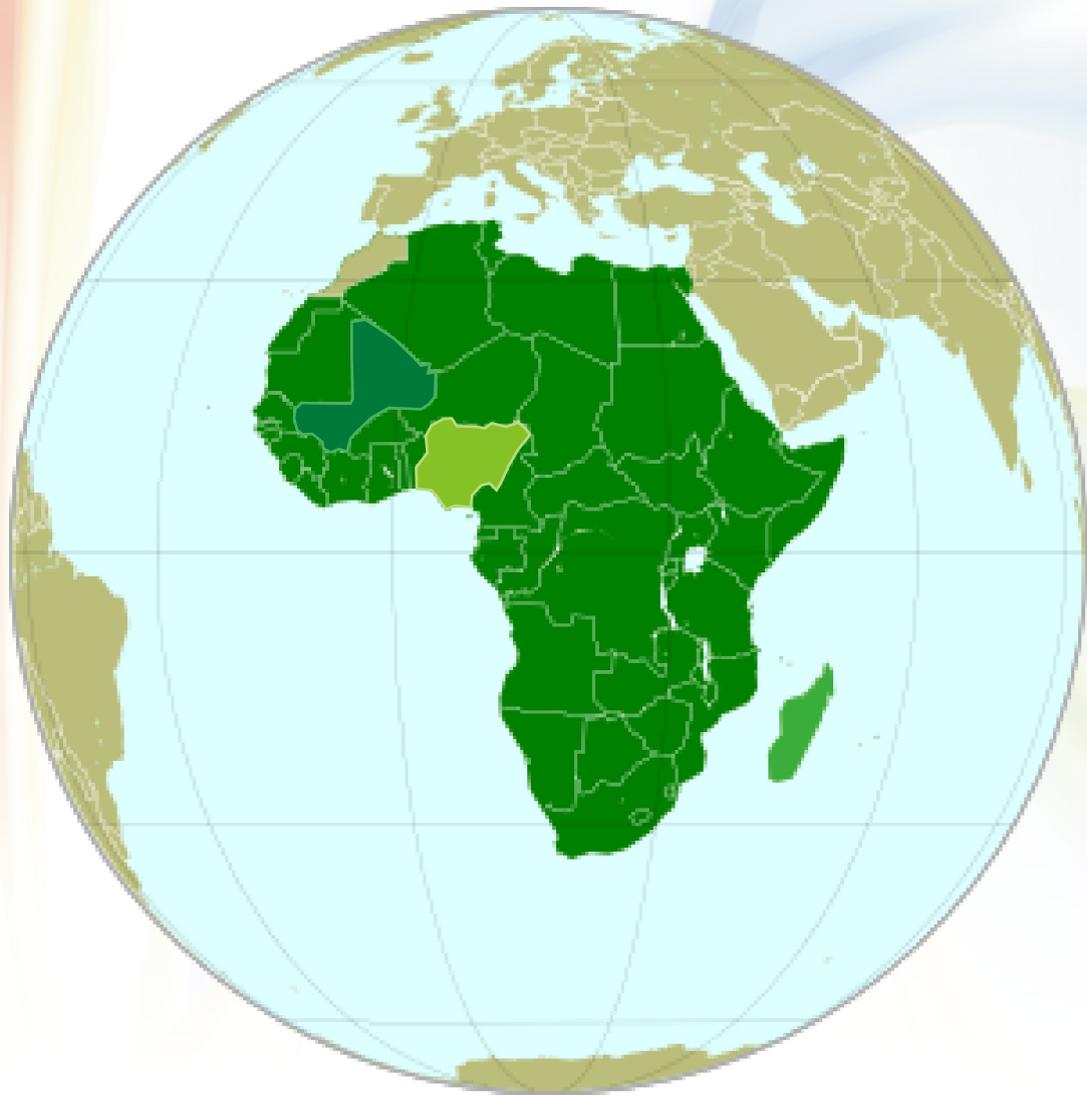


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**HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR EFFICIENCY
AND PRODUCTIVITY: AN EXPOSITORY APPROACH**

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ABSTRACT: The paper examined Human Resource Management for Efficiency and Productivity: An Expository Approach. Maintaining an efficient and productive workforce requires more than just pay, benefits, and safe working conditions. Employees need to be motivated and satisfied with their jobs. Personal and job-related problems may lead to the need for counselling or discipline. Thus, the objectives of this paper are to examine the ways human resource management can manage the workforce diversity for efficiency and productivity in an organization. To find out the ethical pre-requisite that stimulates efficiency and (labour) productivity in an organization. The human resource theoretical approach was used. Data were collected from secondary sources only while historical and exploratory research models based on content analysis were employed for the analysis. The paper found out that inadequate managerial skills required to manage workforce diversity are lacking in some organizations. Secondly ethical values necessary to boost workers morale are grossly ignored by some organizations. The paper, therefore recommends among others, that the purpose and objectives of human resource management should be carried out dispassionately by organizational management. Finally, it is also recommended that human resource management should be ethically and socially responsive to the needs and challenges of society while minimizing the negative impact of such demands on the organization.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Efficiency, Productivity, Teamwork, Managing Diversity

INTRODUCTION

The practice of Human Resource Management (HRM) is concerned with all aspect of how people are employed and managed in organizations. It covers activities such as strategic human resource management, human capital management, corporate social responsibility, knowledge management, organization development, human resource planning, recruitment, and selection. It also involves talent management, performance management, learning and development, reward management, employee relations, employee well-being, health, safety, and the provision of employee services. According to Armstrong (2009, p.241), human resource management practice has “a strong conceptual basis drawn from the behavioural sciences and from strategic management, human capital and industrial relations theories”. This foundation has been built with the help of a multitude of research projects.

It is an obvious that human resource management is aimed at influencing the efficiency of employees for high productivity in organizations. This implies that this paper makes an attempt to cover the following: The managerial activities, external influences, managing diversity and other sundry factors which are germane to the objectives of the study.

Statement of the Problem

Operating managers and human resource experts face many challenges in dealing with people for efficiency and productivity. The central challenge is in assisting the organization in improving its effectiveness and efficiency in an ethical and socially responsible way. Other challenges arise from the environment in which organization operate; changing demands of workers, international and domestic competitors, pressure groups, professional ethics, and government are just but a few. Challenges also come from within the organization. For example, top management staff, middle management staff and other categories of staff compete with human resource department for higher budget, for a larger share of the organization's resources. Perhaps the most pervasive forces are: workforce diversity, lack of team work spirit, the extent of free flow of communication among various levels of departments, sections and units within and outside the organization.

Arising from the above turbulent situation, this paper is poised to ask; what are the objectives of human resource management that stimulate efficiency and productivity? In what ways can the human resource management manage diversity of the workforce in organization that results in efficiency and productivity? These problems among others will be the focus of this paper.

Objectives of this Paper

Arising from the statement of the problem and the resultant research questions above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To evaluate the objectives of human resource management that ensures efficiency and productivity in an organization.
2. To examine the ways human resource management can diplomatically manage the workforce diversity that can arouse efficiency and productivity in organization.
3. To find out the ethical dimension required to stimulate efficiency and productivity of workers in an organization.

Theoretical Analysis

The theoretical framework for this paper is the human resources approach. The human resources approach is rooted both in the demographic theory and the ecological approach which began when scholars started to recognize the importance of human resources and not physical/financial capital as the driving force for efficiency and productivity in an organization (Unanka, 2001, p.4)

According to Adepaju (1976, p.116), it is “now recognized in the planning process that the rate of efficiency and workers productivity in organizations depend not only on the rate at which physical capital can be mobilized but more importantly on the rate at which human resources (skills) can be developed, multiplied and upgraded”. However, Schultz (1961); Pinches (1977); and Unanka (2001) saw human resources “as much larger source of income streams in high productivity and this stressed the importance of acquired abilities or formal education in creating the human capital needed for efficiency and productivity in organizations”.

Several empirical studies have given support to the human resources approach. For example, Damachi and Diejomeoh (1978) tried to “analyze various problems involved in human resources development and utilization in some African countries including Nigeria but did not find out why such development and effective utilization continues to be difficult to achieve”. Harbison (1973, p. 115) maintained that human resources, not material wealth as such, are the ultimate basis of wealth. The goal of organizations is thus maximum possible utilization of human resources in more productive activity and fullest possible development of the skills and knowledge of the labour force which are relevant to that activity.

From the above analytical discourse, it is believed that human resources constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of organizations and therefore, if any organization is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of her workforce and utilize them effectively for high productivity, she will be unable also to develop anything else. This is why this study adopts this theory.

Methodology

This study is purely qualitative research which employed descriptive and expository research approaches. Data were collected through secondary sources. Therefore, the paper is enriched through data, information, opinions and views gathered through textbooks, journals, newspapers and internets. Simple historical and exploratory approaches were used in its analyses.

Definitions of the Key Concepts

Human Resource Management (HRM): Human resource management is a strategic, integrated, and coherent approach to the employment, development and well-being of the people working in organizations (Armstrong, 2009, 9.4).

Human resource management involves all managerial decisions and action that affect the nature of the relationship between the organization and its employees (its human resources) (Beer et al 1984).

Human resource management comprises a set of policies designed to maximize organizational integration, employee commitment, flexibility and quality of work (Guest, 1987).

All we can deduce from the above scholarly definitions is that human resource management is the management of work and people towards desired ends. It is therefore, concerned with how organizations manage their workforce in order to achieve efficiency and high productivity.

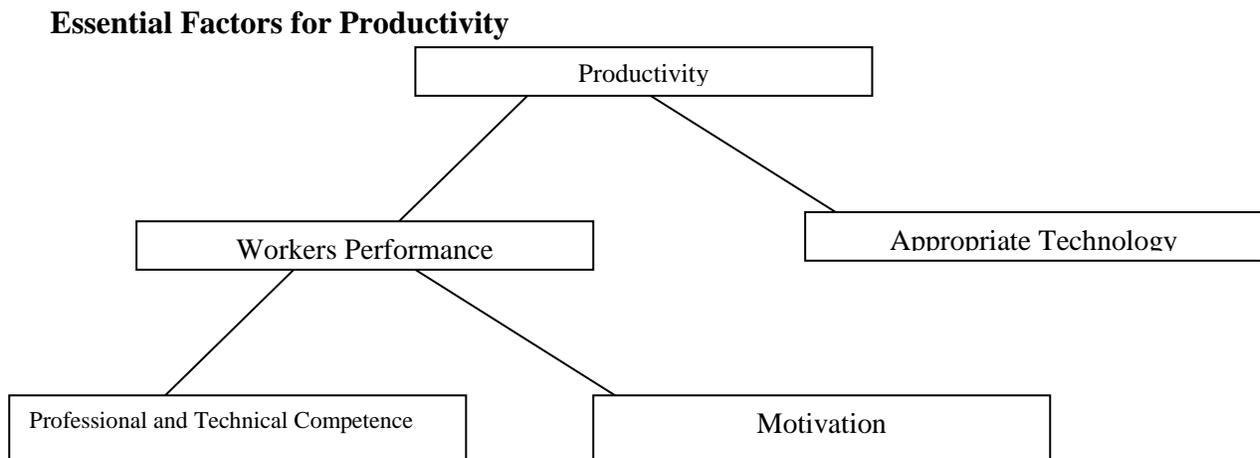
The human resource management seeks to match the ability and motivation of employees with the requirements and rewards of the job. To the extent that when this match is achieved, efficient employee outcome will result.

Efficiency: This suggests an action or potential for action or use in such a way as to avoid loss or waste of energy or materials in the production. Efficiency simply implies to minimize cost in relation to output. When an organization is perceived by the employees as efficient and effective, the employees tend to be highly motivated by the satisfaction that their individual performances are responsible for the organizational efficiency.

Organizations improve through more effective and efficient use of their resources. Effective means producing the right goods or services that society deems appropriate while efficiency means that it must use the minimum amount of resources needed to produce its goods and services.

Productivity: Productivity can be defined as the capacity or a situation where an individual or organization produces maximum results with available human, financial and material resources to achieve set organizational objective. (Ogunna, 1999, p. 279)

Productivity is a goal of every organization. Productivity is dependent on two crucial factors, namely technology relevant to the organization, and employee's performance. The employee's performance on the other hand, is dependent on two variables namely professional and technical competence of the workers (this involves possession of relevant knowledge, skill and techniques) and motivation. This is diagrammatically shown below:



Source: Robert Sutermeister (1969), *People and Productivity*, New York.

The above diagram shows that for organizations to be productive, the staff should possess the relevant professional, administrative and technical competence, operate with the appropriate technology and be highly motivated.

The Objectives of HRM

1. The overall purpose of human resource management is to ensure that the organization is able to achieve success through people.
2. To increase organizational effectiveness and capability – the capacity of an organization to achieve its goals by making the best use of the resources available to it. Ulrich and Lake (1990) remarked that: “Human Resources Management (HRM) systems can be the source of organizational capabilities that allow firms to learn and capitalize on new opportunities”.
3. To sustain its ethical dimension; which means it must also be concerned with the rights and needs of people in organization through the exercise of social responsibility.
4. High commitment – behavioural commitment to pursue agreed goals and attitudinal commitment reflected in a strong identification with the organization.
5. Flexibility – functional flexibility and the existence of an adaptable organization structure with the capacity to manage innovation.

HRM and Managing Diversity

Managing diversity is a sensitive, potentially, volatile, and sometimes uncomfortable issue. In Nigeria, Europe, as well as in the USA, creating a diverse workforce is increasingly considered a necessity. For Nigeria, the ideal is true diversity, which means that we have to value every individual for who and what they are, and we ought to provide them the opportunities to meet their full potential within the organization.

Meaning of Diversity: Diversity represents the multitude of individual differences and similarities that exist between people (Krettner and Kinicki and Buelens 2002, p.34). This definition underscores three important issues about managing diversity.

- Diversity pertains to the host of individual differences that makes all people unique and different from others. This implies that diversity pertains to everybody. It is not an issue of age, tribes, race, gender or religion.
- Diversity is not synonymous with “differences”. Rather it encompasses both differences and similarities. This means that managing diversity entails dealing with both simultaneously.
- Finally, diversity comprises a collective mixture of differences and similarities, not just individual pieces within it. Dealing with diversity requires managers to integrate the collective mixture of differences and similarities that exist within an organization.

Teamwork: Work is a social activity. Groups emerge within work organization through the specialization of functions, through the creation of teams to handle projects or naturally in

order to satisfy a social need. Groups may be formally established by management, or they might arise informally and spontaneously among employees.

According to Kreitner, Kinicki and Buelens, (2002, p. 349), team building “allows team members to wrestle with simulated or real-life problems. Outcomes are then analyzed by the group to determine what group processes need for improvement”. However, with cross-cultural teams becoming commonplace in today’s global organizations, team work is more important than ever so that efficiency and productivity can be maximized.

Working in Groups: Formal groups are set up to perform specific tasks: decision making, project completion, problem solving, communication, and so on. The key issue with formal groups is how best to direct, control and coordinate their activities.

Informal groups result simply from people intermingling in working situations. Workers establish customs and social relations among themselves; patterns of behaviour are constituted, informal rules, relations and working methods not shown in organization charts or official staff manuals become entrenched.

Consider your own department for a moment: How many formal groups can you identify? Are there any informal groups? If so, do the informal groups conflict in any way with the work that may affect productivity?

Communication in Organizations: Without communication an organization would not survive. People spend a lot time communicating, but much of the communication is ineffective and inefficient. Communication involves both giving out of messages from one person and the receiving and understanding of those messages by another or others. If a message has been given out by management but has not been received or not understood by the workers, then communication has not taken place.

Scope of Communication in Organization

Let us look at the organizational communication and what it is generally seen to include:

- Organizations are dependent on communication.
- Organizational communication includes not only communication from management to workers, but also from management to other levels of management.
- Some organizational communication is between managers of the organization and trade unions rather than to individual members of the organization.
- Organizational communication can include information that is intended to be used as persuasion to change attitudes and/or behaviour. Information for the purpose of manipulation is not included.
- There is communication within organization and communication between the organization and the outside world.

Ethical Dimensions Required to Stimulate Efficiency and Productivity of Workers in Organizations

The thrust of this paper as we already know is human resource management for efficiency and productivity.

As Boxall *et al* (2007) point out “while Human Resource Management (HRM) does not need to support commercial outcomes (often called business case), it does exist to save organizational needs for social legitimacy”. This means exercising social responsibility, that is being concerned for the interests (well-being) of employees and acting ethnically with regard to the needs of the people in the organization and the society.

The ethical dimensions required in an organization for efficiency and productivity are to:

- Treat people equally in terms of opportunities for employment, learning and development provided for them;
- Treat people according to the principle of procedural justice (Adams, 1965 and Leventhal 1980), that is, ensure that ways in which workers are managed are fair, consistent, transparent and properly consider the views and needs of employees;
- Treat workers according to the principles of distributive justice (Adams, 1965 and Leventhal, 1980), This implies that rewards are distributed to them according to their contribution and they receive what was promised to them;
- Treat workers according to the principles of natural justice, in order words, individuals should know the standards they are expected to achieve and the rules to which they are expected to conform, they should be given a clear indication of where they are failing or what rules have been broken and, except in cases of gross misconduct, they should be given a chance to improve before disciplinary action is taken.
- Avoid treating workers as mere factors of production.
- Provide a working environment that protects the health and safety of employees and also minimizes stress.

Conclusion

The paper provided the necessary strategies and mechanism that can boost human resources management for efficiency and productivity in organizations whether public or private. To ensure efficiency and productivity of labour force, human resource management is indispensable as it roles in the managing workforce diversity, arouse team work spirit, streamline free flow of communication within and outside organizational environment. These are vital to survival of an organization. The theoretical analysis employed in this study exposed the necessity for development and maximum utilization of human capital and the role the skilled and knowledgeable workforce play towards the efficiency and productivity of organizations. In addition to that, the paper found out that some of the ethical dimensions required to ensure efficiency and productivity of workers are not adequately implemented.

Recommendations

Based on the study, this paper puts forward the following recommendations:

- i. The paper recommends that the purpose and objectives of human resource management should be carried out dispassionately by organizational management.
- ii. Although human resource management contributes to an organization's success in a variety of ways, it should ensure implementation of ethical values required to stimulate workers efficiency and productivity.
- iii. It is expected that human resource management should be ethnically and socially responsive to the needs and challenges of society at large, while minimizing the negative impact of such demands on the organization.
- iv. Provision of favourable working environment that protects the health and safety of entire workers should be encouraged.
- v. The paper also advocates adequate mechanisms for managing workforce diversity that can foster efficiency and productivity in organizations.

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