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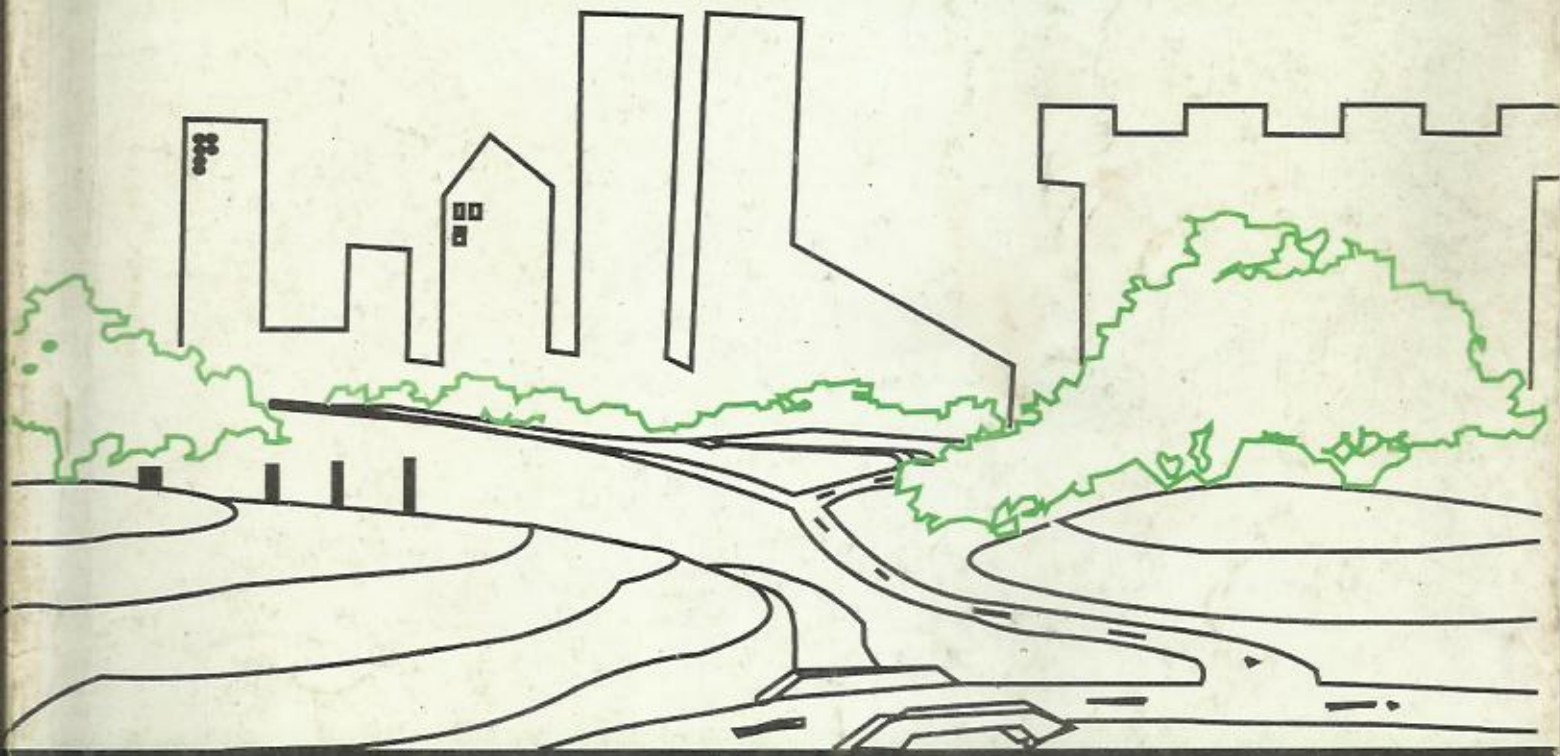


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IMPACT OF STRUCTURED RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND PLACEMENT ON CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The absence of a corporate policy on construction workforce employment and its attendant effects on the productivity of the workforce necessitated this research. The study demonstrates the extent to which structured recruitment of construction industry workforce relates to organizational performance. The research was by exploratory cross-sectional survey of 200 Project Management and Supervisory personnel of medium-large sized limited liability and publicly quoted construction firms operating in Abia, Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi and Enugu states, all in south-eastern Nigeria. From this study population, a sample size of 133 was selected by means of purposive judgmental sampling technique. Research design involved oral interview, structured questionnaire, and empirical support from previous related studies. The responses obtained were presented, analyzed and interpreted using *t*-test statistics for hypothesis testing. The results of the study showed a positive and significant relationship between structured recruitment of construction workforce with meeting productivity targets, timely accomplishment of group tasks, meeting quality/specification requirements and achievement of teamwork. From the study it is recommended among others that workforce recruitment in group tasks should be based on predetermined criteria that reflect organization's goals.

KEYWORDS: *Structured, Recruitment, Selection, Placement, Performance*

INTRODUCTION

The construction industry accounts for a sizeable proportion of worldwide economic activities. For example, in Europe, it accounts for 10% of the gross domestic product (GDP) (Loosemore, Dainty, and Lingard, 2003:2); in Australia it employs about 8 % of the nation's workforce (Proverbs, Holt, and Olomolaiye, 1999:221); in Nigeria it accounts for about 60% of the nations capital investment and 30% of the gross domestic product (Olowo-Okere, 1988:13).

The Nigerian Construction Industry has since independence played a dominant role in the socio-economic development of the country. Productivity and profitability increases within the construction industry and attract substantive benefits to the broader global economy. In Australia, it is reported that if the construction industry increased its effectiveness by 10%, this could lead to an increase of up to 2.5% in the GDP (Stoeckel and Quirke, 1990:8).

Despite recent advances in technology and production management techniques, construction remains one of the most people-reliant industrial sectors. Human resources represents a large majority of costs on most projects in the construction industry (Loosemore, et al, 2003:2).

Construction activity is extremely diverse, ranging from simple housing developments to highly complex infrastructure projects.

The activity of the industry includes:

- a) Creation of infrastructure facilities – This involves projects like power stations, airports, roads, water schemes, hospitals and administrative facilities.
- b) Provision of industrial facilities – This involves the provision of buildings and

other utilities in order to enhance production and earning capacity of industries.

This includes factories, workshops and offices.

c) Provision of accommodation and recreational facilities – Such projects include housing schemes, churches, mosques, sports facilities and recreational centres.

Construction productivity has been viewed as work done in relation to the resources employed (Adindu, Omar, and Attahiru, 1993).

Employment of construction workforce is mainly adhoc and does not follow any pre-determined prescription. The nature of the construction industry is such that labour planning, scheduling and retainership appear to exist conceptually than in reality. Work teams are often formed at site of operations and are shortly disbanded no sooner than the project is completed. Activities are hardly sustainable while job mobility is on the toll. The level of economic activity within the construction industry is highly sensitive to wider economic activity. The cycle of peaks and troughs in construction demand makes it difficult for companies to retain directly employed workforces and make long term investments in its core professional staff. Resulting from this, most construction companies adopt a flexible model of Human Resource Management (HRM), in which they employ the bulk of their workforce on temporary contracts or as subcontracted labour (Loosemore, et al, 2003:2). There is widespread realization in recent years that construction must improve its HRM performance considering its peculiar recruitment and workforce retention challenges, before it can improve its overall efficiency, productivity and cost effectiveness

(Loosemore, et al, 2003:2). In the U.K for example, successive government- initiated reports have recommended action on improving the management of people as the cornerstone of strengthening its business and management practices (Latham, 1994:56; Egan, 1998:34).

Loosemore, et al, (2003:4) avered that all types of construction projects, regardless of size have the following common characteristics:

- Unique, one-off nature
- Tendency to be awarded at short notice
- Reliance on a transient workforce
- Increasingly demanding clients
- A male dominated culture

On this backdrop, the achievement of a structured system of construction workforce selection, recruitment and placement is a critical imperative to the construction industry sub-sector of the national economy as activities of the sector is largely informal and operations erratic in nature. Trained workforces are seldom retained as they are often lost to some others on completion of activity or contract while replacement is often casually contracted depending on the prevailing circumstance with attendant productivity implications.

The major objective of this study, is-

- (a) to determine if significant relationship exist between structured recruitment and achievement of group task output targets in construction activities.

This research is therefore significant in the manpower planning of construction and other project-based organizations, considering their Human Resource (HR) strategy of sourcing, recruiting and retaining appropriate mix of industry workforce for optimum productivity. It also adds to the body of knowledge in the area of strategic human resource planning in project organizations.

Thus, the issue of structured recruitment, selection and placement is of contemporary relevance and poses tremendous challenge in the human resource planning of construction industry line staff.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The adhoc nature of construction workforce recruitment, selection and placement has led to obvious difficulties in building work teams. Research streams in the construction industry consistently show the existence of performance gaps as a result of a lack of strategic recruitment in the subsector.

Thus, the lack of structured mode of engagement of workforce in construction organizations is a problem that would be studied in line with its relationship with performance of the operatives.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

The following research question is crucial for this study to achieve its goal. The question also reflects the objective of the study:

- (a) to what extent is the achievement of group task output targets related to structured recruitment of construction workforce?

1.3 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The research hypothesis formulated to aid this study is as follows:

Alternate-h₁:

There is significant relationship between structured recruitment and achieving group task output targets in construction activities.

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND PLACEMENT

The processes of recruitment, selection and placement are fundamental in the employment of reliable and efficient personnel that are concerned with and committed to the achievement of organizational goals. The Human capital requirement of organizations expect the mobilization of only those members that will align with organizations purpose and structure to form formidable teams that will meet or exceed organizations goals. Imaga (2002) posited that the terms recruitment and selection are so interchangeably used in the employment process as to blur understanding and misconception.

The terms Recruitment, Selection and Placement have variously been defined by scholars each depending on their backgrounds and perspectives of view. Fatiregun (1992) defined recruiting as the process of assessing a job, announcing the vacancy, arousing interest and stimulating people to apply. Mathias and Jackson (1997) viewed recruitment as the process of generating a pool of qualified applicants for organizational jobs. Cole (2002) stated that, the principal purpose of recruitment is to attract sufficient and suitable potential employees to apply for vacancies in the organization. Recruitment is therefore not limited to the formal, planned and systematic effort on the part of employers to attract suitable applicants into their organizations. The nature of activities in the construction industry hardly permits the observance of the procedures of formal recruitment. The workers especially the casual labour-force are often contracted spontaneously as need arises without the due process of advertisement for vacancy, short listing of potential applicants, invitation for interview, administration of competence tests and interview, etc.

Imaga (2002) viewed personnel selection as a process of measurement, evaluation and decision – making. Various scholars avered that the goal of personnel selection is to bring into the organization individuals who will perform well on the job. The hiring is made by the team of co-workers with whom the new employee will work in view of the recent changes in the world of employee selection process (Onah, 2003).

Onah (2003) defined placement as the process of investing an appointee with the authority to perform a role. It is an employment contract in which the employer gives the new employee a written statement setting out the particulars of his or her employment before commencing the job.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was used in conducting this empirical study.

The population of study involves 200 Project Management and Supervisory personnel of medium-large sized limited liability and publicly quoted construction firms operating in the five south-eastern states of Nigeria; namely: Abia, Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi and Enugu states. From this population, a sample size of 133 Project Management and Supervisory personnel was selected by means of purposive judgmental sampling technique.

A personal interview method was used for the purposes of primary data collection with the aid of a well structured questionnaire considering the relative disparity in the literacy level of the respondent's. The analyses were conducted using frequencies, percentages and means; while the student's t -test statistical technique was used for testing the research hypotheses earlier formulated.

Decision Rule: Reject the null hypothesis, H_0 , if $t_c \geq t_c \alpha/2$, or if $t_c \leq - t_c \alpha/2$, for n_1+n_2 degrees of freedom, otherwise accept the alternate hypothesis (H_a), indicating existence of significant difference between the two proportions.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Generally, four questions were asked; which sought responses on the extent to which structured recruitment relates to identified performance appraisal measures (see table 1).

Discarding data from the undecided (neutral) respondents, 77% of the respondents agree that structured recruitment of construction industry workforce is related to meeting -output targets, planned activity time targets, quality/specification requirements, and achieving team cohesiveness while 23% disagree.

4.1 TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis I:

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between structured recruitment and achieving group task output target.

H_a : There is significant relationship between structured recruitment and achieving group task output.

A test of significance between proportions was carried out on the proportion of respondents that agreed P_1 , and the proportion of those that disagreed, P_2 and discarding the proportion of those who were neutral (undecided), P_3 .

$H_0: P_1 = P_2$

$H_a: P_1 > P_2$

Test statistic $= t_0 = \frac{P_1 - P_2}{SE}$

$$SE = \sqrt{\frac{P_1 q_1}{n_1} + \frac{P_2 q_2}{n_2}}$$

$t_{computed} = t_c = 7.242$

Since the result yielded $t_c = 7.242 > t_c = 1.645$ at $\alpha/2$, $\alpha = 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternate hypothesis (H_a), and conclude that there is a significant relationship between structured recruitment and achieving group task output target.

The results of the test of hypothesis show that:

1. Productivity targets can be attained through structured recruitment of workforce engaged in group tasks.
2. Planned time targets for group tasks can be met through structured recruitment of workforce engaged in group tasks.
3. The prescribed quality/specification of works can be met through structured recruitment of workforce engaged in group tasks.
4. Team cohesiveness can be achieved through structured recruitment of workforce engaged in group tasks.

5.0 CONCLUSION

From the result of the study, and the discussion of findings, it is concluded that the relatively poor performance of construction industry workforce is attributable to their unstructured recruitment, selection and placement. The performance of construction workforce is measured in terms of their ability to meet target output, time schedule, quality /specification requirements and team cohesiveness. Recruitment, selection and placement of construction workforce should be based on pre-determined criteria that meets organizational goals and reflects organizational culture. Workforce recruitment, selection and placement should be based on talent, skill and capacity for co-operative working.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Work supervisors should actively participate in team member recruitment, selection and placement.
2. Recruitment should be based on the workers ability and capacity to perform.
3. Placement on high skill jobs should be strictly based on competence and talent.
4. Selection of team members should be based on pre-determined criteria that reflect organization's culture and goals.
5. Preference should be given to workers that have a previous track record of high achievement in group task activities.

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TABLE 1: Project Management and Supervisory personnel responses on the relationship between structured recruitment and identified performance appraisal measures in group tasks.

S/No	Description.	Agree			Neutral		Disagree		
		SA	A	%	UND	%	SD	D	%
1.	Structured recruitment is related to meeting out-put targets in group tasks.	41	65	80 (106)	4	3 (4)	13	10	17 (23)
2.	Structured recruitment is related to meeting planned time targets in group tasks.	38	54	69 (92)	7	5 (7)	16	18	26 (34)
3.	Structured recruitment is related to meeting quality/specification requirements of group tasks.	36	59	71 (95)	2	2 (2)	14	22	27 (36)
4.	Structured recruitment is related to team cohesiveness in group tasks.	43	61	78 (104)	5	4 (5)	10	14	18 (24)
	Average Response	397 (77%)			Discarded		117 (23%)		514 (100 %)

Source: Field survey, 2010