SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF MOTIVATION AND MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

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This paper is an attempt to bring into limelight the socio-cultural dimensions of motivation and management in Nigeria. It commences with an attempt to correct, criticize and reconceptualize the epistemological basis of traditionally accepted knowledge, that is, the classical schools of management, which failed to take into consideration the impact of the socio-cultural environment on workers behaviour and performance. Following a comprehensive review of the uniqueness of the Nigerian socio-cultural environment, this paper took a radical look at the existing theories of motivation and management and challenged some of the basic assumptions of the classical models. Sociological and Anthropological findings have shown that the world all over is characterized by cultural variations and that these cultural differences provided the explanations for variations in behavioural traits at work. Arising from the above, the paper concludes that the strategies for motivating and managing workers is a complex and multidimensional criterion as it cannot be derived from the basic universal principles of management and that the strategies and principles that will work in any setting depend largely on the socio-cultural environment itself. Therefore the peculiarity and uniqueness of each socio-cultural settings must be acknowledged and well taken care of in the formulation of management principles and strategies.

PREAMBLES

Every society has a soul and the soul of the society finds expression in its institutions, and to kill the institutions is to kill the soul. No people can profit by or be helped under institutions, which are not the outcome of their own character (Blyden 1903: 140, 10)

...African organizations may be experiencing serious employee motivation problems. The sources of these problems are varied and not well understood because of lack of empirical research (Kiggundu 1988: 235)

The foreigner interested in designing, implementing and evaluating effective management development programmes must read widely in order to gain an appreciation of this diverse and complex continent, its peoples and social organizations, and the context within which organizations and management takes place. (Kiggundu 1991:32-33).

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INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest contributions which Sociology as a discipline can make or add to the body of existing knowledge in organization theory and management is to come up with findings that can be used to tackle the human problems at work or in organizations. One way of doing this is to examine critically how the culture of a particular society affects work behaviour in general. The question is, “How does culture affect the work values, attitudes, commitment to work, perception of work, and the orientation of workers? Another question that may be asked is: ‘to what extent is culture a determinant of work motivation and performance? These questions and some others are the points of focus and attention in this paper.

There is a considerable body of literature on motivation which is exclusively based upon the findings, thinking and empirical studies from the Western World. The fact however remains that the analysis of various motivation theories and empirical findings carried out in the Western countries cannot be invoked with full confidence and are quite inadequate to solve our peculiar problems in Nigeria. This is because these empirical investigations and findings are carried out in cultural settings which are entirely different from ours. What is therefore needed is to look inwards into our specific cultural environment and examine critically those strategies which emanate from our culture and how these strategies can be used to improve efficiency, effectiveness and performance in work organizations.

Sociology just like any of the other social sciences can be made use of under three broad heads: the demand for information; the need for explanation and the use of Sociology in policy-formulation and execution. Strictly speaking, we cannot separate information gathering from explanation, which involves interpreting the meanings social actors attach to their behaviour. This is what Weber (1978) called the interpretive understanding of social action and behaviour (Verstehen).

Thus, the society is not, it now appears, only external to the individual; it is at the same time internal, shaping our minds and feelings, shaping the things we want and expect. The constraint which society imposes upon the individual is a real one, Durkheim (1974) maintains, in that it sets limits to what we can do and be. The broadest conclusion that can be drawn from this submission is that society influences the worker, the worker in turn also influences the society. The values, attitudes and other behavioural traits which are exhibited at work are largely influenced and determined by the society.

The above submission rests on the basic fact that every society develops an array of work ethos or a collective understanding of the nature of work and of man’s relationship in the work setting. This ethos provides the basic guidelines for the definition of the rights, duties, obligations, roles, and responsibilities of workers as members of specific organizations. It defines the fundamental values, orientation to and perception of work, systems, and channels of interaction for the workers, as well as the belief systems, which embody the internal-
ized values that, in part, propel action. When an array of work ethos reaches the level of general acceptability in a society, it tends to become a strong moral and social force, which gives a kind of uniqueness to such a society. Invariably, therefore, workers in a particular society have to be managed along the lines of the pre-existing work ethos in their society. And as such, motivation and management principles and strategies cannot be separated or divorced from the socio-cultural environment (Alo, 1984; Mohr, 1986; Ahiauzu, 1987 and Aluko 2001).

It is a logical and much respected intellectual practice to begin a paper by defining one’s terms and so our first task will be to define “Motivation” and “Culture”. There are many definitions of Motivation, some of which are quite misleading and not broad enough. Often the reason why people have different views as to what makes people thick is that they attach different meanings to the concept. For the purpose of this paper, we shall adopt two definitions given by Mitchell (1982) and Harries and Woodgate (1984). Mitchell defined motivation as those psychological processes that cause the arousal, direction and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal directed. Harries and Woodgate defined motivation as the “process or factors causing people to act in certain ways consists of the identification of need, the establishment of a goal which will satisfy that need and determination of the required action.” These are; (1) what energizes human behaviour (2) what directs or channels such behaviour, and (3) how this behaviour is maintained or sustained. The logical question now is: Why is motivation so important in management discourse? To this question, George and Jones (1996) argued that management continually faces an uphill task and challenge: how to motivate high-performing workers and get them to continue doing such a good job. Motivation is central to understanding and managing organizational behaviour because it explains why people behave as they do in organizations.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

Tylor (1871) defined “culture as the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Ritzer et al. (1979) defined ‘culture’ as the entire complex of ideas and material objectives that the people of a society use in carrying out their collective life. Thus culture includes knowledge and beliefs, technology, language, values and norms. In another instance, Ekong (1988) simply defined culture as the total way of life of a people which is learned, shared and transmitted from one generation to another. Culture from all indications is an aggregation of attitudes, style, consumption and general worldview of life; its perception, expression and utility by a people, which identify and distinguish them from other people. Hofstede (1991) finally summed it up when he defined culture as “The collective programming of mind which distinguishes the member of one group or category or people from another. From whatever perspective one looks at it, culture is simply the total way of life in a given society and this varies from one society to another.
For so long there has been an on-going debate in management circles about whether management is culture-free or not. There are two schools in this debate. First are those who believe that management is a science governed by universal principles (“the universalist”) and that the principles can be applied anywhere, any time and in any setting or place. This was the main submission of Taylor (1911) and his associates in the scientific management school, Max Weber and advocates of the human relations school. The second school or thought are those who argue that management principles are determined by a relative culture, the so-called culture specific or the Culturalist school. Writers who subscribed to this line of reasoning are Brown 1973, Dore 1973, Ahiauzu 1987, Kiggundu, 1988, Hofstede 1991, Iguisi, 1994 and Aluko 2001. Going further, the Culturalists raise considerable doubt regarding the transferability of management principles. The management principles that will work in any setting depend strongly on the culture of that society. Management, scholars, and others concerned should therefore take particular interest in understanding and acknowledging the cultural forces at work when formulating and propounding motivation and management principles.

It is now apparently clear that we need to evaluate the Nigerian socio-cultural environment in order to come up with the unique cultural forces a work, and on the basis of this formulate and recommend some motivation and management principles and strategies. What then are the cultural forces at work?

First is the collective tradition in Nigeria as in most African societies. It is the concept “We” against the concept “I” and as such individualistic tendencies are suppressed for collectivistic tradition. This is further linked with the pre-existing norm in the extended family. The individual does not exist for himself, his immediate or nuclear family but for the extended family as well. According to Aweda (1990) the theory of family support revolves around the philosophy of ‘people need people’. No person, people say, is an island unto himself. This is supplemented by a popular Yoruba proverb which says “Agbajo owo la nfi soya, Ajeje owo kan ko gberu dori” meaning that greater things could be achieved through collective or concerted efforts as against individual struggles. Mohr (1986) stated that each individual, whether healthy or ill, rich or poor lives under the protection of the family. The capable and successful have to share with the weak and lazy in the family and thus are greatly hampered when it comes to accumulating savings and thus hindering higher living standards. Even for workers who work in towns and cities and large organizations the family ties remain intact and unsevered. The worker goes home during celebrations such as New Year, Christmas, Easter and other functions. The collective tradition and the extended family system affect work attitudes in many ways.

According to Nnoli (1980) in all Nigerian societies, people thought in collective terms. Such collective thoughts enabled them to maintain bonds of kinship even with those who were not generally included in the family unit. The orientation is that
the spirit of brotherhood and cooperation are crucial to social welfare. Collective action is seen as a noble virtue, and individual selfishness is to be subordinated to group norms where legitimate goals are concerned. Consequently, good fortune and misfortune were associated with the kinship group as a whole rather than with the individual alone. Kinship governed all social relations, binding together the life of the entire community.

To begin with, the extended family system is such that the worker always sees himself as working for the members of his extended family rather than solely for his nuclear family as obtains in the western world. The immediate consequence of the trend is that little or nothing is left for the worker to cater for himself after taking care of the extended family. Again, Nti (1989) notes that few African nations can afford comprehensive social security systems of the type taken for granted in the wealthy industrialized countries; redundancy for one employee is likely to cause hardship to many. In the context of the African extended family dependency system is likely to cause more serious problems for more people than might be the case in other socio-cultural settings. Thus the motivation and management principles to be adopted in the Nigerian setting has to take cognizance of the ‘Nigerian factor’ by giving a kind of equitable wages and salaries that will be commensurate with the workers’ expenses in order to be able to take care of both his nuclear and the extended families. This recommendation is based on the premise that when the worker’s regular earnings are inadequate to meet his needs and budgets, then the worker is inclined to look for other ways of supplementing his income so as to meet the ever-increasing pressures on him by the relations.

The second factor has to do with constraints within the economy. For some time now, precisely in the last two decades the Nigerian economy has been in a total mess. The advent of the Structural Adjustment Programme during the General Babangida era further worsened the situation. This led to the near erosion of workers’ purchasing power occasioned by the rising inflation in the country. More than ever, all categories of wage earners were in a state of acute deprivation due to abysmally low wages and poor reward system. In the face of persistent inflationary trend, the standard of living has fallen to an unprecedented level. The public sector employees are noted to be particularly worse off in terms of compensation (incentives) due to government’s hostility to collective bargaining, which has made salary to stagnate in the sector over the years. Even in the private sector where there have been sustained negotiations and remarkable achievements in salaries and allowances, the workers just like their public sector counterparts, live far below their real requirements as wages cannot meet basic needs (CDHR 1996; Mkandawire & Soludo 1999).

Again, in recent times and in the ongoing civilian dispensation, government continues to argue that the workers’ lots have improved tremendously. However, a brief historical excursion into the wages of workers in Nigeria proved otherwise. By giving a minimum wage of N5, 500:00 per month to the workers in 1999, the government has actually reduced the workers’
wages by 77% compared with what they earned in 1981 under the Shehu Shagari administration. Let us examine the logic behind this argument. In 1981, the workers minimum wage was N125 per month, and the official exchange rate was 64 kobo for one dollar; which means the minimum wage was equivalent to 195 dollars. In 2001, the workers minimum wage was N5,500:00 per month but the official exchange rate was N126 for one dollar. This is an indication that the minimum wage was equivalent to 44 dollars in 2001. Invariably, the Nigerian worker has lost an equivalent of 150 dollars per month in twenty years. The minimum wage in Nigeria that should be the equivalent of N125 in 1981 is N24,444.00 per month, which is about 194 dollars. Thus the worth of every worker in Nigeria has been reduced. Workers are made slaves by Nigerian government and management organizations.

In the face of these acute deprivations, workers at all levels of wage employment have devised varying survival strategies which are not only injurious to their organizations but to the economy as a whole. It is quite in order and logical to argue that a worker whose income is grossly inadequate for his needs can hardly be motivated to work efficiently. It beats the imagination for anyone to expect wholehearted commitment on the part of the remaining workers. The result, if anything, has been further demoralization and disillusionment. His thoughts and action are directed elsewhere. One way is to resort to private practice. Such workers put in very little efforts in their official duties and reserve their energies for private ventures or practice.

Other negative behaviour usually exhibited include absenteeism, deliberate slowing down of work speed, unauthorized conversion of official property to personal use, fraud, and using official hours to attend to personal affairs (Adedayo, 1994). How then, do we overcome this negative behaviour? Basically, men like to work, however, from time to time, they need some incentives. This is in line with Taylor’s submission in 1911 when he argued that what workers want most is high wages. According to him workmen cannot be induced to work extra hard without extra pay. In order to motivate and manage workers in the Nigeria economic environment efficiently, management must pay very attractive, handsome and equitable wages.

There are empirical evidences both in Nigeria and abroad to justify this position. (Mgbe, 1994, and Aluko 1998) In a recent study by Aluko in 1998, 60.2 per cent of the respondents stated that money is their primary and main motivating factor. This corroborates some earlier studies by Mgbe in 1994 and Aluko2001 when similar results were obtained. In some other instances outside Nigeria, studies by Behling et al (1976) and Armstrong (1988) also support this position. Money, in the form of pay or some other sort of remuneration, appears to be the most obvious extrinsic reward. Money provides the means to achieve a number of different ends. It is a powerful force because it is linked directly or indirectly to the satisfaction of many needs for survival and security, if it is coming in regularly. According to Armstrong (1988) money may in itself have no intrinsic meaning, but it acquires significant motivating
power because it comes to symbolize so many intangible goals. It acts as a symbol in different ways for different people, and for the same person at different times.

Again, a research carried out by Ashridge College among managers in a large British company revealed that when asked to rate the importance of a list of tangible and intangible rewards, the largest group (25 per cent) was mainly interested in material reward, expressed in money, fringe benefits and opportunities for promotion.

Another piece of research carried out by Goldthorpe et at (1968) among ‘affluent’s skilled and semi-skilled workers, revealed that the workers were motivated in their choice of employer by the extrinsic factors of pay and, to a lesser extent, security. They wanted to increase their power as consumers and their domestic standard of living, rather than satisfy themselves as producers or by the degree of fulfillment they got from work.

Behling and Schriesheim (1976) put it more succinctly when they said “Pay in one form or another is certainly one of the mainsprings of motivation in our society... As it is, it must be repeated: pay is the most important single motivator used in our organized society”.

Armstrong (1988) concluded that people certainly want money and, just as certainly, you have to pay the right amount to get and keep them in most organizations. The only exception to this rule is the relatively few cases where the intrinsic attraction of the work itself overrides financial considerations. The effectiveness of money as a means of improving performance and increasing productivity, however depend upon its being seen as a reasonably sure means of achieving a goal. The effectiveness of money depends on two factors: First, the strength of the need; and second, the degree to which a person is confident that his behaviour will earn the money he or she wants to satisfy the need, that is, his or her expectations about the likelihood of his or her efforts being adequately rewarded.

From all indications, and all things being equal, money can provide positive motivation in the right circumstances. Therefore, in order to motivate and manage workers in the Nigerian economic environment efficiently, management must pay very attractive, handsome and equitable wages. More importantly, multitudes of people in Nigeria take their pay level as barometer to record their personal worth as persons. Workers in general tend to measure their worth by how their work is valued and as such salary levels and pay scales mean more to them than anything else.

The third factor also emanates from the type of economic system practiced in Nigeria, that is, the Mixed Economy. Under this economic system, capitalism is practiced along with elements of socialism and welfarism. The defects of capitalism have managed to rear its ugly face in the Nigerian society. What are the identified defects of capitalism? First, capitalism results in an unjust distribution of national wealth. That is, wealth is concentrated in few hands. Secondly, the wage system under capitalism, results not only in insecurity, but it makes the workers wage slaves. Thirdly, employers and employees are
never in any agreement. This is the more reason why there are strikes, labour unrest and antagonism between the employees and management on many occasions. Fourthly, under capitalism, wages are paid to the wage earners only when it is profitable to the capitalist to employ his labour.

There is an aggressive determination to make profits and succeed at all cost. Conflict is inherent in capitalism and a battle line is drawn between the workers and the capitalists. Each party wants what the other party does not want to give. There is thus a conflict of interest which must be inevitably resolved if work must go on. In order to give room for harmony in work settings, the capitalist must be ready to pay the workers good and equitable wages that must be seen by the workforce as good and fair enough to ensure a reasonable standard of living in the socio-economic environment.

The fourth factor to be given recognition has to do with job security and opportunities for advancement. In Nigeria presently, the production sectors of the economy (agricultural and industrial) are in serious decline (CDHR 1996). The situation is worse as production has virtually collapsed. Work organizations are folding up here and consequently, workers are being laid off in large numbers. In the public sector, mass retrenchment has been a regular exercise. It is apparently clear that the Nigerian economy is characterized by job insecurity. And as such it is quite logical to argue that workers whose tenures of office are not secured can hardly be motivated to work. According to Fadayomi et al (1988) the result of job insecurity is far, uncertainty, and loss of morale which can adversely affect productivity. The only exception to this rule is if the security of the job is tied or attached to hard work or performance. In order to motivate and manage the Nigerian workers, management and employers must ensure that the conditions of work guarantee job security. Here, financial incentives cannot do the bidding. This is because no matter how good a financial incentive may be, it may not work if the employees know that they can be hired and fired at will mechanically. There must also be opportunities for advancement at work. Nobody wants to be static; we all want to reach greater heights, to become whatever one can become. Where there are no opportunities for promotion and advancement, the workforce can hardly be motivated.

There is the argument that rests on the paternalistic care of employees and respect for age (Fashoyin, 1980 and Ejiofor 1987). In the traditional work setting, people work communally or with members of their family. There is recognition and acknowledgement of individual needs and aspirations. And the relationship is usually quite cordial. To begin with, the cultural background of the Nigerian workers differs from what obtains in the workplace. The modern work setting is characterized by excessive formalism, impersonality and anonymity, but on the contrary the worker demands for paternalistic care and informal relationships – such as sympathetic understanding of his personal problems, humane and relaxed supervision and to be treated as a person. This perception does not necessarily require monetary or material incentives. Where management succeeds in recognizing these expectations, the workers can be readily motivated to work, but if not, the workers’
reaction is naturally negative because they feel disappointed and rejected and misunderstood.

Coupled with paternalistic care is the respect for age in work settings. In Nigeria, like it is else where in most African societies, there is a tradition of paying respect to elders. Age therefore confers extra recognition and authority. Nowadays, age is only accorded a negligible role. This thus affects authority relationships in work settings. A young capitalist employer of 25 years becomes “oga sir” to an elder of sixty years whom he has employed as a labourer, driver, clerk, messenger or anything else. The reverse is now the case. However, in the workplace, workers want to be respected for their age, even when those in the management cadre are younger. It is in the realization of this fact that the management of Afribank Plc. pegged the age of those to be employed as Executive Trainees. This is because when older people are employed after younger ones, there tends to be conflict arising from the age factor. The conflict centres on –‘if you are my senior at work, then I am your senior in age’. It is therefore recommended that motivation and management principles in Nigeria must take into cognizance the age factor with its extra recognition, respect and authority.

Some research findings have shown that some workers in Nigeria do not believe in hard work as an avenue to the top. Oloko has documented this in his 1977 study and another one by Aluko in 1998. According to them, the Nigerian worker does not perceive that their advancement depends much on how hard he or she works but mostly for being the bosses’ favourites. Some workers think that promotion depends on whom you know, how well connected you are, where you come from (ethnicity or federal character) or even a matter of luck. ‘God fatherism’ is seen as an avenue for promotion. Some take to offering sacrifices to gods and ancestors, wearing success charms, attending spiritual churches, and joining secret societies and social clubs. Some worship and make rituals to their inner being called ‘Eleda’. This in short has to do with religion and the belief system. Our recommendation is that the criteria for promotion in work settings must be objectively measurable so as to disabuse the minds of workers who believe in connections, divine intervention or luck.

An important pre-requisite for motivating and managing workers efficiently is fairness. This has also been corroborated by Ejiofor in his 1987 study. According to him, any management principles like favouritism, nepotism, ethnicity, quota system, federal character, sectionalism, statism and other undue influences negate fairness and must be abandoned if the Nigerian workers are to be adequately motivated to perform. The issue of ‘federal character’ which now has a commission of its own has been counter-productive. The best from the Southern part of the country are kept out of the system for the worst from the Northern part. It is also reflected in promotion matters. Promotion sometimes depend on where you come from and not solely on merit or performance. It is apparent that workers who are put at a disadvantage by the application of the ‘federal character’ after putting in their best will
definitely be demotivated. A worker will feel bad seeing his junior becoming his boss in the name of ‘federal character’ or ethnic balancing (Dare 1986).

There is also the problem associated with commitment to materialism and the institutionalization of corruption. Corruption and other social vices have eaten deep into the fabric of our society. There is a very strong urge to accumulate wealth and material possession at all costs. The Nigerian society is characterized by ostentatious living. This is reflected and concretized in the way people do social functions such as weddings, funeral, house warming, chieftaincy titles and birthdays. People spend recklessly and spray musicians endlessly at parties. Nigerians are pleasure loving people (Nwala, 1980). People do not morally condemn if, for example, a politically influential person takes advantage of his office to enrich himself, if he or she can thus help his or her family member or his or her ethnic group and some affluent people (Mohr 1986). Above all, Nigeria’s economic problem is compounded by official corruption and mismanagement. During the Babangida era, corruption reached unprecedented levels. This regime saw the introduction and the subsequent institutionalization of the ‘settlement’ syndrome otherwise know as ‘Egunje’ (Falola 1998; Aluko 1999). The resultant effect now is that more people are looting the nation while very few are seriously building it. Those who can neither loot nor grab grumble and shirk their responsibilities. Therefore, any attempt to motivate the Nigerian worker must first of all recognize the institutionalization of corruption in the society and then design strategies or principles that will ensure that workers are paid good and equitable wages. Our thesis is that if workers are paid good and equitable wages that are commensurate with their needs, and cost of living, then the urge or the tendency to engage in corrupt practices is inherently reduced.

The factor of orientation to work now comes into focus. Orientation to work refers to, in a general way, the central organizing principle which underlies people’s attempt to make sense of their lives. This rests on the belief that people’s understanding of their work is important and such understanding is affected by their experience of work and is also related in some way to their understanding of other aspects of their lives. It is the belief that people’s idea about work, and how work fits into their lives, are themselves important sources of variation in the attitudes and behaviour of workers.

The orientation of the worker is determined or shaped by the socio-cultural environment in which the worker is brought up. Thus, the norms and values within the society affect the workers’ attitude. Where hard work results in social recognition, workers strive to excel through hard work. In Nigeria, generally, societal values have shifted from hard work, honesty, good reputation, and integrity to accumulating money, wealth and property thus generating an unwholesome attitude towards work. There is lack of commitment to work. This is further corroborated by some Yoruba adages, which say, “A kii se ise oba lagun”. “Oga ta, oga kota, owo alaru yoo pe’ and a similar Ibo philosophy which says “Ours is ours, mine is mine. A goat does not eat
into the hen’s stomach however friendly the two may be”. All these adages convey the message that when a worker is employed in the public sector he or she should work slowly as government work is not a matter of profit and loss. And whether the employer makes profit or not, the wages have to be paid, irrespective of what happens on the long run. With this kind of orientation to work, it is evidently clear that there is a kind of apathy and lack of commitment to work on the part of some Nigerian workers. This type of negative orientation to work needs to be addressed and the workforce reoriented before they could be motivated to perform.

Again, evidence from the literature (Mohr 1986, Mgbe 1994 and Aluko 1998 and 2001) shows that most Nigerian workers are extrinsically oriented and can therefore be motivated largely by extrinsic motivators such as pay, job security, coworkers’ pressures to perform, supervisory behaviour or work rules and so forth. According to Mohr (1986) whereas the motivation to work in the extended family stems from goodwill, sympathy, devotion and a sense of responsibility, in industry work is primarily carried out for gain and monetary rewards. As a result, the individuals former, non-materialistic orientation have turned into a desire for more and more money, which marks his attitudes towards his work. This from all indications goes to show the imperative need for management to device strategies of motivating their workforce through extrinsic motivators since it is clear that the workers are largely extrinsically oriented.

Closely related to the issue of orientation to work is the desire for self-employment often expressed by some Nigerian workers. According to Fashoyin (1980) this was borne out of the cultural norm which emphasized working for oneself as against working in the industry or in the public sector. Some workers consider wage employment as an indignity, sometimes amounting almost to slavery. The urge to get out is very high. Coupled with this is poor wages and exploitation by management in wage employment. Management often sees its workers as inferior and avaricious people who ought to take whatever they are given, even if it is exploitative. Workers therefore usually react to this exploitative relationship by exhibiting negative attitudes at work or by resigning and setting up private practices and becoming self-employed. The workers do not like to hear the slogan “Monkey do work. Baboon dey chop”, rather their own popular slogan is “mine is mine” that is, “Teni ni teni’ in Yoruba. The slogan is if you are on your own, then you are your own boss.

In order to reduce the urge to go into self-employment, workers must be paid good and adequate wages. The logical conclusion is that a worker will not bother to go into self-employment if he or she knows and is aware that he or she will be making more money in a wage employment. If the conditions of work are good and quite encouraging, the urge to go into self-employment is usually very low and as such, management have to take cognizance of these arguments and submissions.

One of the most important factors for efficiency and high productivity in the Nigerian work organizations is the perfect physi-
cal conditions of the workers. According to Mohr (1986) the fact that the Nigerian worker in general does not consume enough energy-giving food which in some cases leads to reduced efficiency and signs of fatigue. The traditional Nigerian meal is possibly adequate for the village life, by no means however for a worker from whom regular, often considerable release of energy is demanded in the industry. Especially the protein content of some staples such as yams, cassava and maize is inadequate. This protein deficiency causes fatigue. Modern nutrition science attributes the signs of fatigue and inertia in Nigerian peoples to wrong and unhealthy or poor diets. Again, the present wage levels is so inadequate that a typical Nigerian worker cannot afford three square meals a day, talk less of having balanced diets. Lack of money is usually the reasons for the often-poor dietary standards among Nigerian workers. However, with sufficient financial means, it is envisaged that the average Nigerian worker will be able and willing to provide himself with an adequate diet including the most essential nutrients.

In the light of the foregoing, Mohr (1986) suggested some measures that management can take to help the workers improve their performance. First, he suggested that it is necessary to educate and sensitize the workers on the imperative need to take balanced diets. Second, he advised work organizations to set up canteens, which offers the workers calorie-rich foods at low costs. In order to ensure that these nourishing meals are being taken, a certain amount of wages could be deducted. The worker would then be forced to eat the calorie-rich diet provided in the company’s canteen, as the worker would hardly take any to do this on his own. Our own additional submission is that, the work organizations can also give meal subsidies to their workers. This will motivate the workers and encourage them to put in more efforts at work and at the same time afford them the opportunity to increase their calorie intake.

There are also the problems associated with punctuality and absenteeism in Nigeria. That the Nigerian in general is unpunctual and has no sense of timing is very often emphasized in literature as a negative criterion for the work habits. The reasons for not reporting for duty on time are many: long distance, incessant fuel crisis, oversleeping, excessive fatigue, sickness in the family etc. What then can the management do? We hereby suggest the introduction of the system whereby the time missed through late arrival is deducted from total working hours and the appropriate amount of pay withheld. According to Mohr (1986) this system was adopted in Europe and it worked as it changed these irregularities very quickly. It is also envisaged that if this system is also adopted in Nigeria there are great hopes of its success without being too optimistic.

The reasons for the high rate of absenteeism are numerous. This includes factors such as ill-health or sickness, laziness and indiscipline, job dissatisfaction, low level of commitment, poor working conditions, alienation and others. Here we would adopt Kilby’s 1961 thesis. This thesis examined absenteeism in three Nigerian companies on the basis of available data and established a positive correlation between wages,
working hours, and distance between home and place of work. The thesis shows that the ‘higher the pay and the more favourable the working hours, the lower the rate of absenteeism’. The counter-verification ‘the lower the wages and the less favourable the working conditions the higher the rate of absenteeism’. This thesis thus help to sensitize the management to make the wages and other conditions of work more attractive to the workers so as to motivate them and at the same time lower the level of absenteeism in work places.

With regard to absenteeism arising from ill-health and sickness, we hereby suggest the introduction of free or subsidized health care schemes in all work organizations in Nigeria. It is however sad to observe that good medical care is hardly available in many Nigerian organizations. It is also a fact that many Nigerian workers cannot afford the medical expenses needed to keep them in good health because of the low level of wages. Mohr’s ‘(1986) study confirmed the thesis that the introduction of a regular medical service contributed immensely to productivity increase and at the same time lowered the rate of absenteeism. Only a healthy worker is regular and productive at work. Therefore management must provide the necessary health facilities in their organizations.

Within Nigeria itself, there are variations in the cultural traditions among the various ethnic groups that make up the nation. Three of such groups, which are usually identified for comparative analysis, are the Hausa/ Fulanis, Igbos and Yorubas. The cultural traditions among these three major ethnic groups vary markedly. This was the finding of Nnoli (1980) and Ahiauzu (1987) when they did a comparative study of the workplace in the Igbo and Hausa cultural settings. Ahiauzu’s findings strongly suggest than motivation and management principles that will work in any workplace depends largely on the cultural traditions, customary practices, and the nature of the relevant attitudinal characteristics of the dominant ethnic group in the workplace. Why is this so in Nigeria?

The reasons for this are not too far fetched. The Igbos and the Yorubas are well educated and westernized while the Hausa are educationally backward and usually oriented in Eastern or Arabic civilization. Because of the educational advantage, which the Igbos and the Yorubas had over their Hausa counterparts, they were the first to embrace wage employment most especially in the higher cadres of the civil service. The Hausa came into the scene much later and were usually employed in the lower cadres of the service because of their lower western educational backgrounds and as such they usually have a completely different perception of and orientation to work.

According to Nnoli (1980) the structure of authority among the Hausa-Fulani put a high premium on deference to authority, loyalty, obedience and sensitivity to the interests, opinions, views and demands of one’s superiors. Their custom strongly favoured qualities of servility, respect for authority, allegiance to management or whoever is powerful, and submissiveness. Such a tradition frowned at the self-assertiveness of the worker as individual initiative and self-instigated actions to-
wards goals not sanctioned by one’s superior were negatively evaluated or at best irrelevant.

Furthermore, culturally, the Hausa-Fulani are not given to querying authorities except on matters concerning their religion or traditional rulers. Even then they must have been incited to engage in such agitation. Again, the Hausa-Fulani usually do very light work during the annual Ramadan fasting and as such the pace of work is usually slower during this period. In addition, they do like to attend the popular Friday *Jumat* prayers and as such Fridays are usually half-working days in most parts of Northern Nigeria.

Among the Igbo, the pattern of work ethos idealized egalitarian, selfish, individualistic and anarchic pursuits, with due respect to age and tradition. The struggle for survival was characterized by fierce individualistic struggles and a ruthless determination to succeed and “arrive”. A certain boisterousness and aggressiveness was expected at work. The energetic and industrious person, who achieved greatness and fame in his or her chosen vocation, was admired. Thus, Igbos looked down on individuals who accepted superiors, depended on them, or relied on them for their progress. Subservience and unquestioning obedience signified weakness and a lack of masculinity. Among the Igbos, a man must be sufficiently self-motivated to work hard and to successfully compete with and challenge the power of these superiors. (Nnoli 1980, Olugbile 1997).

The Yoruba tradition tended to strike a balance between the opposite extremes represented by the Hausa-Fulani and the Igbo typologies. Yoruba people work according to the need and dictates of the situation. This is reflected in the phrase “Bo ba se gba” that is, working according to the dictates of the present circumstances. However, there is a tradition for excellence and hard work. This is reflected in the adage- “*Ise loogun ise*” meaning work is the antidote of poverty. Among the Yoruba people, laziness is seen as an aberration and a lazy man is looked down upon with disregard and contempt. This is reflected in a popular Yoruba song:

“*Ole lapa ko le fi sise
Ole daso iya bora sun
Ojojumo lebi ma npole sun*”

The message of this song is a lazy man has hands but decided not to work with them, consequently he sleeps with rages of poverty and suffering, and every day the lazy man sleeps with hunger. Another popular adage among the Yoruba people says “*Aji fowuro sere ko le de ibi gigga*” meaning that a man who decides to play in the morning hours of the day cannot reach great and lofty heights. Finally, there is one that says-

“*Ma fowuro sere, ore mi, Ise laa fi deni gigga.*”

also conveying a similar message with the previous adage.

In short, the Yoruba traditional work ethics strongly emphasizes hard work and the workers are expected to be alive to their responsibilities except in unusual circumstances such as sicknesses, accident, or bereavement.

From this kind of socio-cultural and his-
torical background, it is evident that the motivation and management principles to be adopted in Nigeria must take into cognizance and at the same time acknowledge the potency of these varying cultural traditions among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. What works in Ibadan, Lagos, Benin or Enugu, may grind to a halt in Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto or Maiduguri.

CONCLUSION

From all indications, submissions and the empirical evidence in the available literature, the success, the applicability or the workability of motivation and management principles is largely dependent on the cultural traditions of the society in which a work organization is located. This is in line with Sorge’s 1983 conclusion when he argued that all the factors that bear upon motivation and management practices do so in form of cultural construct. Again, this is in line with Ahiauzu’s comments that “it is becoming increasingly widely accepted among social scientists, especially managers and organizational theorists, that patterns of management and employee behaviour in the work place are largely culture-bound “. This in other words, invariably implies that there is no culture-free context of motivation and management principles. Policy recommendations based on the ‘universal’ principles can lead to ill- advised action. The universalists are thus busy defending a trivial thesis.

REFERENCES


