



Managing Human Resources at the Primary Level of Education in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

Human resource management in education is very important and joke with it would result in jeopardy. This is because education personnels are the major instrument for achieving educational goals and consequently, national development. This position paper examined the management of human resources in primary education in Rivers State. It discussed the concept of human resources management, objectives of primary education as indicated in the National Policy on Education (2004) were highlighted. The qualities and utilizations of human resources in primary education were enumerated. Issues and problems militating against effective management of human resources in primary education were equally discussed such as inadequate funding, unconducive learning environment, lack of information and technology equipment and lack of human relations skills among the school administrators. Recommendations made include: provision of adequate funding, provision of infrastructure especially ICTs equipments and organizing regular workshops for primary education administrator to update their knowledge in human relation skills for effective management of human resources in primary education among others.

Keywords: Management, Human, Resources, Primary Education

INTRODUCTION

Education is a tool for national development. Education has been described as the foundation of progress, cornerstone of rapid, economic, social and political development. Every educational system at every level depends heavily on the human resources for execution of its programme. Nwaka and Ofojebe (2010) stated that teachers are the critical resources for effective implementation and realization of the educational policies and objectives at the practical level of classroom. A manager, whether in private or public sector, who underrates the critical role and underplays the importance of people in goal achievement, can neither be effective nor efficient (Oduma, 2012). It is the teacher who ultimately interprets and implements policy as represented in the school curriculum, which is designed to actualize educational goals (Omojunwa, 2007). Maintaining and improving educational standards is only possible through teachers. Teachers therefore are the most indispensable entity in the school. They are the greatest aid to learning. The shortage or poor management of teachers reduces the extent to which the curriculum can be delivered effectively. It should be noted that the major premise of human resources management in education is that the end results of the educative process will be determined by the effectiveness of the teachers who facilitate learning for self-actualization and national development. It is through education that skills, knowledge, and cultural heritage are transferred from generation to generation.

Education is the vital instrument for social and economic mobility at the personal level and an instrument for transformation of society at the national level. Primary education as the focus of this paper is the first level of education. Apart from as the first agent of socialization, primary school is the first place that introduces formal education or literacy to the children. In other words primary school education is a

foundation upon which all other levels of education is built. Fafunwa (1974: 187) stated that the aims of primary education in all the states of the federation are to help the child to:

- a) Master the three Rs – Reading, writing, and arithmetic, this is to develop permanent literacy.
- b) Develop sound standards of individual conduct and behaviour'
- c) Acquire some skills and appreciate the value of manual work.

So, the objectives of the primary education in Nigeria can be summed up as a broad base education with emphasis on the effective communication skills (FRN, 1986:11). The effective communication skills that will enable the pupils to contribute effectively to the social and economic development of the nation. This objective is purposely to produce a literate and numerate population and to lay the ground-work for further education. For further education to attain these objectives, it has to be adequately managed. So far the effectiveness of higher education rests a solid foundation, which is the product of primary education system; there should be effective management of human resources in primary education.

Primary level of education is very important because it is the foundation level. To this end, FRN (2004) describes primary education as the key to the success or failure of the whole education system because all other levels are built upon primary level of education. Oderinde (1989) confirmed this assertion when he wrote that, primary school is the foundation of educational system on top of which other levels rest.

According to Olayinka (2007) primary education is the most popular level of education in Nigeria and other parts of the world.

This is, in view of its availability everywhere in both the developed and developing counties as well as in the urban and rural areas. The importance of primary education is revealed in its general objectives as stated in the National Policy on Education (1984:14) which include:

- 1) Citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
- 2) The inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively.
- 3) Character, moral training and the development of sound attitudes.
- 4) Developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment.
- 5) Giving the child opportunity for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limit of his capacity.
- 6) Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

For these laudable purpose and objectives to be fully achieved, there must be effective management and utilization of human resources in the administration of the primary education in Rivers State.

Primary Education and Universal Basic Education

The National Policy on Education made recommendations for a system of education that segmented the system into 6 years of primary education. The six years of primary education are part of the 6-3-3-4 educational system. The system was designed to allow an exit point after nine years of schooling to continue careers through apprenticeships or other vocational training programmes. The objectives for primary education put emphasis on a balance between physical and intellectual development. The objectives are stated as follows:

- a) To widen access to basic education.
- b) To eliminate present inequalities in enrolment and between urban and rural areas .
- c) To ensure greater retention
- d) To ensure long-term permanent literacy for those children who had completed the programme.

Primary education is a basic education in Nigeria and it is given to children from age 5-12 years. It comprises of six classes primary one to primary six and it is headed by a head teacher.

Human Resource Management

In a rapid competitive business environment, the procedures of outlining the role, function and process of Human Resource management (HRM) within a dynamic and uncertain environment are ongoing for many decades.

In the early 1980s numerous books and articles were published by American Business Schools professors to support the widely recognition of HRM concept, and the environmental volatility in today's contemporary business that specifically identify conflict and Heterogeneity (Soderlund and Bredin, 2005). Due to the conflicting theoretical conception and hypothetical disagreement about the general acceptance, of the definition of Human Resources, Price (2017) definition would be used because it better explained and cover huge areas of the study.

According to Price (2007):

“A philosophy of people management based on the belief that Human Resources are uniquely important to sustain business success. An organization gains competitive advantage by using its people effectively, drawing on their expertise and ingenuity to meet clearly defined objectives. Human resource management is aimed at recruiting capable, flexible and committed people, managing and rewarding their performance and developing key competencies”.

Human Resources Management is the process of recruiting, selecting, inducting employees, providing orientation, imparting training and development, appraising the performance of employees, deciding compensation and providing benefits, motivating employees, maintaining proper relations with employees and their trade unions, ensuring employees safety, welfare and healthy measures in compliance with labour laws of the land.

1. Human resources management involves management functions like planning, organizing, directing and controlling.
2. It involves procurement, development, maintenance of human resources.
3. It helps to achieve individual; organizational and social objectives.
4. Human Resource management is disciplinary subject. It includes the study of management, psychology, communication, economics and sociology.
5. It involves team spirit and team work.
6. It is a continuous process.

Human resources management is a strategic approach to managing employment relation emphasizes that, leveraging people capabilities is critical to gain sustainable competitive advantage, this being achieved via a distinctive set of integrated employment policies, programs and practices (Bratton J. and Gold J, 2003). The actual capital of the organization is the human abilities to utilize the human being as a capital. Each organization has too much cash to commence the business but have not professional bodies to use them at the right pace and at the right time and Human resources is strategic partner of the business which runs with the business and takes the business toward the success (Iftikar M).

The global and competitive market environment has led to new challenges for the individuals and organization. Without having a well trained and well prepared labour force, business drop the ability to compete with national and international rivals resulting in decreased economic success (Tomaka, 2001). For the last ten years, the workplace in the organization has a lot of issues, like increased international and national competition, fast technologies and scientific changes, workforce demography, wider utilization of information technologies etc (Ferner and Hyman, 1992). Human resource managers should understand all kinds of these issues and should develop suitable strategies in order to help their organization. Human resources management is vital for the organization to achieve its goals and success (Pfeffer, 1994 Jackson & Scguler 2000, Barney, 1991). According to Tokesky and Kornides (1994). To show the importance of human resource department to the employees, managers should try to show the relation between human resources management and organization success.

In turn, human relation management has recognized the importance of employees as corporate assets. Employees must have therefore, a wide variety of technical and interpersonal workplace skills and competencies that allow them to work with advanced technologies and function optimally in today's high performing organizations (Combs et al; 2006; Fernerndez, 2001). The skills, knowledge and the experience of the employees are economic values for the organization because the employees enable the organization adaptable and increase productivity. The organizations that run their Human resources department successfully have higher level of productivity higher market value, higher profitability and

meeting the needs of their shareholders, investors, customers, employees and at the end the needs of the society (Schuler and Jackson, 1996).

The Importance of Human Resources in Organization

The sole aim of human resources management is to guarantee that the firm human capitals are being used in the fullest capability to produce the greatest organization results that meets with the firm needs Nadeem Moiden, (2003) & Gilley and Gilley, (2007). Therefore the philosophy of empowering employee's capabilities is coined to the conception that Human resources is extremely crucial for sustainable competitive advantage and organizational success (Koch & McGrath, 2003). Human resources in organization is also crucial because it assist managers and employees through a chance process (Hendry, Jones, Arthur & Pettigrew, 1991).

Behind production of every product or service there is human mind, effort and man hours (working hours). No product or service can be produced without the help of human being. Human being is Fundamental resource for making or construction of anything. Every organization desire to have skilled and competent people to make their organization competent and best.

Business can gain enormous competitive advantages when their employees are used effectively to drawing on their expertise and ingenuity to meet clearly defined objectives. When organization recruit the most effective, capable, committed and flexible people, and managed and reward them accordingly their performances, competencies and efficiency would help the firm productivity immensely (Price A, 2007). Managers that tactfully execute organizational goals depend on the human resources practices to deliver excellently so that they can achieve the utmost business performance (Becker, B. and Crerhart, B., 1996). Among the five Ms of management, i.e, men, money, machines, materials, and methods, Human resource management deals with the first M, which is "Men". It is believed that in the five Ms, "Men" is not easy to manage. "Every" man is different from other and they are totally different from the other Ms in the sense that men possess the power to manipulate the other Ms.

Whereas, the other Ms are lifeless or abstract and such do not have the power to think and decide what is good for them.

Today many experts claim that machines and technology are replacing human resource and minimizing their role of effort. However, the machines and technology are built by the humans and they need to be operated or at least monitored by humans and this is the reason why companies are always on hunt for talented, skilled and qualified professionals for continuous development of the organization.

Therefore Humans are crucial assets for any organization, although today many tasks have been handed over to the artificial intelligence but they lack judgment skills which cannot be matched with human mind.

However, the human resources management field has been isolated and misunderstood by many, researchers and practitioners, failing to realize that without employees there would be no functioning organization, Argole, McEvily & Reagan (2003). As employees remain the most expensive and reliable asset of the organization, the practices of Human resources will remain a vital area of discussion (Becker, B. & Gerhart, B., (1996).

Human personnel in this paper refers to all the personnel both academic and non-academic staff in the primary education in Rivers State. The quality, utilization and the administration of their personnel in achieving these objectives are what the paper will be addressing. The problems or challenges encountered by the administrators will be highlighted and solutions would be proffered for this paper to be appreciated,

The Concept of Human Resources Management

Human resources in organizations are the most essential resources in an organization and are therefore more important than all other resources put together. In an industrial organization, human resources are the workers, managers, engineers, supervisors, artisans, clerical and secretarial staff. In education, especially in primary education, human resources include the head teachers, second masters, classroom teachers, clerical assistants, store keepers, security men, labourers etc. These group of people determine the success or not of the achievement of the objective of primary education.

Human resources management (HRM) is both a field of study and practice. It focuses on the process of planning, funding, building, coordinating, utilizing workforce and handling the formal system for the management of people within the organization until and after their retirement (Peretomode & Peretomode, 2007). Gellerman (1986) considers human resources as the process of bringing people together, and organizing them so that the goal of one another is met. Human Resource Management is also known as personnel management, staff management or manpower management.

However, Human Resources Management in primary school implies the coordination, development, organization and utilization of all the teaching and non teaching staff in the school in order to achieve the objective of primary education.

Qualities of Human Resources in Primary Education

Human Resource Management is the management of people at work. Due to the nature and unique characteristics of primary education, the management of their employees is different from that of other levels of education. Also, the goals and role expectation of the institutions and the staff are different and require that those who perform these roles be appropriately fit for the job as the foundation of all other educational system in the country.

The different categories of personnel and their levels of performance make the management of human resources in primary education unique and challenging.

Teacher quality has to do with the professional qualification of a teacher. The teacher must possess the teaching qualifications that will enable him to be an effective teacher. The quality of the teachers in our primary schools determine to a large extent the quality of those they produce and the quality of their research output (Ogbodo, 2006). The National policy on Education (NPE, 2004) recognizes that the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession should be the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE). According to Nwiyi and Uriah (2007), teachers in the primary education are inadequate and unqualified in most cases as such possess problems in effective management of the school.

There are teachers in primary schools that still have TC II as their qualification and the total numbers of teachers are grossly inadequate, hence there is need for employment of more qualified teachers while retraining the old ones in modern methods and techniques in teaching for effective instructional delivery processes. Therefore, the administrator with few teachers in the school cannot effectively manage the school, because management of both human and material resources of the school is a joint responsibility of all. This is because the administrator who is at the head will be directing, others will be organizing, coordinating, reporting etc all are geared toward achieving the goals of primary education.

Utilization of Human Resources in Primary Education

In primary schools in Rivers State there is shortage of both academic and non academic staff. The few ones are over utilized, as the ratio stands at 1:45 as against the teacher-pupil ratio of 1:35 as specified by FRN (2004:16). It becomes difficult for personnel attention and individualized instruction. At times the pupils are left in the classroom alone when there is personnel audit where all the teachers are required to appear in person with their credentials at either the zonal schools board or the ministry of education.

Utilization of Human Resources

Human relations skills: This is the ability of the educational management (the head teacher) to create a harmonious working relationship, that is, the head teacher ability to work effectively as a team member and build cooperative effort; such skills involve communication, motivating, interacting and supervising ability.

The head teacher should be able to encourage all subordinates to work in accomplishing the educational goals with confidence and keenness (Basse, 2011). Ojo (1995) contended that every resource manager in education requires the following skills for job success. Intelligence skills, educational skills, discriminating skills, executing skills, knowledge of various discipline and formal training in psychological studies. Based on these assertions, the primary education administration lacks almost all the skills for effective administration and competence in managing their staff.

Issues and Challenges

- 1) Inadequate funding: the primary education sector in Nigeria is underfunded the school administrators are not provided with adequate fund by the government to run some expenses in the day to day administration of the schools, the imprests are not enough for the procurement of some necessary facilities for effective administration of the schools. Adequate funding and monitoring of utilization of fund available will enhance effective administration.
- 2) Education in Nigeria is associated with inadequate funding from federal, state and local governments: funds meant for education is diverted and teachers salaries and promotion allowances are not paid as at when due, infrastructural facilities are in a state of decay (Nwiyi, 2009) for survival, teachers abandon their primary assignment (teaching) to look for alternative means of survival to the detriment of the pupils who are the recipient of their service. Ogbuine, Agunloye and Okebe (2003) as cited by Nwiyi (2009) in their findings revealed that teachers are stagnated and denied promotion, some have spent about eight years without promotion this situation is highly demoralizing and has negative impacts on the administration of the school.
- 3) Lack of proper supervision/inspection in primary education, the school administration do not have time to carry out proper and routine supervision and inspection of the teachers in the classroom. They are supposed to examine subjects taught, the scheme of work, lesson note and classroom management. Again, the school administration most times do not go for In-service training on the modern teaching pedagogy and techniques; hence "a blind man cannot lead blind people". The school administration should be going for professional development workshops to update their knowledge in the current principles of administration so that they equip themselves for the challenging tasks ahead.
- 4) The use of information communication technology is lacking in primary schools as most primary schools are not provided with these facilities, information communication technology is a network which offers a steady expanding range of new view services that have standardization of information in schools (Nwafor, 2005) in Education institutions, ICTs are indispensable in effective teaching- learning and general administration of the education system. According to Akpan and Bassey (2011) information technology is very important in designing research, implementing experimental and descriptive studies, statistical analysis, data production and dissemination of research information. Also, records of student, staff and accounts of our universities including periodic information, report for all units could be made readily possible through the use of electronic management information system. But all these are lacking in our primary education sector which poses challenges for the effective administration of the human resources in primary schools.
- 5) Learning environment has been identified as an indispensable factor in the effective function of any school system. A conducive learning environment must be created for the objective of education to be achieved (Ukeje, 1992). Good learning environment promotes quality education which goes beyond good classroom, library laboratories and teachers attendance to workshop and conference, it include adequate policies and practices which prohibit students and teachers harassment, cultism and it's associated violence, it connotes good academic culture, (Ogbodo, 2006). It is also within the purview of the schools to engender a peaceful and conducive climate and academic culture so that the school objective would be achieved through effective management and utilization of human resources in schools.

CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that education remains a veritable means of human resources management and nation building in Nigeria. Whatever needs to be done in this sector should be done in all sincerity and with every urgency for education to fully achieve its predetermined educational objectives. Human resources in every organization including schools as organizations are very difficult to manage due to the uniqueness and nature of every staff or worker, (it therefore requires having human relations skills, introducing better ICT policy and management of ICT infrastructure, provision of enabling environment

as well as commitment from all stakeholders for effective and efficient management of human resources in the primary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion so far in this work, the following recommendations are proffered.

- 1) Primary education administrators should be going for human relations skills workshop regularly for them to be acquainted with these skills for effective human resource management.
- 2) Adequate funding is needed for the primary school heads as imprest to run the day to day administration of the schools.
- 3) Government should provide Information and communication technologies (ICTs) equipments in primary schools and also train staff on the usage.
- 4) There should be full supervision carried out by both the administrators and inspectors from the zonal board and the ministry of education to complement the efforts of the human resources management.
- 5) The government should employ and post trained security to primary schools by creating a conducive atmosphere for teachers.

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