Assessment of Secondary School Teachers Information Needs in Kogi State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study adopted the survey research design. The aim was to establish the extent to which the information needs of secondary school teachers in Kogi State, Nigeria was met by the Kogi State Teaching Service Commission (TSC). The population of the study comprises 4890 teachers of Kogi State Teaching Service Commission (TSC). Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of 400 respondents. Data were subjected to frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation. For the inferential analysis, t-test was used. Results found information received in four of the five areas of information needs as adequate (employment situation in TSC, task, job performance and benefits). Only information on in-service training fell short of the 2.5 mean decision point for acceptance. Also, information expected by the teachers was above the 2.5 mean decision point (employment in TSC with a mean of 3.17; task 3.35; performance 3.32; in-service training 3.10 and benefits 3.24). Analysis of t-test shows significant differences between information received and information expected in all the five variables investigated. The study observed a wide disparity between information received and expected in all the five areas of needs, resulting in information underload. However, it is recommended among other things that management should provide adequate information to the teachers for optimum performance and high morale.
Keywords: Information needs, performance, high morale, TSC

INTRODUCTION

Effective employee communication in an organisation involves giving and getting accurate, adequate and timely messages. As organizations grow in size and population, the needs for relevant information to all employees for effective performance becomes stronger. Indeed, unclear and inadequate organizational information can make a complex idea or process completely unintelligible. Many organizations recognize the need for accurate and adequate information and thus encourage their employees to share information on customers and products so that they can present uniformed image about their organizational activities (Downs and Adrian, 2004). Moreover, studies show that employees identify more with the organization when they feel connected to co-workers and receive relevant information about their organization (Donava and Hocutt, 2001). Information adequacy is therefore, a necessary ingredient for effective organizational performance. Information adequacy, according to Salem (2004) is concerned with the extent to which organizational members received relevant information to do their various jobs. In a period of organizational change, for instance, the importance of effective communication can hardly be overstressed. This

is because communication is vital to effective implementation of change. As Elving and Hansma (2008) have explained that poorly managed change communication results in rumours and resistant to change. Moreover, whenever employees are deprived of adequate information to do their jobs, according to Folarin (2000), it results in information underload. Information underload occurs when the message flow that reaches an individual or higher-level system for processing does not get all the facts required to facilitate efficient performance of its role in the organisation (Folarin, 2000). For effective organizational performance, information must be given in all areas or aspects of employees responsibilities. Goldhaber (1993) identifies three types of information needed by employees to carry out their responsibilities; they include task, human and maintenance information. Salem (2004) provides a working definition of each need as (i) task or job related information, (ii) human or personnel information, and (iii) maintenance or organizational information.

Task or job related information refers to information needed to meet day to day responsibilities; examples include information about job goals, how to actually perform job, and the quality and quantity of work expected. Human or personnel information refers to information needed to meet individual needs; example include information about the chances for bonuses or promotions, opportunities for in-service training about personal benefits, and about evaluation of an individual work. Maintenance or organizational information refers to information needed to sustain the functioning of a unit or the entire organization; examples include information about the success or failure of the organisation or unit, line of responsibilities and information about how organizational decisions are made that might affect the persons job.

Information underload has contributed to many strikes by workers in Nigeria (Folarin, 2000), a phenomenon, Goldhaber (1993) believes could affect employees morale negatively. Abraham Maslow's theory of needs and Heizberg theory of motivation provide the theoretical orientation for the study. Maslow theory seeks to explain why and how people behave the way they do and seeks ways of motivating them for the purpose of raising their morale so as to achieve organizational objectives. Human needs, according to the theory, are in five categories; Physiological needs, Safety needs, Social needs, Esteem needs and Self-actualization needs in order of importance. Maslow in the theory sees man as a perpetual wanting creature dominated by the desire to satisfy so many needs. He is of the view that a satisfied need loses its power to motivate until it becomes activated. He explains that a substantially satisfied need can no longer motivate an individual but those needs that are yet to be met.

In practical life, employees information needs vary according to their tenure and levels on the organizational hierarchy. A new employee's information needs will be limited to procedures or guidelines on how to carry out his job satisfactorily. Later in his career, he will seek information on how to progress within the career ladder, whereas an employee on the verge of retirement will seek information on how he can easily process his benefits without any loss of time. Wherever these needs are not met, according to Maslow, frustration ensues. In the same vein, Heizberg theory of motivation, as cited in McNamara (2004), identifies two dimensions of employee's job satisfaction; the motivator and hygiene issues.

Hygiene issues, according to Heizberg, cannot motivate employees but can minimize dissatisfaction if handled properly. He further argues that hygiene issues can be a source of dissatisfaction if they are absent or mishandled. Examples of Heizberg's hygiene issues include, company policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions. Motivators on the other hand, are issues such as achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility and achievement. He asserts that once hygiene issues are addressed, motivators will produce job satisfaction. Indeed, every worker would desire information on the motivators. For example, an employee at the middle level of the organization hierarchy will seek information on how he can grow with the organization through training and perhaps re-training, if he has not met the academic requirement to rise to the top of his career. The desire for in-service training programme and how he can benefit will overwhelm his needs. Similarly, a well performing employee would normally want to be acknowledged for any outstanding performance in the services of his employer. Where these needs are denied, frustration set in.

Communication and job satisfaction imply that employees must have the information necessary to do their jobs if they are to perform their roles adequately (Kahn,1993; Goldhaber, 1993). For employees to progress in organizations, as noted by Goldhaber (1993), they need to know about the total system and how they fit into the broader system objectives. Communication relationships are important predictors of employee commitment (Goldhaber, 1993). Top management communication appears to be the strongest communication predictors of commitment. Putti et al, as cited in Ford, Carrol and Wade (2003) explain that top management activities by way of communicating organizational policies and promoting a shared value system, are important commitment enhancing mechanism. Postmes, Tanis and Dewith (2001) also find that managerial communication help define what the organization stands for thereby making it easier for employees to identify with organization. Ray and Miller (1991) observe that supportive communication from supervisors and co-workers predicted job satisfaction among teachers by reducing the level of role ambiguity experienced by the teachers. Again, Mueller and Lee (2002), in a study of communication exchange in multiple contexts, find high-quality information among fellow workers as relating to job satisfaction, low role conflict and ambiguity.

One of the problems associated with the declining quality of education in Nigeria has been attributed to inadequate provision of relevant information to employees, especially secondary school teachers, by their employers. In Kogi State, for example, many man hours are lost on yearly basis, to teachers due to inadequate communication. Indeed, while many studies find inadequate information as reasons for most strikes or unrest in the work place, not much effort has been made in identifying the specific areas of needs that is a source of industrial acrimony. This study is, therefore, designed to bridge the missing link using Goldhaber (1993) and Salem (2004) types of information needs. Specifically, this study aimed at examining the extent to which the information needs of Kogi State secondary school teachers were met by the Teaching Service Commission, an arm of the Kogi State Ministry of Education. Consequently, two research questions were formulated to provide direction for the study:

i. To what extent is the Kogi State Secondary School teachers satisfied with the information received on employment situation in TSC, task, job performance, in-service training programme and benefits?

ii. Is there any significant difference between the information received and information expected by the teachers on employment situation in TSC, task, performance, in-service training programme and benefits?

METHOD

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study with questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The population consisted of all practising teachers in the services of Kogi State Teaching Service Commission (TSC), an arm of the Ministry of Education. Out of the 4890 teachers on the payroll of the commission at the time of this study, 400 were selected through stratified random sampling technique on the bases of the three senatorial districts of Kogi State. Descriptive Statistics such as means, frequency counts, percentage and standard deviation were employed for data analysis. In scoring the scale, positively stated items were scored 4, 3, 2 and 1 for strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree respectively. A cut-off or decision point of 2.5 (mean) and above was regarded as" adequate" and where lower was regarded as "inadequate"; this is because a 4 point scale rated 4, 3, 2 and 1 was used. Student t-test was also used to analyse the research question numbers. All inferential analyses were interpreted at both 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance.

The questionnaire items were adaptations of Communication Audit Format designed by the International Communication Association (Goldhaber, 1993). Five facets of information needs were listed for examination. Employment situation in TSC, Task, Job performance, in-service training programme and Benefits . In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they were satisfied with the amount of information received on each of the variables being investigated; they were also asked to indicate the amount of information they would still expect on the same variables. The difference between the received and expected indicate the extent to which the teachers have been overloaded or underloaded with information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: The information received and information expected

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
Information received on employment	400	2.53	1.13	Adequate
Information Expected on Employment	400	3.17	0.999	Adequate
Information Received on Task	400	2.64	0.962	Adequate
Information Expected on Task	400	3.35	0.788	Adequate
Information Received on Performance	400	2.60	1.04	Adequate
Information Expected on Performance	400	3.32	0.777	Adequate
Information Received on in-service	400	2.15	0.948	Inadequate
Information Expected on in-service	400	3.10	1.10	Adequate
Information Received on Benefits	400	2.63	1.02	Adequate
Information Expected on Benefits	400	3.24	0.991	Adequate

Source: Survey, 2009.

Results of the analysis, as presented on table 1 show that all the variables being investigated, except information on in-service training programme, met the 2.5(mean) acceptance point. However, in-service training which is 2.15 (mean), falls short of the acceptance point. Moreover, the decision point fall short of expected information by the teachers across the variables. This implies that the teachers' expectation of information need is far from being satisfied or met .

Table 2: t-test analysis on difference between information received and information expected

Variable	N	Mean	SD	DF	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Info: Received on Employment	400	2.5325	1.13674	399		000
Info: Expected on Employment	400	3.1700	0.99930	399	-19.508	000
Info: Received on Job Task	400	2.6450	0.96244	399		000
Info: Expected on Job Task	400	3.3500	0.78360	399	-26.242	000
Info: Received on Performance	400	2.6050	1.04485	399		000
Info: Expected on Performance	400	3.3200	0.77725	399	-24.721	000
Info: Received on In-service	400	2.1500	0.94855	399		000
Info: Expected on In-service	400	3.1050	1.10319	399	-27.592	000
Info: Received on Benefits	400	2.6325	1.02473	399		000
Info: Expected on Benefits	400	3.2475	0.99182	399	-25.246	000

Source: Survey, 2009

The results of the t-test show a significant difference in the means of information received and expected across the five variables under investigation. The results show that information received by the teachers falls below what they expected for effective performance. The results of the study further show a significant difference between information received and information expected in all the five variables examined, that is information on employment situation in TSC, on teachers' task, performance, in-service training programme and benefits. While four of the variables met the 2.5 (mean) decision point for acceptance on received information, except in-service training none of the variables met the teachers' expectation of information needs in all areas as presented on table1. Inadequate information on job items according to Mueller and Lee (2002) will lead to role conflict and ambiguity.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As findings of this study indicate, information underload exists in all areas such as employment situation in TSC, task, and feedback on job performance, in-service training programme and workers' benefits. In the words of Katz and Kahn (1990), employees will cooperate more with their employers if they know the result of their assignments or actions. By subjecting the teachers to information underload in all the areas under investigation, management may be indirectly retarding the progress of some teachers whose growth is dependent on the supply of accurate, adequate and timely information. For instance, according to Herzberg's, classification, information on in-service training programme and recognition for performance are motivators. No employee would want to remain in a system or organisation in which there is no clear career ladder for advancement. Through in- service training, some employees may be able to make it to the top. Management should provide adequate information to teachers for optimum effective performance and high morale.

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