

## **GENDER ISSUES AND HUMAN RESOURCES (CAPITAL) MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROMISES (PROSPECTS)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper, Gender Issues and Human Resources Management: Problems and Prospects has the objective of identifying the meaning of human resources management, what is gender, causes of gender inequality, and finally what is the prospect of gender issues in human resources management. Human resource management is one of the most complex and challenging fields of endeavour. The operation of any private or public organization is dependent on human resources or manpower managing. Man as a worker is unique and very important when compared to other factors of production. Man is more tasking and challenging as compared to managing other factors of production. If the human resources aspect of production is not managed well, other factors of production will definitely not be managed effectively. Human resources are one of the catalysts to sustainable development in a country. Efficient and effective management of human resources will result in a developed Nigeria. Women are not given equal opportunities as their male counterparts especially when it comes to job opportunities. The men feel that they should always be at the top thereby controlling the women. They also feel that the women's place is the home where they take care of the children. This is evident in Nigeria through the analysis of how federal, state and local government leaders and jobs are open to equal integration of women in the civil service. The paper is a qualitative research and data were collated from secondary sources, i.e. journals, books, official publications of the government and internet materials among others. The data was analyzed using the content analysis. The paper is divided into five sections. Therefore women in Nigeria have been given the opportunity to choose either to remain at the status quo or to struggle to change their predicament.

**Keywords:** human resources, gender, equality, inequality.

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is not an overstatement to state that no nation can carry out any of its developments programmes without adequate and competent human resources. That is, at every stage of development, human resources play an indispensable role (Ogunbiyi, 1992). Lawal (1992) acknowledge a strong relationship between human resource development and economic development. That country with highly developed human resources is often economically developed and the one with less

developed level manpower are less economically developed. This further reinforces the need to effectively integrate qualified men and women, without gender bias into public service at the level of policy formulation and implementation. The public service must be arranged in such a way that neither men nor women would feel marginalized. Any meaningful human resources management must create ample and equal opportunities for both men and women to participate in policy formulation and implementation. Fesler (1967) has rightly argued that human resources management must not reflect gender biases or prejudices when he opined thus: "There is nothing I am so anxious about as good nominations, conscious that the merit as well as the reputation of an Administration depends as much on that as on its measures." His emphasis is on merit as a criterion for attracting best and suitable people into the organization, but the issue of gender does not feature as a criterion. In supporting gender equality in human resources management, Gardner (1968) has convincingly and succinctly argued that: "An increasing number of bright and able people must become involved in the development of public policy. Ours is a difficult and exhilarating form of government not for the faint of heart, not for the tidy-minded, and in these days of complexity not for the stupid".

We need men and women who can bring to government the highest order of intellect, social motivations sturdy enough to pursue good purposes despite setbacks, and a resilience of spirit equal to the frustrations of public life." The history of women in Nigeria's public bureaucracy presents an account of tremendous diversity in the civil service. There can be no mistake in the widespread and presence of women in the civil service of Nigeria. Yet, female senior public administrators are relatively rare. However, prejudice continues to exist, as does the glass ceiling that limits women from enjoying truly equal opportunities in the Nigerian public service. Although, the national government created Ministry of Women Affairs, there is no doubt that the government shapes and limits women's role in the civil service (Robert, 2004). Adeleke (2003) states that there is high inequality between men and women thus, creating a wide gap between them both in political, economic, social and cultural. She is of the opinion that women are not given equal opportunities as their male counterparts especially when it comes to job opportunities. The men feel that they should always be at the top thereby controlling the women and also feel that the women's place is the house where they take care of the children. This is evident in Nigeria through the analysis of how federal, state and local government leaders and jobs are open to equal integration of women in the civil service (Fatile, and Adejuwon and Kehinde 2010).

The management of human resources in Nigeria is most crucial at this time. A nation devising new strategies for economic recovery must adopt a realistic human resources system, planning and utilization in order to inspire its citizens and give them hope. Of all the resources an organisation or a nation requires, human resources are the most important. Human beings make things happen, efficient human beings make things happen efficiently. Apart from being the users of other resources in ways that will fetch the best results, human resources, are themselves, the most dynamic, complex and unpredictable. In order to achieve the objective of this paper, it is divided into the following parts: part one is the introduction, where as part two will treat what human resources management is. Part three shall delve into some of the reasons adduced for the inferior status of woman and the attendant problems of gender bias. Part four shall highlight what have been done in Nigeria to reduce gender issues and part five shall conclude the discussion.

#### **WHAT IS HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT?**

In an attempt to examine what is human resources management, some definitions on what human resources management means will be reviewed. According to Flippo (1981), human resources management is the planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of the procurements,

development, compensation, integration, maintenance, and separation of human resources to the end that individual, organization, and societal objectives are accomplished. Without an adequate plan on how to acquire skilled and well-motivated workforce operating within a sound human resources management, achieving organizational goals will be impossible. According to Frank (1974), human resources management is a series of activities in which the job, the individual and the organization all interact as each develops and changes. He further classified the series of activities into two major activities, which are human resource utilization and human resources development. The first deals with recruitment, selection, placement, compensation and appraisal of the human resources. The second activity deals with improving the productivity of existing human resources in the organization. Abah (1997) sees human resources management as the management of human resources. Griffin (1997) sees Human resource management as the set of organizational activities directed at attracting, developing and maintaining an effective workforce. Similarly, Cuming (1968) says that human resources management is concerned with obtaining the best possible staff for an organization and, having got them, looking after them so that they will want to stay and give out the best to their jobs. In other words, it is recruitment of best personnel, compensating them and motivating them to stay on the job.

According to Onah (2003) every manager must be able to work effectively with people and also be able to solve the varied problems that management of people entails. He went further to say that human resource management functions include broad areas of labour, economic, organization behaviour, motivation, training, collective bargaining, labour laws, income security, and personnel administration. Yoder (1972) asserts this fact as he defines human resource management functions as follows:

1. Setting general and specific management policies, employment relationships, establishing and maintaining a suitable organization for collective bargaining
2. Staffing and organization,
3. Aiding the self-development of employees at all levels by providing opportunities for personal development and growth as well as required skills and experience,
4. Encourage the development and motivation of workers,
5. Reviewing and auditing the workforce and management in the organizations,
6. Industrial relations research, carrying out studies designed to explain employee's behaviour and thereby improve staff management.

Human resources management, at the micro, professional level, is the management of people at work. It is a new, improved name for personnel management and can also be referred to as human capital management. It covers the broad spectrum of the life of the employee at work, from the entry point to the point of final exit. It is about human recruitment, placement and discipline at work; it is about human struggles for improved conditions of service, about the management of his career expectations; about his motivation, training and development, and it relates also to the management of distributive justice in an enterprise, the qualification and measurement of contributions, and the sharing of rewards according to the input of effort by the various actors on the enterprise stage. Human resource management is all these and more; it relates also to structuring of the employees life-after-service. In short, Human Resource Management is concerned with the planning, organising, directing and control of the recruitment, the placement, the induction, the training, the development, the compensation, the integration and the maintenance of people for the purpose of contributing to the goals of the organisation or enterprise they belong to. Therefore, like Financial Management or the Engineering profession, Human Resources Management is a legitimate enterprise discipline.

At the macro level however, human resources management could refer to how a society harness its human endowment for the greatest good of the community. In fact, the polity exists because there is need for human resource management. Without the organisation and management of the human resources, there perhaps will be a nation-state, and life will be “nasty, brutish and short”. In full endorsement of this inescapable truth, African Heads of State, in the Lagos plan of Action (1981), stated that “since Africa’s greatest asset is its human resources, full mobilisation and efficient utilization of the labour force for national development and social progress should be a major instrument of development.

### **THE GENDER QUESTION**

According to Pricilla (1999) gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, the way in which they are differentiated and assigned socially acceptable roles. These are maintained, sustained by multiple structures like family, community, society, ethnicity, and through tools like culture, language, education, media and religion. For ages we have been socialized into believing that the different categories, roles and status accorded to men and women in society are determined by biology i.e. sex, that they are natural and constant and therefore not changeable. In a way, women and their bodies are held responsible for their specific roles and subsequently their subordinate status in society. When biological determinism has been accepted as natural, there is obviously no need to address the gender inequalities and injustice that exist in society. However, if biology alone determined our roles, every woman would be only cooking, washing, sewing, etc.! But this clearly is not the case because most professional cooks, launderers and tailors happen to be men. The roles also change with time, culture, and region. Therefore, neither sex nor nature is responsible for the unjustifiable inequalities that exist between women and men. Like the inequalities that exist between classes and races, inequality between women and men are also created by historical constructs and therefore can be questioned, challenged and changed.

Nature in its infinite goodness, has blessed Nigeria with vast human and material resources. With much endowment, nature has, indeed, laid for it a solid foundation for national greatness and collective happiness. One may however ask of what use have we made of the vast human brain and muscle-power available to us? Why is it that despite this natural endowment, our quality of life has not improved but has infact deteriorated? Why have we failed to fully mobilise our human resources and efficiently and effectively utilize them to attain greatness? Here in Nigeria, there are apparent contradiction in our human resources planning and utilization. While we cry of over-production of graduates on the one hand, we cry of the dearth of the needed skilled manpower to execute national economic development programmes on the other hand. Again, while we design policies to curb graduate unemployment, we vigorously and religiously pursue discriminatory gender issues. What reasons have been given for gender discrimination against women in Nigeria? Women constitute more than half of the population of Nigeria, yet they are relegated to the background in the scheme of things. Some of the reasons often provided for the inferior status of women are dependency syndrome, sociological factor, legal framework and traditional values.

### **DEPENDENCY SYNDROME**

We are made to understand that God first created man; and while he was sleeping one of his ribs was extracted to create woman. The Bible tells us that: It is not good for man to be alone, I will make him a helpmate (Gen2:18). And when the woman was created the Bible again tells us: At last, here is my own kind, bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. Woman shall be her name, for she was taken from man (Gen2:22). As Kukar suggested: “deformity is a permanent feature in life of any man, no matter who he may be. His whole span of life, therefore becomes one process of a search for this missing rib (Kukar, 1985). From the foregoing statement, it could be seen that woman was created from a man’s rib to help him. By logical implication a woman cannot be an

equal to man since a part of something cannot be equal to it. The dependency syndrome was institutionalised over many centuries. Women all over the world developed a psychological orientation from this syndrome. They see their role as being inferior, secondary and supportive to that of man. Consequently, the greatest achievement of most women is marriage. Virtually every woman looks forward to the time when she would get married and live with her husband. As soon as a marriage is contracted she abandons her home and moves to the husband's home where she would be under his supervision and control. While the foregoing statements are true, it is necessary to mention in passing that women in Europe, North America and Asia have struggled and adjusted the balance and are now almost on equal footing with their men fold. However, the empirical situation in Nigeria and in most African countries still reserve secondary role for women.

### **SOCIOLOGICAL FACTOR**

The ideological posture of dependency syndrome is concretised through the institutionalisation of specialised role for women. Women's specialised function in the home, of course, is in the kitchen, where they are condemned to the routine function of cooking and other household chores. Cooking alone takes much of their time. Women, especially those in the rural areas spend a lot of their time processing and conserving food items. Rural women spend a considerable portion of their time processing food items like maize, millet, garri and akpu. It takes several hours to process akpu. Consequently, rural women spend most of their time preparing food. Another specialised function of women is child bearing. A woman carries a child in her body for nine months after which she will take care of the baby for many years. As observed by Mohammed: The woman is also more deeply-committed to the children, since she bore them in her body and looks after them for long hours everyday. In return for this abandonment of the self, the society through the person of her husband, promises her and her children protection and support (Muhammed, 1985). Agriculture is another area in which rural women are marginalised. In most rural areas, land is controlled by man; but those who work on the farms are women. According to Perchnock: Within the family or household, land was usually controlled by the male head of the house, who allocated farms to other adult males within the family. They then gave plots to their wives to farm. Women did not control the land, but were responsible for doing much of the farm work, and were often responsible for feeding themselves as well, from the products of their own farming activities (Perchnock, 1985).

There are also institutional factors within the agricultural sector which further impoverish women. The operation of the farm and the division of labour was fairly hierarchical in nature. At a time when yam was the prime carbohydrate staple food, as well as a revenue earning crop, the yam farms generally belonged to men, women were 'allowed' to plant the lesser starches-cassava, maize, ingredient, vegetables – tomatoes, onions, locust beans, egusi, etc. most of which went direct to their own cooking pots, while some found their ways to the markets to yield the relatively petty cash which was tantamount to 'pocket money' as opposed to the solid income of the men derived from the wholesale of this crops. In the same way, men owned the coconut and oil, palm trees and disposed of the fruits wholesale to women who were engaged in the more labour consuming and tedious job of processing oil from them (Iweribor, 1985).

### **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

Ideally, the legal code of every country should be a representation of the dominant interest in that country. On the contrary we find that the Nigerian legal system represents the interest of men who obviously are less than women in population. Indeed, the law regard both husband and wife as one body. In a study on contraception, abortion and child custody, Rene Pittin (1985) was able to show how decisions over these issues were the exclusive preserve of the husband. For example

on the ownership of children, he has this to say: In the three major ethnic groups of Nigeria, and probably in most but not all of the others, “ownership” of children is vested in their fathers, through the man’s control over their wives. Thus, a Yoruba proverb states that: “the man who owns the tree owns the kola nut”, while a similar Igbo proverb observes that: “the man who owns the goat owns the skin”. A Hausa woman has poignantly expressed the reality of the Hausa situation in the statement that; “ba mu da ya ya ko daya”. (We women have no children, home at all) (Pittin, 1985). Another area in which the law discriminates against women in Nigeria is the requirement that women must obtain the permission of their husbands to get the following things:

1. passport or visa,
2. bank loan,
3. birth control facilities,
4. scholarship.

According to Nwabara (1985), All over the country a woman is considered to have no legal rights to her own children, whom she has laboured to produce and care for. All property within the house is considered to belong to the man, even if it was paid for by the woman.

### **TRADITIONAL VALUES**

Traditional values are still a major determinant of social behaviour in a semi-modern society like Nigeria. Traditional institutions, whether national or not has prevented the Nigerian women from developing. In the area of birth control, traditional values have prevented women from adopting modern birth control techniques, thereby perpetuating the problem of over-population. In some Nigerian societies, women have neither the right over the time to marry or the person to marry. Women being regarded as the ‘possessions’ of their fathers, do not usually have the right to the freedom of choosing either the time of, the partner to or even the idea of marriage. They are forced to accept whatever fate their parents inflict on them (Nwabara, 1985).

### **GENDER EQUALITY AND HOPE**

This paper have been able to high light the reasons adduced for gender discrimination in Nigeria as well as the associated problems as it relates to human resources management. This discourse will be incomplete if those genuine efforts aimed at stopping or reducing gender discrimination are not mentioned. It is in that light, that the efforts made at both the international and domestic (Nigeria) are discussed here. Let it be noted from the onset that all of these moves gives one a ray of hope that one day, gender discrimination will be a thing of the past. Hardly a day passes in Nigeria, without one hearing something about women activities. These activities are largely due to the awakening of the consciousness of the people and government of Nigeria to improve the status of women.

Given the foregoing discussion, the options open to Nigerian women are two, either to accept the status quo and occupy a permanent secondary position to man or struggle to liberate themselves from the domination of men, or they decided to pursue the second course of action. In doing this, they are trying to follow the footsteps of women in Europe, America, and other parts of the world. Women liberation movement in Nigeria can be seen as part of a global movement which started in Western Europe and the USA at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Women in the USA and Europe were relegated to the background before the beginning of the century. The inferior position of women was in that period well described in “the declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions” adopted by American Women Suffrage Convention in 1848.

## **THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF WOMEN AND THE DEVELOPMENT IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES**

The year 1975 can be regarded as the watershed in the development of women organisation. It was in that year that an international conference on women was held in Mexico. The conference took two major decisions which are:

1. The World Plan of Action for Women
2. The Declaration that 1976-1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women.

## **THE WORLD PLAN OF ACTION FOR WOMEN**

The aims of the World Plan of Action for women are as follows.

1. Stimulate action at the national, regional and international levels.
2. Eliminate discrimination against women.
3. Solve the problems, which place women in an inferior position.
4. Integrate women in development.
5. Increase the involvement of women in political life and international cooperation and the maintenance of peace.

The world plan of action also specified fourteen objectives it sought to achieve. These objectives are as follows:

1. Marked increase in illiteracy and civic education of women.
2. Extension of co-educational technical and vocational training in industrial and agricultural sectors.
3. Equal access to education at every level, and compulsory school education.
4. Increased employment opportunities and reduction of unemployment and discrimination in terms of condition of employment.
5. Establishment and increase of infrastructural services.
6. Equal eligibility to vote and seek elected office.
7. Greater participation of women in policy-making positions, locally, nationally and internationally.
8. Increased welfare services in health education.
9. Party in the exercise if civil, social and political rights.
10. Recognition of the economic values of women's work in the home, in domestic good production, in marketing and in other non-ruminated activities.
11. Re-evaluation of the roles of women and men.
12. Promotion of women's units within workers organisations and educational, economic and professional institutions.
13. development of modern rural technology cottage industry and pre-school day centres to reduce the heavy workload of women; and
14. Establishment of governmental machinery to accelerate progress towards achieving equality and the integration of women in national life. While the world plan of action was addressed to all the institutions/organisations was expected. public and private institutions organisation (at all levels), employers and unions, professional associations, mass communication media, political parties, religious groups and individual women.

The United Nations declared 1975 as the International Year of Women (Akande 1985).

## **THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF WOMEN 1976-1985**

The world plan of action was expected to be implemented within the UN Decade for women. The slogan of the Decade is Equality, Development and Peace. Half-way in the Decade-1980, a conference was held in Copenhagen Denmark to review the progress made on the Decade. As part of the decision of this conference: A work plan for the second half of the Decade modifying and strengthening the 1975 recommendation were proposed and in December 1980, the General

Assembly endorsed the Copenhagen decisions. From then emphasis was placed on the complete integration of women into the development process and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and guaranteeing broad participation of women in efforts to strengthen world peace and security (Akande, 1985).

### **THE WORLD PLAN OF ACTION FOR WOMEN AND NIGERIAN WOMEN**

All member states of the UNO were expected to implement the World Plan of Action for Women. To this end Nigeria being a member state of the UN decided to implement the plan. Women development units were set up at both federal and state levels. These development units were assigned the following responsibilities:

1. Examination and evaluation of the contribution of women to developments in various sectors according to national needs;
2. To study specific areas where women's participation should be initiated and strengthened;
3. To work with Government authorities at all levels and in close cooperation with women's non-governmental organisations to promote participation of women in the development of human resources for the community (Johnson 1987).

The government proceeded to set up committees on women and development at both state and federal levels to realise the objective of the World Plan Action for Women. As correctly observed by Johnson: The women's unit has now been upgraded to a Division and it also takes care of children's affairs as well. This division organises training courses for volunteer women leaders in the rural and urban slum areas of the country in health, sanitation, home management, child care, nutrition, family planning, income generating skills, e.g. bread baking, dress making, knitting, handcrafts, etc. The country was divided into zones for economic reasons and to have effective monitoring (Johnson, 1987).

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper has been able to assert that nature in its infinite goodness has blessed Nigeria with vast human and material resources, with such endowment nature has laid for it a solid foundation for national greatness. However, the paper observed that due to gender discrimination arising from dependency syndrome, sociological factor, legal frame work and traditional values, the resources at the disposal of women have not fully being utilised and this is a serious problem which human resources managers have to urgently address. The paper went further to identify the various efforts that have been made at both the international level and Nigeria in particular to reduce gender discrimination. In suggesting recipe or panacea for redressing gender bias in human resources management in Nigeria, remedial actions must be drawn from both internal and external environments. The following recommendations are hereby made. Gender mainstreaming must become mandatory in all government and private sector policies in Nigeria. The various institutions making policies, the federal and state Ministry of Women Affairs should ensure that women are given equal opportunity to contribute in the national development process. With such concrete resolution of the constraints militating against women participation in development, Nigeria will move faster in its industrialization and sustainable development process. Gender balanced policies and women in senior policymaking positions should serve as a model of changing cultural stereotypes. Favourable policy environment for positive action for equality of opportunity between men and women will prepare the ground for reform of legal framework, which often replicates underlying social discrimination practices against women. Government at all levels should seek ways of increasing the percentage of women in the public service in order to avoid gender bias and discrimination. By ensuring that all appointments conform to the National Policy on Women, which stipulates that at least, 35% of all positions should be reserved for women. While equality between men and women in sharing of power and decision-making



should be encouraged, committed and hardworking women should be adequately rewarded in the public service, so that other women will be encouraged to take up the challenges. Gender approach to public policy must always be streamlined so that due attention is strategically focused on active participation and needs of women. The place and role of women in public management would not only be recognized but at the same time institutionalized. Public policy implementation must practically ensure that equal opportunities are provided without restriction. It should be stated that the restoration of women's rights and dignity is necessary. Finally, it is the opinion of these researchers that since Nigeria's greatest asset is its human resources, full mobilisation and efficient utilisation of both sexes without discrimination for national development and social progress should be the major instrument of development in this new millennium in order to achieve the recent development plan (Economic Recovery Growth Plan) by Buhari's administration to transform the country and to ensure development in all sectors of the nation.

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