

# **The Imperative for Strategic Manpower Planning in Public Sector Productivity: Nigeria Perspective**

*Christiana Kayinwaye OMOREDE, Isiaka Adesoye MUSTAPHA & Ruth OGAGA*

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## ***Abstract***

*The paper examined the imperative for strategic manpower planning in public sector productivity: Nigeria perspective focusing on ASCON. The aim of the study was to examine the strategic manpower planning in public sector with a view to establish the challenges faced by manpower training institutions and their implication on staff productivity. Two objectives were formulated to help achieve the aim of the study. The paper assumed that productivity in the Nigerian public sector has suffered serious decline in spite of the enormous manpower resources available at its disposal. The study utilised secondary sourced data for its analysis which included text-books, journals, internet materials and other relevant ASCON documentations. Strategic manpower planning is perceived as the process of allocating scarce resources towards the production of qualified manpower in different areas of need. It was discovered amongst others, that the course contents of the training institutes (ASCON and others) are not up to date with current public realities. The paper concludes that strategic manpower planning which involves manpower training and development for optimum productivity is imperative. The study recommends amongst others that, training institute (ASCON) should update its study curriculum to meet present day Nigerian public sector realities for enhanced staff productivity.*

**Key Words:** *Manpower planning, Nigeria, public sector, productivity, strategic*

## **Introduction**

In more developed countries, strategic manpower planning as a Human Resource Management (HRM) exercise has undergone a paradigm shift from a micro-analytical approach to macro-strategic approach; nonetheless in developing countries such as Nigeria, micro level perspective is yet to be fully explored and analyzed (Igbekwe-Ibeto, Osekede and Anazodo, 2016). In addition to their traditional roles of personnel functions, HRM has recognized new roles in terms of employee supporter, change agent and strategic partner (Ulrich, 2007).

Strategic manpower planning for optimum productivity as a function of management is highly indispensable in the achievement of organisational objectives. It is a continuous process and there is no end to it; as it involves continuous collection, evaluation and selection of data, as well as scientific investigation, and analysis of the possible alternative courses of action and the selection of the best alternative. It is cyclical and helps an organisation to identify current and future human resources needs to achieve the organisational goals (Ghosh, 2020). There is need to plan for the various resources such as human, material and time, amongst others, in order to achieve stated objectives (Igbekwe-Ibeto et al, 2016, and Igbinomwanhia, 2010). Through planning, organisations goals and objectives are determined; the resources available must thus be strategic to achieve the goals and objectives. An organization without planning becomes random and decisions made become meaningless and ad hoc choices (Koontz and O'Donnell. 1993). It should be noted that it is the function of the personnel to combine the various resources in an appropriate manner in order to actualise the objectives of the organisation.

In this globalised era, there are increasing claims that the route to competitive advantage is achieved through human beings. In a situation where identical non-human resources in the form of finance, raw materials, plants, technology, hardware and software are made available to competing organisations, the differences in economic performance between organisations can be attributed to differences in the performance of the organisations workforce (Igbekwe-Ibeto et al, 2016). In other words, the calibre of the human resources in an organisation determine the success or failure of an organisation, hence, justify the rationale to plan for, and develop the personnel in various units of the organisation in order to achieve the stated goals.

To further improve public sector productivity, the recommendations of the second national development plan (1970-1974) which gave considerable attention to the concerns for strategic manpower planning via training of public servants and the report of the Public Service Review Commission (1974) culminated into the establishment of Training Institutes and manpower development agencies by the Government; such as the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Centre for Management Development (CMD), the Industrial training Fund (ITF), National Centre for Economic Management and Administration (NCEMA), Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM), and National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies

(NIPSS), National Teachers' Institute (NTI) and National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) (Inyang & Akaegbu, 2014).

As a strategic manpower institution, the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria, (ASCON) was established through Decree No. 39 of 1973 (now ASCON Act, Cap 6, Vol. 1 LFN 1990) to offer higher management training for senior executives of public and private segments of the Nigeria economy; offer and plan for a comprehensive study and exploration of the principles and techniques of management and administration, and for exchange of ideas and experience, as well as for promotion of better understanding among persons engaged with management and administration arising in diverse areas of national life; carry out research into the difficulties of management and administration connected with different aspects of national life; and commence and facilitate study courses, conferences, lectures, seminars and other activities to support the afore-stated among other objectives (ASCON, 2014).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The importance of strategic manpower planning in the public sector cannot be over-emphasized. Strategic and effective manpower planning implies sufficient manpower, with the right mixture of talent, is available in appropriate locations, performing their jobs when needed. Human resources planning therefore provide direction, reduce uncertainty, and minimize waste and sets standards. Therefore, from the forgoing, no activities can be done without planning; just as nothing can be done in any organisation without first determining the organisation's human resource needs.

In Nigeria's public sector both macro and micro strategic manpower planning as an important HR strategy for achieving organisational productivity and national development is hardly taken seriously by the Nigerian public sector. This could be associated with the fact that public sectors managers perceive manpower planning and development as a ritual and an academic exercise. To tackle this issue, government established the ASCON in 1973, with the mandate among others provide qualitative management training services for public and private sectors of the Nigerian economy. Nonetheless, the manpower planning in public sector, still remains very low with the resultant effect of low productivity in the public service. It is against this background that the study sought to examine the strategic manpower planning in public sector productivity: Nigeria perspective. The following questions are asked to direct the course of the study. What are the training contents and facilities of manpower training facilities? Is ASCON effective in the development of manpower needed for strategic planning? Is there any manpower planning policy in Nigeria? What are the strategic roles of manpower planning in Nigeria? Are the training contents of ASCON effective? Does manpower planning challenges affect human capital development and productivity?

## **Research Objectives**

1. To identify the manpower planning policy in Nigeria.
2. To assess the role of manpower planning on workers in public sector
3. To examine the training contents and facilities of ASCON and its effect on staff productivity.
4. To investigate the challenges faced by ASCON in its strategic role in human capital development and productivity.
5. To recommend strategies for enhancing human resources planning for effective productivity in Nigeria.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

**Strategic manpower planning:** Manpower planning, is the human resources available to an organisation. It is the process of allocating scarce resources towards the production of qualified manpower in different areas of need. On the other hand, Strategic manpower planning also known as human resource planning is the ability to identify current and future human resources needs with the aim of achieving organisation's full potential. This involves reviewing current manpower sources by forecasting on the requirements needed in the future. It is therefore to state the obvious that human resources planning should serve as a link between human resource management and the overall strategic plan of an organisation. The process consists of putting the right number of people, and right kind of people at the right place and at the time.

## **Public Sector:**

Public sector is any sector owned and controlled by government to provide services to the public. It generally includes government and publicly controlled agencies, enterprises, and other organisations that deliver public programmes, goods, or services. Examples are; the military, law enforcement agencies, public transit, public education institutions, among others. Unlike the private sector, the public sector does not seek to make profit off its services. It also implements public policy at all levels of government.

## **Methodology**

This study utilised the secondary source of data which include; academic journals, textbooks, government gazette amongst others. The paper adopted a theoretical discourse as its mode of analysis while considering how manpower planning promotes efficiency and productivity in the public sector.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***The New Public Management Theory***

New Public Management (NPM) was formally conceptualized by Hood (1991). New Public Management points to the failures and inadequacies of public sector performance over time and the problems lying squarely in the nature and processes of public sector activity and traditional public administration. As a new paradigm in public administration, New Public Management theory is the transition from old traditional public administration theories to an arrangement that is workable, practicable and result oriented (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2016). It places emphasis on efficiency, effectiveness, corporate governance, technological innovation and democratisation.

New Public Management theory is a relentless effort in the direction of greater cost reduction, transparency and accountability in resource allocation and performance management through the quality of service (Pollit, 1996). New Public management theory therefore, captures the basis of institutional and organisation restructuring as an attempt to raise its performance by improving the quality of service delivery and productivity. It is result focused rather than the process of result. The new public management theory came up with different concepts for performance and principles to achieve it (Hood, 1991). Consequently, Hood identified the principles as 'accountability and efficiency; reduction of public sector expenditure; improvement in resource use through labour discipline; flexibility in decision making; competition in the public sector through decentralisation and emphasis on result and not procedure.

The main thrust of New Public Management theory, is not with what to do but how to do it better. The basic postulate holds that market oriented management of the public sector will lead to greater cost-efficiency and effectiveness for governments without having negative side-effects on other objectives and considerations. New Public Management (NPM) theory is relevant and applicable in analyzing the subject matter of strategic manpower planning and productivity because whenever issues of public sector efficiency and effectiveness is mentioned in contemporary times, NPM theory comes to mind. Thus, the elements of manpower planning and productivity based on this theory enable us have the bases for accessing the public sector as regards strategic manpower planning and productivity practices in Nigeria.

### **Understanding the Concept of Strategic Manpower Planning and Organizational Productivity**

Scholars have defined the term manpower planning in diverse ways. Manpower planning, also referred to as human resources planning is a broad topic that is crucial to every organisation irrespective of size or organisational goals. Manpower planning has a straight forward definition, in simple terms that are needed to complete specific tasks within a given time frame. The essence of this is to work together or independently to achieve the organisational goals. Naturally, manpower planning

includes certain parameters such as the number of personnel, skills, period, organisational projects, organisational strategy, among others. Effective human resource planning is vital to the growth of any organisation or department, so it is one aspect of HR management that should be focused on.

The concept of manpower planning in a strategic manner is a serious issue in human resource management. This is because planning is one of the main functions of management. Strategic planning is the first process that human resource personnel executes before recruitment, selection, placement, training, promotion, performance appraisal, and compensation (Ikechukwu and Duru, 2017). Strategic manpower planning is therefore a process carried out by the human resource experts or personnel to ascertain the accurate number of workforce needed in the organisation with the Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat, (SWOT) analysis approach as it assesses the opportunities and threats in external environment as well as the strengths and weaknesses in internal environment (Anyadike, 2013). It is also a process of allocating resources to the various departments in the workplace.

Mintzberg (1994) argued that strategic manpower planning begins with a sound strategic business plan, reliable and available workforce data, a strong internal and external analysis, and a keen awareness of trends at the local and national level that impact how an organisation does business and the types of skills an organisation will be able to attract. The Academy of Public Administration perceived the concept as strategic manpower planning which they elucidated that strategic workforce planning is a systematic process for identifying the human capital required to meet organisational goals and developing strategies to meet these requirements (Koontz and Donnell, 1993). Reilly (1996) in Sinclair (2004) contended that strategic manpower planning is a process in which an organisation attempts to estimate the demand for labour and evaluate the size, nature and sources of supply which will be required to meet that demand. But Sinclair (2004) describes strategic manpower planning as a process of getting the right number of people with the right competencies in the right jobs at the right time.

Sullivan (2002) states that strategic manpower planning is a combination of both science (analytics) and art (planning). Another human resource scholar, Sloan (2010) posits that strategic manpower planning is a continual process used to align the needs and priorities of the organisation with those of its workforce to ensure it can meet its legislative, regulatory, service and production requirements and organisational objectives. Fayol (1980), also asserted that, strategic or scientific human resource planning makes the organisations to acquire the right number of qualified people in the right job at the right time, focuses on corporate goal, utilises human resource, reduces uncertainty, reduces labour cost, keeps records, maintains good industrial relation, and regularises in production. Therefore, strategic manpower planning is the most essential for industrial productivity.

Productivity is the driving force behind an organisation's growth and profitability. Productivity is the relationship between output of goods and services of workers of the organisation and input of resources, human and non-human, used in the production process. In other words, productivity is the ratio of output to input. The higher the numerical value of this ratio, the greater the productivity (Onah, 2010). Thus, productivity can be applied at any level, whether for individuals, for work unit, or for the organisation. Productivity has been defined as the measure of how well resources are brought together in organisation and utilisation for accomplishment of a set result (Anyadike, 2013). It is reaching the highest level of performance with the least expenditure of resources. According to Onah (2010), productivity is the relationship between output of goods and services and input of resources, human and non-human, used in the production process. According to Anyadike (2013), productivity is a measurement or calculation between input and outputs. Inputs are the amount of resources such as human resource, money, time, physical, technological and effort spent working in the organisation, while output are the result. If the inputs are equivalent to the outputs, the worker is considered productive.

When the employees are productive, they accomplish more in a given amount of time. In turn, efficiency saves their organisation money in time and labour. When employees are unproductive, they take longer time to complete projects, which cost employee's more money due to the time lost (Ikeanyibe, 2009). The importance of higher productivity of the employees in public enterprise cannot be overemphasised, which include the following; Higher incomes and profit; Higher earnings; Increased supplies of both consumer and capital goods at lower costs and lower prices; Ultimate shorter hours of work and improvements in working and living conditions; Strengthening the general economic foundation of workers (Nwachukwu, 1988 in Anyadike, 2013).

### **Strategic Manpower Planning Steps**

Several authors have proffered steps on how workforce planning should be. However, Robinson and Hirsh (2008) from the Institute for Employment Studies outlined the following eight-steps to guide human resource practitioners in their functions.

Step 1: Understanding the business and its direction

Step 2: Analyzing the workforce

Step 3: Identifying skills gaps

Step 4: Assessing future workforce demand

Step 5: Recruitment and selection

Step 6: Understanding labour markets and planning for succession

Step 7: Training and development plans

Step 8: Developing workforce plans

On another hand, Cotton (2007) enlisted the following seven-steps of strategic manpower planning;

Step 1: Define the Organisation's Strategic Direction

Step 2: Scan the Internal and External Environments

Step 3: Model the Current Workforce

Step 4: Assess Future Workforce Needs and Project Future Workforce Supply

Step 5: Identify Gaps and Develop Gap-Closing Strategies

Step 6: Implement Gap-Closing Strategies

Step 7: Evaluate the Effectiveness of Gap-Closing Strategies and Revise Strategies as Needed

According to Robinson and Hirsh (2008), some of the steps in strategic manpower planning which are amongst others, identification of manpower skill gap and training and development plan are identified as crucial themes and elements in this paper. Thus, the next section of the paper conceptualises the term public service and then takes a look at manpower training in the public sector.

### **Public Service**

In public administration literature, the term public service has become a contested concept which can be understood in the way the word is used and practiced in the constitution of various countries of the world (Shittu, 2020). Despite this, the function and purpose as well as the expectations of public service in terms of service provided remain the same all over the world. Okoli and Onah (2002) in Ibietan (2013) define public service in a broader sense to include personnel of the central government agencies. This therefore means that the public service refers to activities and services done in any government capacity in the interest of the public domain and for the benefits of the general public. Such services include but not limited to policing, defense, healthcare, and education. Gboyega (2004) describes public service as service in any government capacity such as elected or appointed members of the legislative, judiciary, ministries, boards and statutory corporations, and members of the armed forces at all levels of government. All ministries, corporations, and parastatals that government controls are regarded as public service, and staff and employees working for the provision of services to the citizens are called public servants. Faseluka (2010) strengthened the understanding of public service as the totality of the services directed to the management of human, material, and financial resources of the state for the provision of welfare services to the general public.

### **Manpower Training in the Nigerian Public Sector**

The importance of an efficient public service is understated by the fact that policies and programmes of government may not be realized without an efficient public administration. Stated differently, the best policies and laws of government may remain as mere paper declaration of intent if the administrative machinery does not function efficiently. Service delivery in Nigeria has been variously described as “chaotic” “epileptic” “unsatisfactory” “shoddy”, “deplorable”, “sensitive”, “inflexible”, “non-cost effective” etcetera and has been characterized by such negative attitudes and traits as insensitivity towards customers and their complaints, lateness; absenteeism, needless delay and red-tapism (Oyedele, 2015). An efficient public administration avoids waste, correct errors; limits the consequence of incompetence, while executing laws and public policies

(Ahmed, 2012). The exit of the colonialists created a void, hence emphasis was laid more on getting education which was focused on providing knowledge to the beneficiaries. This led to the availability of a much-improved number of highly educated persons in the public service but who did not possess the necessary skill to excel in their jobs. Thus, the phenomenal increase with educated person, came without the corresponding high performance as reflected in various Civil service reforms. On the strength of these reforms the Public service have made remarkable efforts towards the training and retraining of public servants (Aluko & Aluko, 2012).

In Nigeria, the Office of the Head of the Federal Civil Service is the body saddled with the vital responsibility of providing central guidance in manpower development matters. Secretarial staff are trained at Federal centers to acquire basic secretarial skills. Technicians and Professionals aspiring to become managers of resources are given managerial training at the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Agricultural and Rural Management (ARMTI), Centre for Management Development (CMD), amongst others. Managers and senior administrators and professionals aspiring to occupy leadership positions are prepared at higher training and policy institutions, especially the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), where a lot of emphasis is put on strategic policy studies (Commonwealth Adv. Seminar, 2003).

The training document stipulates that training for senior officers in the federal civil service should be systematic and progressional. The document spelt out a comprehensive guideline that should be followed in doing this (Okotoni and Erero 2005). Government recognises that over 80 per cent in the federal civil service are junior officers on grade levels 01-06, and that they are the first contact of members of the public with the service. Because these categories of workers are responsible for the image of the executive arm of government and if the quality of services rendered by government is to be significantly improved, adequate and greater attention has to be paid to their training and performance. Accordingly, ministries and extra-ministerial departments are enjoined to take appropriate steps to ensure that comprehensive training of junior staff in the federal civil service is carried out as effectively and inexpensively as possible. In many ministries this has been carried out with the use of Government training schools and centres, and where possible some have been granted study leave with or without pay to improve their educational status (Crueger & Lindhal, 2001).

Thus, as regards the government training schools for public servants - the ASCON will be discussed in terms of study contents and facilities in the institution and its performance in the development of manpower for effective and efficient productivity in the public sector.

### **ASCON: An evaluation of its study courses and facilities**

Before the paper look at the study courses and facilities of ASCON, a brief historical development of ASCON will help in this section discussion.

## **The establishment of the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria**

The Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) is the premier management development Institute (MDI) in Nigeria and in the West African sub region. It was established following the recommendation of the Professor Wolle's Commission set up in 1967 to carry out a comprehensive identification of training needs for the entire Public Service and make recommendations on how to implement the training programmes identified. The commission recommended the establishment of a Civil Service Academy to be responsible for the training of Public servants. Government however decided that the proposed "Civil Service Academy" would be called the Administrative Staff college of Nigeria (ASCON) and it would be regarded as the foremost management development institution for the training of public servants. Consequently, the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria was established by the Federal Government Decree No. 39 of 1973 (now ASCON Act, Cap. 6, Vol 1 LFN 1990) as the principal organ for sustainable human capital development in both the public and private sectors.

In summary, ASCON has been saddled with three principal roles namely, Training Research and Consultancy. In performing these roles, ASCON is expected to facilitate experiential learning activities, maintain a functional library as well as engage in publications for the purpose of disseminating knowledge as widely as possible. With specific reference to the Public Sector, ASCON was mandated to play three primary roles as follows (ASCON, 2014):

1. build the requisite human capacity for policy development, programme/project planning and implementation and for efficient and effective service delivery;
2. act as "think thank" for the three tiers of government through conducting research into and proffering solutions to, the myriads of problems of the public administration and management;
3. act as management consultant to all tiers of government in order to improve work processes and systems as well as initiate planned change to address the turbulence in the socio economic and political environments.

## **Training Facilities and Courses**

The Administrative Staff College of Nigeria is located at a serene environment on a large expanse of land at Topo, Badagry, Lagos State. The facility has lecture theaters, 22 training rooms library, 292 guest apartments of various sizes and standard, recreational areas and other forms of convenience. The curricula are centered on themes including Leadership, Management and Administration, Project and Financial Management, Procurement Practice, Facilities' Management, Information and Communication Technology. ASCON organises both scheduled programmes and Tailor made programmes to meet diversified training needs of the different categories of personnel in the Public service. The trainings are designed to identify and examine contemporary management challenges (ASCON documents, 2015).

Participants are led through a systematic approach of enquiry and practical simulations to examine challenges that arise within the public and private sectors of the

economy and identify approaches for overcoming those challenges. ASCON Faculty Staff comprise experienced public officers and consultants. They are supported by guest lecturers from the private sectors, universities and other reputable management training institutions in the country. ASCON is purported to be one of the foremost development Institutes (MDI) in Africa, their curricular includes themes on Leadership, Management and Administration, Information and Communication technology. Over the years, ASCON has trained over half a million senior managers in the different areas and aspect of management. These areas include general management, human resources/personnel management, strategic management, policy analysis amongst others (ASCON documents, 2015). The available statistics from 2005 - 2015 shows that ASCON trains about 15,215 public servants annually (ASCON documents, 2015).

ASCON has initiated moves to establish collaboration with reputable management development and academic institution both within and outside Nigeria to execute consultancy assignments in areas and places where ASCON on its own might not make much impact.

Nevertheless, with the efforts made by ASCON in the development of public sector workers, the public sector majorly still suffers major productivity and effective service delivery issues. Igbokwe-Ibeto & Osawe (2014:18), Eneanya (2009:21) and Adamolekun (2007) traced this ugly situation as regards ASCON to issues such as: training based on bureaucratic politics and patronage, predominance of foreign oriented training and development, alter neglect of local problem realities and issues when planning and designing curriculum and models based on borrowed models that are rarely updated, use of irrelevant manpower planning and development curriculum that have no bearing with national/state objectives and policy.

### **Challenges Militating Against ASCON**

Some of the challenges according to Igbekwe-Ibeto et al, (2016, and Gayya, 2021) that inhibits ASCON from delivering her mandate are briefly discussed;

1. ***Epileptic Power Supply***: No organisation in this modern times of ICT can succeed without adequate power supply. Poor electricity supply has been a lingering issue in Nigeria. As inherent in the entire nation, ASCON faces epileptic power supply which makes it mandatory that for any meaningful work to take place, it has to resort to power generating plants, which apart from other inconveniences, is also very expensive to run.
2. ***Inadequate Funding***: There are inadequate funds for the training and development of capabilities and competencies of the staff of the college. According to Gayya (2021), major challenges among others is getting sponsorship to consistently and constantly train their personnel to remain relevant in carrying out their mandate.
3. ***Decline in patronage***: A major discovery in the perusal of the number of trainees is the steady decline of the overall subscription to the ASCON training programmes by MDAs. This has been attributed to different reasons, ranging from late appropriations and late release of funds to lack of annual training plans.

4. ***Bad Access Roads:*** The deplorable state of the Lagos - Badagry road is a serious challenge to ASCON. Participants and visitors to the college are often stuck in traffic for several hours on the road with the risk of being attacked or harassed by hoodlums. Many trainees complained of the nightmare they go through on the road even after travelling to Lagos by air.
5. ***Wrong Perception in Human Investment:*** Another challenge is the perception which sees training as a "cost" rather than an investment in human capital development. Human capital development should adequately be perceived as an investment not as a cost. In other words the training of personnel should not be relegated upon because the end product will enhance productivity and general development in organisations. Rather than abhor capital investment, it should be applauded. One of the reasons for the establishment of ASCON was the realisation that training is in fact a major form of investment. The wrong perception has relegated capacity building to the background as only meagre budgetary provisions are made for it.

### ***Conclusion***

Strategic manpower planning is essential for productivity and organisational effectiveness and efficiency because it acquires best human resources, focuses on corporate goals, utilises human resources, develops human resources, reduces uncertainty and labour cost, regularises production, maintains good industrial relation, keeps records, and controls human resources. Manpower needs which involve training is very key in achieving organisation strategic plans. Therefore, human resource department especially in the public sector must see manpower training and development as pertinent even when linked to ASCON.

### ***Recommendations***

1. In order to have an effective training system, a tripartite (The government, MDAs and ASCON) relationship is required. It is therefore recommended that necessary policies are put in place/implemented by the government to ensure that appropriate training needs are identified by the MDAs with the input of ASCON and trainings must be designed based on identified needs.
2. A review of the ASCON curriculum is necessary in order to meet the dynamic needs of the Nigerian public environment.
3. Funding should adequately be provided to remove bottlenecks in capacity building of staff and in running the institute for better productivity.

Access roads should be provided to attract better patronage of the system.

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