to the job. People who want jobs without the right work attitude and ethics are menace. These

set of people are in different sectors of the Nigerian economy including the Local Government system.

The contention in many quarters is that the Local Government Councils are closer to the people and hence present the best channel for development to trickle down to the ordinary man in the street. This has therefore, continued to fuel the interests and expectations that people show on the third tier of Government. It is against this background that many Nigerians crave for total financial autonomy and change in the structure of the Local Government System as presently constituted in order to not only bring it in conformity with present day realities but to also make it live up to the expectations of the people at the grassroots.

Factors Affecting Employees' Commitment in the Nigerian Local Government System

Many factors influence employees' commitment and their level of productivity and performance. Kochan and Dyer (1993) (in Armstrong,2009) have indicated the factors affecting the level of commitment in what they call "mutual commitment firms". The factors are as follows;

- (i) Strategic level: Supportive business strategies, top management value commitment and affective voice for Human Relation in strategy making and governance.
- (ii) Functional (Human Resource Policy) Level: Staffing based on employment stabilization, investment in training and development, and contingent compensation, participation and contribution.
- (iii) Work place Level: Selection based on high standards broad task design and teamwork, employee involvement in problem solving and climate of cooperation and trust.

As posited by Uwalaka(2004), good and timely remuneration packages contribute positive commitment and performance. Also Azuh and Adejumo (2011) observed that good remuneration affect work attitude positively, leading to better productivity. According to him, good and appropriate remuneration removes the feeling of helplessness, disappointment, inadequacy, consciousness of uncertainty, frustration, hostility, anxiety, aggression, fraudulent practices and laziness.

On the aspect of productivity, Oti (2004) identified the factors affecting productivity as including: Labour Union influence, leadership style, compensation, tool or equipment and career prospect on the job. Making his submission on factors responsible for low productivity in the country, Akanwa (2003) enumerated human environmental, economic,

social and political factors as affecting employees' attitude to work. He further states that the presence of environmental, economic, human, social and political problems have reduced the Nigerian workers to mere laziness with lot of idle time. He also noted that the Nigerian workers have therefore become, by circumstance, a theory worker, lazy and would not want to work unless coerced.

It has been argued that economic and financial rewards as benefits for productivity improvement far outweigh other considerations. According to Tracey Lloyd (2009), people tend to be happier with more money than compared with people who do not have sufficient money at their disposal. He also states that performance related pay schemes could be used to increase employee productivity.

Research into the effectiveness of merit based pay schemes has found that merit based pay has a beneficial effect on individual motivation and performance in the workplace (Corby, White & Stanworth, 2005).

Ubeku(1983) identified the following factors in the Nigerian situation which can promote and enhance productivity:

- (i) A good infrastructure
- (ii) Adequate machinery
- (iii) Availability of adequate material
- (iv) Intelligent use of capital
- (v) A good organizational structure providing for clear lines of communication, authority and accountability.
- (vi) A trained and knowledgeable management
- (vii) A committed and motivated staff

What Ubeku implies by the above point is that productivity can be greatly enhanced if the factors identified by him are adequately addressed through effective policy formulation and implementation.

The failure of the Council workers to show commitment and deliver services efficiently has equally been blamed on the failure of Local Government Council leadership. The authorities at various local governments have failed to pay adequate attention to the welfare and needs of the Council employees making them to show little or no commitment on their jobs. Council employees are most time not paid their salaries as and when due and such development create industrial disputes. Commenting on the above subject, Okereke and Amgbere (2010) have observed that delay in payment of workers' salaries could result to apathy that might hinder efficiency in work performance. It could lead to embarrassing circumstances such as inability to pay house rent and concomitant

quarrel with landlord or caretaker, inability to pay for the schooling of their children/wards, poor feeding that might result to malnutrition and poor health conditions, inability to meet up with social and financial obligation etc. The foregoing could eventually culminate in disaffection between the employees and the Local Government Council Management with consequences of poor attitude to work and low level of productivity.

Theoretical Explanation

In order to engender a critical and objective analytical discussion of the effects of employees' commitment on the productivity of local Government Councils in Nigeria, the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, the Human Relations approach and the system Theory are adopted as the framework of analysis.

The Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

One of the early and best known theories of motivation is that by Abraham Maslow which is known as the Hierarchy of needs theory. Maslow first introduced his concept of a hierarchy of needs in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" and subsequent book Motivation and Psychology. The hierarchy suggests that people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to other, more advanced needs. The five different levels in Maslow's hierarchy of needs are:

1. The physiological needs: These include hunger, thirst, shelter, sex, air and other bodily needs.
2. Safety needs: These include security and protection from physical and emotional harm.
3. Social or love needs: These include affection, belongingness, acceptance and friendship.
4. Esteem needs: These include internal esteem factors such as self respect, autonomy and achievement and external esteem factors such as status, recognition and attention.
5. Self-actualization needs: These include growth, achieving ones potential and fulfillment, the drive to become what one is capable of becoming.

Maslow divided the five needs into higher and lower level needs: The lower level includes the physiological and safety needs while the rest belong to the higher level. Among the needs that command our attention are the esteem needs. The need for self-respect and the respect of others is necessary for a healthy social and psychological life. The feelings of autonomy, competence or ability mastery, achievement, dominance, influence, acquisition and retention express self-esteem. Employees in every organization want to be well

trained and good at their jobs to them contribute positively towards achieving organizational goals. In the same way, the Local Government employees in Nigeria desire the respect of the management and the general public. They equally desire recognition, acclamation, praise, appreciation, attention, prestige, honour and status. Human beings strive to achieve what they feel or perceive is their worth as persons in the group or among other individuals.

The physiological needs are also of interest to this work. The need for shelter, food, water, clothing, sex etc. which face workers are satisfied with money and other material rewards. The extent to which a worker meets financial obligation is a function of his organization compensation scheme. The salaries, wages, allowances, fringe benefits, loans etc which the organization is able and willing to provide determine, to a great extent the level of satisfaction of these needs, by its workers and by implications their level their level of commitment and productivity. It is in line with this that Uwalaka (2004) posits that good and timely remuneration packages contribute to positive commitment and performance.

Also, Azuh and Adejumo (2011) observed that good remuneration affects work attitude positively leading to better productivity.

The need for self-actualization often manifests after the satisfaction of the other needs either fully or partially. Maslow classically defines this need as man's desire for self-fulfillment. Employees when motivated by the desire to realize their potential seek out new responsibilities and try to find meaning and personal growth in their job.

Though Maslow's theory is very popular in management circles, it still has quite some noticeable shortcomings. First, the arrangement of the needs in hierarchy is faulted considering the fact that some needs may occur simultaneously while individual differences and preferences dictate which of the needs are considered more important. For instance, while some people are motivated by money, others are not motivated by it. The theory also failed to take care of environmental factors on people's needs and ignored the influences of culture, religion education in its analysis of the hierarchy of needs.

The Human Relations Approach

The Human Relations movement was championed by Elton Mayor and his Harvard associates. After their famous experiments at the Western Electric Company's Hawthorn Plant at Chicago in America between 1924 and 1932 where they tried to find out the effect of physical condition of work on productivity. Elton Mayo, the apostle of the

Human Relation's Movement concluded that workers have emotions, values, opinions, beliefs etc

These traits, they concluded, invariably affect efficiency and productivity within the organization. Productivity can be boosted by work groups which are close-knit social groups. There is a strong relationship between attitude to work and the wider social attachments outside the organization especially the early socialization of individual. Employees' commitment which was discovered to be a function of informal activities of workers within the organization helps to reduce the incidence of absenteeism, lateness, truancy; insubordination and high labour turn over. The Human Relations approach made immense contributions to management science by emphasizing the social need of workers. Local Government in Nigeria should be more concerned with satisfying the social needs of its work force to elicit efficiency and commitment from the employees.

Despite the crucial function of calling attention to the social context of work and the strong influence of work group on the performance of individual workers, the Human relations approach, has been criticized for being clinical in orientation. The theory is criticized for failing to see the inherent conflict of interest between the management and employees. Another major weakness of the theory is that they concentrated too much on individual and tend to ignore the industrial organization as a whole and its place in the wider society. However, by every standard, Nigerian culture preaches social tie between and among friends, families and work organization. These are better reinforced if Elton Mayor's concept is practiced to the core among the Nigerian Local Government work group. In the long run, productivity of workers both at the middle and low level would have been enhanced.

The System Theory

This is another theoretical perspective that has relevance to employees' commitment in the Local government system and organizations. The System approach attempt to provide a general explanation to social behavior hence deals with a scientific aspect and thought process stating that every little organism or being is part of a larger picture. The theory sees the whole work of human endeavor as a system of interrelated parts that work interdependently for its survival. The parts of a system may exist in the form of techniques, devices procedures, plans, rules, personnel etc. But for a system to facilitate the achievement of a goal, the inter-dependence and interrelation between the parts is very important. The system approach sees organization as a natural system composed of interrelated and interdependent series of processes. To this theory, employee's commitment and improved productivity are achieved when the whole system is

harmoniously held together by the sub-system. The non-functioning of any of its sub-system affect the whole. Local Government Council is a system of its own with other sub-system as the management, employees, resources, rules, environment, departments, units, etc.. The proper functioning of the sub-system makes for high commitment and productivity, where as poor commitment or performance sets in when there is non-functioning or mal-functioning of any of the sub-system.

Despite the plausible features of system theory, it has been criticized on a number of points. The assumption that the organization only changes when factors in the environment desire such is seen as faulty since it overlooks the fact that changes in the organization can be internally generated. Related to the above is the fact that system theory offers the view of largely stable organization. But organizations are not always stable entity. Moreover given the dynamic nature of the environment, organization may not be stable always. The system theory inclines towards reification of the organization. In this sense, the organization which is an entity produced by the activities of human agents is presented erroneously as having a real life of its own devoid of the activities of human beings in it.

Recommendation

In view of the analysis in this study, the following recommendations are made as necessary steps toward building a committed workforce which will in turn improve the level of productivity of Local Government Councils in Nigeria.

- (i) The management of Local Government Councils in Nigeria should endeavour to inspire the employees to be committed through adequate motivation. This should be done by instilling a sense of belonging purpose and responsibility through prompt payment of salaries and other entitlements.
- (ii) Concerted effort should be made by the Local Government Councils management to establish a healthy and reciprocal relationship with the employees. Effective communication system should be introduced in the workplace to give the employees sense of belonging. The employees should be consulted before decision are taken and also be given the opportunity to contribute to plans and decision making.
- (iii) Local Government Council Management should be more concerned with creating an enabling environment where employees are motivated to connect with the goals and aspirations of the Councils without close monitoring and supervision. Such enabling environment should provide improved conditions of service and good human relation's practices where employees will see themselves as integral

parts of the Councils' long-term plans and vision. The Council Management should also create an environment that foster respect, trust and collaboration. Disciplinary measures with human face should be put in place to check cases of insubordination among employees.

- (iv) The Local Government Council employees irrespective of gender should be made to understand vividly the goals, direction and vision of Local Governments as well as the expected roles to play in that regard. Instilling a sense of purpose and responsibility on the employees will ultimately give them the desire to contribute positively toward achieving improved productivity.
- (v) The Council managements in Nigeria should work toward improving the productivity of the Council by applying both economic and social rewards as benefits to the workers. Programmes for recognizing, appreciating and rewarding hard work could be effective in this direction. It is in line with this that Elton Mayo in his Human Relations theory emphasized the importance of satisfying the social needs of workforce, to elicit commitment that will positively affect productivity. In his hierarchy of needs theory, Abraham Maslow emphasized that human are motivated when their esteem needs are met. He maintains that people want recognition, respect, appreciation, attention acclamation, praise, honour, applause, status etc. Hence, individual strive to achieve what they perceive or fee l is their worth as persons in the group or among other individuals.
- (vi) It is also recommended that training and retraining of employees as well as painting a clear picture of what commitment looks like at an individual, team and management level will improve the employees' performances. Inculcating the culture of commitment and dedication in the employees will equally improve their overall performances.

It is therefore, the hope of this study that if the above recommendations are properly implemented, they will go a long way to enthrone a more committed workforce and reposition the Local government administration in Nigerian.

Conclusion

This paper has exposed the fact that Local Government Councils in Nigeria are not very productive and efficient. The Local Government Councils which are the closest tier of government to the grassroots to the Nigeria have continued to deny the people the benefits of their existence. The failure of the Local Government in the area of service delivery has made the citizens to lose trust in the Local government as an institution.

However, to improve the performance and productivity of the Local Government Councils as well as to get the very best out of the employees, concerted effort must be

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made by the management to adequately motivate, train and inspire the employees. There is therefore, no doubt that the recommendations of this research will not only provoke improved commitment and productivity but will ensure that Local Government Councils are efficient in delivering services to the grassroots.

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