McClelland’s Theory of Motivation

David McClelland’s acquired needs theory recognizes that everyone prioritizes needs differently. He also believes that individuals are not born with these needs, but that they are actually learned through life experience. McClelland identifies three specific needs:

1. Need for Achievement is the drive to excel
2. Need for Power is the desire to cause others to behave in a way that they would not have behaved otherwise.
3. Need for Affiliation is the desire for friendly, close interpersonal relationships and conflict avoidance.

McClelland associates each need with a distinct set of work preferences and managers can help tailor the environment to meet these needs. These individuals are strongly motivated by job situations with personal responsibility, feedback, and an intermediate degree of risk. In addition, high achievers often exhibit the following behaviour:

a) Seeks personal responsibility for finding solutions to problems
b) feedback
c) Set goals and perform best,

An individual with a high need of power is likely to follow a path of continued promotion over time. Individuals with a high need of power often demonstrate the following behaviour:

1. Enjoys being in charge
2. Wants to influence others
3. Prefers to be placed into competitive and status oriented situations

People with the need for affiliation seek companionship, social approval and satisfying interpersonal relationships. People needing affiliation display the following behaviours:

1. Takes special interest in work that provides companionship and social approval
2. Strives for friendship
3. Prefer cooperative situation rather than competitive ones
4. Desires relationship involving a high degree of mutual understanding
5. These persons may not make the best managers because their desire for social approval and friendship may complicate managerial decision making.

Interestingly enough, a high need to achieve does not necessarily lead to being a good manager, especially in large organisations. People with high achievement needs are usually
interested in how well they do personally and not in influencing others to do well. On the other hand, the best managers are high in their needs for power and low in their needs for affiliation.

**Limitations of the Theory**

1. The use of projection techniques is objectionable
2. The evidence in support of this theory is fragmentary
3. Achievement motivation cannot be taught because it is acquisition of motivation which accrues in childhood and it is very difficult to change them once established,
4. Achievement motivation is slippery turn,
5. The theory does not fully address the question of process of motivation,
6. Achievement training through promising is time consuming and expensive, in spite of those limitations McClelland theory occupies important position in the motivational theory all.