

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

The paper attempts to bring to the centrality of human resources development in national transformation. It sees human resources development as a process which is highly synonymous with capital formation. It argues that resources development is the process of acquiring and increasing the number of persons who have education, skills and experience as well as the motivation which are critical for economic and social development. The paper also argues that in spite of that prodigious resource with which Nigeria is magnanimously endowed by nature, concern for human resources development is still utterly disheartening. It believes that a radical transformation of the structures and institutions of internal oppression built and sustained by the ruling class will in no little measure lead to a positive concern in this education thereby bringing Nigeria to be among the top developed countries in the world

Introduction

It is through the combined efforts of people that monetary and material resources are utilized for organizational objectives. Without human efforts, organizations cannot accomplish their objectives. Consequently, organizing human effort and stimulating and releasing individual motivation are central responsibilities of managers everywhere (Pigors and Meyers 1981:36)

The forth going assertion underscores the importance of the availability of human resources in the growth and progress of any organization or country. In this article, an attempt was made to accentuate the view that human resources constitute the heartbeat of any country and that the effective development of these resource remains an indispensable ingredient in engendering the transformation of the society. This is done against the backdrop of the Nigerian experience. Moreover, we also try to demonstrate that in spite of the overwhelming and glaring importance of human resource development, successive regimes in Nigerian (military and civilian) clearly neglected this cornerstone or societal development and progress.

The aim therefore is to bring to force dangers posed by the neglect of human resources development with the hope that this exercise would contribute toward finding a panacea to those act of official abdication of responsibility after all as Anikpo (1986:28) has reminded us, the urge to carry out any type of research arises from an awareness of a particular problem an answer to which will improve man's living condition.

Human resources and human resources development: the problem of conceptualization

In order to facilitate a meaningful discourse, it is proper to situate the key terms used in this essay in their proper conceptual perspectives by way of decomposing the problem (Bassey, 1997:137). The human resource of a country shall be taken to refer to the people or masses of that country. It has been argued whether the total population of a country can be viewed based on human resources or the labour forces. Since all persons need to be and are actually never employed at any one time, even the day old baby is expected at some time in the future to work and contribute to production as well as to partake in consumption of the goods and services which is derived from such production. In this all inclusive sense and in economic parlance, the total population may be analytical referee to as human resources (Yesufu, 2003:3). In fact, the term human resources as the total population also constitute the totality of consumers for whom the economic bell tolls and whose welfare (however defined) is the object of the pursuit of economic development (Yesufu, 2003:3-4).

Focusing his attention on the organizational setup, Ndiomu in Ezeani (2003:2) summarized that the human resources of an organization comprise of men and women, young and old who engage in the production of goods and services and who are the greatest assets of the organization. Quoting Gant (1979), Ezeani (2002:2) pointed that the people are the human resources and they constitute the source of supply for technical and professional skilled men who are germane for effective and efficient planning and implementation of development policies programmes, projects and daily activities.

On his part, Eze (1995:2) with the help of an illustration pointed that an organization consists of human beings who work together to achieve specific goals constitute the human resources of the organization. According to him, human resources include the foundation owners or the entrepreneurs or the leader of the enterprise, the directors, the managers and supervisors and the rank and file workers employed by the management.

Human resources development is used to underscore a concerted effort to improve the talents, skills, endowments and capabilities of the people and how these are used to actualize the development aspirations of the society.

Having defined human resources as the managerial, scientific, engineering, technical, craft and other skills which are developed and employed in creating, designing and developing organizations and in managing and operating productive and service enterprise and economic institutions, Udo-Aka (1992:70-71) stated that human resources development is inclusive of education and training which emphasized an unfolding process and carries an implication of growth and maturation through the lowest formal educational level to tertiary level and development of leadership skills and knowledge in commerce, industry and public service.

On his part, Armstrong (1977:13) regarded manpower development as a field that is concerned with obtaining, organizing and motivating the human resources required by the enterprise with a view of developing an organizational climate and management which will promote effective effort, cooperation and trust between all the people working in it. This will help the enterprise to meet its legal obligation and its social responsibilities towards its employees with regards to the conditions of work and quality of life provided for them.

Drawing attention to the centrality of human resources development in societal transformation, Yusuf (2000:320) opined that the capacity to collate and analyze past experiences and to effect relevant innovation progressively requires a conscious effort to develop the necessary human capacity both intellectual and physical to ensure requisite results and success on a continuing basis. According to him, it is the combination of the multi-dimensional efforts and activities that sustain and improve man's effort on current levels of economic performance and social welfare that is termed human resources envisage that the child once it is able to express itself and comprehend communication, needs to be helped or enabled to understand its socio and economic environment at varying stages. It also requires that those actually in search of productive employment are made to be aware of the possibilities, the requirements for effective performance on the rank and file workers employed by the management.

In his own definitional analyses Paten (1979:713) made attempts to identify the relationship between human resources development and a country's growth and development when he opined that:

“ manpower planning when followed up by the systematic development of human resources brings us closer to the achievement of democracy and the solution of some of our societal problems. To this extent, we shall have enhanced the intelligent management of our most precious resources.”

From the foregoing, it could be easily discerned that irrespective of how it is conceptualized, the fact remains that human resources development underscores the enablement of man to give out his best for the benefit of the entire society.

Human resources development in Nigeria: historical review

The idea of managing or developing human resources originated with the emergence of the concept of the family. It is believed that the members of the first family on earth had a way of managing their affairs as well as improving their individual potentials.

In predominantly underdeveloped socio-formations like Nigeria, the head of the family in this case the father was at the head of the “economic affairs” of the family. It was he who planned what the family should do. His children and wife (wives) are just helpers. As Ubeku (1975:1-2) has demonstrated the question of paying the children and the wives for their labour in the farms did not arise. The head of the family ensured that they were all fed and clothed. They did not have any need for money of their own. In any event, it was unthinkable that a father should pay his son wages for helping him in the farm or that a husband should pay his wife for assisting him. It is important to point out that the overall performance of the family was contingent upon the ability of the head (the father) to adequately cater for the needs of the members as well as the readiness to teach the children all the chores of the family.

During the epoch of colonial domination, the human resources of Nigerian were hugely underdeveloped. Yesufu (2003:233) said that personal primary education, then secondary and to tertiary level. Though this process the individual acquires the knowledge and intellectual capacity to adapt to or understand more complex situations. It must not be forgotten that the fundamental objective of colonial rule was to dominate and exploit both human and material resources of the colony and thus the colonial were quick to realize that any serious attempt to ensure the effective development of the human resources of this country would unlock the gate to an early demise of the colonial enterprise

Certainly the colonists needed some auxiliary staff to grease the wheels of their colonial apparatus in Nigeria. To this end, few Nigerians were given ephemeral training to enable them function as interpreters, court clerks, messengers, mail distributors and to carry out such activities that were considered *infra dig* by the white man but the type of training that would have enhanced the overall development of the individual to enable him fertilize social transformation was completely ignored if not outrightly outlawed. This is not surprising because colonialism was a system of destruction without replacement.

Thus, one of the legacies bequeathed to the Nigeria ruling class by the departing British colonists in 1960 was an immensely impoverished people. On the eve of their exit, a Nigerian commission was appointed with the specific tasks of speeding up the training of indigenous manpower to the service. With the publication of the final report of the Parliamentary committee on the Nigerianization of the public service in 1980, the standing committee on governments central authorities responsible for training matters and these two bodies were *inter alia* to provide general supervision, control and various training systems as they may be possible (Bur, 1992:52). This was clearly an indication that the *petit bourgeoisie* had identified the need to develop indigenous personnel in all sectors of the economy to implement the various programmes of the government.

In line with the above disposition, the government sought the assistance of the Institute of Administration of the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University). A survey was conducted on the training needs of the federal civil service and this exercise carried out by C.P Wollw revealed among other things that there was an urgent need for a systematic and regular programme for the development of civil servants of all cadres. The government's white paper on the Wollw report could be regarded as the first formal definitive guidelines on manpower or human resources development in the federal civil service of Nigeria (Bur, 1992:52).

Human resources development and national transformation: any correlation?

The gargantuan importance of man in ensuring the very survival of the society had long been acknowledged by providence. The Almighty God in his omniscience created the first human being on earth-Adam and Eve to superintend the non-human resources of the Garden of Eden. The Almighty might have reasoned that if there was no man to help galvanize the other resources of the garden, the overall well being of that environment would be encumbered.

The development of any society can be brought about with the availability of adequate and requisite human and material resources. Irrespective of the enormity of the available material resources, development cannot be elicited if there is no man to effectively harness these non-human ingredients. Therefore, it could be said that man (who is the human resource of the country) is to the development of the society what the engine is to the automobile.

It is important to note that there is welfare between capital and labour over issues of production gains and benefits. There is no doubt that capital in all its various forms and with all the risks that surround it, is very important to modern commerce and public institutions. It produces the machines, the factory, warehouse and all other inanimate factors without which production cannot commence. It also tackles the very essential question of providing critical utilities such as electricity, water, communication systems and transport. Ofoegbu (1985:57) found that a firm for instance can mobilize all these capital input and still be out of production. According to him, the decision to start capital mobilization is personnel management decision. The assemblage of the inanimate factors of production into a single, coherent and operational production system is a human act, conceived by human effort. The critical process of determining

goals, making investment choices, directing work effort on a day-to-day basis, maintaining and servicing equipment and so on are exclusively done by man. In Ofoegbu's word (ibid),

“We perceive personnel as of critical importance in all public and private organizations. Its indispensability is evident at all times in the history of any organization. Its careful selection and effective management relate positively to the efficiency and success of the organization.”

The ideas of developing the country have to be rooted and articulated by man. In fact, the entire process of societal advancement and progress has to be directed and managed by people. There is no gain saying the fact that human resources are invaluable to the success and progress of any organization or country. Okorafor and Soludo (1991:131) have rightly observed that economists from the classical times to the contemporary period had long recognized the centrality of the stock and rate of accumulation of human capital in the process of development. The symmetry between these two processes has been established in the following manner.

Manpower is a basic resource. It is the indispensable means of converting other resources to mankind's use and belief. How well we develop and employ human skills is fundamental in deciding how much we will accomplish as a nation. The manner in which we do so will moreover profoundly determine the kind of nation we become (Okorafor and Soludo, 1991:131).

There is a strong correlation between the development of human resources and the overall transformation of the society. Ojo (1992:2) has eloquently shown that human resources development is a crucial ingredient in the process of actualizing the developmental aspirations. There is no doubt that any society where the bulk of the human resources are not developed, that society will remain underdeveloped. Nigeria lamentably is a quintessence of such society. The bulk of Nigeria's population of more than one hundred million is made up of people who are completely enveloped in illiteracy. This is simply because the crucial process of conscious development of human resources has been criminally neglected by successive regimes in this country. The role of human resources development in lubricating the machinery of national transformation cannot be overemphasised. It is a truism to state that the industrialized and developed countries of the world enjoy a high level of literacy rate. This implies that most of the people of these countries have been adequately armed with the skills and knowledge necessary for turning around the developmental fortunes of the society. Indeed, human resources not capital not income nor material resources constitute the resources that are passive factors of production. Human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organization as well as carry forward national development. Harbbison in (Ndiomu, 1992: 34) concluded that a country that is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people effectively in the national economy will continue to remain underdeveloped.

Developing human resources for national transformation critique of the Nigerian situation

A case has already been made to prop up the view that a country can only move forward in terms of growth and development if the masses of the country are disentangled from the yoke of un-enlightenment. National development could be checkmated or catalyzed depending on whether the people of the country are victims of or free from the tyranny of ignorance according to Nwankwo (1989:171) words.

Likert in Ezeani (2002:1) had long amplified the position that human resources and their development constitute the fulcrum around which the growth and development of any enterprise are initiated and determined. Plants, offices, computers, automated equipments are unproductive except these are managed by man.

The issue of manpower development has always been raised in Nigeria's national development plans and other elitist policies and programmes of the various government in the country but because of the enormous contradictions which are inherent in these policies and the lack of political will on the part of the ruling class, the implementation of these policies has always been flawed. There has always been a yawning gap between objectives spelt out in the various programmes and the result or outcomes realized at the end of execution.

One way of human resources development is through training either formal or informal. This means that the educational sector of the economy must be highly prioritized if the country's aspiration of improving the quality of the manpower is to be realized.

In view of this, many educational institutions- Primary schools, Post Primary schools, Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, college of Agriculture, research institutes and others have been established. However, these have proved to be grossly inadequate especially against the backdrop of the ever-swelling pool of people who need and desire to have the liberating experience of training and personal development. Fundamentally, the crux of the matter is to the pronouncements and policy statements of successive governments in Nigeria, the educational sub sector has never been given preference in scheme of things rather we have witnessed a disproportionate allocation of huge public resources to the defence sector of the economy and these resources so allocated are often expended on the importation of irrelevant and obsolete military artefact. It is an open secret that in the course of procuring these useless and moribund instrument of warfare, a few privileged people have amassed huge wealth to the detriment of the Nigerian people.

While Smith in Yesufu, (2002:34) may be right to posit that "education does not lend itself to definition and certainly not to one that can endure as unalterably true". There can be no controversy about the fact that education remains the fulcrum on which any nation's economic, social, political, industrial and aesthetic development hinges. Education also serves as a vehicle for transmitting social values such as equal opportunity, national unity, patriotism, peaceful co-existence, love for one another regardless of ethnic differences, respect for the rights of other people, freedom of speech and association, freedom to think, choose the right course and act within the confines of the law (Denga, 2000:297).

According to Mandella (1994: 194)

“Education is the great engine of personnel development. It is through education that the daughter of peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine that a child of a farm worker can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have not what we are given that separates one person from another.”

The various governments in Nigeria since 1960 had always pledge among other things to protect the fundamental human rights of Nigerians but in reality, these pledges are never strictly kept. The Nigerian leaders see themselves as semi gods who have the right to live big, talk big and die great, the right to resort to venal practices which make such a life style possible and the right to politicize ethnicity for private ends. Related to this are the rights car, dog, inconvenience and hardship allowance and the right to daughter, nephew and concubine allowance. Members of the governing class are free to buy political offices, to dispose a national resources for private ends and also free to stampede the nation into crisis such as civil war and military coups whenever their private interest are threatened (Nwankwo, 1987:48).

On the other hand, the right of the downtrodden majority of Nigerians have always included the right to die whenever their ethnic leaders disagree, the right to play extortionate levies and taxes imposed by corrupt officials, the right to poverty, ignorance and disease, the right to undernourishment and malnutrition, the periodic right to salt and stockfish as material incentives for electoral support and the right to suffer consequences of dubious and antisocial policies and programmes of government. The development of human resources is not the only issue that has suffered under the various forms of despotism and misadministration that Nigeria has consistently experienced since 1960. The entire fabrics of the nation's life have been trampled.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made in the forgoing analysis to highlight the certainty of human resources development in propelling national transformation. We have tried to show that human resources development or human capital formation is the process of acquiring and increasing the number of persons who have education, skills and experience and the motivation which are critical for economic and social development of the country. This involves investments in man and his development as creative and productive resources. These investments have both qualitative and quantitative dimensions in the sense that human capital formation includes not only expenditure for education and training but also the development of the right attitudes towards productive activity.

We do agree with the view that human resources development is a continuum, a continuing process from childhood to old age and a must for any society or enterprise that wishes to survive under the complex challenges of a dynamic world. For individual, it should be a life-long process because of the continuously changing environment to which one must

also continuously adapt. For the nation to survive in the modern world, it must devote a high proportion of its resources to developing its human resources in terms of numbers, quality and mix.

This study also revealed that Nigerian situation as far as human resources development is concerned is utterly disheartening. In spite of the prodigious resources with which Nigeria has been magnanimously endowed by nature, the country boasts of a sprawling population of illiterate and poverty stricken people. The huge financial resources that have accrued to us from the sales of our non-human resources from the 'oil boom' era to this day disappeared due to the persistence of official plutocracy and profligacy. Rather than use the resources of this country for the development of the people and the society, members of the extremely self-centred and parasitic ruling class have decided to squander and mismanage nature's blessing on our country. This is the calamity that has befallen Nigeria and its people.

Our position is there must be a radical transformation of the structures and institutions of internal oppression built and sustained by the ruling class. All the civilian and military, politicians and bureaucrats who have committed innumerable atrocities against the masses of this country should be made to pay for their misdeeds. Politics should be seen as an opportunity to render services to the people and the resource of this country must be used to develop the people and the society. A situation where a microscopic segment of the people remain impoverished and miserable is not only criminal and immoral but totally unacceptable.

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