

Manpower Development in Nigeria: Conceptual and Methodological Perspectives

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ABSTRACT This paper unfolds manpower development from the conceptual and methodological perspectives. On the conceptual perspective, the paper analyses the effort of the Nigerian State at developing manpower vis-à-vis the efforts of organizations at manpower development and eventually situating the concept manpower development as encompassing both State and organizational efforts. On methodological perspective, organizational techniques for manpower development were discussed; the relevance and problems against manpower development in Nigeria were unfolded with the researcher stating the options of enhanced government regulatory capability and persuasive device as means of improving manpower development in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The development of indigenous manpower to serve as the propelling force for national growth and development is no doubt a key to Nigeria's socio-economic and political development (Ake 1989). This is quite indispensable considering the argument of the concept of transfer of technology as a propelling force for the development of the developing countries of which Nigeria is one (Ake 1989).

However, it is important to state that the lack of adequate emphasis on manpower development as a tool for development in Nigeria on the part of government as well as the organized private sector could not be far-fetched from the lack of understanding of both the concept and methods for manpower development in a post-colonial Nigerian State in which the process of human resource development for national growth was distorted by colonialism with the attendant negative orientation that was injected into political leadership (Ekpo 1989). Thus, manpower development became an elitist design that was geared to favour capitalist mode of production in which labour was relegated to the background among the factors of production.

From the above background, one could therefore argue that there were distortions in both the concept and method of manpower development in the Nigerian State as it was oriented towards serving capitalist interest. This no doubt account for the discrepancies in the educational system, a mechanism designed for manpower development meant to serve national interest.

Conversely, the focus of this paper is not geared towards unfolding the distortions of colonialism on manpower development in Nigeria; rather, it is geared at understanding the operational concepts by looking at the divergence and compatibility between the concept of manpower development and development of manpower, the common methodological perspectives for manpower development in organizations with implication on the aggregate economy as well as unfolding the relevance and problems of manpower development in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this paper is geared towards having a proper understanding of the concept manpower development and also relate it to the concept development of manpower. Although both concepts could be used interchangeably, it is important to accentuate that the concept manpower development could be defined as "the existence of unskilled and/or skilled humans that need training or re-training to perform specific task in society" (Ekpo 1989). Thus, manpower development could be seen as organizational specific. This is because it is largely a function of organizational manpower need or job specification. That is, it could be viewed as the adaptation of the human resources available in the country to the needs, objectives and orientation of a given organization.

Conversely, the concept development of manpower could be viewed as a concept which is generic because of its focus on turning out human

resource that is needed for the development of the State (Drucker 1999). As a result, development of manpower views man as the most important asset in the society (Chalofsky and Reinhart 1988; Ekpo 1989; Drucker 1999; Muchinsky 2000). A typical example of the manifestation of this concept could be viewed from the perspective of the Nigerian educational system which is anchored on the 6-3-3-4 system which sought to address the manpower need of the country through mechanisms geared towards developing manpower that would boost the nation's socio-economic and technological advancement (FGN 1998).

However, as earlier stated, both concepts could be used interchangeably in that they are both encompassing of each other. For instance, using the example of the 6-3-3-4 educational policy in Nigeria which was classified as most compatible to the concept development of manpower in the sense that the mechanism involve turning out human resources that would serve as inputs to industries. It is also important to emphasize that unbundling the system into parts, indicate that the parts 6, 3, 3, and 4 could be viewed as manpower development because it involve the process of training manpower for meeting specific sectoral needs.

From the above background, the researcher's conception of manpower development encompasses both organizational specific through training and re-training of staff to meet up with organizational requirements, as well as the turning-out of human resource that is needed for the economic development of the State.

TOOLS FOR MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS

The tools and methods for manpower development in organizations differs, and it is largely determined by the objectives of organizations, the idiosyncrasy of management staff or the chief executive, the organizational policy, as well as the organizational environment to mention a few. Thus, it is a common feature to see methods for manpower development varying from one organization to the other, just as a given organization can be tailored at adopting different methods at different times or a combination of techniques at the same time.

However, some methods for manpower development are stated below:

1. Orientation: This method of manpower development could be said to be an integral part of the recruitment exercise in that once an employee has been found appointable, it is expected that such an employee need to be positively oriented in line with the vision and aspiration of the organization for effective discharge of function. And since employee function in an organization is basically affected by his perception of the organization vis-à-vis the rules and principles that exist in the organization. It therefore follow that an employee undergoes formal and informal orientation in a place of work.

While the formal orientation focuses on job specification and occupational demands placed on the employee, the informal orientation involve the social interaction that take place in the place of work which could either boost productivity or be detrimental to it (Koontz et al. 1980). Orientation therefore, as a method of manpower development is quite indispensable because it helps in boosting the productivity of workers which is needed for competing in the global market of the 21st century.

2. On the Job Method of Manpower Development:

This method is basically different from the orientation method in that while orientation is at the point of entry into the organization or a new assignment; on the job method is a process through which knowledge and experience are acquired over a period of time either formally or informally. This process involve the following:

- (a) *Coaching:* This is a method of on the job training and development in which a young employee is attached to a senior employee with the purpose of acquiring knowledge and experience needed for the performance of tasks. (Yalokwu 2000).
- (b) *Job Rotation:* This method either involve the movement of an employee from one official assignment or department to the other, in order for the employee to be acquainted with the different aspects of the work process or through job enlargement – That is given additional responsibility to an employee who has been uplifted as a result of the acquisition of additional skill or knowledge (Yalokwu 2000; Lawal 2006).
- (c) *In House Training:* This involve a formal method of on the job training in which skills and knowledge are acquired by employees through internally organized seminars and

workshops geared toward updating the workers with new techniques or skills associated with the performance of their jobs. (Lawal 2006).

- (d) *In Service Training*: This method involve training outside the organization or workplace in higher institution of learning or vocational centres under the sponsorship of the organization or on terms that may be agreed upon between the organization and the worker (Lawal 2006).

3. Committee/Work Group Method: This method entails manpower development through the involvement of employees in meetings, committees and work group discussion geared towards injecting inputs in form of decision making as regard solving organizational problem. This method is quite indispensable, especially in the aspect of training employees for managerial functions or heading organizational units.

4. Vestibule Training Method: This is a method of manpower development through the acquisition of skills in a related working environment (Nongo 2005). Under this method the trainee practices his skill with identical equipment that he uses or he is expected to use in his actual place of work. This method is most suitable for sensitive operations where maximal perfection is expected. The purpose is therefore to enable perfection at work place.

5. Apprenticeship Method: This method of manpower development involve the acquisition of skill through extensive practice for over a period of time by the trainee. This type of manpower development device could either be formal or informal. In the informal environments the trainee is attached to the trainer, and he/she is expected to pay for an agreed period of apprenticeship (Nongo 2005). In the formal environment on the other hand, an employee of an organization could be placed under apprenticeship in the organization with pay.

THE RELEVANCE OF MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

1. Economic Development: The relevance of manpower development in Nigeria could be situated vis-à-vis economic development. This is because manpower development captures the actual meaning of development in that it is people centred (World Bank 1991; Grawboski and Shields 1996). In addition, it involves the building of

capacity and harnessing the State's human resource which constitute a sine-qua-non for development.

The above advantage was vividly conceptualized by Harbison (1973) when he stated that:

Human resources constitute the ultimate basis for wealth of nations, capital and natural resources are passive factors of production; human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations, and carry forward national development. Clearly a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else.

2. Political Stability: There is no doubt that a country which fails to adequately develop her manpower would be doing so at the expense of her socio-economic and political stability. In the aspect of political stability, Omodia (2004) stressed the dysfunctional use of the nation's human resource among the youths in propelling political instability when he stated that:

...there has been situations in which the Nigerian youth especially, those of poor family background were used as tools for disrupting the political democratic system through rigging, thuggery and ethnic conflicts. These factors of rigging, thuggery in addition to economic mismanagement, personal ambition or selfishness among others, were the factors that terminated the First and Second Republic.

Thus, manpower development could help the youths in the development of self and in improving the quality of their political participation.

3. Poverty Alleviation: It has been argued that effective poverty alleviation scheme must involve the development and utilization of local resource including human for solving local problems (Robb 2000; Omodia 2005). Thus, manpower development is central to solving the present problem of poverty in Nigeria.

PROBLEM OF MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

1. Colonial Experience: There have been several arguments regarding the distortions in manpower development of national growth in Nigeria as a result of colonialism which was fashioned towards economic exploitation (Ekpo 1989; Ake 2001; Dauda 2003). It could be recalled

that the advent of colonialism led to the integration of the Nigerian economy into the World Capitalist System thereby placing minimum premium on labour when compared to other factors of production. This poor performance of indigenous labour by the colonial government no doubt has persisted in the post-colonial Nigerian State. As a result, this problem account for the lack of adequate attention given to labour as a critical part of the production process in Nigeria.

2. Poor Political Leadership: Closely related to the problem of colonial experience as a problem of manpower development in Nigeria is poor political leadership which is further deepening the problem of manpower development in Nigeria. This factor has manifested itself in poor funding of education over the years (Baikie 2002), disparity or class in manpower development between children of the rich and the poor (Omodia 2006).

3. Poor Manpower Planning: This problem is associated with the poor data base that is needed for manpower planning in Nigeria both in the rural and urban centres. This problem no doubt constitute a major hindrance on effective manpower development in Nigeria (Baikie 2002; Oku 2003).

OPTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

The options for effective manpower development in Nigeria could be viewed from two basic perspectives:

1. The option of an enhanced regulatory capability on the part of government for effective enforcement of manpower policies. This is quite indispensable based on the need to ensure quality manpower development irrespective of sex, class, ethnic affiliation to mention a few. This point could best be appreciated considering the liberal nature of most government policies which tend to snowball into elitist benefit in terms of policy outcome.

2. The need for government to be persuasive in making organizations embraces well designed policies at improving the development of manpower in Nigeria. This could be done both internally and externally. Internally, organizations should be made to see reasons why a careful manpower development plan should form part of their plans and objectives for the financial year. As a matter of fact, the success of organizations should not only be measured in terms of the magnitude of profit through the adoption of

outdated personnel administration technique, but, basically on the contribution of the organization in enlarging the confidence of its workers through manpower development.

The external factor involves the contribution of organizations to the development of manpower through financial support meant to boost adult education, vocational education, and specialized research institutes to mention a few.

CONCLUSION

This paper have been able to situate or relate what could be referred to as manpower underdevelopment to socio-economic and political problems in Nigeria by looking at such factors as poverty, political instability and economic underdevelopment. From this background, it is therefore important to conclude that manpower development as a concept and method should be able to take its rightful place as a tool for development in Nigeria through the recognition of the fact that it is the most active and indispensable in the process of production even in the global age of the 21st century.

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