

# The Role of Tertiary Education in Human Resource Development

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## ABSTRACT

The study aimed at highlighting the role of tertiary education in human resource development. In order to clarify the variables that constitute this topic; education, tertiary education, human resources and development were discussed. These concepts were given meaning for better understanding. Human resource development as a compound term was examined, revealing that it has to do with the process of improving and developing the skills and potentials of the individual who in turn develops the organization or society where they operate. The role of tertiary education in human resource development were examined, stressing its importance in the inculcation of worthwhile knowledge, skills, creative abilities, values, and the spirit of commitment which is paramount to the overall development of the system. Certain challenges ranging from human, economic and financial related factors were identified as setback to the higher institution's drive for human resource development. Based on these identified challenges, recommendations were made for the way forward. It was finally submitted that if recommendations made are properly implemented, the course of human resource development will be greatly achieved.

## INTRODUCTION

For any organization, institution or even a nation to function effectively, there must be human and material resources. But among these resources, human resources are the most paramount, since other resources cannot be utilized without human beings. For this reason, these human beings who constitute the human resources in an organization, institution or nation must be well trained, informed and groomed. The act of training, educating and grooming of human resources connotes human resource development. Human resource management is different from human resources development because while the former deals with recruiting, posting, staffing, directing and general personnel administration, the latter deals with developing and improving the potentialities, abilities and capabilities of human beings for maximum benefits of the organizations, institutions and societies where these individuals are to operate. In the task of human resource development, tertiary education through its institutions is very vital. The essence of establishing tertiary institutions in the nation is among other things, to provide manpower needs of the society by the training of professionals in various fields of endeavours, all for the overall development of the nation. In this work, we shall discuss what constitute education, tertiary education, human resources, development and human resources development as a compound term. The role of tertiary institution in achieving human resource development will be examined, challenges of human resource development will be highlighted and at the end, possible solutions or way forward shall be recommended.

## EDUCATION

This work intends not to bore the readers with the various definitions or connotations of the concept of education. However, an insight shall be given on what constitute education for human resource development. This is so because the importance of education for any National Development cannot be over emphasized neither would it be an over statement to state unequivocally that education remains the only potent instrument as well as the prerequisite for the harmonious functioning of the citizens of any society which translates to economic, social and political growth and development of the society that is committed to it. Driving home the essence of education in this direction, Ajonuma (2010) sees education as the process of developing human capacity, skills, abilities, behaviours, and encompasses the social process of achieving competence, growth and development in an institutional or organizational setting. The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) has described education as an instrument 'par excellence' for effecting national development. It affirmed that education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because it is the most important instrument of change. Truly, any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution because it is the surest means of developing the individual into a sound and effective citizen. Education of any nation is sub-divided into primary, secondary and tertiary education. Our focus in this work is the tertiary education as a vehicle through which human resource development is to be achieved.

## **TERTIARY EDUCATION**

Tertiary education is the apex of the sub systems of higher education in any nation. Thus, Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004:24) defined tertiary education as “Education given after secondary education in Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, including institutions offering corresponding courses”. As the apex of the nations’ educational system, Nigeria like any other nation places high expectations on the tertiary education especially as it concerns human resource and research development. Owing to the above fact, it becomes necessary that tertiary education, its institutions and agencies must live up to expectations, so as to meet up with the manpower needs of the nation. Institutions of higher learning that make up the tertiary education system have assigned roles which they are to accomplish in accordance with the national goals and philosophy. It is not in contention that the most paramount role of the tertiary education is to develop the human resources who in turn harnesses the natural and material resources of the nation for the benefit and even development of the society, least the society remain stagnate and backwards in the scheme of human development. How best the tertiary institutions achieve these all-important tasks is the concern of this work.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

The goal of any organization or nation cannot be achieved without human resources. According to Dencenzo and Robbins (1999), it is people, not buildings, equipment or brand names that make the institutions or organizations. In the words of Stewart, Power, Murphy and Crosby (1978), resources are all the assets which may be used to attain organizational or educational goals. Human resources according to Blair (2005) are all people who perform the activities of an organization. George and John (2004) described human resources as those acquired functional knowledge and skills which individuals can supply and gainfully utilize for purpose of achieving productivity. Human resources exist within people and consist of a person’s potential abilities as knowledge, skills, aptitudes, attitudes, physical and mental traits needed to perform job, Onah (2003). It is obvious from the arrears of definitions by these and many other scholars that one thing is deducible and that is the fact that human resources of an organization are people who perform its activities.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

Development involves the activity or task of improving upon an already existing phenomenon. According to Olisa and Obiukwu (1992), development involves strategy designed to improve economic and social lives of the people. Development therefore constitutes the process of planned change for which one approach or the other is adopted for the improvement and or transformation of the lots of the people.

## **HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

As a compound term, Human Resources Development involves the task of articulating plans and strategies for the overall improvement of human capital. This improvement cuts across the intellectual, moral, mental and even physical abilities of human beings for organizational, institutional and societal benefits. Human resource development according to Ogunu (2000) is the process of improving, molding, changing and developing the skills, knowledge, creative ability, aptitude, attitude, values, commitment, etc of an employee based on present and future organizational requirement. Human resource development aims at developing the most superior workforce to enable both the employee and the organization to accomplish stated goals. Often times, people are employed for jobs they cannot perform which may be as a result of shortage of manpower, hence, the need for adequate human resource development to ensure productivity in the entire system.

## **THE ROLE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

Tertiary education being the agent in focus in this context has the role of ensuring human resource development for adequate manpower needs of the society and institutions thereof. The goals of tertiary education as stipulated in the Nigeria Education Policy document are among other things to;

- Contribute to national development through high level manpower training.
- Develop the intellectual capacity of individual to understand and appreciate their local and external environment.
- Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which enables individual to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.

Looking at these goals as stated, one may agree that the major role of tertiary education through its institutions is that of human capital development, which involves the task of inculcating the skills, aptitude, attitude, knowledge, morals, values, creative ability, etc.

Ogunu's definition of human resource development as cited above gives an insight on the role of tertiary education in human resource development. His definition indicates that the tertiary education through its institutions has the role of improving those who are committed to it in all ramifications. First, it has the role of developing the skills of the learner through well packaged educational programmes and entrepreneurial training. Again, it has the duty to develop the creative ability of the individual learner which can only be achieved according to John Dewey, by giving the learner challenging tasks.

Tertiary education has the statutory role of imparting worthwhile knowledge in the learner so as to equip him to contribute meaningfully to the nation's growth and development. It equally has the role of instilling in the learner, the spirit of commitment, good morals and values. This way, individual learners would be intellectually, morally, physically, mentally and psychologically sound, suitable for organizational, institutional and societal use.

In achieving these all encompassing role, there is need for effective teaching and learning, research development culture, effective staff development programmes, unending generation and dissemination of knowledge, adequate and functional students industrial work experience scheme, maintenance of minimum educational standard through appropriate agencies, inter- institutional cooperation, dedicated services to the community through extra-mural and extension services, adequate and frequent training and re-training of the teaching staff of the tertiary institutions to enhance techniques and methodology in teaching.

Furthermore, the overall emphasis of tertiary education shall be on the development of the learner's skills and competence. The administration of tertiary education should be second to none in terms of personnel management, policy implementation, student-staff relationship, maintenance culture among other things. This way, the tertiary education would have assumed its proper position in the development of human resources.

In achieving these lofty goals of human resource development by the tertiary institutions, it is obvious that some impediments are always there to be confronted, which the tertiary institutions and its management must as a matter of importance take cognizance of and ready to tackle. However, the highlights of these challenges become necessary so that the pit falls are identified for possible avoidance.

### **CHALLENGES OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

Presently, tertiary institutions are posed with a lot of challenges such as rapid technological, economic, political and socio-cultural transformations. In this regards, Zeleza and Olukoshin (2010) asserts that the powerful and internal forces like demographic and socio-political issues are re-configuring all aspects of tertiary education. This implies that, the dynamism associated with globalization call for more work on the tertiary institutions. For instance, the issue of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education is now important because the world has gone scientific. That is to say that the universities and other institutions of higher learning are expected to come up with new strategies, techniques and methods to enable them implement ICT in education in its entirety, this will boost human resource developments as expected of the higher institutions.

Also, training of manpower requires adequate funding. In most countries like Nigeria, tertiary institutions are not properly funded. This poor funding results in poor infrastructure, under staffing, poor personnel administration and so on, this adversely affects the institution's drive for human resource development. As earlier stated, tertiary institutions as citadels of higher learning are expected to be the domain for research and information generation and dissemination, but for it to live up to its expectations in this regard, there is need for adequate internet facilities, qualified staff, problem solving culture and so on, which in most cases are inadequate in the universities, polytechnics, monotronics and other corresponding institutions. Where these things are lacking or grossly inadequate, the task of human resource development assigned to tertiary institutions must be defeated. The effect of these challenges on the society, organizations and institutions is that ill-equipped manpower is produced by the tertiary institutions resulting in low productivity in all ramifications.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Having examined the important roles assumed by tertiary education through its institutions in accordance with the aims, goals and objectives of the nation, the need for adequate human resource development, and the challenges associated with, the writer therefore recommends that;

- The tertiary institutions should fashion new ways of tackling the challenges inherent in the school system.
- The government and non-governmental bodies should ensure adequate funding of the tertiary institutions to enable it meet the financial requirement for adequate manpower training.

- Having underscored the importance of education as a yardstick for human and societal development which the ancient philosopher, Plato referred to as “one great thing”, the government should as much as possible ensure access and equality in educational opportunities to all her citizenry.
- There should be a cordial relationship between the tertiary education institutions and the other sectors of the nation’s economy especially in the areas of staff training and overall personnel management.
- Intensified efforts should be made by the universities, polytechnics, monotechnics and other corresponding institutions to facilitate the implementation of science and technology in education such as the e-library and ICT in education in order to upgrade the intellectual capacity of the graduates produced by these institutions in order to make them relevant in the secular society.
- Efforts should be made to provide adequate training and re-training of teachers who are the primary implementers of the school curriculum because any effort in education that fails to recognize the importance of the teachers in its implementations are bound to fail.

## CONCLUSION

However, the indispensability of education for any sincerely national development; be it political, economical, socio-cultural or technological cannot be over emphasized. It is therefore pertinent that every possible effort should be geared towards providing qualitative and quantitative education to the citizenry of every nation. This is important because, educationally developed nation is invariably a developed nation. With educated manpower, the nation will adequately harness her natural endowed resources for an overall development. To achieve this, tertiary education institutions is important machinery that provides solid foundation through articulated educational programmes aiming at human capital Development. On this note, the writer is optimistic that if the recommendations made are properly implemented, there will be positive result.

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