Journal of Innovative Research in Management and Humanities 2(1), April, 2011.
ISSN : 2141-8217. http://www.grpjournal.org/Journal/Category/JOIRMAH.aspx
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Personality Variables and Human Resources Development in Nigeria

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Abstract: This research analyzed the effects of personality variables on human resources development. Trait theory of personality and its influences on behavioural (personality) tendencies formed the conceptual background. Consequently, personal variables like intellectual abilities, and physical abilities, as well as social variables emerged as the major determinants of human resources development. In order to cope with the dynamism and diversity of most modern work demand, it is necessary to develop human resources towards coping with "temporariness" (flux of changes). A number of factors were identified as being relevant implications of effective human resources development. These were reduction in lay-off, skills improvements, and work adaptation. However, the problems militating against effective human resources development in Nigeria were poorly defined personnel development programme, lack of practice of acquired skills, incompetent trainers, lack of feedback, and non-utilization of experts like psychologists. Consequently, it is recommended that these problems could be solved by ensuring that individuals are trained to be adaptive to the inevitable changing work requirements. Again, human resources development programme should be objectively focused, so as to avoid it being converted into a holiday occasion.

Keywords: Personality-variables, Human-resources, Development, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Personality according to Coleman (2001) is the sum of the behavioural and mental characteristics that are distinctive of an individual. Personality helps to understand the differences between individuals which tend to remain relatively stable across variety of situations. Individuals differ a great deal in their physiological make-ups and motivations. These are important factors in human resources development. Human resources development is therefore the process of determining the areas, possibility, and readiness of individuals to seek, acquire, and adapt the skills necessary for them to advance in the chosen career. Employers of labour, for instance the Government, understand the

significance of human resources development. That is why the Government often embarks on training and other capacity building assistance of workers (Nwezeh, 2010).

Human beings differ a great deal in their tendencies to overcome inertia. Some individuals can spend personal resources in order to acquire training and skills for the efficient and effective task performance. On the other hand, there are also those who rarely seek for sources of self-development. Some other individuals want and wait to be sponsored before they can embark on human resources (personnel or manpower) development. Ironically, industries/organizations and the society at large are getting very complex that stagnation, and inability to cope with changes will eventually lead to workers' job dissatisfaction and structural unemployment.

2. PERSONALITY THEORY OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

This connotes behavioural characteristics that influence functional effectiveness and capacity-building of individual. This is as they relate to the tendencies to acquire and integrate the necessary skills for efficient and effective work performance. The theory is a guiding principle as regards identifying, tapping, and developing an individual's potential for his own functioning as well as that of the society. Therefore, the trait theory will be of immense importance in the discussion.

Trait Theory: A theory is a proposition, a coherent system, or a rule of inference for explaining an observed phenomenon, state of affair, or event. On the other hand, trait is a characteristic (pattern), or quality that is more or less consistent, and as such tends to distinguish a person's behaviour, which the individual would likely display in relevant circumstances (Coleman, 2001). In essence, trait theory explains a person's behaviour by making references to individual predisposition or tendencies.

Personality traits associated with human resources development are often categorized into two major parts. One is associated with personal (internal) variables, and the other is associated with social (external) variables. These variables are by no means mutually exclusive. However, the fact remains that one tends to dominate in a person's life, and therefore often determines how far an individual can go in being able to dispense, or acquire additional occupational skills. The major factors of interest under personal variables are intelligence and physical abilities, as well as age and gender (Robbins, 2001). However, for social variables there are socio-economic status, participation, cooperativeness, sociability, popularity, verbal skills, self-confidence and initiative (Stogdill, 1948).

As noted earlier, the two variables do not operate as if they exist under geometrical dichotomization. Rather, they blend and compliment each other. This complimentary system in essence makes human resources development possible. This is because human resources development is based on ability to learn concepts and put them into practice. Based on this, Robbins (2001) identifies personal (internal) variables, especially intelligence, as the overriding factors (variables or determinants) of human resources development. Yet, the physical ability and the intellectual ability do have mutual influence on each other.

3. ABILITY AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Ability can be defined as the capacity to perform various tasks in a job an individual engages in at any point in time. Therefore intellectual ability is the capacity and possibility of doing mental activities. It involves capacity in the sense that an individual "can" do a substantial amount of problem solving over a period of time. Again, it (intellectual ability) is a possibility in the sense that an individual can be found very "dependable" to engage in problem solving with the least amount of hindrance.

Intellectual ability is measured by intelligence quotient (IQ) tests. It is important to note that a high IQ does not give an individual an automatic ability to excel in all jobs. For instance, high routine jobs do offer little or no opportunities to exercise one's intellectual abilities. Consequently, training an individual to acquire extra and unique skills regarding such jobs will be a waste of scarce resources and time. Lack of motivation kills skill acquisition. Individuals with high intellectual ability, and well developed potential who perform such routine jobs are very likely to have job dissatisfaction. This is because the intrinsic needs for achievement (n Ach) which motivates the individuals cannot find a target or outlet. People with high needs for achievement (n-achievement) are competitive, take responsibility for solving problems, have a strong desire for feedback, and often attach much importance to successfully accomplished task. Such individuals want tasks of moderate difficulty since these tasks are challenging, with high sense of accomplishment. Again, these people tend to avoid simple tasks because they (tasks) are anybody's tasks. Very difficult tasks are also not interesting to them for fear of failure (Atkinson, and Feather, 1966; McClelland and Winter, 1969).

In another vein, it has been observed that individuals can be well equipped potentially, to perform all levels of jobs with great proficiency, if they posses the following intellectual abilities: Verbal, numerical, spatial, and perceptual abilities. Individuals that are potentially endowed with the aforementioned are relatively cheap (easy) to train, well motivated to acquire skills, skillfully curious, have sharp memory, able to engage in deductive and

inductive reasoning. Well developed human resources are usually engaged by organizations. This is because such employees posses quality assurance personality traits like trust, integrity, teamwork spirit and job commitment (Animasaun, 2010). Intellectual ability is responsible for learning and transfer of learning. An individual that can learn fast enough can easily, whether consciously or unconsciously, acquire work and extra-work (lifetime) skills. No doubt the individual can easily utilize (transfer) the acquired skills to the work place if the need arises. Such individuals are great assets to any organization or industry. Hence, progress minded organizations do not toy with them. No wonder the world computer giant Microsoft goes for them. This is because they can acquire necessary skills easily at the least cost. Again, they can easily see relationships between concepts thereby finding solutions to problems.

4. DIMENSIONS OF INTELLIGENCE AS THEY AFFECT HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Dimensions here imply areas of coverage or manifestations. As far as personality variables are concerned, intelligence as a factor manifests in two major dimensions (categories). The first is Cognitive Dimension, while the second is Non-Cognitive Dimension.

Cognitive Dimension of Intelligence: Cognition is a mental activity that involves acquiring, processing, and utilizing information and knowledge. By these, cognitive dimension of intelligence has to do with the neural potentialities. In the world of work, cognitive dimension of intelligence is the stored asset possessed by all the human resources. This stored asset only needs to be identified, activated and harnessed in order to make human resources competent.

Cognitive dimension of intelligence is often divided into three sub dimensions (Myers, 1990). These are (a) the Academic Intelligence, and this has to do with the problem-solving skills; (b) the Practical Intelligence, and this is required for handling everyday tasks; and finally (c) the Creative Intelligence, and it is the ability to initiate ideas and products that are both novel and valuable. As far as managing information, decision- making, and knowledge are concerned, these types of cognitive dimension of intelligence go to determine a workers' performance, more or less.

Non-Cognitive Dimension Of Intelligence: This area of intelligence is concerned with being able to read and know one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others. No wonder it is often referred to as EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, and this is defined as an

assortment of non-cognitive skills, capabilities, and competencies that influence a person's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures (Goleman, 1999).

Emotional intelligence is often divided into five sub dimensions (Robbin, 2001). These are (a) Self-Awareness, which is the ability to be aware of what one is feeling; (b) Self-Management, which is the ability to manage one's own emotions and impulses; (c) Self-Motivation, meaning the ability to persist in the face of obstacles and failures; (d) Empathy, standing for the ability to sense how others are feeling; and finally (e) Social Skills meaning the ability to handle the emotions of others.

Job (career/work) that requires interpersonal transactions entails developing human resources in the areas of emotional intelligence. Human resources selection and development should be based on redirecting individuals toward the areas where they possess the personality variables that a particular job requires. For instance surgeons, lawyers, and pilots are expected to be emotionally neural in the face of adversity. This enhances their competence. Similarly, musicians, sales agents, and receptionists are expected to be jovial and tolerant.
No individual has a single intelligence, rather people have multiple intelligence (Gardner, 1983), with one or two of them predominating (outshining) the rest. The implications of these are that people differ in their abilities, interests, and personalities. Owing to these differences, each individual is therefore qualified for many occupations/jobs. Thus, each occupation requires a characteristic pattern with tolerance wide enough to allow variety of individuals in it. This explains the multi-potentiality of human skills that is made possible by multiple intellectual traits.

Consequently, individuals benefit maximally from human resources development when this is carried out in the areas (personality predispositions) in which the individuals are mostly "gifted". The significance of intelligence is that it helps a lot in goal-directed adaptive behaviour. And human resources development entails subjecting, or more appropriately exposing individuals to learning experiences, solving-problems, and clear reasoning, so that such individuals can successfully meet challenges, and achieve results (aims) for engaging in employment.

Most training and other human resources development programmes are waste due to inability to appreciate concepts, and relations. This is predicated on the fact that such human resources development programmes are carried out without considering the individuals capabilities and orientations as regards dimensions of intelligence. The result of this is that the job is not fitted to the individual, nor the individual fitted to the job. This is a

gateway to job dissatisfaction, and other unethical practices. A good human resource development programme is the one that should assist individuals be creative. Basically, creative individual are those who come up with more qualitative ideas in a shorter space of time (Michaiko, 2010)

5. PHYSICAL ABILITIES AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Physical ability is that personal variables required for doing tasks that require stamina, dexterity, strength, and related work characteristics. While intellectual ability is required for general and more complex jobs, physical ability on the other hand is important for successfully doing less skilled and more standardized jobs (Robbins,2001).

In human resources development, it is very important to ascertain the extent to which a job requires physical abilities. A job requires an individual with developed physical abilities when the job demands (1) ability to exert muscular force repeatedly on external objects; (2) ability to make rapid, repeated flexing movements; (3) ability to coordinate the simultaneous actions of different parts of the body; and (4) ability to maintain equilibrium despite forces pulling off balance (Fleishman, 1979).

People benefit maximally from training when they are endowed with physical abilities that are related to the job they perform. For instance, training a person as an astronaut is easier when the individual is very courageous, and coordinate the simultaneous actions of different parts of the body with the least anxiety, tension or difficulty. Similarly, a secret agent (SSS) with good memory ability; a politician and a journalist with good reasoning, smart, and verbal abilities; senior executive with good verbal, empathic, and persuasive abilities; all can benefit maximally from training and other actions or activities that involve effective combination of both the physical and intellectual abilities aimed at achieving success and progress in their chosen career.

By mere possessing these traits, an individual is already physiologically and psychologically set (predisposed) with skills and potential. These can be harnessed through training and learning, as well as availability of opportunities to effect these potential, bearing in mind that "practice and reward make perfect" (Skinner, 1971). As noted in operant conditioning, reinforcement conditioning increases and sustains behaviour, in this case human resources (skills and potential). However, these increment and sustenance are easily achieved when the person being reinforced has the necessary prerequisite abilities. Possessing the right physical abilities also makes transfer of learning possible with the least difficulty. This is very necessary since many human resources development programmes may take place outside the actual work place or environment. In essence, human resources

development is most effective when an individual has personality (comparative) advantages in both the intellectual and physical abilities.

6. SOCIAL VARIABLES AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

These are skills required in interpersonal interactions and group management. Individuals differ a lot on the degree to which they posses these social variables. As observed earlier some of these social skills (variables) are sociability, initiative, cooperativeness, verbal skills, task knowledge, dependability, self-confidence, and socio-economic status (Stogdill, 1948).

Individuals with these social skills do not excel automatically in task, but the fact remains that they are well equipped to excel when trained. They are also already predisposed to acquire job-related skills at the minimal costs. The social skills these individuals are endowed with no doubt serve as motivational bases for them. Thus, they (people) are gingered up to embellish these skills in the context of doing their jobs.

The effect of social variables as personality factors in human resources development can be seen as regards shaping team players or team work. Some individuals posses adequate interpersonal and technical skills that they easily succeed or become effective team workers. Others may require extra training for them to fit in as team workers, while some others hardly fit in as team workers. Furthermore, some jobs on their own part do not require teamwork, for instance, jobs that require individual contributions like lecturing. However, organizations cannot go indefinitely redesigning jobs so as to fit employees. It is therefore very necessary that in selecting employees for jobs that require team interactions and relations, individuals with adequate social skills should be selected. This is because they can achieve on-the-job learning. They are also well motivated to cooperate with others, instead of becoming casualties of team (cooperation) work/job system. Essentially, employees are usually well motivated to deliver their best when newly employed (Sirota Survey Intelligence, 2010). Nevertheless, organization characteristics such as the management attributes can discourage the workers from giving their best.

COPING WITH "TEMPORARINESS": The Dynamism of Human Resources Development

"Temporariness" connotes the changing nature of organization and its activities. Therefore, coping with "temporariness" means training to be able to contain, manage, and produce results from organizational changes. No wonder this is regarded as the dynamism (effective strategy) of human resources development.

All categories of human resources (workers) must learn to live with flexibility, spontaneity, and unpredictability if they want to remain useful in this modem world and organizations that are continually changing. Organizations and professions die out if they are not able to adapt and cope with changes. Ironically, man and organizations are being engulfed in the web of changes. The professional methodologies, systems, and techniques of the previous year(s), months(s), and day(s) may not be same today. Consequently, the watchwords (objectives) of self-conscious human resources have to do with the concepts of continuous improvement. Based on this, workers need to continual update their knowledge and skills to adjust to new job requirements.
The management on its part should provide the employees with good information management system, as this assists the employees to attain quality assurance (Ilesanmi, 2010).

In the past, individuals could be assigned to a specific work group. This assignment was often on relatively permanent bases. Hence, there was a substantial amount of security in working with the same people steadily. Presently, this stability has been overtaken by temporary work group, work conditions, practices, and methods. Professions and organizations are therefore in a state of flux. There is need to recognize the fact that rigidity, bureaucracy, and specialization are becoming outdated organizational practices that many public organizations are becoming privatized. Thus, many poorly skilled and permanent human resources face the threat of being replaced with skillfully and resourceful temporary ones (Grossman, 1998).

Globalization is steadily giving rise to the "universalization" of technology, economy, politics, and sociology as well as psychology within organizations. As a result of this, modem organizations are faced with the problems of how to contain and harness the diversity existing in the organization. Owing to this, there is need for individuals to have foresight (visibility) and seek for ways of improving their resources (skills, potentials, and job demands). This will help them not to be found wanting, and therefore be readily available, so as to immediately and effectively handle unforeseen and foreseen developments of their work. Globalization is a dramatic change that is inevitable for everybody and organizations. Thus, it demands visibility, immediacy, and availability (Abubakar, 2001).

An organization can be viable with wonderful policies, yet performance falls below expectation. The reason behind this is that the workforce is very unable to cope with temporariness or constant changes that are occurring in the organizational policies and focus (Adegbuji, 2001). This problem can be handled by developing skillful human

resources. High uncertainty now limits organizational ability to accurately forecast future trends. No wonder management seeks flexibility over permanence. Sometimes, psychosocial circumstances and bureaucratic bottleneck often reduce promotion opportunities. So career and human resources (personnel) developments are then done and achieved by individuals themselves, rather than by their employers or organization. By this, it becomes individual's (personnel's) responsibility to keep their skills, abilities, and knowledge current (up to date). This will enable them cope with the dynamic and demanding nature of the job.

Well developed human resources (workforce) face and cope with challenges, and other organizational changes (Chinwuba, 2003). On the other hand, undeveloped or poorly developed human resources fear and oppose (resist) challenges. Such individuals start panicking when they perceive organizational changes (Omeata, 2003). The workload and pressures of time, as well as human dynamics, force individuals to work in teams, to manage relationships in manner resulting in co-operation instead of animosity. Similarly, work characteristics also force people to face their own limitations and deal with them, in addition to developing the leadership qualities to succeed despite the odd (Ward, 2003).

The future will require different skills and competencies from leaders, managers and professionals, so as to accommodate entrepreneurship and innovation. The resources of future organizations have to depend on the people's skills. Therefore, there is need to focus on the development of skills, which incorporates emotional intelligence, diversity, and creativity. Leaders should also develop passion for change, with capacity to see the organization as dynamic systems, constantly evolving. This would require creative and innovative thinking. By this leaders have to be change agents that create enabling environments which will make productive changes possible through human resources (Vander-CoIff, 2003).

7. IMPLICATIONS OF EFFICIENT HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One of the implications of efficient human resources for national development is that they help in reducing layoffs. Well developed human resources at the management level detest laying off workers. Contrarily, poorly developed ones resort to layoffs when it has misestimated the occurrence of events. Embarrassed by their own mistakes, the management tries to solve the problem by cutting costs, one of which is laying off staff. Essentially, human resources development improves a person's skills and self efficacy. Well-developed human resources are great assets to any nation. They can make

organizational or careers policies, as well as tackle problems competently. In essence, they are engines for social changes and reformations.

It is often argued that foreign contracted management is more competent than some local human resources. This is because some of these local human resources may be occupying their positions due to socio-political and tribal inclinations. This simply explains that poorly developed human resources are disasters to the nation. So efforts should be made to train competent Nigerians who can handle national problems devoid of favouritism. Presently, jobs/careers are no longer issues concerning increasing income, authority, status, and security. They are also issues concerning how people adapt quickly, learn continuously, and change their work identities. Thus, efficient manpower planning should also consider the possibility of developing the human resources continuously so as to cope with the demands of work and the nation at large.

In Nigeria, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and National Directorate of Employment (NDE) are a few of the national programmes that lacked efficient and effective trained human resources to execute them. Consequently, they have failed. While SAP was aimed at achieving the national industrialization, NDE is aimed at assisting individuals to start up careers. Unfortunately, corrupt politicians who are grossly deficient in the possibility of human resources development, and can no way claim responsibility for their decisions have mismanaged these programmes.

8. PROBLEMS OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

- Sometimes, the objectives of the human resources development programme are not well defined. A lot of people may end up seeing the human resources development programme as a holiday trip, especially when such programme is outside their work environment.

- Some development programmes are not based on the human resources needs for self-development and actualization. Often the selection for the human resources development programme is based on nepotism, tribalism, bribery, and corruption, religious and social, even political affiliation.

- In most cases there is no feedback on the human resources development programme. Individuals do not have means of practicing the skills they have acquired. Thus, the human resources development programmes are uninteresting (not challenging). This does not offer employees' positive reinforcement in form of motivation and opportunity to advance in one's chosen career through "practice makes perfect."

- Similarly, some individuals or organizations are cost-minded that for years they may not embark on or send any of their human resources on a development programme respectively.

- Again, in some human resources development programmes, the trainers and trainees can be poorly selected. Hence the required skills necessary for quantitative and qualitative (excellent and efficient) job perfot1nance on the human resource cannot be impacted.

- Finally, it is unbelievable that most human resources development programmes in particular and organizations in general (whether private or government-owned) in Nigeria do not benefit from the services of psychologists. The effects of this are that the critical areas of human resources development are ignored. This non-employment of psychologists in the programme, both within and outside the organization, is one of the major reasons why human resources development programme seems uninteresting, done with a lot of deficiency, and lacks feedback. This is not surprising since qualified practitioners (psychologists) may not have contributed their knowledge in the programme.

9. CONCLUSSION

One of the ways of improving human resources development in Nigeria is to ensure that the concerned human resources are helped to acquire skills which will help them face, cope with, and manage diversities which are the major characteristics of modern professions/jobs. This is very imperative judging from the fact that a significant major way of achieving organizational and career, as well as occupational developments is by equipping and preparing the human resources to effectively manage the emerging realities.

Adequate application of Organizational Behaviour Modification (OB Mod) will go a long way in improving many organizational and career problems that have bedeviled the Nigerian human resources. OB Mod is the application of reinforcement concepts to individuals in the work setting so as to improve the performance. In using OB Mod to improve ineffective workforce and solve some other organizational and career problems, a five-step model is often followed: (1) is to identify the critical behaviour that make significant impact on the individual's work performance; (2) obtain the number of times the identified behaviour is occurring under present conditions (baseline data); (3) trace the antecedent cues that emit the behaviour, and the consequences that are currently maintaining it; (4) efforts are made to develop and implement an intervention strategy to strengthen desirable performance behaviour and weaken undesirable behaviour; and (5) finally evaluate performance improvement.

The issue of using training programme as holiday trip should be curbed. This single act has made some human resources not to take their training seriously, that eventually they end up not learning or benefiting much from the training. The result of this is that there will not be any difference between their inappropriate behaviour before training and their behaviour after training.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that any sound and well-articulated human resources development should incorporate the possibility of achieving job mobility. By this, individuals should train themselves beyond organizational interests. This is very important in the modern world and organizations where cost (capitalism) is often given high premium. The effect of this is that employees can be fired at any time with or without notice. Thus, any workforce that is developed beyond organizational interest can become a veritable asset to the organization.

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