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STRENGHTENING PROFESSIONALISM IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE: AN AFRICAN CONTEXT AND PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

In the twenty-first century, the idea of public administration has been under constant interrogation from the principles and demands of democratic governance. The fundamental issue is couched in the question: How is the public servant to be trained and capacitated in such a way as to make the public service perform its democratic mandate? This question flows from the original conception of the public service as representing the democratic, indeed the human and humane face of the state vis-à-vis its citizens. According to Rutgers, in the mid-19th century, a section of social reality which we now call 'public administration' became an encompassing concept 'used to shape society: to picture, organize and legitimize the interaction between government and society, politician and civil servant, state and citizen' (2003: 4). Furthermore, for Pollitt and Bouckaert, the realm of public management constricts this social reality to denote specifically 'the *activity* of public servants and politicians. Or it may be used to refer to the *structures and processes* of executive government...' (2004: 13).

The understanding of public management as activity as well as the structure and processes of government implies that the public service is intimately tied with the wider society and the citizenry. The progress of the public service is therefore measured in terms of how well the public servants are trained to be able to carry out their tasks of providing the public goods that would make the life of the people meaningful. It is in this sense that the idea of professionalism and capacity building serve as the test of genuine development for African states. In other words, this challenge is that of the future capability development required for Africa to engage the world on its own terms, while reengineering all facets of its socio-economic life to launch itself not only as a force in global interplay, but as a continent capable of redressing the helplessness of its mass of people who have wallowed for too long in poverty, diseases, bad governance and arrested developmental state.

Within this context, the focus of this paper is to examine the case for professionalism and capacity development in Africa, and how the existing capacity development programmes on the continent can lead to the strengthening of the African public service in the face of global transformations especially in HRM. The contribution is divided into four sections. The first one outlines the postcolonial effort at confronting the idea of increasing the capacity of the public

service in Africa especially given the huge constraints imposed on its development by the colonial institutional legacy. In the second section, we examine the ideas of capacity development and professionalism as it relates with human resources management. These ideas, in section three, are then placed in the context of global practices which indicates that HR functions are moving into a strategic framework that requires moving away from the traditional HRM. In the final section, we critically place the Federal Civil Service in Nigeria in the African and global context to concretely determine the present HRM practices and what ought to be done by way of institutionalising and strengthening professionalisation of the HR functions.

The Idea of Professionalism and Capacity Development in HR Functions

The current trend in public administration is hinged, among other things, on a managerial ethos which seeks to drive public managers to achieve productivity gains driven by a responsive and professionalised workforce. The NPM-style reform emphases that dominate reform ideas in Africa for example, is especially concerned with the issue of a shift from 'appraisal' to 'analysis', the introduction of performance management systems, the increase in the responsibility of public administrators especially as human resource managers, the introduction of market mechanisms into the public sector, the introduction of quality management techniques (Tamekou, 2008: 218).

The value of 'effectiveness, efficiency and economy' which the NPM promotes affects the personnel management system of the public service. It motivates a 'reconfiguration of expertise and its management'. In other words, the new managerial ethos draws on a 'revised form of professionalism which has more to do with the "responsibilisation" of labour' (Dent et al, 2004: 2). This underscores the current effort to shift from the procedural culture of 'doing the right things' to the managerial one of 'doing it right' through the management of resources and operations. It therefore seems reasonable that to achieve the goal of effectiveness and efficiency in the management of resources, the human resource issues involved in the running of the public service require serious attention. This derives from the understanding that

> The breath of competencies required in the public sector is different from that required in the private sector. Specifically, public servants require more than

technical skills; they require a broad spectrum of knowledge, skills, abilities, plus firm grounding in public-sector values and ethics. Second, the kind of learning that applies to public servants—that is adult learning—is distinct from youth learning. Adult learning builds upon a lifetime of experiences (CAPAM, 2005: 5-6).

The idea of human resource management emanates from the understanding that the achievement of excellence in any organisation requires a qualitative workforce that would enter into a strategic relationship with the available ideas, processes and operational tools to jumpstart organisational growth. This element of human capital becomes the significant asset in any attempt to harness the organisational potentials of the public service especially in its quest for an effective and efficient service delivery that impact the citizens. We can make the additional point that the human capital element seems more crucial to the public sector than the private because "in the absence of increased budgets for equipment and resources, public organisations have but one resource left with which to accomplish their expanded and diverse new missions: people" (Valle, 2006: 73). Most public organisations have always been faced with the dearth of proper and adequate funding to carry out the task of governance. This results from the stiff competitions which the public sector organisations have to put up with alongside other government department for the allocation of fund (Olaopa, 2009a: 215). It therefore implies that the little resources at their disposal require a critical mass of capable personnel who can innovate with existing resources and inadequate technologies. Compared with the private sector, the public sector organisations are confronted with several challenges that call on their ingenuity to mobilise a strong human resource strategies to combat encroaching disintegration.

Within this context, human resource management (HRM) is people management; '...all the activities undertaken by an enterprise to ensure the effective utilization of employees towards the attainment of individual, group, and organizational goals' (Kleiman, 2006: 357). These management activities pervade the entire employment cycle from the pre-hire stage through staffing to the post-hire stage. The activities also involve the development and utilisation of the capacities of the workforce as well as the maintenance and compensation for services rendered based on organisational requirement. All these are necessary since HRM derives from the theoretical assumptions that employees are individuals who have personals goals and aspirations but equally wants to contribute productively to the progress of the organisation. The further assumption is that the only hindrance to employees' performance is lack of knowledge,

insufficient training and failures of process (Wikipedia Online).

Applying HR functions and practices to the development of excellence and competence in the public service further requires, according to Kleiman, a productive synergy between the HR professional and the line manager. He notes that the HR professionals are typically responsible for the establishment of HR policies and procedures, the development of HR methods, monitoring and evaluation of HR practices, and advising managers on HR and HR-related matters. On the other hand, the line managers are saddled with the function of directing the employees' daily tasks. In other words, they provide the HR professionals with the necessary inputs for developing effective practices while they concentrate on implementing these practices. They therefore see to: the interview of applicants; provision of orientation and training; provision and communication of job performance ratings; recommendation of salary increases; implementation of disciplinary procedures; investigations of accidents; and soon (Leiman, 2006: 358). Thus, Ulrich and Smallwood argue that

> HR departments, practices, and professionals matter.... There is evidence of the value of HR all around us. We know that investment in HR practices will increase employee commitment, and increased employee commitment is a lead indicator of customer commitment, which is a lead indicator of profitability. We know that firms that invest in some HR practices are more likely to have financial returns than firms that do not invest in these HR practices. We know that HR practices shape an organisation's culture, identity, reputation, and brand. We also know that investments in HR deliver more than they cost through break-even analyses (2005: 224).

The above assessment therefore creates an obvious but fundamental link between human resource management and the idea and ideals of professionalism forged by the modernising imperative of the public service. No public service can hope to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century global world without a strong commitment to HRM and an even stronger commitment to the professionalisation of its HR functions. Inventing a high performing public service, therefore, involves a constant relationship between the processes of recruiting, professionalisation and 'reprofessionalisation'. In this context, professionalism involves the pursuit of both excellence and competence that achieves a practical link between 'knowledge and theory, on the one hand, and public purpose, on the other' (Mosher, 1976: cited in Olaopa, 2009b: 57).

A professional is someone who possesses core knowledge of, and deep familiarity with, the specific expertise that enables him or her to move with ease among the concepts of his or her profession. This implies that the idea of professionalism—improving employee knowledge and skill—does not only concern the issue of 'advancing those bodies of knowledge and the technique of their application as a corporate concern.' More importantly, it involves a continual process of training and reprofessionalisation. If such a reprofessionalisation scheme must achieve what John Hayes calls the goal of 'high commitment' or 'high involvement'—the employment of HR practices to achieve productivity and performance (2010: 358)—then it must start with a reform of recruitment practices that ensures the enlisting of only those who love what they are doing and are ready to commit to constant training and education.

It is this approach that differentiates the hard model of HRM from the soft model. The *hard* HRM strategy is one based on imposing control in an attempt to increase efficiency. For Hayes, this is achieved by 'enforcing compliance through the application of specific rules and procedures' (2010: 360). On the other hand, *soft* HRM strategy requires eliciting commitment through the assumption that people work best and contribute most to the progress and efficiency when they are committed to the organisation (ibid.). Increasing the commitment of the workforce implies a process of capacity development which responds to the need for skilled and knowledgeable manpower that would ensure a consistent high performance management in any public service. According to the Dictionary of Public Administration,

> Capacity building… includes among its major objectives the strengthening of the capacity of chief administrative officers, department and agency heads, and program managers in general purpose government to plan, implement, manage or evaluate policies, strategies, or programs designed to impact on social conditions in the community

It could also be conceived as

> ...the process and means through which national Governments and local communities develop the necessary skills and expertise to manage their environment and natural resources in a sustainable manner within their daily activities.

John Hayes identified eight practices which can in the long run contribute to the goals of capacity building in any public service. These are:

- Recruitment practices that provide a large pool of qualified applicants;
- Selection practices that identified those individuals who possess the required competencies;
- Induction practices that affect the way people are socialized into the organization;
- Training practices that develop knowledge and skills required by organizational members;
- Other development activities that develop the knowledge, skills and job behaviours required for effective performance;
- Retention practices that encourage valued employees to stay with the organization;
- Attendance practices that promote dedication to work; and
- Information-sharing practices that provide employees with knowledge immediate job-related issues and wider business matters they require in order to perform effectively (Hayes, 2010: 361-362).

In the next section, we will identify the global best practices that heighten the necessity of HRM and the idea of professionalism in the public service.

HRM, HRD and Global Best Practices

Since the 90s and as a prelude to the new 21st knowledge age, debates on HR and HRM have been fuelled by new ideas that have been shaping new thinking about HR. The HRM perspective uses analytical and measurement tools and techniques and stresses that people represent an important resource in organizations and are assets to be employed or used in an optimum manner rather than expenses to be minimized. It was this sense that inspired "Human Resource Accounting." - accounting for people as organizational resources on the balance sheet.

The public sector, like the private sector, is constantly faced with the challenge of adaptation and innovation in a globalising world of hi-tech development. This adaptive culture must respond critically to factors such as globalisation, gender, information technology, customer assertiveness, the international labour markets, the new philosophies and configuration of work and work ethic, and so on. Kleiman identifies three fundamental trends that have challenged HRM from 1985 till the present:

> The first is the increasing diversity of the labor force, in terms of age, gender, race, and ethnicity. HRM concerns evolve from EEO and affirmative action to "managing diversity." A second trend is the globalization of business and the accompanying technological revolution. These factors have led to dramatic changes in transportation, communication, and labor markets. The third trend,

which is related to the first two, is the focus on HRM as a "strategic" function. HRM concerns and concepts must be integrated into the overall strategic planning of the firm in order to cope with rapid change, intense competition, and pressure for increased efficiency (2006: 359).

Box 1: HRM Specialty Areas

TRADITIONAL SPECIALTY AREAS
Training/Development
> Conducts training needs analysis; designs/conducts/evaluates training programs; develops/implements succession planning programs.

Compensation/Benefits
> Develops job descriptions; facilitates job evaluation processes; conducts/interprets salary surveys; develops pay structure; designs pay-for-performance and/or performance improvement programs; administers benefits program.

Employee/Industrial Relations
> Helps resolve employee relations problems; develops union avoidance strategies; assists in collective bargaining negotiations; oversees grievance procedures.

Employment/Recruiting
> Assists in the HR planning process; develops/purchases HR information systems; develops/updates job descriptions; oversees recruiting function; develops and administers job posting system; conducts employment interviews, reference checks, and employment tests; validates selection procedures; approves employment decisions.

Safety/Health/Wellness
> Develops accident prevention strategies; develops legal safety and health policies; implements/promotes EAP and wellness programs; develops AIDS and substance abuse policies.

EEO/Affirmative Action
> Develops and administers affirmative action programs; helps resolve EEO disputes; monitors organizational practices with regard to EEO compliance; develops policies for ensuring EEO compliance, such as sexual harassment policies.

HRM Research
> Conducts research studies, such as cost-benefit analysis, test validation, program evaluation, and feasibility studies.

Such critical changes require a corresponding dynamism in the method by which the organisation plans, organises, and directs its energies towards mission accomplishment (Valle, 2006: 64). The public service HR department therefore needs the service of a leader who possesses the capacity to inspire and innovate in response to continual environmental changes as well as prepare the employees to cope with, and adapt to, changes in the mission, environment and direction of the organisation vis-à-vis the latter's assessment of strengths and weaknesses. Some of the changes required for such a paradigm shift, in specific terms, include (especially within the context of the Nigerian Civil Service):

o Change of the career service model through extensive modification in employment framework to provide more flexibilities to improve the performance of staff, and

reinforce their capabilities by attracting high level skills from other sectors of the economy;

o Instituting a new performance culture that is rooted in strategic plans, performance targets with specified outputs and activities which serve as the basis for which funding shall be sought from budgets; performance improvement plans, annual performance agreement signed on to by contracted managers whose tenure is inextricably linked to performance;

o Building of management research capability as a subset of HR capacity, to foster research-policy networks harnessed as a community of practice through ability to generate new questions on policy and public administration trends and trajectories that enable a research community to secure data, to continually research, question and challenge national assumptions that support the status quo and change initiatives; and

o Professionalisation of the HR functions, as HR can no more be managed with generalist competence. HR managers thus become good business partners, change agents or reform champions, administrative experts deploying tested modern management techniques, tools and innovative and adaptable best practices, promoters of corporate brands and standards and champions of employee competence and welfare (Olaopa, 2009b: 245-246).

The operational dynamics that launches the transition to a strategic understanding of the HR function begins when the HR managers can adequately answer the question of what extent the HR function has helped in:

1. In building an organisation fit to compete?
2. Develop the organisation's capacity to change and learn?
3. Improve the quality of leadership and management?
4. Do the difficult things and avoid the obvious and easy answers?
5. Develop a meaningful and fair psychological contract?

These questions presume a serious reappraisal of the idea of capacity development inherent in traditional scheme of HRM. At this level, the HR practices are critically linked to a competitive strategic framework that gives an organisation a competitive advantage. Thus, SHRM serves an integrative function in bringing the traditional HR function into a complementary relationship with strategic management. This becomes a fundamental fulcrum which captures the direction of best practices in HRM. This new shift in revolves around fundamental issues like

• The import of HR as core asset in value creation;

- The roles that HR professionals as distinct from line managers should play, which involve that of:
  - Strategic partner
  - Administrative expert
  - Employee champion
  - Change agent

- New competencies needed for HR as a specialized function;

- New insight into the measurement of HR results;

- The need to connect HR with the corporate objectives and make a difference on bottom-wide result.

Strategic HR therefore translates as the framework for new HR practice which entails the transformation of HR from a staff function to a strategic business partnership. It is a cutting edge technique with tools for accounting for the contribution of every employee to the organization's overall performance in quantitative terms.

Strategic Human Resource Management is a concept that is used to describe the transformation in the role of the human resource manager. It refers to an approach to the management of the people employed in an organisation that recognises the critical role they have to play in creating a vision of the future for the organisation, setting challenging goals, analysing their environment, understanding the drivers of competition in their chosen business, developing strategies to realize the vision they defined and mobilising resources to implement the strategies and achieve the goals set.

Scholars have suggested models that ought to motivate the human resource managers (i.e. the HR professionals and the line managers) in their attempt to achieve the effective application of HR practices to employees' functions. According to Benson Bana, 'The HRM model presupposes "strategic integration" or "strategic fit" of HR policies and practices both at the macro and micro levels. This entails, on the one hand the strategic linkage between the organization's overall strategy and the HR strategy' (2009: 14). The three models include:

i. **The Clerk of Work Model**

'All authority regarding HR roles is vested in the line managers and essentially the HR Manager serves the line managers, and does not report directly to the Chief

Executive Officer in the organization. All that is expected of HR-Manager is the day-to day operation kept on schedule.... The "clerk of works" ensures the fulfilment of the routine and immediate tasks. There is no interest in looking at the long term needs of the organization. HR policies are formed after the actions which demonstrate the need. The policies are not pre-set nor are they seen as an integral part of the organization policy. Personnel system are created in ad-hoc way. The HR Department will administer basic routines undertaking record keeping; first-interviewing some applicants for employment; preparing letters and documents on instructions; providing standard letters. In the light of the "clerk of works" model, the role of HR Manager is largely passive, reactive and somewhat of little value to the organization.' (ibid: 6-7).

ii. **The Contract Managers Model**

'This role is expected to dominate in well established organizations such as the public service. The personnel specialists and professionals perform the main industrial relations activity. The personnelists by virtue of their roles and responsibilities are equated to "consensus negotiators." They must have grown up and developed within the system. Employment relationships are controlled with the accent on procedures for the resolution of discipline problems, grievances and disputes. There are formal bargaining and consultation systems, with an "espoused" and an "operational" employee relations policy. The game of the old hand practitioner is to achieve the latter without compromising the former. The staff manager's role is mainly in the interpretation of existing procedures, agreements and contracts, although they may make minor modifications to these, adapting to new circumstances. The "personnelists" serve as reactive paper processors' (ibid: 8).

iii. **The Architect Model**

'This role gives opportunity to HR managers at senior level to take critical organizational decisions in the light of the consequences for the management of people. There is often senior representation of specialized HR management at the highest decision making level in the organization. As such, key decisions take into account people management issues, taking into account that the human resource is the

valuable asset of the organization. The organizational or corporate strategic plan is prepared with people consequences in mind. Explicit links are made between the organization's strategic plan and human resource management function, including its key practice areas/levers. Human Resource Planning (HRP) is designed into the organization's strategic or corporate plan' (ibid: 9).

Table 1: **Comparison of the Three Models of Human Resource Management**

Role dimension	"Clerk of Works"	"Contract Manager"	"The Architect"
Main role of HR Manager	Enforcer of merit Guardian of the merit principle	Diminished authority and control	Organizational consultant and advisors, change agent
Perception of HRM Profession	Hindrance to effective organizational functioning	Adjunct collection of skills	Full managerial partner
Role of Education	Public personnel administration	Adjunct to managerial skills	HRM, general management, practical focus
Goal Orientation	Uniform enforcement of rules, policies and procedures	Manager centred	Respectful of HRM and organizational goals
Value Orientation	Merit	Consensus builder	Effective organizational functioning coupled with a respect for effective HRM
Policies	Not-preset nor integrate to the organizational strategic objectives. Stem from the Chief Executive	Well established, often implicit, heavy employee relations emphasis, employer association derived	Explicit policies giving effect to organizational strategic plan, concept of HRP
Policy/ Planning Horizon	Short term, immediate, emphasis on budget not on corporate plans	Short-term possibly one to two years	View of tactical and strategic horizons
Authority	Vested in line Managers	Vested in senior line Managers	HR presence at highest levels, people as business resources
Power and Influence of HR function	Nil or very low	Usually low but high in times of crises	Consistently high
Systems	Ad hoc, related to legal requirements, payroll based	Sophisticated systems to help with negotiation and manuals of rules, etc.	Sophisticated and procedurized, concepts of HRP and HRIS are used extensively. Not focused on relationships.
Control	Line managers wholly control subordinates	High trade union density	HR managers and line managers move towards extensive integration, rational decision taking obviates need for traditional idea of control.
HR activities	Largely routine, person not business-centred, routine	Support to senior line management, act as "buffer"	HR Manager as business manager looks for

	administration, welfare, selection of junior staff	between management and employees, high interpretative role, involved in formal relationships but not power-broking	opportunities which make optimal use of available competencies. Technically competent in diagnosis and analysis
HR reporting	To senior line manager, works manager, company secretary, Director of administration and Finance	Likely to senior line manager, policeman role	To the Chief Executive
HR Career path	From another post likely on promotion clerks, senior secretary trainer	Junior HR staff still drawn from other functions, selection on the basis of day-to-day crisis management skills resolution of immediate problems, narrow base of operation	Both Full-time career professionals and a sufficiently high status function to attract line managers permanently or for a spell
Communication pattern	Top-down	Two-way	Multi-directional

Source: Benson Bana (2009).

The architect model raises a fundamental issue that affects the dynamism of HRM in confronting its environment. This is what makes the model the driver of global best practices in HRM matters. In analysing the trajectory of HRM practices in the US, Japan, China and some other countries, Fajana highlights certain best practices that could make HRM achieve the objectives of high performance management. These are:

- Openness and objectivity of the recruitment and selection process
- Strategic deployment of a large number of young workers from the demographic advantage enabled by the baby boom, as in Japan in the 1970s
- Strategic development of staff for optimal utilization; encouragement of mentoring and coaching by the top of the civil service against the feared depletion of the middle level manpower,
- Flexibility in pay system with the focus on merit and performance
- Balance of power in the application of Equal Employment Opportunity
- The efficiency of affirmative action in ensuring Equal Employment Opportunity
- The groupism and collectivism of the Chinese and Japanese firm, cultural traits that also obtain in Nigeria.
- Group harmony which can enhance cooperation and decision-making. This is particularly requisite in Nigeria because of its people diversity

- Lifetime employment will improve employees' commitment to the organisation. This cultural element may be difficult to introduce and sustain in Nigeria on account of the globalization of neo-liberal capitalist economic system.

- There is a need to re-engineer the recruitment process by empowering the job centres (Labour Ministry) to monitor corporate recruitment electronically for the purpose of regulating employment standards, federal character prescriptions, etc., as obtained in Hong Kong, South Korea and China.

- Benchmarking institutional productivity indices against comparable competitors with a view to improving the overall performance of public institutions; this is compliant with international best practices.

- In the public services of Korea and Singapore, the process of work allocation that has proved very effective at instigating superior performance is the insistence on workplans. A workplan is a strategic tool for target setting and control in the performance process that allocates time to segments of related tasks or activities towards the execution of a job. Complied monthly or quarterly, the performance and productivity of workers can be better ensured. Workplans have become indispensable in higher institutions.

- The job search process in China and Hong Kong is completely handled electronically at all stages. The dividends of the digital world are been appropriated in virtually all economic activities, not excepting the job search.

Given the preceding analysis, the next section will analyse the political and administrative efforts made on the continent to achieve a global standard in HRM

The African Pubic Services and the Capacity Development Effort

The Africanisation Policy which was put in place in most African states serves as a convenient juncture from which to theorise the capacity profile of the African public service. On the eve of independence, African states had to respond to the change in administrative profile of the newly independent states especially in terms of size, scope and number of the efforts required to cater for the tasks of governance and service delivery to the people. The African leadership was confronted with the dialectical dynamics of an inherited public service face to face with the unfulfilled aspirations of the African people. This required an urgent, if emotional, need for the repositioning of the colonial public service to meet the immediate need of the populace

(Mutahaba, 2009: 9). According to a commentator,

> …although the civil service in the newly independent states proved largely capable of discharging the role of energising and sustaining the machinery of government, it soon became clear that some changes would be needed in the structure and orientation of the civil service in order to make it more able to assist the newly independent governments to meet the difficult challenges that they would face in their efforts to improve the economies of the new countries and the living conditions of their peoples. In the main, the reforms suggested were intended to produce public administration systems that could meet the requirements of nation building and economic development in an environment in which democratic governance and respect for the fundamental human, political and social rights of the citizens were part of the expectations of most people (Mensah, 2004: v).

Mutahaba further argues, for instance, that there were such sensitive areas like the strengthening of the socio-economic development of the newly independent states which received very low priority from the colonial powers but which eventually carries the weight of postcolonial achievement. This, according to Mutahaba,

> was now to be a major function of the newly independent governments, and the requisite machinery for this activity had to be devised. Another issue that till then had not come up was the maintenance of national integrity. During the colonial period, the different ethnic groups comprising the territory were not committed to the colonial territorial unit for their linkage to it was a matter of administrative convenience. Independence transformed the situation: all ethnic groups falling within the boundaries of the newly independent state were claimed by it as its citizens, and they were expected to feel a commitment to it as their country-a commitment transcending the one they held for their tribe. Machinery for carrying out this new activity had to be developed (ibid: 10).

From the human resource perspective, the Africanisation Policy therefore provided the policy platform to challenge the capacity anomalies created by the colonial administration. Several colonial administrative policies ensured that the postcolonial African public service would suffer from 'a paucity of indigenous public service personnel, a lack of other administrative resources, weak administrative infrastructure, and potentially explosive relations between bureaucrats and politicians' (ibid: 7). In the first place, the colonial administrative structure was built on strict hierarchy and legalistic processes, procedures and precedence which ensures not only that lower level participation in decision making is highly restricted, but also

that Africans who occupy these lower levels are prevented from climbing the hierarchical administrative ladder. For Mutahaba,

> The systems for managing personnel /human resources...were built on rigid rules with over revelation of personnel practices and policies; classification of personnel was usually in terms of duties rather than tasks, and people were paid for what they were rather than what they did. Furthermore, the systems were characterized by vague job descriptions, and performance appraisal systems that valued compliance more than productivity (ibid: 10).

Thus, in the face of counterproductive procedures, lack of senior level management personnel, non-existent training institutions and a growing agitation for meaningful bureaucratic and political governance, the post-independence African public service had to be simultaneously deconstructed and reconstructed on the exigencies of postcolonial realities.

The Africanisation Policy constitutes the first level of responding to these challenges. The second level came in the 90s when African states had to respond to the emasculation of their public services by the SAPs reform framework. The SAP-induced reforms of the 80s gave way to the second wave of reforms in the 90s basically because of the admission of the Bretton Woods institutions that there were fundamental flaws with the reform agenda. The most fundamental of these is that the SAP reforms promoted the destruction of public administration institutions without putting in place any viable alternative to them.

Also responsible for the decline in the capacity level of the average public service in Africa is the fact that military rule sets in in many African states and this further worsened the deteriorating condition of the civil service because of the military's lack of regard for due processes. The consequence of this gross neglect is that public administration systems in many African countries were undermined rather than being nurtured. According to Adamolekun,

> In the countries under military rule (e. g., Benin and Nigeria), the CSIs [Civil Service Institutions] became political arenas where competition over the allocation of resources were carried out in the absence of the traditional political institutions such as political parties and legislative bodies that the military had proscribed (2007: 83).

As a result, the inherited career CSIs began their steady decline. The result was the crisis of governance—the collapse of political and administrative institutions and decline in economy as well as deepening of poverty—that African states witnessed in the 1980s onward. However, by

1989 through the early 1990s, the wave of democratization and economic liberation swept through African countries, but this met in place weak political and administrative structures as well as declining economy. In order to respond to these challenges it was then necessary to rehabilitate the civil service institutions to respond to, and handle, the challenges of running a democracy with viable economy, and thus came the need for capacity building in Africa (Ibid: 84-85).

The capacity challenges confronting Africa could be summarised to include the following: humans resources remain grossly under-utilised and in some cases unutilised; uncoordinated and fragmented approaches to human resources development; lack of data on training needs; uncoordinated training programmes; lack of sectoral and organisational training guidelines/policies; inadequate linkages between training output and the labour market requirements; inadequate support for training end users; wastage and misplacement of personnel; and lack of monitoring mechanisms to determine the capacity and productivity of the trained personnel to contribute meaningfully to national development. All these ultimately brought about ineffective service delivery. Consequently, capacity building was one of the ways devised to combat the decline in the capacity level of the public service sector. Generally, this approach encompasses: the enhancing of staff skills through on-the-job and short-term training; the improvement of management systems and structures, with systems responsible for human resources development, financial, and information management being the target. Others include the restoration of incentives and improvement of pay packages, and the improvement of the work environment.

`   The second wave of PSRs was therefore meant to address this need for capacity development in Africa. This essentially requires developing the skills and performance of both individuals and institutions. Another reason for this second wave stems from the need to reduce the amount of foreign aids expended on the provision of costly expatriates' technical assistance given as capacity intervention to developing countries by development partners (Cohen, 1995: 409).

This second wave of reform effort on the continent later culminated into several continental attempts to combat the HR and capacity development as a way of launching the African public services into the global scheme of things. The most coordinated of these

attempts—within the broad NEPAD initiative—is the African Conference of Ministers of Public/Civil Service established in 1994. Within a broad developmental perspective, the fundamental imperative of this Conference is the development of policies that will enhance the quality of public and civil service administration in Africa. The strategy adopted to achieve this objective is the building and sustaining of a capable state in Africa. According to the Long-Term Strategy document:

> The *vision* of the capable developmental state in Africa is one that is committed first to ensuring a better life for all its citizens; that promotes *popular participation* and the *indigenous ownership* of its entire development agenda; whose public service is *people-oriented,* based on *meritocracy* and driven by service to its citizenry, that has *sound systems* of public administration at all levels of government; has *transparency and accountability* to its citizenry and to its institutions as central tenets; has a sound macro-economic framework; that *eradicates poverty* and surpasses the minimum standards set by the MDGs; *implements* its continental commitments on governance and public administration; mobilises, budgets and manages its *public finances* effectively; and is underpinned by *democratic politics*.

This objective of building the future capability of African states was formulated against the background of the failure of the market mechanism to resolve Africa's development problems. This bold realization therefore influenced the development of the African Public Service Charter as a guiding principle towards strengthening the state and its administrative apparatuses. The Charter defines the key components of a professional and effective public service and its role in building the capable state; it introduces common measures and systems to ensure transparency and accountability in the public sector; and, it establishes a general framework of guiding principles, policies and management mechanisms to be used as a common language in the area of public service in African countries.

The need for a capable state in African therefore intersects the complementary need for capacitating the public services in such a way as to ensure that the bureaucracy stands at the forefront of good governance. This led to the identification of capacity building and state building in Africa as key priorities, as well as the development of a broad strategic framework for identifying and responding to long-term capacity building needs. It is therefore logical, within this context, for the African Ministers to emphasise the need to prioritise human resource management and utilisation; development of skills and strategies; and building institutions that

are required to achieve capacity development. Emphasis has also been placed on the need to enhance the strategic skills of civil servants, including the ability to craft clear development and policy agendas, as well as the capacity to translate agendas, ideals and strategies into clear programmes and projects. Another skill that is required, which has been on the agenda of the Pan-African Ministers, is the ability to identify opportunities, and the introduction of requisite interventions to address weaknesses and constraints. The African Ministers believe that African civil servants must have the ability to foster strong social partnerships with societal forces and civil society entities. To them, interface with publics and citizens on the continent should in fact become the core *raison d'être* of public service provision. In Africa, the overwhelming majority of public services are to be found in education, health, police, welfare and social development. There is thus the challenge of organising and managing millions of public servants into cohesive, well coordinated units and effective government operations throughout the continent.

Given the preceding focus, Balogun (2008: 8) highlights the basic thrust of the Charter as follows:

o resuscitation of the basic ethos of public service – with an accent on professionalism, integrity, competence, accountability, and responsiveness of the service;

o review of personnel policy and practices (with emphasis on the review of performance appraisal instruments and mechanisms, revision of personnel rules, review and reform of pension policies, and computerisation of personnel processes;

o rationalisation of pay and grading structures and the introduction of performance- and productivity-related pay;

o labour redeployment and redundancy management;

o introduction of 'customer-care' initiatives;

o improvement of records and information management systems;

o revitalisation of local government and decentralised agencies;

o implementation of anti-corruption measures (including the establishment of watchdog bodies such as the anti-corruption commissions in Ghana and Nigeria and *mediateur de l'etat* in Francophone countries).

In spite of this insightful diagnosis of the African administrative condition, empirical evidence reveals that the African Public Service Charter has had an ambivalent success since its inauguration. In all, only a few states have actually recorded any significant success vis-à-vis the Charter. For instance, one can point at the visible example of the Batho Pele initiative in South Africa. Uganda, Namibia, Botswana and Mauritius are also success cases in customer oriented service delivery. However, in spite of the progress made by these states, the capacity development profile of most African states is still lacklustre. Balogun argues, for instance, that the issue of the scope and coverage of the Charter has serve as a constraining factor in the determination of the success of the initiative (2008: 10). Secondly, this Charter has also come against the change resistant attitude of the traditional bureaucratic framework. However, this traditional bureaucratic pattern is exactly what must be deconstructed if Africa is to find an administrative niche in the global evolution of HRM. The traditional HR scheme is daily confronted not by the dynamics of consumer aspirations, but also by the evolutionary transformations in global administrative thinking.

In the next section, we will attempt to place Nigeria within this global and continental administrative matrix in other to chart a plausible roadmap for progress in professionalised HRM. The pertinent question at this point, however, is: How does the Federal Civil Service in Nigeria fare within the context of progress and strategic shift in global thinking on SHRM and the idea of capacity development? What are the possibilities open to Nigeria in her attempt to stamp her presence as a serious player in service delivery to the people?

HRM and the Nigeria Public Service: The Challenges of Professionalisation

Nigeria seems to occupy a mid-ground between excellence and mediocrity in HRM matter and result-oriented service delivery on the continent. This is in spite of the fact that it has attempted a vigorous integration of crucial elements of the Charter into its administrative reform programme. The initiative of the Nigerian Government include: the review and revision of civil service rules, conclusion of Service Compacts (SERVICOM) with the Nigerian people, establishment of SERVICOM nodal units and of SERVICOM Compliance/Evaluation Index, and the setting up of the Due Process Office, the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), as well as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) (Balogun, 2008: 38).

This depressing profile derives from challenges arising from her inability to transform its inherited colonial administrative system in spite of the strong seminal prescriptions of the Udoji and Phillips reforms of 1974 and 1988 respectively. Due to the distortions created by half-hearted reform attempts, a number of attributes has come to define the current human resource management practices in the Nigerian public service. One is the centrally determined statutory employment conditions. This system requires strict compliance with rules and regulations with minimum discretion delegation to line managers. The second impediment arises from central governance using the instrument of circulars that promotes the tendency to push a "one-model-fits-all", "one best way" administrative tradition. The third is the general tendency to regard personnel administration function as a mechanical task requiring low-skills generalist competencies. Besides, the HRM system is career oriented with internal indiscriminate mobility across different sectors in the public sector. This system has been criticized for inhibiting innovations and retarding modernisation. Lastly, there is a pay structure in place which is operated with a common salary scale for each grade. Other crippling features especially of the HRM structure in the FCS are the fact that:

o The system operates a unified and uniform scheme of service;
o The system assigns responsibilities on matters that would ordinarily fall within the purview of HRM in the service to three different agencies of government; namely, the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF), the Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC), and Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies of the Federal Government (MDAs);
o Focus of recruitment into the service is at the entry level which requires balancing the merit principle with the federal character principle;
o Discouragement of the recruitment of required and critical 'outsiders' to positions above the entry level in a manner that have value addition;
o The FCS thus operates a close system with strong dose of generic inbreeding;
o Staff are classified into well-defined pools and cadre using a rank-based job and salary grading system;
o The system equally operates a strong culture of 'entitlement' and a weak culture of individual work accountability and performance-orientation;
o There is a fragmented approach to staff training and manpower development;

o   There is an outdated performance management system; etc.

The above outline reveals that the FCS is caught in a trap which ensures that it confronts global HRM problems using the traditional HR framework. There is a visible stagnation in strategies which worked in the last thirty years without a foresight about the growing paradigm shift to SHRM. The new shift in understanding HR functions demands that HRM can no longer be regarded as business as usual. There is rather the need for partnership in anticipating the future, define the imperatives for achieving that organisational future, design the strategies for meeting those objectives, and aligning policies and practices with the chosen strategies. The postcolonial administrative impediments for the Nigerian Civil Service raise several fundamental HRM questions that could serve as the perspective on the way forward:

- What are the key actions needed to ensure a better match between HR requirements and available employee?

- How can we ensure that the department has highly skilled employees in the future in order to address changing needs?

- How can FCSC work with our line ministries/ agencies to attract employees with the right competences for deployment to critical areas in the department?

- What is required to create the right professional environment that could help to breed a new generation of public managers with professional and confidence to demand and give excellent services?

- How can the oversupply of employee in certain areas of the department be re-directed to address other areas with shortages?

- If training and retraining the oversupply is not an option, how can these employees be phased out?

- How can under-representation of designated groups/cadre of ethnic groups be addressed professionally (in view of Federal Character), with due regard given to merit?

- How can the productivity of current employees be consistently improved, monitored and evaluated as basis for interventions?

The previous sections indicate that the answer lies in the institutionalisation and strengthening of the HR functions to reflect not only the global benchmarks in HRM but also to adequately cater for the local need of achieving an effective and efficient service delivery for the Nigerian citizens. This answer further requires a critical restructuring process which implies that HR functions can no more be managed with generalist competence. A whole range of skills would need to be built in view of the competency required to build the world- class public service envisaged in the new strategy for the Public Service Reform. Among these are specialist skills in:

- Managing outsourced HR issues
- Operation Research and Model Building
- IT-based manpower planning/system analysis software based solutions
- Turn around management
- Redundancy management and Industrial/Labour relationship management
- Training policy and impact evaluation
- Problem-solving Techniques and change management
- Pay Research
- Project management, Target setting and performance management
- Management Research, Repertoire of best practices innovations and benchmark king techniques
- Leadership skills development
- Administrative expertise; etc.

The institutionalisation and strengthening of a viable SHRM in the FCS requires a strategic framework guarded by four major processes. These processes include;

a. Strategic alignment requires that HR policies, processes and systems in the FCS are brought in line with national strategies outlined by the Federal Government for is development agenda.

b. A process of change management which requires

   i. A medium to long term establishment of centres consisting of small teams of HR experts with specialist knowledge of current HR solutions;

   ii. Promotion of diversity and inclusiveness behaviours in executing the federal character principle of recruitment;

    iii.   Continuous improvement in HR management service delivery through benchmarking, as well as the adoption and implementation of best practices.

c. The process of employee championship would lead to the promotion of employee advocacy in the FCS; create an employee value promotion framework that would attract, retain and develop talent; develop and communicate a robust succession plan for directorate staff; facilitate learning and development opportunities; promote a motivating environment for staff; and so on.

d. A process of administrative and transaction excellence would require that the FCS

    i.   Reengineer organisational processes to create shared services centres;

    ii.   Fully deploy the newly introduced HR Information and Management System to all MDAs to support employee personal records, payroll, staff performance and development data;

    iii.   Promote customer focus and customer service mentality among key administrative staff; and

    iv.   Acquire, deploy and constantly update latest technology to deliver service.

Other strategic reform options for the FCS to make the desirable shift away from the traditional HR functions to a more strategic HRM include:

- Delegation of HRM
    - ✓ Transferring to MDAs
    - ✓ More flexible policies
    - ✓ Decree 43 of 1988

- Career Service
    - ✓ Renewable contract tenure
    - ✓ Life-time employment
    - ✓ Flexi-timing
    - ✓ Open and closed service

- Promotion
    - ✓ Merit or seniority
    - ✓ Standardised uniform grading
    - ✓ Special promotion enabling diagonal movement

- Pay
    - ✓ Market-based
    - ✓ Internal equity

- ➢ APER
  - ✓ Linked to promotion
  - ✓ For personal development and performance management

- ➢ Training
  - ✓ External courses
  - ✓ On-the-job mentoring and coaching
  - ✓ Web-based courses
  - ✓ Research grants, study leave, sabbatical
  - ✓ Staff exchange scheme

- ➢ Skills pricing
  - ✓ Certificate or skills contents

- ➢ Scheme of service
  - ✓ Fixed or flexible

Conclusion

The capacity of most public services in the world today to effectively and efficiently carry out their administrative functions is judged in global terms by the system of high performance management in place that will initiate a productivity paradigm in terms socio-economic transformation and progress. Whereas there are countries like Nigeria still in the maelstrom of transition, there are good practices innovations in others like Botswana, Namibia, South Africa etc. to name a very few that gives the assurance that though it is "Not yet Uhuru' in Africa, but there is a silver lining glittering there at the end of the tunnel.

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