

# **Academic Staff Motivation in Tanzania Public Higher Learning Institutions: Unmasking the Intricacies and Experiences**

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## **Abstract**

This paper provides a descriptive analysis on the role of motivation on academic staff performance. Following the neglect of motivation practices in many higher learning institutions, the academic staff have opted to move on as usual at the expense of students who need their expertise. The paper acknowledges that higher learning institutions have several motivational packages to boost the performance but these were depicted as being not enough to incite a sense of commitment towards teaching, research, publication and supervision. To arrive at this, part of the sample i.e. 75 respondents comprising Associate Professors, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers, and Tutorial Assistants was obtained using simple random sampling and 4 key informants; two Deputy Principals and two Faculty Deans were purposively sampled out to constitute a sample of 79 respondents for the study. The study was guided by three research questions. A self-developed 4-Point Likert structured questionnaire, semi-structured interview questions, discussions and documentary reviews were the main instruments used in collecting data. Quantitative data collected were analyzed with descriptive statistics using a 4-Point Likert scale and qualitative using Content Analysis. Low monthly salaries were the major factor that dissatisfied academic staff and reduced motivation for high performance at the University. It is concluded and recommended that motivational aspects like salary, allowances, working conditions, recognition and career advancement once well managed and provided then better performance of academic staff is guaranteed.

Keywords: Motivation, Academic Staff, Intricacies, Experiences

# 1. Background and Problem Setting

Motivation is the inner drive that pushes individuals to act or perform and it is one of the most important factors that move every human being to achieve his or her goal. This includes personal as well as professional goals and targets (Baumeister & Voh, 2004). Some scholars in the field believe that if this driving force did not exist, people would live in the rut of monotony and no great discoveries or interventions would have happened. Indeed, motivation is that guiding principle that enables people to stay focused on the path of success regardless of the challenges that may be encountered.

Worldwide, Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) have the prime objectives of imparting knowledge (teaching and/or training), research and consultancy to improve the quality of life (Broni, 2004). To effectively deliver on this objective, qualified and competent academicians are employed. The performance of academic staff is not only a function of ability (qualification and competence) but also of motivation (Nnko, 2010). Motivation is crucial in harnessing effective performance of academic staff. Mmakasa (2007) noted that good salary, good physical working conditions, recognition and many other factors if well considered one's motivation will be boosted resulting into higher performance. In reality, one of the biggest factors affecting performance of employees in an organization is poor motivation (Gupta, 2008). Needless to say, academic staff can only reach high performance if they are adequately motivated assuming that the issue of competence is taken aboard. Hence, lack of motivation and commitment from academicians can have a negative impact on students' learning and most importantly putting their future at stake (Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2007).

Consequently, the uttermost challenge by HLIs is to get their academic staff work willingly and efficiently and exhibit high performance. Their performance evolves largely on the motivational aspects the HLI provides but it is sad to say HLIs do not realize this fact (Ma, 2012) and a lot is still to be realised or done. Therefore, basing on this premise, the study aimed at studying the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation aspects and to unveil the associated intricacies and experiences in the HLIs.

# 2. Literature Synthesis

## 2.1 The Concept of Motivation

Motivation is defined as situation of willingness of an employee to contribute high levels of effort towards his/her work, conditioned by the capacity of the effort to satisfy the employee's personal needs as well as her/his



personal environment. It is a general inspiration process which gets employees in organisation to pull their weight effectively, to give loyalty to the group, to carry out properly the tasks that they have accepted and generally to play an effective part in the job that the group has undertaken (Gupta, 2005). It generally refers to the amount of effort or drive a person exhibits in performing assigned tasks. Armstrong (2001) classifies employee motivation into two categories, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation includes self-generated factors that influence employee to behave in a particular way or move in a particular direction. It happens when employees involve in activity without obvious external incentives. These factors include responsibility (feeling that the job is important and having control over one's own resources), autonomy (freedom to act), scope to use and develop skills and abilities and interest in challenging work, recognition and opportunities for advancement. On the other side extrinsic motivation refers to motivation that comes from outside an individual. It comes about as a result of employees to have a desired goal to reach or external incentives like pay, fringe benefits, and good working conditions. Extrinsic motivators can have an immediate and powerful effect but will not necessarily last long. From the synthesis on motivation types, it could be said that, employees can motivate themselves by seeking, finding and carrying out work or being given work that satisfies their needs or at least leads them to expect that their goals will be achieved (intrinsic motivation). These could be in terms of promotions, job itself, recognition and advancement. Also, people can be motivated by management through such methods as salary and fringe benefits (extrinsic motivation).

## 2.2 Empirical Studies

Academic staff are important in any university as they are the pillars of a building which bears the whole of it so, lecturers/teachers are thought to be the nation builders and they are always given the great importance in educated and dignified societies. However, in recent years stakeholders are complaining about the performance of academic staff in universities and people think that academic staff are no longer dedicated and devoted. It is generally expected that the academicians who are trained and who expected to produce societal virtues like honesty, integrity, discipline, devotion, dignity, are not committed and devoted to their job (Isaac *et al*, 2011). According to Kayuni and Tambulasi (2007) lack of motivation and commitment can have a negative impact on the student's learning and most importantly it puts the future of children on the stake. Teacher's contribution in the human capital development and technological advancement greatly depends on their motivation and willingness for taking initiatives.

According to Nadeem et al. (2011) there are so many variables that affect the motivational level of academic staff and these include, duties and demands on time, low pay, and students conduct issues which have a significant impact on academician's attitudes toward their jobs. In addition, lack of support from staff at all levels has an effect on teacher performance. Low morale among academic staff is another very crucial problem that should be addressed. In order to find the appropriate solution of problems faced by academicians and affecting their motivation, the first step is to identify those factors that have the greatest impact on motivational levels, both negative and positive. Sarita and Tomer (2004) noticed that teaching is one of the most influential and dignified profession in society and teachers are always expected to be the lifeblood of any education system. Institutional locations, books, and classrooms are meaningless and unproductive without academicians. Low incentives, over workload, unconducive class environment, lack of library facility, lack of modern technological aspects, socio economic status of teacher, respect in society, professional attitude of teachers, mental health, academician's moral standards, responsibilities at home, distance of residing area, examination stress, political interference, student power, discriminatory practices, lack of co-operation, working relations with colleagues and heads, working environment, are the factors which affect the academician's' performance negatively. Kazeem (1999) found that academicians tend to be contented and satisfied when they get their pay in time and which is enough to meet their needs and enhance their motivation.

The academic profession is an entirely different profession from an office job because an academician has to play many roles at the same time like friend, teacher, father, mentor, trainer advisor etc. Victor (2010) discussed that effective placement policies can have an impact on success or failure of organizations and selection of the people with right skills and potential bring the fruitful outcomes for the organizations while selection of a person with wrong or inappropriate skill can push both the organization and person toward disaster and destruction. University academic staff holds the most important place in any society because teachers are the sources of transformation of knowledge. The behavior of an employee is dependent on distinguished performance because a flexible and dynamic behavior varies from organization to organization depending on its administrative styles and techniques of getting the work done through their employees and process of decision making and way of decisions implementation which do have an impact on motivational level of employees (Razak, 2011).



According to Robbins, Judge, and Sanghi (2007) Herzberg proposed in his Motivation Hygiene Theory that if the factors associated with work or outcomes are emphasized, such as promotional opportunities, career advancement, acknowledgement and responsibility and achievement then the individuals will find intrinsically rewarded. Republic of Uganda (RoU) White Paper (1992) mentioned that standard of educational institutions can be improved through knowledgeable, committed and motivated staff. Corcoran *et al.* (2004) added that quality of teacher and teaching is the most dominating factor that affects learning at large scale. Eton (1984) noticed that payments, promotions and salaries have a significant impact on the attitude of teachers towards their work. In this view the researcher realized that enough has not been done in outlaying the academic staff motivation challenges and experiences in connection with their performance. Mostly studies have been concerned with employees from organizations other than the Higher Learning Institutions

## 3. Methodology

Case study research design was used to undertake the study taking a case of Moshi University College of Cooperative and Business Studies (MUCCoBS) which is currently known as Moshi Co-operative University (MoCU) located in Moshi Municipality, Kilimanjaro region. The design was preferred because it has a triangulation advantage for it allows several data collection methods like interviews, questionnaires, observation and documentation to be used concurrently while allowing in-depth analysis of a study unit. Also, it provides room for specific findings about a specific unit to be replicated to another environment with similar social setting.

Simple Random and Purposive sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 75 respondents constituting academic staff from the Faculty of Business and Information Sciences (FBIS) as well as Faculty of Cooperative and Community Development (FCCD). Simple random sampling technique was used to draw the 34 and 37 academic staff representative respondents from both FBIS and FCCD. The lottery method was used to arrive at the sample; first, names of all academic staff from faculties were written in pieces of papers, folded and put in a box. Then, the researcher mixed them thoroughly and lastly, picked the names haphazardly till 36 respondents were obtained. The researcher used this method since it is free classification on error and requires minimum advance knowledge of the targeted population (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Also the technique, ensured each member of the population had an equal chance of being selected as subject (Kombo & Tromp, 2009). On the other side, purposive sampling technique was used to target the respondents that have pertinent information about the study in question (key informants to the study). Hence, the researcher selected the two Deputies to the Principal (Deputy Academic and Deputy Administration), and the two Deans of both faculties (FBIS and FCCD). These were selected given the fact that, they are the main actors as far as the motivation of academic members of staff is concerned. The researcher incorporated these to identify the motivational packages offered by MUCCoBS as well the challenges encountered in administering them. The information they had regarding the role of motivation on academic staff performance was never going to be ignored by the researcher.

Multiple approaches including survey questionnaire, interviews, observation and documentary review were used to gather both primary and secondary data which enabled the researcher to do cross-data validity checks. The questionnaires were given to all respondents and interviews were conducted with the key informants while documentary review was used to review documents such as institution's policies (financial, promotion, recruitment, and housing policies), reports (financial, performance, and transformation reports) and published research reports on motivation. Participatory observations were used to understand human actions which helped to yield valuable data over time as recommended by Bell (2010). The researcher observed the academic staff when they were teaching, invigilating and marking examinations. To ensure validity the developed data collection tools (questionnaire, interview guide and observation checklist) were pre-tested before the actual data collection and adjustments had to be made where it was necessary. The collected data were analysed through applying qualitative technique that involved the use of thematic analysis approach while quantitative analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics in the analytical tools.

# 4. Findings Analysis and Discussion

Organizations would have preferred to operate perfectly as far as motivation of their employees is concerned but they are not without motivational challenges. A motivational challenge is the difficult that causes an organization to fail and/or make a lot of efforts in motivating its employees due to internal and external forces. These forces affect both the extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of motivating staff. In order to identify these challenges, key informants were interviewed and university's documents reviewed. The study categorizes these challenges in two groups: extrinsic and intrinsic motivational challenges.



# 4.1 Challenges in Provision of Extrinsic Motivational Aspects

MUCCoBS is providing several extrinsic motivational aspects to its academic staff but faces numerous challenges that hinder their effective provision. The salary, allowances and working conditions that were predominantly identified as extrinsic aspects at MUCCoBS. Nonetheless, the study through interviews with key informants and documentary reviews found the following challenges faced by management in their provision:

The deductions that are huge and lowering the net salary was the biggest challenge the study found. The key informants affirmed that, this was out of their control since a large part of these deductions were statutory. They insisted to have negotiated with the government that regulates the salary to at least reduce the amount deducted but they were yet to receive a concrete solution. The negotiations to make salary a reliable motivational aspect, has been going on for the past 10 years (MUCASA minutes, 2013). The net salary continues to be unsatisfying due to deductions. In justifying this argument one respondent gave the researcher his salary slip to see for himself and he found out that he had about eight (8) deductions that constituted 48% of his gross salary meaning that, half amount got slashed, only to remain with a low net amount by the end of the month. Congruent to this is the study by Ishengoma (2007) who found out that, low salary among academic staff was a result of many deductions and not only deductions but huge deduction like P.A.Y.E resulting into low motivation of academic staff and brain drain. Furthermore, the key informants bemoaned to lack control on the annual increments and increase. One said, "Increments are incredibly unfair to our academic staff and we can do nothing about them". It was revealed that, the yearly notch before one serves his rank to the fullest was far higher than the government increment for the past two years (Human Resource Management Office, 2014). The unfair increments, the research found arrived late for the staff to benefit. He discovered that some academic staff had not been paid their arrears for almost a year (MUCASA Minutes, 2014). This reflects the acute problem facing the primary and secondary school teachers that take 1 to 5 years to receive their arrears, others never get them at all (Trade Union Congress of Tanzania [TUCTA] Report, 2011). It is a serious challenge that has resulted into unannounced strikes by teachers.

Again, limited internal and external sources of fund to pay and improve the existing allowances, proved to be an acute challenge. "The university major sources of fund are the students' fees and the government", one key informant said but these are not sufficient to make allowances more motivational as they envisaged. The university large amount of fees, among others, pays the casual labourers, and the water and electricity bills and this limits its usefulness in improving the allowances (MUCCoBS Financial Report, 2013). This has resulted into the university to be more stringent on its allowances and make sure that only the most deserving get paid. One key informant admitted that this caused delays in payment and they were challenged but it was unavoidable since university's spending is subject to financial audits (internal and external). The researcher discovered complaints on the issue and academic staff claimed that they fill in forms to justify their claims and students' representatives partly verify these claims which were believed to be enough to quicken payments but delays were still experienced. Bureaucracy is at the centre of many delays in public organisations (Mkude *et al.*, 2003) and remains a challenge in executing numerous undertakings.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that, limited development budget for improving working conditions is a big challenge to this motivational aspect at MUCCoBS (MUCCoBS Transformation Report, 2012). This means the university fails to remodel and construct more offices, lecture halls and houses. During interviews, one key informant said, "The desire to furnish our offices, maintain houses, equip the lecture venues with modern technology and have enough teaching tools is limited with the budgetary allocations". Again, pointing out at minimized allocations for recurrent and development expenditures from the government. Basically, the budget has two components, namely; recurrent and development expenditures. Recurrent expenditure is used to meet core functions of the University that is teaching, research and administration. Further, recurrent expenditure covers salaries, wages and other staff benefits. Development budget, on the other hand, is used in improving University College physical infrastructure (ibid.). The Financial Database (2012), shows that MUCCoBS 85% of funds come from the government and the remaining 15% from internal sources. In the past a period from 2008-2012 the total requested development fund was 64 billion but MUCCoBS received only 6 billion (MUCCoBS Financial Report, 2012). Lack of proper working tools is a challenge in many public universities due to meagre budgets and this cause low staff motivation (Mawoli, 2011). The study further revealed that, the university imposed housing rent to cover for deficits in development budget (MUCCoBS Housing Policy, 2010), but this has also been not enough to guarantee regular maintenance of the houses causing academic staff to complain constantly (Nnko, 2010). These challenges directly threaten the motivation of academic staff to perform better. The study discussions established that, academic staff were limited to teach better due to the scarcity of teaching tools like computers and projectors from the university. Also due to the challenge of erratic supply of electricity (MUCCoBS Transformation Report, 2012), lectures in big halls have been cancelled frequently causing most to



lag behind with the semester schedule. The university has a power generator but again the researcher was informed by one key informant that it was utterly expensive to operate it. The motivation of academic staff is limited squarely.

# 4.2 Challenges in Provision of Intrinsic Motivational Aspects

MUCCoBS also faces challenges in providing aspects that motivate academic staff intrinsically. The aspects of career advancement and recognition were the ones investigated by the researcher after they were reviewed in operating documents and predominantly cited by key informants. The challenges in their provision are as follows:

Firstly, the management is challenged by limited opportunities as far as funds and scholarships for Masters and PhD studies for academic staff are concerned. The researcher through discussions found out that the university had no collaborative scholarships for Masters and PhD with local or abroad universities and/or companies. In interviews, it was discovered that this was due to lack of enough funding from the government and the internally generated funds (MUCCoBS Financial Report, 2013). However, only few benefit from this opportunity due to limited specialties at MUCCoBS and Sokoine University of Agriculture to cater for all fields possessed by the academic staff. The researcher found out that most academic staff wanted this to extend to other universities like Mzumbe University and University of Dar es salaam where there are many programmes as per their fields of specialization. It was discovered that, some academic staff take a long time to further their education because of waiting for scholarship opportunities to study abroad or accumulating funds to study in country at universities offering their specialty. This, the researcher found to delay promotion of such, for a master's and/or a PhD degree enables one to climb higher in academic ranks. The motivation once again is challenged significantly since the advancement career wise is limited.

Secondly, the findings revealed that a majority of key informants, noted delays in promotion were a challenge in motivating academic members of staff. The documentations revealed that promotion of an assistant lecturer required at least three years experience of in service academic staff (MUCCoBS Up the Ladder Policy, 2013). Two years were considered enough for many given that one had enough research units meriting promotion but the policy is supposed not to contradict with overall regulations and guidelines for government employees like the Scheme of Service, 2010 and Staff Regulations, 2010 in which three years are set for promotion from one rank to another. Also, the university faces huddles from the government with career advancement. It was discovered that the government has delayed a promotion of some academic members of staff (MUCASA Minutes, 2013) and it is not known when they will be promoted, all of these have exhibited low motivation in teaching. Timely promotion as Armstrong (2006) put "it is a powerful tool of motivation but once delayed it could result into low motivation of employees since they expect this to raise their status, pay and authority".

Thirdly, the university fails to conduct training, workshops, and seminars all due to scarcity of funds. The above contribute immensely in career advancement of academic staff. For example, teaching competence, research and publications knowledge gained from such assist an individual to perform better and consequently earn promotion since teaching and publications add units to merit promotion. MUCCoBS as evidenced from the findings has limited opportunities for training, workshops and seminars. This is indeed causing low motivation to academic staff at MUCCoBS because most see it as a deliberate stance by the university to halt their advancement career wise. But the researcher was told by one key informant that, the perception by respondents was wrong because the challenge emanates from the government budgetary allocations that a little amount has been allocated for a consecutive period of 9 years and it was out of their control. It was discovered that MUCCoBS had received low allocation for training and other activities since 2005 and most of the allocations were on salary and infrastructures (MUCCoBS Financial Report, 2013) leaving a huge gap as far as training, seminars and workshops are concerned.

Lastly, the recognition of best performers is also a challenge at MUCCoBS. The researcher found out that, the university had no performance standards set by the university to recognize their efforts. Even the First of May prize for best performers is not available (MUCASA Minutes, 2013). The researcher found out that most academic staff meriting recognition was unnoticed due to lack of clear demarcations for high, good, average and poor performance. As discovered further it was due to the absence of Open Performance Review and Appraisal System (OPRAS) and that the existing evaluation system lacked this aspect. OPRAS has just been introduced at MUCCoBS and it is in its infancy stage for it has taken only six months since inception (MUCCoBS Performance Report, 2014). But the timing of this study established the long standing lack of recognition due to the difficulty that existed in distinguishing between good performance and normal duty and has not been able to verify that OPRAS will be a proper remedy. Organizations are advised to have good reward systems for its best



performers as to motivate them and others to keep performing better (Pattanayak, 2012). Rewards like pay, promotion, and certificates of appreciation when offered in relation with performance incite more motivation to the recipients but their absence may cause deterioration in general performance.

Generally, the challenges on the provision of motivational aspects at MUCCoBS are central to the financial constraints resulting from the budgetary allocations and limited internal sources to finance a number of these aspects. But the university must strive to solicit from consultancies, research and community training so as to keep on improving these aspects if it wants to ensure the motivation of its academic staff to perform highly.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

## 5.1 Conclusion

Motivation in its totality remains a vital force in employees' performance. The motivational aspects available at MUCCoBS must always be focused to achieve this major aim. Aspects like salary, allowances, recognition, career advancement and working conditions are hugely central in motivating academic staff. The policies and guidelines governing these should favour the employee who sweats for the organizational success and sometimes forgetting his or her own wellbeing. Low fringe benefits, poor working conditions, lack of recognition and career advancement opportunities when allowed to stay that way, the results will always be detrimental to the organization. The challenges that are within the university's financial muscle, must be dealt upon with a sense of urgency since, ignoring them might result into dire consequences like low quality teaching, engagements in part-time, unreported researches and consultancies denying the university a chance to excel as it mission and vision statements show.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Amongst the challenges of job performance at the University is lack of motivation due to limited funds and scholarships. In this regard, it is being recommended that the university college management should try to generate enough funds and scholarship opportunities for its academic staff. The university can establish more evening programmes ranging from the certificates to master's level. These will in turn bring revenues that can be used to improve allowances and infrastructures like lecture halls, buy enough teaching tools like computers and projectors, improve staff offices, maintain houses and finance academic staff studies at Master's and PhD . In so doing the university college will be guaranteeing itself to have well motivated academic staff who are convinced to perform outstandingly.

Along with other things, the study revealed that MUCCoBS is also challenged with delayed promotions to few academic staff. This should not be ignored since it affects only few. It is recommended that, the promotion arrangements be done early before due promotions of academic staff. A six months time of cross-checking who merits promotion and who is not should be used in order to make sure even those having problems like misplaced documents and evidences to support their promotion are handled in time. This will leave all motivated to perform well as their promotions will arrive as scheduled.

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