

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING MARITIME TEACHERS STRESS ACTIVATORS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Maritime teachers experience stress while performing their job .These are caused by insecurity, militancy, lack of ships for training of cadets, excess workload, lack of instructional facilities, inadequate training and re- training programme, delayed promotion, lack of job satisfaction and motivational incentive. These burnouts impede maritime teachers job performance as they work under pressure. This paper examined the effect of stress on teachers and educational implication of stress on their job. However, stress management training programme and coping strategies should be incorporated in seminars and induction courses as corrective and prevention measures to help reduce stress levels among maritime teachers. This will enhance functional and effective instructional delivery in maritime education programme.

Stress can be defined as an adaptive response, mediated by individual characteristics and psychological processes. It is a consequence of any external action, situation or events that places special physical psychological demands upon a person. Stress is also a set of conditions involving intervention of a person and environment or which presents a person with a demand, a constraint, and an opportunity for behavior modification. Stress is an environmental stimulus that affects an environment in a physically or psychological injurious way usually producing anxiety, tension and physiological arousal. Ivancevich Mattherson and Richard (1980) addressed the issue of stress on the job and indicated that stress activators can cause physical illness and psychosomatic as well as physical changes. They observed that while Stress is an

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inevitable part of living and working, excessive pressure can lead to ill-health, higher cost of productivity and increased personal problems. These authors advised that managers must learn to identify potential stress activators in their organizations and make concerted efforts to relieve pain when necessary. Stress is also referred to as the internal condition of an individual failure which could arise because of tension, anxiety, producing a condition that could be a bane to the health of a normal person. Stress is a physiological event, it can affect an individual anywhere and at anytime. When Stress manifests in work environment it could influence job performance as well as job satisfaction of the workers

Maritime Teachers Stress Activators

Maritime teachers are always faced with stress activators which can be summed up as follows:

(a) Inadequate Training Ships

Maritime institutions in Nigeria are without functional ships for sea training of cadets and students as demanded by international maritime organizations (IMO). Due to lack of functional ships for seafarers training, it reduces instructional delivery among maritime teachers (IMO 2001;IMO 2009).

(b) Inadequate Workshop Facilities

Workshop facilities in schools exert some inevitable influence which may be in conflict with maritime teachers academic performance. Ayers (2009) indicated that the condition and adequacy of a school has a significant impact on school academic outcomes. He viewed, the relationship as very complex indicating that facilities affect teachers attitudes, which in turn, affect class room productivity. Ezeji (2004) asserted that facility factors adversely affecting the educational process are poor architectural units that should house industrial Arts Laboratories, overcrowding, poor physical condition of the structure, lack of storage, inadequate laboratory space and acoustic problems. A look at most of the technical institutions shows that their workshops are ill-equipped. There are inadequate number of machines and tools and sometimes the existing ones breakdown for years without hope for repairs or replacement. The ideal situation is that the workshop must be well equipped.

(C) Inadequate Teaching Experience

Teaching is indeed a challenging profession. The teacher is the most important factor in the learning environment. The teacher is to see that the learner develops the right skills, assimilates the facts, right habits, ideals and ethical standard. This explains why competent technical teachers are needed in technical institutions, since teaching is regarded as intricate and challenging occupation. The teacher is the hub of the educational system because the school cannot be better than its teacher. The teacher constitutes the most vital factor in the educational system because it is upon their numbers, quality and devotion to duty that the effectiveness of education system depends. Harvey and Spinney (2010) noted that less experienced teachers are

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experiencing the effects of work intensification more and are most likely to feel stressed about their work.

(d) Delayed Promotion

Grunebery (2008) in a study of University Teacher's satisfaction in which promotion procedures was found to be the aspect of their job with which they are least satisfied. Nicholson (2006) observed that Teacher's behavior can be controlled and shaped by rewarding (reinforcing) desired behaviours while ignoring undesirable actions and overtime, the reinforced behavior will tend to be extinguished and disappear. According to Arubayi (2007), any job without attractive salary, fringe benefits and promotions attached to it, will yield negative results in terms of performance. He contended that promotion does not universally signal recognition of achievement. However, in some organizations such as school organizations, promotion may be based on seniority or length of stay in the organization rather than achievement on the job. He portrays promotion as one major incentive stimulating maritime teachers' instructional delivery.

(e) Militancy

Militancy is a factor that affects effective maritime education. Many teachers and sea instructors have abandoned their jobs because of the fear of being kidnapped. According to Amnesty International (2009), there are some pockets of militancy activities in South-South Nigeria despite the amnesty of the Federal Government. Ekponta (2008) observed that youth militancy has become a major source of instability and security threat in Nigeria, a situation where abduction, bombing, hijacking, kidnapping and hostage taking becomes a lucrative business. Again, Omeje (2006), asserted that there is hardly any academic session without reported cases of kidnapping and cultism in many educational institutions in Nigeria.

(f) Excess Workload

Maritime teachers have many roles to play in helping to develop their students. During the school day, the teacher is called upon to monitor students activities, give lectures, mark attendance register, supervise project and mark scripts. All these culminates in stress. Leblance (2011) stated that the sizes and composition of teachers and classes present serious workload issues for some teachers that have inadequate preparation time within the school day and that assigned supervision makes a substantial demand on a teacher's time. Molner (2009) stated that there were numerous references to the fact that class size and class composition are closely linked and directly related to work load. There are also evidence that smaller class size results in reduced stress and greater satisfaction level among teachers as well as increase in pleasure derived from teaching.

Effect of Stress Activators on Maritime Teachers' Performance

Stress is a silent killer, it affects the psychological and emotional status of a teacher by developing in him incurable symptoms such as hypertension cardiac arrest and heart failure thereby predisposing him to untimely deaths and incapacitation thus it

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leads to poor academic performance particularly teachers that are already induced with stress symptoms. (James 2007; Melgosa 2012) . Stress reduces efficiency as many stressed people work under pressure, anxiety and frustration. Hence, it brings about academic retardation and poor performance. Teaching is indeed a challenging profession. The teacher is the most important factor in the learning environment. The teacher is to see that the learner develops the right skills, assimilates the facts, right habits, ideals and ethics. This explains why the Maritime staff should not be stressed while performing their duties since teaching is a challenging occupation. Teachers need good learning environment, adequate provision of learning facilities, adequate preparation time and motivation to enable them perform maximally but when they are subjected to stress, it reduces their efficiency although moderate stress builds a good quality teachers which enhances their academic performance but excessive stress reduces moral and academic performance.

Teaching is one of the most complex jobs , it is complex because of the many intangible value and numerous human factors involved. Its significance lies in its power to shape human destiny for good or bad. Learning involves experiencing and it represents a change in behavior as a result of experience. Teachers are concerned with providing the much needed experience so as to bring forth the desirable change in behavior and skills. Furthermore, teachers are very important in technical schools because the most precious of natural resources which is children are entrusted in their care at an impressionable stage in life. They can therefore them make technological advancement and future prospect of a nation. In a situation where some teachers are with stress it would create a problem of effective job performance .

Stress Management and Coping Strategies

Coping is defined as cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific demands that are appraised as taxing one's resources. Coping strategies can also be seen as processes by which a teacher takes some action to manage , master, tolerate or reduce environmental or internal demands that cause or might cause stress that tax the individuals inner resources. Stress management and coping strategies are as follows:

(a) ***Resilience:*** This is the extent to which teachers are flexible and respond adaptively to external or internal demands. A teacher who is resilient is said to be less vulnerable to stress activators.

(b)***Defense-Oriented and Task- Oriented Strategies :*** According to Lester (2012), people faced with constant stress use either defense or task-oriented coping stress, to enable them to tolerate and deal with disturbance.

Defense-oriented coping strategies is a method used by stress teachers to protect themselves from the effects of those stressors. The strategies ease stress, thereby enabling teachers to tolerate and deal with disturbances .Teachers may use defense mechanisms to distort reality in order to defend themselves against life's difficulties. One of such mechanism is rationalization, a reinterpretation of reality to make it

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palatable. For example a teacher that miss promotion may cope by telling that he is not due for it. Task-oriented coping strategies for managing stress usually involve tasks such as identifying the stressors since teachers are exposed to multiple stress producing situations simultaneously identifying the stressors is often difficult. A teacher may be experiencing problem with his workload, his finance, social life and colleagues. He must decide what is causing him the most stress and whether his problem with workload for example, are in some way tied to his work situation.

(c)Meditation: According to Melgosa (2012) meditation is a mental state which allows the person to isolate himself from daily obligation and to concentrate on a point of focus to eliminate stress. Meditation is perhaps, the oldest procedure still in existence and undoubtedly is one of the most efficient coping strategies for acquiring mental peace and dispelling stress and tension.

Educational Implications on Stress Activators: Stress Activators and Job performance of Maritime teachers have a lot of implication on Maritime development. Maritime education is a vital tool for sustaining socio-economic and technological development of any nation and the teacher holds the key. In this case, Maritime teachers should not be stressful in their work place so as to ensure maximum performance in terms of technological transfer of knowledge and skills needed in the shipping industry. Maritime teachers are faced with excess workload without adequate preparation time. Therefore, it is imperative for Maritime administrators and educational institutions to increase teachers preparation time in order to reduce, if not completely eradicate stress activators associated with excess workload.

Again, Maritime education programmes are hindered by problems of inexperience, inadequate and incompetent teachers teaching technical and engineering subjects. This implies that incompetency on the part of Maritime teachers is in itself, a stressor. This means that some teachers are in a job that demands either more of what they are qualified and experienced to do. Hence, there is need for recruitment, training and re- training of Maritime teachers.

Conclusion

Maritime teachers have experienced job- related stress because they have not been able to cope or adapt fairly to the work environment and conditions of services. However, certain factors are considered to influence Maritime teachers' performance in discharging their duties. These include lack of ships for training of cadets, militancy, insecurity, excess work load, poor workshop facilities , poor staff development, inadequate instructional materials and delayed promotions . Based on these, effective stress management and coping strategies are required to reduce stress on the Job.

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Recommendations

The following are recommendations made

- (a) Maritime teachers should monitor the stress they experience and the results that this stress imparts on their teaching roles and abilities. They need to consider undertaking strategies that can help reduce extreme levels of stress they experience.
- (b) Stress management and coping strategies should be incorporated in seminars and induction courses as corrective and preventive measures to help reduce stress levels among Maritime teachers.
- (c) Policy makers and the management of maritime institutions should increase their awareness and sensitivity to Maritime teachers concerns and institute corrective and preventive measures to help reduce stress levels among them.
- (d) Stress management and coping training should be introduced for Maritime teachers which could include instruction from such disciplines as meditation Yoga and guided imagery. This may, with teachers practicing these wise disciplines, they could raise their tolerance for stressful conditions and fend off job stress before it begins.
- (e) Maritime teachers class size should be reduced. Although it is expensive this always makes it easier for teachers to do their jobs.

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