

## **The Motivation Challenges Due To High Staff Mobility In A Quasi-Government Organisation, ABC In Zimbabwe (2010-2016)**

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to provide information regarding the motivation problems that ABC (not real name but a quasi-government department) workers were facing due to one of the companies' policies, namely the Transfer policy. The study intended to find out why the transfer policy had serious challenges affecting workers motivation and after a detailed investigation, then come up with recommendations that should improve the implementation of the transfer policy as well as improving and creating a harmonious working environment in ABC. The study was confined to ABC offices at its head office in Harare and a few boarder posts. It covered the period 2010 to April 2016. The study was a survey based on a case study of ABC and was qualitative since an unstructured questionnaire was the instrument used. The study's major findings were; there were various reasons for having the transfer policy such as the need to reduce or weed out corrupt tendencies usually experienced if someone stayed for very long period at one station (boarder post or airport), to frustrate those workers who were vocal and criticized management, means of derailing one's promotion as the transferred person had to get a recommendation from another new supervisor who needed more time to know the subordinate's performance. Although at recruitment, job applicants were informed about the transfer policy and even a clause was put in their employment contract, workers were disgruntled by being denied to make input as decisions were based on management's sole discretion to effect any transfer. The effects arising from the transfers included the breakdown of family and social ties, disruption to member's studies as well as adverse effect on their children's academic performance as they could be exposed to different teachers and learning environments after transferring. Other issues of concern were language barriers at some boarder posts, worrying resignation incidences, cases of promiscuity and HIV/ AIDS victims as well as lack of ancillary services etc. All these concerns culminated in low motivation and ultimately job dissatisfaction. Sentiments raised suggested that the implementation of the transfer policy was not transparent and exacerbated by prevalent cases of corruption and unethical practices perpetrated usually by management who requested 'kick backs' in order to rescind a transfer. The study suggested that there was need to increase the period of stay at one station up to even 10 years from 3or 6 years as well as to take cognizance of the affected workers input. Another suggestion was to curb corruption tendencies by taking deterrent measures on those unethical managers who received 'kick backs' to reverse transfer(s).*

**Definition of key terms:** *The following terms are key to the comprehension of the research problem and the context in which this study was conducted.*

**High staff mobility-** *lots of ABC employee movements from one workstation to another in a period of within three up to six years which affected their families and social ties.*

**Motivation** *-is that desire or driving force behind an employee's behaviour and attitude towards work or the organisation which ultimately culminates in job satisfaction or dissatisfaction.*

**Staff discontentment-** *worker dissatisfaction arising from the grievance emanating from the ABC transfer policy*

**Staff turnover-** *a worrying number of ABC employees who were being forced to unwillingly leave the organisation and join other organisations due to the de-motivating transfer policy.*

**Transfer policy-** *an ABC operational guideline that gives management the prerogative or power to effect the transfer of its employees from one workstation to another after three to six years when it deems it fit, usually without negotiations with those affected.*

**Transparency-** *fair, consistent and objective means of transferring an employee from one workstation to another without bias or favouritism.*

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### **I. Introduction**

The background to the study has been presented to enlighten the reader about the Transfer policy in ABC. The real problem underlying this study has been covered under the statement of the problem. Other key sub-topics covered include; the Literature review, Methodology, Research findings, Conclusions and Recommendations. List of references used in this paper has been given at the end of this paper

## **II. Background To The Study**

ABC (not real name) is a quasi-government organisation which assists in collecting revenue at boarder posts or other ports of entry such as airports on behalf of the Government including the facilitation of trade and travel. ABC also acts as the advisor of government on tax matters and foreign currency procurement and utilisation. ABC introduced a Transfer Policy to its employees in various Grades, (Grades 10-16). The Transfer Policy stipulates that an employee in the grades mentioned above can be transferred anywhere and at anytime to ABC inland stations or any of its borders within a period ranging from 3 to 6 years. Employees are made to sign the transfer policy as acknowledgement and considered as total agreement. Refusing to be transferred for whatever reasons is not tolerated and it is regarded as total insubordination or misconduct and usually results in automatic employee dismissal.

Assuming an employee had been working at a boarder post after having been transferred, that employee could be due for transfer after 3 years e.g. Assuming the employee was at Plumtree boarder post, he/she could be transferred to Chirundu or Forbes or Nyamapanda or Beitbridge border post. Those 3 years taken by an employee at Plumtree border post are normally characterised by that employee taking 1-2 years acclimatising to weather pattern, still familiarising with the surrounding's and learning the new vernacular language. The worker may actually have transferred kids to a Forbes Boarder post school near Mutare which is over 600 kilometres from a Plumtree school. The Boarder post school would be teaching the local vernacular language, Manyika (Shona). In Plumtree, the kids could have been learning Ndebele. Then come the third year, the same employee is again transferred to Beitbridge border post. Because of the transfer policy, the employee will go to Beitbridge and again he or she is forced to take with him his family, who will then need to drop Ndebele and Manyika (Shona) to start learning Venda.

The kids may get confused and this may result in reduction of their academic performance because of the numerous transfers. When he/she is about to settle in Beitbridge, another transfer, may then come after 3 years and be told to go to another boarder post e.g. Nyamapanda in Mutoko which is about 820 kms away. This time again, the employee takes his/her family to Nyamapanda without any questioning as required by the policy. This is the life of an ABC officer throughout his job life (career). As a result of these transfers, many employees have resigned and looked for alternative employment because of what appears to be the autocratic nature of the Transfer policy in ABC. It is against this background that this study wanted to investigate the manifestation and the magnitude of the problems arising from the Transfer policy with regard to employee welfare and satisfaction and what could be done to boost their motivation.

## **III. Statement Of The Problem**

The transfer policy in ABC has raised a lot of employee discontentment on issues of conditions of service culminating in low motivation. Staff members particularly those in lower grades have been victims of this policy as they can not really plan in terms of family stability since they are frequently changed from their working stations. As a result many employees have decided to let their families stay in one place and they themselves do the job trotting. However, with the scourge of the AIDS pandemic and HIV virus, many employees are succumbing to the disease. This is because at the national borders, without their families, they are tempted to get engaged in prostitution and even drug abuse. They view this as a means of attempting to relieve the stress of missing their wives, families, relatives, friends, socialites, church members etc.

## **IV. Objectives Of The Study**

The study wanted

- (i) to find out the rationale for the ABC transfer policy.
- (ii) to establish the degree of transparency in the transferring of employees.
- (iii) to establish the problems arising from the transfer policy.
- (iv) to recommend ways or means of improving staff motivation and stability at ABC work stations.

## **V. Research Questions**

The study wanted to answer the following sub-problems at the end of the investigation

- (i) What was the rationale for coming up with the transfer policy?
- (ii) What is the level of transparency in the transferring of employees?
- (iii) Which are the problems arising from the transfer policy?
- (iv) What should be done to improve staff stability at work stations?

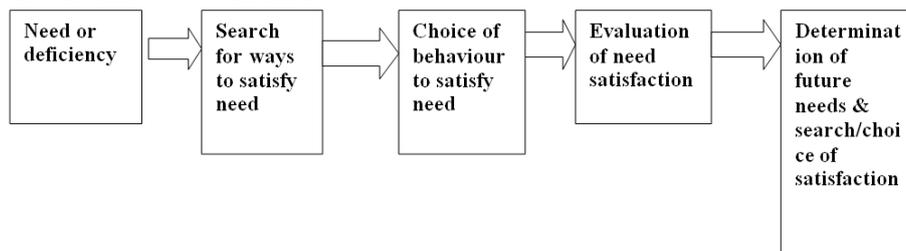
## VI. Literature review

### 6.1 Michael (2004) defined motivation as,

"Forces coming from within a person that account for the wilful direction, intensity and persistence of the persons efforts toward achieving specific goals, where achievement is not due solely to ability or environmental factors."

Motivation is what drives or induces a person to behave in a particular fashion, the internal force which initiates, directs, sustains and terminates all important activities. It influences the level of performance, the efficiency achieved and the time spent on an activity.

### 6.2 Theoretical framework of Motivation



**Figure 1** Motivation framework Source: Adapted from Griffins (2002) cited in Michael (2004)

An unsatisfied need creates tension that stimulates drives within an individual. These drives generate a search behaviour to find particular goals that, if attained, will satisfy the need and reduce the tension. Motivated employees are in a state of tension, to relieve the tension they exert effort. If this effort successfully leads to the satisfaction of the need, it reduces tension. This tension-reduction effort must also be directed towards organizational goals.

### 6.3 The Benefits of Motivation

According to Jubenkanda (2004) and Cole (2004), motivation is very important in an organisation like **ABC** because of the following benefits it provides:-

#### **Puts human resources into action**

Every concern requires physical, financial and human resources to accomplish organisational goals. It is through motivation that the human resources can be utilised by making full use of it. This can be done by building willingness in employees to work. This should help **ABC** in securing best possible utilization of its human resources.

#### **Improves level of efficiency of employees**

The level of performance of a subordinate or an employee does not only depend upon his qualifications and abilities. For getting best of his/her work performance, the gap between ability and willingness has to be filled which helps in improving the level of performance of subordinates. This will result in an increase in productivity, reducing cost of operations, and improving overall efficiency even at **ABC**

#### **Leads to achievement of organizational goals**

The goals of an enterprise can be achieved only when the following factors take place; there is best possible utilization of resources, there is a co-operative work environment, the employees are goal-directed and they act in a purposive manner. Goals can be achieved if co-ordination and co-operation takes place simultaneously which can be effectively done through motivation if seriously considered in **ABC** for its staff to experience job satisfaction.

#### **Builds friendly relationship**

Jubenkanda (2004) also reiterates that motivation is an important factor which brings employees satisfaction. This can be done by keeping into mind and framing an incentive plan for the benefit of the employees. This could initiate monetary and non-monetary incentives, promotion opportunities for employees, disincentives for inefficient employees.

#### **Leads to stability of work force**

Jubenkanda (2004) supported by Banjoko (1996) said that stability of workforce is very important from the point of view of reputation and goodwill of a concern. The employees can remain loyal to the enterprise only

when they have a feeling of participation in management. The skills and efficiency of employees will always be of advantage to employees. This will lead to a good public image in the market which will attract competent and qualified people into a concern. As it is said, "old is gold" which suffices with the role of motivation here, the older the people, the more the experience and their adjustment into a concern which can be of benefit to the enterprise. At **ABC** it is this issue of stability which has remained a contentious issue.

From the above discussion, we can say that motivation is an internal feeling which can be understood only by the Manager since he is in close contact with the employees' needs, wants and desires since these are inter-related and they are the driving force to act. These needs can be understood by the Manager and he can frame motivation plans accordingly. Motivation therefore is a continuous process since its process is based on needs which are unlimited and the process has to be continued throughout. It is important that **ABC** leadership understands the critical role of motivation.

#### **6.4 The Advantages of Motivation**

For an organization to be successful it has to, not only offer products and services that meet customers' needs and wants, but also have staff who are loyal and committed to their duties (Cole, 2004). Employee motivation develops in one of two ways that is intrinsically or extrinsically. Intrinsic motivation comes from within, driving one to succeed based on inner goals and ambition. Extrinsic motivation comes from external sources, motivating one with incentives to push his/her performance. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation carry distinct advantages and different employees display different motivational characteristics. Knowing which employees are motivated more intrinsically or extrinsically can improve the skills of a Manager. Michael (2004) listed the advantages of motivation as below which could help **ABC** to improve its employees motivation with regard to its 'controversial' transfer policy

#### **Labour Costs**

Employees with high levels of intrinsic motivation can reduce total labour costs. Since managers spend less of their time working to motivate intrinsically motivated employees, each manager has more time to focus on more productive tasks. This can allow a small business to operate with fewer managers in the hierarchy, keeping the company lean and reducing labour costs. Intrinsically motivated employees are also more likely to try to solve problems on their own rather than requiring managerial assistance for any issues that arise. Intrinsically motivated employees are more likely to take on new projects on their own, as well, rather than being guided by supervisors on what to do when work tasks are complete (Michael, 2004).

#### **Innovation**

Intrinsically motivated employees can be more creative than those who require outside influence to get motivated. Employees who thrive on personal accomplishment and career development are more likely to make valuable, innovative contributions to strategic initiatives simply for the satisfaction of accomplishing something meaningful in the organization. These employees can be invaluable to small businesses in industries such as software development, where innovation can change the power structure in the industry overnight (Michael, 2004).

#### **Operational Control**

Extrinsically motivated employees require closer supervision to keep their performance high, allowing managers to closely watch and guide employees while they work. While close supervision may be intolerable to some, other employees thrive in situations where they have constant guidance and encouragement from supervisors (Michael, 2004).

#### **Personal Limits**

Extrinsic motivation can come in the form of financial incentives rather than encouragement. Using incentives can boost all employees' motivation, pushing them to break personal performance records and reach new levels of productivity. Incentives have an advantage in that they can be equally attractive to both extrinsically and intrinsically motivated employees. For extrinsically motivated employees, incentives can provide a "carrot" to entice them to push their performance. For intrinsically motivated workers, incentives can allow them to set measurable and attainable goals (Michael, 2004).

If **ABC** was to take heed of Michael (2004) sentiments above about the benefits of motivation, that would help the organisation to be more efficient and effective.

#### **6.5 Contemporary Views on Motivation**

Motivation theories can be classified broadly into two different perspectives: Content and Process theories. Content Theories deal with what motivates people and it is concerned with individual needs and goals.

Maslow, Alderfer, Herzberg and McClelland studied motivation from a content perspective (Michael, 2004). Process Theories deal with the process of motivation and is concerned with how motivation occurs. Vroom, Porter & Lawler, Adams and Locke studied motivation from a process perspective (Michael, 2004).

### **6.5.1 Extrinsic motivation**

It is related to tangible rewards such as salary and fringe benefits, security, promotion, contract of service, the work environment and conditions of service. These are what need to be done to or for people to motivate them. They are often determined at the organisational level and may be largely outside the control of the individual managers. Extrinsic motivators can have an immediate and powerful effect but will not necessarily last long (Mullins, 2005; Armstrong, 2003). Bernard & Stoner (2005) proposes the following are incentives for employees: Salary, Wages and Conditions of Service: To use salaries as an effective motivating tool, personnel managers must consider four major components of salary structures. These are the job rate, which relates to the importance the organisation attaches to each job; payment, which encourages workers or groups by rewarding them according to their performance; personal or special allowances, associated with factors such as scarcity of particular skills or certain categories of information professionals or those with long service; and fringe benefits such as holidays with pay, pensions, and so on.

Akintoye (2000) asserts that money remains the most significant motivational strategy. As far back as 1911, Frederick Taylor and his scientific management associate described money as the most important factor in motivating the industrial workers to achieve greater productivity. Taylor advocated the establishment of incentive wage systems as a means of stimulating workers to higher performance, commitment, and eventually satisfaction. Money possesses significant motivating power in as much as it symbolizes intangible goals like security, power, prestige, and a feeling of accomplishment and success. Katz, in Sinclair (2005) demonstrates the motivational power of money through the process of job choice. He explains that money has the power to attract, retain, and motivate individuals towards higher performance. For instance, if there is information available to a professional about another job offer which has identical characteristics with his/her current job, but greater financial reward, there is the probability that, that worker would be motivated to accept the new job.

Financial rewards are probably the oldest and certainly the most fundamental applied performance practice in organization settings. However, financial rewards do much more than pay employees for their contribution to the achievement of organizational objectives. They are a symbol of success, a reinforcer and motivator, a reflection of one's performance, and a source of reduced anxiety. Cultural values seem to influence the meaning and value of money. This shows that extrinsic motivators can have an immediate and powerful effect on productivity and quality standards and ABC could take a cue from such knowledge. Since the ABC transfer policy does not provide more benefits or remuneration, there is nothing to entice or to motivate the affected

### **6.5.2 Intrinsic Motivation**

This is related to psychological rewards such as the opportunity to use one's ability. A sense of challenge and achievement, receiving appreciation, positive recognition and being treated in a caring and considerate manner. Psychological rewards are those that can usually be determined by the actions and behaviour of the individual managers (Mullins, 2005). Intrinsic motivators are concerned with the quality of work life, and are likely to have deeper and long term effect because they are inherent in individuals and are not imposed from outside (Armstrong, 2006).

## **VII. Methodology**

The planning and collection of data was premised on the following;

### **Approach**

The qualitative paradigm was largely used

### **Research design**

The *survey design* was used since it is one of the most important areas of measurement in applied social research, which involves asking questions and getting detailed feedback or responses.

### **Sample and sampling technique**

A sample size of 65 subjects was used for this study. This was based on *collective exhaustive* combined with *Quota sampling technique* as this researcher felt that he needed to accommodate as many different types of ABC workers who were engaged in different trades (professions) or job roles for inclusivity including management.

### **Research Instrument**

Unstructured questionnaire was used.

### **Data collation and analysis**

Results were analysed using the content analysis method, involving categorization of data, classification, summarization and coding (Cresswell, 2003).

### **Research ethics**

These were upheld during the entire process of data collection up to analysis and collation. No attempt was made to influence responses or to manipulate results as these were solely based on actual responses /comments

## **VIII. Findings**

The following major findings pertained to the sub-problems of Section III

### **7.1 Major reasons for the transfer policy at ABC.**

Various interesting reasons and in some cases contrasting , were given as follows;

- ✓ To demonstrate fairness since ABC is an equal opportunity employer and has no preference to any worker.
- ✓ To reduce corruption and other unethical practices.
- ✓ For managers to get “kick backs” in order to stop transfers.
- ✓ Multi skilling by exposing one to different situations and activities.
- ✓ To remove boredom or job repetition associated with a familiar and routine working environment.
- ✓ Way of frustrating vocal and those critical of management.
- ✓ Strategy to derail one’s promotion.
- ✓ An indirect way of reprimanding those who would have committed misconduct cases (offences).
- ✓ Job rotation for enrichment.
- ✓ Hatred by management on those who criticise their poor corporate governance
- ✓ Autocratic leadership style to instil fear among subordinates so that they become ‘voiceless’.

On a positive note, respondents indicated that ABC was an equal opportunity employs which meant that recruitment was done according to best practices as suggested by Michael (2004). Also the transfers seemed to be done to bring multi-skilling as the workers worked under different locations ( stations) which have different environment and psychological impact . The transfer policy could be done as part of job rotation which is usually associated with motivation and job enrichment according to Jubenkanda (2004).

There were also strong sentiments that the policy was put in place to arrest corruption and numerous unethical practices conducted by ABC workers particularly at boarder. There were also strong sentiments that the transfer policy had a hidden agenda of frustrating those who were critical of management such as members of the workers committee or as an indirect way of reprimanding them, that is instilling discipline on them. This shows an unfair labour practice as victimisation of the workers committee could kill off spirited or sound industrial relations at ABC as suggested by Uzhenyu (2015). Generally the reasons suggested by the respondents seemed to suggest that the transfer policy is a document with ulterior motives by management. Such bad leadership and lack of corporate integrity as revealed by this study at ABC, should not be encouraged as that lead to low motivation among staff (Cole, 2004)

### **7.2 Degree of transparency on policy implementation.**

The results indicated that the majority of respondents felt that the transfer policy lacked transparency. Lack of transparency leads to mistrust which results in bad relationships between management and subordinates as highlighted by Banjoko (1996) cited in Jubankanda (2004). The reasons given were;

- ✓ There are not very ‘ clear –cut’ guidelines on the **criteria** for effecting transfers.
- ✓ There is no consultation in most cases.
- ✓ There is no clear room for appeal.
- ✓ There is inconsistency and bias on the implementation of the policy.
- ✓ Corruption tendencies by some unethical managers who wanted ‘kick backs’ to reverse the transfer.

Generally the majority felt that the transfer policy was not implemented in a transparent manner despite the fact that the contract of employment had a clause to that effect and even at recruitment would have been highlighted. The results consolidated the sentiments about bad leadership and lack of corporate integrity that should not be encouraged as they lead to low motivation among staff (Cole, 2004)

### **7.3 Challenges arising from the transfer policy**

- ✓ Job dissatisfaction.
- ✓ Contributes to low morale (low motivation).
- ✓ Breakdown of family and social ties.
- ✓ Prevalence of cases of HIV / AIDS and a number of related deaths.

- ✓ Job insecurity.
- ✓ Victimization of the vocal or those who criticize management.
- ✓ Way of derailing one's promotion.
- ✓ Very expensive due to relocation costs.
- ✓ Lack of ancillary services i.e. good education, health and banking services'(facilities and infrastructure).
- ✓ Disruption of personal upgrading through academic and professional studies.
- ✓ Language barrier at some boarder posts.
- ✓ Inadequate notice.
- ✓ Difference in performance assessment due to different supervisors.
- ✓ Accommodation problem at some boarder posts.
- ✓ Resignation upon transfer due to frustration.
- ✓ Breakdown of marriages or family disintegration.
- ✓ Break down of social ties.
- ✓ Productivity decline due to low morale.
- ✓ Promiscuity especially among female workers.
- ✓ Adverse effect on children's (students) pass rates or performance as evidenced by an even worrying failure rate of those students(children) who transfer to new schools.
- ✓ Sexual harassment as some male bosses use the opportunity to rescind transfer decisions at times.
- ✓ Job stress.
- ✓ Increased cases of resignations.

The results seriously showed the level of discontentment and low motivation among those affected by the ABC transfer policy and that was likely to affect ABC's operations and tantamount to creating a weak culture that would make the organisation less competitive due to poor service delivery as suggested by Jubenkanda (2004) and Cole (2004). The study was able to 'unearthen' other problems that arise from the transfer policy. The major ones being the breakdown of social and family ties including cases of resignations which showed the gravity of the Transfer policy. ABC should have to relook at the policy by possibly involving workers in the discussions to improve labour relations (Uzhenyu, 2015) as well as production (Atintoye,2000).

Another major disturbing issue was the of lack of transparency and discrimination, hence the suggestion that even management should also be transferred. Corruption has been always a topical issue in Zimbabwe especially among parastatals and ABC is not exceptional. Even ABC workers and not only management, have been involved in a number of corrupt cases according to the *Financial gazette report of 23 September in 2013*. Good corporate governance was needed to improve motivation (Cole, 2004) in ABC which appeared to be low and that should enhance job satisfaction (Jubenkanda, 2004)

## **IX. Conclusion**

The study concluded that the ABC Transfer policy had a plethora of problems which was affecting the motivation of workers and needed urgent attention or revision in order to improve job satisfaction and ultimately better service delivery.

## **Recommendations**

- 10.1**Increase number of years before another transfer to be reasonably longer e.g. at least 10 years at one station may suffice.
- 10.2**Policy should also include management transfers to show openness and equity (fairness).
- 10.3**Avoid corruption by implicating managers who ask for kick backs from transfers or other underhand dealings.
- 10.4**Increase staff size to reduce job stress and improve work engagement.
- 10.5**Improve salary by paying a compensation for inconveniences.
- 10.6**Independent body to monitor transfers e.g. Ministry of information for transparency.
- 10.7**Rotate or change positions of managers to minimise corrupt tendencies.
- 10.8**There should be involvement or discussion of transfers first with those affected before being effected.

The above recommendations if implemented should be able to improve the ABC transfer policy implementation thereby enhancing staff motivation.

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