

Human Resource Management Practices for Teachers' Wellbeing

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Abstract

Human resource management as an aspect of educational management focuses on the effective functioning of the organization. It covers areas such as staffing, staff maintenance, staff development, staff relations and retirement. The human factor is the key to the survival and success of any organization. Hence, their wellbeing should be of utmost concern to management. Teaching has been identified as one of the most stressful jobs, cases of depression, anxiety and stress among teachers abounds. This has affected the wellness and effectiveness of most teachers. There is need for human resource managers in schools to rivet attention on improving the wellbeing of teachers. This paper examined human resource management practices that enhances teachers' wellbeing. Some of the practices discussed are staff motivation, interpersonal communication skills, staff development, human relationship, involvement of teachers in decision making, laying emphasis on work-life balance and effective health campaign programs. The paper concluded that human resource management practices is key to fostering the general wellbeing of teachers in schools. The paper recommended that school managers should initiate effective health campaign programs in primary and secondary schools and continuous staff development programs on maintaining a balance between teachers' work and personal life.

Keywords: Human resource management, Effectiveness, Teachers wellbeing, Job satisfaction, Stress

Introduction

In every organization, human resources remains the important factor that brings about organizational effectiveness. They have the ability to use other resources meant for production, such as materials, machine, and money to achieve the goals of the organization. Otu (2006) observed that human resources differs from material resources. The author argued that the ability to evaluate issues, question management actions and offer loyalty willingly places them on a higher pedestal than other resources. Men have intelligence and reasoning; they are complex and interwoven in complexity (Morin as cited in Fortier and Albert, 2015). Material resources on the other hand, are not rational, they are predictable and can be manipulated to suit the whim and caprices of their owners.

The importance of human resources cannot be overemphasized. They are the most needful aspect in any organization, and should be handled with care. In primary and secondary schools in Nigeria, the persons that assume the positions of human resource managers are the principals and head teachers, in some cases the responsibilities are shared among the school leaders and heads of departments. Their activities among others are recruitment, staff development, promotions, dismissal, payment of salaries, and resolving conflicts in schools.

The term human resource management (HRM) is an aspect of educational management, which specializes in the management of people in schools. It is defined as the proper arrangement of the human factor in an organization to achieve effective and efficient services. Sands (2020), defines human resource management as the management and development of employees in an organization to increase employees' performance and employees' wellness. Sands (2020), used two striking terms "employee performance and employee wellness" to describe human resource management. Employee performance in terms of subject content and pedagogical knowledge. It is believed that at the point of employment, a certain level of knowledge is required from teachers, after which more knowledge is gained on the job. The principals or the head teachers as the case may be are expected to lead the teachers to develop more needed skills and competence that will increase their effectiveness in their teaching job; they are to help them develop the ability to connect with students in the classroom, and teach them how to use instructional materials available in the school. Equally important, is the principals' concern for the improvement of the wellbeing of teachers under them. A teachers' general wellbeing comprise of physical, emotional, social and psychological wellness. Each of these aspects of wellbeing is needed for effective performance of teachers on their jobs. Teachers should be able to live well among others; they should feel good about themselves and their jobs; they should be able to develop healthy relationships with others and have good mental alacrity. The World Health Organizations as cited in (Melbourne, 2021) sees teachers' wellbeing as a positive state of health that is more than the absence of illness. It enables individuals function well and reduces loafing. There is therefore, need for management to meet teachers' expectations in terms of pay and welfare services.

Research has noted a link between teachers' job performance and teachers' wellbeing (DeLoatch, 2021). The logic is that only a satisfied teacher will be willing to go out of their way to put effort and resources to make sure students learn and become productive in life (Kaliski as cited in Okeke, 2018). Teachers' wellness is crucial for teachers' job performance; and the wellbeing of teachers is a crucial component of the health and wellness of a school (Wikipedia, 2020).

Teachers' Wellbeing or wellness: It is a state of contentment, and peace of mind of a teacher. It is the experience of good mental health and having a sense of meaning and purpose (Davis, 2019). For the school principal, it is the ability to

provide an enabling environment which is void of abuse and emotional frustration. An environment that allows for a free exchange of ideas among management, teaching staff and students. This view was also supported by Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development as cited in Kowalshi and Loretto, (2017) who believed that a school environment should promote a state of contentment that will allow teachers flourish and achieve their full potential. It is therefore needful to state at this point that the school environment or climate is an important element in achieving teachers' wellbeing. When school climate is warm and welcoming, teachers relax and do their jobs, pursue goals and achieve purposes.

Of recent, researchers have noted the rising levels of anxiety and depression among teachers, (Stanley, 2019, Chaplain, 2008). In United Kingdom, 2018, a population of 3,750 teachers signed off from work on long- term sick leave due to stress (Stanley, 2019). Stress is caused by unpleasant experiences and conditions teachers are exposed to while on the job. They are known to endure a lot of job stress more than other profession. The reason is increase in students' enrolment and decrease in teachers' population. (National Foundation Education Research –NFER as cited in Busby, 2019). It is important to note that stress is a sign of poor wellbeing, chronic stress can lead to teachers' burnt-out and turnover and eventually to more stress related illnesses (DeLoatch, 2021). The stressfulness of the teaching job demands an intervention by the Ministry of Education through the school resource managers. They are in the position to develop means of ameliorating the state of teachers in their schools.

Furthermore, the Organization of Economic Country Development (OECD) provided indicator that measures each member countries level of wellbeing. In their recent issue, it was observed that long working hours was a factor affecting the wellbeing of most teachers in OECD countries. Long working hours has to do with work overload (Kowalski and Lorreto, 2017). In a bid to meet up with financial obligations or company targets, most workers give long hours. This is mostly common with private schools in Nigeria, where teachers stay at work for long hours and come back late, tired and exhausted. This situation has made many teachers to be dissatisfied with their teaching jobs and long for another. Popoola, as cited in Okeke (2018) conducted a research on unsatisfied teachers in Nigeria and found out that most teachers have tried to leave their job at one point, while a majority prefer other jobs to teaching. They study found pay, recognition, respect, workload, and administrative support as factors influencing the level of dissatisfaction among many teachers.

In another study by Asa and Lasebikan on Mental health of teachers in secondary schools in Nigeria. The study used a sample size of 471 primary school teachers in Oyo State. The aim was to determine the prevalence and predictors of teachers stress, anxiety and depression. The result of the findings shows that 7 out of

every 10 teachers had stress, about 3 out of every 10 teachers had depression, and 3 out of every 10 teachers had generalized anxiety disorder. By implications most teachers are passing through stress and anxiety and this in effect can lead to reduced productivity, loss of confidence and inability to perform routine task (Vipene and Jackreece, 2015). For teachers to instruct well, they must be well. The wellbeing of teachers should be a prior concern of school human resource managers (HRM).

Human Resources Practices that Enhances Teachers Wellbeing.

These are activities carried out by the school resource managers to promote teachers wellness as well as encourage workers to put in their best in schools.

Motivation of Teachers: Teachers are the backbone of any successful school. The more they are motivated they more productive they become (Miller, 2018). Motivation has to do with energizing, arousing, and sustaining teachers' behavior and performance. It is the force that propels teachers into achievement of set goals (Idiegbeyan-Ose, Aregbesola, Owolabi and Eyiolorunshe, 2019). A study carried out by (Idiegbeyan-Ose, Aregbesola, Owolabi and Eyiolorunshe, (2019) to find the link between motivation and job satisfaction of Library staff of private Universities in Nigeria, the findings disclosed a positive relationship between job satisfaction and job motivation. Teachers' job satisfaction means experiencing contentment in the teaching job, they more satisfied teachers are on their jobs, the more motivated they become.

Adelabu (2005), carried out a study on teachers' motivation and incentives in Nigeria and identified three factors that affect teachers' motivation, which are job context, job content and reward. Job context, he noted comprised of dilapidated school buildings, without basic infrastructure; this lowers teachers' morale and makes it difficult for them to enjoy their job. Job content has to do with work load; teachers' in primary schools are overloaded with work, and are required to teach an average of forty periods in five working days in addition to other activities. While "reward" which consist of teachers' salaries, are poor and not enough to meet their basic needs. School leaders' motivational practices should be, to improve the teaching context, teaching content and teachers reward system. Additionally, teachers' motivation is not bribery, nor manipulation, but understanding teachers' needs and providing ways to help them meet those needs (Out, 2006). When teachers are truly motivated, their wellbeing will definitely improve.

Interpersonal CommunicationSkills: It is a skill needed by the school human resource managers to get along with teachers and school stakeholders. It has to do with having the ability to connect with teachers to foster healthy relationships (Malcolm, 2017). By maintaining an open door communication policy, school

leaders help workers air their views on issues pertaining to their welfare. Chang as cited in Okeke, (2019) noted that effective school managers are the ones that build positive working relationship with staff, communicating changes taking place in the school to teachers, as well as identifying and supporting teachers' needs and concerns. In that way, teachers will have trust and confidence which will boost their social wellbeing

A human resource manager should be apt to listen, empathize, connect with people, and able to teach, present and motivates teachers to achieve predestined goals (McEwan, as cited in Okeke, 2019). School managers who always have listening ears know when teachers are both mentally and physical burnt out.

Also needful are soft skills such as negotiation and collaboration skills, both are essential for the human resource managers. Negotiation is needed to get teachers to rub minds together (Computer Training School, 2015). It helps if the school managers could discuss issues with teachers and know their positions. Another communication soft skill is Collaboration. It is the act of working jointly and cooperatively with teachers to meet their needs and the needs of the school. In collaboration, the school resource managers pull on the strength of teachers, proving that they do not know it all. To collaborate with teachers is to make them part of the problem solving team. This effort from the HRM will advance teachers ego and self-esteem.

Staff Development Programs: The act of offering staff additional training courses help them grow in their teaching career, they acquire new skills and knowledge which will help them change with the times. Staff development improves teachers' self- concept, increases confidence level and motivate them into higher levels of personal achievement (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano and Dennison as cited in Okeke, 2019). Continuous staff development is the only way to satisfy teachers career needs. Such Staff development practices are:

- Teachers' induction programs: This is actually carried out with new employees who are yet to adapt to a new workplace. Through induction programs, they acquire support and guidance that will help them do their job effectively. \
- On-the job-training: This training program is meant for all staff, and it is done while on the job. The objective is to train the teacher to become efficient and effective in carrying out specific duties within the school. It can come in form of coaching or mentoring.
- Refresher courses: This training program is for updating teachers' knowledge and skills, especially with the introduction of new innovation such as computer literacy in the school system. Refresher courses help teachers acquire skills that will help them perform better.
- In-service courses is a type of continuing education program for teachers. It

helps teachers update knowledge and skills in their disciplines. Most times, it comes in form of additional qualifications that will enable teachers grow in their profession.

It is important to know that school leaders in public schools in Nigeria have been faithful in giving teachers opportunities to improve on their careers. Nevertheless, more needs to be done in the induction programs. It is the opinion of the researcher, that school leaders have fallen short in the area of induction of new teachers. Most times new and young teachers are left to discover and learn the ropes on their own. The effect is that, they end up confused and frustrated.

Human Relationships: Human relationships exist in schools, among management, academics and non-academics staff. The relationship could be healthy or unhealthy, it all depends on the effectiveness of the human resource managers. When the relationship is cordial, it motivates workers and fosters performance and wellbeing of staff but, when it is unfriendly it demotivates workers and causes strife. The human factor should not be neglected in any organization rather they should be acknowledged and appreciated through praise and rewards. Vishakha (2020) noted some good human relation practices such as understanding workers' needs and expectations, providing good working conditions, and resolving conflict between management as well as workers. School leaders should treat staff members with respect and see them as family. It is also good if extra- curricular activity periods could sometimes be used as a time of socializing among staff, this can go a long way to bring overall improvement and wellness in the school. Teachers should be made to know that when they lift one hand for help, there will be many hands supporting them.

Involvement of teachers in decision making: Decision making is an important aspect of a school manager's job. The decisions they make affect the whole school, it is therefore necessary to include teachers. Landry (2020), stated that school leaders can increase their chances of making right decisions by including their team members in the decision making process. Accordingly, it creates opportunity for colleagues to share ideas, learn from each other and work towards a common goal. Being a part of decision making in a school organization is very important and it usually boost the morale of teachers involved. It is important that school managers ask for teacher's opinion in making decisions on issues concerning them. It fulfills their need for esteem, self-respect and recognition. Olorunsola and Olayemi (2011) carried out an investigation to find out teachers participation in decision making process in secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study discovered that teachers' involvement in decision making was very high, also age, sex and educational qualifications did not hinder teachers from participating in decision making process. Short (2017) noted the importance of involving teachers in decision making as:

- Increasing their morale and making them feel involved and empowered. This usually leads to increased engagement and satisfaction with their job.
- Increasing their productivity: Teachers who are involved in decision making feel they have a stake in the school, and naturally will contribute more.
- Increasing their commitment to its success as those engaged usually take ownership of the decision and will stake their life to make sure it comes through.

Initiating Health Programs: Good health is part of the general wellbeing, and there is a saying that health is wealth. Sick teachers can never achieve full potentials in their careers. Health programs and activities should be introduced in schools to improve teachers' physical and mental wellbeing. Teachers should be sensitized on healthy life style such as eating right, exercising and practicing deep breathing which is known to decrease stress; and finally the human resource managers should encourage teachers to go for regular routine medical checkups.

Work- Life balance: This is a concept that describes a balance between work and personal life. Teachers have personal lives which is apart from teaching work. Their personal lives, include families, relationship, dreams and aspirations, these are to be maintained. There was a case of a teacher in a private school who took permission from management to drop her son in a boarding school. By the end of that month ten thousand naira was deducted from her salary as a result of that movement. The effect was that she resigned after the incident. This kind of issue could have been prevented by the HRM who knows his or her job. It is the duty of the human resource manager to make provisions to accommodate teachers' needs outside of school. These needs could be in form of visiting their kids at school or taking time off to connect with families and loved ones.

Conclusion:

Human resource management is key to fostering the general wellbeing of teachers in schools. Right from the point of recruitment to retirement of teachers, the human resource managers' function as caretakers, they are employed to take care of personnel in the organization. Their effectiveness to their practices will generate among others, teachers' wellness, job satisfaction, job performance, teachers' engagement and school effectiveness.

Recommendations:

It is therefore recommended that:

1. Human resource managers should initiate effective health campaign programs in primary and secondary schools for teaching staff to learn how to take care of their general wellbeing.

2. Continuous staff development programs is paramount to enhance teachers' job performance.
3. School leaders should develop measures to help teachers strike a balance between work and personal life. Such as:
 - a. No work after school over.
 - b. Sharing work appropriately among teachers to avoid over load.
 - c. Avoid engaging teachers on weekends.

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