

DUE PROCESS: A PARADIGM FOR REDUCING WORK RELATED STRESS AND FACILITATING JOB SATISFACTION.

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Abstract

The fight against corrupt practices in Nigeria, relating to public procurement, award of contracts and fiscal discipline has in the past few years been conceptualized as Due Process Mechanism. This mechanism ensures that certain processes are taken by public officials to ensure that things are done properly, and as when they are supposed. The process was also adopted to ensure that the gap between role expectations and role behaviour of public servant are narrowed. This paper examines the extent to which stress could be a function of non-normative behaviour, viz non adherence to the Due Process Mechanism and its relationship with Job satisfaction. The paper posits that reducing work related stress by adhering to the Due Process Mechanism could significantly increase job satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Since we assumed self-rule from the British colonial masters, successive governments in Nigeria have been faced with the problem of proper allocation and utilization of the resources of the nation. In the years immediately after political independence, the country earned foreign exchange from various natural resources and her agricultural products. During this period, public servants showed more commitment and dedication to service to the nation as much of the codes of conduct for public servants were derived from established British laws and practices, and a good degree of morality was evident in the running of public affairs.

However, the events of the late sixties ushered in a new Nigerian psyche in the public service which engendered, divisive and negative tendencies, disunity, discord and multi-ethnic interest among Nigerian nationals. The composite tribes became stronger in influence on top public servants and so, the concept of sharing the national cake was introduced in the 1970s. With the oil boom of the same 1970s, public servants saw easy and "effortless money" and allowances around them and thus, hard work and proper work orientation and ethics gave way to service for money. The newly acquired 'psyche' now germinated unrealistic public expenditure profiles, carelessness in fund allocation, and a general tendency towards corrosive corruption among public officials. Ethical standards therefore lowered, and laws, decrees, rules and codes of conduct were fashioned to suit people in positions of authority and to aid their avarice.

Consequently corrupt practices of all manners became a way of life and the worsening scenario of institutionalized corruption culminated in rampant looting of public treasury with impunity which led to Nigeria becoming one of the poorest oil producing countries in the world.

This paper, therefore seeks to show that corrupt practices (the opposite of Due Process Mechanism) could be a source of stress for a public servant and how doing things the proper way (the Due Process) could facilitate the well-being of the public servant, reduce work related stress, therefore create job satisfaction for him.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

The Concept of Due Process

Due Process is a mechanism for ensuring strict compliance with openness, competition and cost accuracy, rules and procedures that guide contract award within the Federal Government of Nigeria. (FMINO, 2004).

It has also become the popularly adopted short form for the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (BMPIU) which is the Unit tasked with implementing Nigeria's Public Procurement Reform Programme. The BMPIU was established by former President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2001, to ensure transparency and accountability in the management of Nigeria's public resources.

As encapsulated in his reform programme, the vision of the BMPIU is "to help move Nigeria to a level where Public Procurement (Public Contracting) is governed by the principles of integrity, transparency, competence and competitiveness as national ethics". In line with this, BMPIU has as its mission "to use the Due Process Mechanism to re-establish and sustain an open, transparent and competitive integrity driven, spending within Budget, and ensures speedy implementation of projects in order to achieve value-for-money outcomes without sacrificing quality and standards".

To achieve this, BMPIU has the following objectives:

- to harmonize and update all Federal Government Policies and practices on Public Procurement;
- to ensure that project conceptualization and packaging match the defined priorities and targets as set in annual appropriations;
- to strictly enforce the Due Process principles of transparency, competition and efficiency and value for money in the procurement of public goods, works and services;
- to ensure efficient and integrity based monitoring of the implementation of all Federal Government Projects in line with Due Process principles;
- to prevent extra budgetary spending by Ministries, Departments and Agencies by ensuring that only projects with due appropriation by the National Assembly are certified and thus funded for execution; and
- to prevent contract inflation by ensuring cost reasonableness, accuracy and comparability of all public contracts with national, regional and global costs. (FMINO, 2004).

Due Process Mechanism, therefore, is the instrument through which the BMPIU operates. It encapsulates all the principles and modalities for contract award in Nigeria. As a behavioural paradigm, it is a guide for public service to ensure that things are done according to laid down procedures, rules and regulations.

JOB SATISFACTION

The concept of job satisfaction can be defined as "the feelings and attitudes one has about one's job". These attitudes includes all aspects of negative or positive feelings about a particular job which are likely to contribute to the development of feelings of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction)

(Riggio, 2003; Aamodt, 1999). Job satisfaction describes how contented an individual is with his/her job and incorporates issues like, how does the worker feel about a job or task. Perhaps, this may have influenced the views of Locke (1976), in describing job satisfaction as 'a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job, an "affective reaction to one's job, and an attitude formed towards one's job. Weiss (2007), believes that such attitudes formed towards one's job are normally based on feelings, beliefs and behaviours.

Several factors account for a person's level of job satisfaction. Apart from the demands of the job which may psychologically make a person to be uncomfortable on a job, issues of pay level and benefits, the perceived fairness of the promotion system within an organization, the quality of work conditions etc. may influence the level of satisfaction a person may derive on a job. However, there is no doubt that when conditions that promote merit such as the due process mechanism, are entrenched and followed in an organization, job satisfaction is likely to improve among the staff of such organization.

STRESS

Stress is one concept that cannot be easily defined as there is no agreement on a single definition for it. Consequently, there are at least eight different definitions for stress. (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1999). Early stress researcher, Hans Seyle (1976), sees stress as primarily "a psychological reaction to certain threatening environmental events". According to him, work related stress would simply refer to the stress caused by events in the work environment. Riggio (2003) on his own part defines stress as "the physiological and or psychological reactions to events that are perceived to be threatening or taxing. Lazarus (1991), went further to opine that stress are reactions resulting from a workers perception that a certain environmental event is a threat or a challenge (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

Stress is of two types, 'Eustress' and 'Distress'. While 'Eustress' is good and occurs when stress is converted to positive energy and becomes motivating, 'Distress' is bad or negative and happens when there is too much stress and when nothing is done to eliminate, reduce or counter act its negative effects.

In whatever way one sees it, stress places physical and psychological demands on the worker and makes the worker to exceed his adjustive capacity. As such, its physical, mental and psychological demand makes the worker to behave in manners that deviate from expectations.

THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS

One of the theories that explains why individuals behave in certain ways is the "Social Learning Theory". The theory had its origins in the behavioural writings of eminent psychologists like Ivan Pavlov, John B. Watson, and B.F. Skinner. (Lahey, 2003:476). The view point of the Social Learning Theory is that most important parts of our behaviour are learned from other persons in society such as members of the family, friends and other significant persons. The leading figure in the theory today and who gave its name is Albert Bandura a psychologist at Stanford University, USA. To Bandura (1977), Social Learning Theory believes in reciprocal determination, that while a person learns behaviour from interactions with other persons, in the environment, his behaviour influences how other persons interact with him. (Lahey, 2003).

Based on this, the Social Learning Theory therefore, emphasizes that corrupt behaviours can be learned, may be by inferiors as they observe their superiors while such inferiors' behaviours influence others around them such as their colleagues.

The cognitive theory is germane to the explanation of the path way through which this 'newly' acquired behaviour may predispose to psychopathology. Beck (1976), posit that all maladaptive behaviours are resultant of unfounded and catastrophic self talks. All cognitive psychologists hold that our thoughts, and perceptions determine our emotion, behaviours and adjustment. In this regard, it is plausible that the public officer who does not follow due process, but is aware of the rules would be besieged with apprehension due to cogitation of the possible consequences of his/her actions.

We argue that since corrupt practices are non-normative behaviours because these practices, are usually against the laws of the land (and the organization), then people who engage in such practices must be alert all the time to ensure that the arm of the law do not catch them. Consequently, they experience exaggerated physiological and psychological activities which culminate in anxiety and stress.

Anxiety and stress are anti-thesis of peace, joy and self-actualization (Obi-Nwosu, 1998). It is logical therefore that workers so affected become less productive and loose job satisfaction.

DUE PROCESS, STRESS AND JOB SATISFACTION

Due Process Mechanism is necessarily a reorientation paradigm, for ensuring that public servants hold their offices as the public trust they are, by promoting good behaviour and conduct in public affairs.

Among these processes are good governance of public money and assets resulting in the reduction of corruption. Due Process Mechanism creates room for public officials to handle public funds and assets with probity and transparency. Under such conditions, public officials limit their operations to those allowed by organizational rules and regulations, each table deals with the aspect of the service that concerns her and passes on the 'file' to the next one without interference. Treatment of files (attendance to duties and schedules) are without prejudice, are standardized and devoid of manipulations of any sort.

Due Process ensures, these through improved technical efficiency in managing and utilization of resources through information flow, which are relevant to decision responsibilities of administration. This reduces apprehension and mistakes, and makes the officials of the public service have feelings of sense of worth which engenders psychological well-being, dedication and commitment.

Secondly the Due Process Mechanism enhances transparency and accountability in all governmental projects and this saves money for staff emolument and welfare and therefore it reduces stress by cancelling several potential stressors related to financial problems. This enhances the confidence of the public servant in the system, affords him/her ample room for planning the expenditure profile, consequently he/she feels secure, desired and happy. This is antithetical of catastrophic irrational self talks, anxiety and stress. It is a prelude to job satisfaction.

CONCLUSIONS

Among other reform policies of the Federal Government in Nigeria, the institutionalization of the Due Process Mechanism is an essential element for providing good, efficient and stress free procurement system.

This is a critical cornerstone for good governance and an efficient public service. Apart from the fact that the Due Process Mechanism promotes transparency, openness and competitiveness, it has also installed good practices in public service which are positive developments for stress free environments for the public servants. This in turn makes a public servants enjoy more satisfaction on the job as an efficient procurement system is not only an important tool for expenditure management but it leads to efficient delivery of public services and thus economic growth. There is no doubt that public servants can enjoy life more positively under such conditions as it is not only less stressful but it can also increase job satisfaction in; and among them.

The Due Process Mechanism is therefore a proper paradigm in the handling of public affairs not only in the award of contract but in other spheres of the public service when there is Due Process, work related stress shall reduce among public servants while job satisfaction shall increase among them. The principles of the Due Process Mechanism should therefore be extended to other spheres of public affairs and activities.

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