Possible Application of Sound Human Resource Development Techniques for Enduring Employment Relationships and Sustainable Tertiary Education Governance

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Abstract

This paper views Higher Education as catalyst for human resource development for sustainable governance and Institution-building. It recognizes employment relationships in the tertiary education system as being very complex, involving often delicate diversities as well as several competing multilateral interests and decision processes. It is therefore concluded that tertiary education governance should leverage strategic human resource development approaches, which in turn, should encourage effective and efficient utilization of human resources required in meeting the demands of their founding objectives.

1. General Introduction

The structure of this paper is broken into six broad parts for ease of presentation. Background information is initially provided on the societal role of education and social capacity building, while some key associated underlying concepts (e.g. human resource development / management, human resource planning, human resource accountability, e.t.c.) are explained. Thereafter, the issue of tertiary education development and human resources is discussed. The variables that influence availability and management of human resources in the tertiary education sector are further elaborated, with a particular emphasis on the imperative of strategic human resources development for possible sustainable futures of tertiary education governance and institution-building. The paper concludes that the future of the tertiary education system, especially in an emerging nation such as Nigeria, lies in the embrace of best practices of tertiary education governance, including sound human resource development, human resource accountability and reporting as well as proactive initiatives in favour of strategic capacity building for symmetrical organization development in line with the founding objectives and in the best interest of public good.

2. Conceptual Framework of Thought

Education is regarded as the singular most important instrument for holistic human development and the empowerment of the populace of any nation. Obielumani (2006) observed that education is the super-structure on which economic development and societal growth are predicated since innovation and creativity usually come from the educational environment. The global perception agrees that, for economic and social development to be achieved effectively there is a need for advancement in, and the application of, knowledge (Adebayo, Oyenike and Adesoji, 2007). It is evident that illiteracy, or the lack of formal education, often constrains the logical process of human development in a nation. Given the importance of human capital and its harnessing for economic growth and sustainable development, widespread or free education is often a desirable ideal. However, depending on a country's economic endowment or financial resources, and the existence of various competing demands of public expenditure within the social sector, the financing of free or widespread education may be problematic and or unaffordable or even uneconomical. However, with the effective and efficient management of a nation's resources (human, material or physical/natural and financial), organizations therein, including tertiary / educational institutions, can very well sustain their existence, operations and growth. The goal of tertiary education is to produce world-class professionals and entrepreneurs that will provide leadership and sustain national economic growth in the relevant fields, including the occupations and professions.

The notion of human resource development refers to the integrated use of training, organization, and career development efforts to improve individual, group and organizational effectiveness. In other words, it is the expansion of

human capital within an organization through the development of both the organization and the individual to achieve performance improvements with the primary objective of achieving sustainable human development. It is recalled that Adam Smith once stated, that "The capacities of individuals depend on their access to education". According to Swanson, Richard A & Elwood F. Holton 111 (2011) human resource development develops the key competencies that enable individuals in organizations to perform current and future jobs through planned learning activities. It may be pertinent to further state that groups within organizations often resort to human resource development in the initiation and management of change as well as in ensuring a match between individuals and organizational needs. In the tertiary education sector, human resource development, otherwise known as human capacity building, is attained through a regime of organized seminars and conferences and, more importantly, the purposive training and development of staff. In essence, the purport of tertiary education is to build a culture of better informed people who will contribute to overall development initiatives, sustain development and ensure best practices in the totality of service and project delivery.

Human resource management is the management of an organization's workforce. This managerial function is responsible for the attraction, selection, training, assessment and rewarding of employees, while also overseeing organizational leadership and culture, as well as ensuring compliance with employment and labour laws.

Human resource planning is a continuous process that identifies current and future human resource needs for an organization to achieve it goals. As defined by Bulla and Scott (1994), human resource planning is 'the process for ensuring that the human resource requirements of an organization are identified and plans are made for satisfying those requirements. It involves forecasting labour demand, analyzing present labour supply, and balancing projected labour demand and supply.

Human resource accountability is the requirement of answering or accounting for one's performance. Accountability is derived from authority. The important principle of accountability is single accountability. That is each person is accountable to only one person. Divided accountability is undesirable. Accountability by both individual managers and departmental leadership is a key factor in implementing robust performance development practices.

The concept of tertiary education governance, according to Meek and Davies (2009), "is, in the end, primarily about the governance and management of knowledge and the formation of coherent knowledge systems". A knowledge system can be defined as "an organized structure and formal process for generating and representing content, components, classes, or types of knowledge".

3. Objectives of Human resource development:

Reid A. Bates (2000) noted that, at the 2000 Academy for Human Resource Development Conference, a small group of researchers and practitioners (the Performance/Integrity Workgroup) had agreed that the primary purpose of human resource development is to enhance learning, human potential and high performance in work-related systems.

Human resource development programmes include planning development programmes based on identified performance gaps by enabling individuals to achieve short-term career goals and supporting succession planning through the implementation of leadership development programmes. Human resource development programmes also help organizations comply with local, state and federal regulations, often necessarily in tandem with the norms of employment legislation and regulatory imperative.

For a better understanding of the objectives of human resource development, it may be pertinent to have clear understanding of some additional terminologies. Therefore, the following definitions are also provided in the following segments of the paper. These are:

4. Human Resources

Human resources can be defined as the personnel of an organization, especially when regarded as a significant asset. This constitute the ultimate basis of the wealth of nations, capital and natural resources, are passive factors of production; human beings are creative agents who accumulate, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations and carry forward national development (Harbison, 1973. P. 39)

5. Human Resource Input

It is necessary for a country to be well endowed with natural resources if it is to develop a modern economy. However, as it were, this view is no longer tenable; the reason being that the Asian tigers of China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore

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and other countries have demonstrated, beyond any doubt, that a rich endowment of natural resources is not a sufficient condition in developing a modern economy. Nor is it necessary that a country be large for it to modernize, hence the need for highly trained human capital to harness these natural resources. This can only be achieved through education which has become a major source of skills and trained talent. Indeed, education plays a critical economic role –i.e. in the formation of human capital, which shows "the capital value of man".

6. Human Resource Development

It must be noted that human resource development is a broad field of research, theory and practice directed at the development of human resources, their rational and optimal use, and the establishment of an enabling environment in which these resources can find their full expression. The primary purpose of human resource development is to enhance learning, human potential and high performance in work-related systems as well as contribute to sustainable human development.

7. Human Potential

This refers to the vast latent capabilities in humans for growth and development. It is a critical element of human resource development because of the implications it has for the ongoing adaptation, change and well being of individuals as well as work systems.

8. Sustainable Development

It is on record that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the primary source on sustainable development. The mission of UNDP is the Global Compact. UNDP one of the key international assistance agencies on sustainable development with the main focus to help countries build and share solutions to what they have identified as the biggest challenges to the development process; democratic governance, poverty reduction, crises prevention and recovery, energy and environment, information and communications technology, HIV/AIDS. In its work the UNDP aims to protect and promote human rights, especially the empowerment of women. The UNDP Commissions an annual Human Development Report. This report is written by experts who analyze development data, ideas and practices from around the world. The hope is these reports will spur political debates, draw attention to issues, and help countries formulate development solutions.

The United Nations Division for sustainable development works to advice, train and build the institutional capacities of governments at their own request. The Division designs and implements development projects that the government subsequently becomes responsible for. The goal is to formulate policy around sustainable development. Their expertise covers: freshwater management, energy infrastructure, and land management, HRED (2003).

In order to understand the concept of sustainable development, it is important first and foremost to understand the concept of "development". The concept – "development", in its simplest term, is synonymous with growth. Curle (1973) viewed development "as the creation of a form of society in which certain conditions – safety, sufficiency, satisfaction and stimulus (4s) prevails for human beings. Hence, for development to bring about improvement in the living standards of the people, it must involve the economic, political, educational, and psychological transformation of its citizens. The concept of sustainable development was popularized in 1987 with the publication of the "Brundland Report" – the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. However, the concept of sustainable development, as used in this paper, means the continuous, practical, positive, proactive and deliberate improvement of resource inputs, of human, financial and facilities in tertiary education with the intention of positioning them to perform their assigned mandates. The over-riding goal of sustainable development is to permanently improve the living conditions of human beings, with the implication that social and economic development must be carried out in a way that is environmentally and ecologically sound, ensuring the continual rejuvenation and availability of natural resources for future generations.

9. Performance

This is the outcome or achievement that results from goal-directed work system behavior. Campbell (1990) notes that performance is distinguishable from effectiveness (i.e.an evaluative judgment of outcomes), productivity (i.e. level of effectiveness divided by the cost to achieve that outcomes), and utility (i.e. value of performance effectiveness or

productivity)

10. Work system

Reid A. Bates (2000) defined work system as an interdependent, organized architecture of human activities directed toward the accomplishment of a valued goal or outcome. This broad definition extends the concept of work system from a loose collection of individuals to organized work teams and formal for-profit and public service work organizations. The underlining fundamental assumptions of this definition are as follows. First, it assumes that work systems are carried to enhance the human condition. Second, it assumes that work systems are entities that do not exist independently from the people that comprise them.

11. Learning

For the purpose of this paper, learning is defined as a relatively permanent change in work system capabilities. It is a primary process through which human resource development accomplishes its objectives. It can result from formal, planned learning experiences such as those that occur in training situations. It also includes structured and unstructured self-directed learning, as well as unplanned, spontaneous learning that often occurs when one learns from one's work. Traditionally for human resource development, learning has been conceived of as occurring at the individual level.

12. Interface between Resources Input and Sustainable Development in the Tertiary Education System

Education, all over the world, is believed to be the most powerful and dynamic instrument for social-economic, political, scientific and technological development of nations (see Olutola, 1983; Fadipe, 2000; Aghenta, 2001, and Abdulkareem, 2001). This reasoning has informed the establishment of about one hundred and forty-two (142) universities in Nigeria to facilitate the production of the required critical manpower to drive the wheels of national development. In order to achieve this, it is important to always examine the relationship these resources have with the wider process of pursuing and achieving sustainable development in tertiary education.

13. On the need for sustainable tertiary education governance

For a country, such as Nigeria, to fulfill her quest for solid national development, there is the need to build sustainable and strong institutions. It is generally believed that education is an essential tool for achieving sustainability. People around the world recognized that, given the current economic development trends, the variables of public awareness, education and training are keys to moving society towards sustainability. In other words, for the Nigerian universities to be effective, efficient and productive there must be a collaborative interplay between human resources supply, infrastructure/facilities provision and adequate funding for maximum productive output. If a country is unable to develop the skill and knowledge of its people and utilize them effectively and efficiently within the context of the national economy, then such a nation would be unable to develop anything else.

It must be noted at this juncture, that, if there has to be sustainable development in the Nigerian tertiary education sector, the composite tertiary education institutions they have to be "adequately" staffed. The financing of education should be the concerted function of all the major stakeholders. This is because government alone cannot fund tertiary education. Inadequate funding of tertiary education has been identified as the prime cause of the problems of the tertiary education sector (Ifakachukwu, 2009). There is need for strong institutions for purposes of service delivery, government efficiency, and strong policy and programme implementation. More importantly, there is the need to build capacity divorced from our individual, regional, religious and personal aggrandizement in order to encourage public and private sector sustenance.

Correspondingly, it must be noted that, a country cannot grow or achieve much if she depends on individual genius, personality cult, and passion to run her public institutions. The development of infrastructure as well as maintenance and delivery of other state services need viable and functional institutions. These institutions should be the driving force towards the maintenance of the country's dilapidated roads, outdated power infrastructure and other conceivable public sector services.

It may be pertinent to further state, at this juncture, that government agencies have failed because they failed to build an enduring institutional structure. If the government had built sustainable institutions or leveraged on strategic

capacity building, most of the critical challenges that are being encountered in the country could have been minimized or possibly totally avoided.

Further still, on Nigeria, substantial investments of the nation's wealth should be made in favour of the training and retraining of the national workforce. This is because every nation's strength appears to also lie in her work force. If an emerging nation such as Nigeria would develop a well-dedicated and trained work force, a substantial part of the nation's developmental problems could have been solved.

14. Conclusion

By and large, the general importance of effective tertiary education governance cannot be under- stated, given the primacy of strategic educational and knowledge management for the possible attainment of necessary economic growth and sustainable human development across the globe. The pursuit of the inclusive but multidimensional goals of sustainable tertiary education governance and strategic capacity building are also dependent on the extent to which institutional human resources are prudently harnessed and managed.

Consequently, tertiary education governance has a critical role to play in this nexus. Indeed, successful tertiary education governance within the context of the 21st century must leverage on the tenets of sound resources allocation, utilization and financial management to catalyze processes of necessary capacity building for balanced organization development and sustainable futures of the knowledge industry.

Finally in conclusion, the instrumentality of human resource reporting, international best practices in strategic tertiary education governance and the necessary understanding of the harvestable pool of human resources that is available to the global tertiary education system as well as various mechanisms for putting these into usage for the promotion of industrial peace and organizational stability in the tertiary education system are all necessary ingredients for possible application of sound human resource development techniques for the attainment of enduring employment relationships and sustainable tertiary education governance.

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