

HUMAN RESOURCES AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: AKWA IBOM STATE EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT: *Human resource and strategic management is one of the most important requirements for the sustenance of an economy, whether at micro or macro levels. It is a must for any society, country or even enterprise that wishes to survive under complex challenges of a dynamic as well as globalized world. The objective of this study was to examine human resources and strategic management for sustainable development in Nigeria drawing specifically from Akwa Ibom State experience. The study adopted a historical and descriptive research drawing data mostly from secondary sources. The study revealed that Akwa Ibom state government is committed to training its workforce in the critical areas of need such as science, technology and engineering as a core area for sustainable development. The study further revealed that where human resources capital are not strategically managed, it would stalled any meaningful development in the state. The study therefore recommended that the training and retraining of workforce in the state should be focus mostly on the critical areas of science, technology and engineering as against the present emphasis on general administration. Also, the workforce so train should be strategically managed to enhance sustainable development in the state.*

KEYWORDS: Human Resource, Management, Sustainable Development, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Human resources management, personal administration, and manpower development are used interchangeable to mean a concerted effort to improve the talents, skills and the capabilities of the people and how these attributes are used to achieve the developmental needs of the state. The task of human resources management is to provide positive leadership, capable of encouraging and stimulating people to willingly make effective contribution towards the actualization of state or organizational goals, and by extension to satisfy their personal needs. This task is enormous given the complex nature of the people with their different talents, ambitions, different needs, values, potentials, knowledge, skills, abilities and cultures if these complexities associated with personnel are clearly understood and effectively managed or harnessed, then the organization or the state will succeed, but if not the states is doomed (Ikeji 2005 and Oba, 2005).

Efficient management of the human resource is essential for the attainment of organizational or societal objectives. This is so because it is human that runs an organization. So organizational effectiveness and or the capacity of an organization or society to adapt and maintain itself, survive, grow in the face of changing situations depends greatly on how effective its workforce (human resource) can be managed and utilize. This is anchored on the

fact that human resources are the greatest asset of a society which should be well managed and utilized. Now human are treated as a resource, that is as something having peculiar physiological properties, abilities and limitations that require the same amount of attention as the property of any other resource (Sharma, *et al*, 2012).

Human resources is all-embracing, i.e. all inclusive of persons who work now, or are likely to be productively employed sooner or later. The point here is that human resources development or management embraces virtually the whole population as its target. It envisages that the child, once it is able to express itself and comprehend communication, needs to be helped or enabled to understand its social and economic environment and to be fitted for participative roles in the development of that environment at, and through, 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 relevant jobs, including active preparation to successfully perform thereon (Yesufu, 2000, Ibok and Ibang, 2014).

Human resources management or development is one of the most important requirements for the sustenance of an economy, whether at micro or macro levels. It is a must for any society or enterprise that wishes to survive under complex challenges of a dynamic world. For the individual it should be a life-long process, because of the continuously changing environment to which one must also continuously adapt. This enables the persons involved to move vertically or laterally in the economic and social environment. Also, for a national economy, no country, society or state can be adequate both in quantity and quality-wise, in the skills and expertise that will sustain the economy efficiency and indefinitely, or to cope with the exponentially growing consequences of new technology, growing and changing consumer and service demands of a rising and or more sophisticated population, national security etc. In order to survive, the nation, state etc in the modern world, must devote a high proportion of its resources to managing by way of developing its human resources in terms of numbers, quality and mix. The mix in particular, must be continuously watched, analysed, planned, and adapted in order to ensure optimum overall economic and social development. This therefore entails strategic management of human resources for sustainable development (Yesufu, 2000).

The overall aims and objectives of human resources management is anchored on strategic planning. Others are: it emphasis on the importance of transformational leadership in the work organisation or a country. This shows that, the purpose of leadership is to create a vision and a working environment that encourages worker's commitment, innovation, change and self-renewal at all levels of the organisation or society. It also emphasizes the importance of workplace learning at the individual and organisational level so that innovation and adaptation becomes systemic. This therefore informed the reason why the present leadership in Nigeria and by extension Akwa Ibom State is interested in the development and management of its human resources in virtually all field of human endeavours for sustainable development.

Conceptual Explication

The available literature presents 'hard' and 'soft' version of Human Resource Management (HRM). The 'hard' version emphasizes the term resource and adopts a rational approach to managing employees' that is, aligning business strategy and human resource strategy, and viewing people as any other economic factor, as a cost that must be control. The 'soft' model

emphasizes the term 'human' and thus advocates investment in training and development and the adoption of commitment strategies to ensure that highly skilled and loyal employees gives the organization a competitive advantage. It also represents a distinctive approach to the organization of work and the management of the employment relationship that fits with the new economic order (Storey, 1995).

Adamolekun (2005) defined Human resources management as a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce, using an integrated array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques. The point of note is that HRM emphasizes the strategic role of personnel in managing organisational or societal change; that it integrates human resources considerations to overall organisational strategy; and it focuses on securing employee commitment to organisational goals through a consensual development of an organizational culture, devolved responsibility and empowerment.

Human resources management has become an important factor for all organizations in this age of global competition in which all large-scale organisation must compete for resources whether they are in the public, private sector and nongovernmental organisations. The importance of HRM orientation for Nigerian public administration system in particular is that it underscores the need for the transformation of personnel department in public sector organizations from a preoccupation with passive or even negative roles of administering largely on the basis of outdated rules to actively developing and pursuing policies for harnessing the personnel function with overall proactive strategic management within the organization. It therefore focuses on the need to develop professional skills for managing the most critical of all organizational resources namely personnel instead of treating it as a residual responsibility that can be handled by anyone who cannot be otherwise productively engaged in the organization (Adamolekun, 2005).

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) (1990), describes human resources as the knowledge, skills, attitudes, physical and managerial effort required to manipulate capital, technology, and land among other things, to produce goods and services for human consumption. Explaining further, human resources are the totality of human potentials (knowledge, skills, attitude, energy and technology) inherent within a nation's human resource stock and whose combined effort, if properly developed and harnessed, would yield a high level of labour productivity. Human resources management or development can be seen as the process of developing or managing the skills, knowledge and the capabilities of all the people of the society and which are needed in the labour market for the production of goods and services. In economic terms, it could be described as the accumulation of human capital and its effective investment in the development of an economy (Uwat, 2002, Harbison and Mayers, 1964).

In a more precise way, human resource management (HRM) is the process of hiring and developing employees so that they become more valuable to the organization. It also includes conducting job analysis, planning, personnel needs, recruiting the right people for the job, orienting and training, managing wages and salaries, providing benefits and incentives, evaluating performance, resolving disputes, and communicating with all employees at all levels (www.businessdictionary.com, 2016).

Armstrong (1999) asserts that modern human resources management is guided by several overriding principles. The paramount principle is a simple recognition that human resources

are the most important assets of an organisation; a business cannot be successful without effectively managing this resources. Also, business success is most likely to be achieved if the personnel policies and procedures of the enterprise are closely linked with, and make a major contribution to the achievement of corporate objectives and strategic plans. Another principle is that, it is human resources responsibility to find, secure, guide and develop employees whose talents and desires are compatible with the operating needs and future goals of the company. From this, it can be said that human resources management is a strategic approach to the acquisition, motivation, development and management of the organization's or society's human resources (Armstrong, 1999; Burstiner, 1988).

On the other hand, sustainable development has become a household name all over the world championed by the United Nations to manage our resources notably human capital or resources. According to the World Commission on Environmental and Development (1987), sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs. The point is that meeting the needs of the future depends on how well we balance social, economic and environmental objectives or needs, when making decisions such as efficient use of labour.

Sustainable development requires high quality and appropriate human resource to successfully implement. Sustainance is the ability to make things continue to happened for a long time while sustainability refers to the use of natural products and energy in a way that does not harm the environment. It is a compelling idea for many people. It is mostly concerned with how business and societies can contribute to some of the most challenges that the world face today. The Role of sustainable development is to address the expectation of both employees and employers. It encourages society and business alike to focus on performance, consistent, eagerness to improve and continual learning. In summary, it is a known fact that fundamental and overriding success factor in the implementation of sustainable development is human capital and how this is harnessed and effectively utilized rest squarely on effective leadership (Olayode, 2006); www.worldbank, 2016).

Policy Context

Strategic management is the comprehensive collection of ongoing activities and process that organisation or society use to systematically coordinate and align resources and action with mission, vision and strategy. Strategic management activities transform the static or organisational plan into a system that provide performance feedback to decision making and enables the plan to evolve and grow as requirement and other circumstances change. It is the management of a society or an organization resource to achieve its goals and objectives (www.invest ofedin.com, 2016, www.balancedesco record.org, 2016).

Strategic human resources thus refers to management of human resources or capital that is focused on a long term success. It concerns itself with targets usually for a 5 or 10 years span ahead which addresses issues such as first, where we are now in terms of age, education, and experience of the employees, their attitudes and opinion, the value of employee's skills, education and abilities. The cost and effectiveness of the human resources and analyses of the assets of the work force, second, 'how we got there', which specifically deals with the growth, history and patterns of the society especially in the analysis of supply and demand for labour. Thirdly, the 'where we are headed' which has to do with population projection for the future in terms of quality and quantity, ratio of high-talent man power to total workforce, future supply of labour, future demand for human resources, future cost of labour etc.

The central point of strategic human resources is on estimating the demand for labour for some period into the future. This calls for two kinds of data; (i) an inventory of present employment levels and (2) forecast of future employment needs. This will determine the training need with which society might be faced in terms of the kinds of jobs that may be shorthanded, and the kinds of jobs that may be difficult to find. This boils down to manpower development and management in the critical areas for sustainable development which education plays a vital role.

In Nigeria education and training for manpower or human resource for sustainable development have multiplied tremendously since the colonial period. Education, mainly in the formal, intellectually oriented form, is institutionalised through primary, secondary and tertiary education. The growth in the educational and training system in Nigeria has been phenomenal, both in terms of the numbers of institutions and of enrolments. But sad to say that there exists a widening and growing demand at all levels both for general or liberal education and for technical as well as professional skills. This is anchored on its extremely unbalanced enrolment and output of trained manpower. The criticism is that the system is bookish, elitish and colonial in orientation, and does not reflect the actual needs of the country in terms of the types and various mixes of manpower that are needed for sustainable social and economic development. For example, the national tertiary education policy of 60:40 science/humanities mix of enrolments established since independence has never been met in the universities, nor have the polytechnics achieved even a 50:50 ratio of technical, technological and related occupation compared with administrative and non-science based skills (Yesufu, 2000).

To achieve sustainable development, there is need for Nigeria to train manpower in the critical areas of science, engineering and technology. This is where strategic management of human resources or manpower forecast plays a vital role. The manpower forecast is meant to ensure that the best human material is available to promote the development of the economy. Also, provides a basis for that aspect of educational planning and training that will ensure that the human resources concerned have the necessary skills and proficiency as and when necessary. These must be well utilised and motivated to avoid brain drain. It is a well-known fact that the best Nigerian brains in all fields of science, computer technology, academics, engineering, and even space science are mostly to be found in the USA, Western Europe, and among the ranks of international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); (Yesufu, 2000; Adams, 1968).

Effective manpower utilization hinges on effective and visionary leadership. In recent years, Nigeria has seen the need for strategic human resources management for sustainable development. A good example is the directive given to all Nigerian universities by NUC in 2005 as a matter of urgency to meet the human resources need of the University as basic requirement for lecturing to produce at least 5,000 Ph.D., between 2005 -2010 (5 years) to avoid total collapse of the sector. The issue is not churning out 5,000 Ph.D, manpower for the sector, but emphasis should have been on the critical areas of science, technology, engineering, medicine etc. A closer look at some critical sector revealed dearth of staff which require strategic management for its sustainability. Whether this target was realized or not, but the visionary leadership of professor Okoje was aimed at sustainable national development.

Strategic Management of Human Resources for Sustainable Development: Akwa Ibom State Experience

Akwa Ibom State is one of the 36 states in the Nigerian Federation. It was created on 23rd September, 1987, it is the tenth largest state in the country with 31 local government areas and Uyo as the state capital. Akwa Ibom State is the third largest oil producing state in Nigeria. Natural gas, solid and industrial minerals are produced in the state. The solid and industrial minerals include kaolinitic and ball class, gas and silica sand; bentonite, limestone, gravels, sodium chloride etc, (Akwa Ibom, 2005).

Akwa Ibom State is predominantly civil service state with the government being the major engine of development. The industrial base of the state is not only small but also weak and underdeveloped. The industrial activities in the state are at low ebb as almost all the companies are moribund such as Sunshine Batteries, Peacock Paint, Quality Ceramics, Qua Steel Products Limited, Asbbestanit Industries, Plasto-Crown Industries, International Biscuit Limited, Palmil Industries and Seastate Seafood Limited. This contemptuous situation is attributed partially to the absence of a well-developed private entrepreneurship, which informed the present government determination to pursue sustainable development via private sector initiatives. In all these, without properly managed human resources which the state is blessed with it cannot achieve any meaning development talkless of sustaining same (Akwa Ibom, 2005; Ibok and Ibanga, 2014).

The present government recognises that effective management of human resource entails equipping people through education and training not only for employment but also to enable them perceives new opportunities, and initiate and organise innovative programmes. So government commitment in investing in human capital and effectively managing same in the state will create a broad technological trained human capital base well suited for rapid economic development and efficient management in the critical areas with ultimate goal of driving industrialization in the state. This is to ensure a paradigm shift from the civil service state or agrarian state to industrial state. This entails a complete shift from the style of the previous administration to a new style of human resource management for sustainable development (Ibok and Ibanga, 2014, News Africa, 2016).

To buttress the above, on assumption of office the present Governor visited Peacock Paint factory that has been moribund for years at Ikot Ekan in Etinan Local Government Area and reactivated the ailing company for productive activities which has engaged unemployed people of the state. The government commitment in establishing Automotive Assembling plant in Itu Local Government Area in partnership with an Israeli company is intended when fully operational to employ at least 50,000 people from the state. Also, the Ibom Deep Sea Port, establishment of Industrial Parks in each of the senatorial zones of the state, production of coconut oil and refined coconut produce in partnership with a South African firm which a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has already been signed, manufacturing of low energy saving bulbs and production of electricity metres in collaboration with LED etc. To achieve these, effective and efficient human resource management is required otherwise it will amount to efforts in futility and promises not realised (Ekoriko, 2016).

It is of good note to observe that to actualised sound and effective resource management for sustainable development, the present government on assumption of office, sponsored thirty (30) indigenes of the state studying ICT related courses in India. The students, who were being trained in oracle, information technology and cyber management, all graduated with

Master's Degree in Information Technology (IT) with specialization in different fields to make the state IT compliance. This goes on to prove the administration watchword of "training and retraining" of human resources in all fields especially in the critical area for sustainable development of the state (Ekoriko, 2016).

It is pertinent to observe that training and retraining of workforce should go beyond general administration as was the case in the previous administration. The government should concentrate on the areas that will drive industrialization. Strategic management should guide such training and retraining. The government in collaboration with the private sector should embark on training for 10 – 15 years, so that whatever progress is recorded now will be sustained in the future. And this should be a continuous process.

Akwa Ibom State presently lacked human resources in the critical areas of science, technology, engineering etc. specifically, now we need manpower in the health sector such as general practitioner, general surgeon, obstetric/gynaecologist, paediatrician, physician, psychiatrist, ophthalmologist, radiographers nurses etc to manned and sustain the sector. To develop and sustain educational sector, the state needs more Ph.D. and professors in all field especially in the critical area of science and technology. The same is applied to the development of science and technology to drive industrialization - human resources is paramount. The fact remains that, currently we have shortage of manpower in these areas, but with a determined efforts through strategic management, this can be overcome.

It is one thing to invest and develop human resources stock in the state, and another is to managed or fully utilised them. This is where management comes in. So human resource can be effectively managed the way other sectors are managed. This means that human resources manager(s) should be able to identify and manage individual potential and performance. Lack of such knowledge in the state be it in the micro or mezzo levels will limit the state ability to harness individual productivity. This is true because no matter the training one receives or highly professional one is, there must be variance. That is, a very capable human under a certain situation and condition can offer unacceptable performance of potential and vice versa.

To actualize sustainable development in the state as envisioned by the present administration, full knowledge of human resources is important as it will help to know where to deploy them so as to uncover their potential. For example, a good knowledge of individual potential and individual performance will help identify the deadwood, the workhorse, the stars and the problem child as a component of the state work force. So proper and effective management of these identified components will aid human resource manager or consultant to know who should be given more training and in which area. For example, the problem child represents those who have great potential but low performance meaning that there is a missing link which needs to be identified and solved for high performance.

CONCLUSION

Human resources management is the epicentre of any meaningful development programme that may be pursued by any country or state. It entails a process of expanding choices and developing capabilities of the people in all economic, social, technological and cultural

activities, through which the skills, knowledge, productivity and innovations are enhanced for sustainable development.

It is interesting to observe that the present government appreciates the importance of human capital and the need to strategically develop and effectively managed same to actualize and sustain any recorded development in the state. This therefore informed government ongoing efforts in manpower training and development as evidenced in ICT etc. However, to avoid the mistakes of the past, the present government should focus its efforts in developing human resources in the critical areas of need. Presently, the state lacked manpower in science, technology, engineering, doctors etc. To sustain the state now and the future entails that a strategic plan be developed to guide the state toward that direction. Also, workforce so developed should be properly utilized and managed to enhance their potential and performance. The overall effects of strategic management of human resources of all kinds within a given state are to sustain any development recorded now and in the future which tantamount to sustainable development.

Recommendations

1. That there should be paradigm shift from training and retraining of the state workforce from the general administration to the critical areas of science technology and engineering.
2. That the educational enrolment policy of 60 science and 40 liberal studies should be enforced in the state.
3. That the workforce so developed should be strategically managed to enhance sustainable development in the state.
4. That Akwa Ibom State government should collaborate with the private sector to embark on training for 10 – 20 years, so that whatever gain or progress recorded now will be sustained in the future.
5. That human resource administrators, managers and consultants in the state should be knowledgeable to identify individual potential and individual performance for proper utilization of human stock or capital in the state.

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