

EMERGING CHALLENGES IN MANPOWER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE

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Abstract

The importance of training and development in the public service is found to be more obvious given the growing complexity of the work environment, the rapid change in organizations and advancement in technology among other things. The Nigerian civil service, which has its origin from British colonial administration, with its glorious moments during the post-independent times, has later found its soul ravaged by corruption, its structure weakened by incompetence and occasioned by lifelong gradual erosion of professionalism. To diagnose and treat these ailments that bedevil the service, public and private management development institutions and consultants are confronted with a lot of challenges. These among others include technological and knowledge based challenges, lack of political will, prevalence of unaccredited training consultants etc. This paper therefore attempts to unfold these challenges with a view to propose a way forward in facing the challenges.

The Nigerian civil service was created by the British colonial administration as an executive agency of government responsible for the implementation of government's policies, routine maintenance of law and order, simple tax collection and operation of socio-economic services meant apparently for the benefit of the British administration. With the expanding roles of government and the civil service in particular in the federal, states and Local governments training and development became imperative for its personnel. By so doing, training and development will enable government to derive optimism benefits from its investment in manpower development. Along the same vein, as labour creates wealth, governments seeking to achieve sustainable growth must of necessity pay particular attention to critical labour issues such as capacity building, mobilization, harnessing and deployment of human capital resources.

As an indispensable component of the government, and an instrument for advice and implementation of government policies, the civil service in Nigeria today is certainly rooted in the absence of honest, capable and efficient work force (Ilallah, 2013). This, coupled with other reasons makes it mandatory for continuous training and re-training of staff in both public and private sectors of the economy. Management development Institutes in Nigeria though not adequate in comparison with the teeming workforce, are facing a lot of challenges in their attempt to re-position the civil service for better performance. Management development Institutes in Nigeria include Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Centre for Management Development (CMD), Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and Manpower Development Institute of Jigawa state at the state level.

An Overview on Manpower Training and Development

The rapid scientific and technological development in all fields of human endeavor coupled with the knowledge based economy of the 21st century makes manpower training and development an indispensable aspect of public service. From a macroeconomic perspective, manpower training and development is aimed at improving labor productivity, facilitating technological innovations, increasing return on capital and making growth more sustainable.

At the microeconomic level, manpower training and development is considered as a component of education that contributes to an individual's productivity and earnings. Manpower training and development is concerned with any attempt to increase managerial effectiveness through a planned and deliberate learning process. Bassey (2011) asserted that as at today, the development of an effective, efficient, competent and proactive workforce in the public service in Nigeria remains one of the greatest challenges facing Nigeria as a nation. These challenges are numerous and dynamic owing to the increasing complexity of policy making and service delivery.

Definition of Key Concepts

Some authors use the terms 'training' and 'development' as synonyms. However, some view the two concepts as different. For instance, Jones, George & Hill (2000), believed that training primarily focuses on teaching organizational members how to perform their current jobs and helping them to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to be effective performers. Development on the other hand, focuses on building the knowledge and skills of organizational members so that they will be prepared to take on new responsibilities and challenges.

Ademolekun (1983), stated that manpower training and development involves the training, education and career development of staff in an organization.

Mullins (1999), itemized the following to be among the benefits of manpower training and development;

1. Increase the confidence, motivation and commitment of staff.
2. Provide recognition and enhanced responsibility.
3. Give feeling of personal satisfaction and achievement, and broaden opportunities for career progression.
4. Help to improve the availability and quality of staff.

Manpower Training and Development Institutions in Nigeria

In Nigeria, there are few manpower training institutions that are fully accredited. Among these institutions, only one is owned by a state government. They include the following;

1. Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON)

ASCON was established via decree number 39 of 1973 (now ASCON Act, Cap 6, 1990) with the mandate to provide higher management training for the development of senior executives for both the public and private sectors of the Nigerian economy as well as award grants, scholarships or travel fellowships that facilitate research in public administration and allied subjects.

2. Centre for Management Development (CMD)

CMD as a resource institution was established by decree 51 of 1976 as the operational arm of the Nigerian Council for Management Development with the responsibility of stimulating, promoting and coordinating management aspect of businesses.

3. Industrial Training Fund (ITF)

ITF was established by decree now act number 47 of 6th October, 1971 to promote and encourage the acquisition of skills in commerce and industry with a view to generating a pool of indigenous trained manpower sufficient to meet the needs of the economy.

4. Manpower Development Institute (MDI) Dutse, Jigawa State

MDI Dutse, Jigawa state, came in to being with the enactment of an enabling law number 7 of 2010. It was established primarily to provide training for both state and local Sgovernment staff of the state. It is the think tank of Jigawa state with power to operate in both the public and the private sectors of not only Jigawa state but in Nigeria as a whole (Newman, 2011).

The Nigerian Civil Service

The Nigerian civil service was created by the British colonial administration. Today the civil service still remains an executive agency of government responsible for the implementation of government's policy. With the expanding role of government and the civil service in particular, training for its civil service has become imperative. Despite this disposition, the service has been described to be invaded by forces that have lowered standards and undermine the vitality, integrity and cohesion of the institution. Quality and competence have been sacrificed on the altar of greed. Favoritism, bribery and sundry vices have all crept in to the system.

In view of this, the need to train and re-train the workforce is never an issue to argue about.

Emerging Challenges Facing Manpower Training and Development in Nigeria

There are a lot of challenges facing manpower training and development in the Nigeria civil service that are akin to the 21st century. These among others include the following:

1. **Technological Challenges.** As technology always come with changes, developments and improvement in systems and machinery, it is indispensable for workers to acquaint themselves with all these developments in order to remain relevant and up to date. For instance, a large number of workers serving in the three tiers of government are still yet to blend and become computer literate. This is a serious challenge as most of the training institutions are using modern techniques in training where computer illiterates are not carried along and find it difficult to apprehend. Examples include the use of power point and other public presentation packages and issuing CD-ROMs to participants at the end of a programme in place of printed papers.
2. **Haphazard training.** This refers to training exercise that is carried out without carrying out a Training Needs Analysis (TNA). As training is conducted to remedy an observed ailment of skill gap, knowledge gap or need for attitudinal change, a lot of training programs are conducted without TNA. If there is an observed knowledge gap or need for change in attitude of employees, training on skill acquisition will never solve the problem. This only leads to waste of funds without a commensurate result in employee performance.
3. **Lack of political will.** Lack of political will coupled with misplacement of priority has made manpower training and development issue to be relegated to the back. For this reason, workers spend several years in the service without attending training. This mostly results in declining productivity and loss of interest in the job.
4. **Prevalence of unaccredited training consultants.** This is yet another challenge. Many consultants that provide management training are doing so without accreditation. As such they knew little on the needs of the employees. Training is different from teaching and lecturing and one needs to undergo special (Train the Trainers) course before being able to

deliver effectively and get accreditation. Through these unaccredited consultants a lot of training funds are drained with little impact.

5. Knowledge based challenges. As one of the most serious challenges, knowledge based challenge makes training difficult to the trainers. Knowledge in Nigeria is only measured on the basis of certificates which most of its holders cannot defend. Lack of requisite knowledge that is sound and well grounded makes learning of new skills and ideas difficult.
6. Language and communication challenges. Even though English is the language of instruction in all levels of education and government's official language in Nigeria, many people cannot express themselves, understand and speak the language fluently. As such, when undergoing any form of training, they lag behind and mostly retard progress of the training sessions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear from the foregone that manpower training is an indispensable aspect of the public service. Decades of neglect of this important aspect has eroded quality and efficiency in the service. To put things right, management development institutions have a great task ahead as a result of a number of challenges peculiar to the 21st century.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered with a view towards finding a way forward;

1. There is need for increased political will and commitment from the side of leaders in order to give training the right position it deserves.
2. Align manpower training and development for civil servants to the critical needs of the country.
3. Embark on proactive research and Training Needs Analysis.
4. Create and maintain a corrupt-free public service culture.
5. Taking a coordinated approach by management training institutions in tackling any emerging challenge.
6. Embark on an intensive and all inclusive sensitization drive towards attitudinal change.

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