

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOS) IN BORNO, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Human resource development is a key area in personnel planning and management or human resources field in general that emphasize on enhancing the knowledge and skills of employees working in certain organisations in order to make them up-to date, enhance their performance, increase productivity, and cope with general challenges associated with work or service delivery. As much as its importance, human resource development is faced with a number of challenges particularly in organisations that are not static, have poor planning, funding challenge, and employees with poor attitude to training and development. The paper is a qualitative research that adopted a survey approach to generate data using in-depth interviews with selected civil society groups operating in the state. The objective of this study is to examine the capacity development training challenges associated with the operations of civil society organisations (CSOs) operation in Borno State Nigeria. The study sampled and interacted with 30 civil society organisations with emphasis on both management and human resource - based staff in the sampled organisations. The study revealed that human resource - based training opportunities are unavailable for CSOs, and there is further difficulty accessing the available training opportunities in the state for many CSOs. In some cases, employees frequently change organisations in search for better opportunities especially around high payment expectations. Other CSOs are genuinely busy with many projects taking place in deep field which makes it very difficult for them to assess training opportunities especially in situation where they are based or operate in hard-to-reach communities.

Keywords: *Employees, Organisation, Challenges, Training,*

Introduction

Human resource development is a key area in personnel planning and management or human resources field in general that emphasize on enhancing the knowledge and skills of employees working in certain organisations in order to make them up-to date, enhance their performance, increase productivity, and cope with general challenges associated with work or service delivery. Because of its importance, serious organisations have invested in it so much that their employees are receiving training opportunities often. It is therefore a distinctive aspect that human resource managers should take with utmost seriousness in order to attain a desirable workplace, maximum staff development, and effective service delivery in both public and private sector organisations.

As much as its importance, human resource development is faced with a number of challenges particularly in organisations that are not static, have poor planning, funding challenge, and employees with poor attitude to training and development. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are non-governmental organisations that derive membership from interest persons who serve either on unpaid voluntary basis or as a paid staff when there is a provision for funding. However, the primary objective is not about money earning but serving the communities. In the process of these services, development of capacities of staff is necessary for effective and efficient functioning. The difference between civil society groups that undergo training frequently and those that seldom receive training is obvious to all observers, which tells the significant relevance of capacity development.

Objective

The objective of this study is to examine the capacity development training challenges associated with the operations of civil society organisations (CSOs) operation in Borno State Nigeria. The paper attempts to identify factors responsible for human resource development challenges in the CSOs operating in Borno State.

Research Methodology

The paper is a qualitative research that adopted a survey approach to generate data using in-depth interviews with selected civil society groups operating in the state. The study sampled and interacted with 30 civil society organisations. Emphasis during the interviews were given to both management staff and human resource - based staff in order to identify the ideal challenges. However, due to consent limitations, most of the organisations preferred not to be identified by their names. As such, the author reported the challenges derived from the study in general without specific mention of any organisation especially as most of the organisations attest to the challenges mention by others.

Literature Review

Many writers in the field of human resources referred to 'human resource development' as a term or phrase that connotes training, development of employee capacity, career development, and organisation development as investment in the learning of its human resources and as part of human resource management approach (Alhalboosi, (2018; Vinesh, 2014). Human resources development connotes the vast area of training and development established by organisations in order to increase the skills, knowledge, abilities, and education of the employees of such organisation (Stewart & Scalia, 2021). It is the assortment of trainings which helps employees understand what is expected of them at work, learn the culture of the organisation and adjust appropriately. Human resource training that is effective can go a long way of ensuring that staff of organisations perform effectively. Human resource development exposes employees to the needed skills they may need to carry out their duties and assist them in succeeding in their roles.

Human resource development trainings can be on-the-job or off-the-job. Training on-the-job is acquired through learning while rendering the job. Such trainings take place directly on the organisation's working environment and on the type of job which the trainee is being prepared. According to Aminu (2020), it is referred to as on-the-job because the trainees learn the job while contributing towards the objectives of the organisation. Training off-the-job on the hand is a situation where employees enhance their skills about their job at a location away from their working environment. Off-the-job training takes place in a farther place with less distractions, more focus, and often with different people from the ones in their workplace. Aminu (2020) exemplify the types of trainings that fall in this category to include conferences, extension courses, and going to schools. Human resource development trainings therefore make people more competent, more committed to their jobs, enhance trust and respect, promotes acceptability towards change, and increase the capacity of problem solving in an organisation.

Many a times, human resource development begins from the time an employee is hired and continues throughout the period such employee spends as a staff with the particular organisation. It is so because organisations recruit employees who most at times come with zero or basic level experience. As such, they must be trained in order to carry out their responsibilities efficiently and effectively. Even where the recruited staff have ample experience, it is possible that such experience is not adequately related to the particular organisation. With human resource development trainings therefore, employees get the information they needed to adapt to a particular organisation, get used to its culture and carry out the works effectively and efficiently (Stewart & Scalia, 2021).

Human resource development is challenging for many organisations, whether small or big. In this age of rapid change, organisation managers find it difficult to adapt to the modern changes introduced for organisational management. For instance, dealing with the ever-growing administrative responsibilities is a common challenge. As organisations hire more staff, such organisation need more strategies to manage the additional loads. This is especially in organisations that seldom update their human resource management systems, manage very small human resource teams, or unable to recruit good talents (Pappas, 2021). Furthermore, as trends, systems and needs changes, employees need to learn new things and update their knowledge and skills base. Where organisation fails to enhance the capacity of its human resources, it could lead to high turnover rate due to unhappiness and poor motivation and morale, which could cost the organisation more. With enhanced training for employees, many risks would be mitigated (Pappas, 2021; Abdullahi, 2021).

The rapidly changing environments that human beings live in has made development of human resources necessary for the success of both public and private organisations. However, the wide range of challenges that human resource managers increasingly face continuous to impact on the operations of the organisations, overall efficiency, and employee morale. According to Pappas (2021), there are many angles through which human resources can be developed and managed. Some of the ways include recruiting top talent, keeping employees engaged, and establishing a suitable organisational culture. Pappas is of the opinion

that organisations employ qualified staff who fits its culture and could assist in training its fellow staff who require more skills. He equally believes that the success of any organisation relies heavily in keeping its employees engaged. When employees work always, the tendency of learning more knowledge and skills is assured. However, keeping such employees means offering them recognition, providing more training opportunities, and establishing a positive working environment. Having a positive working culture attracts more staff to work and stay in the workplace, as well as learn easily and in peace. Managers of organisations therefore include strategies for respecting one another and promoting team work as part of the organisation culture (Abdullahi, 2021).

CSOs in Borno – Nigeria

Borno State is one of the states in Nigeria that attracted the activities of civil society organisations following the humanitarian crises as a result of Boko Haram terrorist activities from the year 2009 to date. Although, the state has been having a number of civil society organisations operating even before the crises, the crises encouraged more individuals, groups and communities to establish more organisations in an effort to pursue their interests and respond to the yearnings and aspirations of fellow citizens. According to the Borno State Agency for the Coordination of Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Response [BOACSDHR] (2023), there are 217 registered local civil society organisations recognised by the government as at February-2023. These organisations exist to provide more support to the citizens as a response to the crises and also exploit the opportunity of partnering with international aid bodies operating in the state to support victims of the crises. The civil society groups therefore contribute in sectors as – livelihood, peacebuilding, infrastructure, women empowerment, youth empowerment, governance, advocacy, social justice and protection, health and nutrition, climate change and environment, and water sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

Findings

The study revealed a number of challenges facing civil society organisations in relation to human resource development as discussed below:

- i. **Human Resource Based Training Opportunities Are Unavailable**
The CSOs revealed that human resources based training opportunities are not always available. Even where there are trainings, the specific human resource development challenge being faced by the organisations are not covered by the trainers. Instead of consulting or assessing the human resource capacity gaps in the CSOs, most trainings are designed by the funders or international development partners. A respondent explicitly mention that “the training we need is not the type of training available. You just receive invitation to participate in a workshop that you don’t know how the organisers come about it. Many of our staff require specific enhancement but such opportunities are not there”.
- ii. **Difficulty Accessing Training Opportunities**
The findings from the study indicate that many civil society organisations are unable to access training opportunities provided by international development partners like USAID, European Union, British Council, OSIWA, Amnesty

International, FCDO, etc. in Borno State. Many CSOs explained that there are numerous opportunities provided development partners for CSOs human resource development. However, only few CSOs have the opportunity to access those trainings. CSOs with poor or low capacity seldom get such opportunities. In fact, a respondent said “we hardly get the opportunity to participate in trainings organised by development partners because the trainings are not open for application by all organisations. Even where it is open, those of us that have weak structure find it difficult to apply”. It was further revealed that government agencies hardly organise trainings for CSOs despite all the efforts put forward by the civil groups to respond to the humanitarian disasters.

iii. CSOs Are Genuinely Busy

The crises in Borno State, the availability of international development partners, and the opportunity of assessing grants makes the CSOs busy. Most at times, the CSOs have certain projects they implement which makes them genuinely busy. Some of these CSOs are operating in deep field and hard-to-reach communities of the state. Yet the trainings even where available are carried out in the capital of the state (Maiduguri). A respondent emphasis this where he stated that “many projects are ongoing. Even where the training opportunities exist, we don’t have the time to participate in them. We work with timelines and our donors wouldn’t tolerate complaints of training attendance. Our Executive Directors are equally concerned with meeting deadlines rather than capacity development. So we only think about attending capacity development trainings when we are less busy”.

iv. CSOs Staff Change Organisation Frequently

The managers of the CSOs expressed that they are facing capacity gaps in human resources because staff of CSOs often change organisation frequently. An Executive Director explains that “we spend a lot of money to train a staff but he/she ends up moving to other opportunities without giving the CSO enough. As such we find investing in building their capacity frustrating especially where we cannot pay them a higher salary because once they get empowered they start thinking about moving to international organisations that pay higher salaries”. The inability of CSO staff to spend reasonable period of time working in a CSO makes the CSO managers uneasy and unwilling to sponsor their enhancements.

v. Lack of Funding and Sponsorship Opportunities

Some CSOs have genuine interest in training their staff and enhance their abilities. Unfortunately, they experience difficulty in accessing funding or sponsorship to take part in human resource development trainings. A respondent expressed that “training our human resource staff is the most difficult of all trainings. There is virtually no opportunity for CSOs like ours that doesn’t have funded projects. That’s why you notice that our staff don’t have good capacity of human resource management. All our staff records are poorly kept, and we cannot manage even staff welfare. We need money to be able to build such capacity or employ someone qualified to do it for us”. Lack

of funding therefore distracts any attempt to build the capacity of staff in the CSOs.

vi. Poor Step-Down Plans by CSOs

Most CSOs testified to their inability to effectively step-down trainings benefitted by some of our staff. As such, even when there are opportunities for CSOs to participate in human resource development trainings, the knowledge and skills gained could be lost when the beneficiary decides to leave the CSO at any point.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

As much as human resource development is significant in enhancing the operations of civil society organisations, many challenges hinder the effective capacity building for employees of CSOs. Human resource based training opportunities for CSOs are often unavailable, and there is further difficulty accessing the available training opportunities in the state for many CSOs. In some cases, employees frequently change organisations in search for better opportunities especially around high payment expectations. Other CSOs are genuinely busy with many projects taking place in deep field which makes it very difficult for them to assess training opportunities especially in situation where they are based or operate in hard-to-reach communities. It has further been understood that most of the CSOs have poor step-down training plans which could have assisted in extending the knowledge and skills gained with other staff. For CSOs to effectively perform, these challenges must be addressed. Deliberate efforts must be made by international development partners who are the prime organisers of major capacity development trainings to identify training needs by first assessing the gaps, and then implement trainings around human resources in order to enhance personnel management capacities. Governments must equally support the capacity building plans in order to encourage CSOs to continue to complement its efforts of attending to humanitarian crises with enhanced manpower capacity. CSOs must devise effective internal trainings that could ensure all knowledge or skills are not in the hands of one or few individuals so that even if the person leaves an organisation, there would be a good replacement and all critical things can continue.

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