Challenges of Managing in Nigeria Work Environment

Victor, Barinua Y.
Nzor, Nuka P.
Abolo, Aseinimieyeofori P.

Department of Accounting,
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Emenike Chikwe

Department of Management, Faculty of Management Sciences
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Abstract

It is no news that Nigeria is a blessed country with both human and natural resources with a land area of 983,213km^s and over 120 million people, as expected though with its own fair share of challenges and opportunity yet unaddressed owning to which the services of management practice becomes eminent and brings to bear the need for this paper on the challenges of managing in the Nigeria work environment. These challenges were viewed in two perspectives, external and internal with individual peculiarities. Handling our work environment demand collective effort, owing to which the skills of managing play a greater role within the said system. It is our believe then, that we create an institution which promote an ideal working environment that captures a more collective interest and speak of collective vision with the big picture in mind of today's issue with the focus on tomorrows challenge. A glance at Nigerian workers shows motivational problems which is traceable to the variety of circumstances as notice in the various environments. These challenges can be addressed by both management and government to introduce useful and lasting measures, practices to stir the sea of management to meet its "big picture".

Keyword: Managing, Challenges, Environment, Nigeria

Introduction

The peculiarity of Nigeria work environment demands a peculiar consideration with a view to proffering peculiar assertion. As Nigeria is bless with both human and natural resources with a land area of 983,213km^s and over 120 million people. Owning to which a holistic capturing and consideration of our working environment becomes eminent, bearing in mind the ever increasing challenge faced by managers that manage within such environment. A predominant factor becomes how to function well as a manager within such tasking environment, especially when most times the controlling variables to tackling the said challenge seem outside the reach of the manager. At such moment, managing becomes a daunting challenge.

    In trying not to be brave, the choice of this topic "The Challenges of Managing in Nigeria Work Environment" and its presentation can never be more eminent than now in the calendar of

today's Nigeria. The choice of writing this paper will be to capture both audiences within and outside the management cycle; at such the most common expression of English usage will be most important. Furthermore, our concern is not to reopen the exodus of management and its established concept as expressed in C. C. Nwachukwu (2002 p. 2) as the work of management in modern terms is generic and continuous but to narrow our discussion on specific areas that address the subject matter.

The Role of Management

It is interesting to stress the predominant roles management play in our everyday life not minding the classification of our given institution. The coverage of such scope transcends institutional boundaries and sectional disciplines. The possibilities of any functional institutions, is dependent on the function of management even where such terms are not captured or expressed literally. The connectivity with the cycle of action and reactions within any system demand and requires the services of management. The multiplier effect for the need of management practice is made accessible in its sectionalisation with each providing specific skill to furnish practitioners with relevant information to make better decision that will be visible in their everyday activities. These categories more often than not range from: Human resource management, Organizational behaviour and management, Change management, Marketing management, Management information system, Production/operational management, etc.

Deliberate attempt have been made to isolate the very essence of management practice within some giving disciplines and institutions as noticed in the definition of concept. The lack of which has literally reduce the impact of the given construct as against expected result and practicability envisage. C. C. Nwachukwu (2000). These attempt those not only negate the trend of history that trace management practice as far back to the very stone age. A result of which (Stetan Roboch 1963, Nwachukwu 1982) buttress that institution cannot function in isolation without management practice as that is the very essence of the institution. Management is viewed as the engine room that defines the flow of all economic and productive activities.

Nwachukwu (2000) had paid a similar focus on this topic "The Challenges of Managing in Nigeria Work Environment" with specific interest on management as a power horse of any nation. Predominant amongst Nwachukwu (2000) assertions on the subject matter were:

- The increasing demand for human capital development is hinged on the rational that the birth, growth and development of any business ventures is dependent on the human capital consideration which has a multiplier effect on the developmental trend in the nation.
- The creation of employment opportunity for all level of individual falls within the jurisdiction of management which in turn pose some level of challenge.
- The bedrock for management challenge falls and remains under the cycle of human resource management as presented in his diagram
- There exist two separate goals of both organizational and employee that must be reconcile for effectiveness within any system.
- Management is the engine that steams any economic progress within any system. Etc.
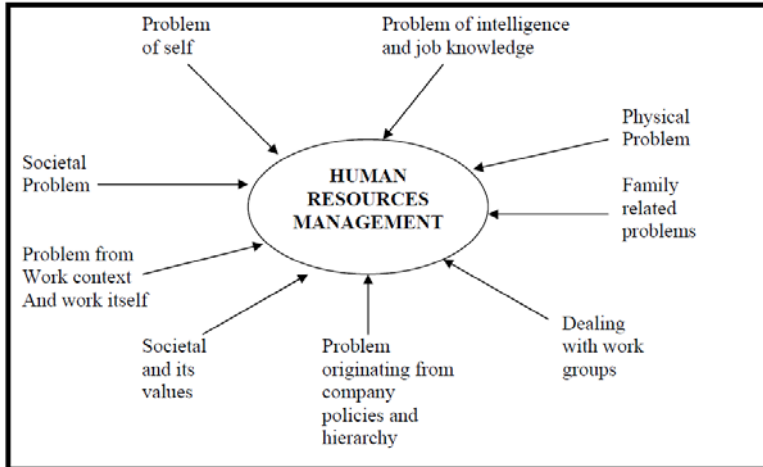
Source: Nwachukwu 2000

However, as laudable as it should seem, Nwachukwu (2000) on the subject matter identified a host of challenge and created the space for the way forward. Owning to which, the current paper will toe a similar line in the approach of management as an agent of change that functions efficiently and effectively on the basis of the past, in the eyes of today with the picture of tomorrow given cognizance to existing and would be environmental variables.

Concept of Managing

The emergence of management scholars has no less been visible in the number of definition attached to the concept of management or managing. So much that the words of Harold Koontz, 1961 in an article "Management Theory Jungle" was develop owning to the enormous definition of the term management and its application. Harold Koontz's work foresaw the future as today management archives lacks in no means on the meaning and definition of the subject matter. He opined a new vista for management scholars to measure the wealth of existing definition and presented a platform to narrow the relatedness and difference if any as they portray, with specific classification and categorization where applicable.

Traditionally the term management is viewed on tripod/levels:

1. Strategic managers: These are executives of an organization placed with a responsibility to development the company's goal. Specific focus is placed on long-term issue. The growth and overall effectiveness of the organization forms their very essence as their interaction often requires them to work extensively with outside individual and organization.
2. Tactical/middle line managers: The interest of these line of managers are the translation of the general goal and plans design and develop by the strategic managers into specific objectives and activities which most times requires proper coordination of resources for expected outcome.
3. Operational managers: They are regarded as the link between non-management personnel. These are lower level managers placed with the responsibilities of supervising the operations of the organizations.

It is interesting to note though that even with such classification; today's globalization has almost provided a plain sequence for management to operate freely.

Management and Managing Defined

The term management and managing are used interchangeably but they are in no means the same even were they are similar. Management as defined by the American Institute of Management "*it is used to denoted either a group of functions or the personnel who carry them out; to describe either an organization's official hierarchy or the activities of men who compose it; to provide antonym to either labour or ownership.*"

Managing on the other hand is the effective performance of the established function of management. Although, to some Nigerian, it is a term used to describe a state of absence or lack of satisfaction for an expected event or issue. I.e. trying to hold on in the face of perceive pressing hardship.

Chanlenges of Managing in Nigeria work environment

An overview of related literature underscores various perspectives as to viewing managing challenges and narrowing it more especially to Nigeria work environment. The everyday Nigerian manager is compounded with enormous challenge that requires a strong will to work the next day. The realization of any institutional progress is closely linked to informed information that shape existing or would be environmental forces which defines the extent of managerial practice. This environment could be external and internal with their individual peculiarities. However, the proper marriage of the first and the later create the green light for any manager not minding the weight of the said challenge. But you may ask is that ever possible in the current Nigeria? Where the wave of globalization wind for best management practice and value for human co-existence with core interest on transparency and reduce corruption, accountability, stewardship, peace and collective drive for ethical values and integrity amongst practitioners etc. tend to sound ill-timed and therefore should not see the light in the formulation of our personal and collective policies. However though, the present administration is making frantic effort to reposition the lost glory by tackling neglected generational managerial decision that would have yielded a better working environment. The choice for taking most of these unpopular economic and managerial decisions for the common good of our tomorrow is indeed a big challenge as visible in the last nationwide protest over the pump price of petro.

The big picture becomes the challenge for managing how to create a balance from the past system of approach to the modern rush for global recognition by placing a benchmark which in turn helps to strengthening the identified weakness within our institution and organization. To critically examine the challenges of managing within the context of Nigeria working environment in retrospect, two environments as captured above comes to bear. These environments are external and internal.

External Environment

These are those environmental forces that have the controlling power domicile outside the hands of the manager and its influence on the overall managing process holds bound to the level of management perceptions and climate outside the organization given cognizance to envisage

design projection. Among the scope of external environment that pose some level of challenge for managing are:

1. Challenge of political interference: Most Nigerian institution, organization and workforce has been so politicized that it takes only the divine hand of our creator to stand the chance of been recruited. However, there are still few organization and individuals that preach and practice the message of meritocracy and at such, some employee remains thankful for such gesture. The dilemma for most manager that are captured in this web of political selection, amongst pestilent issues they are that of positioning the manager to accept and manage personnel and employees that may not suit the specific criterion for the envisage job but must take responsibilities and account for their entire organizational activity. On the other hand, the sole appointment of external individual based on political association will pose a great deal of challenge for the employee and the internal factors within such system especially where such an appointee lacks the professional experience. Which is the story of most government owned institution in Nigeria.

2. Challenge of inconsistent government policies: The concise dictionary student edition defines policies as "*a course of action; a program of actions adopted by individual, group, or government, or the set of principle in which they are based*". As alluded from the above a clear cut contrast interplays within the Nigerian work environment, as each government (local, state and federal) create and introduce policies and regulations that produce dramatic effect on the overall work force which most times lacks the connection from the past to create the present and project for the future and thereby hampering the trend and transition of managerial activities to consider limited forecast which actually opposed and becomes the challenge for the process of strategic management that look at the future with the "big picture". The challenge for managers for such inconsistency are considered as a shift of focus in the specific agenda of any established government, for instance a policy on tariff increase/decrease and/or import and export issues that has a multiplier impact and effect on the kind of management decision that should and will be formulated and practice bearing in mind the sensitivity of employees and customers. Issues also predominant are:
   a. No guarantee of employee policies, thereby causing unguided layoff of workers and downsizing.
   b. Inconsiderate government policies etc.

3. Challenge of technological change: These are environment that allows the creation of new ideas that transform into creative and innovative product and services which impact the technological advancement within a given system. Today's managers are in the era of "*Information Age*" where the use of information translates into ideas which create and innovates inventions that position the human intellectual capital within the institution to be abreast with today's technology. The challenge however, for managing becomes how to tailor such creative and innovative process in a hypercompetitive environment as ours with the level of our technological backwardness. The manager must be faced with the reality to understand that technology actually transcend the use of machine and portrays the actual work system as to current trend in human capacity training and development, customer satisfaction, design of formulated policy etc. A greater challenge also within the space of technology for managing is the proper allowance and the need and marriage of creative ideas and innovation within the work force as it is considered to be imperative in organizational survival. To buttress, Goleman, Kaufman and Ray (1992) understand that

creativity and innovation demand a management culture that encourages the freest expression and the open exhibition of ideas. This actually can be viewed as a challenge to keep moving with the pace of global innovative demand. Is that really possible for the Nigerian system you may ask?

4. Challenge of social-cultural condition: These are regarded as a distinct environmental/societal norms, tradition, values and preference that interplay within the said society which are most times not constant but subject to change given cognizance to the peculiarity of the area or zone within the country. The challenge of managing in such environment becomes tasking to consider in relation some form of social responsibility function as to the consideration of host community/environmental norms, traditions, cultures in the creation and delivery of any business especially where existing business outfit or organization is introduce to a new norm and culture not envisage by the manager.

5. Challenge of insecurity: Insecurity almost sounds like a song that is in mind-eyes of almost every Nigerian today. So much that they cry out for help within our workplace has drastically water-down the passion for working not minding the amount of armed and security checkpoint in offices and institution. But an ideal secure society is that which its citizenry can work without the watch of security checkpoint but an internalized consciousness for individual freedom that transcend the movement of armed security agents. Let us restrict our discussion to our area of focus as the topic of Nigerian insecurity is tempting but remains an issue for another discuss. As for the level of challenge insecurity pose for managing is enormous as the level of most employee interest is not only on job enrichment but job security. Most working environment today are so hostile that managing becomes almost impossible where bomb blast is the order of the day, thereby making organization spend above the required procedure for specific, tasking and less productive activities owing almost to an incomplete secure working environment.

Internal Environment

These are challenges that are under the control of the organization and the management to better create an atmosphere that will provide the climate and culture for effective performance and productivity. Amongst the internal environment are:

1. Challenge of employee perception: The topic of perception cut across section, institution and organization which must be understood by managers to provide the platform to draw from its flow for any given issue, as the employee understanding and awareness of expected thought, actions, and result is traceable to the level of perception. Perception is not freely accessible directly by managers or fixed by a switch of a button which becomes a challenge because a proper understanding of the perception process play a greater role in the entire mind-set of the employee within their cycle of work operation. The length and breadth of organizational practice lies solely on the kind of understanding attached to information disseminated within the organization which the manager must understand is a product of perception.

2. The challenge of organizational culture: Edgar Schein defined organizational culture as: "*a pattern of basic assumption – invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as is learns to cope with the problem of external adaption and internal integration - that has*

worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to the taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problem."

3. Imaging a system where everything flow in the sequence as designed, were worker are happy at their workstation and wish that they had more than the normal working hour in a day and weeks to work, where managers listen painstakingly to the worker's comment about their general affairs and the general atmosphere within the organization is vibrant, i.e. an ideal environment that respect the value of workers and gives special preference to ethical values, spirituality etc. this kind of workplace can be created and among the starting point for such creation also falls within a workable organizational culture. The existence of a successful organization is hinged on the national, organization climate and culture that flourish within such systems. As society are a product of people and their prevailing culture which is dependent on the national culture that is learned, shared and a sum total of the believe system, custom and roles that is characterised in its population. Because there are individual peculiarities in the formation of culture, it poses some level of challenge for managing. Most predominant is occupational mobility or geographical mobility which demands a cultural mobility or context within the said organization and at such, individual cultural characteristics interplay with each other and demands a process of learning new values and processing information in new ways in an established environment. These consideration and many more becomes key issue that managing must strive with as it is believed that organization is closely related to shared values amongst its employee which in turns create the procedure in dealing with both internal and external factors.

4. Challenge of job design: By job design, this is the initial stage of designing a job done by management with specific duties and responsibilities. But this definition is too fixed and rigid. Thus the term job design will be refer to as "all managerial efforts to create jobs weather initially or subsequently." The existence of any institution or organization is on the basis of a given job. At such, the design of business ventures and organization in most Nigerian environment is traceable to this fact. But the extent to which these job designed improve and better the lot by way of providing Quality for Work Life (QWL) becomes an issue for management to handle. The concept of Quality for Work Life (QWL) is widely used to denote "a philosophy of management that enhances the dignity of all workers; introduced changes in organizations culture; and improves the physical and emotional wellbeing of employee (e.g. providing opportunity for growth and development)". Owning to which, the challenge for managing becomes how to provide Quality for Work Life (QWL) and to better understand the trade-offs between organizational growth and Quality for Work Life (QWL), the job design becomes the key for such trade-offs. Because job are created for people and not the opposite.

5. Challenge of effective utilization of resources: The process of managing in our environment as define in economics with "limited resources" becomes a challenge for some managers as to creating the balance with existing resources within their power with the expected goal. Among the choice to be made that poses some challenge are that of how to efficiently and effectively use:

- Human resources
- Technological advancement
- Financial resources
- Inflow of information within and outside the organization
- SWOT analysis etc.

Visible most times are issues of:

- Unsatisfactory working condition characterised by heavy workload, lack of professional autonomy, poor supervision and support, long working hours, inadequate working structure.
- Lack of induction, orientation, training and development for employee.
- Poor managerial attitude for planning.
- Lack of core managerial skills etc.

Way Forward/Managing the Challenges

Nigeria as in many countries in the region is faced with the requirement for effective and efficient human resources as key to the needed policy planning process. It is a key for the requirement of reaching a favourable working system and situation. We lack scarce data on availability, distribution and trend in human resource management. An effective and efficient manager is the one that has core managerial skill such as:

- Strategic skills
  o Environmental assess scanning
  o Strategic formulation
  o Mapping strategic intent and defining mission
  o Strategic implementation
  o Human resource congruency
- Task skills
  o Setting and prioritizing objectives
  o Developing plan of action and implementation
  o Responding in a flexible manner
  o Creating value
  o Working through the organizational structure
  o Allocating human resources
  o Managing time efficiently
- People skills
  o Delegating
  o Influencing
  o Motivating
  o Handling conflict
  o Win-win negotiating
  o Networking
  o Presentation
  o Nonverbal; communication
  o Listening
  o Cross-cultural management
  o Heterogeneous teamwork

- Self-awareness skills
  o Personal adaptability
  o Understanding personal biases
  o Internal locus of control
  Source: Gomez-Mejia, Luis R. et al 2005

The success or failure of the manager depends on its handling of the past, present and forecast of his organizational make-up and marries it with the employee and other variables to determined and tailor a desirable trend of activity for the ultimate objective of the organization. In handling these challenges, a deliberate attempt will be made for both specific and collective analysis of the basis and origin of such challenge and provide solution to form a guide for management practitioners. Some recommendation has been made to handle these challenges:

1. Total reforms in the entire workforce of the various sectors through education stressing the need for the moving concept of "Workforce Spirituality", which to me, forms the basis for other recommendation. This is so because, a personal consideration and collective application of truth, honesty, integrity, fairness and equity etc. to our workforce not minding the categories and differences would form a free flowing effective and efficient working environment thereby reducing any foreseen challenges.
2. Positioning the organizational plans from the *inside-out mentality*. The organizational cycle is a make-up of both internal and external environment; it's therefore eminent in the planning process, for managers to hold any existing variables within and outside its organization to project future occurrence and situations for any change that could hinder the atmosphere of good working situation.
3. Positioning the organizational structures to meet with external requirement. This is the perfect understanding of the need and demand of your location as against your company's objective.
4. Attract employees with multiple incentives, especially to make working in an unattractive area more appealing to drive back passion and zeal.
5. Strong attention should be placed from the human resource personnel for training, induction and development of employees within and outside the organization.
6. A strong drive for government policies to capture the UTMOST INTEREST of the organizations and its workers. Such interest should be visible in its
   • Economic Policies
   • Legal Policies
   • Political Policies
   • Internal & External Policies etc.
7. Understanding the situational requirement for each of the organizational planning stage; a perfect understanding of your situational requirement as a manager or individual will guide to determine the kind of procedure or decision to come up with giving the specific situation being faced with.
8. Accusation of requisite managerial skills as listed above
9. Lead by example; be a team player
10. Equitable distribution of national income and zero tolerance for corruption.

From the outline above, a clear emphasis is shown in the requirement for who should be responsible to manage such challenge.

Today's world has closed the gap for distinction of profession for the need of managing. Its demand is ever more useful than before, as a result, both management and employee need and requires some tenant of managerial skills to handle the pressure and demand of our ever growing work environment. On a wither look, as a nation, the various sectors of our economy may require specific attention to the call of managing practice. Our skilled and unskilled labour within our work environment today should have in their daily routine a form of managing drive within them.

Managing the challenges in our work environment is not fixed on the management alone but a collective responsibility and demand for an attainable working atmosphere. These responsibilities is vested to both

- Government
- Management
- Employees
- Individuals etc.

It should be noted that the above classification as to the obligation of managing is subject to its situational demand. Government, management, employees, individuals etc all have specific and different challenges that could require different response as to providing useful and lasting solution within its available drives and expectation from and within its environment.

Managers are considered to be delicate to organizations, because they are drivers that get people to the "big picture" of the organizations. Today's managers must understand that the twenty first century world is strongly influenced by three issues:

1. **Managements of change**: Organizational leaders must cooperate with and adapt to rapid changes on daily basis.
2. **Increasing emphasis on customer service:** The organization must first satisfy the needs of its customers in ways that contribute to the long loyalty.
3. **Need for higher business ethics:** ethics are the standards and values which are considered necessary for collective interest of employers, shareholders and society. Team spirit is an issue that could also separate and distinguish managers. Finally, managers should build in their capacities the ability to carry everyone along to get to their promise land. Like an American Indian says: "tell me and I'll forget". Show me and I may not remember. Involve me and I'll understand.

Conclusion

In conclusion, effort to strengthen the Nigerian work environment must be motivated, protected to build upon the professional ethos of workers. This specifically entails appreciating professionalism and addressing individual and collective professional goal, such as recognition, career development, it is also very important for every government to develop the work environment so that workers would be able to meet both personal and organizational goals, and also ensuring the availability of essential means, materials and provision of adequate working condition that enables them to carry out their work appropriately and effectively. Governance and leadership from any quarter within and outside work-places must be expressed as tangible actions that result in policy makers valuing and respecting workers. New career and incentives systems must be developed, along with better social and technical support for organization with international relevance to innovate, reduce cost and continually improve their business process, consistent with the environment in which they operate. The work environment must enjoy sound industrial relation and respect for the role of social partners at work.

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