

**PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN NIGERIAN QUANTITY
SURVEYING FIRMS**

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Abstract

One of the basic responsibilities of top managers of an organisation is the ability to manage, supervise and control other members of staff in the best possible way to ensure optimum performance and high productivity. Failure to understand, acknowledge and meet the expectation and requirement of staff members by an organisation may lead to deterioration in commitment, loyalty to the values of the organisation, lack of motivation and eventually, low productivity. In this study, personnel management (PM) practices in Nigerian quantity surveying firms were examined by evaluating various human resource management (HRM) approach and techniques. The aspects considered are staff strength, welfare, training and development, mentoring and succession rate. Questionnaires were adopted for the study and it was administered on quantity surveying firms using convenient sampling method. Quantity surveying firms are not providing their members of staff with the necessary and expected welfare and mentoring and level of staff training is below average. In view of this, managers, directors and other top management staff of quantity surveying firms should ensure proper recruitment and selection process at the initial stage of personnel management; improve on staff training and development strategies; be concerned about staff welfare and mentoring; maintain a strong, stable, and increasing staff strength; and prioritise staff mentoring and succession in order to enhance productivity of staff and general performance of the firms. This will not only improve their innovativeness in delivering better to clients but will also enhance better competition in both local and international market.

Keywords: Human Resource Management (HRM), Mentoring, Quantity surveying firms (QSFs), Quantity surveyors, Recruitment, Training.

1. INTRODUCTION

The management of personnel, also refer to human or human resources, engaged and employed in an organisation has become an important element of the development of any organizational. According to Quresh *et al.* (2010), human resource management (HRM) practices is a determining factor for organizational enhancement and staff performance. Anthony, Obiamaka and Onwumere (2014) defined HRM as the process of hiring and developing staffs so that they can become more valuable to the organization. This implies that the practice goes beyond recruitment but continuously improving the skills and competencies. According to Ayanda, Lawal and Ben-Bernard (2014) personnel management (PM) are the procedures and practices needed to carry out the human resource aspect of a management position, including advertisement,

selection, job definition, training, performance appraisal, compensation, career planning, encouraging employee participation in decision making as well as mentoring the staff to rise to the point of becoming partners or directors. HRM can therefore be seen as a determining factor for a firm growth and its knowledge, a powerful tool for a firm competitiveness and firm innovation practices.

Quantity surveying firms (QSFs) are oriented organizations that provide services that cover all aspects of project procurement, contractual and cost management in infrastructural development. Anyadike (2013) pointed out that knowledge management processes interaction in QSFs has become a powerful tool for sustaining firms' competitiveness and robust innovation practices. It was however stated that there is a decline in HRM aspect of most QSFs as more attention is given to the financial aspect of the organization that the development of staffs. Francis, Cyril and Samuel (2011) observed that the inefficiency of manpower, lack of performance evaluation, human relation problem which may include planning management, management not based on established merit, lack of technological experience, remuneration and motivation hinders the performance of personnel in QSFs. The management of increased workforce might create new problems and challenges as the workers are becoming more conscious of their rights.

Wilkinson, Johnstone and Townsend (2012) observed that HRM has the complicated responsibility of balancing the needs and interests of staffs against the needs and interests of the firm. More so, Daud (2006) posited that HRM faces a lot of problems because of the continuous changing socio-economic, technological and political condition of the construction industry. Due to the changes in their environment and complexity of the construction industry, it is important for managers of firms to be concerned with issues relating to the management of personnel and the firm in general. In view of this, HRM practices in QSFs were examined with a view to improving personnel performance and the overall productivity of the firm. In achieving this, staff welfare and various staff training activities in the firms as well as the various ways of staff mentoring and succession were identified and evaluated.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Personnel Management

According to Loosemore, Dianti and Lingard, (2003), the development of personnel management can be traced to the Industrial Revolution in England in the late 18th. It was further affirmed that the political and economic conditions prevalent after the 2nd world war increased the demand for workmen and personnel specialists and this led to the current era of HRM where personnel or staffs are viewed as resources. Agbodjah (2008) noted that these was due to the fact that after the end of the second world war, people were urgently needed to work in factories, industries, etc. hence specialists were contacted to ensure good HRM practices. Daud (2006) observed that the concept of HRM became prevalent in the early 80s due to increasing academic interest and researches in the concept.

HRM concept is concerned with the management of what most researchers describes as the most valued assets of an organisation, that is, the people in order to provide a competitive advantage (Agbodjah, 2008). According to Armstrong (2003) and Matthew, Paul and Patrick (2003), the main features of HRM includes: emphasis on the strategic management of personnel, that is, personnel asset of the organization, which achieves integration between the business and the HRM approach; logical and comprehensive approach to the provision of mutually supporting employment practices and policies; development of integrated HRM and policies; importance

placed on gaining commitment to the goals and values of organization; and the treatment of personnel as assets rather than costs.

According to Fitz-enz (2000), staffs of a given firm are seen as personnel or human capital by virtue of the role they participate in the firm and because of how they add to the productivity of the firm. It was further stated that human resource is the most bothersome assets to manage. Apart from helping an organisation to achieve high performance by advocating for appropriate integration of people and processes, HRM also enhance motivation, commitment and job engagements (Agbodjah, 2008).

2.2 Personnel Management Practices in QSFs

The origins of quantity surveying is traced to the ancient Egyptian civilization who used dedicated personnel to carry out estimates and costing of their structures and buildings. However, it developed into an occupation during the 17th century restoration of London after the Great Fire (Said, Shafiei and Omran, 2010). In 1836, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (2014) noted that the profession entered its new age when the Houses of Parliament of Great Britain, became the first major public contract to be fully measured and tendered using detailed bills of quantities for cost and financial accountability.

In the early Twentieth century, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) developed the early modalities of becoming a quantity surveyor which later gained global recognition. Foreign members later established similar professional bodies in their countries and one of these is the Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS) founded in 1969 as a parallel body to RICS (Said *et al.*, 2010). In 1986, Onwusonye (2013) stated that the Federal Government of Nigeria recognized the NIQS through the Quantity Surveyors Registration Board of Nigeria (QSRBN) decree No. 31 of December 1986.

In general, there are services offered quantity surveying firms (NIQS, 2004; Said *et al.*, 2010; Oke and Ogunsemi, 2013; Olanipekun, Aje and Abiola, 2013; Olatunji, Oke, Aghimien and Ogunwoye, 2016), these are: preliminary cost advice and feasibility studies; cost planning and advising on contractual methods; advising on selection contractor and other consultants; tender documents preparation and other tendering activities; evaluating and estimating of construction works; preparing and agreeing accounts for or with contractors; preparing expenditure statements for tax accounting purposes; periodic financial reporting and technical auditing; replacement value for insurance; project management related services; giving expert evidence in arbitrations; value management related services and other cost, procurement and contractual responsibilities.

The challenge to the management of quantity surveying firms is not only to focus on devising strategies for driving performance but to ensure sustainability by giving consideration that influences performance (Olanipekun, *et al.*, 2013). HRM is a social phenomenon that enhances performance of an organization and its staffs when its practices are rightly utilized. This implies that QSFs can be more efficient and achieve better performance if necessary attention are directed at personnel management elements as staff welfare, training and development, mentoring and succession procedures.

According to Olanipekun *et al.*, (2013), QSFs have not been able to adapt to the general HRM principles due to peculiar challenges that have the potential to challenge the applicability and usefulness of the principles. These challenges accounted by Loosemore *et al.*, (2003); Abidin, Yusof, Hassan and Andros (2010); and Ogunsemi, Awodele and Oke (2013) include: nature of QSFs and their products and services;

nature of construction activity and the centralization of HRM function to other professionals; changing demand for construction products and service; labour market and image of the construction sector; personnel turnover and retention; subcontracting and self-employment in QSFs; training, development and knowledge creation; communication and employee relations; equal opportunity and diversity; and health, safety and welfare of personnel. More so, most QSFs are small in size with low capacity, little training, poor personnel motivation and inability to retain specialists and experienced members (Olanipekun *et al.*, 2013). Ogunsemi, Awodele and Oke (2013) opined that virtually all the QSFs in Nigeria are structured as either sole proprietorship or partnership which no longer satisfies the present day business environment.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, personnel management practices in QSFs was examined. In view of the nature of the study, survey method was adopted. Quantitative technique was employed through questionnaires distributed to quantity surveying firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. The actual population of these firms as at the time of the study is 57. This was obtained from the directory of Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS), Lagos state chapter, a body recognised by law for certification and monitoring of the firms in the country. In view of the small size of the population, census sampling was adopted whereby all the firms were contacted. It was ensured that a questionnaire was administered to a firm to eliminate double entry of information.

In designing the questionnaire, multiple-choice answers were adopted for various highlighted questions. The first part of the instrument was structured to solicit information regarding general characteristics of the firm while the second part was planned to obtain relevant data relating to the objectives of the study. The latter deals with staff strength, welfare, training, as well as mentoring and succession plans of the firms. For ethical consideration, a cover letter was provided highlighting relevant information for the study. It was stated that the data will solely be used for academic purpose and respondents are free to opt out of the study at any time. Confidentiality of the respondents were guarantee and questions that may reveal the firms such as name, address, registration number, etc. were avoided. Prior to the actual data collection, pilot study was carried out to test the suitability of the research instrument. Academia and professional quantity surveyors were involved and their comments and suggestions were considered in drafting the final instrument.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the administered 57 questionnaires, 49 were retrieved while 5 were found unworthy of analysis. Vital information were missing and some provided more than required number of answers for questions posted. In view of this, data contained in the 44 workable instruments were analysed.

4.1 Characteristics of the respondents

Result in table 1 indicate that about 66% of the QSFs have been operating for over 10 years, thus their response can be relied upon. Their ownership status revealed that 24 are sole proprietorship, 18 are partnership while the remaining 2 are consortium. Result also shows that QSFs are involved in substantial number of construction projects, ranging from building, civil and heavy engineering construction. However, the annual turnover of some of the firms seems inadequate and this may affect strength and salary of organisation's personnel.

Table 1: Background information

	Variables	Frequency	Percent
Years of existence of firm	1-5years	4	9.0
	6-10years	10	22.7
	11-15years	11	25.0
	16-20years	12	27.3
	21-25years	6	13.6
	26years above	1	2.4
	Total	44	100
Nature of firms' ownership	Sole proprietorship	24	54.5
	Partnership	18	41.0
	Consortium	2	4.5
	Total	44	100.000
Nature of jobs undertaken by firm	Building works	14	31.9
	Civil Engineering & Building Works	26	59.0
	Others	4	9.1
	Total	44	100.000
Firms' minimum turnover in current value (annual)	1-10million	10	22.7
	11-20million	11	25.0
	21-30million	6	13.6
	31-40million	2	4.6
	over 41million	2	4.6
	Not sure	13	29.5
	Total	44	100

4.2 Human Resource Management

Result in table 2 indicates that almost half of the quantity surveying firms have no department responsible for human management and relations. Also, less than one third of the firms that have a department responsible for human relations named such department as HRM or PM. This department is responsible for recruitment and further improvement of the productivity of the staff and the firm in general. Result further shows that less than half of the firms have this department managed by a managing director directly responsible for the running of the firm, while less than one third are headed by Human resource manager. This indicates that human resource manager are rarely employed by quantity surveying firms to oversee their personnel management.

Table 2: Human resource management

	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Department for human relations	Yes	13	29.6
	No	21	47.8
	Not sure	10	22.6
	Total	44	100.0
Name of this department	Human Resource Department	7	16.0
	Personnel Department	3	6.8
	Others	9	20.5
	Not sure	25	56.7
	Total	44	100.0
Person in charge	Human Resource Manager	5	11.4
	Personnel Manager	4	9.1
	Managing Director	17	38.6
	General Manager	1	2.3
	Others	4	10.0
	Not sure	13	29.6
	Total	44	100.0

4.3 Staff Strength

For this aspect, some respondents responding on behalf of the firm left some questions unanswered. However, result in table 3 shows that the average number of overall staff strength in a quantity surveying firms are about 14 which is on a high side considering the number of firms under survey. Average number of industrial training students are about 7, while graduate/probationer has an average number of 5 personnel. An average of about 6 members of staff are members of NIQS and registered with Quantity Surveyors Registration Board of Nigeria (QSRBN), the two bodies recognised for registration and administration of quantity surveying firms in the country. Other members of staff that do work in Qs firms such as cleaners, secretaries, drivers, etc. average about 9 in the firms.

Table 3: Staff strength

	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Overall Staff Members	1-10	14	31.8
	11-20	26	59.1
	21-30	4	9.1
	Average	14.14	
Industrial Training Students	1-10	39	88.6
	31 above	1	2.3
	Not sure	4	9.1
	Average	7.14	
Graduate/Probationer	1-10	37	84.1
	11-20	1	2.3
	Not sure	6	13.6
	Average	5.76	
Registered Staffs (NIQS)	1-10	42	95.5
	Not sure	2	4.5
	Average	5.50	

Registered Staffs (QSRBN)	1-10	41	93.2
	Not sure	3	6.8
	Average	5.50	
Others	1-10	32	72.7
	31 above	4	9.1
	Not sure	8	18.2
	Average	8.83	

4.4 Staff Welfare

On staff welfare provided by QSFs, it could be observed from table 4 that the adequate payment of staffs' salaries in quantity surveying firms is on a high side with more than half of the firms indicating that is very adequate. For staff pay increment, less than half of the firms indicated that it is satisfactory, indicating that quantity surveying firms increases salaries of their staffs only when necessary. Also, less than half of the firms has no idea if the firm matches their pay with performance which is on a high side, less than one-third of the firms indicates that increment of pay does not match with performance, while less than one quarter of the firms indicated that matching pay with the performance of their staffs is carried out.

Table 4: Staff Welfare

	Classification	Frequency	Percent
Adequacy of staff payment	Very adequate	28	63.6
	Adequate	14	31.8
	Once in a while	2	4.6
	Total	44	100.0
Staff pay increment	Very satisfactory	1	2.3
	Satisfactory	19	43.2
	Sometimes	9	20.5
	Once in a while	13	29.5
	Never	2	4.5
	Total	44	100.0
With performance	Yes	8	18.1
	No	11	25.0
	No idea	20	45.5
	Not sure	5	11.4
	Total	44	100.0

On the support provided by quantity surveying firms for their members of staff, it could be observed from table 5 that almost half of the firms distribute rewards and incentives once in a while among staffs, while some firms strictly linked the rewards with performance, others have no idea of the matter. In the area of providing health/medical insurance for members of staff, more than one third of firms sometimes carry out such act which is encouraging. However, less than one third of the firms ensures a better welfare package for their personnel in the area of transportation and allowances.

Table 5: Rewards and Incentives

	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Rewards and incentives to the staffs	Satisfactory	8	18.2
	Sometimes	11	25.0
	Once in a while	21	47.7
	Never	4	9.1
	Total	44	100.000
Rewards linked to staff performance	YES	12	28.0
	NO	12	28.0
	NO IDEA	20	44.0
	Total	44	100.0
Staff health/medical insurance	Very often	6	13.5
	Often	9	20.5
	Sometimes	19	43.2
	Once in a while	5	11.4
	Never	5	11.4
	Total	44	100.0
Staff transportation/allowances	Very often	7	16.0
	Often	13	29.5
	Sometimes	6	13.6
	Once in a while	12	27.3
	Never	6	13.6
	Total	44	100.0

Table 6 indicates that close to half of quantity surveying firms do not provide housing for their staff. Also, less than half of quantity surveying firms sometimes provide for the welfare of their staff in case of their involvement in accident.

Table 6: Housing and Accident

	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Staff welfare in the area of housing	Very often	3	6.8
	Often	8	18.2
	Sometimes	8	18.2
	Once in a while	7	15.9
	Never	18	40.9
	Total	44	100.0
Welfare in occurrences such as accident	Often	8	18.2
	Sometimes	17	38.6
	Once in a while	15	34.1
	Never	4	9.1
	Total	44	100.0

4.5 Staff Training and methods

Result in table 7 indicates that 55% of quantity surveying firms assess their staffs based on performance appraisal so as to provide for their training needs, 32% of has no idea while for the reaming firms, training needs of their staffs are not assessed. 41% of quantity surveying firms provide social training for their staffs once in a while, 32% sometimes provide an environment for the socialization of their staffs, while 23% never carry out such training for their personnel. More so, 41% of these firms

sometimes provide training for the general problem solving skills of their staffs, 30% provide such training once in a while and 16% does not carry out any of such training.

Table 7: Staff Training

	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Training performance appraisal	Yes	24	54.545
	No	6	13.636
	No idea	14	31.818
	Total	44	100.000
Social training skills of the staff	Satisfactory	2	14.500
	Sometimes	14	31.818
	Once in a while	18	40.909
	Never	10	22.727
	Total	44	100.000
General problem solving skills	Satisfactory	7	15.909
	Sometimes	18	40.909
	Once in a while	13	29.545
	Never	6	13.636
	Total	44	100.000
Training within/outside country	Very often	5	11.364
	Often	4	9.091
	Sometimes	3	6.818
	Once in a while	9	20.455
	Never	23	52.300
	Total	44	100.000
Firm aims and objectives	Very often	1	2.273
	Often	8	18.182
	Sometimes	15	34.091
	Once in a while	14	31.818
	Never	6	13.636
	Total	44	100.000

Result further shows that 50% of quantity surveying firms never provide for professional training of their staffs within or outside the country which is on a high side, 21% do it once in a while and it is done often by more than 21% of the firms. 34% of quantity surveying firms provide training for their staff for the broader knowledge of the aims and objectives of the firms sometimes, 32% do it once in a while and 14% never provide for such training.

Table 8: Staff training methods

	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Changing needs of the firm	Very satisfactory	1	2.3
	Satisfactory	7	15.8
	Sometimes	9	20.5
	Once in a while	19	43.2
	Never	8	18.2
	Total	44	100.0
Seminars and workshops etc.	Yes	31	70.6
	No	6	13.6
	No idea	6	15.8
	Total	44	100.0

Result in table 8 indicate more than one third of QSFs organizes training programs relevant to the changing needs of the firm once in a while, less than one quarter sometimes organize such programs while only one of the firms organize such training programs. More than half of the firms encourage their staffs to participate in various seminars, workshops, conferences, etc. to broaden the knowledge of their personnel.

4.6 Staff Mentoring and Succession in QSFs

On opportunity for personnel to rise to the position of partners and directors in the firm as described in table 9, only 50% provides such opportunity. Despite agreeing that mentoring offers benefits to the mentor, mentee and the firm, it could be observed that more than half of quantity surveying firms does not have any personnel that rose to become partners or directors of the firm. On the average, only about 1 of the personnel rise to become partners of their firm.

Table 9: Mentoring and Succession

	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Staffs to rise to partner or director	Yes	22	50.0
	No	22	50.0
	Total	44	100.0
Staffs that rose to partners or directors	None	24	54.5
	1-2	12	27.3
	3-4	3	6.8
	5-6	2	4.6
	Not sure	3	6.8
	Average	0.960	
Benefits of mentoring	Yes	32	72.7
	No	2	4.6
	No idea	10	22.7
	Total	44	100.0

4.7 Discussion of Findings

Staff strength of quantity surveying firms is below average as staffs tend to seek opportunities elsewhere due to the fact that their needs are not satisfactorily met by their firm. Anakwe (2002) observed that traditional human resource management functions, are very much practiced by human resource professionals which seems to be missing in about 50% of the identified firms. The training of personnel in QSFs is on the average as some firms provide training in areas of social skills, general problem solving skills, professional skills and training for the broader knowledge of the firm. According to Aliyu (2011), staffs in quantity surveying firms are poorly trained, resulting to the inability of firms to retain specialist knowledge and potentials there by weakening the strength of the firm. Training programmes increases personnel skills, which in turn, increases staff productivity and reduces job dissatisfaction that results in staff turnover (Obisi, 2011). However, QSFs rarely send their staffs for such training programs.

Personnel welfare covers a wide range of facilities that are essential for the well-being of a personnel and are offered by an employer, firm or organisation. From the research, some of the QSFs pay their staffs adequately so as to make them feel secured

with a satisfactory pay increase, but majority of these firms don't match the payment with performance. This may affect competitiveness of the personnel and their overall productivity (John and Pamela, 2008). QSFs distribute rewards/incentives once in a while depending on the financial strength of the firm and some firms does not link their rewards to staff performance. However, staffs in QSFs rarely rise to become partners or directors. Succession which involves identifying staffs within an organization who possess the skills necessary to move into positions of greater responsibility is another area of challenge for QSFs and mentoring is an essential tool to achieve the practice.

5 CONCLUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Generally, QSFs are performing below average on issues relating to welfare, training, mentoring and development of their members of staff. This leads to personnel moving jobs thereby affect the growth, stability and productivity of the firm. Some of these personnel are denied basic welfare package and benefits that will motivate them, improve their work and enhance the productivity of the firms. The fact that there is an improvement in the level of staff performance is not indicative of an effective staff management system. In most cases, personnel perform to their optimum because of the fear of not able to secure better job elsewhere.

Lack of adequate attention to factors of productivity of personnel such as promotion and succession; incentives, rewards and awards; health/medical insurance; transportation allowance and housing allowance; etc. invariably affects the productivity and performance of firms. To guarantee optimum and effective performance of personnel in QSFs, it is necessary to ensure that the selection and recruitment process of staffs takes into cognisance skills, abilities, potentials and other traits of the applicants. After their engagement, continuous professional training and development should be a fundamental and regular activities for personnel's innovativeness, relevance and better performance. More so, human resources or personnel managers should be employed by the firms so as to understand the potentials, abilities and motivational requirements of each members of staff. This will ensure that adequate attention are paid to personnel welfare, thereby reduce dissatisfaction and improve performance. Staff strength of most quantity surveying firms seems to be adequate but there is need to develop a benchmark for size and mix of categories of quantity surveyors required for QSFs.

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