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THE CHALLENGES OF MANPOWER PLANNING IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANISATIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the challenges of manpower (human resource) planning in both public and private sectors in Nigeria. To achieve this, extant literature were reviewed. Findings show that lack of sensitivity to work problems, power politics, low support of top management or government; unsteady revenue profile or cost, absence of job-analysis, poor database/information system, and technological changes were the leading challenges of manpower planning in both public and private sectors of Nigeria. Besides, other peculiar challenges found in public establishments were politicisation of manpower planning effort, absence of employees' database, and rapid changes. Whereas in the private sector, peculiar challenges observed include; compliance with public laws and regulations, the huge cost of training, and forecasting systems. In conclusion, the challenges of manpower planning are severe obstacles to the survival of every organisation in either the private or public sector. The study recommended that, while political influence should be eliminated in both public and private organisations, proper personnel database and information should be developed in order to enhance an efficient and effective manpower (human resource) planning in Nigerian organisations.

Keywords: Manpower (Human Resource) Planning, Challenges, Prospects, Public Sector, Private Sector, Nigeria.

Introduction

The human factor is considered an important factor to all social organisations. They serve as special resources with which without them organisations cannot survive. Though, for over three centuries ago, organisations have deviated from the agrarian society (human and animal labour) to machines and computerised systems (Koc & Teker, 2019). However, the most notable and vital resource of any organisation is its manpower otherwise known as the human resource. Even with the advent of machines and artificial intelligence (A.I), no organisation can survive without the operation of humans. Vashisht and Vashisht (2019) reported that a major challenge faced by managers nowadays is how to build and retain talented human resource in their organisations.

In the contemporary and changing volatile business environment, various business organisations have collapsed owing to inefficient management of their human resource Helavalada and Julius (2017). However, some other

organisations lag behind their desired goals through the recruitment of inadequate manpower and spontaneous labour cost based on shortage or excess of labour supply. Whereas, every business organisation, whether in the public or private sector have a targeted goal or set of goals to accomplish which would be difficult without effective manpower planning. Certainly, a goal without a plan is nothing other than mere wishes. The popular maxim which states that if you fail to plan, you plan to fail is germane to manpower planning.

The adopted label for the planning and utilisation of organisational human capital has undergone paradigm shifts in recent times. It started as manpower planning, then personnel planning. From personnel planning to human resource planning, and currently the reigning label is workforce planning (Chidi, 2014). Manpower planning is a crucial activity of the human resource management function. It is the process of making sure that an organisation has the right number of staff with requisite skills, in the right place and at the right time. Moreover, it allows organisations to forecast ahead in order to achieve the best fit between employees and jobs. The essence of manpower planning is to avoid excess or deficiency in the supply of manpower. Planning for manpower in large private or multinational organisations is even more complex as employees move between countries for varied but cogent reasons beyond their control (Guthridge & Komm, 2008). Similarly, this applies to the public sector with a need for government to maintain a balance between national labour demand and supply which is the common objective of human resource planning (Imison, Buchan & Xavier, 2009).

Globally, the drastic shift in business survival and sustainable development has necessitated the role of manpower planning policies in both public and private organisations (Al-Wahshi, Omari, & Barrett, 2013). Planning of manpower is a double-edged sword. If properly used, could lead to optimal utilisation of manpower, reduces high labour turnover and absenteeism which are required for achieving set goals. Alternatively, its defective usage can result in overstaffing, work disruption and low productivity. Some organisations in Nigeria suffer the consequence of

not having a suitable plan for manpower to achieve organisational goals and objectives. In other words, poor preparations for manpower can result in overstaffing which could lead to wastage of human resource and high labour cost. Whereas under staffing could lead to multi-tasking and inadequate employee remuneration. The implications are that there would be lower commitment and high turnover intentions. These are the situations that are common to both private and public establishments in Nigeria.

To achieve effective manpower planning, there must be an adequate forecast in such a way that there is equilibrium between the demand and supply of human resource in the organisation. But the reverse is the case in some organisations in Nigeria, be it private or public. More often than not, public organisations in Nigeria such as ministries, extra-ministerial departments and agencies are faced with the challenges of overstaffing and unproductive workforce while private organisations are also not free from uncommitted and demotivated employees. This situation is attributable to defective manpower planning (Anugwon, 2004). Consequently, Nigeria experiences manpower underutilisation, seasonal employment, persistent absenteeism and turnover, technological changes and market fluctuations which have become the order of the day. This study examined the constraints of effective manpower planning in public and private organisations in Nigeria. The authors advocate a way forward for effective manpower planning towards potential projections to ensure a steady supply of productive manpower to meet desired organisational goals.

Literature Review

Concept of Manpower Planning

Smith and Bartholomew (1988) posited that it is over half a century since the term manpower planning came to general use. However, the term is a fusion of two distinct concepts which are 'Manpower' and 'Planning'. Manpower can be regarded as the total staff available, or engaged in designated job or task (Agabi & Ogah, 2010). It also refers to the entirety of the labour capacity of a nation including both men and women. Unugbro et al. (2012) defined planning as the process of

deciding aims and goals to be pursued within a time frame and steps towards achieving pre-planned goals. To plan is to decide in advance on what to do, how to do it, when to do it and who to do it (Weihrich, Cannic & Knoontz, 2008). As a prerequisite need for best human efficacy, arrangement for manpower must be institutionalised (Unugbro et al. 2012).

Manpower planning can be viewed as the process of determining human resource requirements or needs as well as utilisation towards the achievement of organisational goals. Lucent-Iwhiwhu and Adekunle (2014) defined manpower planning as the process used by an organisation to ensure that it has the right number and kinds of people to deliver a particular level of output for organisational sustainability. Kelly and Cole (2015) argued that human resource planning is a task that deals with identifying manpower demand and developing means to ensure that a sufficient supply of labour is balanced against its demand in the organisation. Armstrong (2014) views manpower planning as concerned with the methods in which people are employed and developed to improve organisational performance.

Needs for Manpower Planning

Nowadays, business structure is changing and talented human resource is in the demand for the survival and competitive gain of private and public organisations (Manish & Sharma, 2018). Environmental factors keep promulgating novel tasks and functions to organisations. Whereas some employees may become disenchanted with the increased workload, thereby feeling overworked and undervalued. Nonetheless, organisations suffer frequent turnover, manpower under utilisation, low employee morale, high labour cost, job dissatisfaction, low work quality, inefficient growth, overstaffing, inefficiency, interruption of jobs, frequent complaints about labour, idleness, boredom, among others that could infringe organisational productivity.

Thus, for organisations to stay afloat ahead of market uncertainties, there should be prepared evaluation ahead of an operation. Kelly and Cole

(2015) stated that manpower planning is vital owing to its rational approach to manpower recruitment, retention, development including staff dismissal and retirement. Igbinomwanhia (2010) reported that manpower planning helps in training and development which often leads to high employee satisfaction. Productivity level increases when resources are utilised in the possible best manner. Higher productivity results from minimal time wastage, cash and efforts.

Uncertainties in Manpower Planning

The future is beclouded with vagueness and obscurity. Whereas, it is believed that lack of clarity could put the brakes on any journey to success. In this view of unpractical access to complete information of the future, planning becomes challenging, risky and complex. In essence, a number of scholarly submissions held that the problems of planning are also the problems of manpower planning. Manpower planning can only be as good as the ability of organisations to predict futuristic trends in the environment surrounding the business such as economic and social change. Armstrong (2012) and Price (2011) argued that many HR professionals lack the skills and background to predict these events with 100% accuracy. The pace of change in the workplace is so fast that it is hard to predict what skills will be needed from certain employees in the nearest future. People make decisions about their careers, whether to stay or go, regardless of intra-organisational trends. Still, organisations need to forecast their value of stay or retention. In volatile areas like Maiduguri and Borno, workers continue to turn in their resignation letters with no compassion for the survival of the organisation. Although, the list of manpower planning challenges across the globe cannot be exhausted. However, the major ones would be highlighted and discussed as follows:

Challenges of Manpower Planning in the Nigerian Public Sector

The Nigerian public sector revolves around government establishments put in place to render essential services to the citizenry. It functions to ensure and maintain opportunities for employment while utilising the human resource of

the country most efficiently. Owing to the limitless games known with politics in Nigeria to which public organisations are not immune, Obasan and Yomi (2011) outline the followings as the cog to the wheels of effective manpower planning in Nigeria:

- i. **The Politicisation of Manpower Planning Effort** : During manpower inventory, political big weights always lobby to ensure that much of the job allocation comes to their constituency. In view of the limited valid slot available and the limitless hustle by politicians, unneeded vacancies ended up been created. Once this happens, the essence of manpower planning is defeated.
- ii. **The Dearth of Professionally Trained Manpower Planners** : sequel to the political gimmicks involved in recruitment to public service, the sector was marked by corruption as the standard ended up being traded for political patronage. Hence, the essence of manpower planning which is to maximise output with minimal input ended up being compromised with the bulk of the workforce found to be incompetent (Haines & Bandt, 2004).
- iii. Lip-service paid to manpower planning and lack of commitment by stakeholders particularly Federal and State Governments. Also, manpower planning weakened as a result of policy somersaults and inconsistencies in government policies in Nigeria. This could be attributed to the incessant political changes every four years or tactless change of public programmes over flimsy reasons. Aside from the submissions of Obasan and Yomi (2011), other factors that curtail manpower planning in the Nigerian public sector are;
- iv. **Absence of Employees' Database**: Many organisations do not have sufficient manpower records and information. Notwithstanding, several of those who have them do not have a proper retrieval system. Some organisations appear to be incapable of updating the retrievable information which is very relevant to manpower planning (Adekunle & Lucent-Iwhiwhu, 2014). There

are complications in the design, definition and creation of a computerised personnel information system for effective manpower planning and utilisation. Even the existing technologies are not being used optimally in this respect.

- v. **Rapid Environmental Changes**: the continuous changes in manpower environment such as technological changes, economic changes, political changes and social changes cause difficulties in manpower planning. It is imperative that the sources of changes should be discerned. Furthermore, there is always resistance to change. However, this resistance needs to be controlled if manpower is to be effectively utilised (Folayan, 2006; Adekunle & Lucent-Iwhiwhu, 2014).

Similarly, the challenges to effective manpower planning in the Nigerian public sector cannot be exhausted. However, those discussed so far are very apparent and they deserve urgent attention to ensure that the impact of government is felt on a massive scale.

Challenges of Manpower Planning the Private Sector in Nigeria

The efficiency and competitiveness of an enterprise are directly proportional to the quality and quantity of human capital. Chidi (2014) found that human resource planning had a positive and significant influence on financial and non-financial dimensions of organisational performance. Private organisations are known for efficiency in resource use and effectiveness in achieving goals. The performance standard is usually set for individuals and departments to ensure that all hands are on deck. Despite its capability in human resource use, certain impediments still curtail proper manpower planning in the Nigerian private organisations and they are as follows:

- i. **Compliance with Public Laws and Regulations** : keeping up with changing employment laws is a struggle for private businesses. Many choose to ignore employment laws, believing such laws do

not apply to their business. However, doing so could necessitate audits, lawsuits, and possibly a sanction or total clamp down on the organisation. In essence, these laws and rules interfere with manpower planning in the organisation. The current minimum wage law in Nigeria has remained a serious cause for concern for both private companies and state governments as they grapple with retrenchment and heavy cost of labour financing.

- ii. **Changes in Management and Strategy:** if a company expands, its policies, structure and internal processes change. Meanwhile, some members of staff have a hard time coping with these shifts. Thus, an impromptu adjustment in manpower may be desired. This invariably creates an unstable pattern of manpower planning sequel to spontaneous changes in organisational strategies.
- iii. **Employees' Training and Development:** investing in the training and development of lower-level employees is another common manpower planning problem. Some companies struggle to find the resources to do so. Employees on the front lines are some of the affected workers, and they may not have the time to take a training course.
- iv. **Organisational Politics:** the use of unofficial means to settle official issues in the private sector is often the order of the day. This happens during recruitment, training, placement, promotion and even retrenchment. An effective manpower planning can hardly succeed in this type of environment.
- v. **Forecasting Systems:** the constant changes in economic environment of Nigeria greatly affect the forecasting of future manpower needs. Indeed, a growing economy leads to several changes in manpower needs and employment patterns (Folayan, 2006). The adverse reversal of economic trend has been the cause of the current down turn in forecasting of manpower needs and development. Human resource managers in private organisations are unable to predict effectively the economic changes which

eventually affect their forecasting for current and future manpower requirements. Private organisations in Nigeria are known for high performance made possible by strict rules, effective supervision and quick decision making. This has placed the sector far ahead of its public sector counterpart.

Theoretical Framework

Best - Fit theory

The best-fit theory also known as the universalistic approach postulates that manpower planning is a pervasive function of human resource management in every organisation. The theory emphasises the association between effective human resource management and organisational performance. Luthans and Sommers (2005) opined that organisations will attain optimal performance and productivity by adopting several superior human resource management practices. The best-fit theory asserts that strategic manpower planning practices should be consistent with other human resource management functions for achievability (Schuler, 1992). Moreover, manpower planning practices should be aligned with internal and external environmental considerations. Performance of organisations can be adversely affected, when there is a mismatch between the organisation and persons selected as well as between the persons selected and the job.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a qualitative research strategy with an in-depth investigation of extant literature on the subject matter. It is an appropriate qualitative design to explore concrete and firm knowledge about the challenges of manpower planning in the Nigerian public and private sectors. Data collection was basically from secondary sources, in particular the information retrieved from journal articles, documentary evidence, books, records from government agencies, library searches, interview reports, conference papers and other pertinent materials from the internet. Data generated were qualitatively analysed. This analysis aims at providing an explanation of the challenges of manpower planning in private and public sectors in order to arrive at a reasonable conclusion.

Results and Discussion

Various challenges of manpower planning particularly in the private and public sectors have been explicitly identified. Previous studies on the challenges besetting manpower planning have focused on the peculiarities of private and public sector organisations (Ladan, 2014; Ameh & Daniel, 2017; Mohammed, 2018). The peculiar challenges associated with the public sector includes the politicisation of manpower planning effort, lack of professionally trained manpower planners, lip-service paid to manpower planning, inadequate use of manpower, poor manpower database and technical incompetence as well as high absenteeism rate at the workplace. According to Augustine (2013), there is no effective manpower planning in the Nigerian public sector. Recruitment and promotion processes are only carried out by the various Departments and Commissions of in the public sector, based on

labour demands. Manpower planning in the private sector also faces some challenges that include the compliance to unfavourable public laws, persistent changes in management and strategies, poor training and development, organisational politics and poor forecasting system. Adamelakun(2002) concluded that there had been problems between government agencies, the planner and private organisations regarding manpower planning in Nigeria. The nature of manpower planning and its regulative policies at the national level is largely based on the information provided by the public sector. Hence little attention is paid to manpower planning in private sector organisations (Augustine, 2013). Having presented the spectacular challenges associated with either of the sectors in the Nigerian economy, it is considered necessary that areas of similarities in the challenges of both public and private sector be highlighted and discussed in a tabular form as stated in Table 1.

Table 1: Challenges of Manpower Planning in Public and Private Sectors in Nigeria

Challenges of Manpower Planning	Public sector	Private sector
Lack of sensitive to work problem	Manpower planning in Nigerian institutions (MDAs) is majorly defective owing to government lack of sensitivity to largely talented Nigerians who are migrating and doing great things abroad other than home. Government sees nothing bad there, hence no need for manpower planning.	Management of private firms are more concerned with making profits rather than building their profit source (human capital). Mohajan, (2019)opined that over the past industrialisation, productivity has increased due to technology. However, further improvement lies on manpower utilisation.
Power politics	People lobby to secure jobs and elevation/promotions.Nigeria is among the most corrupt nations in the world with ineffective public sector performance (Mathews, 2002)	Top management influence the recruitment and selection processes. There is high rate of tribalism, favouritism and nepotism. Other researchers argue that, in many cases, managers and those responsible for recruitment employ candidates with whom they are personally associated regardless of their expertise or credentials(Alesina, 2007).

Low support of top management or government officials	Ebebe (2017) posited that Nigeria government pay less attention to manpower planning in Nigeria owing to little comprehension about its essence. Thus, manpower planning in Nigeria is much considered as irrelevant expenses to the government.	It is evident that a large number of HR practitioners in private sector are not well sound in the field of manpower planning and probability (Ameh, & Daniel 2017). Many HR managers are used to the traditional approaches which are not viable in the 21st century world of work.
Constant changes in policies & strategies	Frequent changes in government policies in Nigeria have affected national development and human resource planning (Afolayan, 2006)	Ukpong (2017) concluded that the continual change in policy management in Nigeria leads to loss of focus or unit of direction in the private sector which affect manpower planning.
Unsteady revenue profile or cost	The effect of the dwindling economy and low efficacy of the public organisation on the revenue base would hinder the inclusion of Manpower planning in the public organisation financial budget (Obasan&Yomi, 2011)	Changes in the market economy hinder the inclusion of Manpower planning in organisation's financial reports (Mohammed, 2018). Manpower plans become susceptible to endless review in line with funds rather than on demand.
Absence of Job analysis	The skills and knowledge required for recruitment in the public sector in most cases are not well spelt out thereby resulting in overstaffing, redundancy and low productivity of most, if not all public organisations.	The traditional approach to manpower planning has been a finance-led process, focused primarily on managing headcount budget to prevent cost overruns, companies must look at manpower planning beyond mere financials and integrate HR data and predictive analytics when recruiting
Poor Database/ Information System	There is no proper utilisation of database in Nigeria as a whole. Some organisations appear to be incapable of updating the retrievable information which is very relevant to manpower planning (Adekunle& Lucent-Iwhiwhu, 2014).	In most organisations, human resource information system (HRIS) has not fully developed and in the absence of reliable data it would not be possible to operate effective planning (Helavalada&Julius, 2017).
Technological Changes	Inability to provide essential services to the public due to the outdated technology in use and inability to equip personnel with requisite skills, training and new or modern technologies to ease their rendering of their services to the public.	The twenty first century gives room for unending technological innovations. However, despite its prevalence, its adversity can lead to swapping human operation with machines. Thus, this leads to low human resource needs vis-à-vis poor manpower planning.

Low support of top Management or Government Officials	Ebebe (2017) posited that Nigeria government pay less attention to manpower planning in Nigeria owing to little comprehension about its essence. Thus, manpower planning in Nigeria is much considered as irrelevant expenses to the government.	It is evident that a large number of HR practitioners in private sector are not well sound in the field of manpower planning and probability (Ameh, & Daniel 2017). ManyHR managers are used to the traditionalapproaches which are not viable in the 21st century world of work.
Lack of proper recognition	Nigerian labour welfare is fraught with excessive bureaucracy and corruption (Nwosu, 1987). Thus, the efforts of governmentin ensuring manpower planning areinsignificant.	Manpower planning as a gradual process is not expected to yield result immediately. However, most business organisations do not pay proper attention to manpower planning (Monday, 2010)
Employment laws/regulations	Despite being owned and operated by the government, the employment regulation saffecting manpower planning laid by the same government are not duly followed as a result of undue political influence.	Many private firms choose to ignore employment laws, believing that such laws do not apply to their business. As a result, they disregard manpower planning practises.

Source: Authors computation, 2020

Conclusion and Recommendations

Evidences across the globe indicate that manpower planning challenges are not peculiar to the third world; rather it is a world-wide menace. It was asserted that lack of sensitivity to work problems, power politics, low support of top management or government, constant changes in policies and strategies, unsteady revenue profile or cost, absence of job analysis, poor database/information system, technological changes, lack of proper recognition, and a host of other issues were identified to be the leading challenges of manpower planning in the public and private sectors of Nigeria. Besides, other peculiar challenges identified in the public sector were, lip-service paid to manpower planning, rapid changes to name a few. On the other hand, compliance with public laws, huge training cost, and forecasting systems are the challenges confronting the private sector. The paper concluded that the challenges of manpower planning are a severe obstacle to the survival of every organisation either private or public sector as well as organisational sustainability. From the foregoing discussions and findings, it is hereby recommended that:

- i. Administrators and management of public and private establishments should exterminate any form of undue influence on manpower planning in their organisations.
- ii. There should be proper storage and documentation of manpower data for assessment. In essence, the government should utilise emergent technology as a means to advocate for digital data collection of personnel, like what obtains in other developed and developing nations.
- iii. Finally, the management of both private and public organisations should give great importance to the need for manpower planning in their organisations, as hiring and promoting personnel will produce high-quality service delivery.
- iv. Organisations should adopt both the quantitative and qualitative methods of forecasting manpower or human resource requirements.
- v. The development and adoption of manpower system is recommended: manpower system provides information on recruits, stocks,

promotions, transfers, voluntary and involuntary leavers as well as some assumptions about future human resource requirements. The adoption of manpower system which shows the analysis of inflows (inputs), processes and outflows (outputs) of staff in an organisation is useful for effective manpower planning in both the private and public sector organisations in Nigeria.

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