



Aligning Human Resource in Public and Private Sectors: A Panacea to Nigerian Economy

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ABSTRACT

The past three decades have witnessed a widening gulf in the human resource practices between the public and private sectors of the Nigerian economy. This is why the Nigerian economy throughout these referred decades had continued to have endless hiccups and palpitations. The habits of seeing public sector as nobody's business had characterized the apathy, lawlessness and other corrupt practices that have seen almost all the public sector enterprises not performing well, as evidenced in the lackluster performances in the utilities sector, especially energy sector, and other sectors such as health, education, technology, air/land/sea transportations and other service industries. However, the paper examined the realities of under estimating the impacts of human resource practices on public and private sectors in the national economy in emerging global economic competitiveness. The finding from the study reveals that there is lack of commitment, aggressiveness and other drives to propel the private sector enterprises toward success, when measured against their public sector enterprises have been quite embarrassing. The research adopted observation and qualitative technique of data collection through content analysis and considerable review of related literature. Recommendations were stated such as applying transparency in management of employees, strategic human resource planning, practicing ethical standard in labour relations and cultivating good character in employee relations etc.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The apparent lack of performance in the public sector enterprises continues to exist in the national economy. The reverse in terms of investment drives and productivity would have been salutary, if the gulf in the human resource practices were kept narrowing rather than widening. The cycle is vicious and continues to be on the rise, perhaps due to cultural mindsets and conduct of national character. It is in this regard that the paper in affirmative with Bill Gates, the Microsoft Chief Executive, and computer business thus; "if the 1980s were about quality, and the 1990s were about re-engineering, then the 2020s will be about management velocity". This is to say that the public and private sectors must each strive to bridge the gaps in their operational strategies, through the subtle manipulation of E-business use of the instruments of velocity. Here, the democratization of access to information technology and multi-media should be synergistically adopted by the public and private sectors. This synergy is to help bridge the observed negative operational gaps, with the public sector and the private sector economy, stimulating each other to cope with the demands of globalization, technology and guided liberalization. The actualization of this synergy relied heavily upon the proper utilization of the human resource practices as the fundamental instrument to fine tune the national economy to face global competitiveness. No doubt the Nigeria economy has encountered exceptional modification since 1999. The economy has continued been inconsistent with assurance of enormous boost in creation capacity from consecutive governments in Nigeria. In order to improve the economy, sequential governments in their venture at economically employing some sector such as the energy sector engaged in privatizing the sector to highest financial bidders. The revitalization venture has not been laudable in its mandate to improve the economy because of its ineffectual human resource practices. The paper stated some strategies that require re-defining the alignment synergy that will re-order and restructure human resource for improvement of both the public and private sectors that will improve national economy.

1.1 | Statement of Problem

The Nigerian economic potential is constrained by incompetent human resource management involving lack of trained personnel, indiscipline and corruption among managers and employees, lack of clear objectives, get rich quick syndrome, government interference, and inadequate financing. The aspect of human resource management is so much relegated to a level human (employees) as primary building blocks of any organization are treated with levity and regarded as mere instrument to enhance productivity. As a result of poor human resource management, there are unhealthy industrial

relations that are on-going both in public and private sector which is a major cause of most industrial actions. However, insistent industrial actions work against state economic development.

1.2 | Methodology

The paper adopted observation and qualitative techniques of data collection through the content analysis and a considerable review of related literature.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Contentious issues

The core of contentious issues in human resource management practices between the private sector and the public sector has been that, the public sector approaches to management of personnel and other infrastructural bases has continued to fail (Opara, 2019). Such failure appears to be, even at the expense of the better run private sector enterprises. The core public sector enterprises even when privatized, with the government hold controlling shares in parts or whole to the private sector operators, the issue is that human resource practices and whose management effectiveness and efficiency have continued to be much in doubt. In this regard, the roles government should be streamlined its regulatory functions. These regulatory roles should involve the three arms of government which are executive, legislative and judicial processes. But in Nigeria, these arms of government have abysmally failed to provide all-important issues of good governance, provisions of infrastructural and effective economic structural support base. The contentions here are often that if the spirits of commitment, aggressiveness and other impetus that propel private sector competitions are utilized, therefore effectiveness and efficiency in rendering services could generate greater productivity. With the resultant resource availability, thus guaranteeing resource affordability, then privatization with healthy human resource practices is the best option to adopt. More especially so, when commercialization of public enterprises have continued to record recurrent failures due mainly public sector personnel apathies, corrupt practices, and dismal results, vis-à-vis the recurrent threats to investment incentives will adversely affect the economy.

There is no doubt, that the recurrent incidence of failures can be attributed to deficiency in both horizontal and vertical leadership and responsibility quotients. In this sense, both in public and private sectors, leadership can be seen as that human factor which binds a group together and motivates it toward goals (Manning/Curtis, 2000). It is also observed that,

leadership is a part of management but not all of it (Donnelly, 1987). However, management activities such as planning, organizing and decision making are dormant cocoons until the leadership triggers the power of motivation in people and guides them toward goals. From this perspective, leadership becomes an invaluable entrepreneurial factor that directs and relocates other factors of economic production. According to Manning/Curtis (2000, p.71), "leadership is the epicenter of managing performance of human resource practices", which no doubt is the main catalyst that will boost the economy.

So, if privatization becomes the panacea, both government and the organized private sectors should see it as a challenge to provide leadership for them to cooperate toward effecting the privatization modalities and principles. This should not leave the consuming public short-changed in anyway harmful to orderly functions of the society and the rule of law. According to Chppelow (2019), If such alignment or realignment is strictly guided by altruism rather than the individual interest, directed by the regulatory and implementation agents of privatization, its trickle-down effect will benefit all levels of human coexistence, rather than the privileged few on the corridors of power. This implies that it is only when done badly that there are orchestrated recurrent cries of woes by the citizenry. The resultant effects of further alignment or realignment could see two major strata of human resource contending each other (Omenka, 2002). Those aligning with government as categories of professional civil servants, helping in the pure business of governance, where-in the preoccupation of government should be governing constructively and productively guaranteeing security, peace and unity of the citizenry.

Such redefined new public sector whose business is maximization of human resource practices (personnel) and potentials, should be made to contrast sharply with the roles of the organized private sector professionals. Through competitive enterprise, the private sector businesses are only interested in profit maximization. They also stimulate commodity productivity to control open market through price stability. Their business concern should appreciate good governance, national stability and contented hardworking employees. To the paper, this is the core of computing and competing for the future. Opara (2019) asserts that it is the kernel of human resource practices challenge that should key Nigerians up, to meet up the challenges of liberalization and globalization, the theme songs of the third millennium. This implies such alignment or realignment, when properly done through networking, facilitated by modern information and electronic communications will enhance interpersonal cum corporate citizenry and co-existence. According to Opara (2019), when properly done, the degree of cooperation and interaction among mutually enriching private and public sector managers and corresponding human resource counterpart would be acculturated in getting the best out of human resource practices in the organization for greater productivity.

2.2 | Reorientation on (Public and Private) Sectoral Professionalization

Public sector is that "segment of the national economy that is owned and controlled by the government of the federation as its agencies" (Opara, 2014, p.20). It is seen as the sector which serves all the citizens. In Nigeria, the concept of the public sector could be taken to imply- the civil service bureaucracy exemplified by the federal, state and local governmental ministries, departments and the parastatals which include public corporations like the Nigerian Railway Corporation, Transmission Company of Nigeria, Nigeria Football Association, etc. Employees in these categories of the public sector form the largest number of workers in the country. Private sector is the part of the national economy that is not under direct state control. This is referred to as the citizen sector, which is owned by private individuals or groups usually as a means of enterprise for profit, rather than being owned by the state. According to Chppelow (2019), characteristic of private sector includes the following:

- The private sector consists of all privately-owned, for-profit businesses in the economy.
- The private sector tends to make up a larger share of the economy in free market, capitalist based societies.
- The private sector businesses can also collaborate with government-run agencies in arrangements called public-private partnerships.

In most free economies, the private sector makes the economy as opposed to nations that have more state control over their economies which have a larger public sector. Nigeria has a strong private sector because she has a free economy. The re-orientation of professionalism in managing human resources is highly needed if we want to achieve effective human management that will improve productivity. The re-orientation should be focused on the need to regard human being as most important assets any organization could have. However, systematization of professional realignment both in public and private sectors can be guaranteed through the

following organizational rituals of socialization provided, namely; recruitment and selection, training/manpower development, compensation and salaries administration, pension schemes, industrial/labour relations, environmental issues, ergonomic realignment, globalization/liberalization and multiculturalism, and leadership.

2.3 | Private Sectors and Nigeria Economy

Private sectors are integral part of the Nigeria economy. They are being managed by individuals, group of persons and are organizations for profit making. They are not state owned or run by the state government. They create employments for the citizens and a major boost that help in economic growth. According to National Bureau of Statistics (2022), private sectors contribute about 90% of the National Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In the first quarter of 2023, the performers of the GDP were driven majorly by the services sector such as the energy sector with a recorded growth of about 4.35% and contributed 57.29% to the aggregate GDP (Source: National Bureau of Statistics, NBS, 2022).

Statistics of Private Sector Economic Growth in Nigeria

GDP growth 2.2% (2019), 3.0% (2020), 1.5% (2021), 2.6% (2022)

GDP per capita \$2,326 (nominal, 2022), \$5,884 (PPP, 2022)

GDP per capita rank 145 (nominal, 2022), 141(PPP, 2022)

GDP by sector Agriculture: 21.90%, Industry 23.65%, Services 54.39% (2022 est)

(Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

2.4 | Recruitment and Selection

On recruitment and selection, there must be a new standardized process of rigorous alignment, at this stage, from the advertisement for positions required through interviews and selection so as to correctly separate the wheat from the chaffs (Martin, 2018). This is to guarantee more stable and reliable characters, through aptitude tests to correctly determine suitability along private or public sector alignments. There should be complete de-politicization of recruitments and selections, avoiding quota system or federal characters, which tend to encourage institutionalization of mediocrity in the system, public or private. Merits based on performance in the aptitude tests should determine selections, just as promotions must be based on periodic test as guarantee on the job experiences performance and results. For instance, in Imo state civil service as public sector recruitment and selection has been influenced by politics of the ruling political party in the state and also in federal civil service recruitment is based on quota selection system among component states which result to institutionalization of mediocrity in public sector.

2.5 | Training/Manpower Development

The need for training and retraining of personnel, of any category, for manpower development should be made regular routines and as rights of employees not as privileges to begrudge them. The main purpose of such training is 'to maximize productivity and human potentials in respect of particular sector' (Lee, 2017). Productivity tests must also be properly and consistently applied in all categories. Any employee not measuring up to required standards set can be eased out or redeployed, humanely and encouraged to a more suitable productive sector, available. In this way, ineffective employees can be productively eased out with relative peace. However, according to Bhatia, Sharma and Ganguly (2023), non-financial privileges such as career development benefits, flexible work pattern of recognition process are partly responsible to employee motivation by satisfying their intrinsic needs of growth, work-life balance and acceptance.

2.6 | Compensation and Salary Alignments

The principles of adequate remunerations, commensurate with actual performance and productivity must be transparently guaranteed to each based on equity, fairness and justice. Special awards, allowances, instituted to provide added motivations or inducements to stimulate added productivity can be established. Regular culture of salaries and wages (payments) is a sine qua non to conscientious dedication to duties (Olugbile, 2016). Also, an attractive compensation and reward packages are critical factors in enticing skilled professional to join an organization (Bhatia, Sharma & Ganguly, 2023). This is a reliable measure against industrial actions and related work stoppages. Any employer, public or private sector which will trifle with the workers' salaries and wages does so at the risk of peace, industry and productivity. Workers' motivation and relative productivity can be assured if a schedule of payments of salaries and wages are systematized to, say, 18th or 25th periodically. For example, wage administration of banks or oil companies as private institutions are far much better when compared with the poor wage administration and employees' welfare of state civil service as a public sector institution.

2.7 | Pension Schemes

A well-planned pension scheme in any sector can encourage stability of tenure (Opara & Nwosu 2019). For where an employee is guaranteed sufficiently that he/she would not retire into relatively hardship or penury, such a worker would feel secure to put in his best. This is to assure the worker that he/she will not be treated with levity by the employer but to recognize employee's effort and support during the active days to the organization. Whether private or public sector, the pension scheme can be worked out wherein a percentage of annual salaries can be worked out compulsorily saved to boost pension scheme for retirement age; or the percentage saved, with relevant interests, thereof, added to the employees' gratuities, honoraria or any other such scheme. A good business enterprise sector can go the extra miles by working out shares in the organization, paid for through agreed terms or formulae with the employees, to get them relatively involved or committed, even if symbolic, as shareholders in the company in which they are working. However, the workers' pension scheme of state civil service as a public sector is not encouraging. The civil service employees are retired into relative hardship or penury. The state civil service employees often treat with levity by the government which may imply that they do not appreciate state employees' effort during their active service years. Many of these senior citizens die before their time due to poverty, frustrations and lack of welfare care from the government. The spirits of commitment and self-worth that such gesture can generate may be worthy of emulation. An employer must do all within his power to constantly institute a culture of life after retirement among his/her employees public or private sector, not with-standing, and do all he can to enrich and guarantee active participation in such culture. Possible resource maximization that such culture may stimulate can be far-reaching.

2.8 | Industrial Relations/Labour Issues

In management theories, industrial/labour relations can be used interchangeable with human relations, as an avenue for human relations and communications in industries, in terms of private or public sector. Such units within an organization are often geared toward human resource management and engineering. In relation to the matters and issues of the workplace, and relative harmony toward orderliness of the organization, industrial relations has become as a measure of guaranteed productivity, good governance and related interests. Industrial relations/labour matters cater also to the interests of clients, customers or patrons in terms of private or public sectoral management as may be adapted for specialized interests. In this regard, (Opara, 2014) thus, management of supportive matters such as information, cries and market potentials becomes a significant challenge that may make or mar the sector, public or private. Industrial relations or labour relations, in its varied nomenclatures, must be regarded as an integral part of the organizational functioning, and therefore, should always be taken seriously, for the protection of the interests of the stakeholders, modified variously in the two sectoral variant. In this sense, effective industrial relations generate motivation in an employee. Contented employees are likely to show quality output, creativity and commitment, eventually heading to improved standard of productivity and customers' satisfaction (Saradi, 2023).

2.9 | Environmental Issues/Ergonomics

It is significant to remark that while industrial relations and labour matters are often geared toward maximization of human resource potentials, in productivity terms, environmental issues are geared toward maximization of material resource potentials; through resourceful use of the environment, toward enrichment of the human elements, guarding against mismanagement of the same environment by avoiding senseless pollution or depletion of same in any way. In this regard, doing anything that threatens the ecosystem and other vital aspects of the environment is often counterproductive and should be avoided. However, cost-effective treatment of the environment for the benefits of humanity enhances alignment or realignment of the sectoral potentials, and overall enrichment of the human family (Alo, 1999). In the study of people's efficiency in their working environment, ergonomics is defined as the study of how people work in their environment; the science that seeks to adapt for working conditions to suit the worker (Wikipedia: <https://www.yourdictionary.com/ergonomics>). This is intended to maximize productivity by reducing operator fatigue, discomfort and injury in the working environment. Ergonomics is a human factor engineering that assesses the mental and physical capacities of persons in relation to the demands made upon them by various kinds of work (Blanc, 2018). It is in consonance with ergonomically conditioning that the paper argued in favor of privatization per se as a prudent panacea for solution to dwindling Nigeria resources, human and material, as a result of public sectoral mismanagement impacting negatively on the private sector management, leaving the society significantly shortchanged.

Provided, of course, that such privatization of the public sector concerns, be it crude oil and gas production, security outfits or the

information dissemination media control, to name only a few is done right. It is only when wrong-headedly or selfishly carried out, as it appears to be the norms so far in our national social system that the center should not hold for it. It is only then that the citizenry's call for doubt against privatization and its implementers or exponents can be justified. Therefore, ergonomically sensibilities argue that all public sector management apparatus should be mobilized in favour of the pure business of governance through democratic polity for orderly functioning of civil society (Omenka, 2002). On the other hand, private sector management support systems, infrastructural and human resource, must continue to stress the pure business of business, wherein competition is on the cutting edge of effectiveness and efficiency toward sustainable market forces and price stability, which in turns, guarantee the good life. In this regard, each sector is supported to do what it can do best for the mutual enrichment of the other toward orderliness of the society, stimulating growth and stable investments, and other interconnected variables (Welrich, Cannice & Koontz, 2011).

2.10 | Globalization, Liberalization and Multiculturalism

The three closely interrelated concepts appear, individually and collectively to be the theme song for the twenty-first century modernity; the new working gospels of the third millennium coexistence and inter dependability. In this regard, one may ask, how do the three concepts square up with this all-important sectoral alignment or realignment? Each of them is tied to productivity, the fruit of organized labour, private or public. Peters (1992), however, opined that it is only when globalization and its twin concept, liberalization breed suspect relationship that they called to question as erupted sometime in Seattle, Washington, over the World Trade Organization (WTO). When breaking down of international trade barriers do conflict with the controversial issues of protectionist tendencies of the developed economies emerges (Benson, 1999). For example, like the United States of America and its allies that the developing countries prone to import dependency at the expense of the Thailand capital, Bangkok, over conflicts in relations to UNCTAD (United Nations – Conference on Trade and Development) can be justified. Similarly, multiculturalism, though tolerant of the interdependency of contemporary world cultures should not be used as the new imperialism or colonialism in all its negative connotations. Globalization, like liberalization or multiculturalism that emasculate rather than mutually promoting and enriching the intercontinental family: West, East, North or South is a misnomer that must be excoriated from the world body family, which has become an extended village.

2.11 | Leadership

The question of leadership is always central to any principle of the kind of sectoral alignment being discussed, public or private. To this alignment, Opara & Eboh (2017) observed that any notion of leadership, its attributes and code of conduct, are central to any thought system which embodies or articulates a body of principles that would guide the exercise of policy-making authority. A good, ideal leader inspires through his/her examples worthy of emulation. Such a leader is special gift to an organization for its ability to stimulate the best out of his subordinates (Opara, 2014). This is applied in terms of maximizing and optimizing productivity, and out of creative use of available resources, human or material. An ideal leader in this regard is a beacon of hope for the hopeless subordinates, radiating peace and concord to neutralize or minimize conflicts, toward proper management of crisis situations; that would under uninspiring leadership, escalate and degenerate to overwhelming proportions, damaging the sector, private or public, in the process. According to Majjiny (2022), the duties of the leader and the workplace environment also has considerably impact on the development of employee performance because the leader has the capacity to control workers towards enhancing quality which will have an influence on the generation of a perfect workplace environment and development of overall organizational performance. A manager, captain of any industrial sector that cannot rise to generate hope, where there is despair, or contain existing floods of frustration, generating creativity and motivation out of where disaster strikes belong to a distant backseat. An ideal leadership role embodies assuming a fatherly or motherly responsibility in terms of skillfully managing the subordinates, vis-à-vis the circumstances plaguing them individually or collectively (Manning & Curtis, 2000). Only thus can the leader generate and inspire creative confidence that caters to the maximum or optimum productivity of the sector he controls or leads. Such leadership, therefore, guarantees recurrent booms rather than bursts, both in human spirit and production engineering.

To this end, a good leader creates or generates positives out of adversities and inspires or motivates his subordinates to do no less in any situation they find themselves, or in circumstances they are confronted with (Iheriohanma, 2009). This is what gives greater latitudes of meanings to the saying that a good leadership deserves the followership it gets, and vice versa.

There is no greater magic to productivity than such relationship, born, bred, nourished and nurtured to sustainable levels overtime.

2.12 | Theoretical Review (Strategic Contingency Theory)

The paper adopted 'strategic contingency theory' in human resource management as model to organize optimal course of action on leadership effectiveness. A leader becomes a central part of an organization due to his/her unique management skills to handle the biggest human resource challenges which others are not able to resolve. The strategic contingency theory illustrates that leadership effectiveness is contingent based on the leadership pattern matches to a condition. When management leadership is successful in the role, they played then it is expected to perfect a match. However, in Nigeria there is evident of failure of leadership both in government and organizational management. The aspect of human resource management is so much relegated to the level human being as fundamental building blocks of every organization are treated with levity and regarded as mere instrument to enhance productivity. This is common both in public and private sectors, which have adversely affected the national economy of the country. The high level of incompetent human resource management has become basic issue hindering the growth and development of the state economy in Nigeria. There is urgent need to improve leadership in human resource management both in public and private sectors that will perfect roles to enhance the state economy.

3 | CONCLUSION

It can be observed from the foregoing that we are not straight-jacketed to any particular ideological confinement in the discourse, in our attempt to align human resource practices in organized private or public sectors of our economy or human endeavors. We do, however, strongly believe that if the elements of inter-human relations practice and co-ordinations highlighted above are applied, even modestly using the principles of live and let live or humanistic cooperation and coexistence, productivity in all its optimal and maximal coordinates would result; all for the optimal benefits of the Nigerian economy. If the principles of cooperating division of labour articulated above are applied to recruitment/selections, and socialization of employees of both the private and public sectors of our economy, optimal results would be guaranteed. The same would be no less result, if only our approaches to privatization, manpower training and development, globalization and liberalization, the treatment of environmental issues, and even ergonomic rationalization are properly managed. As our world continues to assume more and more competitive scope and panorama, under the silhouettes of information super highways and related indices of developments, the human family may have no other choice available from this dawn of the third millennium. The choice, in all, is adapt or perish, where threats to resource allocation and distribution become more competitively the rule rather than exception.

3.1 | Recommendations

The genesis of habit formation of handling public sector or business as nobody's business has been the problem of poor management of human resource practices, which has adversely affected the national economy in emerging global economic competitiveness. In proffering strategies in aligning human resource practice in public and private sectors include the followings:

The issue of transparency and accountability in management of employees in both private and public sectors is highly necessary. This is because employees are the most important assets of any organization. Transparency is a form of motivation to employees and good human relations practices. Human factor should be well motivated in the public or private sectors that will actually give a boost to national economy that will be sustained in global economic competitiveness.

Strategic human resource planning in embarking of career development, staff training/re-training, and performance development will position any employee to up-grade his productivity rates and help to achieve organization's goals.

Periodic performance appraisal is a way to stimulate employee's productivity. Performance appraisal as management criteria in public and private sectors is a form of growth for the employee and regards him/her self as important personnel of the organization. It is a motivating factor that will boost the employee's morale.

Application of ethical standard in human relations should be up-held firmly by both government (public) and private sector businesses. Ethical standard means principles of conduct governing an individual or a group (Dassler, 2008). In this sense, ethical decisions should involve normative judgment that implies that something is good or bad, right or wrong, better or worse; and moral standard should address behavior of serious consequence to society's wellbeing such as- treating workers with levity, non-

payment of workers, failure to implement collective-bargaining, lying and slanderous behavior. Ethical issues can-not be changed by decisions of authoritative bodies like legislature or any government institutions. Ethical issues should over-ride self-interest, sectional or authoritative interests.

Cultivating a good human character in employee relations is an outstanding approach in aligning human resource practice in public and private sectors which will enhance national economy. The concept of human character places more emphasis upon the 'subjective state of individuals, their feelings, the meanings they attach to events and the motives they have for behaving in particular ways' (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013). The aspect of human character matters a lot because 'human being is the basic building block of any organization' (Daft & Bowerman, 1998). Organizations hire people with the expectation that they have certain knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs), but individual character and values will influence or put into proper application the KSAs to function to the corporate advantage of the organization, public or private sector.

Providing good governance will help to create the enabling environment for public and private sector to flourish. Good governance implies providing workable policies that is not economically stringent that allows free flow of economic activities in a capitalist economy like in Nigeria, that boost the national economy through aligning human resource practices in public and private sectors.

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