

Capacity Building and Challenges of Compliance with Global Best Practices in Labour-Management Relations in Bayelsa State

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Abstract

A very important reason(s) for building the capacity of workers in any organization either in public or private sector is to enable them acquire knowledge, skills and technical know-how needed to improve upon their performances. In Bayelsa State South South Nigeria, issues of workers capacity building are very eminent and the question that comes to mind is; are workers expose to different forms of training to equip them with practices on global trends in labour management relations? This study examined the challenges of building workers capacity in the civil service and recommended the institutionalization of regular training and re-training of workers for effective service delivery. This is an important step to boost workers morale for increase productivity and to update their competencies required to translate government policies and programmes into action for industrial peace and harmony in the State.

Keywords: training, workers, union, organizations, conventions, government

Introduction

Global trends on human development especially in developing countries like Nigeria must comply with best practices on capacity building using alternative approaches. The essence of building the human capital particularly the workers in public or the private sector, small or large businesses, formal or informal institutions is to ensure optimal use of resources. Thus, effective resource management is the guiding principle in the practice of industrial relations and the praxis for human capital development. Meanwhile, the understanding of industrial relations and its use from capacity building in any work organization or service is governed essentially by the following schools of thought:

- The Economic School. This school is usually associated with the early Scientific Management Theory propounded by Fredrick Taylor used to explain the behavior of people in their workplace, Yalokwu (2000). The theory assumes that people are motivated to work based on economic considerations. Logically, it follows that the economically motivated worker would want to be productive contributing his best to the profit of the organization as well as ensuring his own financial wellbeing.
- The Human Relations School. This approach is based on the integration of people into work situation for their motivation to engender cooperation, productivity, social and psychological satisfaction. The approach as Ozurumba (2013) noted was founded by Elton Mayo and highlights the policies and techniques of improving employee morale, efficiency and job satisfaction.
- The Gandhian School. Gandhi has been described as one of the greatest labour leaders of modern India. He held the views of fixing and regulation of wages, trade union function, collective bargaining, use of strike, labour indiscipline, condition and duties of workers and participation in management decisions in industrial relations. The Gandhian principles believes on trusteeship which views all forms of property and human accomplishment as gift of nature and as such, they belong not to any one individual but to society. According to Sigh (2013), Ganddhi realized that relations between labour and management can either be a powerful stimulus to economic and social progress or an important factor in economic and social stagnation. The theory therefore aimed at achieving economic equality and materials advancement of the “have-nots” in a capitalist society by non-violent means.
- The Welfare school. This school of thought advocates building a good working environment for workers through better wages and remuneration. The theory emphasize the need for employer of labour to adopt measures that will give comfort and improvement on the intellectual and social condition of employee over and above his wages that is not a necessity of the industry. This is done with the hope to enable workers have a richer and more satisfactory living standards, Haralambos and Heald (2006).
- The Marxian school. This school according to Sigh (2013) advocates the elimination of various forms of exploitation against workers in organizational setting. It emphasized unity of the working class across national boundaries to collectively safeguard workers alienation from the manipulative powers of capitalism. The approach is adopted to explain the necessity of abolishing policies that are inimical to workers rights and benefits. The approach emphasized the need for workers to take full control of organizational management rather than mere instruments of labour for use by the bourgeoisie class.

These schools of thought are useful in explaining the specific roles individual relations (worker), collective relations (union) and the state (government) play in any work organizations. The applicability of any or combination of these thematic approaches in industrial relations is bound to promote synergy in the day-to-day relationship between labour and management. This can better be achieved through a well taught out philosophy of building the capacity of workers. So what then is capacity building?

The concept of Capacity Building

As a term, capacity building has been described in various dimensions by scholars, development practitioners and civil society groups in so many ways. The orthodox perspective for instance, sees training as capacity building which involves a process of learning a skill needed by someone to do a job, Wehmeier (2000). However, the dynamism of human advancement viewed capacity building beyond ordinary training to include development of institutions, philosophies and complex system. This gives capacity building a much broader scope in meaning over time and space.

The International Institute for Educational Planning IIEP (2006) viewed capacity building as a process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies increase their abilities to perform core functions by solving problems, defining multi-dimensional objectives and understanding how to deal with development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner. Put differently, Cole (1973) and Igbongidi (2011) saw capacity building as coordinated efforts to upgrade, improve procedures and strengthen organizations through investment on the people, institutions and countries to achieve development objectives.

The above implies that capacity building involves a conscious attempt to increase the capabilities of not only the people and institutions but the utilization of society's systematic network of resources including its men and materials for the accomplishment of set goals. This broad concept is meant to address three (3) fundamental areas which are.

Firstly, it requires the processes of promoting human resource development through a coordinated mechanism of equipping individuals to acquire knowledge and skills. This involves access to the use of information communication technology (ICT), knowledge use of education and training either formally or informally to enable an individual perform effectively.

Secondly, it involves a process of promoting organizational development by involving the elaboration of management structures, processes and procedures, not only within organization but also the management of relationships between the different organizations and sectors such as private, public or the community.

Thirdly, it entails the process of promoting institutions and legal framework by putting in place enactment of legislations and regulatory changes. This process enables organizations, institutions and agencies at all levels, and in all sectors, to observe rules which enhance their capabilities and operations.

Addressing the goals to improve the efficacy of institutions, the United Nations Environmental Programme UNEP (2006) highlighted the following as factors necessary for capacity building:

- Identifying capacity needs and building on already existing ones through a careful plan of need assessment goals.
- Being clear about your objectives especially in understanding between capacity providers, beneficiaries and the channels of awareness creation, analysis and decision making.
- Using a wide range of capacity building approaches to determine the most cost effective and suitable method(s).
- Targeting the right audience and people to build a critical mass i.e focusing on key players such as senior officials, health care providers, drivers or social workers.
- Making the training-of-trainers work by using a small group or step-down training for others or large groups for information dissemination.
- Institutionalizing capacity building programmes such as collaboration with relevant international, national and local institutions like development partners, the universities, training centres, Community resource centres etc for technical support.
- Making budgetary provisions and maximizing the use of limited resources to achieve identified needs for the corporate survival of such organization.

Essentially, the benefits of building workers capacities in any organization therefore, is to empower and provide a virile, skilled, knowledgeable and competent workforce required to manage scarce resources to meet both present and future needs.

Forms of Training for Workers Capacity Building

In any organization or service, training to build the capacity of workers takes different forms. Okunola (2002), Fajana (2002) and Armstrong (2003) identified the following five (5) types of training suitable in a governmental setting to include:

- Pre-service training. This training is directed at providing technical-know-how for the clientele before assumption of full employment or deployment to a new office. It is therefore a preparation process for a

worker to take higher responsibility for effective service delivery.

- Induction and on-the-job training. This is aimed primarily at familiarizing newly employed workers with organizational set up, administration, policies, philosophy and methods of work. It is also concerned with the day-to-day work experiences administered through case studies/conferences, demonstration, mentoring, visits and working on actual situation.
- In-service or off-job-training- is organized to keep workers up to date with ideas and discoveries in the workplace or profession usually through short courses, seminars and workshops, study tours, newsletters, group exercises etc.
- Professional or graduate training- is usually organized to enhance efficiency and also to enable workers acquire higher responsibilities such as nomination of a worker with diploma certificate to acquire a university degree, Master or Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) Degree.
- Systematic Training. This is the form of training that is specifically designed, planned and implemented to meet defined workers need. It is usually provided by experts who already know how to train and give meaning to specific areas of workers interest. A worker with typing skills who desire to update his competence with computer skills to cope with the new Information Communication Technology (ICT) trends is a clear example of the systematic form of training.

International Benchmarks for the Practice of Labour Relations

Nigeria is a member of the United Nations (UN) and signatory to the International Labour organization (ILO) whose mandate according to Aborisade (1992), Yusuf (1998) and Kester (2006) is to regulate international Labour standards (ILS). In order to identify with the ILO standards Eroke (2013) maintained that Nigeria has ratified about 40 conventions with the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) of 2006 being the latest. This was to ensure decent work for seafarers and to help protect quality ship owners operating under the flag of countries who ratified the MLC.

This indicated that Nigeria has demonstrated in principle her commitment to the implementation of the ILO standards for workers incentive and adequate remuneration in organization system (Oghenekohwo 2013). Also, Nigeria has taken the necessary framework of promoting opportunities for decent and productive employment in both public and private sectors. These framework and opportunities constitute the basis for labour-management relations adopted by member nations including Nigeria for global compliance.

Onyekpere (2001) highlighted some of these global conventions proclaimed by the organization on labour-management relationship to include:

- **Convention NO. 87 adopted 1948:** This is the freedom of association and protection of the right to organize convention. The convention states inter alia. Article 2: Workers and employers, without distinction whatsoever, shall have the right to establish and subject only to the rules of the organization concerned, to join organization of their own choosing without previous authorization. Article 3:1. Workers' and employer organizations shall have the right to draw up their constitutions and rules, to elect their representatives in full freedom, to organize their administration and activities and to formulate their programmes.
2. The public authorities shall refrain from any interference which would restrict this right or impede the lawful exercise thereof.
Article 4: Workers and employers organizations shall not be liable to be dissolve or suspended by administrative authority.
- **Convention NO. 98 adopted 1949:** This is the right to organize and collective bargaining concerning the application of the principles of the right to organize and bargain collectively. The convention states thus: Article 1: 1.workers shall enjoy adequate protection against acts of anti-union discrimination in respect of their employment.
2. Such protection shall apply more particularly in respect of acts calculated to: (a). make the employment of a worker subject to the condition that he shall not join a union or shall relinquish trade union membership.
(b). cause the dismissal of or otherwise prejudice a worker by reason of union membership or because of participation in union activities outside working hours or, with the consent of the employer, within working hours.
- **Convention No.15 adopted 1978:** This is the Right to labour relations (Public Service) concerning protection of the right to organize and procedures for determining conditions of employment in the public service. This convention is as stated thus: Article 1: This convention applies to all persons employed by public authorities, to the extent that more favourable provisions in other international labour convention are not applicable to them.
Article 3: For the purpose of this convention, the term public employees' organization means any organization, however composed, the purpose of which is to further and defend the interests of

public employees

Article 7: Measures appropriate to national conditions shall be taken, where necessary, to encourage and promote the full development and utilization of machinery for negotiation of terms and conditions of employment between the public authorities concerned and public employees' organizations, or of such other methods as will allow representatives of public employees to participate in the determination of these matters.

Article 8: The settlement of disputes arising in connection with the determination of terms and conditions of employment shall be sought, as may be appropriate to national conditions, through negotiation, between the parties or through independent and impartial machinery such as mediation, conciliation and arbitration, established in such a manner as to ensure the confidence of the parties involved.

- **Convention NO. 100 adopted 1951:** This deals with equal remuneration for men and women workers of equal value. The convention states thus: Article 1: (a). The term "remuneration" includes the ordinary, basic or minimum wage or salary and any additional emoluments whatsoever payable directly or indirectly, whether in cash or in kind, by the employer to the worker and arising out of the worker's employment.
(b). The term "equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value" refers to rates of remuneration established without discrimination based on sex.
- **Convention NO. 105 adopted 1957:** This convention deals on abolition of forced labour as the convention stated thus: Article 1: Each member of the ILO which ratifies this convention undertakes to suppress and not to make use of any form of forced or compulsory labour.
(a). as a means of political coercion or education or as a punishment for holding or expressing political views or views ideologically opposed to the established political, social and economic system through:
(b). a method of mobilizing and using labour for purposes of economic development;
(c). a means of labour discipline;
(d). a punishment for having participated in strike;
(e). a means of racial, social, national or religious discrimination.
- **Convention NO. 155 adopted 1981:** This convention deal on occupational safety and health and the promotional framework on occupational safety and health convention. This is concerned with the health and safety of workers and welfare provisions for good social security of work environment.

The implementations of these ILO conventions are designed to accelerate the manpower development of nations as launched in the popular Philadelphia declaration of 1944. Since then, the ILO has adopted various measures to stimulate the most effective and productive use of human resource in the process of economic and social development. The ILO manpower experts have been made available to developing countries seeking help in assessing their manpower needs in comparative terms. They have also been practically involved in organizing different training programmes in the areas of productivity and management development to maintain standards in human and labour related issues across the world especially in developing countries.

Nigerian Experience on Capacity Building in Labour Relations

Over the years, Nigeria has made concerted efforts in building workers capacity at different levels to increase efficiency. This is because, the advantages of harnessing the human resource of the nation is the most critical factor in the development process, Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (2001). This development has made the Nigerian government to collaborate with different world bodies to access manpower development at the global level. The government also took various steps by the establishment of the Federal Manpower Board and the Management Services and Training Department of the Federal Civil Service to meet the training need of workers.

These departments handle matters of policy formulation in respect to human resource development in the service. Besides, the National Council on Establishment coordinates measures to achieve results on human resource development (HRD). Beyond matters of policies, various institutions have also been established to play vital roles in capacity building programmes in the country. Bur (1992) enumerated some of these training agencies as follows:

- The External Aid Agencies (Bureau for External Aid).
- Scholarship Board.
- Universities, Polytechnic or Colleges of Education.
- Planning and Budget office in the Presidency.
- Professional organizations like Institute of Chartered Accountant of Nigeria (ICAN), Association of National Accountants of Nigeria (ANAN), Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM), Nigerian

- Institute of Safety Professionals (NISP), Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) etc
- Public Service Institutions Like Nigeria Institute for Training and Development (NITD), Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Centre for Management and Development (CMD), Agriculture and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI), ITF, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Command and Staff College, Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) etc.
 - Management Consultants

Also, the Federal Establishment Circular (2011) highlighted six (6) training and staff development centres located in different parts of the country to offer wide range of training for junior and supervisory staff of civil servants. Similarly, others bodies that handles training of senior and management training cadres are ASCON, NIPSS, CMD and ARMTI which are concerned with the building of workers capacity in Nigeria.

However, as a result of various reforms in the service, matters of training is now a shared responsibility between the federal civil service commission, ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) to build workers capacity in recent times. This structure and situation is basically the same in all the states of the Nigerian federation including Bayelsa State.

The Challenges of Building Workers Capacity in Bayelsa State

The greatest challenge facing the work force in Bayelsa State is lack of capacity building in line with the practice of modern trends. Available information indicates that training programmes for civil servants in the state is virtually lacking. This is exhibited by the complete abandonment of the Public Service Training Institute meant to cater for workers training needs. As a result, some workers make sacrifices through personal effort by attending programmes for their self development to improve service delivery. Over the last three years for instance, civil servants undergoing various in-service training across the six (6) federal training centres had cried out for non-remittance of their training cost by government. This is not a welcome development for the growth of the public service in Bayelsa State.

A common feature in the civil service is the prevalence of mass illiterates recruited into the system on political, ethnic or other considerations. In a state where training programmes for civil servants are not regular, a good number of workers can hardly perform simple government business. Little wonder as some civil servants lack the ability of treating files and recording same on the folio for correct filing or easy dispatch. These practices negate manpower planning in terms of selection of candidates for appointment into the service as noted by Olagboye (2005) and Adebayo (2001).

Another aspect is that workers who could not build their capacities may find it difficult to relate properly with both their senior officers and junior colleagues. They may also find it difficult to understand their basic rights and how to claim their entitlements. It is not uncommon that if such persons find themselves in leadership positions such as labour unions. They can easily compromise the general interest of workers in a bargaining process due to their ignorance.

Furthermore, given that a good number of workers in the service are illiterates and were not prepared for government business, it is very common for these workers to exhibit negative attitude to work. Some of these attitudes includes: lateness and or early closing of work, indecent dressing, gossiping, absenteeism, rudeness and un-wholesome behaviors etc. These attitudes apart from going against the ethics of the General Order and Public Service Rules, it often results to indolence, corruption, apathy, laziness, inefficiency, low productivity and poor achievement in the service generally.

It is quite regrettable that officers or government decision to encourage strict compliance to rules is often resisted in various forms. It is observed in Bayelsa State that persons in authority or government who are determined to implement such government policies is usually tagged "A Wicked Man" "Enemy of Progress" or "A Bad Government" etc. These are the stigma and names given to people who are principled. This is very true of what is experienced in the state following the compulsory signing of attendance register by civil servants in recent times.

The implication of these challenges in the service is that, the state is breeding a crop of weak civil servants who may not be quite visionary to translate government policies and programmes into action. The scenario poses great danger for government who relied essentially on the innovativeness of civil servants for their expertise.

Conclusion

The overall goals of building the capacity of workers in any organization is to maximize the use of limited resources and to reduce wastages. For workers in Bayelsa State to perform their duties efficiently, it is very crucial for them to be properly trained to understand the rules of the service. Denial of civil servants to acquire training no doubt negates their basic rights and compliance with international best practices in labour management relations. It equally portends great dangers and threat to industrial peace and harmony in the state. This is very true as an ignorant mind is a destructive mind.

Recommendations

In order to improve on workers capacity to meet with global standards for effective service delivery, it is

recommended that:

- There is the urgent need to institutionalize a capacity building culture for workers in the Bayelsa State civil service. This can be done through regular training and re-training in all the ministries, department and agencies MDAs to attain global competitiveness in work ethics.
- Government should revitalize the moribund public service training institute and appoint a dynamic and visionary leadership to manage the affairs of the institute. This will help to cater for the training needs of civil servants in the state to drive government policies and programmes better.
- Adequate budgetary provisions should be made for the funding of capacity building programmes in the state. This will afford workers the opportunity to attend training programmes to acquire relevant skills especially in understanding the scheme of service and use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to comply with the practice of global standards.
- Civil servant in the state should make judicious use of training resources to enhance their growth. The habit were some workers nominated for training programmes collect government monies and seat back in their houses does not benefit such individuals and the corporate development of the service especially in the state.
- There is the crucial need for workers to understand their basic right and obligation in their working environment. This will provide avenue for meaningful dialogue with government in the face of new tax regimes, disasters management like flood, housing policies, pension etc to engender mutual trust and greater benefits.

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