

Desirability And Efficacy Of Human Resource Planning In The Nigerian Public Sector: A Critical Discourse Of The Delta State Civil Service

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Abstract

Developing and utilizing a well trained and flexible workforce that will contribute to organizations' capacity to cope with and adapt to uncertain and changing environments is critical to public sector performance, productivity, renewal and re-invention that is needed for the socio-economic and political development of any nation. In the Nigerian public sector, there is no appropriate planning and rational appraisal of human resource in-flow and out-flow both at the national and organizational levels. Both levels of planning involve a continuous and on-going process that takes cognizance of human resource stock through deliberately constructed appraisals of human capital formation, forecasts about utilization demands and development strategies. The concomitant effect of poor planning is the near absence of analysis of human resource demands, supplies, surpluses and shortages as well as wastages and utilization that is at the heart of national and organizational growth and development. This paper which attempted a critical discourse of the desirability and efficacy of human resource planning in the Nigerian public sector with a focus on Delta State Civil Service relied on valuable primary and secondary sources of data. The paper which subsequently argued that inadequate human resource planning in Nigeria will compound the trend of gross under-utilization (a feature of the Nigerian public sector) and constrain the developmental role of the civil service, concluded with some useful and valuable recommendations for the adoption, applicability and utility of an appropriately integrated, synthetic and eclectic approach to human resource planning that is an integral part of the broad process of corporate planning in the Nigerian public sector.

Introduction

That human resource planning determines the human resources required by organizations if they are to achieve their strategic goals is indubitable. The concern for human resource planning which ensures that the human resource requirements of an organization are identified and plans are made for satisfying those requirements is not unconnected with the realization that human resource is the most strategic, valuable and critical of all organizational resources and, as a result, it is at the heart of organizational functioning, development and renewal whether in the public or private sector environment. Despite the

utility and inevitability of human resource planning for organizational performance and productivity, it is bewildering to note that what many organizations do at best is a piecemeal and half-hearted retail planning that is neither comprehensive nor full-blown and wholesale. The implications of either unplanned and unsystematic or piecemeal and half-hearted approach to human resource planning for organizational performance that are manifold include an over-bloated staff population, poor mix of employees with the requisite skills, knowledge, capacity and experience or exposure, mix-match between the developed absorptive capacity of the service and the accommodated number of employees, under-utilization, inefficiency and low productivity. This paper therefore attempted a critical discourse of the desirability and efficacy of an adequately appropriate human resource planning in the Nigerian public sector, using the Delta State Civil Service as a case study.

Planning: Meaning and Significance

First and foremost, planning is deciding what to do, how to do it and who is to do it (Koontz et al, 2004). It is deciding what actions to be taken in the future for the purpose of achieving organizational goals. It involves thinking ahead, initiating and taking a pre-determined course of action and deciding in advance what should be done, how, when and by whom. Without planning, the activities of the various components may well become a series of random actions with meaningless objectives (Datta, 2008). There is, in short, a convergence of opinion among authors on administration and management that planning has a primacy over all the other organizational functions. (Koontz et al, 2004; Stoner and Freeman, 2004; Armstrong, 2007; Ezeani, 2006; Byers, 1994; Cowling & Mailer 2004; Glueck, 1992; Hackett, 1997 and Certo, 2009).

Planning, in fact, provides a rational approach to pre-selected objectives and strongly implies managerial innovation. It is not only the most critical aspect of all the managerial functions, it is an intellectually demanding process that requires that we consciously determine courses of action and base our decisions, which bridges the gap between where we are and where we want to go on purpose, knowledge and considered estimates. Despite the obvious importance of planning, it is still the least well done part of managing and poor planning may be the cause of many managerial problems. In essence, planning is the process of determining how the organization can get to where it wants to be and exactly what it will do to accomplish its objectives.

In a more formal context, planning is the systematic development of action programmes aimed at reaching agreed organizational objectives through the process of analyzing, evaluating, and selecting among the opportunities which are foreseen. Over the years, management writers have presented several different purposes of planning. For example, Roney (2002:13) posited that organizational planning has two purposes: protective and affirmative. The protective purpose of planning is to minimize risk by reducing the uncertainties surrounding business conditions and clarifying the consequences of related management action. The affirmative purpose of planning is to increase the degree of organizational success. Still another purpose of planning is to establish a coordinated effort within the organization.

Absence of planning is usually accompanied by an absence of coordination and, therefore, usually contributes to organizational inefficiency. The fundamental purpose of planning, however, is to help the organization reach its objectives or to facilitate its accomplishment. All other purposes of planning are simply spin-offs of this fundamental purpose. A vigorous planning programme helps managers to be future- oriented, for they are forced to look beyond their normal everyday problems to project what may face them in the future. Managers who look only at the present and neglect the future seem headed toward certain failure. Decision coordination is a second advantage of a sound planning programme. A decision should not be made today without some idea of how it will affect a decision that will have to be made tomorrow. The planning function assists managers in their efforts to coordinate their decisions. A third advantage of planning is that it emphasizes organizational objectives and since organizational objectives are the starting points for planning, managers are constantly reminded of exactly what their organization is trying to accomplish.

Human Resource Planning: A Conceptual Clarification

Human Resource Planning is the process by which management determines how the organization should move from its current (human resource) position to its anticipated or expected position (Vetter, 1997). Vetter's definition which is deceptively simple assumes that four basic questions can be answered. These questions that constitute a four-stage planning process are:

Where Are We Now? The answer centre on an analysis of the current employees, their skills, attitudes, work, behaviours, interests and so forth and an analysis of the work to be performed as well as its design and organization into meaningful jobs and the degree of match between the nature of the individual employees with the nature of the jobs.

Where Do We Want to Be? The answer to this question involves establishing human resource goals that are consistent or in tandem with the objectives and mission of the organization, the condition found in the external environment and the interests, skills and attitudes of our employees. The correspondence between the work and the individual will greatly affect work behaviours and ultimately all human outcomes.

How Do We Get From Where We Are Now to Where We Want to Be? Answer to this revolves around the heart of personnel decision-making and programming. The human resource specialist generates alternative possible actions to achieve the human resource goals. These programmes include activities designed to increase unit productivity and employee performance, to ensure control and to solve any current or anticipated problems that employees may face.

How Effective Were the Actions? Answers here involve evaluation of the results of the personnel activities, to assess if the actions taken did accomplish the human resource objectives set earlier and to monitor any new problems that might have surfaced.

Human resource planning can also be seen as a concept that involves the critical analysis of supply, demand, surplus, shortages, wastages and utilization of human resources (Ogunniyi, 1992). Its primary goal is the adoption of policy actions and strategies which will seek to balance the equation of supply and demand of manpower required for socio-economic and political development of a nation. It is concerned with the development of critical human competence, skills and attitudes which will match occupational, professional, administrative and technical demands for sectoral and national development activities of a nation. The overriding understanding of this process is the fact that human resource planning is valuable for the development of skills, concepts and abilities for national economic objectives of public and private sector institutions.

In the perspective of Bulla and Scott (2004), human resource planning is the process for ensuring that the human resource requirements of an organization are identified and plans are made for satisfying those requirements. Human resource planning is based on the belief that people are an organization's most important strategic resource. It is generally concerned with matching resources to business in the longer term, although it will sometimes address shorter term requirements. Human resource planning is therefore concerned with broader issues relating to the ways in which people are employed and developed in order to improve organizational effectiveness and as, a consequence, plays a significant part in strategic human resource management.

Quinn Mills (2003) also emphasized that human resource planning is a decision-making process that combines three important activities: identifying and acquiring the right number of people with the proper skills, motivating them achieve high performance and creating interactive links between corporate objectives and people-planning activities, while Casson (2008) stressed that human resource planning that consists of forecasting people needs, the future availability of people and drawing up plans to match both demand and supply sides is an all-embracing, policy-making activity producing on a rolling basis precise forecast using technically sophisticated and highly integrated planning systems. He added that the concept is better regarded as a regular monitoring activity through which human resource stocks are flows and their relationships to corporate needs can be better understood, assessed and controlled, problems highlighted and a base established from which to respond to unforeseen events and an investigatory activity by which the human resource implications of particular problems and change situations can be explored and the effects of alternative policies and actions investigated.

Essentially too, human resource planning is the process by which management anticipates personnel (or staffing) requirements now and in the foreseeable future and therefore seeks ways to ensure that the right persons in the right mix and number are available for the right jobs at the right time. According to Cowling and Mailer (2004) human resource planning is a systematic approach designed to ensure that the right people will be in the right place at the right time. He added that it is a subsystem of the macro corporate strategy and it provides a clear framework for management action in areas such as recruitment, training, pay and rewards and employee relations. In a similar perspective, Bell and Hanson (2007) defined it

as the systematic analysis of organizations resources and the construction of a forecast of its future manpower requirements from the base, with special concentration on the efficient utilization of manpower at both stages and the planning necessary to ensure that the manpower supply matches the forecast requirements.

Human Resource planning has two phases – planning at national and organizational level. Both planning functions are interrelated. For they deal with rational appraisal of human resources in-flow and out-flow and the estimation of demand and supply phenomena. Both are also concerned with a continuous process that takes cognizance of existing manpower stock. Generally, the common basis between human resources planning at both levels is the inevitable task of appraising human capital formation, making forecasts about utilization demands and developing strategy for manpower development and utilization. Hackett (1999) equally opined that human resource planning is a deliberately planned process that enables organizations to identify the areas where a shortage or excess of manpower is likely to occur in the future or where there is inefficient use of people. Armed with this information, you can take steps to deal with the situation before it becomes a crisis. In the same vein, Ferris and Buckley (1995) defined human resources planning as the first activity in the series of activities that involves the adoption of an integrated, synthetic and eclectic approach for anticipating and estimating future manpower requirements.

For it to be meaningful, human resource planning should be an integral part of the broad process of corporate planning. And the strategic planning process should define projected changes in the scale and types of activities carried out by the organization and identify the core competences the organization needs to achieve its goals and therefore its skills requirements. In so far as there are articulated strategic corporate plans, human resource planning interprets them in terms of people requirements and has the potency of influencing the corporate strategy by drawing attention to ways in which people could be developed and deployed more effectively to further the attainment of corporate goals as well as focusing on problems that have to be resolved in order to ensure that the people required will be available and capable of making the required contribution (Armstrong, 2007).

On the whole, human resource planning is valuably useful because it is aimed at attracting and retaining the number of people required with appropriate skills, expertise, and competencies, anticipating the problems of potential surpluses or deficits of people,

developing a well trained and flexible workforce thereby contributing to the organization's ability to adapt to an uncertain and changing environment, reducing dependence on external recruitment when key skills are in short supply by formulating employee retention and development strategies and improving the utilization of people by introducing more flexible systems of work. Thus while the demand forecasting side is an estimate of the future numbers of people required and the likely skills and competencies they will need, the supply forecasting side has to do with the measures the number of people likely to be available from within and outside the organization having allowed for attrition in the form of labour wastage and retirements, absenteeism, internal movements and promotions, and changes in hours and other conditions of work.

Human Resource Planning (Supply Side)

Based on the forecast of the future manpower demand, an assessment of the number of people likely to be available from within and outside the organization will be done. There are two areas to focus on in the assessment of the supply side of human resource planning. They are the existing workforce (internal labour market) and the potential employees in the external labour market. The areas that are germane for the supply of the analysis can be categorized into three groups:

Existing Staff	Potential Staff	Leavers
Numbers	Categories	Redundancies
Categories	Location	Retirements
Skills	Skills	Wastages Rates
Performance	Trainability	Dismissals
Flexibility	Attitudes	Resignations

Human Resource Supply: Internal

In identifying our existing manpower position and to predict the proportion of the existing workforce that will remain within the organization throughout the planning period, it will require the following:

Age Analysis: It will show where the concentrations occur and to highlight any imbalances or likely problem areas (i.e. impending upheaval in the shape of mass retirement among managers or workers).

Skills Analysis: It will show how many people are proficient in the key skills required by the organization (i.e. managerial, supervisory, clerical and manual)

Training Plan Analysis: It will identify what can be done to improve and diversify the skills of the existing workforce. An effective system of performance appraisal to monitor progress is relevant here.

Succession Plan Analysis: To indicate who in the organization can succeed who in the hierarchy.

Leavers Analysis: To indicate the labour turnover rate by staff category and/department. How many people are due for retirement? Are there any redundancies likely? How many people left due to dissatisfaction? The information obtained will present a reliable picture of the state of the organization's workforce. Three outcomes are likely: the supply available will match the forecasted demand; the supply exceeds the forecasted labour requirements – more likely in industries that are contracting in one or more categories or the demand exceeds the supply of manpower requirements.

Organization's need to key into the external labour market source at intervals in order to take care of short falls of labour in the existing workforce. External labour market is the particular group or pool of potential employees locally, regionally or nationally, who possess the skills and knowledge required by an organization at a given point in time. When the labour market is extremely competitive, organizations should reconsider their reward system and focus more on the methods of retaining skilled categories of staff.

Labour Turnover Analysis: It will reveal potential problems such as excessive wastage among trainees which might mean that you will have a shortage of skilled workers in a few years ahead. A common index of labour performance used in organizations is labour turnover. This provides information about the ratio of leavers to the average numbers of those employed in the course of the same year. The equation can be expressed as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Number of employees leaving during the year}}{\text{Average numbers of employed during the year}}$$

Once you have identified what manpower will be available within the organization, you can compare it with the manpower demand information or forecast. This will lead you to one of two broad conclusions. Either you will have too much manpower or you will have too little. The picture may not be uniform throughout the organization. In this case, it may be possible to consider moving people with appropriate training from one part of the organization to another. This will help to avoid expensive redundancy payments and the loss of employees familiar with the organization and its methods likely to occur in exactly the areas where you would wish to expect. You are therefore almost bound to look outside the organization for at least some of your future resources.

Human Resource Supply – External

It is very difficult to secure all your people requirements from within your organization. As a consequence, the areas to consider in the external supply side of human resource planning are:

General Profile of the Population: Age, sex, and occupation category or socio-economic grouping.

Immigration and Emigration: There is need to consider the pattern of immigration and emigration from the area to see if the population is growing, shrinking or changing in composition.

Educational System Output: The nature of the output from the educational system in order to determine whether sufficient numbers of apprentices or trainees with the right educational background will be available should be determined.

Local Unemployment Levels and a Profile of Skills or Occupational Groupings: This will add to your knowledge of the availability of labour in the area.

Inhibiting Problems in Human Resource Planning

Several factors tend to inhibit efforts at ensuring human resource planning. The factors include the following:

Information: One of the major problems that may be encountered in human resource planning is obtaining the right kind of information. Organizational members may be reluctant to be specific about their objectives and needs or may mistrust the whole idea of trying to plan in this way, suspecting that this is just management's way of preparing for redundancies. Others may see the idea of planning ahead in a rapidly changing economic and technological environment as futile and therefore resent or resist it.

Expertise: Systematic and sophisticated human resource planning models require expertise to build and execute. If your organization is not big enough to enable you engage the services of an expert, a general identification of future trends and general problem areas can provide useful starting point until the expertise is developed.

Time: Human resource planning is not done overnight and it is not a fly-by-night venture. It will, in fact, take time to establish the right kind of information system and to interpret the data obtained. There are no shortcuts to a systematic process of data collection and interpretation and a continuous concentration on what you set out to achieve.

Future Uncertainties: Some people will purport to have the ability to predict with certainty just what the future holds. Economic changes may affect the demand for your goods or services; technological changes may alter your work methods and social and political changes may influence people's attitude to work and to the kind of work that they are prepared to undertake. We cannot pretend that this uncertainty does not exist, but we are expected to identify the current trends, consider any likely changes in the factors that underlie the trends and come up with a prediction which is adequately accurate in the present circumstances. By constantly monitoring the actual situation as it unfolds to see how it compares with the plan, it should be possible to update both the plan and the premises upon which it is based so as to be able to improve the planning expertise in the process.

Human Resource Planning in the Nigerian Public Sector: A Critical Discourse of the Delta State Civil Service

Human resource planning that is a deliberately planned process enabling organizations to identify the areas where shortage or excess of manpower is likely to occur in the future or where there is inefficient use of people is critical to the proper and efficient functioning of both public and private sector organizations. In Nigerian public sector organizations, there is a very poor human resource planning in respect of balancing the demand and supply sides of the equation. In fact, there is a token support for or very poor commitment to human resource planning concerns such that there is no adequacy of the right mix of people available for the right jobs at the right time. As a consequence, there is no systematic analysis of organizational resources and the construction of a forecast of its future human resource requirements from the base with special concentration on efficient utilization of manpower and the planning necessary to ensure that supply side matches the forecasted demand requirements.

Pragmatically, recruitment and selection of staff is supposed to be an outgrowth of the human resource planning functional activity in the civil service so that the Commission that is responsible for engaging the services of employees, their training, promotions as well as deployments would do the appropriate and adequate forecast of demand and supply requirements so as to ensure that there is available at all times the right persons in the right mix and number for the right job.

Unfortunately however, recruitment and selection in the Delta State Civil Service is based largely on political consideration without resorting to proper and adequate human resource planning. This position was confirmed by the interview responses from both serving and incumbent commissioners on the state Civil Service Commission Board between June and November 2009. They stressed that although new employees are engaged based on some measure of need, the major deciding factor is political influence and governmental pressures. They added that the politics and putsch for ethnic representation in the civil service is usually so intense and volatile that the number of persons employed always exceeded the likely

number needed at each recruitment and selection exercise. While civil service administration cannot be divorced from politics, its influence should not be hydra-headed to the level of absolute manipulation.

Worse still, neither the Delta State Government nor the state Civil Service Commission has any form of data bank containing the general profile of the population in respect of age, sex and occupation category or socio-economic grouping, the pattern of immigration to and emigration from the state to see if the population is growing, shrinking or changing in composition, educational system output showing the nature of the output from the educational system in order to determine whether sufficient numbers of potential employees or trainees with the right educational background will be available at different times for engagement in the civil service. The implications of the near lack of appropriate human resource planning in the Delta State Civil Service apart from an over-bloated staff population, is poor mix of employees with the requisite skills, knowledge, capacity and experience or exposure, mix-match between the developed absorptive capacity of the service and the accommodated number of employees, under-utilization, inefficiency and low productivity.

Ordinarily, utilization has to do with the extent to which human resources are acquired, developed, organized, managed and deployed for maximum achievement of individual, collective, organizational and national goals (Kiggundu, 2000). And from an organizational or institutional parlance, human resource utilization must contextually be understood in the light of its impact on the effective performance of the organization's critical operating and strategic management tasks. Under-utilization of human resources can, of course, be caused by a variety of factors including under-employment, job-person mismatch, poor supervision and employee motivation, political interference and poor quality of jobs as DeFranco (2004) rightly posited. After all, an appropriately adequate human resource planning has the potency of facilitating the actualization of an intelligent, result-oriented, responsive and highly motivated and performing civil service as against a weak and enervated one. The need for an adequately appropriate human resource planning for managing the employee demand and supply forecasts or requirements in the Delta State Civil Service cannot therefore be over-emphasized.

Conclusive Remarks and Recommendations

Human resource planning has the capacity of enhancing the capability of the civil service in its critically contributory role to the development process. This is because, apart from the fact that human resource is the most strategic, valuable and critical resource in public sector organizations especially as other resources are certainly dormant awaiting the activation by the human resource element, human resource provides the nexus between organizations and their short-term and long-term goals by reason of its facilitating role. This arguably explains why human resource planning is both desirable and efficacious in the Nigerian public sector, particularly the Delta State Civil Service. While civil service administration cannot be divorced from politics, its influence should not be hydra-headed to the level of absolute manipulation. For the state civil service to be a performing and productive one that is responsive, result-oriented, development-conscious and service-based therefore, applicability and utility of an appropriately integrated, synthetic and eclectic approach to human resource planning that is an integral part of the broad process of corporate planning in the Nigerian public sector is a desideratum. And for an adequately appropriate human resource planning that will seek a balance between manpower demand inventory/forecast and supply, there is the exigency of more than a token support by the political and administrative leadership; that is to say, there should exist true commitment to the human resource planning concern and activity by top management. This true commitment will create a genial climate that will naturally engender support and co-operation from all and sundry.

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