

The Problems of Information and Communication Technology on Personnel Development in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract: The study attempted to achieve two objectives that is to discuss the concepts of information and communication technology and to analyze the constraints to the use of contemporary communication and how it is impacting on personnel development and management in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The use of electronic technology for communication has since become a very vital and effective tool of personnel development and management in tertiary institutions across the world. In Nigeria, it is fast becoming a significant aspect of personnel development. Thriving organisations attach great values to good personnel management and effective internal and external communications. The study therefore, concluded by presenting some recommendations on how the academic institutions in Nigeria can increase the effectiveness of information and communication technologies for the sustenance of effective personnel management.

Key words: Development media, personnel management, universities, effectiveness, communications, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Humans are an organization's greatest assets without them, everyday business functions such as managing cash flow, making business transactions, communicating through all forms of media and dealing with customers could not be completed. Humans and the potential they possess drive an organization. Today's organizations are continuously changing. Organization change impacts not only the business but also its employees. In order to maximize organizational effectiveness, human potential-individuals' capabilities, time and talents must be managed. Personnel management works to ensure that employees are able to meet the organization's goals.

Personnel management is responsible for how people are treated in organizations. It is responsible for bringing people into the organization, helping them perform their work, compensating them for their labours and solving problems that arise (Tracy, 1998). There are seven management functions of a personnel department that will be specially addressed; staffing, performance appraisals, compensation and benefits, training and development, employee and labour relations safety and health and personnel research.

In fact, the world is growing at very fast rate with regards to information technology and personnel management processes and methods. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) provide enormous adequate potentials for enhancing productivity of

personnel in small and large organisations although, the gains of information and communication technologies in the industrialised countries have been noted to be far reaching than in the developing countries. Argenti (1996, 1998) argues that since, contemporary organizations become more focused on retaining a happy workforce with changing values and different demographics, they have necessarily had to think more seriously about how they communicate with employees.

Every organisation including educational institutions needs to give the internal audience equal attention to those external to the organization (Wright *et al.*, 1994). Dolphin (2005) noted that communications professionals have to recognize the importance of integrating the internal message with those messages communicated externally.

As societies develop, therefore technologies of handling information become more sophisticated because a combination of older and new technologies can be used simultaneously. For example in a 1st phase of human development (nomadic hunting and gathering communities) the technology of processing information was organic.

Social network among students and staff of the universities enhance by information technology tools aids personnel development. Communication involves the transmission of information. It is a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding (Noel, 2003).

Information could be expressed in codes and symbols or in a combination of symbols capable of conveying meaning. Development is practically impossible without communication. Okunna (2002) observed that communication and development are so closely inter-connected that there can be no development without communication. On the other hand, personnel management has the capability of bringing about changes in communication (Dortok, 2006). According to Cowell (2010) electronic channels are the new roads and bridges and just as the industrial age shifted societies from an agrarian and pastoral way of life to factories, mass production and city expansion, technology has decreased the size of the world. Technology has not only changed society, it has changed organizational structure and the way workers do their jobs.

The occupational structure of this knowledge-based economy has shifted to white collar services in office jobs. Technology, specifically internet capability is not just about all the commerce we can do but about how we can change community to enable people to better meet their needs and thrive (Urien, 2011). Canton (1999) remarked that technology is more important to a town than new roads or bridges. Modern communication tools have greatly influenced personnel management in Nigeria. Similarly, the improvement in the development of personnel makes communication faster and easier. Assembling, processing, storing and transmitting information are now not only easy but also faster for example, Freire (1970) and Tracy (1998) noted that the advancement in telecommunication networks which relays massive volume of voices, video and print products along digital circuits at very high speeds could not be possible without the efficacy of personnel management.

Personnel Management (PM) is increasing the utility rates of various technologies thus, the applications for administration are at a worldwide adoption rate of 89% that includes all industries. In addition, utilizing technology for employee productivity outperforms technologies to increase management productivity (Cowell, 2010).

Contemporary communication also provides employment and empowering poor communities across the world (Belbin and Belbin, 1972). For example, mobile phones and GSM operators have created vast job opportunities in Nigeria. According to Freire (1970), the range of services that can be provided by the availability of communication services have expanded rapidly and will continue to expand from fax, mobile phone and email, etc. It is common knowledge that contemporary digital technology facilitates access to wide range of information which is highly valuable in real-time decision making on

diverse issues including human and materials management. For instance, Dennis (1995) observed that mobile telephones enable people to communicate on real-time basis, thereby saving time and money. Nowadays, no discussion on personnel management would be complete without some mention of the web's significance in expanding and extending the extent to which the dissemination of information occurs globally (Drucker, 1998; Charvatova and van der Veer, 2006). Odiome (1984) explained that development media theory accepts economic development and nation building as overriding objectives. Unfortunately, the Nigerian government has to overcome quite a number of challenges in ensuring that its citizens fully embrace personnel management. Egboh (2009) argue that the cognitive properties of personnel and its link to adequate communication are invaluable. Thus, the qualities of employers are regarded as the organizational single most important asset and its success depends on the quality of the available personnel.

Personnel management is at a cross road as newly developed communication technologies continue to create opportunities for more strategic leadership in the management of human capital, corporate culture and communication. Communication is the key engine of personnel management in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This is because personnel management deals with the development of personnel and performs the roles of multiplier through communication technologies. Hence, the main purpose of human resource management in the schools lies in the ability to prepare hire, retain and train staff taking adequate care to develop the human resource potentials (Belbin and Belbin, 1972).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Personnel are the most important driver of national prosperity, growth and development. It is the determinant and nucleus of the work force to which the economy revolves. Personnel development involves the improvement of aptitudes, skills, abilities, knowledge, understanding and attitude of the employees of an enterprise.

No country can prosper without the capacity of the people to manage, govern and control the material resources. At the centre of personnel development is the effectiveness of the educational policies and practices which enhances the knowledge and skills of the nation and moulds the future of the nation.

The current international trend in personnel management and development depends largely on communication. The tools and methods of communication

have evolved over the centuries. Presently, the Information Technologies (IT) presents new challenges to Nigeria for many reasons. The role of the educational institutions to the building of adequate workforce capable of coping with the national challenges has placed the tertiary universities in prime focus. This study presents a narrative discourse of the subject-matter. Materials used are deduced from selected previous literature. The caveat of the research does not require empirical analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Charvatova and van der Veer (2006) communication is not a purely inborn skill and ability, it is necessary to develop it. The theory of personnel management, therefore uses a growth management model. However, many organisations still fail to define an appropriate and realistic strategy or goal understandable to all the segments of the organisation. In a number of companies, management teams do not communicate the goals and employees, not being acquainted with them cannot implement the strategy efficiently and in full. The performance of goals is determined by corporate culture, human resource management and functional support systems.

The outcomes are also influenced by the communication system, controlling and suitable organisational structure. The fulfilment of goals is based on the ability to respect and adapt to current conditions and the environment, provided there is a clear and shared company strategy. Other important factors include the quality of human labour relations, permitting to build on well functioning company structure, company systems and processes helping the company to carry out its activities.

Despite the significance of modern information and communication technology on personnel management in Nigeria, quite a number of challenges still confront the Nigerian government in ensuring that HRM is fully utilized. These challenges arise as a result of social, economic and political state of the nation. Mayerhofer (2005) asserted that constant electric power outages in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) pose serious threat to the survival of personnel management. These power outages last for many hours or days and have become a common occurrence in almost all organizations of LDCs. The Nigerian government, especially has not been able to tackle the problem of energy despite the huge income being accumulated from oil production. The Nigerian government has not been able to define the purpose, principles and values that should animate their communication system. This is why Stein and Sambe advised that making these social choices would allow

these decisions to be incorporated into technology and industry as they develop rather than forcing costly and inefficient changes later. Sambe (2005) and Wells *et al.* (2002) observed that a major limitation to the use of communication technology to develop personnel for management and administration is the extremely high cost of producing and running HRM programmes. In Nigeria, the high exchange rate is also affecting the cost of HRM because majority of needed equipment are imported from Europe and Asia.

CONCLUSION

The study has shown a rising need for the use of information and communication technology for the development of personnel in Nigerian universities. This is consistent with the opinion of scholars who suggest that effective use of communication and information technology fosters adequate development of personnel.

Nigerian universities lack effective vertical communication. Nevertheless, the research has shown that downward vertical communication predominates in these academic institutions in particular in the areas of the use of information and communication technology in the development of personnel it has also demonstrated that efficient communication as vital tool for personnel development is suffering from severe national constraints mainly attributable to the failure of the state to provide and maintain the basic support infrastructure including electricity consistency.

In order to sustain reliability of personnel development and progress in the universities, the federal government urgently needs to place more emphasis on personnel development in the universities. Budget should be earmarked to tackle the basic barriers to the use of information technology. The personality of the university administrators can be influenced by adequate personnel development. The weakness of the development is affecting the employees of the universities and affecting their performances thereby affecting the teaching and learning process. For any reversal of the current trend to occur, there must be appropriate conditions by which a systematic development and suitable personnel management tools which encourage motivation is paramount.

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