

Politics of Manpower Development in Nigerian Public Service: A Case of Ebonyi State Public Service

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Abstract: This study “The Politics of Manpower Development in Nigeria’s Public Service: A Case of Ebonyi State Public Service” aims at examining the dimensions of political under current in manpower development and utilization in Nigerian Public Service with special interest in Ebonyi State Public Service. The study which adopted a content analytical method is anchored on the Human Capital Theory. The data for the study were mainly obtained from secondary sources wherein renowned works on the subject matter in scholarly journals, books, verifiable printed materials were extensively analyzed which was corroborated with primary source through interview granted to the researchers by public servants in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that manpower development and utilization have overtime been negatively affected by political interference and administrative ineptitude, poor manpower planning, absence of framework for organizational skill evaluation and the abuse of federal character principle. The implication of the finding of the study is that economic development of the public sector, labor productivity, efficient service delivery, poverty reduction and political stability have continued to elude Ebonyi State in particular and Nigeria in general. The study concluded that so long as inefficient and incompetent public service has become the order of the day, it will be difficult to promote a healthy democratic growth and economic development. The study therefore recommended a rejection of corrupt practices, non-politicization of processes of manpower development and utilization, strong political and administrative will to punish anyone caught circumventing government well thought out manpower development and utilization policies under any guise.

Key words: Manpower Development • Public Service • Manpower Utilization • Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

National development and economic growth are predicated on proper development of manpower resources while the realization of complete economic independence is a function of an effective development strategies and efficient utilization of manpower potentials [1]. Studies have shown that Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural and human resources but these enormous resources may be left unexploited without well trained human resources to tap and put them into effective use. It has been argued that effective human resources are crucial in the drive for inclusive socio-economic development in any economy. Manpower training and development has come to be universally accepted as a vital point in management processes aimed at improving and enhancing organizational output both qualitatively and

quantitatively. This however, suggests that manpower development is instrumental to Nigeria’s socio-economic development agenda especially now that the citizenry are desirous of change in all ramifications of our national life.

Since Nigeria gained independence in 1960, the country has been faced with the challenges of providing adequate and effective manpower needs for the management of her enormous economic and natural resources. The inability to provide for the necessary manpower needs in our national system has resulted in under exploitation as well as under utilization of the nation’s endowed abundant resources and potentials. Manpower development is a dynamic process, a response to change in beliefs, attitudes and behavior of employees towards the use of better and new technologies for labor productivity at the right time and in the right places [2]. Thus Gyang [3] observed that;

The development of a nation relies on the development and capability of human resources of the nation and the effort to push Nigeria forward to attain the desired vision 20:20:20 depends on the quantum and magnitude of its manpower skills and the level of the economy.

Nadler [4], also added that:

The essential motive behind the colonial experience on manpower development and utilization policies was primarily economical and political. He asserts that the character of the state can be significantly influenced and determined by the historical experience of the dominant class, the degree of hegemony exercised by its dominant class, the structure of production, exchange, intensity and direction of class struggle.

Therefore, the socio-economic and political policies of the post – colonial Nigeria in terms of indigenous manpower development became a carryover of the colonial legacy with its attendant negative orientation injected into the political leadership [5]. A serious factor in the Nigerian public service in general and Ebonyi State in particular has been that of under development of public servants which by extension leads to under-utilization and poor performance in all spheres of our national life and this situation has lingered in the public sector of our national economy. This ugly scenario has been generally attributed to inappropriate training as well as ineffective deployment of manpower resources towards nation building. It is noteworthy that there is a strong link between economic development and expansion of manpower potentials and capabilities. While technological progress is facilitated by high labor productivity sustained through investment in manpower development, the enhancement of manpower capabilities often requires changing technologies, institutions and social values so that the creativity within human beings can be unlocked so as to spearhead economic development and growth [6]. This is because a country that has high level of illiteracy will invariably have low per capita income and low level of skilled manpower, while investment and development in education will lead to increase in skilled manpower and per capita income [7].

Considering the numerous efforts of the Nigerian government with reference to manpower development, well meaning Nigerians have expressed concern over the deterioration in the skills and capacities of public servants

in various ministries, departments and agencies which snowballs into poor performance of our economy, hence the alarming rate of poverty. It is no longer news that manpower development in Nigeria has been seriously bedridden and submerged in politics as government decision on manpower development involves political process which is characterized by ethnicity, nepotism, federal character principles, religion and poor budgetary provision [8]. Training and development of manpower in Ebonyi State is not an exception as such an important aspect of human resource management function has been severely politicized thereby reducing investment in staff capacity building into a waste of hard earned public resources with the masses at the receiving end of the whole mess. This is because the ill-equipped staff hardly understand government policies and programmes not to talk of making wise input towards committing them into concrete actions for the enjoyment of the masses.

Conceptual Analysis

Politics: Politics deals with authoritative decision making in allocation of societal values and resources. Harold and David [9], defined politics as the distribution of power, resources and how policy makers and implementers share these values for the benefit of all. According to him, politics has to do with “who gets what, when and how”.

Politics is also the battle of challenge and competition which can be likened to the game of “winner takes all and the loser misses all”. It involves the allocation of scarce economic resources to individuals, groups, regions and classes [9]. In the context of this study, politics implies the use of unconventional means or influence to skew public programmes for personal aggrandizement or undue influence for personal and close associates’ gains

Manpower Development: Manpower development broadly refers to job enrichment that has an intrinsic mechanism to motivate an employee to accept and play challenging organizational tasks. It involves activities that enable an employee to comfortably and conveniently perform organizational task. Manpower development is the process of improving, molding, changing and developing the skills, knowledge, creative ability, aptitude, attitude, values, commitment etc of an employee based on present and future organizational requirements. Skills, knowledge and abilities are usually imparted in employees through the use of new technological innovative methods such as computer and simulated games, role playing and audio-visual tools. There are traditional methods such as mentoring, coaching, lectures, conferences, movie or films

and case studies etc that represent effective means of training in organizations [10, 11]. Manpower development is usually practiced with the aim of meeting the demands of modern society based on the receptivity of the mind of workers toward scientific reasoning.

Manpower development refers to strategies and methodologies that an organization adopts to determine its work load at a given moment. It describes how effectively an organization develops and uses its manpower or employee to achieve established goals [12]. It consists of developing and putting the right number of people, right kind of people at the right time, doing the right things for which they are developed and suited for the achievement of organization's goals.

Nadler [4], observed that manpower development is a framework for the expansion of human capital within an organization, municipality, region or nation. He sees it as a strategic approach to inter – sector linkages and a combination of training and education in a broad context of adequate health and employment policies that ensure the continual improvement and growth of both individual, the organization and the great wide human resourcefulness. This means that manpower development is not a defined object, but a series of organized processes with specific learning as the major objective.

To Chamberlain [13], he sees it as those activities performed towards improving the knowledge, sharpening the skills, instilling the values and encouraging behavior necessary to actualize staff potentials in the organization. While Swanson and Hulton [14], defined it as an integrated approach that addresses multidimensional aspects of employees, ranging from enhancing technical and interpersonal skills to creative thinking and leadership in order to optimize an organizations usage of its manpower resources.

Theoretical Framework: The study adopts Human Capital Theory. The proposition that human is a capital is not new since the birth of science of Economics. The argument that human and his skills as well as qualifications are a form of capital in the workplace has received scholarly attention from renowned classical economists such as: W.Petty, W.Farr, A.Smith, J.B.Say, N.Senior, F.List, J.S.Mill, A.Marshall, V.Thunen, W.Roscher, W.Bagehot, E.Engel, H.Sidgwick, L.Walras and I.Fisher. Classical school of thought has come to accept the fact that skills gained by human are a part of capital while some economists posit strongly that the human himself is an essential capital to organizations. This is due mainly to the realization that it is the most

important asset which controls, directs and co-ordinates other organizational physical assets such as land, capital, finance, etc. "Human capital" can be defined as knowledge, skills, attitudes, aptitudes and other acquired traits contributing to production [15]. Skills represent individual capacities contributing to production as an important factor in the production process [16].

Successively, Human Capital developed into a theory which was improved by Becker [17]. Specifically [17] espoused the theory in his book entitled "Human Capital". He developed a model of individual investment in human capital [18]. In this view, human capital is similar to "physical means of production". According to Becker [17], investing in human capital means "all activities that influence future real income through the embedding of resources in people". In specific terms, Human capital investments are expenditures on education, training, health, information and labor mobility [19]. Human Capital theory is defined as activities that increase future consumption possibilities by increasing the resources in people. The accumulation of human capital takes place in three ways: formal schooling (i.e. the individual devotes his whole time to learning), on-the-job training (i.e. post-school training provided by the current employer) and off-the-job training.

The significant underpinning of the Becker [17] model is that education involves investment of time and foregone earnings for expected higher rates of return in the future. Just like investments in physical capital, a human capital investment is solely embarked on by wealth-maximizing individuals or firms if the expected return from the investment (which is equal to the net internal rate of return) is greater than the market rate of interest. This means that workers and organization both undertake investment in capacity buildings only if they will stand the chance to secure higher wages and higher return from investment respectively. This follows that no individual can venture into training of any sort without a firm knowledge of what he will stand to gain at the end of the exercise, whether he still remains with his current employer or changes employer. Regarding the costs of human capital investments, Perri [20], remarks that - if the best alternative of an investment in specialized human capital is investing in another specialization of human capital - then the measure of foregone earnings has to cover the complete opportunity costs of specialized education. These opportunity costs describe what could have been earned with the best alternative specialized education.

Becker [17], distinguished between general human capital and specific human capital where he noted that general human capital is usually relevant to both the current employer and future employer. As such employers oftentimes refuse to foot the training bills whereas specific human capital improves specific job performance of employees on the current jobs, hence the employers are more likely to invest in such capacity building programmes. For general human capital, workers themselves have the right incentives to invest in training because they are the sole beneficiaries of their increased productivity (either with their current or with future employers). However in some non-competitive economies, firms/organizations prefer more skilled workers to less skilled ones and invest in general training until the desired level of training that will trigger higher productivity is achieved.

This particular observation is true in developing countries such as Nigeria. Most of the general human capital investment is done by the organization or government especially in public institutions to help inculcate in the staff the required skills for effective performance. Both public and private organizations from time to time organize capacity building programmes such as workshops, symposia, conferences, further studies, etc. All in a bid to enhance their employees' capacities. However, these all-important activities which are meant to improve productive capacities of the workmen usually come under political influence. In Ebonyi State in particular and Nigeria in general, the selection of staff for training or capacity building programmes is not usually based on any objective criteria. Rather godfatherism, favoritism, "man-know-man", personal connections, etc are the major denominator for nomination and subsequent appointment of staff for training programmes. This goes to portray the fact that workers in public institutions in Nigeria are oftentimes placed on training without much attention paid on specific skill deficiencies in such institutions. With the consequence that the major aim of the training programme both on the part of individual or government either in the short-run and long-run is usually defeated. Nevertheless, the trainees only gain pecuniary benefits from training allowances and other benefits derivable from such training trips. This ugly situation may have been responsible for the poor performance of public institutions even in the face of various training programmes put in place to enhance workers' capacities.

Review of Related Literature

Empirical Review: Imeokoro [21], in a study entitled "Poor Human Resources Development in Nigerian Civil Service:

Causes and Remedies" set out to identify the major variables responsible for poor manpower development and measures to forestall their future occurrence. The study adopted descriptive design approach. The study revealed that poor human resources development in Nigeria civil service are caused by several factors such as lack of manpower planning, godfather syndrome, nepotism, excessive bureaucratization, corruption, lack of funds, poor regulatory framework, lack of managerial and technical know-how and non-application of manpower tools. The study recommended for the application of manpower guide in manpower or labor force recruitment exercises, enhanced regulatory framework, manpower planning, sustained manpower education and training.

Chamberlain [13], in a related study on the "Effect of Poor Manpower Education and Employment in Nigeria" adopted survey research design. The study revealed that poor manpower education and employment sap labor morale, erode productivity, lead to economic sabotage and underdevelopment, poverty reduction failure, staff discontentment, autocratic leadership, political and administrative instability. It recommended that government at all levels should adopt a strong political will towards establishing an effective manpower regulatory framework while specialized training institutions should be adequately equipped.

Furthermore, in another study by Eloduka [22] on the "Impact of Effective Manpower Development and Utilization", using Enugu State Civil Service as a Case, the research sought to find out the positive impact of adequate manpower development and utilization in Enugu State of Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. It revealed that manpower development policies and programmes that are not deficient in content and complementation promotes efficiency in service delivery, labor productivity, better human relations, staff motivation, job satisfaction, value re-orientation, responsibility and accountability, economic development, political stability and poverty reduction. The study suggested for the application of manpower tools in all training and employment and immediate review of the training and development policies and programmes in government establishment through regulatory framework to make it functional and adaptable to the present and future needs of organizations.

Effective Manpower Development and Utilization in the Nigerian Public Sector: Political Obstacle to Realization: The objective of manpower development and utilization in any economy (private and public institutions) is to increase efficiency in service delivery,

labor productivity, better human relations, staff motivation, job satisfaction, promotion of value reorientation, responsibility and accountability, economic development, political and administrative stability and poverty reduction [2, 12]. These objectives have been compromised and eroded by government at all levels in Nigeria due to over politicization of manpower development policies and programmes as a result of corruption, ethnicity, nepotism, favouritism, federal character principles, poor value system, inefficient regulatory framework, colonial practices, poor manpower planning and obdurate autocratic laws and orders [21, 23]. Effective manpower development and utilization will ultimately lead to improvement in labor productivity which is the ultimate aim of manpower development programmes. This is so because skills acquired in the course of worker education and training are put into effective use by the workforce in the workplace for higher productivity. This explains why manpower training and development programmes are not being toyed with by any forward-looking organization.

However, this all important human resource function has for a long time been compromised especially in government owned institutions in Nigeria. Politics has assumed the order of the day in staff training and development programmes in our public institutions. Essentially, the history of politicization of manpower development could be traced to major landmark in the political development of Nigeria. Thus, in the past towards the end of colonialism in the country, government in an attempt to upturn the dominance of the expatriates in higher echelons of public institutions in the country introduced indigenization policy. This well thought out policy to give Nigerians a pride a place in the management of government establishment such as ministries, departments, agencies (Nigerianization Policy) was abused in the course of implementation. Consequently, there was introduction of northernization policy and fragrant manipulations of the ethnic divides in the country at the point of recruitment and staff development in public organizations. There is also the situation whereby some endangered workers who miraculously participated in training and development programmes are through political manipulations denied of the opportunity to be placed on areas where their newly acquired skills could be put into effective use. The poor performance of public institutions may be attributed to politics of manpower development and utilization. This ugly political attitude spread like a wild fire to partly infest the private sector. Today, the situation has not

changed. There is still the issue of “ethnic balancing” and the “federal character principle” in employments and staff development [23]. Indeed, a number of incompetent managers hide under this cloak and use political action to earn promotion. Moreover, there are constant accusations that unless one speaks the language of the manager, one does not stand the chance of getting employment, promotion or study leave in the public service. Many universities and specialized manpower development institutions (NIPSS) etc are neglected as they are inadequately equipped, understaffed and underfunded due mainly to politics of nepotism and ethnicity at the detriment of the national economy.

Anugwom [24] noted that politics of manpower development and utilization in Nigeria sap labor, erode public productivity and lead to rapid labor turnover. Uchendu [5], aptly portrayed the negative effects of politics of manpower development and utilization in the state public service and local government administration. He revealed that it results in staff being dismissed for not belonging to the party that formed government of the day and the dismissed staff are in most cases replaced with party faithful and cronies. In a related development, Ibeogu [23], asserted that subject to the emergence of People’s Democratic Party (P.D.P) in Ebonyi State after 2015 general elections, most civil and public servants who identified with the Labor Party (L.P) faced similar challenges as they were either demoted, posted to non-viable government sectors, suspended, or relieved of their appointments and positions. In short, most of them were denied government instituted manpower development programmes. The result is out there for us to see as the state has been starved of competent hands to manage its affairs to enhance the living conditions of the masses.

Politics of manpower development and utilization in Nigeria, has been negative in all ramifications, devastating and disastrous. They concluded that the politicization of the public service had led to economic underdevelopment, disorderliness, upsurge in poverty rate, bureaucratic corruption, ethnicity, nepotism, godfatherism, staff discontentment, inefficiency and ineffectiveness, autocratic leadership, low productivity, poor regulatory framework, marginalization and economic sabotage.

Implications of Politics of Manpower Development and Utilization on the Ebonyi State Economy: Labor or manpower development in Nigeria has been mismanaged, misplaced, neglected and has thus attracted public concern. It has not only negatively affected the productivity level of public service in the country but also

the political development and poverty alleviation strategies of government at all levels (job creation). Human Development Index and Human Poverty Index resulting from over politicization of manpower development have shown a downward trend [6].

The objectives of effective manpower development which include efficiency in service delivery, labor productivity, staff motivation, job satisfaction, economic development, political and bureaucratic stability, amiable leadership and poverty reduction have been thwarted by undue politics in staff development and utilization processes. Consequent upon this, specialized talents are misplaced or found in the wrong kinds of activity; competent and experienced labor are given fields that offer little or no challenge, hence creates constraints which sap labor morale and erode employee productivity Uchendu [5]. Political patronage, bureaucratic favouritism, godfatherism, ethnic loyalty, inadequate funding of manpower development programmes have combined to jettison the main goal of effective manpower development in Ebonyi State public service in particular and Nigerian public service in general.

Dauda [25], observed that the public services of the local government, state and the federal levels are characterized by corruption, hence mediocrity and foot dragging have become the order of the day with undue political interference in bureaucratic process thereby elevating manpower or employees who are not qualified to jobs and positions of high responsibilities. He continued that the public service of the local government system and the nation at large have become a dumping ground for political loyalists, thugs, mediocres and the relations of the hierarchy of the Nigerian public servants. Ethnicity, nepotism, pressure from legislators, local government chairmen, commissioners, ministers and national assembly members have mar administrative processes and made labor or manpower planning, recruitment, selection and training more political than administrative. The tendency for bureaucrats to succumb to excessive lobbying by the political elites in favor of their candidates results to erosion of objectivity and merit in manpower requirements and these adversely affect the state's economy.

Strategies for Effective Manpower Development and Utilization in the Nigerian Public Service.

The following points if religiously observed could help to remedy the already bastardized manpower development and utilization processes in government owned organizations in Nigeria:

- Government at all levels should improve on the quality of education in order to produce skilled manpower that will fit properly into various positions in public institutions to raise the nation's economy.
- Training of manpower in various institutions of learning should be matched with labor market needs through careful review of our educational curricula to ensure relevance and currency.
- Selection of manpower for development programmes should be primarily based on merit by means of objective appraisal of all eligible applicants in order to select those with skill deficiencies or training needs.
- There is need for an enhanced regulatory capability on the part of government for effective enforcement of manpower policies to ensure quality labor development irrespective of sex, class, or ethnic affiliation.
- Framework for effective manpower training and development such as orientation, induction, job specification, job description, personnel assessment, coaching, mentoring, simulation, job instruction method and management by objectives should be adopted to ensure quality manpower development;
- Organizational climate of public organization should be conducive to encourage effective labor development and utilization. This should include the existence of challenging tasks as well as positions for the newly developed manpower to practice the acquired skills and knowledge, enhanced remuneration and favorable work environment;
- An effective manpower planning should be religiously undertaken without politicization to promote sound manpower development (education and training);
- Government should demonstrate political will on matters relating to manpower development and utilization for higher labor productivity to be guaranteed in public owned institutions.

CONCLUSION

Where there is policy inconsistency in manpower development and utilization, the entire process is bound to be characterized by politicization, nepotism, favoritism and abuse of federal character principle. Situation like this will bring about poor performance of public policies as there will be inefficient staff that man strategic positions in the administrative machineries of government. It is therefore, our contention that manpower development and

utilization should be properly handled in a professional way for competence, high labor productivity, job satisfaction and motivation to be enthroned in our public institutions. This, it is believed will bring about responsible government that will be sensitive and proactive to the yearnings and aspirations of the people through prompt delivery of public goods and services.

Recommendations: The following recommendations have been suggested for effective manpower development and utilization devoid of any form of undue political manipulations.

- There should be proper organizational need assessment and evaluation of manpower skill requirements in public institutions so as to determine areas that require training;
- To ensure sound manpower development programmes we make a case for a strong institutional framework for manpower development and monitoring for effectiveness;
- Specialized institutions of higher learning such as, universities polytechnics and other tertiary institutions should be equipped and funded to produce skilled manpower;
- Selection of manpower for development should be based on merit and objective appraisal of skills of all eligible candidates;
- Trained and developed manpower should be placed on positions where they can put their newly acquired skills to effective use.
- Government should demonstrate strong political will by dealing decisively with anyone found either covertly or overtly politicization manpower development and utilization programmes so as to serve as deterrent to others who may wish to do same in the nearby future.

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