

MANPOWER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGERIAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

In view of the present competitiveness and the general brain drain across the nations, manpower planning and development are becoming increasingly important within the industry.

This paper therefore discussed the current manpower situation in the Nigerian industry with a special emphasis on the construction industry in Nigeria. It began with a broad review of manpower planning and its development. It was revealed that modern manpower management relies upon formal programmes of development for all kinds and levels of employees through training, education and effective communication.

It then concluded by highlighting the strategies for effective manpower development in construction industry and the general industry in Nigeria. They include the establishment of easily achievable goal, the development of a set of objectives to assist in the realization of the goal and the formulation of implementation strategies for each of the objectives.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the major problems confronting management in any organization is the issue of finding the most effective way of matching people with jobs. The perennial question that often comes to the mind of experts is whether we should design the job to suit the individual or get the individual to fit into a job position?

Before an answer is provided for this question, it is to be observed that one of the functions of management is to determine its manpower needs.

Manpower is essentially an aggregate of skills and attitudes from education and training which equips a labour-force with the capacity to plan, organise and carry out economic processes when properly allocated. On the other hand, management can be described as a process of getting things done through other people (Olateju, 1992). Infact, different meanings have been ascribed to the word 'Management'. Why some people see it as referring to a group of people, some see it as a process demanding the performance of a specific function. Management is also defined scientifically as the coordination of all the resources of an organization through the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling in order to attain organizational objectives. Management can also be referred to as the guidance or direction of people towards organizational goals or objectives. It can also be seen as the supervising, controlling and co-ordinating of activities to attain optimum results with organizational resources.

It could be stressed here that the success of any manpower planning and its development is a function of good management.

2.1 MANPOWER PLANNING

It has been earlier mentioned that one of the fundamental functions of management is to determine its manpower needs. The process by which management attempts to provide for its human resources to accomplish its task is referred to as Manpower Planning. According to Nwachukwu (1988), manpower planning is essential in all organizations because it is required for recruitment. Without it, it would be practically difficult to determine the number of personnel required for recruitment, to be reassigned, due for retirement or that need to be retained for better utilization. All organizations must therefore plan their manpower needs formally or informally. The following figure shows the employment planning flow chart for a typical organization.

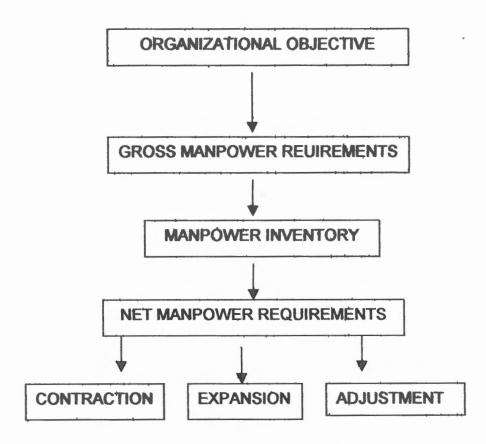


Fig. 1: Employment Planning Flow Chart.

Source: Nwachukwu (1988)

Manpower planning brings to a minimum excessive recruitment, training and transfer and thereby saves management cost and time. It has been observed elsewhere that the major changes in population, technological innovation as well as size and complexity of organizations have made informal methods of employment planning obsolete for all but very small and stable organizations.

The situation is more crucial here in Nigeria where there is scarcity of qualified manpower to fill existing positions. Manpower planning is very compelling to effectively and efficiently utilize whatever personnel that is available. It is in view of this that people in the organization who need more training could be identified to upgrade skills in order to assume more responsibility positions. Manpower planning would also aid the organization to start very early to seek and find capable hands to replace those about to retire to cushion the effect of their departure from the establishment.

Human resource planning is a process which seeks to ensure that the right number and kind of people will be at the right places and at the right time in future, capable of doing those thins which are needed so that the organization can continue to achieve its goals. Studies have clearly demonstrated that systematic planning in all types of organizations increases their chances for success. In the light of this, the components which are essential to the process are as follows:

i) Inventorying existing human resources.

- Forecasting future needs for different kinds of skills and types of human resources.
- iii) Projecting present resources into the future and comparing against the needs that have been forecast.
- iv) Planning the necessary activities such as recruiting, selection, training, placement and compensation required to meet future human resource requirements. These will now be further discussed.

2.1.1 Inventorying Existing Human Resources

Manpower inventory is the stock taking of employees in the different categories and the different sections of the organization. In the words of Burack (1965), a critical analysis of the current manpower resources available in the organizations will reveal two areas for possible management action – that of overstaffing and that of underemployment.

The role of management here is to initiate a meeting of all heads of departments in which a consensus s is arrived at based on the size of operations in each unit.

Information obtained enables them to decide on the fore goings:

- i) Whether a unit or department has surplus staff who are not needed or who could be transferred to other sections instead of recruiting new ones;
- ii) Whether employees are usefully employed. Where employees are underemployed, they get demoralised as the job becomes

unsatisfying. In these circumstances, it is possible to discover through the exercise when people are overworked in a section. This phase is followed by manpower audit, which gives the actual number of employees on the establishment.

2.1.2. Human Resources Forecasting

Once the current establishment has been agreed upon, the next thing to do is to plan for the future. Inventories of available talents and counts of vacant positions sometimes supplemented by estimates of losses through turnover, retirements, dismissals, promotions, demotions, transfers and deaths are the usual approaches.

In addition to the knowledge of present manpower resources, successful future forecast of the human resource is a function of two other factors. They are:

- a) Information on the manpower environment.
- b) Information on business objectives.

2.1.2.1 <u>The Manpower Environment</u>

The manpower environment is affected by certain changes which must be taken into account while planning for the manpower requirement of an organisation. Once these sources of change have been discovered, steps can now be taken to cope with the situation. The common sources of change are:

- (i) Technological changes
- (ii) Social changes
- (iii) Economic changes
- (iv) Political changes.

(i) Technological changes:

The major effects of technological changes on the manpower requirements of a firm are in terms of occupation and skills involved. A typical example is the use of new and complex equipment in the construction industry. It is therefore necessary to decide at what point in time the equipment will be installed and if possible, start to train the present employees who will operate the machines or to recruit new employees where the old ones do not have the necessary background for the acquisition of that type of skill. In fact, technological changes require the training of employees and since such training takes time and resources, it has to be properly phased, otherwise, the company's target date for starting production may not be met.

(ii) Social Changes

The major types of changes here are population trends, education and social mobility. One finds it very disturbing to note that young people prefer working in the urban areas to being employed in rural settings. Any building firm and other firms located in the rural areas therefore is likely to suffer from manpower problems as most of the skilled personnel and management staff necessary for the operation may not be available.

(iii) Economic Changes

When the level of economic activities in a country grows, a lot of developmental projects are embarked upon. This increases the demand for skilled staff and managerial personnel. One of the things which may arise in such a situation is that some of the well-trained personnel who do not get the

challenge they want from their jobs either quit for other jobs or come together and form small scale firms of their own. This further creates a shortage of trained managers and/or other skilled personnel.

(iv) Political Considerations

In the past and up till today in Nigeria with the exception of the Federal Government establishments, the chance of a qualified person obtaining a job in a corporation of another state were very remote. There is much talk of ethnic balancing in jobs and the poor employee is caught in the middle of all these. Unfortunately however, some managers/employers of labour assists in perpetuating this social injustice. There are constant accusations that unless one speaks the language of the manager (that is, belonging to the same ethnic group or state), one does not stand the chance of getting a job. In most cases, applicants do not believe on their own merit, somebody must talk to somebody on their behalf.

2.1.2.2 <u>Information On Business Objective</u>

The manpower requirements of a building firm or any other enterprise have to be related to its own objectives.

The question that may be raised here are:

- (i) What manpower is required?
- (ii) What manpower resources are available?
- (iii) What action(s) need to be taken to achieve the future manpower requirement?
- (iv) Who will take action?.

In drawing up the manpower plan shown in fig. 2 therefore, the five questions posed above must be examined properly with considerable emphasis on the categories of employees. A continuous check is made on the sources of recruitment and the general levels of pay in the country.

2.2 MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT

New employees do not often come to a firm completely for the work they are employed to perform. They must learn to adjust to a new environment, increase and sharpen the skills they have, become understanding participants in organisational endeavours and meet challenges of changing conditions. Such improvements may be left to chance or guess work. But modern manpower management relies upon formal programmes of development for all kinds and levels of employees through training, education and effective communication.

2.2.1 Training

The term "training" can be referred to as any process by which the aptitudes, skills and abilities of employees to perform specifics jobs are increased. Training can also referred to as "Know how".

The training of operative manpower serves to improve employees' skills which in turn increases the quantity and quality of output. In addition, the relative amount of equipment and materials required to produce a unit of output is decreased and executive effort will tend to shift from the need of correcting mistakes to the task of planning work and encouraging experts employees. Also, a man who is trained has confidence in his ability to

perform. He believes that he has control of his environment and is equipped to tolerate occasional disappointments, frustrations and inconveniences. He learns to rationalize and to accept blame for his own failures instead of blaming the organization. A trained employee derives intrinsic satisfaction from his work, which promotes his morale. Organizations that have regular training programmes give employees the feeling of being wanted and something to look up to.

2.2.1.1 Determining Training Needs

Before any training programme is undertaken, the need for training has to be identified. The need for training increases as a result of new technology, new products, variety of new customers, and other factors such as competitive strategy of competitors. To mount a training programme needs systematic analysis. Analysis could reveal that low productivity in the operations department for example, is due to work scheduling.

Training could be a waste of time and resources if the area of emphasis in training is not properly isolated. French (1974) observed that nothing can be more frustrating and demoralizing as teaching a person what he already knows. Concerted effort must therefore be made to clearly identify areas of stress in training programme.

According to Nwachukwu (1988), the best common sense approach to identify areas of training is to use the formula:

D = M - I

Where:

D = inefficiency in the employee

M = complete list of behaviour necessary for mastery of the job.

I = for all the knowledge of behaviour necessary for the job which the employee already possesses.

By identifying the behaviour or traits required to perform a job and finding out what an employee lacks, training can then be concentrated in areas of deficiency.

2.2.1.2 Methods of Training

It must be stressed here that there is no hard and fast rule as to how to select methods of training. New training methods are constantly being experimented upon and each produces the desire effect.

The more common training methods in use are discussed below;

(i) On the job Training

This is the most popular and in some cases, the only form of training programme used by some organizations. One of the merits of on-the –job training is that it minimizes the problem of transfer of learning associated with other methods of training. On-the-job training could be an on-going process that does not excessively disrupt normal company operation.

The major disadvantage of on-the-job training is that there is every tendency for the trainer to pick up bad habits.

(ii) Apprenticeship Programme

This method of training is employed when extensive practice or technical knowledge is required to perform a job. The training combines on the job training with classroom lectures.

(iii) Job Rotation

This is a training device that makes it necessary to move the trainee from one department or unit to another to master what goes on in that section. The importance of this programme is to broaden the trainee's experience in different jobs.

(iv) <u>Vestibule Training</u>

This is a training device that trains the employee off his regular work area but in an environment closely resembling his place. He practices his skill with identical equipment that he uses at his regular work place. Vestibule training has the advantage of training numbers of employees in a short period of time without disturbing the flow of normal routine. Moreover, costly mistakes are avoided and the problem of transfer of training is enhanced as the trainee practices with identical equipment and tools.

(v) Role Playing

This is a technique of training where the trainee plays the part of a certain character or acts in an event. He is taught to do a job or make decisions the way he thinks his boss could have made it. Role playing is very exciting as it challenges the imagination of the employee. Role playing promotes retention as it heightens imagination, ingenuity and resourcefulness.

(vi) Outside Courses

Vocational, correspondences, trade and evening schools are avenue through which semi-skilled, skilled and other categories of workers can be improved upon. Attendance of Annual Conferences and Organised Workshop/Seminars are also another avenue of training employees in an organisation.

2.2.2 Education

Education can be otherwise referred to as "know why". Education must be concerned with the understanding, perceptions and attitudes of people at all levels of the organisation. Two forms of education could be readily identified and they are:

- (i) Upward Education
- (ii) Downward education

2.2.2.1 <u>Upward Education</u>

This deals with how executives learn more about lower levels of an organisation.

Management cannot do an effective job of educating employees unless it is knowledgeable about their thinking and attitudes. To be able to be on firm ground, answers must be provided to the salient questions. What must be learnt about employees and how is this learning going to be accomplished?

2.2.2.2 <u>Downward Education</u>

This deals with how executives seek to increase the understanding of lower levels. The process of downward education consists of two major phases: Subject matter and learning methods.

2.2.3 <u>Communication</u>

The best of educational methods will be to no avail if they are not

properly communicated. Communication therefore is an indispensable management tool. Any means that an individual uses to transfer meaning, ideas, feeling, emotion or attitude to others is communication.

It must be stressed that when the managers in an organization are friendly and have a good working rapport, communication tends to be very good. On the other hand, when the members of the organisation engage in mutual distrust, resentment, gossips or when there is a feeling of incompetence and insecurity, there is bound to be communication breakdown. All the key functions of an organization: planning, organising, directing and controlling depend on effective communication for proper execution.

Directing requires effective communication and all results-oriented leaders encourage effective communication by having established channels (formal and informal) means of transmitting information to people.

For management, communication serves two key functions:

- (i) It provides a vehicle by which one can implement a pllan of action co-ordinated towards a common goal.
- (ii) It provides a means by which members of an organization can be motivated to execute the plans willingly and enthusiastically.

2.3 MANPOWER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGERIAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.

It is universally accepted that the construction industry plays a significant role in the economic development of many nations and Nigeria is not an exemption. It is often considered to be complex and a unique one. It is

also considered to be highly organized, fast moving and exciting process.

It is a rewarding, often tough and demanding discipline. The construction industry differs from other industries in the following ways:

- (i) Work is carried out in the open and is subject to interference from the weather.
- (ii) The labour force within the construction industry is often considered as nomadic in nature. That is, employees not moving from site to site, but also from employer to employer;
- (iii) The plan of work on a building site varies and changes from day-today;
- (iv) Sites are often situated many miles from head offices and/ or regional centres of organizations;
- (v) Construction involves a high volume of specialist work and a wide range of trades and activities.

The National Construction Policy put in place some years back by the Federal Government has addressed the issue of manpower development and training for the Nigerian construction industry. The goal and objectives of the policy on the issue are as follows:

Goal: To redress the problem of manpower shortage in all cadres of the construction industry by providing well funded academic and practical training through improvement in existing training programmes in our universities, polytechnics and trade centres and establishing new programmes to cope with the demand.

Objectives:

- Achieve self-sufficiency in the training of manpower for the construction industry.
- (ii) Update and upgrade the training programmes for all related construction professionals locally so as to eliminate the use of hard currency for currency for this purpose.
- (iii) Develop strong collaboration between training and practice.
- (iv) Expand the outlets for training personnel through seminars and workshops, and establish new schools and course programmes as occasions demand.

Husseini (1992) opined that a number of options are possible in establishing the kinds of manpower in the construction industry.

Towards this end, he identified the types of staff required for each of the categories in a Building construction organisation as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1:	Personnel Categories In The Construction Industry

Personnel Level

Types of Staff

Unskilled Labour

Able bodied men/women to perform

manual duties

Skilled Labour

Masons, carpenters, electricians,

plumbers, e.t.c

Technical Personnel

Architects, builders, engineers, quantity

surveyors, e.t.c

Management Personnel

Administrators, architects, builders,

engineers, quantity surveyors e.t.c

The professionals in this group may be doubling up for technical functions as well.

One must not forget to stress here that the domination of the Nigerian construction industry by expatriate firms also effects the manpower within the industry. Shortage of construction manpower can be said to be a general problem although, it is particularly severe in developing countries. Husseini (1988) was of the view that even countries that had established a cadre of construction workers are sometimes threatened by migration of skilled workers to richer markets.

2.4 <u>STRATEGIES FOR MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT IN</u> <u>THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.</u>

The following guidelines would form the cornerstone of the manpower policy for the construction industry (Wahab, 1990).

- (i) The establishment of easily achievable goal.
- (ii) The development of a set of objectives to assist in the realisation of the goal.
- (iii) The formulation of implementation strategies for each of the objectives including the sharing of responsibilities between the public sector organs and the private sector with respect to formal training, practical training, continuous professional development, e.t.c.

In order to achieve these guidelines and objectives, the following should be embraced.

(Now, Min of Housing 2 Urban Development)

- (i) The Ministry of works and Housing in collaboration with the Manpower Board, the Ministry of Labour, the Federation of Building and Civil Engineering Contractors in Nigeria as well as relevant professional bodies in construction should be charged with the promotion and monitoring the policies specified.
- (ii) The Manpower Board should be charged with detailed manpower analysis of the industry and other vital statistics on manpower utilization, profession by profession, trade by trade including projection of demand, intake and out turn from educational institutions.
- (iii) The training of both supervisors and tradesmen should be as formal as those of middle and high-level manpower.

The apprenticeship schemes should be revamped to meet the requirements of the new millennium.

through changes in designs that can guarantee indigenous firms' participation. In addition, there should an established body that will be charged with the responsibility of verifying the skills, expertise and other claims made by the expatriate job seekers.

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- (v) All the three tiers of government should actively ensure planned release of capital projects to the construction market as a way of keeping the industry in continuous productivity.
- (vi) The building and roads research institute in collaboration with institutions of higher learning should be charged with the responsibility of gradually building up indices for estimating manpower requirements for future projects.
- (vii) The improvement of information on labour and statistics of output of construction workers at trades level as well as collection, analysis and presentation of accident data should vigorously pursued.

3.0 <u>CONCLUSION</u>

The importance of manpower planning and development in the economy of any serious nation cannot be pushed to the wall. Infact, manpower can be regarded as the main resources of the construction industry and other industries alike. Although, other resources are important, it is the manpower that enables their effective utilization.

With the present competitiveness and brain drain, manpower planning and development are becoming increasingly important within the industry.

Moreover, the attainment of higher productivity in every sector of the nation's economy can only be achieved through appropriate strategies for manpower planning and development of human resources.

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