

Implications of the Job Characteristics Theory for School Management in Ghana: A Literature Review

Andrews Acquah

Department of Arts Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana, West Africa

Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to review literature on the implications of the job characteristics theory for school management. It is realized from the review that human beings have a basic and universal need and when these needs are met in their current situations then the individual is said to be satisfied. It is also found from the review of this paper that there is a positive relationship among the job characteristics, individual differences in need strength and employee's motivation, satisfaction, performance and absenteeism on the job. It is deduced that all three of the psychological states must be experienced by an individual if desirable outcomes are to emerge. If any one of three psychological states is not present, several outcome variables such as motivation and satisfaction will be weakened. From the review, it is recommended that the complete role of the job characteristics theory is a sine a qua as far as the management of school is concerned. It is therefore recommended periodical workshops are organized for all the heads and managers of schools to sensitize them on the need to redesign the teaching job. This will go a long way to assist school managers to identify the needs of their schools and redesign the jobs of their teachers. In this sense, the teachers would be willing to put off their best and eventually enhance the academic performance of the students.

Keywords: job redesign, job satisfaction, job diagnosis survey, school management

1. Introduction

The concept of job characteristics has been widely researched since the beginning of the twentieth century, when there was a move towards considering the psychological conditions of the employee associated with post-war industrial reevaluation for the purpose of increasing the productivity of workers (Allen & Wilburn, 2002; Mullins, 2004). Work plays an important role in individuals' lives because they spend more of their time at work than doing any other single activity (Zeffane, Ibrahim & Mehairi, 2008). According to Furnham (2005), people work for so many reasons: a source of income, a source of activity and stimulation, a source of social contacts, a means of structuring time, and a source of self-fulfilment and self-actualization. Employees' job satisfaction is also an important aspect of work. When employees are happy with their job, they are happy with their lives in general. This implies that the work and the characteristics of the work or the job could be a source of positive for employees and this also reflects in their psychological and physical well being (Spector, 2008).

To perform any job an employee should have ability required and along with ability the willingness of that employee to perform job is also essential. To create the willingness of employees and to motivate them managers should design jobs that motivate the employees and satisfy them on work. Hackman and Oldham (1975) maintained that motivation of employees makes them efficient in achieving the goals of an organization. These scholars also maintained that general satisfaction is an overall measure of the degree to which the employee is satisfied and happy with the job (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). According to Hackman and Oldham (1975), satisfaction of employees in their jobs can be categorized into two. The first one is growth satisfaction which describes the opportunities for personal growth and development. This refers to the extent to which an employee likes to have challenge in his job. The second one focuses on internal work motivation which deals with the degree to which the employee is self-motivated to perform effectively on the job. That is the employee experience positive internal feelings when working effectively on the job, and negative internal feelings when doing poorly.

Hoppock (1935) first proposed the concept of employee satisfaction, according to him it is the individual feelings about his/her work environment. Employee satisfaction, also called "job satisfaction" according to Wang (2005). Employee satisfaction defined as employees' feelings and thoughts about organization, work and co-workers (Beer, 1964). The theory of value proposed by Locke (1976), suggests that job satisfaction is not about employees desires only but also includes the principles and needs of the employee. These desires, needs or principles could be in the case of a good remuneration, prospects for career advancement, conducive working environment may influence the employee to be loyal which in turn influence his/her job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is perception (whether delightful or vice versa) of the employee about his work and organization. Satisfied employees are more likely to be accommodating and relate better with customers and if employees are not satisfied with the job it could lead to customer unhappiness (Hanif & Kamal, 2009). Moreso, to Parvin and Kabir (2011) there are a variety of factors that can influence a person's level of job satisfaction. Some of these factors include the level of pay and benefits, the perceived fairness of the promotion system within a company, the quality of the working conditions, leadership and social relationships, the job itself (the

variety of tasks involved, the interest and challenge the job generates, and the clarity of the job description/requirements). The happier people are within their job, the more satisfied they are said to be.

An organizations level of productivity, efficiency, employee loyalty is associated with employee job redesign. When employees are satisfied with their jobs, it reduces absenteeism and turnover (Ellickson & Logsdon, 2001). According to Wright and Davis (2003), job redesign positively affect on the ability, effort and capability of the employees however, if employees not satisfied with the job then it may cause turnover intentions, increasing costs, decreasing profits and ultimately customer unhappiness with the organization. Job redesign has to do with changing some aspects of the job to suit the employees and make them perform effectively to the achievement of organizational goals. The attention on job redesign has a direct relationship with job characteristics theory as propounded by Hackman and Oldham (1975). The job characteristics theory describes the relationship between job characteristics and individual employees' responses to work. The theory specifies emphatically that the task conditions in which individuals are predicted to prosper are in their work. According Hackman and Oldham (1975), there are five job dimensions and three psychological states that play instrumental roles as far as work outcomes are concerned. This presupposes that there is relationship between job redesign and outcome variables.

2. Statement of the Problem

An organization's very survival rests heavily on its ability to attract and retain qualified workers and an organization that is known to mistreat its personnel will have difficulty in drawing the best people to staff its positions (Vecchio, 1991). However, it appears serious attention has not been given to the issue of staff job redesign which is a pre-condition to job satisfaction in most institutions (Vecchio, 1991). Teachers' commitment and effectiveness solely depend on motivation, morale and job redesign (Shann, 2001). This implies that teacher motivation and job satisfaction are important phenomena for all organizations including schools in any country. A survey conducted recently on teachers' job redesign and performance as well as job satisfaction in 12 countries in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa including Tanzania raises concerns about the influence of low teacher job satisfaction on teachers' absenteeism, lateness and lack of commitment to their work (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2013). Additionally, teachers' satisfaction is not only important to teachers themselves but also of a much concern to educational managers, leaders and employers as well as students in all categories of schools. In the words of Shann (2001), "teacher satisfaction has been shown to be a predictor of teacher retention, determinant of teacher commitment, and, in turn, a contributor to school effectiveness" (p. 67). This follows logically that teacher job satisfaction is an important phenomenon for school teachers, their employers and students at large.

In a research conducted by Okorley (2010), the result depicted that there was a positive and a stronger relationship between motivation and job satisfaction of teachers as far as job redesign was also considered. The peak of the problem is what are the implications of the job characteristics theory for school management? Hence, the main aim of this paper to review literature on the implications of the job characteristics theory for school management.

3. Significance of the Paper

This review would help management of schools to know the importance of job redesign on the performance of teachers and eventually the academic performance of students. It would also employers in educational organizations to have knowledge on the relationship between job redesign and employees job satisfaction. The findings from the review would also add to the store of knowledge on job characteristics theory and its implications for school management.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Job Satisfaction

Employee job satisfaction is one of the tools mostly used by management to ensure an organizational health. Management is of the belief that employees are the lifeline of every organization and they therefore strive to ensure employee satisfaction (Oshagbemi, 2003). According to Spector (1997), it is common activity these days in organizations for management to be concerned about employees well being. This implies that management, human resource managers, supervisors, heads of departments are all concerned about what is job satisfaction and how best to ensure employee job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction has been defined in different ways. This implies that the concept of job satisfaction has no definite meaning. The definition of job satisfaction also depends on researcher's perception, knowledge and experiences about the concept of job satisfaction. Although the concept of Job satisfaction has been defined by many scholars in different areas of study, job satisfaction is still complex to define and measure (Abdulla, 2009). According to Spector (1997), one of the simplest ways of explaining what job satisfaction is by defining it as an attitudinal variable. That is job satisfaction is how people feel about their work and the different aspects or

characteristics that make up the work. In effect, it is what employees like or dislike about their jobs. Many researchers such as (Spector, 2008; Luthans, 2002; Rose 2001) all conclude that job satisfaction is a state of mind or a psychological phenomenon. They all also agree that job satisfaction it is difficult to give a definite definition of job satisfaction. According to Hoppock (1935) as cited by Abdullah (2009), job satisfaction is the combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that would cause a person truthfully to state that, 'I am satisfied with by work'. Luthans (2002) also asserts that job satisfaction is an intangible phenomenon and can only be inferred. In the same direction, Gruneberg (1979) defines job satisfaction as an employee's emotional reaction to aspects of his/her job.

Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000), assumes that human beings have a basic and universal need and when these needs are met in their current situations then the individual is said to be satisfied. According to them job satisfaction is a balance between what an employee "pleasures" such as salaries, fringe benefits, status and good working conditions and what employee "displeasures" such as working time, effort, work policies among others.

Rose (2001) regard job satisfaction as a bi-dimensional concept consisting of extrinsic factors and intrinsic factors. To Rose, the intrinsic source of an employee's job satisfaction depends on an individual's personal characteristic such as ability to take initiative, relationship with management because these are intangible aspects of the job. The extrinsic sources of an employee's job satisfaction are situational and depend on the environment such as pay, promotion, or job security. These are financial and other tangible rewards or advantages of the job. For an employee to be satisfied with his/her job there should be a balance between both intrinsic and extrinsic sources of satisfaction (Rose, 2001). Moreso, Fields (2002) defines job satisfaction as meeting what the employee expects from his/her job. In effect this means when employees expectation about is the work, pay, promotion, good working conditions are met, there is high job satisfaction and also when there is an accumulation of unmet employees' expectations then there is low employee job satisfaction.

4.2 Job Redesign

Job redesign refers to the way tasks are combined to form complete jobs (Robbins & Coulter, 2006). The importance of job design has been realized by managers, scholars, theorists, many, many year's back. Process of job redesign has evolved over a long period of time. For the first time the operational measures of the job characteristics were given by Turner and Lawrence (1965). They developed six task attributes assumed to be positively related to workers satisfaction and attendance.

Hackman and Lawler (1971) empirically tested the relationships among the job characteristics, individual differences in need strength and employee's motivation, satisfaction, performance, and absenteeism on the job. The results indicated that positive relationship was found among job dimensions and dependent measures: motivation, satisfaction, performance and attendance. Hackman and Oldham (1974) originally developed the Job Diagnosis Survey (JDS). They described that this theory may not provide the desired results for all the individuals. It is especially suitable for those who have the strong desire for feeling of accomplishment and growth. Individuals who are low on growth need strength may find such job difficult to perform and may feel uncomfortable with it. During the development of the JDS Hackman and Oldham (1974) also checked that the internal consistency reliability. The inter correlation among JDS scales were also calculated along with their significance level. Inter-correlation showed that job dimensions themselves are moderately inter-correlated. The correlation results were higher across jobs than the respondents. The mediating effect of Critical Psychological States (CPS) and moderating effect of General Satisfaction (GS) was only postulated in this research, but not empirically tested.

Hackman and Oldham (1976) empirically tested the relationships postulated by Job Characteristics Model (JCM) including the mediating effect of critical psychological states and moderating effect of general satisfaction. In broad-spectrum, all correlations between Job Characteristics (JC), Critical Psychological States (CPS) and outcomes (except absenteeism) were positive and negative for absenteeism as expected. The mediating effect of critical psychological states was proved through the partial correlations and multiple regressions. The moderating role of General Satisfaction (GS) was also proved by determining separate correlations for employees high and low on General Satisfaction (GS) measurement scale. The correlation results were higher for those who were high on general satisfaction as compared to those who were low on general satisfaction

4.3 Job Characteristics Theory

Job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) describes the relationship between job characteristics and individual responses to work. The theory specifies the task condition in which individuals are predicted to prosper in their work. There are five job dimensions prompting three psychological states that lead to some beneficial personal and work outcomes. The theory also includes individual difference variables as moderator of the relationship between the characteristics and the outcome variables. Hackman and Oldham (1980), define the

five job characteristics as follows:

Skill variety: the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work, involving the use of a number of different skills and talents of the person.

Task identity: the degree to which the job requires completion of a whole, identifiable piece of work; that is, doing a job from beginning to end with visible outcome.

Task significance: the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives of other people, whether those people are in the immediate organization or in the world at large.

Autonomy: the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedure to be used in carrying it out.

Job feedback: the degree to which carrying out the work activities required by the job provides the individual with direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance.

Hackman and Oldham (1980) define three psychological states in their theory. To experience the work as meaningful is to feel that the work the individual does is generally worthwhile, valuable, or important by some system of values he or she accepts. The individual experiences personal responsibility means that he or she feels personally accountable for the results of the work he and/or she does. Finally, the person who has knowledge of the results of one's work knows and understands how effectively he or she is performing the job. According to job characteristics theory, all three of the psychological states must be experienced by an individual if desirable outcomes are to emerge. If any one of three psychological states is not present, several outcome variables such as motivation and satisfaction will be weakened. The theory emphasizes that the most important outcome variable is internal motivation which exists when good performance is an occasion for self-reward and poor performance prompts unhappy feelings. Other predicted outcomes are growth satisfaction, general job satisfaction, work effectiveness, quality work performance, absenteeism and turnover. Growth satisfaction is a feeling that one is learning and growing personally or professionally at work. General satisfaction reflects responses to unspecified work conditions as measured by questions such as measured by questions such as "generally speaking, how satisfied are you with your job?" (Hackman & Oldham, 1980, p. 89). Work effectiveness includes quality and quantity of the goods or services produced. Quality work performance can be measured by, for instance, the number of errors made by employees. Absenteeism is the easiest to measure if there is an available work attendance record in a given period. Since the unit analysis of job characteristics model is the individual, turnover is simply defined as the intention to quit the employee's job.

Hackman and Oldham (1980) recognized that not all employees will respond positively to a job high in motivating potential. There are three characteristics of people which are especially important in moderating both the job characteristics-psychological states relationship, as well as the psychological states-outcome relationship (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Kulik, Oldham & Hackman, 1987). They are knowledge and skill to perform the work, growth need strength, and work context such as pay, job security, coworkers, and managers. At the link between the job characteristics and the psychological states, when the job characteristics and the psychological states, when the job characteristics are good, it is more likely that psychological states will be experienced if moderator variables are high, especially growth need strength than if moderator variables are low. Referring to the link between the psychological states and outcome variables, individuals with high moderator variables respond more positively to experience of psychological states. In this condition, better outcomes can be predicted.

There is an essential proposition in the theory that positive feelings follow from good performance and negative feelings follow from poor performance. If a job low in motivating potential (measured by Job Diagnosis Survey as Motivating Potential Score or MPS), outcomes will be low, and one's feelings will not be influenced much by how well one does. On the other hand, if a job is high in MPS, good performance will be reinforcing the poor performance will result in unhappy feelings. In high MPS, people who are competent to perform well will have positive feelings as a result of their work activities. In contrast, people who do not have enough knowledge and skill to do well will feel unhappy or frustrated.

Growth need strength that is the degree to which people have need for personal growth and development, can be very crucial in determining response to a job high in motivating potential. People who have high growth need strength will be likely to respond enthusiastically to the opportunities for personal accomplishment, learning and developing themselves provided by a job high in motivating potential (Kulik et al., 1987). Others who have less strong need for growth will be less likely to want to exploit the opportunities for personal growth and development. The theory also predicts that reactions of employees to jobs with high motivating potential will be affected by their satisfaction as aspects of the work context. As mentioned by O'Brien (1982) and Kulik et al. (1987), if employees are not satisfied by one or more of these contextual factors, especially payment, their performance cannot be maximum.

5. Discussions

The review found out that human beings have a basic and universal need and when these needs are met in their current situations then the individual is said to be satisfied. In agreement to this Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza

(2000), maintained that human beings have a basic and universal needs and when these needs are met in their current situations then the individual is said to be satisfied. According to them job satisfaction is a balance between what an employee “pleasures” such as salaries, fringe benefits, status and good working conditions and what employee “displeasures” such as; working time, effort, work policies among others. Rose (2001) regards job satisfaction as a bi-dimensional concept consisting of extrinsic factors and intrinsic factors. To Rose, the intrinsic source of an employee’s job satisfaction depends on an individual’s personal characteristic such as ability to take initiative, relationship with management because these are intangible aspects of the job. The extrinsic sources of an employee’s job satisfaction are situational and depend on the environment such as pay, promotion, or job security. These are financial and other tangible rewards or advantages of the job. For an employee to be satisfied with his/her job there should be a balance between both intrinsic and extrinsic sources of satisfaction (Rose, 2001).

Additionally, the review found out that there is a positive relationship among the job characteristics, individual differences in need strength and employee’s motivation, satisfaction, performance, and absenteeism on the job. Hackman and Lawler (1971) empirically tested the relationships among the job characteristics, individual differences in need strength and employee’s motivation, satisfaction, performance, and absenteeism on the job. The results indicated that positive relationship was found among job dimensions and dependent measures: motivation, satisfaction, performance and attendance. Hackman and Oldham (1974) originally developed the job diagnosis survey (JDS). In this research they described that this theory may not provide the desired results for all the individuals. It is especially suitable for those who have the strong desire for feeling of accomplishment and growth. Individuals who are low on growth need strength may find such job difficult to perform and may feel uncomfortable with it. During the development of the job diagnosis survey (JDS) Hackman and Oldham (1974) also checked the internal consistency reliability.

Finally, the review found out that all three of the psychological states must be experienced by an individual if desirable job outcomes are to emerge. If any one of three psychological states is not present, several outcome variables such as motivation and satisfaction will be weakened. The theory emphasizes that the most important outcome variable is internal motivation which exists when good performance is an occasion for self-reward and poor performance prompts unhappy feelings. Other predicted outcomes are growth satisfaction, general job satisfaction, work effectiveness, quality work performance, absenteeism and turnover. Growth satisfaction is a feeling that one is learning and growing personally or professionally at work. General satisfaction reflects responses to unspecified work conditions as measured by questions such as measured by questions such as “generally speaking, how satisfied are you with your job?” (Hackman & Oldham, 1980, p. 89).

6. Conclusions

It can be concluded from the review that that human beings have a basic and universal need and when these needs are met in their current situations then the individual is said to be satisfied. In other words the satisfaction of human needs plays an instrumental role as far as the success of the organization is concerned. Again, it can also be concluded from the review that there is a positive relationship among the job characteristics, individual differences in need strength and employee’s motivation, satisfaction, performance, and absenteeism on the job. Finally, it could be concluded from the review that all three of the psychological states must be experienced by an individual if desirable outcomes are to emerge. If any one of three psychological states is not present, several outcome variables such as motivation and satisfaction will be weakened. The theory emphasizes that the most important outcome variable is internal motivation which exists when good performance is an occasion for self-reward and poor performance prompts unhappy feelings.

7. Recommendations for School Managers

It is recommended that the complete role of the job characteristics theory is a sine a qua as far as the management of school is concerned. It is therefore recommended periodical workshops are organized for all the heads and managers of schools to sensitize them on the need to redesign the teaching job. This will go a long way to assist school managers to identify the needs of their school and redesign the jobs of their teachers. In this sense, the teachers would be willing to put off their best and eventually enhance the academic performance of the students.

REFERENCES

- Abdulla, J. M. (2009). *Determinants of job satisfaction among Dubai police employees*. Unpublished PhD. thesis, University of Glamorgan, Glamorgan Business School, United Kingdom.
- Akoi-Gyebi, A. E. (2009). *Motivational strategies to improve productivity in the construction industry in Ghana*. Unpublished master’s thesis, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi.
- Allen, D. R., & Wilburn, M. (2002). *Linking customer and employee satisfaction to the bottom line*. Milwaukee: American Society for Quality.

- Beer, M. (1964). Organization size and job satisfaction. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 7(1), 9-20.
- Bennel, N., & Acheampong, C. (2001). Work goals among male and female business students in Canada and China: The effects of culture and gender. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 12(2), 166-183.
- Ellickson, M. C., & Logsdon, K. (2001). Determinants of job satisfaction of municipal government employees. *State and Local Government Review*, 33(3), 173-84.
- Fields D. L. (2002). *Taking the measure of work: A guide to validated scales for organizational research and diagnosis*. London: Sage Publications Inc.
- Furnham, A. (2005). *The psychology of behaviour at work: The individual in the organization* (2nd ed.). New York: Hove Psychology Press.
- Gruneberg, M. M. (1979). *Job satisfaction: A reader*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Hackman, J. R., & Lawler, E. E. (1971). Employee reaction to job characteristics. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 55(3), 259 – 286.
- Hackman, J. R., & Lawler, E. E. (1980). Employee reaction to job characteristics. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 55(3), 259–286.
- Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1974). *The job diagnosis survey: An instrument for the diagnosis of jobs and the evaluation of job redesign projects*. Technical Report No.4. Yale University, Department of Administrative Science.
- Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1975). Development of the job diagnostic survey. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 60(2), 159-170.
- Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1976). Motivation through the design of work: Test of a theory. *Organization Behaviour and Human Performance*, 16, 250-279.
- Hanif, M. F. & Kamal, Y. (2009). Pay and Job Satisfaction: A Comparative Analysis of Different Pakistani Commercial Banks, *9th National Research Conference at SZABIST*, Islamabad.
- Hoppock, R. (1935). *Job satisfaction*. New York: Harper and Brothers.
- Kulik, C. T., Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1987). Work design as an approach to person-environment fit. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 31, 278-296.
- Locke, E. A. (1976). The Nature and Causes of Job Satisfaction. In M. D. Dunette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*, (pp. 1247-1349). Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Luthans, F. (2002). The need for and meaning of positive organizational behaviour. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, 23, 695-706.
- Mullins, L. J. (2005). *Management and organizational behaviour* (7th ed.). London: Financial Times/Prentice Hall.
- O' Brien, G. E. (1982). Evaluation of job characteristics theory of work attitudes and performance. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 34(3), 383-401.
- Okorley, E. N. A. (2010). *Factors influencing the motivation of bank staff Cape Coast metropolis*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.
- Oshagbemi, T. (2003). Gender differences in the job satisfaction of university teachers. *Women in Management Review*, 15(7), 331-343.
- Parvin, M. M., & Kabir, M. M. N. (2011). Factors affecting employee job satisfaction of pharmaceutical sector. *Australian Journal of Business and Management Research*, 1(9), 113-123.
- Robbins, S. P., & Coulter, M. (2006). *Management*. India: Prentice Hall of India.
- Rose, E. (2001). Love the Job. *Business Review Weekly*, 23(4), 56-59.
- Shann, M. (2001). Importance of job characteristics among future business persons: A Comparative study of Russian and Polish students. *International Journal of Management*, 25(4), 641-653.
- Souza-Poza, A., & Souza-Poza, A. (2000). Well-being at work: A cross-national analysis of the levels and determinants of job satisfaction. *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 29(5), 17-38.
- Spector, P. (1997). *Job satisfaction: Application, assessment, causes and consequences*. New York: Sage.
- Spector, P. (2008). *Industrial and organizational psychology: Research and practice* (5th ed.). New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Turner, A. N., & Lawrence, P. R. (1965). *Industrial jobs and the workers*. Boston: Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration.
- Vercchio, R. P. (1991). *Organizational behaviour* (2nd ed.). London: The Dryden.
- Wright, B. E., & Davis, B. S. (2003). Job satisfaction in the public sector: the role of the work environment. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 33, 170-90.
- Zeffane, R., Ibrahim, M. E., & Mehairi, R. A. (2008). Exploring the differential impact of job satisfaction on employee attendance and conduct: The case of a utility company in the United Arab Emirates. *Employee Relations*, 30(3), 237-250.