

Education Re-Engineering in the New Normal World

Festschrift for
Professor Rashid Adewumi Aderinoye



Edited by
Kester Osegha Ojokheta
Kehinde O. Kester

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A Festschrift for
PROFESSOR RASHID ADEWUMI ADERINOYE

Edited by

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xii</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xv</i>
INTRODUCTORY SESSION	
1. The Rise and Rise of the Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria - <i>M. A. Omolewa</i>	3
2. Moving From Teaching as Telling to Teaching as Guiding - <i>Pai Obanya</i>	13
PART ONE: ACCESS, CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT RE-ENGINEERING	
3. Education Reengineering and Future Proofing in a New Normal World - <i>H. Inyega</i>	25
4. Re-engineering Educational Assessment in Nigeria: Higher Education Institutions to Bridge Inequality in Undergraduates' Access to Quality Education in the New World - <i>J. O. Osakuade</i>	34
5. Rethinking Widening Educational Access for Out-of-School Children in Nigeria: A Paradigm Shift towards Non-Formal Education System - <i>K. O. Kester, A. I. Gbenro and O. T. Ogidan</i>	42
6. Suggesting Paradigm Shift for Learners Assessment in Nigeria's Education System in the New Normal World - <i>T. G. Muibi</i>	50
7. The Future of World of Work in the New Normal World: Essential Preparations Needed - <i>A. M. Momoh and G. M. Adegbola</i>	61
8. New Normal and Labour Union Participation: Reducing Gender Bias in "Virtual Meetings or Gatherings" and the Need for "Unconscious Bias Training" for Leaders - <i>V. O. Aasa and A. A. Ishola</i>	67
9. Increasing Organisational Performance During COVID-19 Crisis: Workers' Welfare Option - <i>D. I. Ukpabi</i>	76
10. Educating Stakeholders for Healthy Workplace and Productivity in the Post-COVID-19 Lockdown Nigeria - <i>B. M. Oni</i>	87

11.	Emphasising the Importance of Non-Governmental Organisations in the Development of Urban-Rural Communities in the New Normal World – <i>Y. L. Olaleye and R. J. Adebusuyi</i>	97
12.	The Necessity of Active Participation of NGOs in Basic Literacy Delivery in Post-COVID-19 Nigeria: Experience from Lapai Literacy Clinic Foundation (LLCF) – <i>A. A. Olojede and R. I. Eziufa</i>	111
13.	Girl-Child Education in Nigeria: Implication for National Development – <i>P. E. Okeke</i>	121
14.	Denoting the Experiences of Artisans in Benin City, Nigeria During the COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown Period – <i>L. A. Okukpon and F. U. Aghedo</i>	130
15.	Parenting in the New Normal World: Lessons Inherent to Imbibe – <i>S. O. Oladeji</i>	138
16.	Curriculum Structure and Teaching Mode in Lifelong Learning – <i>L. K. Kazeem</i>	145
17.	Government Efforts at Developing Relevant Curriculum and Textbooks for Sustainable Educational Programmes Implementation in Nigeria: A Critique – <i>O. E. Igudia and C. A. Akangbe</i>	155
18.	Historical Perspective of Universal Basic Education: Issues and Prospects – <i>M. T. Oni, O. Kayode-Olawoyin and B. O. Lawal</i>	166
PART TWO: TEACHING, LEARNING AND COUNSELLING RE-ENGINEERING		
19.	Re-Engineering Teaching-Learning Process for Post-COVID-19 Pandemic Pedagogy in Nigeria – <i>N. A. Adedokun</i>	179
20.	Educational Uptakes for Post-COVID-19 in Nigeria: Synopses and Challenges – <i>O. B. Sanni</i>	189
21.	Advocating Alternative Education Delivery Mechanisms in Post-COVID-19 Nigeria – <i>K. O. Ojokheta and P. O. Ojokheta</i>	195
22.	Alternative Approaches to Mental Health Delivery in Nigeria in the New Normal World – <i>U. S. Omokhabi</i>	206
23.	Containment Efforts and Strategies Against the Spread of COVID-19 Around the World – <i>A. E. Alabi, B. O. Akinsanya and K. A. Aderogba</i>	218
24.	The New Normal World of COVID-19 and Education in Nigeria: Dimensions, Impacts and Resilience – <i>R. O. Ogundipe and M. A. Omilani</i>	234

25.	Peer Pressure, Media Literacy Skills and Promotion of Learning Process in South-South, Nigeria – <i>K. A. Aramide and N. A. Babalola</i>	245
26.	Post-COVID-19 Nigeria and the Propriety of Entrepreneurship Paradigm – <i>C. M. Orji</i>	251
27.	Education Reengineering and Liberty in Nigeria – <i>M. F. Olajide, S. O. Okemakinde, Y. A. Omole and F. O. Olajide</i>	259
28.	Integrating Community Resource for Effective Teaching and Learning for Quality Education – <i>E. T. Daramola</i>	266
PART THREE: HIGHER EDUCATION AND OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING RE-ENGINEERING		
29.	Access Barriers to Higher Education among Nigerian Households – <i>E. J. Isuku, E. Nwafor and I. Olowookere</i>	277
30.	University Without Walls: Rethinking Higher Education Conclave in the New Normal World – <i>O. A. Aremu, Y. O. Akinyemi and O. F. Adeyemo</i>	284
31.	Embracing the New Normal in Open and Distance Learning in Nigeria – <i>J. Eyisi</i>	293
32.	Re-engineering Open Distance Learning Practice in Nigeria for Sustainability in the New Normal World – <i>A. A. Adelakun</i>	304
33.	Ensuring Affordability and Usability in the Provision of Learners' Support Services by ODL Institutions During COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond – <i>M. S. Akintola and L. K. Bello</i>	315
34.	Reengineering the Nigerian Education System towards Resilience in the New Normal World: Practical Strategies – <i>F. S. Akinwumi and A. A. Itobore</i>	325
35.	Selfless Leadership Practice in School Organisation in Nigeria – <i>O. J. Abiodun-Oyebanji and O. M. Iyiola</i>	335
36.	Educational Services Preparation and Delivery in Nigeria in the Post-COVID-19 Era – <i>E. A. Isah</i>	345
37.	Promoting Open and Distance Learning in Higher Education in Botswana and Nigeria – <i>G. Adekanmbi and B. Gaotlhobogwe</i>	358
38.	COVID-19 and the Scramble for Digitalisation of Higher Education Curricula – <i>S. K. Alonge</i>	373

PART FOUR: ICT AND EDUCATION RE-ENGINEERING

39.	Upgrading Skills, Technology Adoption and Innovation Capacity as Part of Nigerian Recovery Trajectories from COVID-19 Shocks - <i>J. B. Babalola</i>	385
40.	Adapting Virtual Resource Materials in Community Development Delivery in the New Normal World - <i>U. C. Osu</i>	401
41.	Pathways for Promoting Basic and Digital Literacy in Post-COVID-19 Nigeria - <i>J. O. Edeh</i>	410
42.	Online Assessment of Virtual Learning in the New Normal Era - <i>J. O. Fehintola</i>	424
43.	Online Teaching and Educationists During and After COVID-19 Lockdown - <i>T. V. Gbadamosi</i>	436
44.	Cyber Ethics Knowledge, Adherence and Use of Electronic Information Resources by Distance Learners in Nigeria - <i>A. Adetimirin</i>	447
45.	Repositioning Education for Sustainability in a World of COVID-19 Pandemic: The Digital Learning Opportunities - <i>G. A. Nwogu</i>	456
46.	Framework for Improved Utilisation of E-learning Resources in Distance Learning Programmes in New Normal World - <i>D. A. Egunyomi and A. E. Olatunji</i>	466
47.	COVID 19 Pandemic and the Necessity of Online Learning in Nigeria's Education - <i>H. F. Adepoju and E. F. Oyegbile</i>	479
48.	Retooling Adult Literacy in a New Normal World: The Place of Digital Literacy - <i>S. O. Ojedeyi and O. O. Adelere</i>	486
49.	Delivery of Digital Learning in Nigerian Universities in New Normal World: A Perspective - <i>B. A. Fajimi</i>	492
50.	COVID-19 and E-Learning Instructional Requirements of University Lecturers in Nigeria - <i>R. U. Nwachukwu, S.C. Nwizu and C. Egwuekwe</i>	503
51.	Intricacies of Online Teaching and Learning for Primary School Pupils in a Post-Pandemic Era - <i>A. A. Fadiya</i>	513
52.	Technology and Distance Education: A Panacea for Reengineering Education in COVID-19 Pandemic Era - <i>L. C. Ukwuaba and M. A. Ali</i>	522

PART FIVE: ADULT EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE PRACTICE
RE-ENGINEERING

53. Re-inventing Adult Education Praxis in Nigeria for a New World Order 537
- *J. E. Oghenekohwo*
54. Reengineering Adult and Non-Formal Education Through Nomenclature and Professionalisation: The Nigerian Experience 542
- *M. A. Hassan and F. O. Olaniyi*
55. Enhancing Adult Education Through Family Literacy Approach 550
- *I. A. Alao*
56. Enhancing Adult Literacy Teaching and Learning in COVID-19 Crisis and Beyond in Nigeria 558
- *B. E. Anyikwa and A. R. Ajayi*
57. Advocating Alternative Approaches to the Promotion of Lifelong Learning in Nigeria in the New Normal World Nigeria 565
- *A. A. Sarumi*
58. Educational Innovations: Towards Better Adult Learning 580
- *M. O. Adedokun and O. A. Olanipekun*
59. Validation Process of Primer and Materials Developed in Adult and Non-Formal Education for Adult Learners 589
- *A. Halilu and U. H. Babanzara*
60. Retraining Youth and Adult Literacy Facilitators in Edo State in the Face of COVID-19 Crisis and Beyond 595
- *C. O. Olomukoro and I. H. Omoregie*
61. Re-Engineering Adult Education Towards Mitigating the Negative Effects of Strategies Adopted for the Control of COVID-19 on Livelihoods in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria 604
- *G. Adekola and O. A. Fekosufa*
62. Imperativeness of New Paradigms in the Delivery of Social Welfare Services in the New Normal Nigeria 613
- *A. A. Omokhabi*
63. Motivational Strategies for Re-Engineering Delivery System in Adult Education Programmes in the New Normal World 628
- *M. A. Oyebamiji and C. N. Odele*
64. Repositioning Women for Life: The Place of Women Education in the New Normal 637
- *R. C. Ojo and A. F. Afonja*
65. The Imperativeness of Mass Literacy in Adult Preparedness for Managing Pandemic: A Case of COVID-19 647
- *B. G. Agboola and B. K. Awoniyi*
66. The State of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria: Preliminary Observations on Contemporary Challenges 654
- *M. G. Dukku*

PART SIX: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION RE-ENGINEERING

67. Community Health and the Challenges of COVID-19 in Nigerian Communities 663
 – *O. R. Oyelami*
68. Towards Effective Community Mobilisation to Curtail the Spread of Outbreak of Communicable Diseases: Lessons from COVID-19 Pandemic 673
 – *O. A. Moronkola and O. A. Moronkola*
69. Youth Engagement and Good Governance in Nigeria: The New Normal World 681
 – *O. E. Olajide, O. V. Adaja and K. M. Ojoogun*
70. Rethinking Community Development Practice in the New Normal Nigeria: Community Education Option 691
 – *O. P. Orimogunje and O. F. Aromolaran*
71. Re-Engineering Literacy Education in a New Normal Nigeria for Sustainable Economic Empowerment and Development 697
 – *O. A. A. Adebayo*
72. Community Education and Community Inclusive Actions for Post-COVID-19 Era in Nigeria 705
 – *I. A. Abiona*
73. The Place of Community Education in the Development of Social Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development in Nigeria 716
 – *B. Ladan*
74. Multidimensional Role(s) of Sports in Community Development in Nigeria 724
 – *O. Adisa, O. Ifeta and O. A. Adegbesan*
75. Community Health Workers and the Challenges of COVID-19 in Nigeria 733
 – *L. O. Ige and M. O. Falolu*

PART SEVEN: LANGUAGE EDUCATION RE-ENGINEERING

76. Utilising Corporate Social Responsibility as a Tool for Community Well-Being in Nigeria 747
 – *U. A. Idris*
77. Language, Education and COVID-19 Pandemic 755
 – *C. O. O. Kolawole and A. O. Kolawole*
78. COVID-19 and its Implications for English Language Educators in Nigeria 765
 – *O. A. Olubodun*
79. Public Participation in Governance: Language Issues in Nigeria 776
 – *S. I. Odiaka*
80. Language Diversity and the Problem of Ethnicity in Nigeria: Any Solution in Sight? 784
 – *A. A. Adeyinka and I. T. Akinsola*

PART EIGHT: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, RECREATIONAL AND INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION RE-ENGINEERING

81.	Health Education and Implementation of SDG 3 for Improved Education System in the Post-COVID-19 Nigeria - R. O. Adeniji and R. A. Kareem	797
82.	Rethinking Investment in Education: Issues, Perspective and Challenges - B. A. Fashogbon and P. N. Abu	805
83.	Re-Engineering Nigerian University Education for Sustainable Development in the 21st Century - O. S. E. Odusanya	815
84.	Meeting the Inclusive Education Needs of Students with Hearing Impairment in a New Normal World - J. Ajamu and O. O. Isaiah	823
85.	Sports and Migration in a Globalized Economy - A. O. Fadoju and M. A. Adebayo	830
86.	Including Learners with Disabilities in Post-COVID-19 Lockdown Education - O. A. Fakolade and O. C. Ashara	841
87.	The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as a Veritable Tool of Adult Education Programmes in Nigeria - O. I. Oke and A. F. Akinkunmi	849
88.	Community-Driven Development Approach to Inclusive Growth in Local Government Areas of Nigeria - O. M. Oludare	859

APPENDICES

	Profile of Professor Rashid Adewumi Aderinoye	869
	Professor Rashid Adewumi Aderinoye at 70	871
	President Buhari Felicitates with University Don, Professor Rashid Adewumi Aderinoye at 70	872
	Professor Rasheed A. Aderinoye: A Man of Destiny @ 70	873
	Notes on Contributors	875
Index		891

Chapter 9

Increasing Organisational Performance During COVID-19 Crisis: Workers' Welfare Option

D. I. Ukpabi

Introduction

It is the joy of every worker to get paid and enjoy all the necessary benefits attached to his/her work; however, it becomes worrisome when some of these workers are denied their inalienable rights having carried out their statutory responsibility. Most workers in Nigeria are plagued by the menace of non-payment of salary and this has highly affected them. For instance, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities (SSANU), Non-Academic Staff Union of the Universities (NASU), National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT) and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) saga is veritably affecting the quality of education and performance of workers in this country. Some state governments owe their workers several months' salary, while most private organisations do not care of their workers' monthly salary let alone other benefits attached. These organisations often hide under the guise of economic crunch to default in the payment of salary and other fringe benefits, thereby given room for substandard products. This act of default in welfare of workers and other incentives adversely affects the increase of workers' performance. This paper considered welfare incentive and salary increase as some of the factors that may increase job performance. It is based on this premise; that this paper tends to examine the effect of increasing organisational performance of workers through welfare incentive during COVID-19 crisis.

COVID-19 Crisis and its Impacts on Organisational Performance

COVID-19 is a global health crisis and also an international economic threat. The worldwide lockdown of businesses and industries that were implemented and mandated to restrain the spread of the virus generated fundamental challenges for both employees and employers across the globe. At the individual level, populations of shutdown affected employees were turned overnight into work from home by the employees, essential life-sustaining workers (e.g. emergency room medical personnel and supermarket staff), laid-off employees seeking the nation-specific equivalent of unemployment benefits. Organisationally, the economic shutdowns and related governmental activities appeared to likely change some industries fundamentally, accelerate trends that were already underway in others, and open opportunities for novel industries to emerge, as typically

happens in times of wars and natural disasters (Sine and David, 2003).

As an example, between 1918-1920, the Spanish flu killed an estimated 50 million people worldwide, many of them adults between the ages of 20 and 50 years. In response, many countries adopted policies to improve health and working conditions by providing either universal health care (Europe) or employer-based insurance schemes (US). More generally, the financial and health impacts of infectious disease have been COVID-19 and the Workplace linked to tighter cultural norms and practices (Gelfand, 2019), political conservatism and xenophobia (Ji, Tybur and Van Vugt, 2019), and more directive workplace leadership (Van Vugt, Hogan and Kaiser, 2008). We also know, when considering other recent systemic shocks such as the 9/11/2001 attacks in the United States, that such shocks can produce long-lasting global changes in practices and attitudes towards surveillance, security, and privacy. In the analysis present here, it was focussed on the relevance of COVID-19-related risks and changes for workers, workplaces, and work practices – and do not differentiate between the direct health risks associated with COVID-19 and the economic fallout. Our broad survey of topics allows us to identify a variety of economic, social, and psychological risks that workers appear likely to face as a result of COVID-19; and, notably, some of these risks are those that research on prior economic contractions suggests may have adverse – and lethal – health effects (Popovici and French, 2013).

The economic downturn in Nigeria was triggered by a combination of declining oil price and spillovers from the Covid-19 outbreak, which not only led to a fall in the demand for oil products but also stopped economic activities from taking place when social distancing policies were enforced. The government responded to the crisis by providing financial assistance to businesses, not to households, that were affected by the outbreak. The monetary authority adopted accommodative monetary policies and offered a targeted 3.5 trillion loan support to some sectors. These efforts should have prevented the economic crisis from occurring but it didn't. Economic agents refused to engage in economic activities for fear of contracting the Covid-19 disease that was spreading very fast at the time.

A Gartner (2020) survey of 229 Human Resources (HR) departments showed that approximately one-half of the companies had more than 80 percent of their COVID-19 and the Workplace employees working from home during early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic – and estimated substantial long-term increases for remote work after the pandemic. The need for millions of workers to work from home (WFH) in response to COVID-19 has accelerated recent remote work trends facilitated by the rise of connectivity and communication technologies.

While remote work is a broader category since it can include Work from Anywhere (i.e., not necessarily home), we do know that some – such as professionals who need to perform complex tasks that require little interaction with peers – actually prefer and are more productive if they work from home (Allen, Cho and Meier, 2014). Yet as large numbers of workers are forced to work from home, many face challenges due to such fundamental issues as not having space in one's home to attend to work. Employees who live with others also face a larger set of challenges than those who live alone since they need to navigate others' space as well. Employees often find it challenging to maintain boundaries between work and non-work (Ramarajan and Reid, 2013). One domain that might offer lessons – in addition to being increasingly important independently – is the experience of gig workers (i.e. people taking on very-short-term

jobs) (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018) since they often work from anywhere (e.g. as drivers, shoppers, and delivery people). Reflective of the gig economy's expansion prior to COVID-19: in the US, at least, 20 percent of the current workforce are freelance workers McKinsey and Bradley (2016), and that number has been predicted to grow to 40 percent by the mid-2020s (Gillespie, 2017).

Remarkably, labour economists estimate that all of the net job growth between 2005 and 2015 was in this sector (Katz and Kruger, 2016). While so-called rideshare companies were shut down as part of the first wave of reactions to the COVID-19 outbreak, a corresponding boom in various delivery services staffed by gig workers shows the growth potential of such jobs. The challenges that gig workers are known to face will sound familiar to those required to work from home (WFH) since they include getting and staying organised; managing the heightened emotions associated with such work; figuring out and maintaining an identity so that those emotions do not disrupt the productivity upon which their survival depends; coping with loneliness while also seeking out and maintaining functional relationships that support the work; and, establishing some semblance of a longer-term career (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018).

Reasons for Low Organisational Performance

Organisations want to strive for greater height but majority of them are not toeing the path of achieving this. In the postulation of Ajila and Abiola (2014), in order for an organisation to gain competitive advantage, there is need to ensure that the optimisation of the performance of employees become sacrosanct. Workers' productivity will go a long way in determining the performance of the organisation. From the look of things regarding COVID-19 pandemic, there was an obvious low organisational performance. According to (Ozili, 2020), the Nigeria government responded to the crisis by providing financial assistance to businesses, not to households, that were affected by the outbreak. The monetary authority adopted accommodative monetary policies and offered a targeted 3.5 trillion loan support to some sectors. These efforts should have prevented the economic crisis from occurring but it didn't. Economic agents refused to engage in economic activities for fear of contracting the COVID-19 disease that was spreading very fast at the time. In another development, Popovici and French (2013), opined on the economic fallout during the COVID-19 crisis. More generally, the financial and health impacts of infectious disease have been COVID-19 and the workplace linked to tighter cultural norms and practices (Gelfand, 2019), for which there was disparate COVID-19 impacts on the low organisational performance of workers of which it's welfare incentive is likely to be the better option to rescue the situation.

Low performance at work is one of the reasons why a country or an organisation may go down within a few years of establishing itself. Staff performance management is an indispensable skill in running a company, but dealing with low performance goes beyond rolling out precepts and some endless lists of work ethics. Hence, it is one thing to understand the reasons for low performance at work, and another thing to know how to deal with low performance at work. Companies may perform poorly for a variety of specific reasons, but common causes of low revenue or profit include undefined or unclear objectives, poor strategy or execution, lack of talent or resources and poor marketing and communication. Clearly defined business goals and strategies, to enact them are often the starting point for improving poor performance. The organisational climate is viewed as characterised by the following factors: Unchallenging jobs, lack of

recognition for work done well through merit or announcements in meetings, shortage of personnel where they are expected to perform responsibilities, which were supposed to be performed by other employees, lack of feedback about performance, poor communication where there is no two-way communication between subordinates and managers and lack of staff development activities which prevent personnel from being equipped with skill and knowledge that they need in order to provide quality service, and lack of material resources which make it difficult for employees to carry out duties. When the problems that are mentioned above are perceived, dissatisfaction in the workplace/organisation manifest (Chandrasekar, 2011). Consequently, increase in organisational performance can be limited by a lack of commitment or ineffective marketing and communication. A retailer might have products and services with great benefits for customers, but customers don't know it. Lack of investment in market research limits development of desired products and services. Lack of investment in promotion negates the ability to attract customers and build a successful brand reputation. Consequently, increase in organisational performance can be limited by a lack of commitment or ineffective marketing and communication.

Every person has his own wants and desires, for that purpose he/she works to get fulfilled. It is not enough for an employee to be satisfied materially but non material aspects are as essential as material aspects, an employee need both to be fulfilled. Material means his salary, bonuses, allowances, job security and other facilities. While non-material aspect includes leaves, excellent working environment, good understanding among other fellow workers and top management, all these elements have much to do with motivation of employee. When employees are committed to the job and the organisation seem to be reaping higher from the increased profit, employees will feel exploited when the increased value is not reflected on their overall wellbeing and when such thoughts set in, they become dissatisfied with the job and performance begins to decline. The fate of an organisation is usually determined by its employees so it sounds logical to understand how employees can be motivated. As far as the employee's motivation is concerned, employee motivational incentive programmes have been found to be the most commonly adopted technique among organisations.

Human resource provides basis for an organisation to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Since organisations are operating in a dynamic and competitive business environment, they need to develop strategies to acquire and retain the competent workforce. Human asset is considered to be the most important asset of any organisation and in order to get the efficient and effective result from human resource, motivation is necessary (Zaman, Nadia, Shah and Jamsheed, 2011). However, it is noteworthy that incentives are designed to get maximum employee's productivity and help retain the most productive and performing employees. Incentive provides a platform through which firms can motivate their employees to improve their employee's productivity, scholars like Arnolds and Venter (2007), have all carried out research into monetary and non-monetary incentive and how they affect organisations. Ojokuku and Oyedokun (2011), also identified the effect of financial incentives on information and communication technology professionals. Profit sharing plans, premium pay and cash bonus are the types of financial benefits enjoyed by these professionals which enhanced their motivation to work.

Nigerian Workers' Welfare: Conceptualisation, Components and Measurement

Nigerian workers deserve equitable and living wage and welfare package such as transportation facilities to and fro workplace, crèche, housing and medical facilities, schooling allowances for employees' children and facility of gym and also the trainers in the organisation. Organisation could also have a facility where people can relax, listen to music, play games outside their normal work hours. Every worker has a right and responsibility as enshrined by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Although these rights are being infringed upon by the constituted authority and this has adversely affected the functionality of these employees. Both government and non-government agencies seem not to show much concern about the welfare of Nigerian workers. This could be adduced from the recent happenings in the country, whereby the Federal government flagrantly defied on the implementation of the new minimum wage as agreed by the tripartite and the technical committees. Government at all levels dilly dally on issues pertaining to the welfare of workers, as this is not perceived by them as a matter of national importance. Both government and private organisations treat workers with disdain and utmost lack of discreet.

It is noteworthy that wellbeing of these people who are the functional unit of any organisation cannot be separated from their welfare as both is seen as a Siamese twins and they are essential in politics, economics and law of any country or organisation (Griffin in Odeku and Odeku, 2014). This shows that in Nigeria, this is lacking as substantial number of people with capacity and ability to work are unemployed. This is an aberration and against standard practice anywhere the dignity and respect for human labour is considered and held high. The right to job safety and security, payment commensurate with qualification anywhere in the country, collective bargaining and welfare of every worker no matter the organisation (Laura, Powell and Volpp in Odeku and Odeku 2014).

Henkel and von Hippel (2005) postulated that the negative aspect of employees' welfare has to do with neutralising the significant impacts of large organisations in terms of their production capacity; while Gaikwad (2013) was of the view that the positive side of the welfare of workers involves making available opportunities for every worker to enjoy good life with every member of his/her family.

Increased employees' welfare reduces the level of attrition or turnover among the workers and ultimately builds the company's goodwill in the long run (Grigore and Stancu, 2011). According to Lau and May in Odeku and Odeku (2014), the image of the quality of life of the company will affect its market and the performances of its finance and that companies that had high quality of work life have the likelihood of having exceptional profitability and growth. This shows that the more the quality of life in terms of work relations, the more the performance of the employees. The key factor that promotes quality of work life is optimisation of welfare of workers by the company's management.

Any organisation that wants to keep binge on edge in terms of performance should device policies that would boost the welfare of workers in terms of promotion, fringe benefits, conducive working environment, reasonable pay, and adequate compensation plan from time to time. Therefore, for increasing organisational performance by the workers, there should be welfare of workers as an issue that must be taken seriously and

with high sense of commitment on the part of the management of the various organisations and government at all levels.

To ensure effective and efficient working relations between the workers and management, the welfare of workers in all spheres should be prime and taken with high sense of seriousness. No nation can survive a belligerent working environment as this will spell doom to the economic development. In the research of performance in business, the definition of performance has led Folan (2007) to highlight three priorities or objectives of governance of performance: Firstly, performance should be analysed by each entity within the limits of the environment in which they decide to operate. For example, a company's performance needs to be analysed in the markets in which it operates and not those that are not relevant to its operations.

Secondly, performance is always linked to one or several objectives set by the entity whose performance is analysed. Therefore, a company measures its performance against objectives and targets established and accepted internally rather than on those used by external bodies. Thirdly, performance is reduced to the relevant and recognisable features. According to Folan's theory, performance is influenced by the environment, the objectives to be achieved and relevant recognisable features. Folan uses several definitions for the concept of performance as it should be analysed and quantified from several points of view. As stated above, traditional human resource managers believe solely on salaries and promotion as a welfare scheme offered to employers. In essence, employees may get promoted to higher ranks and receive higher salaries which may stimulate some psychological satisfaction but may not breed job satisfaction. For instance, an individual might have risen to the position of General Manager in his company but may not find satisfaction even though his salary is ten times higher than the salary he was receiving when he joined the company. At such, he may not show commitment and dedication to the job.

Renewed perspective on human resources is however viewing welfare as an addition to salaries, wages and promotion because of the potential impact of job satisfaction to employee productivity and attainment of organisational goals. Today, everything about welfare is given due priority to ensure that the employees are mentally, psychologically, emotionally and socially able to deliver on the job. To this end, there are over forty-four reward tools that have evolved over time, serving as a means of improving individual and team effectiveness. Thus, Rudzi *et al* (2013) stressed that understanding their reward preferences and the implications of these differences are essential in designing incentives to attract and retain managers after their advanced training is completed. It is clear that training which is a form of motivation and capacity development is not an alternative to welfare even though it meets a need. Welfare in this case implies that employees can meet their fundamental human need of clothing, shelter, education, healthcare by remaining in the service of the organisation. When welfare packages are provided to employees, they become contented and loyal with the organisation and that could be a viable strategy of employee retention.

Measuring Organisational Performance

Many researchers utilise traditional accounting measures of profit. As van Dyck, Frese, Baer, and Sonnentag (2005) highlight, return on assets is a measure of operating efficiency, reflecting the long term financial strength of organisations. Although a ubiquitous measure, return on assets is not always an optimal measure. For example,

return on assets should not be used to compare organisations in different industries. The peculiarities of any industry will fault this index. Because of the massive reserves in the insurance and banking industries, for example, return on assets will tend to underestimate the profitability of these organisations. Productivity is the revenue divided by the total number of employees. Many researchers, however, prefer to compute the natural log of revenue divided by the total number of employees (Subramony, Krause, Norton, and Burns (2008)). These authors also showed that perceptions of pay affected productivity. That is, productivity, as measured by the natural log of revenue divided by the total number of employees, increased if employees, one year earlier, had reported they felt their pay was competitive. Sales is often used to gauge the performance of organisations. Nevertheless, several variants of sales have been utilised. In one study, for example, conducted by Salamon and Robinson (2008), sales relative to targets was calculated. That is, senior management had estimated the sales target of each site, depending on the product lines, characteristics of the clientele, and other factors.

One of the most common subjective indices is customer service or retention. According to Salamon and Robinson (2008), in customer surveys conducted. This particular survey comprised 10 questions, such as whether customers were assisted or greeted appropriately. Customer service was rated more favourably if employees felt trusted by management. Some researchers utilise a measure that, in essence, combines the benefits of objective indices with the merits of subjective indices. To gauge workplace performance, some researchers examined the extent to which the organisation has fulfilled its goals. According to (van Dyck, Frese, Baer and Sonnentag, 2005), organisations that manage errors effectively were more likely to fulfill their goals; that is, organisations were more likely to satisfy their goals, as measured by those two items; it is however, the employees that, communicated knowledge about errors, collaborated to resolve errors, and introduced practices that detect and manage errors expeditiously.

Workers' Welfare and Organisational Performance in Nigeria: The Way Forward

The type of an organisation would determine the need of employees in any organisation and the provision of welfare package that would be available for them. One common thing to all organisation is human capital. The importance of human resources cannot be underrated in any organisation, human resources is the greatest asset and this asset in no situation should be compromised. Material and financial resources cannot replace the work of human resources, it can neither increase efficiency nor contribute to the anticipated rate of return on investment. No matter the sufficiency or strength of financial resources of an organisation, probability of success would be low if employees do not have sufficient activity (Odeku and Odeku, 2015). Welfare package is only effective when it is able to yield a level of satisfaction in employees and there is a problem of individual differences because what satisfies one person may not satisfy another person. In some organisations, it can be observed that in times of crisis, which may lead to delay in payments or remuneration of employees, some workers still tend to stay, perhaps, employee satisfaction can be traced to this. The health and productivity of an organisation depends on motivated workers that have attained a high level of job satisfaction. When employees are satisfied, they tend to be more loyal towards their organisation and stick to their jobs even at worse scenarios (Odeku and Odeku, 2015).

It is worthy to note that welfare is a relative term that mean different things in different context. According to Encarta Encyclopedia (2010), welfare can also be provided by informal groups apart from the government; religious groups and intergovernmental organisations such as the functioning of the United Nations. The employees under authorities of Youth Empowerment Scheme, Oyo (YESO), Osun Youth Empowerment Scheme (OYESO) and Lagos State Transport Management Authority (LASTMA), for instance, experience various challenges in carrying out their day to day activities which ranges from lack of cooperation by people and motorists, lack of discipline amongst motorists, thuggery and hooliganisms by some motorists, physical abuse and irrespective of all these they still do not leave their job, that showcases workers' productivity that can go a long way in determining the performance of the organisation. However, that could not have been effective if they are not in some sorts motivated. Welfare of employees in an organisation encompasses matters relating to work conditions and amenities such as canteens, crèches for employee's children, provision of rest and lunch rooms, housing, transport, medical assistance, education, health and safety, recreational facilities, etc.

In the postulation of Ajila (2014), in order for an organisation to gain competitive advantage, there is need to ensure that the optimisation of the performance of employees become sacrosanct.

Another impediment to the employee's commitment to his/her job is when the employer is not so concerned about employee's desires, involvement with top management regarding decision making, concern about performance etc. The role of employees, being a fundamental base of any organisation, must not be underestimated if they are satisfied with the job being offered, then would feel thankful to whatever the company has offered to them (Lawson and Price, 2003; Johnson and Yang, 2010). However, some organisations are capable of providing their staff or employees with some of these welfare services; lack of not providing any of these welfare packages may lead to the low turnover rate of productivity, and so many other things that can lead to the breakdown of the organisation. In this case, it would be encouraging for staff to be provided with little tips of these services.

Conclusion

This chapter in conclusion haven delved into the organisational performance during covid-19 crisis, suggested that, the option for increasing performance in the organisation is increasing workers' welfare packages which would in return enhance organisational productivity. However, welfare services are introduced in organisation due to the employer's sincere belief that a good staff employee services activity will induce them to work hard and improve general staff morale. It was observed that, unless a benefit is attractive and well administered to workers, it would not motivate but rather encourage apathy. It was also concluded that employees should be taken as critical stakeholders in the determination and planning of welfare incentive packages as their perception of whatever welfare package provided plays a critical role in determining how effective such welfare package will translate into improved performance, effectiveness and development of the organisation. Taking into consideration all the principles of labour welfare, like: social responsibility, efficiency, participation, accountability and timeliness; all of these aim to convey that utilising an employee welfare programme helps to build up a sense of loyalty which will help to achieve organisational goals.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the paper, the researcher advances the following recommendations:

- (1) There is a need for management of organisations to consider the immediate needs and interest of the employees when providing welfare incentive packages for employees. This would enable employees in determining welfare packages and appropriate management communication of the rationale for such packages to employees to rule out the possibilities of misconception.
- (2) Human Resource Department of any organisation should restructure their protocol for provision of employee welfare incentive packages in a way that it would be adequate enough to yield positive result and shun sharp practices in the organisation.
- (3) In the face of the present economic recession/COVID-19 crisis, the researcher recommends that, government and private organisations are called upon to give due priority attention to the provision of welfare incentive packages for employees as this will keep them focused on the job rather than cutting down on welfare packages or blocking cost inefficiencies which may induce negative consequences on the effectiveness, competitiveness, performance and productivity of the organisation. Reducing welfare packages can only get them dissatisfied with their job and this may lead to increase in the turnover syndrome which may develop a problem for the organisation.
- (4) Since provision of welfare packages help in promoting innovations from employees, organisations can consider improving welfare packages for employees to create a drive in them to help in achieving efficiency and attainment of set goals and objectives.
- (5) Adequate compensation plan should be put in place especially at this COVID-19 crisis period for every Nigerian worker, which would enhance increase in their job performance.
- (6) The working environment of the workers must be stimulating and conducive to the point of bringing out the best in them.

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