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Nigerian University Education and Human Resources for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

By

CHIMA THERESA ISIFE
*Institute for Development Studies,
University of Nigeria,
Enugu Campus.*

VERA NNEKA OGAKWU, Ph.D
*Institute for Development Studies,
University of Nigeria,
Enugu Campus.*

LINDA IFEYINWA EZE
*Center for Entrepreneurship and Development Research,
University of Nigeria,
Enugu Campus.*

and

COLLINS CHIBUZO NJOKU
*Institute for Development Studies,
University of Nigeria,
Enugu Campus.*

Abstract

Education is a prerequisite for economic growth, and economic growth is indispensable for the creation of the minimal condition necessary for any meaningful political development. This review paper tries to capture the role Nigerian university system plays in relation to sustainable development. The production of human resource through education enhances economic growth and political stability. People that work in the educational institutions are endowed with a range of abilities, talent and attitudes, influence and productivity, quality and profitability. They also, set overall strategies and goals, design work systems, produce goods and services. It is recommended that proper funding of schools and effective management of Human Resource

Management through effective and efficient staffing, reward system, staff development, motivation, staff maintenance and staff relations should be given priority attention in the nation so that education can produce functional citizens. It is concluded that human resources deserve proper treatment in all ramifications in order to perform better than ever to enhance sustainable development.

Nigerian Universities, like other world universities are charged by the United Nation to implement sustainable education for sustainable development. Education can lead to self development and sustenance. According to Ukeje (2005) educational system is the master determinant of all aspects of change. It has come to occupy a strategic position as the central determinant of economic, political, social and cultural character of society. Right from the time of Plato, it has been the view that “what you want in the state you must put into the school”. The school, so to speak, is the factory that manufactures the society. Education is therefore very important for human resources development in the whole process of nation building. Ukeje (2005) emphasized that economic growth and political growth can be achieved by human resources development through education rather than by the increase in capital, land and other classical factors of growth. This means that generally, there is a high relationship between a country educational development and its economic productivity and political life.

In nation building, Ibiam (2004) identified three facets of national development, namely; economic development, political development, educational and cultural development. The three are not just interrelated but intertwined and interdependent. This means that education is prerequisite of economic growth, and economic growth is indispensable for the creation of the minimal condition necessary for any meaningful political development. Education is thus the bedrock of any meaningful nation building.

Nigerian University System refers to the third tier or tertiary level of our educational level. Universities offer higher education after secondary education. University according to Ogbonnaya (2010) is a learning organization. The education offered in the universities is regarded as higher education. According to the National Policy on Education (National Policy on Education (NPE,1998), Higher Education covers the post secondary section of the nation’s Education System which is given in universities and other tertiary institutions.

As the 21st century world is undergoing rapid social, political, and economic changes, there is the urgency for a work force /manpower that is dependable and diligent and which can inspire the young citizens and prepare them for life in the changing world. Education has since been believed to be the only instrument for this

preparation in the changing world. Perhaps this is why Bosah (2005), posited that the driving force behind development or improvement in all nations of the world and in all fields of human endeavor has been traced to education at the center of which is the teacher. The formation, development and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspect of education. Education fosters the worth and development of the individual, for each individuals sake, and for the general development of the society (NPE, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

Nation building is the target of any educational system. It establishes the condition for growth and development. It helps in understanding and appreciation of modernization process. Through the production of human resource, education enhances economic growth and political stability. In spite of these benefits, Nwosu (2001) in argument maintained that generally speaking, the content of education in Nigeria is perhaps irrelevant to the need of prospective job seekers and teaching methods militates against the cultivation of desirable personality traits necessary for active and voluntary participation in economic life. Perhaps, Nigeria has the highest number of unemployed university graduates, at least in Africa, if not in the World (Nwosu, 2001). The unemployment affects graduates of all fields. Lawyers, engineers, accountants, and so on are today seeking for employment to teach in the private secondary schools, yet they are not given the chance. Doctorate degree holders are seen moving from one office to another seeking for employment. They have certificates, good ones indeed, in the Nigerian assessment, yet they are not self-reliant. This is so because the problem is not only because there is no job but also partly because the graduates have not learned anything which would be useful on the job and how to fend for themselves in self employment.

The curriculum makes inadequate provision for practical activities and experiences, and is dominated by examinations, external and internal. Students learn for the sake of passing examinations rather than for its value. These challenges lead to the production of non-technical university graduates. The number of unemployed graduates exceeds the economy's capacity to absorb them productively. The incessant unemployment in Nigeria can be rightly blamed on running an educational system which is unsustainable. We have all graduates in various fields such as in civil Engineers, Electrical, Electronic Engineers, Architects, etc, but whenever there is a road, house, dam etc. to be constructed for example, the contract will be awarded to expatriates who are graduates of foreign universities. This shows that even Nigerians do not have confidence in the competency of our graduates. It is reported that apart from the students not putting in their best to learn, every other thing in the university is in short supply. How can this nation produce graduates that will enhance the economy and sustainable development where money, sexual harassment and cultism are the

necessary qualification for passing examinations? The problems are that under these conditions, the necessary skills knowledge, values and attitudes required for nation building cannot be achieved.

It is no understatement to say that the Nigerian government over the years has not been meeting the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendation of 26% of the total budget allocation to education sector. A very disastrous consequence of this financial crisis is the loss of much valuable manpower to overseas countries. Odekunle lamented that the universities lost lecturers in sensitive and critical areas of development to tertiary institutions both within and outside the continent.

Zayyad (1986) in Akindutire (2004) observed that it has been difficult to attract enough good people into the university system not only because the general conditions of service are not sufficiently attractive but also because the supporting facilities for meaningful research are not just there. The increasing gap between the identified financial needs of these institutions and what they actually received has created several crises in the higher education system. It is against this background that the authors decided to write on the topic.

Human Resource

Okafor (2005) noted that human resources refer to the totality of energies, skills, knowledge and experience available in a country. By implication it is human beings that can possess these characteristics. Therefore, people that work in the educational institutions are endowed with a range of abilities, talent and attitudes, influence and productivity, quality and profitability. They also, set overall strategies and goals, design work systems, produce goods and services. Hence, by virtue of the roles they assume in the educational organizations in order to achieve educational goals they become human resources. Therefore, human resources refer to the personnel, staff and officer in an organization for example the school. Human Resources simply means the personnel, people or manpower of the organization, (Ihunda, 2005) while resource development deals with the activities undertaken to assist the employees or human resources in performing additional duties and assuming positions of importance in the organizational hierarchy (Nwachukwu, 1988).

The human resources are different from other resources because it is potentially a living, creative and complex resource, whose behavior and performance in any organization is influenced by at least four variables: capability/ ability, motivation, role perception and environmental contingencies etc. The human resources, in organizations, sometimes are referred to as man power, personnel, officer, staff, workers, etc. Ofoegbu (2009) more succinctly stated that human resources are different

categories of personnel that provide different services such as in teaching learning process. He grouped them thus:

1. Specialists in specific subject matters like English language, Mathematics, Integrated Science, and other school subjects. They are professional teachers with teaching qualifications.
2. Highly skilled and experienced staff that provide administrative and other services, example: Bursars, Guidance Counselors, Typists, Librarians, etc. These people can give learners talk on various vocations or help in day to day running of the school.
3. Other professionals like medical doctors, lawyers, business executives such as general managers and managing directors of companies and factories. These people can also help to educate learners through talks and seminars on choice of career.

Non Professionals: The non professionals are those who lack professional skill of the job they do, and still provide services in the teaching-learning process, for example; auxiliary teachers, casual workers etc.

Teachers in the tertiary institutions are the real agents that operate the educational system to ensure that the learners gain socio-political, economic, cultural and technological awareness necessary for changes to take place in the country. The teachers help in the development of various skills and competencies that will in turn, help to equip individuals in the society for their various roles (Umeozor, 2010).

Education and Sustainable Development

Education has been acknowledged by all as a major agent of emancipation and development of any nation. It is an important channel through which development can be attained. It is the most important instrument of change. This means that fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of the society has to be preceded by education revolution. Education is thus a process of social reformation. It breeds citizens who are conscious of the role they are expected to play in the society. Through education, religious, political, economic and such other institutions are propagated. Based on this, Anachunam (2007) sees education as the process of transmitting societal values and desirable attitude from one generation to another.

Nwangwu *et al* (2001) defined education as the process by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, skills, and attitudes in its cultural setting and heritage in order to foster continuously the well

being of mankind and guarantee its survival against the unpredictable which at times are hostile and destructive to man and nature.

However, it is pertinent to point out that it is only functional education that can help a nation to reach her development goals. Supporting this view, Nigerian Policy on education (NPE, 1998) states that there is need for functional education for all for the promotion of a progressive United Nigeria. It further states that, to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive, while interest and ability should determine individuals' direction in education. Thus the best education for development, according to Denga (1997) is that of the heart, the head and the hand. When education aims at the development of the human productive capacity, it means education that provides the specific and basic skills that are essential for the production of goods and services required by the economy. Ifegbo (2005) refers to these types of education as education for Sustainable development.

Education for sustainable development promotes systems of ethics and values that promotes cultural dialogue, democratic decision-making and appreciate use and management of natural resources seen as social learning. It is an education that increases concern about sustainable practices and increases and increases people's capacity to confront and master change. It does not only inform people but also change them. This type of education is a means for personal enlightenment, cultural renewal and central to sustainable development.

Education for Sustainable Development, according to UNESCO (2005), encourages knowing what others are doing around the world as a significant source of learning and innovation and is frequently an encouragement and motivation force to preserve in the long-term. Education for Sustainable Development enables students to develop knowledge, skills, understanding and values to participate in decision making about the way people do things individually and collectively, both locally and globally, that will improve the quality of life now without in any way diminishing the possibilities and opportunities of future generations nor damaging the planet for the future. Education for Sustainable Development will empower students to participate in local and global environmental issues.

Human Resource Management (HRM) in Education

HRM concerns the procurement or recruitment /staffing, welfare/maintenance, training and retraining, placement, promotion, motivation, relationships, compensation/ rewards, transfer and discipline of staff. HRM lies at the care of the efficiency of the organization. According to Otu (2006), it deals with the establishment of procedures from the employment and payment of workers or staff. It is the arrangement of conditions which make possible greater self direction by staff in the performance of their duties. Ibukum (2004) opined that staff personnel management is

the act of staff selection, recruitment, development, transfer/ posting, discipline, control, and supervision. In other words, HRM is a basic function of management that determines the performance of staff in any organization. This simply implies that when staff in the education systems are adequately recruited, selected and supervised, inducted and adequately rewarded, and provided for, properly developed, appraised and promoted on the job, they will be committed to the job, remain dedicated and productive in the education system. This would signal advancement in the educational system and consequently, students of the tertiary institution upon graduation will be useful to the society which will enhance the sustainable development in the country.

However, HRM simply put is the coordination of the activities and efforts of the workers in education organization so that educational goals are achieved. Hence, in education it is the process of motivating workers to maximize their performance in order to obtain maximum output from them starting from the day they were recruited. Put differently, it means utilizing people to perform duties and functions in the schools.

Human resources are essential to get work done. Therefore, every educational system at every level depends heavily on the human resources (teachers) for execution of its programmes. The teacher is a critical resource for effective implementation and realization of the educational policies and objectives at the practical level of the classroom (Okpara, 2005). It is the teacher who ultimately interprets and implements policy as represented in the school curriculum, which is designed to actualize educational goals (Yepwi, 2009). Maintaining and improving educational standards is only possible through teachers. The teacher, therefore, is the most indispensable entity in the school. He is the greatest aid to learning. The shortage or poor management of teachers reduces the extent to which the curriculum can be delivered effectively (Nwaka, 2011).

The Characteristics of Human Resources

The characteristics of human resources in the process of teaching and learning include the following:

1. They are highly interactive depending on the mood or wishes of the persons.
2. They are highly adaptable and flexible depending on the skills and attitude of the person.
3. They possess and reflect empathy.
4. They can simultaneously process multiple sensory inputs from various sources and select those that are most critical to the current situation.
5. They are amenable to training and retraining.

It is not an overstatement that no matter how good/efficient/qualified a human resource is, if it is not properly managed, the goodness/quality would be lost. Hence, the need for management of human resources so that human resources can efficiently and effectively navigate through the task areas and improve quality of the investment in human resources through education.

In education parlance, management is said to be the process which deals with utilizing both human and material resources available to education for the achievement of set educational objectives, using such managerial skills of planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and decision making. It is the art of getting things done through people or with people, otherwise called subordinates under the coordinatorship of the super ordinate/administrator/school head or manager. Management means the method by which the leader utilizes material and human resources to achieve predetermined organizational goals (Otu, 2006). Therefore, management in education is the process that deals with utilizing the scarce human and material resources to achieve predetermined educational goals.

Functions of Human Resources Management in Education

HRM education is a set of practices and methods of integrating and maintaining the teaching staff in school so that the school can achieve their purpose and as well as meet the goals for which they were established (Ocho, 2005). In other words it is the motivation and coordination of the activities and effort of the teachers in school in order to obtain maximum output from them and consequently achieve the goals of education optimally. These functions include the following:

1. **Staffing/ procurement of staff:** The HRM functions start with the process of recruitment and selection by which educational institutions get the best personnel to interpret and implement the curriculum programmes. The staffing of schools is a job performed by the Ministry of Education through its agencies in the Federal and state governments. Staffing in education deals with obtaining people with appropriate and necessary skills, abilities, knowledge and experience to fill vacant teaching posts in the schools. Plans are made on the number and cadre of personnel needed. Staff could be sourced internally or externally or both. Internally, it could be effected through postings or promotions or transfers. If externally, staff vacancy will be advertised followed by interview (written or oral) or short listing before interview.
2. **Job performance rewards:** This deals with the designs and administration of rewards for jobs performed. Practices include performance appraisal and benefits. It is very important that management, the Ministry of Education and its agencies take the issue of reward system very seriously. Staff performance would increase

3. substantially if they are adequately compensated according to the quantity and quality of work. Lumping workers together as is done in Nigeria will not augur well for national development.
4. **Staff development:** This involves analyzing the training requirements in schools to ensure person possess the knowledge and skills needed to perform satisfactorily in their duties. It is a process of appraising staff performances and identifying their key skills and competence that need developing/training to improve their skills for better performances. The success of educational organizations hinges on the strength and quality of the staff members. As the society changes, so does its demands and expectations.
5. **Staff maintenance:** This involves administration and monitoring of work-place safety, health and welfare policies to motivate and retrain a competent workforce and as well comply with the statutory standards and regulations. This concerns making the work environment conducive for workers.
6. **Staff relations:** This includes recognizing the staff as human beings with feelings, interest, needs, and emotions and treating them as such with fairness and respect. By implication, although the work must be done effectively, the workers to perform it are more important than the work itself. There must be a good communication network in the school to enable workers constantly informed of the progress being made in the school.

Challenges of Human Resource Management

There have been challenges facing HRM and these problems if not solved will retard the sustainable development in the country. HRM has become notably complex in the sense that as human beings they are not reliable for doing the thing over and over in exactly the same way. They can be expensive depending on their cadres, qualification and skills. A number of factors have contributed in this complexity. These factors include:

The enormous problems of staffing, The current call for the use of Information Communication, Technology (ICT) in education, Poor recruitment process, Poor reward system, Poor working conditions, Poor supervision, Poor personnel commitment to work, Poor funding and Poor induction of human resources.

Contemporary Issues in Human Resource Management: Poor salary structure for all levels of education institution constitutes a stumbling block to the smooth administration of the system.

1. Some schools are over-populated beyond the administrative expertise of school heads.
2. Unionism activities, which have come to stay in all organizations, are being regarded by many school authorities as confrontational, oppositional and awful in its dealings.
3. Very poor financing of the education industry has reduced its functionality to a low degree. The dilapidated equipment, materials and buildings cannot be put in place for effective teaching and learning conditions.
4. HIV/AIDS disaster results in the industry reducing some of its scarce experts and student population whom may not be replaced in the short run.
5. Brain drain is sweeping away some experts at different levels to better options because of poor conditions of service.

Conclusion

Staffing has long been an integral part of the management process. No education system has ever existed without human beings (academics and non-academics) planning and organizing its processes. Very high considerations must be given to this facet of the organization, especially in the present dispensation of increasing environmental complexities and organizational sophistication. The teaching and non teaching staff have a great task to perform in order to keep the educational system afloat. This is very eminent today with the trend of globalization, which demands more skilful people for development and growth of various nations. With these the human resources deserve proper treatment in all ramifications in order to perform better than ever to enhance sustainable development.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussions the following recommendations were made: Government should become more responsive to the plight of teachers. Proper funding of schools, HRM through effective and efficient staffing should be done. Staff should be rewarded /motivated. There should be encouragement of staff development through seminars and workshops. Staff maintenance and staff relations should be given priority attention in the nation so that education can produce functional citizens in the society to enhance productivity.

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