Building Safety into Organisation Policies

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Visualize, Realize and Internalize: THE CULTURE OF SAFETY!

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Introduction

Every organisation needs policies. It may need policies

a) to develop, maintain and continually improve of an organisation

b) Certification purposes

c) Regulatory or compliance purposes

An absence of policy as common as an occupational safety policy is like a herd of cattle moving in different directions.

Incurring direct and indirect costs with little to large impacts resulting from workplace incidents has become more than necessary for organisations to include safety in all aspects of their operations through their policies.

Hence, to prevent these unwanted costs or actions, policies should be set with the nature and structure of the business in mind.

To drive an effective and practical safety culture within an organisation, the use of policy as a fundamental tool when implemented accurately is key.

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Policies

- Policies are basically a set of guidelines, rules, or principles formulated or adopted by an organisation to reach its long-term goals, written and documented easily, and widely accessibly.

- Generally, a policy contains the key elements of

  - ***The general statement of intent***
  - ***The organisation section***
  - ***The arrangements section***

- However, do not confuse a policy with a program or management system. A policy is a fundamental part of both a program and management system and is neither a program nor management system.

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Before the preparation of your policy you must consider inter alia the following questions-

| |
|---|
| Its objectives- what are the aims we set out to achieve or our desired outcomes? |
| Target- who is it meant for? |
| Responsibility- Who monitors its observation and or controls it? |
| Accountability/Level of commitment- Who is the risk owner (who is held responsible should there be a fault)? |
| Consultation – Should the objectives and reviews be done by collective or selective representation in formal or informal gatherings? |
| Training – How do we educate and inform staff of our policies and continuous changes? |
| Review – When should a review be carried out e.g. at the least every three years? |
| Assessment Methodology – How do you measure your performance? |
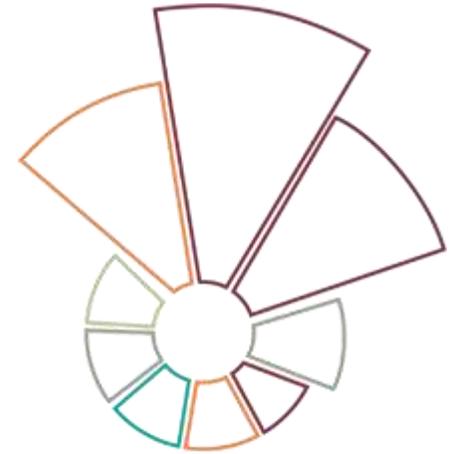
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Nature and structure of Businesses:

- Every business needs certain policy to guide its people in achieving its set objectives. It does not matter on the nature or structure of the business. Whether it is a manufacturing or services-based company, policies are a requirement.

- Though, the type of policies it may require will be determined on the nature and structure of its business.

- Importantly, there are certain policies that are relevant to every organisation such as fire safety, emergency response and health and safety policies.
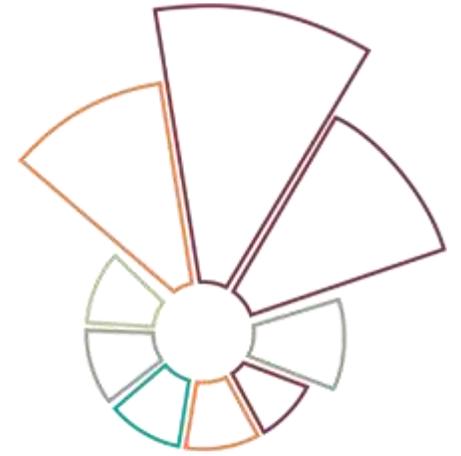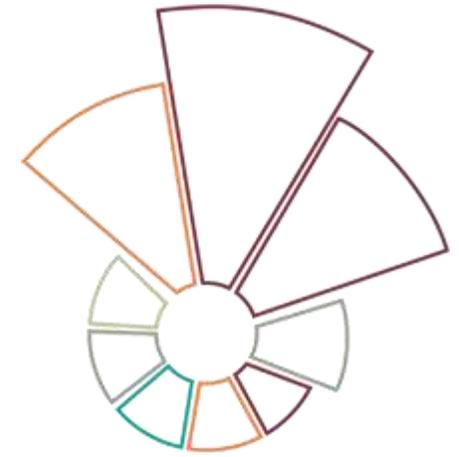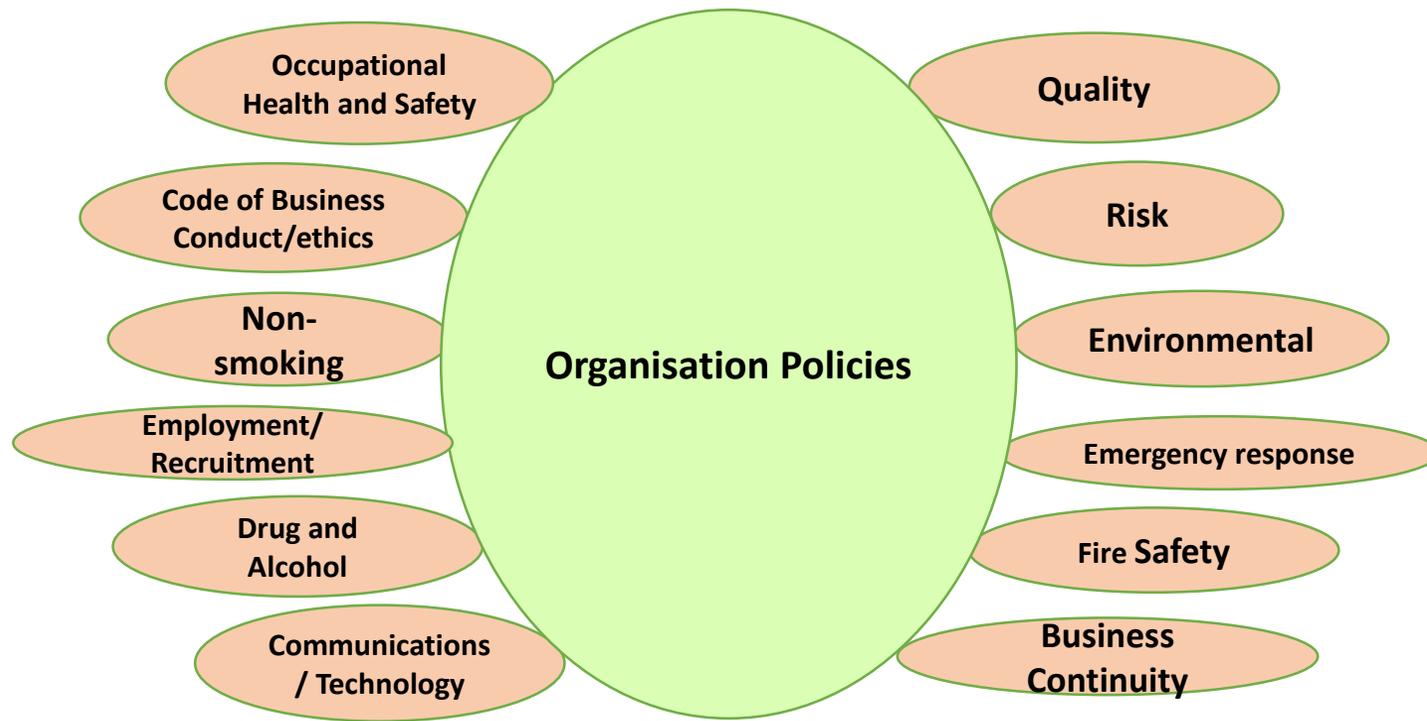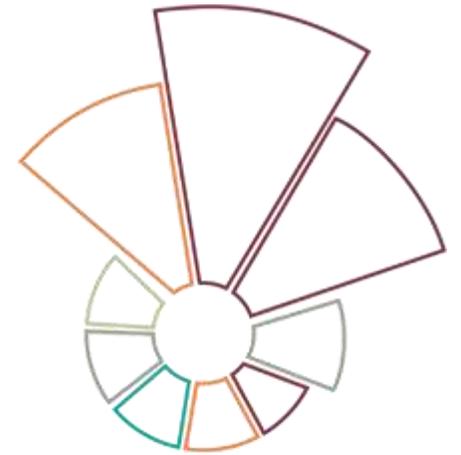
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Diagram A: Types of Organisation or Workplace Policies

- A small services-based company may not see the need for a food safety policy but a restaurant or food manufacturing company may deem this as a necessity.

- For health and Safety, an organisation with five or more staff are required to have a documented health and safety policy.

- Sometimes, two or more policies are combined for example, risk can be incorporated into OH&S, Quality, Environmental, Fire Safety and Food Safety.

- Simply making or having rules or policies in effect are not enough.

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Operations of an Organisation:

Premises and Workplace	Change control
Transport and Distribution	Environmental control
Training requirements	Contractor management
Regulatory compliance	Energy and Water conservation
Maintenance	Atmospheric emission abatement
Emergency and crisis Management	Substance control and material hazards
Office and Laboratory	Task design and Risk assessments (Safe Systems of Work)
Spillage and Prevention Control	Product Safety
Assets design and Procurement	Construction
Storage and Warehousing	Health assessments
Continuous Improvement Plans	Effluent and Wastes
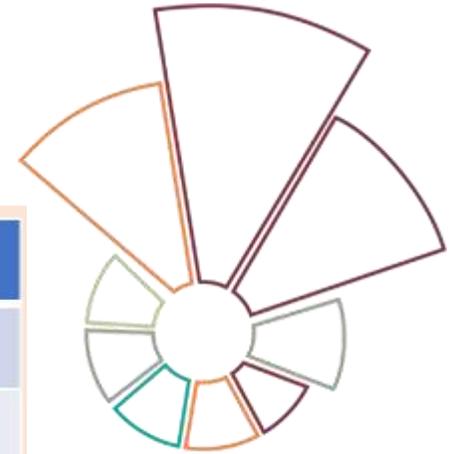
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PAUSE, STOP AND THINK…

The big ???

**Can safety be embedded in organisation policies just as risk?**

YES

Application: When can this be done?

This can be done if and when an organisation

- Is treated similar to an employee or staff with rights to health and safety at work and requires protection from injury or harm

- Following company law

  "a company or organisation is a legal entity or individual"

- Therefore, what stops an organisation from being an employee that its members from top to bottom would seek to protect from accidents leading to direct or indirect costs developed from building and sustaining a healthy safety culture
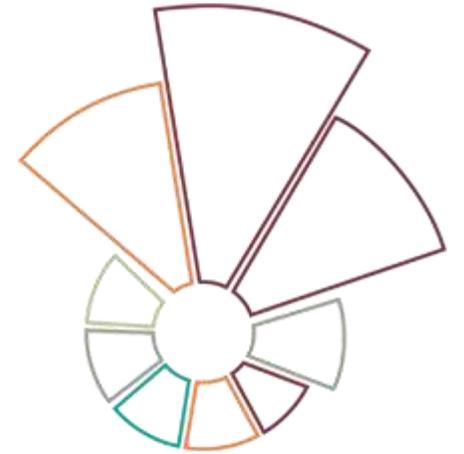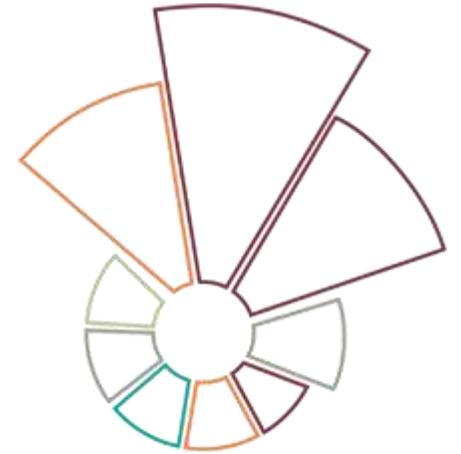
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Nigeria as a case study:

Diagram B: Availability of Policies vs. Organisation size
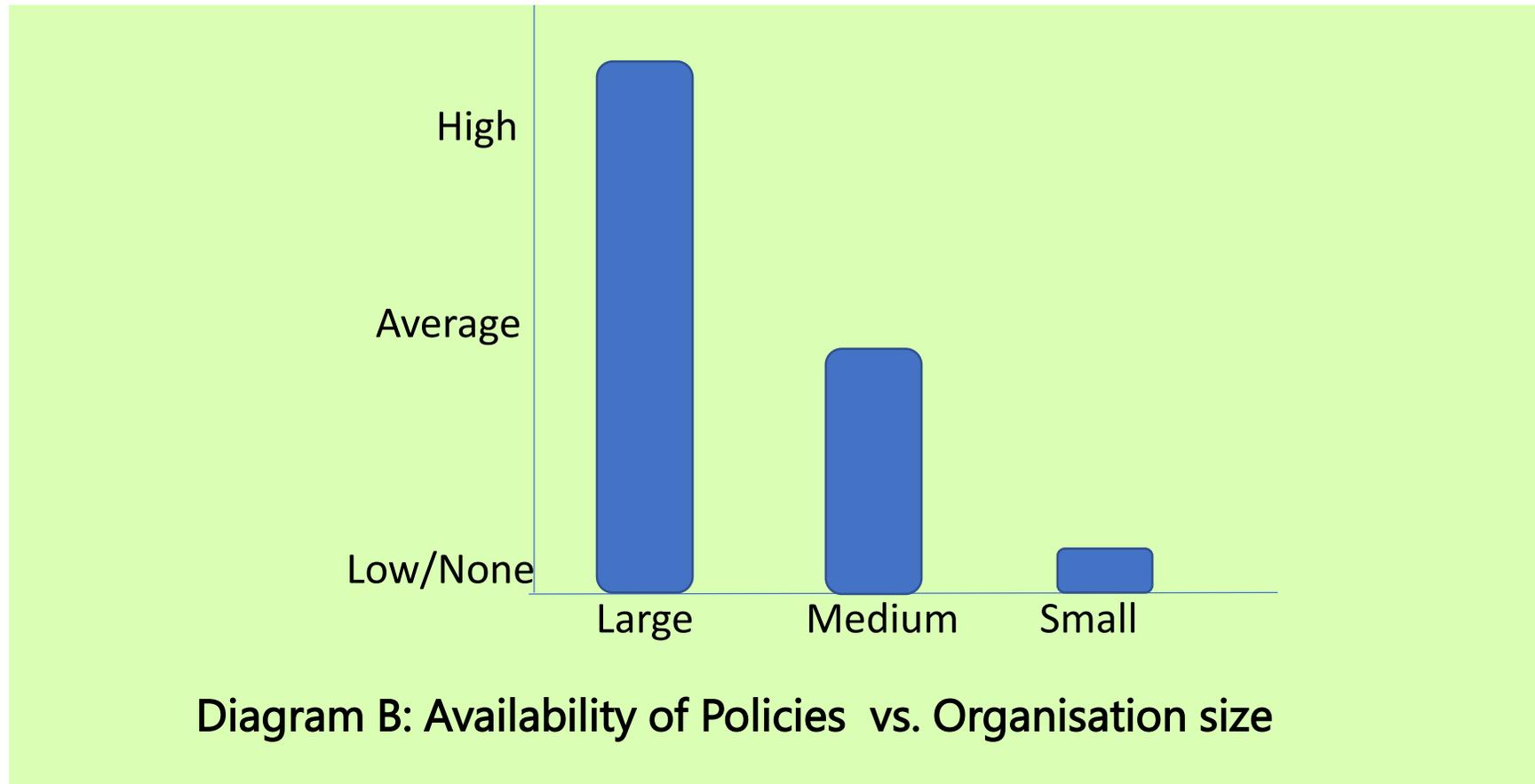
- Mostly, leading organisations (multi-nationals) in Nigeria foster a comprehensive safety culture throughout their operations from the top down and bottom up.

- Organisations of medium size may be similar to leading companies as they also foster comprehensive safety culture throughout their operations though they may do this with fewer policies/programs

- Small businesses usually have one or few or sometimes none. This is because they neither see the need for this as a requirement for regulatory compliance nor have a basic understanding of the concept.

- For instance, what concerns an Idumota or Alaba trader in Lagos with a workplace health and safety policy or even a fire safety policy though we have had incidents of shops affected by fire incidents

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- This should not only apply to large/medium sized organisations seeking certification or factories (The Factory Act, 2004 on Provision of Workplace health and Safety)

- The top factors encouraging these companies or any company to adopt safety practices remain

  a) parent company/client scrutiny

  b) workers' health and safety

  c) liability/legal concerns

  d) and insurance costs

- These are covered by direct or indirect costs.

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Direct Costs:

- The general consensus is that indirect costs associated with workplace incidents were higher than the direct costs.

- Direct, or insured costs for accidents are usually considered those costs covered by workers' compensation insurance, legal fees and other minor medical costs for the accident.

- The company pays insurance to cover these costs.

- The average direct costs depends on the nature of the injury or illness.

- Of course, the more accidents, the higher the insurance or liability.

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Indirect Costs:

•Indirect costs are all the "uninsured" additional costs associated with an accident.

•What is important to realize is that indirect costs are usually much greater than direct costs: From 2-10 times as expensive.

•Another important point is that, unlike direct costs, indirect costs are uninsured...they come right out of the corporate pocketbook.

•These are the costs that can drive an organisation into the red or have a major impact on its bottom line.

•The loss of its reputation by an organisation or morale amongst its staff causing irreparable damages may never be recovered or would take years to rebuild if not managed properly

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How do you measure the impact of policies on your organisation:

- Management/leadership commitment

- Recognition of fundamental company values on different areas e.g. health and safety, employment, compensation and incentives, etc.

- Accountability on projects

- Workers Involvement

- Supervision/Supervisory leadership

- Effectiveness of company's communications

- Owner involvement e.g. parent company, or if the managing director, chief executive or chairman is different from the owner

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Benefits of Policies:

- Reportable non-compliance cases

- Business benefits – ability to contract new work based on effective organisational policies and projects management

- Staffing benefits – with work increasing, workforce shortages are becoming a serious factor for many companies, making the ability to retain existing staff and attract new staff of growing importance. Though the opposite should be the case.

Simply, with new work, staff retention and attracting new staff improves.

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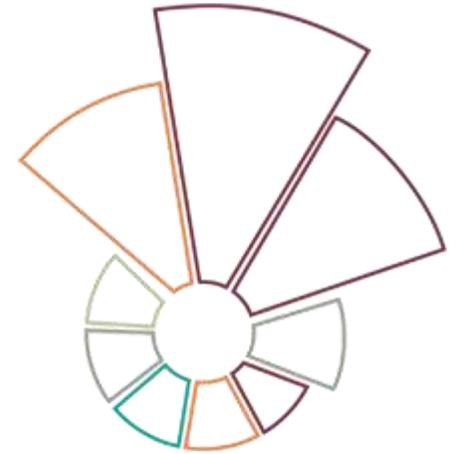and Internalize:
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Conclusion

- To prove the existence of a safety culture or obtain any recognition or compliance from a certifying agency, an organisation must first establish an OHS policy that reflects the financial outcomes of the company's commitment to health and safety.

- Even if certification is out of the question at least be familiar with the standards in order to perform risk assessments and develop a measurable OH & S management program

- Any potential hazards must be determined and identified, and their risks assessed and controlled on an ongoing basis

- Implementing best practices that will assist you achieve your objectives must be determined and identified and continually monitored for effectiveness
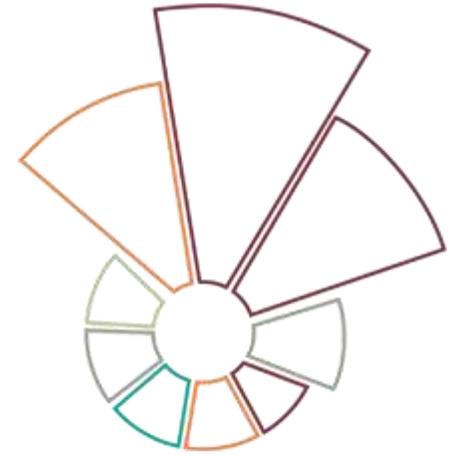
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