

Human Resource Development and Preservation: Implications For National Economic Growth

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Abstract

This paper asserts that the development of the human capital is the basis of consistent national development because it is human resource development that removes obsolescence and redundancy in human and national progress. This paper also avers that the pursuit of human capital development without effective measures of human capital preservation is analogous to building a national monument on quacks as no country can develop what it has not nurtured and preserved. The paper among other issues x-rays Nigeria's economic situation which is characterized by structural bottlenecks, import dependence and pervasive corruption and highlights the role of micro and macro human resource development, and human capital preservation as some of the difficulties in revitalizing some sectors of Nigeria's economy may be due to frequent loss of trained, developed, experienced and valuable manpower hence human capital preservation.

Key Words: HRM, Economic, Growth, Effective Measure.

Introduction

It is generally agreed that the human resource is the most important single resource of any country. Development of the human resource is the basis of consistent national development and it is human resource development and preservation that remove obsolescence and redundancy in human progress. As indicated in the UN world development report (1990), human resource development in Nigeria had been

influenced more by world environmental development than by internal macro factors. Obisi (2013) laments the fact that most developing countries, particularly Nigeria, tend to be more concerned about wealth in monetary terms at the expense of human and social development. Little wonder, therefore, that the UN development report in year 2000 ranked Nigeria among the poorest countries of the world with particular reference to human development index.

Akingbola (2000) argues that a nation's economy is an aggregate expression of all the activities of its citizenry devoted to the production of goods and services in one form or the other. By extension, this refers to activities and processes geared towards the promotion of wealth both for the benefit of the individual and the society at large.

Itsede (2001) asserts that for some years now the Nigerian economy has had a lackluster performance. Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which stood at 2.4 and 2.7 per cent in 1998 and 1999 respectively, had risen only marginally to 2.8 per cent in 2000. From an average exchange rate of N83.8 to US \$1.00 in 1998 the local currency had exchanged at an average of 4102.02 in 2000, indicating a depreciation of 21.74 percent between 1998 and 2000.

Furthermore, for the third consecutive year, industrial value added trended downwards, declining by 0.8 per cent in 2000 even as the Nigerian economy grappled with, among others, the lingering structural bottleneck evidenced by the continued pre-eminence of the oil sector, derelict infrastructure and inefficient public utilities, low capacity utilization, high unemployment and pandemic poverty, import dependence, debt overhang and pervasive corruption.

The picture painted above by Itsede is indeed disturbing. Nigeria therefore needs to begin immediately to design and implement a compact profile of human resource development and preservation strategies to tackle economic degeneration head-on if she wants to come out of the economic doldrums in which she has found herself. It should be appreciated that people are the real wealth of a nation and that the basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives.

Accordingly, human resource development strategies should stress the importance of quality of life, the social value system, human behavioral patterns and the regular appraisal of human development and not attach much importance to abstract and sophisticated numerical formulae (Okoye, & Raymond, 2013). The issues in human resource development and preservation which are examined pragmatically are education, skill development, skill-improvement, training for self-employment, local resource generation, development of leadership in decision-making situations, ability to draw inferences against uncertainties, ability- to form judgments about failure prospects, and other aspects of human personality development (Obisi, & Anyim, 2012).

Types of Human Resource Development

Human resource development is divided into two parts, namely, micro and macro:

Micro Human Resource Development:

These are the deliberate activities by the employing organization targeted at the people who work in such an organization to make them win competitive advantage. Micro human resource development would also include the efforts of the individuals in contributing to their own career development and growth in the context of organization, human resource development and preservation is the result of acquisition of technical, managerial, behavioural, and conceptual capabilities at the cognitive, affective and active levels.

The basic assumption in respect of an individual's personality development in the organisational context is

that the individual is genuinely interested in developing his capabilities and that when an awareness is created in him about his strength and weakness, about the direction in which he could develop, the individual would develop his capabilities faster and in a better way. He would also be enabled to identify opportunities within and outside the organization for his development and upliftment with the help of his trainers and supervisors with whom he interacts, and to evaluate the results of his learning by taking a feedback. This would also involve making efforts to unlearn some attitudes and orientations acquired previously. Thus, the specific human resource development in the context of industrial organization would imply:

- (a) Acquisition of knowledge (conceptual);
- (b) Development of capabilities; and
- (c) Development of skills, attitudes and orientation.

Educational institutions may take upon themselves the task of imparting knowledge at the cognitive level. They should aim at storing information about details, components, inputs and concepts, while development of skills and attitudes in the context of managerial behavioral capabilities is the task of the employing organization. Therefore, in framing the plan for human resource development, the employing organization should aim at development of the following capabilities at the cognitive, affective and active levels:

- (a) Systems development capability;
- (b) Organizational and allocation of responsibility;
- (c) Decision making;
- (d) Forecasting and prediction;
- (e) Ability to receive, use feedback and control;
- (f) Ability to appreciate and develop sensitivity to needs, values, beliefs, orientations, strengths and weaknesses;
- (g) Ability to judge personal reactions, responses, resistance and receptiveness in others and evaluate and appraise his and others behavior in terms of their impact; and
- (h) Develop openness, enterprise (Risk taking) and perceptiveness.

Byars and Rue (1979) argue that the primary activities involved in employee resource development are orientation, training in job skills and cultivation of managerial skills. Other activities related to employee development are evaluating performance, counseling and communicating organisational policies and procedures.

Adewunmi (1982) laments the low funding of training and development by most Nigerian organizations and charged them with merely paying lip service to the issue of human development. Armstrong (2014) explains that one of the objectives of employee development is to see improved performance and growth. The objective is achieved by ensuring as far as possible that every employee in the organization has the knowledge and skills, and reaches the level of competence required to carry out their work effectively; that the performance of individuals and teams is subject to continuous improvement; and that people are developed in a way which maximizes their potential for growth and promotion.

Byars and Rue (1979) suggest the following criteria as general, guidelines to help in defining employee development objectives:

- (a) Employer must develop realistic objectives for employee development;
- (b) Employer should encourage employees to devise their own personal objectives for training;
- (c) Employee development objectives and organisational objectives must be compatible;
- (d) The objectives should be stated clearly in writing; and
- (e) Results' should be measurable and verifiable.

It is only when such objectives have been identified that appropriate development programmes can be embarked upon. Employee development is a continuous process and evaluation should be continuous to know whether the development programmes are worthwhile or whether modification and direction are required. If the result matches the objectives set out then employee development can be said to be worthwhile.

Macro Human Resource Development

These are the deliberate activities by the State or Government at the national, state or local government levels through various agencies directed towards human resource development, utilization and preservation.

In 1953, a World Bank economic mission visited Nigeria and prepared a report which submitted that Nigeria's economic growth had been left largely to the efforts of the expatriate entrepreneurs. Following that telling report, the, British colonial government set up the Ashby Commission to look into the various deficiencies in human resource development in Nigeria. The Commission submitted its report in 1960 which observed that human resource development in Nigeria was marred by the following:

- (a) Inability to adequately analyse human resource contents of development projects submitted to the central planning office;
- (b) Inability to undertake studies regarding employment status by states, education distribution by sex, age etc.
- (c) Absence of overall information on skills and talents obtainable in Nigeria;
- (d) Inadequate research on human resource planning;
- (e) Low performance from the agencies involved in human resource planning;
- (f) Non-maintenance and retention of professional manpower skills; and
- (g) Defective system of education both at primary, secondary and university levels.

It was as a result of the above findings that the National Manpower Board, the National Universities Commission and such other agencies were set up to tackle the issue of human resource deficit. However, not much has been achieved to date. In fact, the situation was such that when members of the Governing Council of the Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria visited President Olusegun Obasanjo in Abuja, in 2001, he disclosed to them that the National Manpower Board had become moribund! The President's frank disclosure clearly mirrors; the sorry state of affairs in Nigeria generally. For, when human resource development at the macro level is faulty, nothing much would be achieved at the micro (organizational) level.

That must be why, in recent years, there has been a growing interest in discovering the nigerianness of Nigerian management but which interest according to Obisi (2013), has been vitiated by foreign influences. This trend, Obisi argues, should be reversed since organizational values essentially stem from individual values rather than the other way round.

Again, in a comparative study of the U.S., Indian, Nigerian and Japanese cultures, Obisi (2013) found that whereas the American and Japanese were of the belief that:

- (a) Individuals can influence the world around them and help to determine the future of their countries;
- (b) An individual can make a difference in the achievement of organizational goals;
- (c) High educational levels, groupism and homogeneity are necessary for healthy and result oriented decisions; and
- (d) Differences of opinion cannot make persons disagreeable and unwanted, Nigerian culture and civilization tend towards determinism - which assumes that all things in life are tied to destiny.

As can be seen, the foregoing depicts a rather negative, disturbing and depressing view about Nigerians and their culture, that is, the Nigerian ethos. The unquestioning mind of the average Nigerian militates against the economic, social and political advancement of the nation. For, the mental conditioning of young Nigerian management students is such that they are willing to accept unconditionally and even imitate the cultures of the affluent or technologically advanced societies, good or bad, right or wrong. Their intellectual inertia compels them to believe that paradise lost can be regained only by adopting the culture of the technologically advanced nations. Nigeria, therefore, needs to tackle the problem of intellectual inertia and negative mental conditioning if it hopes to develop meaningfully.

Human Resource Preservation

There is a marked difference between human resource development and human resource preservation. Badiru (2001) argues that skilled human resource is the cornerstone of national development. However, the pursuit of manpower development without measures of manpower preservation is analogous to building a national monument on quicksand. No country can develop what it has not nurtured and preserved.

Human resource wastage abounds in Nigeria so much that Kolade (1999) could not but lament the contradiction in terms whenever Nigerian business organizations proudly declare that their human resource is their most valuable asset. For, when the organisations are having problems, the first thing they do is to descend on their same most valuable asset in the name of restructuring, repositioning, downsizing, right-sizing or re-engineering.

Badiru (2000) suspects that some of the difficulties in revitalizing some sectors of our economy may be due to frequent loss of trained, developed, experienced and valuable manpower.

Obisi (2013) suggests that Nigerians should look at themselves both at the micro and macro levels and address the following fundamental issues about the Nigerian philosophy of life, culture and civilization.

1. Why do Nigerians feel and think differently?
2. Why is Nigeria today, despite having one of the largest pools of skilled manpower in the world is held in low esteem everywhere both in terms of human qualities and economics success?
Going by the adage that "*If skills are lost, little is lost; if values are lost, everything is lost*"; it is clear why absolute honesty or truthfulness stands eroded in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The single most important resource of any organisation and any nation in the wider circumstance is the people. Any organisation that wants to grow and develop must start first by developing its human resource. No machine or computer can turn negative into positive without human effort. Why is it that the balance sheet of many organisations are not recognising the invaluable efforts of their human capital.

People make organisations and organisations must invest in their workforce. It is a tragedy that man has reached the moon but man has not reached man. Organisations are placing low premium on their human resource and placing higher emphasis on machines and technology. This must stop. The goose that lays the golden eggs must be recognised, developed and preserved. Investment in human resource is like money kept in a safe deposit which appreciates overtime.

Human Resource Development and Preservation is the key to Nigeria's economic growth. Brain drain and human resource wastages constitute the bane of Nigeria's advancement and this must be reversed if Nigeria's dream of becoming an industrialized country is to be realized.

Recommendations

The way forward for human resource development and preservation both at micro (organisational) and macro (national) levels

1. Match the job to the individual.
2. Make effective use of performance appraisals.
3. Organise and implement meaningful human resource development programmes for developing skills and capabilities, and for enhancing the role of the individual in the organization.
4. Enhance employees' acquaintance with the computer, matrix management and the imperatives of multinational business.
5. People should be oriented in such a manner as to enable them determine and achieve their own goals by directing their efforts towards meeting the organization's objective.
6. Personnel managers should add value to their competence in people management by keeping themselves abreast of various developments in behavioral sciences.
7. Traditions and socio-economic conditions prevailing in the country must be taken into consideration while organizing and implementing human resource development programmes.
8. Responsibility for human resource development at the micro level should be on the management but encouraged by supportive responses from the employees and their organization.
9. At the macro (national) level, all the agencies that promote human resource development should be resuscitated/reinvigorated.
10. Positive and supportive environment should be created at local, state and federal levels to turn human resources into productive forces.
11. There should be massive revitalization of the educational sector from primary to tertiary level.
12. All round security of life of every Nigerian should be a top priority because, as Badiru (2001) puts it, manpower assets that are preserved while at work become vulnerable in the open community.

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