

Implications of the Achievement Motivation Theory for School Management in Ghana: A Literature Review

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to review literature on the implications of the achievement motivation theory for school management. It is realized from the literature for managers to understand human behaviour and how an individual could be motivated, they must first understand their needs and inclinations. It is also found from the literature of this paper that employees have the need for achievement which the suitable opportunities should be created for them to satisfy it. It is deduced that that employees have the need for power which should also be exercised and satisfied and the role of the need for affiliation is paramount in the management of every school. From the review, it is recommended a periodical workshop is organized for all heads and managers of schools to sensitize them on the need for them to satisfy the desires of the teachers and students to satisfy the three major needs outlined by McClelland. This will go a long way to assist school managers to identify the needs within themselves, their co-workers and subordinates in order to create the work environment that are responsive to those needs. In this sense teachers would be willing to put in their best in teaching and motivating their students to achieve high academic laurels.

1. Introduction

It remains an undisputable fact that the successful performance of any organization first of all depends on the use and management of the available resources, with human resources being the most important. All organizations, whether they produce services or products, have people in the process. Furthermore, an organization's ability to have motivated employees will determine the success or failure of that organization (Bergmann & Scarpello, 2001). The management of human resources, therefore, is to a great degree connected to employee or staff motivation. Employee or staff motivation has become a determining factor of organizational success including the schools in recent years.

Staff motivation has become crucial to employee behaviour including loyalty, commitment and job performance levels (Bateman & Snell 2007). Motivation is defined as those internal and/or external forces that trigger actions that persist until a certain goal is achieved (Daft, 2006). In business firms, these triggers of behaviour are various needs that employees are striving to satisfy through various intrinsic and extrinsic rewards they receive at work (Bateman & Snell, 2007; George & Jones, 2006). Ryan and Deci (2000) indicated that feelings of competence and feelings of autonomy must co-occur in order to achieve high levels of intrinsic motivation. Motivation plays an important role in informal relationships as well as highly structured relationships such as those found in industry and education. In education, managers use motivation techniques to promote cooperation between employer and employees or staff. Such cooperation enables staff to satisfy certain needs through their jobs including security, career interests and respect among others. If the staff expect their jobs to help satisfy these needs, they will probably be more motivated to contribute in achieving the organization's objectives. This follows logically that staff motivation is therefore one of the key ingredients in employees' performance and productivity, given that motivated people are willing to exert a particular level of effort for a certain amount of time toward the achievement of a particular goal and efficiency.

Motivation is generally regarded as the drive to achieve targets and the process to maintain the drive. Motivation provides an important foundation to complete cognitive behaviour, such as planning, organization, decision-making, learning, and assessments (Pintrich & Schunk, 2005). Spence and Helmreich (2003) defined achievements as task-oriented behaviour. Performances of individuals are often compared against standards or with others for assessments. The differing perspectives of scholars result in various definitions of achievement motivation. The original definition of achievement motivation was from Atkinson (1964), who defined it as the comparison of performances with others and against certain standard activities. Achievement motivation is a drive to excel in learning tasks combined with the capacity to experience tried in accomplishment McClelland and Atkinson were the first scholars to concentrate on the study of achievement motivation. For McClelland, Atkinson, Clark and Lowell, (1953), people who strive for excellence in a field for the sake of achieving and not for some reward are considered to have a high need for achievement. This need has been labelled n-achievement for convenience. Atkinson and Feather (1966) suggested that achievement motivation is a combination of two personality variables: tendency to approach success and tendency to avoid failure. Bigge and Hunt (1980) defined achievement motivation as the drive to work with diligence and vitality, to constantly steer toward targets, to obtain dominance in challenging and difficult tasks and create sense of achievement as a result. This definition consists of three elements: the stimulation of personal capabilities, constant efforts with drive and

obtaining of sense of satisfaction. According to the above definitions, achievement motivation is a subjective and internal psychological drive, enabling individuals to pursue work they perceive to be valuable and prompting them to reach their goals. Meanwhile, achievement motivation is also a mentality to compete and compare with others. In agreement with the definitions, as proposed by the previously mentioned scholars, achievement motivation is a subjective, internal, and psychological drive, enabling individuals to pursue work they perceive to be valuable and eventually achieve their goals. Sparrow (2000) found that motivations have influence on the formation of psychological contracts. Motivations include meaningful work, job security, and a sense of achievement, promotional channels, and opportunities.

2. Statement of the Problem

In order to understand human behaviour and how an individual could be motivated, one must first understand their needs. The issue of satisfying the needs of teachers and students has raised a lot of concerns in the teaching fraternity. Ideally, students are supposed to perform well regardless of the very schools they attend, but this is not the situation on the ground as it is seen. Some factors within the various schools may be seen as the contributors to the performance of students. What actually account for the differences in the performance of students? Teachers' need and motivation affects students to have high self-esteem which could probably leads to high student's performance (Peck, Fox & Morsten, 1997). In the same view, research has showed that in an industrial organization, the need for affiliation or the desire for friendly and warm relations with others, the need for power and the need for achievement are very instrumental to the successful achievement of organizational goals. The school, like any other human organization working with employees will undoubtedly have its staff craving to satisfy these needs. It is therefore noteworthy that aside other tools or motivational techniques provided for teachers in a particular school there would still be the need for them to affiliate themselves to an organization, the need to control others and influence their behaviour and the need to achieve something valuable in the life and history of that particular school.

In a research conducted by Akoi-Gyebi (2009) on the effects of team work which is a product of affiliation on the work output of teachers in selected junior and senior high schools in the New Juabeng Municipality in the eastern region of Ghana, the results showed that there was a stronger relationship between the need for affiliation and work output of teachers. It can be deduced from the above that when teachers are affiliated to a group or an association in the school, they learn from each other, strive for power or position in that particular association by virtue of their ability to influence others and also enhances their levels of achievement as far as the academic performance, moral and physical development of the students are concerned. A closer look reveals that majority of the schools in Ghana have the need achievement theory being practiced, however, there seems to some lapses in the academic, moral, social and physical development of students from these schools. The crux of the problem is what are the implications of the need achievement theory for school management? The main purpose of this paper is to review literature on the implications of the achievement motivation theory for school management.

3. Significance of the Paper

This review would help management of schools to understand human behaviour and also help them to know that for an individual to be motivated, they must first understand their needs and inclinations. It would also assist the management of schools to know that employees have the need for achievement and the suitable opportunities should be created for them to satisfy it. This means that the school like any other human institution should allow its employees (teachers) to satisfy the strong and undying desire to control others and influence their behaviour. Finally, it would go a long way in helping school management to know and understand the importance of need for affiliation in schools.

4. Literature Review

4.1 The Meaning of Motivation

The word *motivation* is coined from the Latin word "*movere*", which means to move and it is basically concerned with why people behave in a certain way. The basic underlying question is, 'why do people do what they do'? Motivation is the fuel that drives people towards achieving their goals and objectives. In fact, without these fuel human beings would be indolent, leading to a mundane and unproductive life. In this sense, motivation is not what the employer does to employees but rather the urge that comes from the employee (Byars & Rue, 2002). The employer only needs to create the condition or environment that would bring out motivation.

Many contemporary authors have also defined the concept of motivation. Generally, it is defined as a driving force that initiates and directs behaviour. In other words, motivation is a kind of internal energy which drives a person to do something in order to achieve something. In the organizational context, Boachie-Mensah (2006) referred to motivation as the willingness of an individual to respond to organizational requirements in the short run. He further pointed out that motivation causes people to make choices from the available alternatives,

about how best to allocate their energy and time. Similarly, Molander (1996) viewed motivation as an individual's willingness to put efforts into his/her work and on the amount of effects, which are made in order to obtain incentives or a specific form of incentives.

Motivation is further defined as the psychological process that causes the arousal, direction and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal directed (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2006). Daft (2006) however does not only see motivation as an internal force but also external or both forces that trigger actions that persist until a certain goal is achieved. A goal is the satisfaction of a need or needs and this need is the difference between the desired state and the actual state. There are various types of motivations that can influence a person. These include primary/basic and secondary motivation.

Primary motivation includes needs such as hunger, thirst, warmth, sex and other primary motives which influence a person's behaviour at a very basic level. Secondary motivation which is known in psychology as "learned" motivation, differs from one person to another. Here, a person consciously desires a particular goal or result, and behaves in a way that brings them closer to that particular goal. This kind of motivation generally falls into two basic types: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In business firms, these 'drives' are various needs that employees are striving to satisfy through various intrinsic and extrinsic rewards they receive at work (Bateman & Snell, 2007; George & Jones, 2006). Examples of intrinsic rewards include feelings of achievement and personal growth, while extrinsic rewards include outcomes such as salary, status, job security and fringe benefits.

A study was undertaken by Adu (1993) and Tachie (2007) on University of Cape Coast staff and civil servants in Ghana respectively. Their study revealed that the most satisfying intrinsic factors were social service, followed by activity (keeping busy) and moral values. The four most dissatisfying factors on the other hand were compensation or pay, good working condition service (policies and practices), advancement and recognition. The workers were also satisfied with relationship with co-workers supervision (both human relations and technical) but dissatisfied with the ability utilization of civil servants. Their findings are similar to the views of Bassy (2002) and Kreitner and Kinicki (2006) that relationship with peers foster team work and helps to achieve intrinsic motivation.

Armstrong (1996) argued that using a reward system not only gives instrumental value, but also acts as a powerful symbol of the management's philosophy, attitudes and intent. Rewards are designed to encourage behaviour that will contribute directly to the achievement of the organization's objective. According to Armstrong (1996), extrinsic rewards provided by the employer will be important in attracting and retaining employees. Shields (2007) also claimed that one of the three main purposes with reward management is to retain the best people by recognizing and rewarding their contribution.

From the above different definitions of motivation, three common characteristics or denominators can be identified from them. First, what energizes human behaviour? Secondly, what directs this behaviour and thirdly, how is such behaviour maintained or sustained? (Porter, Bigley & Steers, 2003). Different ideas may explain why this occurs. Organizations should strive to enhance motivational level among all employees. The most serious threat to potential productivity stems from low level of motivation among high ability employees (Vroom, 1964). There are three basic categories of variables that determine the motivation in work setting; characteristics of individuals, characteristics of jobs and characteristics of work situation. This has come about because individuals' personalities certainly contribute to their attitude about their jobs. Managers and supervisors cannot do much to control these personal variables. However, managers and supervisors do control other variables that can cause employees to lose motivation.

4.2. Achievement Motivation Theory

The theoretical background for this study was rooted in McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory. "Achievement Motivation Theory" attempts to explain and predict behaviour and performance based on a person's need for achievement, power and affiliation" (Lussier & Achua, 2007, p. 42). The Achievement Motivation Theory is also referred to as the Acquired Needs Theory or the Learned Needs Theory. In the words of Daft (2008) the Acquired Needs Theory as "McClelland's theory that proposes that certain types of needs (achievement, affiliation, power) are acquired during an individual's lifetime" (p. 233). Achievement motivation has been defined as the extent to which individuals differ in their need to strive to attain rewards, such as physical satisfaction, praise from others and feelings of personal mastery (McClelland, 1985). This means the Achievement Motivation Theory explores the idea that there are three major needs that working employees in schools irrespective of the level will acquire over their lifetime as a result of the experiences in their career or in their own personal lives (Schermerhorn, 2003). Schermerhorn strongly believes that in order for managers to understand human behaviour and how an individual could be motivated, they must first understand their needs and inclinations.

4.3. Need for Achievement

McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell (1958) defined the need for Achievement (*n* Achievement) as success in competition with some standard of excellence. This presupposes that, the goal of some individual is to be successful in terms of competition with some standard of excellence. The individual may fail to achieve this goal, but the concern over competition with a standard of excellence still enables one to identify the goal sought as an achievement goal. This, then, is the generic definition of *n* Achievement” (p. 181). McClelland et al., (1958) additionally described that competition with a standard of excellence was most notable when an individual was in direct competition with someone else but that it can also be evident in the concern for how well one individual performs a task, regardless of how someone else is doing. In the words of Lussier and Achua (2007), “the need for achievement is the unconscious concern for excellence in accomplishments through individual efforts” (p. 42). Similarly, Daft (2008) stated the need for Achievement comprises four main areas namely; the desire to accomplish something difficult, attain a high standard of success, master complex tasks and surpass others. Characteristically, individuals who exhibit the need for achievement seek to accomplish realistic but challenging goals. Such people will act in ways that will help them to outperform others, meet or surpass some standard of excellence, or do something unique (Schmidt & Frieze, 2007). This means that an individual’s need for achievement is driven by the challenge of success and the fear of failure. Peoples need for achievement is moderate and they set for themselves moderately difficult tasks. They are analytical in nature and take calculated risks. Such people are motivated to perform when they see at least some chances of success (McClelland, 1985). It can be deduced from the various definitions that employees with high achievement needs seek to excel in their work and appreciates recognition of their efforts. They tend to avoid situations where there is only a small gain while also avoiding high risk situations where failure is a possibility.

4.4 Need for Power

McClelland (1961) defined the need for power as a “concern with the control of the means of influencing a person” (p. 167). Lussier and Achua (2007) defined the need for power as “the unconscious concern for influencing others and seeking positions of authority” (p. 42). For Daft (2008), the need for power is the desire to influence or control others, being responsible to others, and having authority over others. Naturally, individuals who exhibit the need for power have a desire to be influential and want to make an impact. McClelland maintained that a person’s need for power (*n*Pow) can be one of two types namely; personal and institutional. Those who need personal power want to direct others. Persons who need institutional power (also known as social power) want to organize the efforts of others to further the goals of an institution. Managers with a high need for institutional power tend to be more effective than those with a high need for personal power (McClelland, 1965). Basically, workers with high need for power are inclined towards influence and control. They like to be at the centre and are good orators. They are demanding in nature, forceful in manners and ambitious in life. They can be motivated to perform if they are given key positions or power positions.

4.5 Need for Affiliation

In his definition of the need for Affiliation, McClelland (1961) stated that the need for Affiliation is establishing, maintaining, or restoring a positive affective relationship with another person and this relationship is most adequately described by the word friendship” (p. 160). Therefore, “the need for affiliation is the unconscious concern for developing, maintaining, and restoring close personal relationships” (Lussier & Achua, 2007, p. 43). Daft (2008) defined the need for Affiliation as “the desire to form close personal relationships, avoid conflict, and establish warm friendships” (p. 233). (Okorley, 2010) added that individuals who exhibit the need for Affiliation are seeking interactions with other people and are social in nature. They affiliate themselves with individuals and groups. They are driven by love and faith. They like to build friendly environments among themselves. Finally, social recognition and affiliation with others provide them motivation.

5. Discussions

Firstly, the review found out that for managers to understand human behaviour and how an individual could be motivated, they must first understand their needs and inclinations. This is in consonance with Schermerhorn (2003), who maintained that there are three major needs that one will acquire over their lifetime as a result of the experiences in their career or in their own personal lives Schermerhorn strongly believes that in order for managers to understand human behaviour and how an individual could be motivated, they must first understand their needs and inclinations. This implies that managers of schools should in the first place satisfy the needs of their employees.

Secondly, it can also be deduced from the review that employees have the need for achievement which the suitable opportunities should be created for them to satisfy it. Daft (2008) stated that the need for Achievement is “the desire to accomplish something difficult, attain a high standard of success, master complex tasks, and surpass others” (p. 233). Individuals who exhibit the need for achievement seek to accomplish realistic

but challenging goals. Such people will act in ways that will help them to outperform others, meet or surpass some standard of excellence, or do something unique (Schmidt & Frieze, 1997). This implies that for an excellent school management, platforms should be created for teachers to satisfy the need for achievement and by so doing they will be motivated to put off their best as far as the academic, moral and psychosocial development of the students are concerned.

Thirdly, the review established employees have the need for power which should also be exercised and satisfied. The school like any other human institution should allow its employees (teachers) to satisfy the strong and undying desire to control others and influence their behaviour. This concord with McClelland (1961) who defined the need for Power as a “concern with the control of the means of influencing a person”. Managers with a high need for institutional power tend to be more effective than those with a high need for personal power (McClelland, 1965). Basically, people with high need for power are inclined towards influence and control. They like to be at the centre and are good orators. They are demanding in nature, forceful in manners and ambitious in life. They can be motivated to perform if they are given key positions or power positions. This gives the implication that school managers should know the need of delegating authoritative positions such as: assistant headteacher, form masters, house masters, class prefects and prefectorial positions to teachers and students alike in order to enhance their performance as far as the management of the school is concerned.

Finally, the review outlined that the role of the need for affiliation is paramount in the management of every school. It can be said with no iota of doubt that people desire to affiliate themselves to one group or the other is very important in the school management. McClelland (1961) stated that the need for Affiliation is establishing, maintaining, or restoring a positive affective relationship with another person. This relationship is most adequately described by the word friendship” (p. 160). Therefore, “the need for affiliation is the unconscious concern for developing, maintaining, and restoring close personal relationships” (Lussier & Achua, 2007, p. 43). Daft (2008) defined the need for Affiliation as “the desire to form close personal relationships, avoid conflict, and establish warm friendships” (p. 233). The findings from the above review imply the horizontal relationship between one employee and the other. In order to satisfy the need to join an association, a club, or group is very instrumental in the good management of every school.

6. Conclusions

It can be concluded from the review the ability of school managers to satisfy the three major needs of employees and students alike is very important in every school setting. It can also be concluded from the review that both the employees and students in the school setting have the desire to satisfy the need for achievement, the need for power and the need for affiliation. Hence, the provision of adequate opportunities for them will be very helpful as far as a successful school management is concerned.

7. Recommendations for School Managers

It is recommended that the complete role of the achievement motivation theory cannot be done without as far as the management of the school is concerned. It is therefore recommended that a periodical workshop is organized for all heads and managers of schools to sensitize them on the need for them to satisfy the desires of the teachers and students to satisfy the three major needs outlined by McClelland. This will go a long way to assist school managers to identify the needs within themselves, their co-workers and subordinates in order to create the work environment that are responsive to those needs. In this logic teachers would be willing to put in their best in teaching and motivating their students to achieve high academic laurels.

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