

STAFF WELFARE AND PRODUCTIVITY IN DELTA STATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, 2007-2015

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Abstract

The welfare of staff has been understood as a tool for employee productivity. This further explains how employees are cared for and how this gesture encourage them to get fully involved in production activities of their organization. Apart from the employer benefiting from the impact of staff welfare, the general public and the society at large also benefit from improved loyalty and services efficiency. In order to have goods and services within an allocated resources being efficiently and effectively utilized, the employee need good pension scheme, grants loans, sick leave and other motivational incentives. One of the major reason why employees gain the heart of their employee in production process through welfare packages is to make more profit and endear the employee to sacrifice extra hours unpaid following the impression made possible by the management of their organization. This study made use of documentary research design in order to effectively make full use of the secondary sources of data where all policy implementations on the area of staff welfare can be traced in Delta state local government system. The recommendations outlined different welfare packages that can motivate employee's to remain committed in promoting productivity in Delta state local government areas.

Keyword: Productivity, Employee, Welfare packages, Organization and Motivation.

INTRODUCTION

The growth of employees' welfare benefits has been rampant particularly since the end of the Second World War. Apparently, no end is in sight because some of these welfare benefits are legally required and therefore are obligatory on Management to the employees. Welfare is a corporate attitude or commitment reflected in the expressed care for employees at all levels: underpinning their work and the environment in which it is performed (Cowling and Mailer, 1992). Coventry and Barker (1988) asserts that, staff welfare includes providing pension fund, leave grants, making loans on hardship cases; arranging legal aid and giving advice on personal problems; making long service grants; providing assistance to staff transferred to another area and providing fringe benefits (such as payment during sickness, luncheon vouchers and other indirect advantages). Productivity, on the other hand, means goods and services produced in a specified period of time in relation to the resources utilized (Singh, 2009).

The suspicion derived from the observed poor road networks and other necessary infrastructural deficits in most of the 774 Local Government Areas in Nigeria; the inadequate state of health facilities (both in physical structure and equipment); the deteriorated state of school buildings (with walls noticeably cracked and the roofs destroyed) and dilapidated furniture (table, desks and boards); absence of government-owned recreational facilities; little or no encouragement for increased agriculture productivity via timely provision of agricultural additives (fertilizers, improved seedlings, cassava cuttings) and agricultural loans: no visible effort to reduce the prevalent high rate of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria through job creations among others. The researcher argues that the below-standard performance is a function of ineptitude of the management (local government administrators and career officers) and depressed staff morale owing to neglected attention to the welfare service scheme.

Onah (2000) explained that the efficiency with which an organization can perform will depend to a large extent, upon how its human resource can be managed and utilized. Without gainsay, productivity is a critical factor in an economic and social development of a nation and it is a determinant of the standard of living of the citizenry. Hence, when employees or the staff of any organization are faced with unattractive conditions in their workplace, their productivity will no doubt, be low resulting to high cost of production and finally high cost of living and both the consumers, the organization and such staff stand to lose. On the other hand, when the welfare of employees is given due consideration by the management in any industry, the staff will be effective and efficient and their productivity will be high. When productivity is high and

of high quality, the cost of production will be low, the consumers, the organization will make relatively high profit and stand the chances of making the work environment hygienically attractive and motivating for the very employees. High productivity, as it will afford the organization competitive advantage, would also foster sustainable development in the host community.

In his own discussion on the welfare of employees, Anikpo, Nzeribe and Ezeonwu (1991) contended that the assumption that Nigeria workers are motivated to perform more by increased wages and other salary supplements, such as paid leave, free health care programmes, houses, pension and gratuity plans, insurance have received some support from both the labour unions and Nigeria government. Employee counseling, training and development were also included on the list of welfare services. These factors or conditions could be equated to the hygiene factors in Herzberg's motivation theory.

Furthermore, the Staff welfare is in the interest of the employee, the employer and the society as a whole. The benefits of employee welfare are: It helps to improve the loyalty and morale of the employees, it reduces labour turnover and absenteeism. Welfare measures help to improve the goodwill and public image of the organization. It helps to improve industrial relations and industrial peace. It helps to improve employee productivity. We have also noted that diminishing productivity and efficiency in Nigerian organization would be attributed to many variables, work habits, the quality of education, business investment, the nature of social, political and economic expectations and in general the innovation and assessment of challenges. Also, the inability of managers of organizations to adequately motivate their employees by means of adequate provision of needful welfare services and programmes. The inadequacy of such welfare services and programmes in Nigerian organizations like the local governments in Delta state has, for long, impeded and is still impeding on the organizational set goals and objectives which, in turn, adversely affect productivity that should foster sustainable development.

Delta States consists of 25 Local Government Areas and there was absence of staff welfare in almost all the Local Government Areas (Ethiope East and West, Okpe, Sapele, Ughelli, North and South, Aniocha North and South, Ukwuani, Bomadi, Burutu, Patani and others). The working environment was poor, in terms of welfare packages for workers (free education for staff children, paucity' of car loan, housing, manpower development and staff recruitment), scarcely available monetary incentives and unreliable health and safety facilities, which altogether reduced moral (job satisfaction) and efficiency in job performance.

It will not be an over-statement to assert here that the sustainable development of Delta State is greatly dependent on the extent of productivity of

her local government Areas. This is because a good majority of Deltans are rural dwellers whose poverty and other social ills can only be alleviated by a robust local government system. A productive and efficient local government system would to an appreciable extent, engender a viable socioeconomic development of Delta State which will also translate to the much needed national development.

It is against this backdrop that this study poses the following questions:

- How does welfare package affect employee productivity in Delta state local government areas?
- What are the major impediments to productivity as regards welfare package in the Delta state local government system?
- How can staff welfare be improved so as to enhance productivity in the Delta state local government areas?

Methodology

The research design used in this study was a documentary research design. This is focused on the staff welfare and productivity in Delta State Local Government areas. Documentary research design was chosen because, the study involved the use of secondary source of data such as relevant texts, journals, magazine, newspaper etc. The researcher used secondary sources of data collection for this study. This involved a more detailed facts finding exercise through the use of relevant texts, journals, magazine, newspapers, Delta State Local Government Service Commission, Delta State Ministry of Local Government Affairs, published and unpublished materials from the internet. The study adopted qualitative descriptive analysis which is an aspect of content analysis. Content analysis connotes the systematic analysis of the content or meaning of documentary work. It is a specific technique describing the form and the content of the communication of the research. The adoption of content analysis technique is to ascertain whether the data from the documentary sources support the questions under the research.

Literature Review

This section of the study reviewed related literature that are relevant to this study under the following headings:

Staff Welfare and Productivity

Staff Welfare or Employee Welfare means “the efforts to make life worth living for workmen” (Ejiofor, 1983). According to Todd (2011) Staff Welfare means anything done for the comfort and improvement, intellectual or social, of the employees over and above the wages paid which is not a necessity of the organization. He stressed further that staff welfare is a comprehensive term including various services, facilities and amenities provided to employees for their betterment. The basic purpose is to improve the lot of the working class.

Nwachukwu (1976) explained employees’ welfare services to mean fringe benefits hence; “they are additional entitlements given to employees by management to support their wages”. Continuing, he observed that “the most frequently offered fringe benefits are health plans, housing or housing allowances, transportation or transportation allowances, sick leave, study leave, touring allowance, salary advances, death benefits, pension and gratuities, overtime and time off. Nwachukwu added that those supplementary benefits tend to trap employees as they stay to take advantages of their accumulated benefits such as retirement pension, long annual vacation or sick benefit. Fringe benefits are known to promote employees satisfaction, morals, tenure and health competition. He also added that welfare services are important to the organization and the employees.

In support of the above assertion, Benard (1972) stated that any organization that secures the services of its employees by the incentives it offers them, there is no doubt that the employees will give in the best of their efforts and the result is high level of productivity. He enumerated some of the incentives that had received the greatest emphasis to include moral inducement, salary, bonus and fringe benefits. Finally, he warned that men will often not work at all under other incentives if the social situations from their point of view, is unsatisfactory. Where they accept to work at all, they will most likely rarely work well. Supporting the above warning, the writer reminds management in all organizations that an unmotivated employee is not an asset but rather a threat to his organization. Hence, when he fails to achieve his personal goal he feels frustrated and a frustrated employee is usually unreasonable, aggressive and unproductive.

Specifically, Conventory and Baker (1985) asserted that Staff welfare includes providing social club and sports facilities as appropriate, supervising staff and works’ canteens, medical and saving schemes, dealing with superannuation, pension funds and leave grants, making loans on hardship free cases, arranging legal aid and giving advice on personal problems, making long service grants, providing assistance to staff transferred to another area and

providing fringe benefit (such as payment during sickness, luncheon vouchers and other indirect advantages).

Ubeku (1975) in his discussions on trends in fringe benefits noted that “the introduction of fringe benefits in most cases was motivated by a sincere belief on the part of employers that employees were entitled to share in the prosperity of their organization”. He went further to posit that “over the years... all sorts of fringe benefits have crept in without the management realizing it” and by the time they realize it, they are late to do anything effective without consulting the unions. As every manager know, once a benefit has been given to employees, it is not easy to remove it. This led to the high growth of variety of employee welfare benefits over the years. Miner and Miner (1977) observed that the number and variety of benefits and services provided by employers for their employees have grown rapidly over the years to the point that items of this kind represent a major factor in total compensation. Flippas (1983) classified these employee benefits into three categories as follows:

- i. Economic services like pension, life insurance, health and accident services.
- ii. Recreational services covering provision for sports and social events.
- iii. Facilitative services embracing medical, transport, canteens, housing and educational services.

A school of thought that is of immense importance in the area of employee welfare is the Chamber of Commerce of the United States of America (1958) conducted a biannual survey of the costs of all fringe benefits to employees in the public service. They summarized these benefits into five categories thus:

- i. Employment services — such as pension, insurance schemes, discount on goods and services, etc.
- ii. Legally required services including unemployment compensation, old age and survivors insurance.
- iii. Paid lunch periods, rest periods, etc.
- iv. Payment for time not worked covering such periods like vacation, holidays, sick leave and annual leave.
- v. Miscellaneous payments such as profit sharing, Christmas bonuses, etc.

The survey showed that some of these welfare benefits are legally required and therefore are obligatory on management to the employees.

Ejiofor (1983) referred us to the Nigerian Employees consultative Association. The association according to him had a list of these benefits under sixteen categories. Onyishi (2002) considered all these categories by other scholars as belonging to one category only. He called them the statutory welfare which managers owe to their employees as a duty. The second category he

described as those fringe benefits which the employer develops to motivate the employees to be absolutely committed to their duties. Hence, Onah (1993) was of the view that the employee benefits are usually stipulated in the civil service regulations of various documents titled “conditions of service” and that they may also be embodied in numerous collective bargaining agreements.

As the number of items on the list of employee’s welfare benefits grows tremendously resulting in industrial disharmony generally, Mussel man and Hudes (1969) advised managers to always remember that an employee’s needs and wants are extremely important to him that he will most likely not continue to work in an organization where these needs are not satisfied.

Employees’ Productivity

Productivity is an assessment of an employee or a group of employee’s efficiency. It is evaluated by looking at the total workforce or employee output in a given time. In most cases, the productivity of an individual will be assessed in comparison to the average output of other employees doing similar work (Ejiofor, 1986). Wikipedia (2015) defined productivity as the amount of goods and services that a group of workers produce in a given amount of time.

OECD (2002) explained productivity as the ratio of a volume measure of output to a volume measure of input. Volume measures of output are normally gross domestic products (GDP) or gross value added (GVA). OECD stressed further that input can be measured by hours worked, workforce jobs and number of people in employment.

Productivity is the amount of work produced in a given period of time. Productivity relates to the person’s ability to produce the standard amount or number of products, services or outcomes as described in a work description. It is not considered in isolation but is considered based on the interrelationship with, performance and profitability (Oloko,1983).

Labour productivity is the quality of goods and services that someone can produce with a given expenditure of effort, usually measured or averaged out in terms of time spent working or labour time (OECD, 2002). Productivity growth reflects growth in output not attributable to growth in inputs (such as labour, capital and natural resources) (Oloko,1983). Increases in productivity can be driven by technological advances (through innovation and increases in skills) or improvements in efficiency (making better use of existing technology). Over the long term, productivity improvements are considered to be the main contributor to higher results, profitability, earnings and rising living standards (Ejiofor, 1986).

Productivity is affected by multiple factors which plays a major role to increase or decrease the labour productivity. OECD (2002) classified the factor affecting productivity as follows:

- i. Physical, organizational, location, and technological
- ii. Cultural and behavioural
- iii. Global influences, innovativeness, strategic alliances, liberal policies etc
- iv. Managerial and organizational business environment.
- v. Levels of flexibility in internal labour markets and organization of work activities
- vi. Individual rewards and payment systems: e.g. working conditions, nature of job security, training of employees, liberty at work, motivation of employees, welfare and social security, etc. development and staff recruitment), scarcely available monetary incentives and unreliable health and safety facilities, which altogether reduced moral (job satisfaction) and efficiency in job performance(OECD, 2002).

Productivity in Public service must be developed in order to find appropriate balance of workforce and ability of workers to practice effectively and efficiently (Yesufu, 1984). Ejiofor (1986) noted that a major challenge for Public services is the implementation of strategies to increase productivity so as to create conditions for sustainable development.; achieving these results requires not only adequate implementation of Public service strategies but also acquiring the best technology and manpower that will make difference in the job performance. To Ajileye, (2004), workers' productivity is one of the biggest problems of the local government in Nigeria. This may be attributed to fewer incentives and supports systems available to attract and retain workers at the rural level.

Nwachukwu (2007), lamented that in Nigeria, capacity of government administrators to create a positive and productive environment that enable motivated, produce a high-performing work force is weak thus undermining delivery of needed workers performance.

Nwanna (1982), opined that the factors that contribute to labour productivity are not only limited to the working environment of the organization but also include the interactions between colleagues. The high quality in the delivery of government services requires efficient team working. It is suggested that administrators of public services not only create relationships within the

teams providing the services but also strive to improve these relationships in order to increase labour productivity.

Although labour productivity is rarely measured directly however, it can be inferred from changes in employee's attitude and behaviour such as organisational commitment, organisational citizenship, job satisfaction, punctuality and work attendance, greater collaboration and team work, workers' efficiency and effectiveness, improved industrial relations etc.

Meaning of Employee Welfare Programme

Employees' welfare programme has been defined in various ways by many scholars. Yoder et al (1958) defined the term as a wide variety of services provided by companies for employees, and in some cases, for members of employees' families. Shubin (1957) sees it as additional incentives given to employees by management to augment their wages. Moreover, Ejiofor (1986) perceives employee welfare package from monetary and non-monetary perspectives when he defines it as something of value, apart from agreed regular monetary payments of salaries and wages given by an employer to an employee. A fine distinction is made by Ejiofor between benefits and service. According to him, "benefits are when direct monetary reward accrues to the individual worker". For example, pension, leave pay, and salary advance, while services involve no direct and identifiable monetary benefit. Examples of such include the establishment of staff clubs, recreation facilities, picnics, dances and festival parties. It is in line with this the Ekpiken (1983) and Yesufu (1984) describe welfare programme as including the provision of well ventilated offices, drinking water, end-of-year parties, rest rooms, toilet, and first aid facilities by the management to the employees. They also opine that providing employees with such things as canteens, subsidized meals, medical facilities, recreational facilities, subsidized transport facilities, housing or housing allowance are regarded as welfare programmes. This paper views employee welfare programme as provision of additional monetary and non-monetary incentives to employees by the management. Examples of such will include the ones reviewed above. Besides, in an educational setting, other welfare programme could be provision of ventilated and well-furnished classrooms and lecture theatres, laboratories, well equipped library, vacation and holiday practices, giving room for labour union activities, cooperative credit ventures, and establishment of bookshops.

Some Problems Facing a Full Implementation of Employee Welfare Programmes in Nigeria.

False Paternalistic Assumptions

One of the notions which colours management attitude to employee welfare programmes is that workers should see fringe benefits as kind gestures from employers which they should reciprocate; whereas many employees believe that the employer returns to them much less than they contribute to the organization.

Low Awareness Level by Beneficiaries:

Partly because employees see the benefits as their right, and partly because of communication barriers between management and workers, many employees are not even aware of the existence of welfare programmes. A worker cannot be motivated by a benefit he is not aware of.

Doubtful Valence

For any reward to motivate employees, it has to be attractive to the prospective recipients. Intrinsic value of reward is not critical. Different people value different things at different stages of their lives and working careers. As a result of differences in valence, while some employees are enthusiastic about some of the benefits, other employees are, at best, indifferent or even hostile, to some of the welfare programmes.

Intra-Organization Inequity

Many employee programmes turn out to be morale depressants, instead of stimulants, because they fail the internal alignment test. They are inequitably dispensed between the senior and the junior staff and between the administrative and political staff in the local government system in Delta state.

Bad Management of Good Benefits

Benefits not properly administered can cause frustration. Such mismanagement may arise out of a questionable integrity of the dispensing officer. Also, many desirable employee benefits get mismanaged because what should accrue to the workers as rights is, at times, treated as privileges. This is particularly true in the allocation of official vehicles to political and career staff in the Nigerian local government system. While many senior members of the administrative staff are denied official vehicles, their counterparts with political portfolios have many vehicles to themselves. It is therefore apparent that good welfare measures in an organization causes motivation to grow into a useful tool for an organization.

Impact of Staff Welfare and Productivity

Many scholars argued that there exists somewhat a kind of relationship between labour productivity and employee welfare benefits and services. For instance, Onitiri (1983) opined that poor standards of living, bad health, lack of education, bad housing, poor transportation to and fro work, bad conditions in the work place reduce workers' productivity, and low productivity in turn reduces the capacity of the society to improve working conditions, most especially housing, transportation, food and health facilities could substantially improve the worker's productivity. The increased concern for labour productivity on the part of union and management is hinged on three factors.

Furthermore, Yesufu (1984) and Ejiofor (1986) argued that employee welfare benefits and services are capable of attracting and retaining employees, assisting employees in meeting their needs better, helping in lowering unit cost of production, improving morale, increasing employee security and blunting these sharp edges of managerial autocracy. All these, according to these scholars, have a positive effect on labour motivation and productivity. Relating labour productivity to welfare benefits, in the study carried out by the Kilby (1969) in a study found out that there was relative efficacy of incentive payment schemes in inducing increased labour productivity. The study showed that Nigerian workers employed in places where the management made use of an incentive based payment system, are as productive as workers elsewhere.

Similarly, Ekpiken (1983) believed that a worker will put in more effort and produce more goods and services if he knows that he will be paid more for his efforts. He quickly adds that this is more efficacy among junior workers in the industry. The limitation of this system is that purely financial view of productivity pays off for only a short while after which the effects of the traditional pay wear off and the workers return to their old pace of working. Consequently, one observes that a combination of welfare benefits and services could likely induce labour productivity.

It has been observed, however, that the relationship between safe workplace and increased productivity of workers is not direct, as was earlier put in this paper in respect of positive work environment and productivity. An intervening variable, the authors argued in the form of motivation, could be identified. Mitchell (1978) points that there is consensus amongst most theorists that 'ability to work' goes hand in glove with 'motivation' to produce performance, as ability of the employees to do the job does not mean that they would do it. Most managers have recognized the vital role job satisfaction (satisfaction of members of the organization) plays on productivity. Impact of Staff welfare could be well

explained on 1. How it motivates staff to productivity 2. How it increases staff morale and productivity and, 3. How it brings job satisfaction and productivity.

Dealing With Staff Welfare and Improving Productivity

Senge (1990) and Greenleaf (1996) opined that the major ways of improving productivity can be by providing a competent leadership and paying ear to workers needs wherein besides mandatory welfare services, need-based welfare services also need to be showered on workers. Unbiased approach in reward distribution like compensation, promotion and benefit can be some other ways of improving morale. Being an empathetic listener to workers issues, providing clarity of roles and openness in communication can be some other ways of improving productivity. Finger (2005) suggests that the improvement of productivity can be done by addressing the issues of Staff welfare. Ewton (2007) was of the view that staff welfare is directly proportional to satisfaction which in turn is negatively related to percentage of absenteeism and job turnover. He also emphasized that lack of staff welfare acts as driver for workers discontentment and poor performance.

Staff Welfare in Delta State Local government Areas

Although, staff welfare programmes in Delta State Local Government Areas span the 1991 to 2007 when the state was created, there were no success stories in labour productivity. Sustainable wages and other fringed benefits have eluded the Local Government Areas in Delta State and the general welfare and standard of living of workers remained poor and miserable (Delta State Development Performance, Assessment Report 2015)

The Delta state Development Performance Report (2015) stated that the administration of Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan as Governor of Delta State between 2007 and 2015 marked the period of highest staff recruitment and welfare packages (free education for staff children, Health care for staff and family, Car loans, Housing, Training, Bonus for job performance) for local government workers across the twenty five local government areas in the state with three senatorial districts- Delta North; Delta Central and Delta south senatorial districts. They organizes training and retraining programmes for staff, and also motivated the workforce by ensuring that promotion interviews were conducted for officers who are due for promotion as at when due (Delta State Development Performance, Assessment Report 2015).

Conclusion

Although, staff welfare programmes in Delta State Local Government Areas span the 1991 to 2007 when the state was created, there were no success stories in labour productivity. Sustainable wages and other fringed benefits have eluded the Local Government Areas in Delta State and the general welfare and standard of living of workers remained poor and miserable (Delta State Development Performance, Assessment Report 2015)

This study showed that welfare package remains the inevitable factor that energizes workers to job commitment and productivity. Although labour productivity is rarely measured directly however, it can be inferred from changes in employee's attitude and behaviour such as organisational commitment, organisational citizenship and job satisfaction. The study has sought to examine the ways of improving on staff welfare so as to enhance productivity in Delta State Local Government Areas. Having delved extensively into the research, we make bold to conclude that the implementation of the above recommendations will enhance and improve the quality of life of the employees and also enhance their productivity in the Delta state Local Government Areas.

Recommendations

Against the backdrop of the outcome of our study, we proffer the following recommendations as a way forward:

There are different welfare packages that can motivate employees to remain focus for productivity in Local Government Areas. These welfare packages that cut across tangible and intangible variables. Although the tangible factors of monetary packages remain a major source of high motivation among employees, yet those non-monetary factors are vital prerequisites that keep the motivation steady. It is recommended that Local Governments Areas in Delta State should promote good leadership within the system. This will go a long way in reducing frustration among workers thereby increasing motivational impact of the system.

It is found that Delta State Local Government Areas did not have a well-planned welfare policy for staff. It is recommended that there should be a well-established welfare policy and increased budget allocation that will motivate workers and improve their living conditions. This may enhance maximum job commitment and productivity.

Finally, the Local Government Areas in Delta State should really put in place many factors that will encourage employees' job commitment by giving opportunities for training on the job and off the job as the case may be. They should develop their workers and give them good reasons for their existence in the job.

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