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Motivation of the skilled workforce in the construction industry of South Africa

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2007-10-22T12:05:51Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/3919

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CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The questions 'why does man work? And why does one man work harder than another?' the answers to these questions have different answers of varied complexity and many theories attempt to provide solutions which can be applied generally throughout the building industry. Patchett (1983) cited three theories in this regard:

i. Incentive theories suggest that man will direct his efforts to attain desired tangible rewards because:
   - He wants the rewards;
   - He believes the rewards is worth the effort;
   - He is in complete control of his rate of production.

The most common reward is money, which can be exchanged for any desired available object or service.

ii. Satisfaction theories have the assumption that man is motivated by a job, which allows him to meet varieties of needs. It requires assumptions regarding the relationship between job satisfaction and productivity while it is established that consideration of the needs of man generally leads to reduce labour turnover and a lower absentee rate the assumption that a satisfied worker is a more productive worker has yet to be proven. It has been suggested that high productivity causes job satisfaction rather than the other way round.

iii. Intrinsic theories deals with mans identification of, and search for, an ideal self image which leads to constant attempt to close the gap between what a man is and what he would like to be.

The reward system of the building industry have traditionally been based on the external needs of man but intrinsic theories seek to suggest that only through a redesign of task and relationships in the form of introducing involvement and participation will man secure the achievement of self improvement.
The application of work incentives with the sole aim of generating higher levels of performance and productivity output depend to a greater extend on establishing a careful balance of the many inter – related motivating factor necessary in achieving workers satisfaction. This sometime is often complicated by the varying and prevailing nature of the construction environment.

Most site managers in the construction industry are greatly concerned about the motivation of their employees; motivated employees are the product of good management. Site managers in the construction industry need to be doing continuous self – check by asking questions such as: “Are site managers making the best use of the human resources? Are these site managers keeping the workers/employees happy and motivated and how can the managers continue to motivate (or begin to) motivate current skilled workforce? How can employees be motivated so that they will help the construction industry to grow without adding to the already high cost of operation?”(Olomolaiye et al, 1998).

Most organizations today are moving away from people fit the job toward making the job fit people. Jobs are becoming more flexible. Work places are becoming more responsive to worker’s need. To attract and keep good people it will become increasingly necessary to create an atmosphere of learning and growth. This call for a new kind of supervisor – one who can: coach, teach, lead employees to new challenges, make people feel good about themselves and keep individuals motivated and interested (Dell, 1988).

Cold, hard cash isn’t the answer to problems with poor morale, low productivity, high absenteeism, or bad attitudes. Today’s employees require commitment, loyalty, and involvement; they require all these things on a consistent basis (Grensing, 1991).

The underlying concept of motivation is some driving force within individual by which they attempt to achieve some goal in order to fulfil some need or expectation (Mullins, 1993).

Locke and Latham (1990) stated the importance of goals in determining motivation. This gives an effective contribution in understanding how and why people become committed to goals and also clarify the way participation and extrinsic rewards affects the performance goals established by individuals. Therefore individuals' belief about the consequences of their actions and the likelihood of those actions to be successful are the key determinants of motivation in the working and non - working set-up.

Lawler (1994) drew comparison between work design and reward systems and its relevant to the current emphasis on creating high performance work organizations through organizational design and management approaches.
No matter what kind of organizational or management approaches used, it cannot succeed if it fails to motivate employees to perform well.

Kreitner et al's (1998) theory on expectancy holds that people are motivated to behave in ways that produce desired combinations of expected outcomes.

Olomolaiye et al (1998) described motivation as an inner 'generator' of actions and reactions, which is of interest to managers as a means to an end and used in the optimisation of the human resource in the production process.

Kanungo et al (1994) studies gave a complementary model for a comprehensive understanding of the issues involved in work motivation in developing countries and how to deal with them in management practices.

2.2 South African research overview.

Considerable research has been done over the years in the area of workforce motivation. National Institute of Personnel Research (NIPR) established in 1946

did some research using the theoretical findings of industrial psychology, these researches provided increasing sophisticated assistance to government, industry and commerce in personnel management matters. Research undertaken between 1946 and 1978 by NIPR shows that only 8 percent of research was done on motivation in South Africa (Barling, 1983).

Thereafter other researches have been done in areas such as motivation in the upper class of the managerial performance level (Yudelowitz, 1991; Human and Hofmeyr, 1985).

Pozniak (1993) did a case study on motivation of Black workers in small businesses; he highlighted the critical role of management in motivation of workers. The research submitted that management initiatives did not fully and genuinely include the workers, nor did they effectively address the problems confronting the workers' external environment. Changes in the external environment and a given corresponding shift in management style and approach, and the responsiveness of black workers were positively altered.

Backer (1973) made an evaluation of the state of development of work motivation in terms of concepts derive from well known Maslow and Herzberg theories in relation to Black work motivation in South Africa. These include:

- gratification of psychological needs rated highly – 70 %
- esteem needs – 18 %
- security needs – 9 %
- belonging needs – 2 % and
- self – actualizations needs – 1 %

The seventy percent (70 %) expressing gratification of psychological needs was consistent with Maslow's postulate taken into consideration the environment in which the study was done (Black urban working class).

Orpen (1976) also did a similar studies as Backer (1973) on 250 black labourers, they were categorized into three groups of westernise black supervisors, labourers and tribal labourers, his studies shows that only

westernised group of supervisors differentiated between control and content factors; job satisfaction and dissatisfaction did not show as a separate entities in the other two groups at all.

Koopman et al (1988) carried out a study on the cash build company's goals of motivation in South Africa; two significant issues came out as a main role in introducing employee motivation through participation.
Firstly they concluded that there is nothing like demotivated employees, only weak managers who could not motivate.
Secondly, the obstacle of changing the attitudes and perceptions, not of the workers, but of the predominantly white managers.

Biesheuvel (1984) view reveals that the only basic employee – worker relationship is money. Consistent and equitable compensation scheme for workers is a very good motivator; the absence of it gives a reverse impact, a demotivator. The study further illustrates how productivity as a human factor could be made more effective through the compensation system. Biesheuvel findings shows that motivation can best be stimulated by building particular features into the compensation system.

Matthews (1975) reasoned that workers motivation could be measured through certain objectives such as production output, labour turnover, absenteeism from work, and the level of accident rates. The study further investigated the consequences of increased remuneration on a group of black workers in East London. The conclusions of his findings reveal that productivity measured in terms of kilograms of sweets per man hour, increased slightly after the general pay increase, but level off and then began to fall about two years later. Labour turnover rate fell substantially but the pay increase has no effect on absenteeism and the accident rate.

Spangenberg (1994) gave an illustration of the complexities surrounding performance management and suggested ways to increase the likelihood of its successful implementation and integration. Spangenberg also reviewed

performance as a way of motivating employees to achieve their full potential in line with the objectives of the organizations.

Sigadi's (1997) research indicated the lack of motivation within the public service of South Africa. The study specifically focused on the department of land affairs as a case study. The research population sample was drawn across all levels of management (junior, middle and senior). Sigadi concluded that there are more demotivation within the public service than the motivators and this leaves the employees more dissatisfied and some of the workers loosing interest in their job.

2.3 Conclusion

In conclusion the various motivational studies done in South Africa generally point to two basic issues; the biological drives which includes both physiological and psychological deficiencies with regards to motivation and the ego needs of workers, which are determined by social and cultural setup.

The removal of some deficiencies, accompanied by a state of satisfaction will enhance better performance within the construction industry's skilled workforce. Ego needs on the other hand may act in combination at different levels to produce behaviour of considerable motivational complexity.

Motivation is important to the success of the construction industry. If site managers fail to motivates their skilled workforce, this will consequently lead to dissatisfaction, absenteeism, low production and performance output. Motivation increases the morale of the workforce and hence a positive output in terms of productivity and performance.

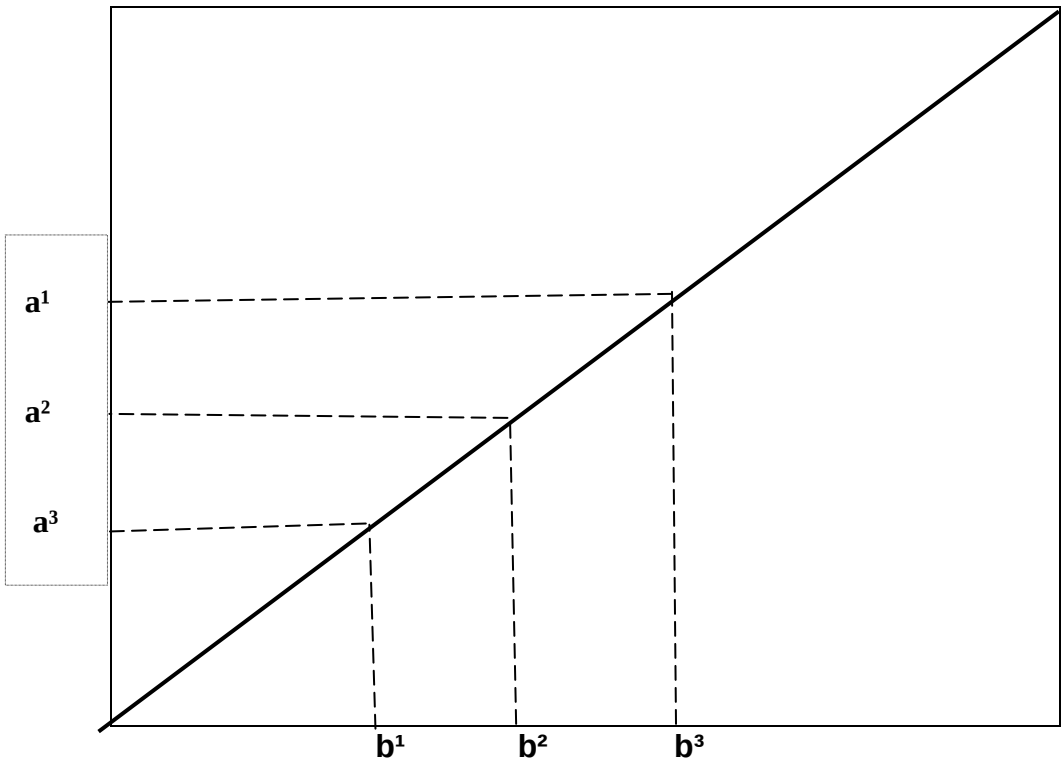
2.4 Motivation and productivity in the construction industry

Productivity refers to the net outcome of employee's performance while performance itself refers to the employee's manifest behaviour in a work environment. Performance outcomes would be poor not only in situation of low employee motivation, but also in situation of low employee capacity to perform. (Kanungo et al, 1994).

Behavioural scientist over the years believed that “increased motivation causes increased productivity; that productivity is dependent upon motivation”. This statement is patently true, but it is only half the story. The other half is that increased productivity causes increased motivation and motivation in turn dependent upon productivity (Warren, 1989)

Interdependent Relationship between motivation versus productivity

Motivation



(Figure 2.1) Productivity (Warren, 1989)

Figure 2.1 shows an interdependent relationship between motivation and productivity. As motivation is increased from a^3 to a^2 productivity increases from b^1 to $b^{\acute{2}}$, similarly as motivation increases from $a^{\acute{2}}$ to $a^{\acute{1}}$, productivity increases from $b^{\acute{2}}$ to $b^{\acute{3}}$ .An increase or decrease in any of the two parameters causes an increase or decrease in the other (Warren, 1989).

Herzberg’s two-factor theory is an accurate way of determining the motivation of construction site personnel’s. These two factors are hygiene and motivators.

The hygiene factors include money, supervision, and status, security, working conditions, policies and interpersonal relations prevent dissatisfaction but do not motivate; they produce no output in a way but they prevent decay in employee's performance. Motivators, which have positive impacts on job satisfaction and increase output, are factors such as works itself, recognition, advancement with regards to training, possibilities of responsibility and achievement. (Naoum, 2001).

Nash gave guidelines on how to make employees production increases throughout the employment cycle. He focused on how to achieve greater productivity through proper use of the organizations human resources.
Poor productivity normally arise as a result of poor human resource utilization of one kind or another, the failure of the organization to apply human, financial, and technical resources in the most effective manner (Nash, 1985).

The question of how to improve productivity is based on three key points. Site managers therefore:

- Have to measure productivity to be able to improve it.
- Need to take a balanced approach to the productivity process
- Have to drive the process on – going, as it is not a once – off event.

The major production constraint that stands out over and again is the lack of proper productivity measurement systems.
Without productivity objectives site managers within an organization does not have direction and without productivity measurements it does not have control. If companies have a basis to compare results and outcomes, future productivity can be set.
There are many factors impacting on productivity improvement from hard production inputs and products produced by machine utilization to softer issues like motivating workers, positively influencing workers attitudes and participation in decision making (Productivity South Africa, 2001).

2.5 Background of the construction industry

The construction industry (in its narrow definition) is the largest industrial employer in the world with one hundred and eleven million employees worldwide. Of these, seventy four percent are in the low – income countries. The reason being that twenty three percent of the global construction output "employment intensity" of construction activities is much higher in low – income countries than in the high – income ones. (International Labour Organization, 2001).

The construction companies and its employment conditions play a major role in human development and the improvement of the standard of life for the poor. The construction industry has a potential to enhance economic sustainability through its structure, conduct and performance. In almost every country in the world, the built environment normally constitutes more than half of the total national capital investment, and construction represents as much as ten percent of Gross National Product (GNP) (Confederation of International Contractors Association - CICA and United Nations Environmental Programme - UNEP).

One important element necessary to the support of the skilled workforce is the direction given by site managers/agent. These site manager's acts as leader, they advocate and give instruction in the form of craft knowledge to the workforce. They direct the craftsmen in performing the work, co-ordinates essential elements involved in the work. They must empathize and understand what motivates or demotivates the workforce (Warren, 1989).

2.6 Impact of motivation on the skilled workforce in the South Africa construction industry.

The outcome of a successful motivation of the workforce in the building industry is to improve productivity. Motivation creates self – satisfaction which comes with achievement and induces the workforce to seek out other goals, other accomplishments, and other satisfiers. What is deeply gratifying to most of the workforce than self – satisfaction is the esteem of others that comes with the

recognition of their accomplishment. Work incentive as a motivator generates a higher levels of performance and productivity output, this can be achieve by creating or establishing a careful balance of the inter – related motivating factors necessary in achieving work satisfaction, this is often complicated by the diversity and nature of the building industry (Fryer, 1985).

Achieving high motivation depends to a greater extend on the working environment where financial or psychological rewards can be regarded as incentive for the efforts needed in achieving high productivity (Naoum, 2001).

Nicholls et al (1987) tested Hertzberg's two-factor hypothesis theory of motivation and concluded that it is an accurate way of determining the motivation of construction site engineers. The two factors are hygiene and motivators.
Hygiene factors include: money, supervision, status, security, working conditions, policies and interpersonal relations prevent dissatisfaction but do not motivate; they normally do not produce output but they prevent decay in performance.
Motivators include: work, recognition, advancement, possibility of responsibility and achievement can have a positive impact on job satisfaction, which will lead to increased output or productivity. In conclusion there is an overall agreement with Herzberg in that site managers consider the most important factor to be the work itself.

2.7 Summary of motivational theories

Maslow's need hierarchy of motivation depends on set of needs arranged in order of hierarchy in which the satisfaction of needs results to the emergence of the higher need. The theory overlooks the importance of individual differences. It also fails to differentiate between what employee "value" and "need".

Alderfer's ERG theory reduces Maslow's hierarchy to three general – need classification. The failure to satisfy one need may lead to overemphasis on

lower needs. *The ERG theory* has received some empirical support but further research and testing are necessary.

Herzberg's motivator and Hygiene factor theory has certain elements associated to the kind of work which is responsible for motivation: other element related to the work environment may appeal to and hold employees but they do not motivate them. This tends to ignore or reduces individual differences. It also assumes all persons are alike. This theory has limited empirical support.

Equity theory of motivation assumes that employees want to be treated fairly. The theory further hypothesizes that employees in most cases compare their own input – to outcome rate within the company in comparison to the proportion of other companies. If they feel unfairly treated they take action to minimize their inequality.

Expectancy theory follows the presumption that employees are motivated to work towards a common goal if they want it and think they have a reasonable chance of achieving it. The model also suggests that performance may lead to a variety of both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. When these rewards are understood as being equitable, then it leads to satisfaction.

Attribution theory proposes that employees understand their behaviour as coming from either external or internal causes and employees are motivated by rewards that are in line with the cause of their conduct.

Goal – setting proposes that goal difficulty, specificity, accepted by employees and they must get a feedback.

Content theories of motivation are less concrete than other approaches to motivation; this will encourage managers to look beneath the surface of behaviour. The theories may oversimplify the process of motivation but they do however provide construction companies with a window through which individuals can be viewed. Understanding what needs may be most important to

a person provides an insight into the rewards or outcomes that particularly motivate the employees.
Process theories equip managers with an analytical tool for understanding and managing employee motivation. Both expectancy and equity theory encourages managers to reason like the employees in order to understand the decision they make to put forth their effort in a particular situation. Motivating a group of employees is a complicated issues but understanding theories of motivation can greatly enhance managerial effectiveness. Goal – setting appears to be another sound managerial technique for motivating employees. Site managers/agents who set goals should experience higher productivity from those who do not set goals. Goals should be specific, challenging and accompanied by feedback.

In conclusion, both content and process theories deals with the question of "what motivate" for the former and "how to motivate" for the latter (Naoum, 2001).

Changing of poor performance and maintaining high performance requires a clear understanding of the nature of work motivation (Kanungo et al, 1994).

Although the skilled workforce are aspired by such theory as Maslow's theory of belongingness and love needs, it does not means that certain external features or influences such as poor management by site managers/agents or supervisors, can't drive the workforce down to the next lower level with regards to a proportional loss of motivation.
Poor management can virtually cause employees to lose their sense of security, whose present enhance them to reach the highest level. Unexpected changes in the mode of site operation and the loss of things the workforce has come to expect each day when they comes to work can also cause them to lose motivation. What the employees look for in a typical construction site environment is a consistent management, the establishment and application of policies, procedures, standards of acceptance by site managers/agents are judged by what they contribute and by the successes and failures of the people who work for the construction industry.

They are responsible for setting the correct climate, leading the skilled workforce in building a motivational environment that makes the overall industry successful. In most cases, a motivating work place is more profitable than a demotivating one.

2.8 Conclusion

The review of related literature presented in the study is centred on motivation of the workforce with regards to the construction industry production output.

Motivation is a set of attributes, which predisposes a person to act in a specific goal directed way. Motivation is an inner state, which energizes channels and sustains human behaviour to achieve set goals. The attitudes of employees to work ultimately determines the productivity level and hence the construction industry's ability to survive. Satisfied employees make a committed workforce, which is vital for the construction industry to achieve sustainable growth.

What is rewarding to employees varies greatly depending on their background, expectations, values, and needs. The value of money, response to public recognition, the desire for peer and professional respect, and the need for challenging assignments all vary according to lifestyle and culture.

The question one needs to ask is "how can site managers satisfy employees to get them sufficiently motivated so that they can do their best for the construction industry?"

It is therefore important to understand the behaviour of employees. People behave in certain ways to satisfy specific needs. Demotivation begins with an unsatisfied need, which results in tension or frustration of employee.

The activities of the construction industry can only be achieved through combined efforts of both the employer and the employees (skilled workforce). This relationship is governed by what motivates them to work and the fulfilment they derive from it. Therefore site managers/agents must know how best to motivate their skilled workforce so that they can work willingly and effectively.