Strategic Human Resource Development as a Catalyst for Sustainable Economic Reforms

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Abstract
Nigeria, once again has embarked on another economic reforms reminding us of other previous reforms like SAP etc. But these economic reforms have not yielded the desired result because the human resource have been neglected and forgotten in the process of development. It is the strategic human resource development that can turn things around for a meaningful change. The human resource is the most important single resource of any country. Its development removes obsolescence and redundancy in progress. The key issue in strategic human resource development is to continuously and consistently link human resource with business and organizational strategy.

Keywords: Strategic Human Resource Development, Leadership, Sustainable Economic.

Introduction
People are the basis for reforms and development and any reform that fail to take serious look at people issues should be reworked or abandoned. People make nations and for nations to grow, it has to invest in the people. Unlike other resources, human resource have rather unlimited potential capabilities. The potential can be used only by creating a climate that can continuously identify, bring to surface, nurture and use the capabilities of people.

According to Obisi, (2004) it is the task of government to provide the positive and supportive environment for human resource development through sustained planning and infrastructural development. Organizations at the micro level and government at the macro level can meaningfully contribute towards effective human resource management by:
- Creating and clarifying positive challenging roles for people at work;
- Openly and regularly sharing important information with employees;
- Encouraging true employee participation in the control of work; creating conditions leading to greater security of the employees;
- Emphasizing fairness and ethics in the award of recognition for the employee's contribution;
- Generally treating the individual with respect and dignity; Kolade, (1999).

Objectives of the Paper
- To clarify that people are the basis for any meaningful reforms.
- To re-awaken stakeholders on the critical issues needed for strategic human resource management.
- To remind individuals that they can take their destinies in their own hands and prepare for they would be fall out of government reforms.
- To demonstrate that effective communication would ensure successful reforms.
Theoretical Framework
Sambo, (1998) explains that Nigeria after about 40 years of independence is still underdeveloped going by all the parameters for assessing development as Nigeria is still characterized by low Gross National Product (GDP), high level of unemployment, low rate of capital formation, poor healthcare delivery system, low level of literacy, inadequate high level technical manpower, low per capital in human resource management, low private sector initiative etc. Sambo therefore calls for an action plan hinged on a strategic developing of Nigeria's human resource in order to achieve a breakthrough in economic and social growth.

Strategic human resource development is an approach to making decisions on the intentions of the organization concerning people. These decisions being essential components of the organization's business strategy- Armstrong (1995). This would also mean the overall direction the organization wishes to pursue in achieving its objectives through people. Strategic human resource development would also look at organizations long term plans towards the people.

According to Miller (1989), strategic human resource development would encompass those decisions and actions which concern the management of employees at all levels and which are directed towards creating and sustaining competitive advantage. Strategic human resource development aims to provide a sense of direction in an often turbulent environment so that organizational and business needs can be translated into coherent and practical policies and programmes. It provides guidelines for successful action and the ultimate test of the reality of strategic human resource development is the extent to which it has stimulated such action – Armstrong (1995)

Key Issues to help Reforms Succeed Match the Job to the Individual
In the different phases of the life of a business enterprise which is in a constant state of flux, organizations for the purpose of short term adaptability, stability and development in the long run should:
- Match the job to the individual
- To go continuously through various stages of performance appraisals/management
- To impart training and organize and implement human resource development programme for developing skills and capabilities and for enhancing the role of an individual in the organization
- To increase employees' acquisition i.e. with computer age, matrix management and multi-national business.

However, as a long term strategy, it is necessary to visualize the possibilities of employing personal styles, skills and professional strategies that satisfy the demands of a maturing corporate world and the technology, economy and society of today.

The world of management always changes and management effectiveness in meeting challenges is increasingly important for survival let alone growth. It is necessary, therefore, to tap the experience, knowledge and aptitude of the staff and stimulate them to think more clearly, rationally and deeply into their management actions, decisions, practices, operating principles of managing mistakes committed previously and lessons learnt and organizing resources for fulfilling the short term and long term objectives of total organization.

In the plan for strategic human resource development, the individual is to be perceptively and responsibly linked to the job, to the organization and to the business world.
Strategic human resource development should be able to look at the long term needs of resources of the organization, should be able to define more realistically the actual expectations for the job and the existing would be opportunities for upliftment and prospective capabilities of individuals in the organization.

It should also look at productivity of the organization, readiness of organization to future and crisis of organizational change that reflects in individual's position and performance.

Organizations should accept realities - people are lethargic, indifferent to move upwards, they are indifferent towards training as a career development plan; Obisi, (1993). This implies that fulfillment of employee self interest, quality of life and other material desires do mean that management must make consistent and continuous efforts to help employees have meaningful part in what the company is doing rather than just having a job.

Thus, individual's interests, human rigidities and personality traits are the basic factors influencing management's plan for resource management whether human or material. However, management can take several positive steps in human resource development:
- Improvement in selection.
- Modification of training and educational programmes for the employees to manage change.
- Defining more explicitly qualities of performance for promotion in the context of being effective participant in management.
- Management must adopt and develop a flexible approach for adjusting to the needs or demands of employees to participate and influence policies, procedures and plans. This flexibility expresses a stronger value system and a deeper commitment than does a more narrow minded position.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Leadership is about influencing the followers towards positive direction of achieving organizational and individual goals and objectives. Adefuye, (2003), explains that for effective utilization of resources, both human and material, a good, strong, honest, wise, intelligent and adaptive leadership is sine-qua non. According to Adefuye, the complexity of the leadership process cannot be revealed without considering the dynamic interaction between the leader and the follower. Leadership therefore depends on an interactional context, which includes how others view a leader's performance and its effects and this is influenced by the leadership expectations and performances of the subordinate.

Leadership should be able to pull and support the followership towards positive career growth and development and solve problems. Management of human resource consultant inc. cited in Adefuye (2003) suggests five components of leadership effectiveness:
- The ability to get your employees to follow you and your vision: the ability to inspire;
- The ability to get things done;
- The ability to build relationships and to build consensus with co-workers and subordinates;
- The ability to communicate clearly and concisely on a peer level to achieve true understanding; and
- Ability to give up power and to truly empower subordinates in a give-and-take environment.

Adefuye maintains that leadership is so powerful that it gives pace and energy to the workforce and empowers them. When the workforce is empowered, they feel significant and become part of the community.
Work becomes exciting and people are pulled rather than pushed towards goals. No one can therefore be called a leader until his or her appointment is ratified in the hearts and minds of the subordinates.

To ensure that people are loyal and trusting, leadership must:
- Harmonize terms and conditions for all staff;
- Use psychological tests in selecting staff;
- Formal system of communicating values to all staff;
- Deliberate development of a learning organization;
- Design of jobs to make full use of skills and abilities;
- Formal and honest appraisal of all staff at least annually;
- A regular system of informing about organization performance and prospects; and
- A policy of job security and a merit element in pay of staff.

EVALUATE PERSONNEL STRATEGY
Obisi, (1993) explains that the critical issues in strategic human resource development which deserve careful consideration are:
- Are affirmative action plans effective?
- Is staff reluctantly law abiding?
- What is the nature of involvement of minorities?
- How many and how far are management programmes?
- Are performance appraisal such that the behaviours management asks of the workforce are properly rewarded?
- Does management blindly endure poor performance or excuse ineffectiveness on the grounds of inexperience, inadequate training or personal circumstances?

It is necessary for management to take a review of their rules and policies with reference to the above queries so that individuals can be managed with skills, creativity, adequately compensated and manage by leading.

Thus, a big challenge in strategic human resource development and in developing a sensible and knowledgeable perspective on the changing individual is to be flexible so that people can be revitalized.

Communication and Gaining Commitment to Reforms
Alo, (2006) explains that there is ample evidence of inadequate or total absence of strategic communication in many of the reform programmes. He argues that what was required was a process of strategically communicating facts to the stakeholders, gauging their responses, harvesting their suggestions and testing the reform ideas with them before finally announcing it. The danger according to Alo is that some powerful vested interests that benefited from old system misinform the public and frustrate the reform agenda even before it took off.

Organizations and institutions must put effective communication structures in place to disseminate information on government reforms and its impact on the human resource.

In many government establishments, even those who suppose to know do not have information to give. There seem to be total confusion.
Gaining Commitment to Reforms
These guidelines point in one direction: having decided why changes are necessary, what the goals are and how they are to be achieved, the most important task is gain the commitment of all concerned to the proposed change.

A strategy for gaining commitment to change should cover the following phases as indicated by Armstrong, (1995):

(1) **Preparation**: In this phase, the person or persons likely to be affected by the proposed change are contacted in order to be made aware of the fact that a change is being contemplated.

(2) **Acceptance**: In the second phase, information is provided on the purpose of the change, how it is proposed to implement it and effect it will have on those concerned. The aim is to achieve understanding of what the change means and to obtain a positive reaction. This is more likely if:
- The change is perceived to be consistent with the mission and values of the organization
- The change is not thought to be threatening
- The change seems likely to meet the needs of those concerned
- There is a compelling and fully understood reason of change.
- Those concerned are involved in planning and implementing the change programme.
- It is understood that steps will be taken to mitigate any detrimental effects of the change.

It may be difficult, even impossible to meet all these requirements. That is why the problems of gaining commitment to change should not be underestimated.

During this phase, the extent to which reactions are positive or negative can be noted and action taken accordingly. It is at this stage that original plans may have to be modified to cater for legitimate reservations or second thoughts.

(3) **COMMITMENT**: During the third phase, the change is implemented and becomes operational. The change process and people's reaction to it need to be monitored. There will inevitably be delays, setbacks, unforeseen problems and negative reactions from those faced with the reality of change. A response to these reactions is essential so that valid criticisms can be acted upon or explanations given of why it is believed that the change should proceed as planned.

Following implementation, the aim is to get the change adopted as, with use, its worth becomes evident. The decision is made at this stage on whether to continue with the change or whether it needs to be modified or even aborted. Account should again be taken of the views of those involved.

Finally, and after further, modifications as required, the change is institutionalized and becomes an inherent part of the organization's culture and operations.

Imparting Training and Developmental Programmes
Organizations should continuously train and organize developmental programmes for its staff without which they would fall by the wayside during reforms. It does no longer surprise people to hear that in some organizations, workers are not trained for years, and would not also grow on the job. In some cases, individuals remain on the same position for years. For example, a clerk can become a chief clerk after 25 years on the job. This has to change. Certain specific human development programmes should be put in place to:
- Acquire knowledge;
- Develop capabilities;
- Develop skills, attitudes and orientation.

Fig. 1: The Process of Planned Training


CONCLUSION
To make reforms painless and developmental, people must be carried along with effective communication and also take the following steps:
- More emphasis on participative management.
- People must be oriented in such a manner as to enable them determine and achieve their own goals and this could be done best by directing their own efforts towards meeting organizations objective. This theory renders authoritarian or dictatorial approach redundant and irrelevant.
- Human Resource Development is an integrative process; it removes human resource obstacles to rapid economic growth.
- For solving problems in people, management, personnel managers must build a system of specialization in people management and must keep themselves abreast of various developments in behavioural sciences.
Traditions and Socio-economic conditions prevailing in the country must be taken into consideration while organizing and implementing H.R.D. programmes. The emerging value systems, the managerial revolution and the role of professional management are also important for developing a work culture, full of loyalties and discipline among the young executives.

Human Resource Development programmes in modern times will have to be so oriented as to satisfy:

(a) The self renewal needs.
(b) Sensitivity needs - which enable people, release some important forces which enhance management's ability to control more effectively and creatively his human environment.
(c) Psychological and safety needs, - if satisfied reasonable, needs of the next higher level begin to dominate man's behaviour, the chief factors behind motivation. The culture, the value system, atmosphere of uncertainty, insecurity, and frustration these demoralizing influences create a variety of psychological traits.
(d) The social needs - which affect average human being in making him indolent, inactive, lethargic, irresponsible, self centered, indifferent to organizational needs, resistant to change (inadaptability) and gullible.
(e) Ego-needs - related to one's self-esteem, self-reputation and acceptance, self-fulfillment realizing one's potentialities for continued self-development.

(f) Human Resource Development should be based on adequate assumptions that:
I. Responsibility for H.R.M. is on the management but management's efforts in the direction of H.R.D. should be encouraged by supportive responses from the employees and their organization.
II. People are not by nature passive or resistant to organizational needs what they need is leadership which should not be biased, short sighted but humane.
III. The H.R.M. process is primarily of creating opportunities, releasing potential, removing obstacles, encouraging growth, and providing guidance thus management by objective in contrast to management by control.

References
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