

SUSTAINABLE HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA.

Mebom Charles, MPA

**Department Of Employment Relations and Human Resource Management
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.**

ABSTRACT

This paper explored Human Capital Development as that aspect of development that presupposes investments, activities and processes that produce knowledge, skills, health or values that are embodied in people. This implies building an appropriate balance and critical mass of human resource base and providing an enabling environment for all individuals to be fully engaged and contribute to goals of an organization or a nation. The paper posits that any effort to increase human knowledge enhances skills and productivity and stimulates resourcefulness of individuals as an effort in human capital development. The focus of this paper is on the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, the largest wetland in Africa and third in the world. Recommendations were made inter alia: Strengthening of the development of the human resources and of capacities of public sector institutions through technical assistance and international cooperation; Creation of an enabling policy environment supportive of the partnership between the public, private and community sectors; Provision of enhanced training and technical assistance to institutions particularly in regard to social, economic and environmental aspects of human settlements development; Provision of direct assistance for human settlement development at the community level in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Keywords: Human Capital, Environment, Development, and Resources.

INTRODUCTION

The Niger Delta is the largest wetland in Africa and third in the world. It is a geographical area measuring about 70,000 sq. km and lies in the southern part of Nigeria stretching from the Nigeria Cameroun boundary in the east to the Ondo – Ogun State boundary in the west. The area is bounded in the North by Enugu, Ebonyi Anambra, Kogi and Ekiti States, with the Atlantic coast forming the general boundary in the South. The whole area is transverse by a large number of rivers, streams, rivulets and creeks and consists of a number of ecological zones, sandy coastal ridge, barrier, brackish or saline mangroves freshwater, permanent and seasonal swamp forests and low land rain forests. The classical description of the Niger Delta is restricted to a few States in the South-South geopolitical zone which possess varying degrees of deltaic features as described above namely: Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, and Akwa Ibom States. But today the Niger Delta is broadly viewed to comprise about 16,000 communities in nine oil producing States of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo, Imo Ondo and Rivers, with more than 20 Million People.

The major occupation of the people of the area is farming and fishing which the tropical climate, rain forest, the numerous rivers and creeks encourage. For generations, the rich flora and fauna of the area have been the primary source of livelihood for the people; Amechi, (2009) and NDDC (2006) The Master plan observed that a major challenge to the

sustainable development of the region are socio-economic and political characteristics which include:

- (i) Wide spread poverty with close to 70% of the population living below the poverty line.
- (ii) Low level of industrial development and the attendant high unemployment rate.
- (iii) Poor health conditions, infant mortality rate of 20 % ranks among the highest globally.
- (iv) Social restiveness and violent conflict are rampant.
- (v) Good and transparent governance is indispensable in order to check the decay in the administration of public funds, law and order etc.
- (vi) Corruption is rife and social institutions have severely deteriorated.

The petroleum industry is the backbone of the Nigerian economy. It accounts for over 90% of the country's foreign exchange revenue and about 80% of total government revenue. In addition gas which was hitherto flared is beginning to make more contributions to the Nigerian's earnings. In 2001, gas export earned a total of US\$1,197.00 Million and is increasing (NDDC 2006). All the crude oil and gas in Nigeria are produced from numerous fields located in the Niger Delta Region (Onshore and Offshore) and the product is exported through several onshore terminals and a number of floating production vessels.

In recent survey carried out for the NDDC master plan, a breakdown of employment in the private sector shows that 44.2% of the populations are employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing industry while 17.4% are engaged in trading and other commercial activities. Employment on other sectors include basic social services 16.9%, administration 5.4%, transport- 2.2%, construction 2.8%, while a combination of other activities accounts for 11.1%. This paper will focus on how Human capacity development can improve the condition of living of the people of Niger Delta.

The Concept Of Human Capital Development

The concept of Human capital was introduced in the 1960's by Gary Becker in order to point out the wages reflect in part a return on human capital

Various authorities have attempted to define human capital. Oxford dictionary of finance and banking defined Human capital as the skills, general or specific acquired by an individual in the course of training and work place. Human capital otherwise known as human resources is an all embracing and multi dimensional concept that cannot be fully captured by mere definition.

According to Akingbola (2009) it is that intangible factor of production that brings human intellect, skills and competences in the production and provision of goods and services. It is human capability and productivity engendered through knowledge and skill acquired from education, training and experience and facilitated by an enabling environment.

Human capital represents the knowledge, skills and abilities that make it possible for people to do their Jobs (Buckingham and Coffman 1999).

Elements of Human capital would include: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and motivation belonging to an enterprise or society and engaged in the development of that enterprise or society to fulfill its objectives.

Ajayi (2005) said Human Capital development also known as Human Resource development is the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively.

Buckingham and Coffman (1999) opined that human capital development is about recruiting, supporting and investing in people using a variety of means including education, training, coaching, mentoring, internships, organizational development and human resource management.

Human Capital Development therefore, presupposes investments, activities and processes that produce knowledge, skills, health or values that are embodied in people. It implies building an appropriate balance and critical mass of human resource base and providing an enabling environment for all individuals to be fully engaged and contribute to goals of an organization or a nation. Any effort to increase human knowledge enhances skills and productivity and stimulates resourcefulness of individuals as an effort in human capital development.

As a process, Human Capital Development should be systematic, sustainable and strategic. The process should be systematic to the extent that there should be a plan for previous activities to facilitate the attainment of set goals. The process should be sustainable since the product (human capital) must make desired and enduring impact on the organization or society. The process should be strategic to the extent that there are well defined goals and targets whose attainments are time bound. It should be dynamic, responsive and result oriented, continually evolving and also proactive to address emerging challenges (Akingbola, 2009).

Human Capital refers to the stock of skills and knowledge embodied in the ability to perform labour so as to produce economic value. It is the skills and knowledge gained by a worker through education and experience. Many early economic theories refer to it simply as labor, one of the three factors of production and a fungible resource-homogenous and easily interchangeable (Omeiza-Michael, 2009).

Adam Smith saw human capital as skills, dexterity (Physical, intellectual, Psychological etc.) and judgment. On a national level, a country's ability to learn from the leader is a function of its stock of human capital. Furthermore, human capital can be acquired through formal schooling and on the Job-Training –what you know can shape your life (Omeiza-Michael, 2009).

Kinds of Capital

According to Ibeneche (2009), poor countries lack six major kinds of capital such as:

1. Human capital: Health, nutrition and skills needed for each person to become economically productive.
 2. Business capital: The machinery, facilities, motorized transport used in agriculture, industry and services
 3. Infrastructure: Roads, power, water and telecommunications systems that are critical inputs into business productivity.
 4. National capital: Arable land, healthy soils, biodiversity and well functioning ecosystems that provide the environmental services needed by human society.
 5. Public institutional capital: The commercial law, judicial systems, government services and policing that underpin the peaceful and prosperous division of Labour.
 6. Knowledge capital: The scientific and technological know – how that raises productivity in business output and the promotion of physical and natural capital.
- Nigeria has not fared well in these entire bench-marks.

Wealth Is Human Capital

Without investment in human capital development, no economy has ever moved from agrarian to industrial stage. It is necessary for Nigeria and yes the south-south region to focus on the development of human capital as the only viable route to wealth. Converting the limited rent derived from mineral resources to human capital is the only strategy that will lead to wealth creation (Ibeneche 2009).

Ibeneche (2009) proposed a plan of action to achieve human capital investment; strands of which include:

- i. Establishment of elite secondary schools.
- ii. Establishment of shared facilities (just same as schools sharing stadia for sports development).
- iii. Establishment of specialist institutions for shipping, aviation etc. such as Maritime Academy and so on.
- iv. Establishment of regional specialist schools.
- v. Establishment of vehicles for effective public private partnership (PPP) schools.
- vi. Secondment of professionals to schools
- vii. Sabbatical for teachers in oil and gas industry.

To benefit from the numerous opportunities presented by oil and gas industry, we must have the right skill set and the requisite education. It is evident that investment in science education is critical to getting a significant toehold in the industry.

The key skills needed through the life cycle of an oil and gas field are based on science education or on science related crafts and technology.

There are other skills, which play secondary roles: Finance, legal, medical, media, administration etc; but the numbers of specialists needed are fewer and they in general play supporting roles.

The key to quality human capital lies in the provision of good secondary education. Secondary education is critical to building human capital. Deficiencies in primary education can be remedied at secondary school level by dedicated teachers; but then, it is far more difficult and almost impossible to repair the damage of a failed primary and secondary school levels by dedicated teachers. It is also far more difficult and almost impossible to repair the damage of a failed primary and secondary education at the university level. At the tertiary level, it is assumed that the child has learned how to learn.

Capacity Building Approaches

Capacity building takes place across organizations within communities in whole geographic areas, within the non-profit sector and across the sector. It often involves individuals and groups of individuals, organization, groups of organizations within the same field or sector and organizations and actors from different fields and sectors.

Public Sector Participation in Human Capital Development:

a. Education System

Redefinition of the purpose and content of education, educational curriculum at the various tiers of educational set-up and educational methodology (Ajayi, 2005):

- i. New focus for education as a means of developing mind and skill of people rather than as a meal ticket.

- ii. Proper relationship and link between educational institutions, the industry and the environment and the needs of the economy.
 - iii. Enrich academic programmes in tertiary institutions to include such skill as are required by industrial and commercial enterprises.
 - iv. Greater emphasis on science and technology based learning.
 - v. Academic exchange.
 - vi. Transfer of equipment and academic literature
 - vii. Accessibility to quality education by all especially youths and children who constitute an important tool of human resource in view of their significant numbers.
- b. Deliberate human capital development strategy.**
- i. Low value placed on human capital development to be reviewed
 - ii. Deliberate scholarship for science scholarship for science and technology education and the development of valleys of development in specifies areas of need for industrial and technological advancement.
 - iii. Focal funding of the new education policy of 9 -3 -4 system by the federal Government.
- c. Labour Education –Literacy**
- i. National policy on labour education and a plan of action to facilitate its implementation. Labour in Nigeria requires to be equipped intellectually not only for effective wage negotiation and industrial conflict resolution but also for effective discharge of its historic responsibility as a social force in the current drive for national reformation.
- d. Value System**
- The development of an efficient and responsive training system to meet the demand for knowledgeable and highly skilled labour force that is equipped with positive values and attitudes.

How human rights affect sustainable human development

Sustainable human development seeks to expand choices for all people-women, men and children, current and future generations-while protecting the natural systems on which all life depends. Moving away from a narrow, economy-centered approach to development, sustainable human development places people at the core, and views humans as both a means and an end of development. Thus sustainable human development aims to eliminate poverty, promote human dignity and rights, and provide equitable opportunities for all through good governance, thereby promoting the realization of all human rights-economic, social, cultural, civil and political. The promotion of human rights is of particular relevance in the context of globalization and its potential for excluding and marginalizing weak members of the international community and people with limited resources. Human rights afford protection against such exclusion and marginalization.

Human rights and sustainable human development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Development is unsustainable where the rule of law and equity do not exist; where ethnic, religious or sexual discrimination are rampant; where there are restrictions on free speech, free association and the media; or where large numbers of people live in abject and degrading poverty. Similarly, human rights are enhanced when gender equity or poverty reduction programmes empower people to become aware of and claim their rights. Sustainable human development and human rights will be undone in a repressive

environment where threat or disease prevails, and both are better able to promote human choices in a peaceful and pluralistic society.

A critical dimension of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is its linking of rights with responsibilities. It is the responsibility of every individual and every organ of society to promote respect for human rights and "to secure their universal recognition and observance." All human beings "should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." Article 29 states: "Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible." These concepts from the Universal Declaration are important in the context of sustainable human development; social capital is a critical factor for development.

The 1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development states that development is a human right. That proclamation was strengthened by the Declaration of the 1993 UN World Conference on Human Rights, which says that "the right to development is an inalienable human right and an integral part of fundamental human freedoms." This view was confirmed at the UN global conferences on population and development (Cairo) and women (Beijing) and at the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen).

Human rights and sustainable human development are inextricably linked, complementary and multidimensional. That is perhaps nowhere better summarized than by the UN Working Group on the Right to Development (October 1995), which states that the right to development is: *multidimensional, integrated, dynamic and progressive. Its realization involves the full observance of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. It further embraces the different concepts of development of all development sectors, namely sustainable development, human development and the concept of indivisibility, interdependence and universality of all human rights. . . . Realization of the right to development is the responsibility of all actors in development, within the international community, within States at both the national and international levels, within the agencies of the United Nations system.*

A fundamental human freedom is the freedom from want. Poverty is a human rights violation, and freedom from poverty is an integral and inalienable human right.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Specific human resource development and capacity-building activities have to be built into each of the programme areas in Nigeria. In order to do so, this study recommends that Nigeria, as appropriate should take the following actions:

- (a) Strengthen the development of the human resources and of capacities of public sector institutions through technical assistance and international cooperation so as to achieve by the year 2015 substantial improvement in the efficiency of governmental activities;
- (b) Create an enabling policy environment supportive of the partnership between the public, private and community sectors;
- (c) Provide enhanced training and technical assistance to institutions providing training for technicians, professionals and administrators, and appointed, elected, and professional members of local governments and strengthen their capacity to address priority training needs, particularly in regard to social, economic and environmental aspects of human settlements development;
- (d) Provide direct assistance for human settlement development at the community level, inter alia, by:

- a) Strengthening and promoting programs for social mobilization and awareness raising of the potential of women and youth in human settlements activities;
- b) Facilitating coordination of the activities of women, youth, community groups, and non-governmental organizations in human settlements development;
- c) Promoting research on women's programs and other groups, and evaluate progress made with a view to identifying bottlenecks and needed assistance;
- d) Promote the inclusion of integrated environmental management into general local government activities.
- e) Developing a cadre of professionals with adequate skills in integrated infrastructural service planning and maintenance of resource efficient, environmentally sound and socially acceptable systems;
- f) Strengthening the institutional capacity of local authorities and administrators in the integrated provision of adequate infrastructure services in partnership with local communities and the private sector;
- g) Adopting appropriate legal and regulatory instruments, including cross-subsidy arrangements, to extend the benefits of adequate and affordable environmental infrastructure to unserved population groups, especially the poor in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Both formal training and non-formal types of human resource development and capacity-building programs should be combined, and use should be made of user-oriented training methods. Where as appropriate guidelines and strategies should be devised for applying scientific and technical knowledge, taking into account the cultural and economic diversity in the region. While awareness of the means approaches and benefits of the provision of environmental infrastructure facilities, especially among indigenous people, women, low-income groups and the poor should be raised.

REFERENCES

- Ajayi, J.A. (2005). *Building quality manpower for sustainable development being a paper delivered at the 2005 Annual conference of the Nigerian institute of management (Chartered)*. November, 7th – 8th.
- Akingbola, E.B.O. (2009). Human capital development: Meeting the challenges of the global economic meltdown. *The Guardian Newspapers*, Friday, July 10, 54-55.
- Akpomi, M.E; Kaizer, N.A & Kaizer, G.C (2010) Human capital development and the productivity of business education teachers in Delta State. Bamigbade, W.A; Adedeji, K.A (eds). *African Journal of Business and Management* 2(2)1-10.
- Amechi, R.C. (2009). *How successive Governments Neglected the Niger Delta*, Port Harcourt. The Beacon Newspaper. Friday, March, 27-April 2nd, .8-9 and 11.
- Becker, G. S. (2020). Investment in human capital: A theoretical analysis. *Journal of Political Economy*. 70 (5, Part 2): 9–49. doi:10.1086/258724. ISSN0022-3808.

- Beer, M: Spector ,B ; Lawrence, P: Quinn Mills , D & Walton, R (2010). *Managing human assets*. The free press.
- Buckingham, M. and Coffman, C. (1999). *Human capital development, first break all the rules*, New York Simon and Schuster.
- Ebukajolo, V.O. (2005). *Building quality manpower for sustainable development. Being a Paper delivered at the 2005 Annual Conference of Nigerian Institute of Management (chartered) November, 7th - 8th.*
<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/employeremployee-relationship>
- Ibeneche, C. (2009). *Building human capacity for the oil and gas business sector today and tomorrow*, Lagos, The Guardian Newspaper, Friday, April 24th Pp.11.
- Josan, L.J., (2013). *Human capital and organizational effectiveness. Manager Journal, 17(1): 39-45.*
- Kaizer, A.N (2013) *Issues and challenges of utilizing human capital development strategies in enhancing the business teachers' task performance in Delta State. Journal of National Association of Female Teachers (JONAFET), 4(2), 23-28.*
- Kum, D.A., R. Cowden & A.M. Karodia, 2014. *The impact of training and development on employee performance: A case study of ESCON consulting. Singaporean Journal of Business Economics and Management Studies, 3(3), 72-105.:*
<https://doi.org/10.12816/0010945>.
- MacDowall, A & Saunders, M.N.K (2010). *UK managers' conceptions of employee training and development; Journal of European Industrial Training; 34(7), 609-630.*
- Núñez-Cacho, P. & Grande, F. (2020). *The human resources development through Mentoring: The Spanish case. Intangible Capital, 8(1), 61-91.*
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3926/ic.292>
- Núñez-Cacho, P.; Grande, F.A. & Pedrosa, C. (2019). *New challenges in career development: the boundary less career model. Universia Business Review, 34(1), 14-35.*
- Nwachukwu, C.C.(2000). *The challenges of managing in Nigerian work environment; the human resources factor*. Lecture Paper Presented at the 24th Inaugural Lecture of University of Port Harcourt, River State Nigeria.
- Nyengidiiki, I (2020). *Human capital development and employee performance improvement in Public Hospitals in Rivers State. Nigeria*. Unpublished MSc. Dissertation.

- Obiekwe, O. (2012). *Human capital development and organizational survival in Nigerian banking industry*. Unpublished MSc. Thesis presented to Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria.
- OECD, (2001). *The wellbeing of nations: The rate of human and social capital*. Paris: OECD.
- Oforegbunam, T.E. & Okorafor, G.F (2010) Effect of human capital development on the performance of small and medium scale enterprises in the South Eastern Region of Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 12(8), 49-58.
- Olufemi, A.J.,(2009) Human capital development practices and organizational effectiveness: A focus on the Nigerian banking industry. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(4), 194-199.
- Omeiza-Micheal, S. (2009). *Vision 2020 with 80% Unemployable human capital*, Lagos, business-Day Newspaper, Friday, March 13, Pp6-7.
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), (2001). *The wellbeing of nations: The rate of human and social capital*. OECD.
- Price, A. (2011). *Fundamentals of human resource management*, South-Western Cengage Learning, U.K
- Schreiner, E. (2017). *What is an employer-employee relationship?*
- Schulz T, (1993).The economic importance of human capital in modernization; *Education Economics*, 1(1), 13-19.
- Schultz, T.W (1961). *Education and economic growth*; in N.B Henry (ed). *Social forces influencing American Education*, University of Chicago Press.
- Schunk, D. H.; Dibenedetto, M. K. (2020). Motivation and social cognitive theory. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*. 60: 101832. doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2019.101832. ISSN 0361-476.
- Stuart, B (2020) *Learning and Development: annual survey reports*. cipd.co.uk
- Susan, I. C (2019) Human capital development and organizational sustainability of the oil and gas companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Nigeria.
- UNDP (2011). *The human capital development index (HDI)*. www.undp.org/bz/human-development
- Wong, K (2020). *Core company values: 12 inspiring examples*. www.achievers.com.

