INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: A PROGRESSIVE APPROACH

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Abstract

The internationalization of business is having great impact on human resource management practices, and has now become more important than ever for business or educational organization to engage in human resource management practices. While the management of people is mostly associated with Human Resource Management (HRM). The definition, parameter and context are contested by different researchers. However, the paper attempted to differentiate between personnel management and human resource management by emphasizing on the progressive approach to managing people. The purpose of this paper is to examine the principles and progressive approach of internationalization of human resource management by different organizations in Nigeria including socio-cultural influence. The paper concludes that socio-cultural diversity of Nigeria influences HRM practices in Nigeria because employment discrimination has not been adequately addressed due to 'quota' system syndrome which still exists in most of the public service organizations. In the light of this conclusion, the paper recommends that both the management of all organizational sectors and the Nigerian government should strive to adopt progressive approach to ensure coherent human resource policies that will fit closely with overall business strategy.

Keywords: Internationalization, Human Resource, Management, Progressive Approach

Introduction

Organizations, be it educational or business sector organizations must be managed with global best practices, which confronts managers with many new challenges. As a result, organizations today have pressing International Human Resources Management (HRM) needs regarding selecting, training, compensating and repatriating international employees.

Inter-country differences have an impact on organization's HRM process. Cultural factors, economic factors, labour cost factors and industrial relations norms influence the nature of an organization or institutions specific Human Resources polces from country to country. To this end, selecting employees for international assignments means screening them for traits that predict success in adapting to dramatically new environments. Such expatriate traits include adaptability and flexibility, cultural toughness, self-orientation, job knowledge and motivation, relational skills, extra cultural openness, and family situation. Adaptability screening that focuses on the family's probable success in handling the foreign assignment and transfer can be especially important and progressive approach in the internationalization selection process.

Internationalization is not a new nomenclature in Nigerian educational system. Some educational institutions such as universities, with national entities are recognized as international institutions even in time of aggressive nationalism. Internationalization tends to address the increase in border crossing activities amidst national systems of education. Globalization on the other hand, assumes that borders and national systems do not exist-(Varghese, 2008). The Nigeria educational institutions are mainly concerned with the productions and dissemination of universal knowledge. For instance, universities are institutions with dual characteristics, national and international. While the ownerships, structure and organization may always be national, the content and knowledge imparted is universal and international. According to Varghese (2008), internationalization of education is the imparting of knowledge, skills and values which have universal appeal and application. It implies that a curriculum becomes cross-national and inter-cultural in nation. Uche and Ahunanya (2013) said that there are different models of internationalization of education, namely, international student mobility, faculty exchange and development, research collaboration, foreign language study, exchange of manpower otherwise known as human resources(HR), building internal perspectives, international networks, distance education, locally supported distance education, twining programme, articulation programmes, branch campuses, franchising agreements and

international quality assurance systems. These have resulted to intensified mobility of ideas, students and academic staff in Nigerian Universities, leading to increase brain drain and capital flight, which are plaguing the Nigeria academia.

Internationalization can also occur in such a way that people working in different organizations or institutions can acquire skills without having to leave the country. Sometimes, it involves a shift from producing for national markets to international markets. This implies changing the orientation of courses of training provided to people in the domestic institutions, which sometimes are referred to as "internationalization at home" (Varghese, 2008). This may take place without the presence of any foreign provider at home. As distinguished from globalization with its emphasis on world wide condition that influence perceptions of space, mobility of action, the nature of communication and orientation to social interaction, internalization focuses attention on the internal action of individuals, groups and social institutions to cross national borders in pursuit of social, economic, political or cultural benefits. From higher educational institution perspective, Knight in Douglas and Nelson (2012) defined internationalization as a matter of integrating transnational elements into the purpose, functions or delivery of tertiary education. For instance colleges, universities and indeed the Nigeria governments are internationalizing their personnel to other friendly nations in the name of technical Aid (TA).

Human Resources Management (HRM) as a concept got into the Nigeria literature in 1940 during the colonial period with industrialization and commercialization, which later became wage employment. Ever since then, there has been a tremendous growth of HRM in Nigeria, which in recent years has been characterized by lack of professionalism and specialization. Different reasons have been adduced as the challenges facing HRM practices in Nigeria. HRM is a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through strategy development of a highly committed and capable workforce using an integrated array of cultural structure and personnel techniques (Story, 2001). Beer (1984) defined HRM as a strategic approach to the management of human resources that involves all management decisions and actions that affects the relationship between the organization and

employees. While Adefuye (2012) asserted that HRM is a strategic coherent and comprehensive approach to the management and development of the organization's human resources in which every aspect of that process is wholly integrated within the overall management of the organization. HRM practice in Nigeria has evolved over the years. Before the turn of the 21st century, the term HRM is hardly mentioned. "Personnel Management" was the phrase widely used then. The development of HRM coincides with developments in both academia and industry. Considering HRM within the Nigeria's context, it is important to recognize that the term may not be homogenous and can sometime be vaguely used especially in public sector establishments.

The variations relates to whether the organization is public of private sector oriented. Public sector remains conservative holding tight to terms like personnel management while the private sector are quick to evolve with development across the international borders. Nevertheless, there are common trends in the use of the term in both the public and private sector organizations.

Human Resources Management (HMR) is concerned with the resourcing and management of employee and employment relationship on the one hand and the agreement that are established between the individuals and the organization on the other. The later, in the past, often centers around organizations and management concerns instead of those played by employees with the continued important role played by employees, the former appeared to be taking centre stage in most organizations. The current trend has therefore meant that whilst managing employment relationship and employees expectations, HRM must also ensure the achievement of organizational goals and interest. According to Price (2000), much academic literature have forgotten the human element in HRM, rather people have been tagged as a 'resource' along with other resources such as tables and desk. Price (2000) believed that people cannot be discussed and treated in exactly the same manner as equipments. The 'human' aspect of HRM is concerned with the relationship between employer and employee and it is associated with the human relations movement and the concept of high commitment work practices developed by (Walton, 1985). This model defines HRM as the softer issues of strategic management (Bashir, 2007). That is why HRM should therefore be part of management strategies concerned with the decisions, strategies, factors, principles, operations, practices, functions and

methods related to the management of people as employees in any type of organization (Steering Committee for HRM Standard and Qualification in South Africa, 1999).

In order for HRM to function very well, Price (2000) argued it has to be pragmatic (aims to achieve practical solutions to real work problems) and eclectic (the solutions can be drawn from a variety of theoretical and managerial traditions). Given all these arguments, HRM is a philosophy of people management based on the belief that human resources are uniquely important to sustain business success, and an organization gains competitive advantage by using its people effectively, drawing on the expertise to meet clearly defined objectives (American Management Association, 2000). As the management of an organization is accountable for obtaining and maintaining environment, fulfilling that mission is a major contribution to an organization's success (American Management Association, 2000).

There are three levels at which Human Resources Management can be operationalized following Budwar and Sparrow (2004) view, which are national level, (this involves the international market, national culture, social-cultural environment, legislations), contingent variables (such as the type and the nature of business ownership, age etc) and organizational strategies (this relates to the HR functions and the internal labour markets). This framework will be the basis on which HRM practices in Nigeria will be based through progressive approach. However, this model should be treated with some caution because Budwar and Sparrow (2004) developed this framework to analyze issues of HRM internationally.

The need for enhancing HRM in Nigeria educational system cannot be over emphasized. HRM is a basic function of administration of the education industry in particularly and organizations in general as they use their capabilities and those of their subordinates to get things done. This HRM department is expected to make the best use of the personnel elements in the organization with the ultimate goals of obtaining the maximum output from the staff. The goal of any organization whether school or business is to provide the society with man-power needed for development to enhance the quality of the conditions of living of their product or members. This can only be achieved through progressive approach.

On the side of our educational institutions, HRM is an important tasks of

educational administration referred to as human resource management. French (2005) further describes it as that function of all enterprises, which provide for effective utilization of human resources nationally or internationally to achieve both the organizational objectives of the enterprises and satisfaction and development of the enterprise. It is very crucial to all organizations because the quality of staff available determines the quality of service delivery of the organization especially through progressive approach. Odigbo (2000) explained that human resources in any organization or educational institutions are part of the processes of management in general but it is focused on the people's side of management. Odigbo (2000) further noted that the objectives of any organization among other things include planning ahead of time with a view to replacing the retiring officers in order to avoid creating a vacuum.

Progressive Approach of Internationalization of Human Resource Management

Internationalization as noted earlier on, involves putting in place a multinational institutions with universal goals, vision, and objectives that transcend the original boundaries with relevant human and material resources to function across borders. This progressive approach as postulated by Backley and Cason in Uche and Ahumanya (2013), insisted that higher education institutions should adopt 'international approach management model" in order to understand and control the dictate of the expanded boundaries to be in deep contact with the external environment without disregard to the growth of her internal organizational structure. The emphasis is on the establishment of several resourceful factors that would stimulate the institution to transcend domestic borders but still remain operationally intact by making use of well established extensions with wide decisional or planned perspective and networks. This approach of internationalization was originally linked to business thinking as an international requirement to reach most parts of the world with the same business, similar products and services. This progressive approach led to the establishment of multinational corporations, stores and services. This could be the original global conceptions as the ideological and philosophical thinking did

not have clear cut demarcations from today's internationalization and continentalization or cross-breading of resources, human labour, capital/fiscal efforts, transfer of technology, multi-tasking of roles and specializations, extension of programmes as in organized study tours, all types of exchange programmes as well as networking of both ideas, goods, and relevant factors. Education is recognized as fee riders; product and services. The university sells her public goods which is the high level skilled man-power to those who needs them. The Nigeria Human Resources Managers should therefore embrace internationalization of HRM as progressive approach which involves having a critical corporate perception of our institutions with a perfect conceptual key for doing business abroad in order to survive at home.

The approaches employed in Nigeria revealed that there is no one consistent approach to HRM practice and strategy in the internationalization process. But it further suggested that due to the culture and other organizational, environmental and economic factors prevailing in Nigeria, most multinational companies and institutions are unable to adopt uniform approach to managing human resources, neither the convergence nor divergence is dominated rather a blend cross-vengeance approach characterized by need and necessity of the time. Anakwe (2002) described the Nigeria's situation as reflecting a combination of foreign practices driven by the organization's culture or strategy and local practices driven by the country's specific factors (Anakwe, 2002).

Challenges of Internationalization of HRM

Nigeria according to Fajana (2009) is one of the African countries troubled by abundant labour and scare talent. Attracting, developing, deploying and retaining best talents had become a challenge. That is why Fajana and Ige (2007) argued that the desire for top in Nigeria can be said to be still in infancy and a lot of academic research is still in this area. Lack of indigenous and comprehensive human resources management models is one of the challenges facing its practices in Nigeria. This is why majority of principles and practices evidence in work places in Nigeria are all adopted from other countries. HRM practices in Nigeria are a convergence of western-inspired approaches, with the

evidence of culture and institutional influences. That is, there is a blend of transplanted HRM with indigenous HRM practices. The sensitivity to historical, political and social contexts according to Azolukwam and Perkins (2009) may enable organizations to capitalize on the potential to transplant forms of HRM from parent country's culture to developing countries such as Nigeria.

Nevertheless, most organizations are characterized by lack of funding for human resource management research and development. Nigeria's democracy has enhanced the practice of HRM, determining the quota of expatriates it permits. Nigeria's economy allows the importation of new technology as a progressive approach but training is still a bit slow, thus employment of international personnel to handle such is still encouraged. In Nigeria, there is application of new management techniques and skills used in the management of organizations, aimed at a cost effective system. HRM practices in Nigeria cannot be totally diffused from what is evidence in other counties.

However, due to the peculiarity of the social-cultural characteristics of Nigeria, HRM in Nigeria is an area open for further research. Good employee-employer relations are therefore critical to the stable and sustainable development of the Nigeria economy, as well as the world economy as a whole. Several other factors have affected HRM practices in Nigeria such as; first, lack of internal manpower to complete all necessary tasks the complexity of today's business climate as a result of deregulation, globalization and technology advancements. All these have outpaced many companies' level of operation to get special projects done without adding employees to the payroll (Olofin and Folawewo, 2006).

Most organizations in Nigeria now offer a continued education and training to help its people cultivate the right skills and expand their career within a truly global collaborative work place. However, in recent time, Nigerian workplaces are introducing different HR ideologies adopted from foreign organization. For instance, there has been a tremendous increase in level of contract or temporary employment and most of these activities are contracted out to consultants, via out sourcing thereby reducing the number of personnel in its payroll. The implication of this is that organization are paying lesser for more work, and at the same time are loosing the psychological attachment,

commitment, loyalty of their employees. In Nigeria therefore, organizational control is firmly in the hands of management and the management's role is to progressively manage the number of employees and match them closely within desired goals and objectives.

Conclusion

The socio- cultural diversity of Nigeria has influenced the Human Resources Management practices in Nigeria. Both the management and the Nigeria government should strive to make coherent Human Resource policies that fit closely with overall business strategy. Employment discrimination has not been adequately addressed because of the quota system" that is still present in most of the public service organizations.

Lastly, most organizations in Nigeria are highly unionized, especially the public sector organizations and employees unite to protect and promote their interest; so also do the employers. While in the private organizations, there has not been a high employee's involvement in union activities. It is obvious that Human Resources Management practices in Nigeria has not been fully developed and there is urgent need to internationally employ the services of Human Resources professionals, consultants and researchers to progressively help shape and develop new directional focus that will ensure an efficient and effective human resource practice in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussions, the following recommendations are suggested.

1. Nigeria government and various institutions be it public or private should embrace the culture of internationalizing their staff by sending them to other countries to acquire practical skills through training, development and deployment using progressive approach.

2. Organizations and government should formulate an indigenous and comprehensive Human Resource Management (HRM) model which is one of the challenges facing it in Nigeria so as to stop adopting principles and practices from other countries which is evidence in Nigerian workplaces.

3. Funds should be made available on regular bases to organizations by government through industrial banks to enable them sponsor human resource management research and development in Nigeria.

4.   There should be good employer-employee relations in order to enhance stable and sustainable development of the Nigeria economy, as well as the world economy at large.

5.   Government and organizations should create employment opportunities for teaming unemployed youths in Nigeria so as to reduce redundancy of human resources.

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