

WORKERS EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *As manpower development is germane to the effectiveness and profitability of an organisation, so is workers education crucial to educative activities for human resources development of the labour force. This paper examines the benefits and potentials of workers education in developing the manpower capacity and capabilities of labour force for national development. Based on the premise that the Nigeria government has not been able to fulfil her obligations through annual budgetary allocation to education, it is needful for stakeholders in the sector to revamp the human resources depreciation especially in the nation's work force. It is therefore recommended that workers education should be recurrent and holistic exercise both in the private and public work sector for progressive, upgrading of skills and knowledge to increase organisations potentials to efficiently achieve their goals.*

KEYWORDS: Workers Education, Manpower Development, National Development, Human Resources development.

INTRODUCTION

Nations are constituted by societies filled with strata of human beings of different ages. These human beings impact on the nation through several avenues. Adults within the working age however contribute more because they help in boosting the Gross Domestic Product as workers, paying tax to the state amidst other contributions. Egunyomi (1999) observed that no nation can achieve development if her citizens are not sufficiently educated to meet the challenges of the fast changing world especially in the industrial sector. In the classification of Anyaele (1990), Aderinto and Abdullahi (1992), the industrial sector comprises the processing industry, manufacturing industry, mining industry, construction industry, transportation industry, agricultural industry, construction and communication industries. These industries through the workers play great roles in the sustenance of other sectors of the economy in providing finished goods, provision of equipment and tools for other sectors as well; it also generates foreign exchange for the country (Andy, 2003).

These workers are the core of production in work institutions and are usually engaged in interaction with non-human materials and other human beings. The need for their continued relevance in the world of work require continuous development of skills, knowledge to meet with the ever increasing demand for updated knowledge to enhance productivity, peace and cooperation, development for personal and institutional successes. Aderinto and Abdullahi (1992) & Andy (2003) highlighted difficulties facing Nigerian industries as shortage of skilled manpower, low technology, shortage of capital, poor infrastructure, under-development of agriculture and solid mineral. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2000) observed that the

performance of the Nigerian industrial sector is unimpressive. She pointed out that this has been due to low capacity utilisation, low quality of the manpower resources, policy instability, bureaucratic bottlenecks, low access to fund, obsolete technology, etc.

According to Adekola (2010) achieving rapid and sustainable industrial development is not a sector specific issue. It is a multi-sectoral programme that should involve the formal and informal, private and public sector of the economy. To achieve the best result in industrialization, Nigeria in the year 2000 set a target of 24% contribution to the national output by year 2010 for the industrial sector, increase in its contribution to employment from 10% in year 2000 to 30% by 2010 and meeting 50% demand for basic consumer goods (FGN, 2000). To meet this target, provision of skilled manpower, training and retraining and on-the-job learning are the strategies set out for implementation.

The Nigeria educational system has experienced a lot of crises in the recent past. According FGN (2000), vital literacy indicators revealed a deplorable condition in the education sector while Aderinoye (2004) stated that the adult literacy rate is 53%.

There has also been an increase in the rate of school drop-out; quality of formal education has also fallen significantly at all levels. At the tertiary level which produces skilled manpower for the industries, banditry, cultism and brain-drain are very rampant. To provide adequate skilled manpower and sustainable human resource development and cope with challenges of industrialization there is the need for continuing education of the employees in the industrial sector. Adekola (2010) is of the opinion that this brings to the fore the issue of education with specific emphasis on an aspect of adult education known as power development for the smooth running of the industries. Asojo (2001) is of the view that the quickest way to increase productivity in less developed countries is to train adults who are already on the job. This kind of education is the type that should focus on developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and habits of workers with which they can defend their own human, social and economic rights and duties at the workplace and society at large. It should also mould them into good citizens. Akinsanya (2011) buttressed the foregoing by reiterating that the demand of work on both male and female workers in the face of increasing global technologies requires effective functioning and updated knowledge achievable through workers education.

Though education for children is necessary, its potential contribution to output may not be comparable with the potential contribution of efforts devoted to improving adults' skills. Thus, Onyenemezu (2012) suggested Adult education, as an integral aspect of education and learning process whether formal, informal and non-formal which the adult person engages in for better information, self and national development. Akinsanya & Adeniyi (2005) posited adult education as an umbrella providing shade for workers education and host of others. Workers education is a major means of showcasing the latest and most pertinent knowledge with the people and through it, human resource can be developed to match the needs of the Nigerian economy.

Nzeneri (1996) posits adult education as any education given to adults based on their social, political, cultural and economic needs or problems, to enable them adjust fully to changes and challenges in their lives and society. Adult continuing education, as an aspect of adult education is for national development. It encompasses developing the human (adults) mind, knowledge, attitude, skills, behavioural pattern, physical and necessary ideas capable of solving human and societal problems in order to achieve sustainable national development.

In the views of Prosser (1967) as cited in Akintayo and Oghenekhowo (2004), adult education was seen as that force which in its ideal application can bring about a maximum of re-adjustment of attitude within a society to any new and changed situation in the shortest possible time and which helps to initiate changes which evolve and impart new skills and techniques required and made necessary by the change. Akintayo and Oghenekhowo (2004) claimed that the field of adult education has expanded to include; workers education, remedial education, life-long education, distance education, prison education, mass education, nomadic education, women education, vocational education, community education, leadership training; and labour education.

Phenomenon of Workers Education

Workers education according to Hopkins (1985) cited in Akinsanya (2011) is ...that sector of adult education which caters for adults in their capacity as workers and especially as members of workers organizations. Its immediate aims are usually to increase the ability of workers to assume more responsibilities in their own organizations... their work places and in local and national decision making bodies. Abdul Aziz Afaf (2010) submitted that workers' education is undoubtedly, one of the most effective tools in trade union organizing, strengthening and unity. It is meant to provide workers with lifelong learning processes and the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude to empower themselves in order to effect changes in workplaces and society. Igbo (2008) gave a conceptual understanding of Workers education, as an aspect of adult education that is the fastest growing part of the Nigeria education system. It provides education that helps workers to maintain their employment status and tackle the challenges of stunning advancement in all disciplines as well as provides up-to-date information in one's special field. Igbo (2008) highlighted the methods of workers' education as consulting services, questions and answers, campus visits with demonstrations, field trips, conferences, seminars, workshops and symposiums all of which aim at up-dating or topping up the knowledge, skills, expertise and work ethics of a country's labour force.

In evaluating the role of workers' education in manpower development, Ngwu (2006) attests to this saying, the initial education given to workers cannot make a worker functionally effective all through his working life, workers education is therefore one of the means of pushing forward the urgent task of improving the quality of Nigerian labour force with the cardinal objective of releasing the potentials of individuals and collectives for growth, economic, productivity, social and political responsibility. Ihejirika and Onyenemezu (2012) expressed that through it, illiterate workers could be led to acquire other life skills that can enable them operate usefully and gainfully in a community and society on the basis of existing economic and social dispensation. As an indispensable strategy for empowering non-literate workers, literacy education is very effective in development of Nigeria's manpower resources, to the point of enabling recipients to go on obtaining and exchanging new and possibly complex information needed to improve their productivity.

Ratnam Venkata (2011) further espoused some advantages of workers education as;

- a) Helping to increase the ability of the union to reach its goals by raising the education level of the members and leaders through education, members will be more aware of their own working and living conditions and of their ability to improve these in cooperation with other workers.

- b) Workers education helps to strengthen internal democracy in the functioning of the unions by motivating members to participate in their own affairs. It improves the quality of information available within the union,

- c) Workers education makes the work of the union far more effective because it increases its members skills and increases significantly the number of people who can take responsibility for different union functions.

- d) It helps to train members in cooperation. It infuses a sense of responsibility for the common cause and the organisation of workers, as well as a feeling of togetherness with other union members and workers everywhere.

Conceptualizing Manpower development

Dode and Bassey (2014) defined Manpower development as the continuous process of improving the skill content of staff members of an organisation which is a function of 'job change'. Haslinda (2009) quoted 'The Manpower Services Commission' in defining manpower development as the planned process to modify attitude, knowledge or skills through learning experiences to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Its purpose, in the work situation, is to develop the abilities of the individual and to satisfy the current and future needs of the organization".

Manpower development is a crucial factor for a country's economic political, scientific and socio cultural transformation. In the real sense, the human capital of a country is the most valuable asset and thus needs to be mobilised to facilitate and ensure development in every facet of national growth. It implies that the human resource, particularly the working age, constitute the wealth of a nation and prosperity. The level of human capital development of a nation can be ascertained by the country's education system and impact on science, technology, women development, empowerment and healthcare delivery and productivity including other development programmes (Akpa, 2012).

Scholars such as Harbison (1973), Todaro (1977), Nzeneri (1990) stressed the need for manpower development, stating, "Human resources ...constitute the ultimate basis for the 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'.

To put it succinctly human beings are the active agents used in accumulating capital, tapping natural resources, building social, economic and political organization, and for national development. Akinsanya & Adeniyi (2005) connecting Adult education and manpower development for national growth observed that in building blocks of human development, and not just as a right, education (adult education) is a foundation, advancing of the prime resource. Akangbou (1987), Schumacher (1973) stated that education is a kind of investment that produces the stock of human capital that is skilled and adaptable to improving the national economy. The analysis of this is that development results from human effort. Human agents

mobilise capital, exploit natural resources and create markets to carry on trade (Akpa, 2012). Accordingly, there is a strong correlation between literacy and per capita income which indicates that education is a strong dominant factor in economic development of a nation.

In furthering manpower development, World Bank (2003), affirmed that a knowledge economy rests on four indices which are a supportive economic and institutional regime which can provide incentives for the efficient use of existing, an educated and skilled population that can create, share, and use knowledge, a dynamic information infrastructure which can facilitate the effective communication dissemination and processing of information an efficient innovation system of firms, research centres, universities, consultants, and other organizations who can tap the growing stock of global knowledge, assimilate and adapt it to local needs, and create new technology.

Objectives of Manpower Development was posited by World Bank (2003) as;

to improve present performance of workers on the same job; to improve future performance of employees on a new or higher job; to upgrade and update competence of workers for future job assignments to raise productivity of workers; and to produce workers that are ready to take up new challenges brought about by the change in technology.

The bottom line of manpower development is to advance the personnel human resource potentials for the overall betterment of the workforce and work organisation. However, the Nigerian government had over the years been paying lip service to adequate funding of education as indicated in table 1.

Table 1: Federal Government Budgetary Allocation to the Education Sector, 2000 - 2013

Year	Allocation as percentage of total budget
2000	8.36
2001	7.00
2002	5.9
2003	1.83
2004	10.5
2005	9.3
2006	11.00
2007	8.09
2008	13.0
2009	6.54
2010	6.40
2011	1.69
2012	10.0
2013	8.70

Source: Central Bank of Nigeria (2013). Statistical Bulletin and Information. Retrieved on 06/03/2016 from www.nigeria.gov.ng

A cursory look at Table 1 shows clearly that Nigeria is far from achieving the UNESCO minimum standard on education for developing countries. This portends crisis, danger and

chaos for education in this country. It is saddening to note that on the average, Nigeria spends less than six percent (6%) of its annual budget on education when smaller other African nations spend much more: Botswana, 19.0%; Swaziland, 24.6%; Lesotho, 17.0%; South Africa, 25.8%, Cote d'Ivoire, 30.0%, Ghana, 31% Kenya, 23%; Uganda, 27.0%, Tunisia, 17.0%; and Morocco, 17.7% (World Bank, 2012; Odiaka, 2013; Nzeh, 2013; Oseni, 2012; Kupoluyi 2012).

In Nigeria, manpower development tenet is entrenched in Nigerian education blueprint, this is pronounced in the education policy of 6-3-3-4 which involved the process of training manpower for meeting specific sectoral needs. The concentration on human resource development the elementary stage (the first 3 years in secondary school) would have benefitted Nigeria nation and transformed her to be one of the developed nations of the world except for the articulate policy without practical implementation. From independence to date, Nigeria yearly budgetary allocation to education still fall abysmally below the 26% UNESCO's benchmark for developing nations (UNESCO, 1999). This poor trend of budgetary allocation to education leaves much to be desired as the national development of any nation depends significantly on attention paid to education sector.

The inadequate funding of education by government has depleted the human capital base of the

nation's workforce rendering so many illiterates, some half-educated and some others needing to update their acquired skills and education. Hence, the need for workers education to consolidate and constantly update the knowledge, skills, expertise and work ethics of a country's labour force.

Tools and methods for manpower development in organisations differs and it is largely determined by

the objectives of organisation, the idiosyncrasy of management staff or the chief executive, the organisational policy, as well as the organisational environment to mention a few (Omodia, 2009). It is pertinent to note that in all the methods, available training and education for workers form the baseline. Human resource development is all about training and re-training of staff to meet up with organisational requirements, as well as the turning-out of human resource that is needed for the economic development of the nation.

Workers education and manpower development are two concepts with the same purpose, the ultimate objective of both are to make available better and innovative workforce. Some method of manpower development as stated by Omodia, (2009); Yalokwu (2009) Lawal, (2006); and Nongo, (2005) are; orientation, on the job method manpower development, coaching, job rotation, in house training, in service training, committee/work group method, vestibule training method and apprenticeship method among others. It is noteworthy to submit that all the highlighted methods manpower development also are forms of workers education, hence workers education could be said to be the process while manpower development is the end result.

Maximizing Workers Education for Human Resources Development

Human resources remain the most crucial asset of any organisation. The successful performance of an organisation, by and large depend upon the quality of its human resources.

The quality of organisation's human resources depends upon the extent of knowledge through training and education they have received. Manpower development and human resource development are two concepts with same meaning often times used interchangeably with the aim of maximizing the productivity and increasing the return on investment of all the organisational stakeholders. The training and education that workers receive while on the job (workers education) are basically targeted toward developing their manpower capacity and capability to ensure the continuous improvement of both the individuals and organisations. When the workforce is given the necessary training and education, their knowledge, skills and ability (KSA) are built in the society.

More broadly, workers education contributes to civil liberties, political stability..... advancing economic development (Coppel, 2006). The development of human resources through workers education helps workers to utilize their capabilities and enables them to reach to the height of their professional career to lead fuller and richer lives. Creativity and innovations in various professional areas in a country is the core element that determines the potential for being competitive in the world. The knowledge and skills of a nation's workforce and the quality of its infrastructure are what make it unique and attractive in the world economy (Jan, Mitho, Ali and Abdul). Workers education potential brings about rejuvenation in human resources as the labour force gain more and more experience in their fields which keeps them updated and versed. This will in no small measure boost the efficiency and effectiveness they put to their deliveries.

Other resources depreciate with the passage of time but when the manpower in workplaces are offered necessary training and development, they remain an endurable asset and active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build economic and social organisation and carry forward national development goals. Workers education improves the all-round growth of the employees. It also improves team spirit in the organisation, which makes personnel to become more open in their behaviour; thus, new values are generated. Workers feel a sense of pride and achievement while performing their jobs.

CONCLUSION

No organisation is immune to the need for processes that help to acquire and increase its capabilities for stabilities and renewal. Employee's capacity and resources must continuously be sharpened, renewed and updated through constant workers education at all levels; this will create an enabling work environment in which employees use their initiative to better the lot of their career and workplaces. As the budgetary allocation to education of many countries especially the developing nations are inadequate to provide the ideal education, also with the need for regular rejuvenation of manpower resources, stakeholders in the labour sector are enjoined to invest on the education of workers to be able to meet up with global demands and challenges in the world of work.

The paper has been able to conceptualize workers education, manpower development and development and benefits of training (an array of workers education) for human resources and national development. From this background, it is therefore important to conclude that workers education is a key process toward manpower development of any nation.

Government, employers and employees must not take with levity workers education if productivity, profitability and proficiency are to be achieved.

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