

Performance Appraisal and Labour Relations Practices as Correlates of Teachers' Professional Commitment in Public Secondary Schools in Abia State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out whether performance appraisal and labour relations practices predict teachers' professional commitment in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. The relative contribution of each of the two independent variables to the prediction was also investigated. Two hypotheses guided the study. A correlational survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 1877 teachers and the sample comprised 306 teachers. Multi stage random sampling technique was used to draw the sample. Instrument for data collection were structured and adapted questionnaires. Data were analyzed using multiple regression. The result of the study revealed that both performance appraisal and labour relations practices jointly predict teachers' professional commitment ($F = 12.991$; $P < .05$). Performance appraisal practice was a more potent predictor of professional commitment ($t = 2.68$; $P < .05$) than labour relations practice ($t = 2.59$; $P < .05$). The two independent variables make significant relative contributions to the prediction of teachers' professional commitment. Premised on these findings, it was recommended that the Secondary Education Management Board (SEMB) should focus more on labour relations practices, and improve on fairness in promotion of teachers in order to ensure teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. Again, the state government should ensure a conducive workplace for their teachers and endeavour to avoid actions that could jeopardize their sense of commitment.

Keywords: Performance appraisal practice, Labour relations practice, and Professional commitment.

1. Introduction

Background of the Study

The Nigerian secondary education system today is facing a lot of challenges due to the increasing demand for education. Werner (2007) cited in Gupta (2013) observed that social, political and technological forces challenge organizations to redefine their practices on how to manage their human resources. This has led to organizations, especially the schools, aspiring to have teachers who will be committed to their job so as to tackle the challenges and also utilize the available opportunities efficiently. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), secondary education is the form of education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. The underlining principle as articulated in the policy document on secondary education is that secondary schools, among others, will inspire the students with the desire for achievement both at school and later life. These expectations and objectives of secondary education may not be achieved without teachers who are highly committed to teaching. Nakpodia (2011) is of the view that teachers will work hard and show high level of commitment when they are adequately motivated.

Teachers play significant role in the determination of the quality of education. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in her National Policy on Education succinctly states that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers thus implying the important role teachers play in facilitating teaching and learning. The teachers are the supporting pillars for the realization of educational goals, and the realization of these goals may be largely dependent on how the teachers are being treated. Eziuzo (2009) observed that when teachers are not poorly treated, they will remain dedicated to the teaching profession. Due to the importance of teachers in secondary schools, their commitment may go a long way in determining how well the secondary education system achieves its set goals and objectives.

Teachers' professional commitment is a very important factor in the educational system. Chan (2006) is of the view that teachers' professional commitment is a predictor of teachers' work performance, and absenteeism. Chan further asserts that teachers who are not committed to the teaching profession would leave their work place early and are likely to put less effort in the classroom as compared to teachers with high levels of commitment and this adversely affects student learning and achievement in particular and standard of education in the country in general. In order to achieve greater commitment of teachers, school administrators employ different practices in the management of the teachers, and these practices are referred to as human

resource management practices. Tiwari (2012) sees these practices as organizational activities directed at managing the human resources and ensuring that they are employed towards the fulfillment of organizational goals. It therefore refers to practices used by school administrators for the maintenance of teachers towards the achievement of the goals of secondary education. Ulrich, Brockbank and Johnson (2008) are of the view that human resource management practices involve recruitment, staffing, orientation, training and development, retention, and outsourcing. Of all these practices, the researchers feel that performance appraisal, and labour relations practices play key role in relation to teachers' professional commitment.

Performance appraisal and labour relations practices are critical to the realization of the objectives of any organization. Its strategic use in an organization influences performance (Armstrong, 2004). These practices are found to influence the commitment of teachers. Oyebade (2000) observed that poor management of these practices could lead to incessant strike actions by the teachers and this affects their commitment to the teaching profession. This is because if teachers are not promoted as at and when due, if they are neglected, and if they work in an atmosphere of tension and uncertainty, hardly will they be committed, and most likely they neglect their duties. Research findings have shown that there is a positive relationship between performance appraisal and teacher performance in secondary schools in Kampala, Uganda. (Kakayi, 2012). Halowah (2005) studied the relationship between effective communication of high school principals and teachers in Abu Dhabi District and found out that school climate was positively associated with principals' communication effectiveness. Ndom-Uchendu (2011) carried out a research work on human resource management and students' academic performance in vocational education subjects in junior secondary schools in Abia state, Nigeria and found out that human resource management affects students' academic performance.

In public secondary schools in Abia state, there has been a persistent expression of dissatisfaction by teachers due to delay in their promotion and autocratic leadership behaviours by school administrators (Ndom-Uchendu (2011)). This dissatisfaction has increased staff truancy, teachers' lateness to school, nonchalant attitude of teachers towards school activities and teacher absenteeism in secondary schools. It is this background that informs the researchers' interest to find out whether performance appraisal and labour relations practices significantly contribute to teachers' professional commitment, and also to determine whether performance appraisal and labour relations practices significantly predict teachers' professional commitment in secondary schools in Abia state, Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Performance appraisal and labour relations practices in public secondary schools in Abia state, Nigeria appear not to have been given due attention, hence the occurrences of strike actions, high rate of teacher truancy, teachers' lateness to school, and teachers' absenteeism from classes. Clement (2006) observed that the decline in teachers' attendance to classes is glaring in public secondary schools and that it has led many parents and guardians to withdraw their children and wards from public secondary schools to federal and private secondary schools. Clement further asserts that lack of commitment to duty by teachers heightens exam malpractice. The teachers' unruly behaviours have led the researchers to undertake this study in order to find a solution to the problem under investigation.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate performance appraisal and labour relations practices as predictors of teachers' professional commitment in public secondary schools in Abia state, Nigeria. Specifically, the study was guided by the following objectives.

- 1 To find out whether performance appraisal and labour relations practices significantly contribute to teachers' professional commitment in public secondary schools in Aba Education zone of Abia state.
- 2 To determine whether performance appraisal and labour relations practices predict teachers' professional commitment in public secondary schools in Aba Education zone of Abia state.

1.3 Hypotheses

Ho₁ Performance appraisal and labour relations practices do not significantly contribute to teachers' professional commitment in Aba Education zone of Abia State.

Ho₂ Performance appraisal and labour relations do not significantly predict teachers' professional commitment in Aba Education Zone of Abia State.

2 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

2.1 Theoretical framework

This study was anchored on theory X and Y which were propounded by Mc Gregor in 1960. Theory X is characterized by the assumption that an average person is lazy and has an inherent dislike for work, avoids responsibility, prefers to be directed, lacks ambition, values security most of all, must be coerced, directed and threatened with punishment if the organization is to achieve its objectives. This theory is associated with the classical school of thought where human beings are equated to machine and rewards based on performance. In

relation to school, the school administrators apply the philosophy of direction, close supervision, and authoritarian style of leadership in order to improve teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. On the other hand, theory Y is characterized by the assumptions that work is as natural as play or rest, and that the average human being, under proper conditions, does not inherently dislike work rather he or she accepts and seeks responsibilities. Mc Gregor believes that if the working conditions are favourable, employees will be motivated to grow and develop their potentials in the organization, be committed, and perform efficiently in order to achieve the goals of the organization. This theory puts much emphasis on the importance of work in a person's life and also the need for proper management of employees.

2.2 Conceptual framework

The study was guided by a conceptual schema represented in figure 1. The schema in figure 1 is a diagrammatic explanation of the relationship between the various variables of the study. The framework suggests an interrelationship between an independent variable and the dependent variable. The independent variables includes: performance appraisal and labour relations practices while the dependent variable is professional commitment. It is conceptualized that each of the independent variable (performance appraisal and labour relations practices) can influence professional commitment. Thus school administrators should take into cognizance of these practices in secondary schools.

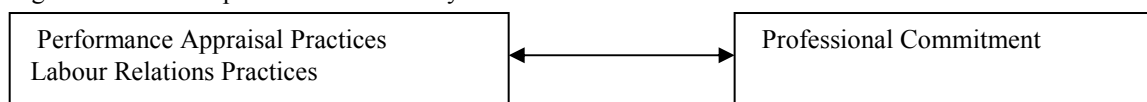


Fig 1: A conceptual schema of the relationship between performance appraisal and labour relations practices, and professional commitment.

It is important to understand the concepts used in this study which includes: Human resource management practices, performance appraisal practices, labour relations practices, and professional commitment. Cheng and Azzat (2011) opined that human resource management practices relate to specific practices, formal policies and philosophies that are designed to attract, develop, motivate and retain employees who will ensure the effective functioning and survival of the organization. Cheng and Azzat further assert that human resource management practices is a managerial process that allows organizations to manage their human resources effectively so as to improve the goals of the organization. Sola, Oluwakemi, Tunde and Mariam (2011) are of the view that human resource management practices involve the following:

Openness and objectivity of the recruitment and selection process; strategic development of staff for optimal utilization; flexibility in pay system, balance of power in the application of equal employment opportunity; the efficiency of affirmative action in ensuring employment opportunity; and group harmony which can enhance cooperation and decision making. (p:60)

Human resource management practices, according to Armstrong (2009), is a strategic approach to acquiring, developing, managing, motivating and gaining the commitment of the organization's key resource, that is, the people who work in and for it. Saxena and Tiwari (2009) are of the view that it involves training and development, employer-employee relations, recognition through rewards, culture building, career development, compensation and benefits. In the application of these definitions in secondary schools, it suggests that human resource management practices refer to the practices used by school administrators for the maintenance of teachers towards the achievement of the goals of secondary education. These practices which involves staffing, training and development, compensation, performance appraisal, and labour relations play an important role in motivating the employees towards exhibiting favourable attitudes and behaviours which are required to support and implement the goals of the school. Ernest and Regina (2013) are of the opinion that there are some human resource management practices that receive greater emphasis and they include: planning, monitoring, supervising, training and development, and performance appraisal. Research findings have shown that human resource management practices have significant effect on organizational commitment of employees (Smeenk, Eisinga, Teelken and Doorewaard, 2006). Martin (2011) found out that a strong and positive relationship exists between human resource management practices (training and development, and compensation, performance appraisal and labour relations) and organizational commitment.

Performance appraisal is a component of human resource management practices which can also be referred to as performance evaluation. Performance appraisal is the evaluation of employees' job performance and contributions to their organization (Samad, 2011). The sole aim of performance appraisal is to monitor the employees' work progress in order to improve productivity and also enhance promotion. Its strategic use in an organization influences performance (Armstrong, 2004). It involves rewarding personnel, providing feedback, employee participation in performance appraisal process, fairness, and maintaining communications between employers and employees. In secondary schools, performance appraisal involves providing feedback to teachers after appraisal, teacher participation in performance appraisal process, fairness of school administrators in

performance appraisal, and maintaining communications between administrators and teachers. It provides school administrators with useful information for decision making. Muhammad, Rabia and Arshad (2011) found out that performance appraisal practices have no significant relationship with organizational commitment. However, Paul and Anantharaman (2003) found out that performance appraisal has a significant influence on organizational commitment.

Labour relations is another component of human resource management practices, and it can also be referred to as employee relations. The establishment of an excellent and cordial relationship between the employers and the employees is referred to as labour relations. It deals with how the employers and employees work together to create a conducive workplace through communication and discipline. Armstrong (2009) defines labour relations as a system of rules regulating employment and the ways in which employees behave at work. It is a system in which employers and employees set rules for the governance of work relationship. Asma and Mehboob (2012) are of the view that the way information is shared and communicated is a source for employees to remain committed to the organization. The success of any organization depends on the degree of cooperation, compromise and partnership which exist between the employer and employee (Okeke, 2008). Harold and Sebastian (2012) found out that labour relations practices do predict employee commitment in organizations. In secondary schools, labour relations strategies involve teacher participation in decision making, free flow of communication, and discipline. Meyer and Allen (1997) observed that the highest commitment is derived from participation whereby employees have a say in decisions that affects them at work place. Therefore, organizations that change from a system of hierarchical control to one in which employees are encouraged to demonstrate initiative show that they are supportive of their employees and value their contributions. Individual or professional growth is enhanced through participation in activities that are of interest to the individual. By participating in the activities relating to a given organization, the employee becomes acquainted with the activities. Unachukwu (1997) is of the view that in secondary schools, when teachers participate in activities that concern them, they are likely to function better to ensure that the school objectives are achieved.

Professional commitment is an important factor in an organization. It is one of the important factors that determine people's work behaviours (Kannan and Pillai, 2008). Metin and Gokhan (2011) define professional commitment as the psychological relationship an individual establishes with his or her profession and the emotional responses towards his or her profession. According to David and Matthew (2008), professional commitment refers to the attachments that individuals form to their profession. It therefore refers to the employees' devotion which may be based on their emotional attachment, cost implications, and obligation to its profession. Teachers with a strong sense of professional commitment will keep up with the developments in the teaching profession, attend professional meetings, participate in their professional association, and remain with the teaching profession because they realize that they have much to lose by not staying with the teaching profession. Nwogbo and Okeke (2009) opined that the following are the characteristics of a committed teacher: A committed teacher takes the job seriously, manages his or her time well by coming early to work, participates actively in school activities, shows care and interest in school affairs, especially in the students' performance, protects the school properties, shuns all corrupt practices and acts that are evil and capable of hindering the achievement of the goals of the school, and is obedient to the school authority by abiding by the rules and regulations of the school. Osuji in Abubakar (2003) observed that lack of commitment of teachers have plagued the educational system in Nigeria.

In conclusion, teachers' professional commitment cannot be achieved without adequate management of performance appraisal and labour relations practices in secondary schools.

3 Research Method

A Correlational survey research design was adopted for the study to determine whether performance appraisal and labour relations practices significantly predict teachers' professional commitment, and whether performance appraisal and labour relations significantly contribute to teachers' professional commitment in public secondary schools in Aba Education zone of Abia state, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 1877 teachers in the 95 public secondary schools in Aba Education Zone of Abia state, Nigeria. (Source: Planning, Research and Statistics (PRS) Division 2013, Secondary Education Management Board, Abia state). The sample for the study comprised 306 teachers selected from 30 public secondary schools in Aba Education Zone of Abia state, Nigeria. The multi stage sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study.

The instruments used for data collection were two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was a researchers' developed questionnaire titled "Human Resource Management Practices Questionnaire" (HRMPQ) while the second questionnaire was an adapted questionnaire developed by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) titled "Professional Commitment Questionnaire" (PCQ). Both questionnaires were structured on two different response patterns of Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Little Extent (2), very Little Extent (1), and Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The HRMPQ was face validated by three (3) experts, two (2) from Educational Administration and Planning and one (1) from Measurement and Evaluation

all from Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The validated version of the instrument was trial tested to ascertain the internal consistency reliability using Cronbach Alpha method. The reliability coefficient estimates were obtained: 0.70 for performance appraisal practices, and 0.76 for labour relations practices. The instrument was distributed by three research assistants who were briefed by the researchers and was collected immediately on completion. This ensured 100% return rate. The data collected were analyzed using multiple regression analysis.

4 Results

The results were analyzed according to the hypotheses that guided the study.

4.1 Performance appraisal and labour relations practices do not significantly contribute to teachers' professional commitment in Aba Education zone of Abia State.

Table 1: Multiple Regression analysis on the relative contribution of performance appraisal and labour relations practices to teachers' professional commitment in Aba Education Zone of Abia State.

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t
Performance Appraisal Practice	.084	.031	.167	2.68
Labour Relations Practice	.101	.039	.161	2.59

Significant at $P < 0.05$; Multiple $R = 0.281$; $R^2 = 0.079$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.073$; $SE = 0.39$

Data presented on Table 1 indicate for each independent variable, unstandardized regression coefficient (B), Standard Error (SE), standardized coefficient (Beta) and T-ratio. From the table, it can be seen that R^2 value of 0.079 showed that the two predictor variables jointly and significantly contributed 7.9% of the variance in teachers' professional commitment. Other factors not included in the study accounted for the other variance (92.1%). The t-values for performance appraisal and labour relations practices are 2.68 and 2.59 respectively. These values were found to be significant at 0.05 alpha level. Performance appraisal ($t = 2.68$) has the higher contribution followed by labour relations ($t = 2.59$). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, performance appraisal and labour relations practices make significant contributions to the prediction of teachers' professional commitment.

4.2 Performance appraisal and labour relations practices do not significantly predict teachers' professional commitment in Aba Education Zone of Abia State.

Table 2: Multiple regression analysis on Performance Appraisal and labour relations practices as predictors of teachers' professional commitment in secondary schools.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	3.983	2	1.991	12.991	.000 ^b
Residual	46.446	303	.153		
Total	50.429	305			

Significant at $P < 0.05$; Multiple $R = 0.281$; $R^2 = 0.079$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.073$; $SE = 0.39$

a Dependent Variable: Professional Commitment

b Predictors: (Constant), Performance Appraisal Practice, Labour Relations Practice

Data presented on Table 2 show performance appraisal and labour relations practices as predictors of teachers' professional commitment in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone, Abia state. The table reveals that the probability value associated with the calculated value of F (12.991) for the relationship between performance appraisal, labour relations practices, and professional commitment is 0.000. Since the probability value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that performance appraisal and labour relations practices do significantly predict teachers' professional commitment.

5 Discussions of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of the hypothesized conditions, firstly, the results have established that performance appraisal and labour relations significantly contribute to teachers' professional commitment in Aba Education Zone of Abia State. The t-values associated with the two variables show that performance appraisal practices are the more potent contributor than labour relations practice. The explanation for this finding is that fairness in promotion, giving feedback, maintenance of appraisal standards and goals, teacher participation in decision making, mutual trust, harmonious relationship, fair treatment and discipline in secondary schools can yield higher level of teacher commitment. In other words, performance appraisal and labour relations practices are certified method for enhancing commitment to the teaching profession. The improvement of these practices leads to high level of teacher commitment. If teachers do not experience these practices, it tends to reduce their morale, and it will thus affect their commitment. The significant contribution made by performance appraisal practices to professional commitment agrees with the research findings of Paul and Anantharaman (2003) that performance appraisal practice has a significant influence on commitment but is at variance with the findings of Muhammed,

Syed, Rabia, and Arshad (2011) that performance appraisal has no significant influence on commitment.

The study also reveals that performance appraisal and labour relations practices significantly predict teachers' professional commitment in secondary schools. The explanation for this finding is not farfetched. Practices such as mutual agreement, opportunities for teachers to discuss about their performances after appraisals, flexibility in school policies guiding the teachers, and peaceful interpersonal relationship among teachers are very stable in secondary schools. Teacher commitment will be very high due to the fact that the school climate is open and very conducive. This finding is in line with what Samad (2011) and Harold and Sebastian (2012) found out. Samad (2011) reported that performance appraisal practices predict employee commitment, while Harold and Sebastian (2012) found out that labour relations do predict employee commitment. The findings of this study have implications for school administrators of secondary schools in Abia state, Nigeria. School administrators can get an insight from the findings of the study that teacher commitment to the teaching profession can be increased by not relenting in the application of performance appraisal practices, and labour relations practices in secondary schools. This will not only boost their morale, it will also make them to be more committed to the teaching profession. The conclusion drawn from this study is that performance appraisal and labour relations practices jointly, significantly contribute, and predict teachers' professional commitment in secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. It could also be concluded that there is a significant difference in the relative contribution of performance appraisal practice and labour relations practice to teachers' professional commitment, with performance appraisal practice being the more potent contributor than labour relations practice. Thus, performance appraisal and labour relations practices are essential tools for teacher commitment to the teaching profession. The study therefore recommends that the Secondary Education Management Board (SEMB) should focus more on labour relations practices and improve on fairness in promotion in order to ensure teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. The state government should ensure a conducive workplace for their teachers and endeavour to avoid actions that could jeopardize their sense of commitment.

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