

# **MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT FOR INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY: THE CHALLENGES OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines manpower development, and maintenance of stable industrial relations for increased productivity as the major challenges of personnel management in Nigeria. The paper argues that Nigeria is endowed with abundant human and natural resources but has not been able to adequately develop, motivate and utilize her workforce for economic progress. It discusses the relationship between manpower development and motivation on the one hand and productivity on the other, and attributes the low level of productivity in the country to inadequate attention given to the development, motivation and utilization of available manpower. Among other recommendations, the paper calls on personnel managers and other appropriate authorities to give more attention to matters relating to the development, motivation and proper utilization of the workforce as a major step towards increasing productivity.

## **Introduction**

Organizations are usually established to accomplish a definite goal or set of goals. Such a goal or set of goals may be essentially social, economic, political or varied combination of these, depending on the motive of the proprietors of the organization. Whatever its goals, however, an organization employs three major categories of resources for their attainment. These include exemplified by machinery and buildings, financial resources and human resources otherwise known as labour or workforce. Labour is the active factor that “plays God” by generating, mobilizing, manipulating, and controlling the other factors in the production process. Ability, motivation and productivity are labour related concepts. In other words, they are attributes of labour or the workforce that, itself, is the principal focus of personnel management. Human beings come into an organization with varied needs and expectations. The realization of these needs according to Vroom and Deci (1970), Thomason (1981) and Leviatan and Werneke (1984) influenced the designing of different management strategies to direct human energies towards achieving both workers’ and organizations’ goals. In terms of an organization, productivity is an index of achievement of its goals, be such goals service, products, or profit. Productivity thus, describes the realization of any set goals in terms of the designed quantity and quality. In economic terms, however, productivity is defined as ‘ output per man per hour, quality considered’ (Sutermeister, 1969). Productivity levels vary with nations, organization, workforce and with individual employees.

Developing countries, especially in Africa, are facing the major problem of low and poor productivity. Agriculturally, they have not been able to produce enough food and other agricultural products to meet the needs of their teeming populations. Industrial production is low in quantity and the situation is worse in the public sectors of the economies of these countries. In the case of Nigeria, for example, the Federal Government and various State Governments have adopted the policy of privatization and commercialization as a panacea. The impact of these, however, is yet to be felt by the people.

Many explanations have been offered in relation to the problem of low productivity in developing countries. Some people have blamed it on the peoples, cultures and on the inherent laziness, unintelligence and low productive capacity of African labour (Yesufu, 1984). Others see it as the problem of alien policies imposed through Nigerians who act as compradors or political and economic surrogates for foreign interests. Yet some other analysts explain the situation in terms of poor managerial ability and acumen. Like this latest school of thought, this paper holds the human factor and particularly the personnel management practice culpable. The problem borders on poor training and motivation.

## **Objectives of the Study**

Against the background of the foregoing problem, this paper seeks to:

**Obusi, O. Oko and E.B.J. Iheriohamna, Ph.D**

- i. Examine the nature of Nigeria's workforce,
- ii. Examine the relationship between workers' ability, motivation and productivity in Nigeria,
- iii. Explore ways of increasing productivity through the interplay of worker's ability and motivation,
- iv. Proffer strategies towards effective development and motivation of workers with a view to enhancing their productivity.

**Significance of the Study**

This paper has some implications for personnel management practice in Nigeria. Personnel managers and other technocrats have not been able to work out effective integrated motivational schemes. They tend to employ motivational factors in a truncated and an atomistic manner that often demotivate rather than motivate the worker. One significance of this paper, therefore, is that it will enhance the motivation skills of personnel managers in the country. This will ultimately lead to improvement in overall productivity and national development Besides, this paper comes as an addition to the existing corpus of knowledge and ideas in the area of focus.

**Theoretical Framework and Assumptions**

This paper is based on the theoretical construct which states that workers react favourably to experiences and situations which they feel are supportive and contributory to their:

- (a) Sense of worth.
- (b) Development in terms of skills, physical and mental abilities; and
- (c) Need achievement.

Essentially, each and every one wants to feel he has a place in this world and group behaviour indicate that people desire appreciation and recognition, participation, security, independence, influence and feeling of accomplishment and achievement. No one wants to be identified as lacking ambition disliking responsibilities, indifferent to organizational needs, and resistant to change especially in this age of technology and management science.

Vroom and Deci (1970): Milbourne and Francis (1980), Ebegbe (1987) and Iheriohanma (1997) contend that, in an attempt to help workers realize their desires, motivational and reinforcement strategies have been designed. These strategies are implicitly recognized in the theoretical constructs of Mayo, McGregor, Likert, Leavitt, Fayol, Kreither, etc. (See Vroom and Deci, 1970, Miboune and Francis, 1980). The results of the application of the strategies include improved performance level, participation, goal attainment and increased productivity.

In line with the above theoretical constructs, this paper assumes that:

- (a) Nigeria's workforce is imbued with abilities and talents that if adequately promoted and appropriately harnessed, will enhance productivity;
- (b) The level of productivity of workers depends on the level of motivation they have to satisfy certain needs.
- (c) Differential achievement motives among the Nigerian labour account for differential levels of productivity.
- (d) Emphasis on productivity without recourse to the twin factors of ability and motivation engenders instability in Nigeria's industrial relations.

**Methodology**

This paper is a literary or library research work. Its data derived mainly from secondary sources of data that include appropriate texts, reports, research projects, theses, journals, etc. Its scope is limited to the Nigerian situation, although inferences are drawn from examples and works that do not necessarily have Nigeria as their focus. The paper employs qualitative method of analysis bothering on description discussion.

**Nigeria's Workforce and Development of Abilities**

Nigeria is endowed with abundant human and natural resources. She has an area of 913,073 square kilometers (Daily Times. 1983) and a population of over 120,000,000 people. Her main mineral resources include petroleum, tin, columbite. coal, iron ore, zinc, lead, limestone and uranium ore. Her non-mineral wealth includes main exports as cocoa, rubber, timber, hides and skins and soya bean. Given such stupendous amount of human and natural resources, one would imagine that Nigeria should have become an economic force to reckon in the comity of nations. But she is very far from this mainly because

she has not been able to adequately and effectively harness and mobilize these resources in this direction.

The nation's workforce remains largely undeveloped and unskilled as the level of literacy and ignorance also remains high. And even among the so called skilled manpower, there is a preponderance of white collar job seekers. This is largely blamable on the colonial education system which was not geared towards development of potentials and capabilities of the workforce. Not only was the education generalist rather than specialized in content but its curricula were not tailored towards the development of indigenous technology such as crafts, pottery making, iron-works, bonemending, etc. There was not much attempt to adapt and domesticate the education system.

The national workforce has a great deal of potentials that remain largely underdeveloped and untapped. Yet, the number of educational institutions including polytechnics, colleges of education, Universities of technology and agriculture and research institutes has increased by leaps and bounds. Added to these, of course, are staff development programmes of organisations. According to Ebege (1987), such programmes meant to develop employee talents, knowledge and skills for the purpose of improving organisations' effectiveness have not been effectively implemented. Only few workers in each organization have benefited from training programmes of all kinds. An empirical M.Sc. research work carried out by Obasi (1999) on training in the Imo State Local Government system for 1985-88 revealed the data below.

**Table 1: Training Data for Imp State Local Government System for 1985-88**

Year	Total No. of Staff	Total No. Training Beneficiaries	% Total Staff Strength
1985	7,872	21	0.3
1986	7,752	722	9.3
1987	8,184	12	0.1
1988	8,099	3	0.0

**Source:** Local Government Service Commission Annual Reports: 1986, 1987, and 1988.

The above data vividly illustrate the level of relegation which training suffered in our work organizations. Ebege in his own study, observed that manpower development programmes are coordinated at the top management level and this explains why the senior staff had greater development opportunity than the junior employees. Even when training opportunities are extended to the junior staff at all, they are so done as a perfunctory exercise undertaken more for the contract benefit associated with them than for their utility and effect.

Levitan and Weineke (1984) observed that the demographic shift and entry of increased number of uneducated women into the labour force increased the proportion of relatively unskilled and inexperienced workers. The influx adversely affected productivity.

The ability of the Nigerian workforce can best be developed through the instrumentality of education. Education creates opportunities for talents and abilities to be developed in relation to labour market demands. Industrial societies require creativity, innovativeness, critical minds and technocrats to tackle the practical problems of the nation. Levitan and Weineke (1984) opined that "a strong educational background is related to productivity because it is associated with the ability to understand and to adapt more quickly to change". They further argued that increased educational qualification whose aim is the fortification of skills and ability of workers tend to facilitate technological advancement and productivity. Apart from improving skills and knowledge, higher education in itself is an incentive to work. It stimulates achievement motives of workers by enhancing the quality of their (acquired and inherited) capabilities.

Scientific and technological educations are veritable means by which such advanced societies as United States of America, Britain, France, Japan, etc find themselves ahead of others. The educational policy of any nation must be tailored to the material and other needs of society for it to be relevant. The failure by our political authorities and educational policy makes to appreciate the

relationships between education, culture and technology in relation to the development of abilities has militated against progress and higher productivity in the country.

However, education or training without motivation cannot lead to high productivity. Thus, the thesis of this paper is that it takes the interplay of the right type of education or training and motivation to increase the productivity of the workforce. Here in lies the major challenges faced by personnel managers in work organizations.

## **Personnel Management, Training, Motivation, Industrial Relations and Productivity**

Personnel management, as an aspect of management, is a set of activities purposively related to people at work. It is a specialist function of management concerned with activities of setting objectives, formulating policies, inspiring efforts, regulating incentives, controlling and co-ordinating the labour force. The functional sphere of this aspect of management is more prominently delineated in larger organizations and public service with high degree of division of managerial labour (Blau and Scott, 1977). Thomason (1984) defined personnel management as that specialist management concerned with people at work and with their relationships within an enterprise. Personnel management is concerned with people at work. It deals with recruitment, hiring, promotion, welfare and discipline of an enterprise's workforce.

Training, development and motivation of the workforce are essential personnel functions. Training is the process of preparing a worker to perform his job or task better. On the other hand, development has to do with the improvement of the total person - his knowledge, skills, cognitive ability, perceptual ability, reasoning and analytical capacity, etc. Thus training is only an aspect of development. Bedeian and Glueck (1983) defined training as a systematic process of modifying the behaviour of workers for the purpose of achieving an organization's goals/ objectives. As noted already, training, developing and motivating the workforce are basic functions of personnel management in any work organization.

Productivity in organizational context is the ability to bring about desired results or to hit work targets measurable in qualitative and or quantitative terms. It measures the fruitfulness of human labour employed under varying circumstances, the efficiency with which resources (capital and human) are employed in production process and is the major factor that determines the trend of rewards and real wages. Productivity is a function of several factors the most important of which are training and motivation. Apart from increasing productivity through the enhancement of skills, efficiency and organizational effectiveness, training, among other functions, provides security against redundancy of work force, reduces industrial accidents and labour turn-over, equips the workforce with capacity to cope with changing circumstances, motivates it (workforce) and guarantees the organization continuity through easy and smooth succession.

Training and development of the workforce can be carried out through formal and informal processes. Specific examples of formal genre of training include class lectures, conferences, seminars, workshop, group discussions, demonstrations, audio-visual lessons, apprenticeship, job rotation, orientation etc. Delegation of responsibilities is a typical example of an informal training.

One of the fundamental challenges of personnel management is how to optimize and maximize the utilization of an organization's workforce for the attainment of any set goals. To overcome such challenges, personnel management resorts to basic activities namely: appropriate staff development, motivation and training. These are very necessary for effective utilization of the existing workforce and for increasing productivity. No matter how well-trained the workforce may be, it is not appropriately deployed and motivated, there will be no increase in productivity. On the other hand, if the workforce is motivated in some other ways without training, productivity will also not result. It therefore, takes the interplay of training: motivation and appropriate deployment to guarantee increase in productivity. The failure of personnel management in Nigeria to appreciate this truism largely accounts for the low level of production especially in the public sector of the economy.

A cursory look at the pattern of labour training and utilization in Nigeria reveals a great deal of anomalies and incongruities. Some workers are given training opportunities but are not appropriately deployed after the training (Fashoyin, 1992). In some cases, workers are given other forms of incentives but denied training opportunities which Herzberg identified as a motivator, Although we have argued that training, motivation and appropriate deployment complementary lead

to increase in productivity, this should not be taken to mean that these are the only factors that enhance productivity in work organization.

In the public sector, it is very common to find authorities in charge of training treating it perfunctorily. In such circumstances no effort is made to determine the training need of the workers, nor is adequate attention (if any) paid to the content of the training programme. And even after the training exercise, there is hardly any evaluation carried out to ascertain the degree of success or failure of the training. The major preoccupation of the authorities and even the trainees is the amount of pecuniary or material benefits that will accrue from the training exercise. If carried out this way (i.e. without due regard to the need for it, the caliber of resource persons, the content of the programme, the conduciveness of the venue, etc.) training becomes a useless exercise. Personnel managers or training authorities can make their training relevant and appropriate only if they maintain close interaction with the workers, or pay close attention to their job performances. This is necessary for accurate appraisal of the workers, appropriate

identification of their training needs and for the designing of appropriate training programmes to meet the identified needs.

Another notable factor that militates against national productivity is the counter-productive relationship between employers of labour and their employees. The unequal relationship existing between labour and employers (owners of factors of production) creates a very dangerous situation in the realization of our dream for high productivity. According to Fashoyin (1992), as long as the owners of factors of production employ their resource or capital as they deem fit to the utter disregard of the motivation of their employees and as long as they see themselves as performing a paternalistic service to their employees, it will be difficult to realize the training needs of the employees. This will also affect the designing of appropriate training programmes. Ultimately, this unequal relationship will affect industrial relations practice in both the public and private sector economy of Nigeria.

Beyond training, personnel managers must appreciate the complexity of human behaviour and be conversant with the various techniques of motivating workers as put forward by motivation theorists. One of such techniques hinges on the ideas of Thomason (1981) as quoted from Porter and Lawler (1968) who, in their “ Expectancy-Instrumentality - Valence Theory”, explain the relationship between performance and expectation. The theory thus, explains the relationship that exists between what a person does and the expected outcome from the organizational environment. According to Thomason (1981: 272), decision and willingness to expend effort will depend upon these major perceptions and beliefs about effort - reward situation.

These are that:

- (a) Availability of rewards for successful achievement results from efforts expended\* the rewards are believed to have value or attractiveness to the individual;
- (b) The achievement of success resulting from expending of effort will bring forth expected rewards; and
- (c) The expenditure of effort will result in successful achievement.

The theory further stated that:

Successful performance (achievement) will depend not only upon this decision to expend effort but also upon traits and skills as abilities of the individual (which will set a boundary to potential achievement) and upon the role perceptions of the individual (Thomason, 1981: 271-273).

The reward associated with successful performance may be intrinsic or extrinsic. A feeling of satisfaction that a worker has as a result of his successful performance of a task, for example, is an intrinsic form of reward. On the other hand, the promotion or bonus he receives as a result of the same reason is an extrinsic reward.

The acceptance of the reward is adjudged to conform to the individual's perception of what is fair and equitable. The satisfaction and equitability of reward stimulate the worker to give out his best and where this is sustained, it results in high productivity. An obvious implication of the theoretical formulation explained above is that there is differential achievement motive amongst workers. This must guide personnel management in designing strategies for motivation, rewards and inducement.

Motivation comes in different forms, e.g. through incentives such as pay increase, promotion, allowances, provision of housing, transportation and free health services. Unlike their counterparts in the advanced countries who enjoy a great deal of social welfare or social security measures provided by their governments. Nigerian workers enjoy little or no motivation at all. The so-called living wage which they enjoy at present can hardly sustain them in the face of high rent, high medical services, high cost of transportation, high cost of education and high cost of living in general. If the government gives adequate attention to some or all of these in designing motivational packages for its workers, the incessant demand made by the workers for salary increase will be minimized. After all, motivation carries a great deal of implications for industrial relations as well as for productivity.

Contrary to the view held by many Nigerians, Yesufu argues that the Nigerian worker does not have any inherent incapacity to achieve high levels of productivity, he maintains that in similar situations, Nigerian workers are not inferior to their European counterparts. Yesufu acknowledged that what seemed different between countries and establishments were the relative skills and experiences of the workers: adequacy and quality of supervision; form of relationship among management, the trade union and employees; wage system; security of employment; human resources development programmes; and systems of motivations etc. He however, argues that what seemed peculiar with Nigerian, and especially

African workers were the burden of increased family commitment; low levels of skill and industrial experiences, personal factors such as health, nutrition and fatigue. Yesufu therefore, suggests that in designing motivational packages and human resources development programmes, the above peculiarities should be top priorities. It is only through this that we can achieve high productivity in both public and private sectors.

### **Recommendations**

The conclusion of this work will highlight the major points. One of such points is that the manpower or workforce is a veritable factor that makes any organization or nation tick. Another point is that Nigeria is endowed with abundant human and natural resources which successive governments of the state have not been able to effectively develop and harness. It is argued in the paper that a preponderance of the country's workforce is either undeveloped, untrained or ill-trained while a large proportion is under-utilized, and not motivated. This accounts for the low level of productivity, especially in the public sector of the economy. It also accounts for the poor or low level of industrial relations in Nigeria as well as explains its link with low productivity. In the light of its discussion, the paper recommends the following as strategies for increasing productivity, especially in the public sector.

- (a) Appreciation of the vital role of the education sector in producing the necessary manpower by giving it the prime of place in the national scheme of things.
- (b) Review of our educational policy/system with a view to making it more relevant to our local needs and circumstances.
- (c) Enhancement of the status of personnel management through restructuring of personnel units in public sector organizations with a view to making them more effective in their onerous task of manpower development and motivation for increased productivity.
- (d) Personnel management in Nigeria should de-emphasize simple control model and increasingly involve itself in the development of effective training and motivational schemes, policies, strategies and practices (Iheriohanma, 1997).
- (e) A Bureau of Public Service and Manpower Development should be established to work in conjunction with Ministries of Education and Labour and Productivity. This Bureau will be charged with the responsibility of systematically reviewing, planning and perfecting training and manpower development policies and method.
- (f) A fair and just scheme of remuneration should be established to redress the injustices and inequity that characterize the present wage system in the country. Those who perform similar job and make similar inputs at the same level and location should receive equal pay regardless of the organization where they are working (i.e. the principle of equal work in the same location).
- (g) More emphasis should be made to training and manpower development, especially in the public sector organizations.
  
- (h) An effective social security or social welfare scheme should be established to mitigate the socio-economic hardship experienced by Nigerian workers. Such a scheme will motivate workers to greater job performance and therefore enhance efficient industrial relations and national productivity.

Nigerian workers deserve more than they have been getting for their labour. They are the major force behind national productivity. They have to be developed, motivated and appropriately deployed to turn our ever-ailing economy around. A nation that ignores her workforce is doomed forever.

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