



## Education and Human Resource Planning In Nigeria: The Case of National Manpower Board (NMB)

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### Abstract

This case study describes the activities of the National Manpower Board (NMB) prior to its merger with the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER). This study describes the activities of the NMB in relation to the development of education in Nigeria. It highlights the scope and techniques of human resource planning in Nigeria as well as obstacles to effective human resource planning. Five research questions guided the study. A nine-item open-ended questionnaire was administered to a randomly selected sample of five senior NMB staff. Relevant documents were also reviewed. The results of this study indicate that the NMB collects, collates and analyses data on human resource development, utilization and requirements using the employers' opinion method and the normative approach. The activities of the NMB spanned across all sectors and all states of the federation. The obstacles faced by the Board included insufficient funds to carry out field operations, insufficient staff, inadequate information from ministries and human resource development institutions, and indifferent attitudes of state governments towards the establishment of zonal and state manpower offices. These obstacles rendered the NMB ineffective in the performance of its statutory duties. It became moribund in 2006 when it was merged with the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research; with NISER retaining its name and responsibilities. This study recommends increased funding for NISER if it is to succeed where the NMB failed. The establishment of NISER zonal offices in all the states of the federation is also strongly and urgently recommended.

**Keywords:** Manpower; Human resources; National Manpower Board; Planning; Utilization; Nigerian

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## INTRODUCTION

Manpower, also known as human resources, can be defined as the bulk of labour available for any particular kind of work. In more specific terms "it is the bulk of human beings with the relevant skills, energies, talents, knowledge and attitudes that can be committed towards the production of goods and services" (Gbosi, 2003: 3). In most developing

countries, human resource development is tied to education because it is seen as the path leading to development and developed country status. The ultimate aim is to achieve economic advancement through the provision of relevant education and hence the production of the right combination of human resources (Ololube, 2009).

In Nigeria, an individual, at any stage of life after basic education, can choose between continuing full time studies, combining work with study, or embarking on full time employment without excluding the prospects of resuming studies later on (FRN, 2004). As such, tertiary institutions are encouraged to run various kinds of part-time programmes. The National Policy on Education also encourages private participation in the provision of formal and non-formal education. All of these efforts are directed at providing adequate and relevant human resources to facilitate the economic advancement of Nigeria.

Specifically, Nigeria, like most developing countries, desires to reposition science and technical education as well as human resources as areas of optimum economic performance. For the purpose of this repositioning, the National Policy on Education recommends not less than 60% of seats in sciences and science-oriented courses in conventional universities and not less than 80% in the universities of technology. For polytechnics, admission into technology and business courses is to be weighed in the ratio of 70:30 (FRN, 2004). The adoption of the universal primary education programme in 1976 and the universal basic education programme in 1999 is part of the education and training efforts to improve the quality of human resources that are available in the country. The modification of educational curriculum at the earliest levels of education to include computer appreciation, introductory technology, integrated science and woodwork is also aimed at the attainment of the desired type of human resources. Other similarly focused government efforts include the establishment of the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 1962, the National Manpower Board (NMB) in 1962, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in 1976, the National Teachers Institute in 1977, and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) in 1988. To complement the efforts of these bodies, the federal government also instituted the Education Tax Fund (ETF), the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), and the National Science and Technology Fund (NSTF). Private sector firms and multi-nationals operating in the country are mandated to pay a set percentage of their profits towards the sustenance of these funds. These funds, like the aforementioned government mandated institutions are directed at ensuring that education programmes do not run contrary to national human resource development plans.

In spite of these efforts, Nigeria continues to experience double digit unemployment rates amidst difficulties in meeting human resource requirements in the fields of science and technology. Consequently, a balance is yet to be achieved between manpower production and manpower demand (Ike, 2007; Adeniyi, 2008). The result is a constant shortfall in the supply of teachers in the sciences and in technical and vocational fields of study (Oghuvbu & Akpotu, 2004; Undie, Enya, *et al*, 2004). In addition to the future supply of human resources, this shortfall adversely affects the attitude of students in courses in these fields as well as the confidence of employers of science and technology graduates (Agabi, 2006). The purpose of this study is therefore to highlight the scope and problems of human resource planning as experienced by the National Manpower Board with the hope of eliminating these problems and facilitating the development of the desired human resource mix through education and training.

## **Assumptions**

The study was based on the following assumptions:

1. Human resource planning is an essential activity needed to ensure that the development of human resources is guided to meet the needs of any given society.
2. When human resources are not well planned, it results in an increase in the well-educated unemployed.
3. Prior to 2006 human resource planning in Nigeria was carried out by the National Manpower Board.
4. Education is a major tool of human resource development.

## **Research Questions**

In this historical case study, the human resource planning activities of the NMB are described in relation to educational development and Nigeria's human resource situation. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What was the organizational structure of the NMB?
2. What were the human resource planning activities of the NMB?
3. What was the scope of human resource planning in Nigeria, as carried out by the NMB?

4. What human resource planning techniques were used by the NMB?
5. What were the major obstacles to effective human resource planning faced by the NMB?

### **Background Information on NMB**

The National Manpower Board (NMB) was responsible for human resource planning in Nigeria prior to 2006. It was first established in 1962 under the umbrella of the National Economic Council, as part of the recommendations of the Ashby Commission and was to give full consideration to all aspects of manpower development programmes in Nigeria (Yesufu, 1969). In 1984, the NMB was dissolved, but its secretariat continued to function as a manpower division in the erstwhile Ministry of Budget and Planning. In 1991, the NMB became a statutory body under Decree Number 18 of 30<sup>th</sup> May 1991. It was inaugurated in October 1992. Section 5 of the decree mandates it to:

- a) Determine and advise the government on the nation's manpower needs in all occupations;
- b) Formulate manpower development and utilization policies and programmes in order to ensure optimum implementation of the same for enhancement of the nation's manpower resources;
- c) Coordinate manpower policies and programmes of federal, state and local governments;
- d) Collect, collate, analyse and publish manpower employment information and data generated through surveys, studies and enquiries including administrative means (FRN, 1991).

This brief background outlines the statutory role of the NMB as prescribed by law. However, in January 2006, the federal government approved the merger of the NMB with the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) while at the same time retaining NISER'S name and functions. The functions of NISER as stated in Act 70 of 1977 (updated to NISER Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2006 Chapter N115) and as provided in the NISER 2008 information brochure include:

- a) Provision of consultancy services to the federal and state government, their agencies and organizations, in the field of economic and social development;
- b) Conduct research into the economic and social problems of the country with a view to the applications of the results thereof;
- c) Organization of seminars and conferences on problems of economic and social development in the country, whether on its own accounts or on behalf of the government of Nigeria or their agencies;
- d) Cooperate with Nigerian Universities and research institutes and other institutions in the mobilization of the countries research potentials for the task of national development and dissemination of research findings for the use of policy makers at all levels.

NISER consists of five departments namely: economic and technology development, human resources development and utilization, social, governance and physical development, agriculture and rural development, and administration and finance. Clearly, the scope of activities carried out by NISER goes far beyond human resource development. Still the question remains: is NISER in a better position to handle manpower development issues in Nigeria than the NMB, specifically established for such purposes, was? Only time can tell.

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Human resource planning involves forecasting the human resource needs of an economy, setting objectives that will lead to the realization of such needs, designing strategies for the achievement of the set objectives, identifying resource needs, and defining modalities for plan implementation. This planning process is not complete without adequate provision for plan evaluation and modification (where necessary). From the perspective of educational planning, Adiele (2006) defines manpower planning as a conscious and rational decision making process geared towards defining the various courses of action that need to be carried out within an educational institution. This definition reaffirms that of Agabi (1999), which asserts that manpower planning is about rational decisions directed at effective human resource development. The ultimate purpose of this planning is to ensure regular and adequate supply and maintenance of relevant human resources in all sectors of the economy, at all times.

## **The Importance of Planning**

Planning is an element of management which can be defined in a variety of ways. For Adesina (1990), planning is a method of deciding what we want to accomplish. It is essentially concerned with concepts of the future, and problems requiring imagination, choice, design and deliberate fore thought. For Koontz *et al* (1980), planning involves deciding in advance what to do, how to do it, when to do it and who is to do it. Planning bridges the gap from where we are to where we want to be. These authors acknowledge that although it is difficult to predict the exact future, considering the interference of factors beyond human control even with the best-laid plans, events are left to chance unless such events are planned. They conclude that planning is an intellectually demanding process which requires the conscious determination of courses of action and the basing of decisions on purpose, knowledge and considered estimates.

The definition of planning proffered by Koontz *et al* (1980) is supported by Akinwumiju & Agabi (2008) who present planning as involving the prediction of events ahead of time and the mapping out of strategies to meet such events. For this duo, planning also involves setting goals for the future and deciding in advance the activities and resources that will lead to the realization of such goals. The purpose of planning is to ensure that goals are achieved within the designated time frame and at minimal cost.

Planning, from the above analysis, can be described as an economic activity directed at the management of time and essential resources with the aim of achieving an identified set of objectives. The success or failure of a plan is therefore measured against the time frame within which the plan is set and the resources made available for the implementation of the plan. Planning is therefore a managerial process directed at the optimal utilization of time and resources in the attainment of a set of clearly identified goals. It is an important process in economic development.

## **The Need for Human Resource Planning and Development**

Generally, human resources refer to people, humanity, and society with all its aspirations, needs and capacities. As an economic resource, manpower is a representation of the aggregate skills and attitudes resulting from the culmination of education and training. Such training is usually designed to equip a labour force with the capacity to plan, organize and carry out economic process when properly allocated. It is from this economic perspective that Gbosi (2003) describes manpower as the bulk of human beings with relevant skills, energies, talents, knowledge and attitudes that can be put to the production of goods and services. Here human beings are not described as manpower or human resources except in that they can be put to some economic use as a resource that in turn can be used for wealth generation or for the facilitation of increases in wealth.

The need for manpower planning is clearly expressed in the following excerpt from Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1985:72): Skilled manpower is one of the most crucial inputs of modern economy growth (and to avoid critical shortages or surpluses of manpower). Planners have sought to identify future requirements for skilled manpower and to design the education system so as to produce a labour force with the necessary skill and technical or professional knowledge.

It is clear that every plan is directed at achieving specific objectives. Human resource planning helps to eliminate or minimize problems of human resource wastage that arise from unemployment, over-employment and under-employment, as the case may be. The central objective of human resource planning is to construct a strategy of human resource development that is consistent with a country's broader objectives of social, political and economic development. Human resource planning at the very least includes planning of the formal education system, planning of in-service training and planning of adult education. This should also include an analysis of the structure of incentives and the utilization of human resources as well as surveys on unemployment and under-employment and the development of appropriate measures for their alleviation.

## **Human Resources in Nigeria**

A study carried out by the National Planning Commission (NPC) between 1999 and 2003 indicates that industrial capacity increased from 29% in 1999 to 60% in 2003. Income also grew from 2.8% in the 1990s to 5% between 1999 and 2003 while unemployment fell from 18% in 1999 to 10.8% in 2003 with 3.5 million new jobs created in the period under review (FRN, 2004b). Contrary to NPC's report, is the outcome of a situational analysis carried out by the Human Resources Department of NISER and published in 2005. The situational analysis indicates that unemployment in Nigeria worsened in the last two decades due primarily to an upsurge in the output from tertiary education

institutions and the inelastic labour absorptive capacity of the Nigerian labour market for the services of university graduates. The analysis also revealed that the failure of past federal government employment policies was a result of managerial incapability, effort duplication, unaccountability, low quality training inputs, inadequate funding, policy inconsistency and poor governance, unwieldy scope of programmes, and ineffective targeting of beneficiaries. The report stated clearly that in the achievement of employment-intensive economic growth, all economic players including government, the private sector, workers, individuals and non-governmental organizations must pursue policies and programmes aimed at attaining this objective. It recommends remedial measures including linking education and training with labour market requirements, the promotion of an enterprise culture to induce self reliance, risk-taking and the creation of a national environment that rewards positive effort initiative, self employment, and curriculum re-engineering (NISER, 2005).

Other issues hindering Nigeria's ability to achieve the desired level of human resources development and utilization, especially in the area of science and technology, are highlighted by Oghuvbu and Akpotu (2004), and Undie, Enya *et al* (2004). In a study of factors negatively affecting technical school education in Nigeria, Oghuvbu and Akpotu (2004) identified inadequate funding, poor teacher quality, inadequate facilities and inconsistent government policies as major areas of concern. They conclude that these factors generate negative effects irrespective of whether schools are located in rural or urban areas. With the belief that technical colleges form the basis for technological breakthrough in Nigeria, they recommend a consistent policy on funding and the recruitment of qualified technical science teachers.

In a similar study, Undie, Enya, *et al* (2004) investigated human resource wastage in technical subjects in the Cross River State of southern Nigeria. Their study covered all 167 technical education teachers in the three education zones in the state and examined secondary school staff utilization in woodworking, electronics, auto mechanics, building and technical education. Their analysis showed a high level of staff over-utilization due to staff shortages in these subject areas in both rural and urban schools. Their study revealed a gross inadequacy of teachers to teach technical subjects in secondary schools. This explains the poor quality of teachers in technical colleges as observed by Oghuvbu *et al* (2004). Human resources are over-utilized when skilled personnel are in short supply relative to the existing volume of work. This situation is compounded by the supply of used, substandard or obsolete machines to education institutions, irregular power supply which seems to have worsened in the past decade, the shortage of learning materials and physical insecurities or vulnerabilities which often result in vandalism or the outright theft of existing educational equipment (Adeniyi, 2008).

In a similar study, Apagu and Duhu (2008) examined factors affecting the performance of agricultural technology education students in technical drawing. The results of this study revealed the existence of an inconducive learning environment, inadequate drawing facilities and a shortage of technical equipment and tools. The study involved a sample of 60 undergraduate students randomly selected from electrical/electronics, mechanical construction and agricultural technology education programmes, as well as 10 lecturers from the Department of Education Technology at the Federal University of Technology in the Adamawa State of northern Nigeria. The authors conclude that the poor performance of students in this highly technical area was due to the poor learning environment and the inadequacy of instructional facilities.

It is clear that imbalances in the supply and demand of human and basic resources in technical education (as illustrated by the above reviewed studies) negatively impacts on the ability of the NMB to achieve the much desired human resource production ratio of 60:40 in favour of science and technology. There is little wonder then that, in spite of the improvement in manpower utilization between 1999 and 2003 as indicated by the NPC study, double digit unemployment persists in Nigeria. This suggests a considerable gap between human resource planning and human resource plan implementation. National human resource supply and demand imbalances may very well be as result of this gap between planning and plan implementation. Human resource planning is therefore incomplete without the establishment of adequate modalities and the provision of relevant resources to ensure effective plan implementation and the regular review of planned activities.

### **Human Resource Planning Techniques**

Human resource planning involves the use of forecasting techniques to predict future work force requirements. The forecasting techniques used include the employers' opinion method (EOM), incremental labour out-put ratios (ILOR), density ratio method (DRM), international comparisons method (ICM), and Parne's Mediterranean regional project method (MRPM).

The employer's opinion method (EOM) is the most commonly used technique by both developed and developing countries. This method entails obtaining information directly from all employers on the type and number of employees they will require in the near future. An aggregate of all employers minus estimated deaths and retirements over the specified period will produce a forecast of the increase in effective demand for labour by the target year. This method is suitable for short term planning (less than three years) but suffers from the deficiency of being based on guess work.

ILOR are concerned with a particular type of human resource in an occupational category and industrial output or national income. They involve extrapolating, for instance, further demand for teachers from a linear regression of the number of teachers on national income in a specific period. ILOR are used for long term planning (twenty years and beyond). They can only be used in countries that have time series on output per man cross classified by sector, occupation and educational qualification. Blaug (1974) describes this method as being unsuitable for short term planning, greatly unreliable and unsuitable in the absence of time series.

The DRM, also known as the "ratio of saturation," involves estimating fractions of qualified manpower in the labour force of an economic sector and then applying this fraction to the demographic forecasts of the total labour force in various industrial sectors. It is used for long term planning that ranges from ten to fifteen years. The alternative to the DRM, according to Blaug, is to estimate stable density ratios between different types of work force, for instance, the ratio of scientists to engineers or engineers to technicians so that a forecast of one leads to that of the other. This method also requires the use of time series.

The ICM involves using the results of human resource planning activities in one country as a basis for forecasting the human resource requirements of another country with similar needs. Blaug (1974) disapproves of this technique because no two countries have exactly the same economic needs, work force requirements or educational characteristics.

The MRPM was developed as a result of "the effort to develop educational plans for Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey within a common conceptual frame work" (Blaug, 1970). It is the most generally used technique in determining the demand for educated manpower based on the achievement of a set of predetermined gross national production (GNP) targets. The MRPM involves the multiplication of scalar by:

1. A row of vector fractions of GNP origination in different industries
2. A column vector of labour-output coefficients
3. An industry-occupation matrix
4. An occupation-education matrix.

Ahmed and Blaug (1973), Psacharopoulos (1984), and Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1985) argue that although the idea of predicting a country's future manpower requirements with forecasts and using such forecasts as the basis for planning a country's scale of education is appealing, the reliability of past forecasts are questionable. According to them, the controversy lies in the desirability of attempts at work force forecasting and the validity of the notion of work force requirement or need. They argue that even though advocates of manpower forecasting claim that the purpose of such forecasting is to ensure that the right combination of skills are produced by education systems, the flexibility of the labour market makes the idea of fixed manpower requirement meaningless. They recommend an approach to work force analysis that involves a constant feedback, and regular monitoring of information derived from rate-of-returns estimates, and analysis of wage and salary data. In addition to this, labour market trends should be analyzed. The combination of this approach with a relevant work force forecasting technique is also considered very important.

### **Factors Inhibiting Human Resource Planning**

Effective planning can be hampered by a lack of commitment, the confusion of planning studies with plans, a tendency to under-estimate the importance of planning premises, failure to see the scope of planning, excessive reliance on experience, lack of control and insufficient information (Koontz et al, 1980). These and other inhibiting factors including the politicization of manpower planning efforts and the dearth of professionally trained manpower planners have been identified as major challenges in the achievement of effectiveness in manpower planning (Agabi, 1999). Insufficient and unreliable demographic data and poor funding also constitute major hindrances (Nelson-Twakor, 2005). According to Nigeria's 1991-93 National Rolling Plan, inadequate financial provisions and shortages of

qualified planning staff have consistently ranked among the greatest impediments. Consequently in some cases, well designed projects have been abandoned for lack of funds (FRN, 1992).

Variations between planning contexts and implementation contexts can also result in the failure of a plan. Some plans which are plausible at a particular time may be utterly impracticable or unmanageable in different situations, especially if the political, social, cultural and economic contexts are irrelevant to the new situation (Adesina, 1990). The socio-politically and economic environment in which the planner works therefore has a direct impact on the success or failure of any plan. This lends credence to the notion that manpower requirement estimates should not be fixed, and should vary with labour market trends and feedback from rate-of-returns estimates.

### **Organizational structure of the NMB**

The NMB was a corporate parastatal under the National Planning Commission. It was headed by a chairman with the assistance of an Executive Secretary and involved an internal audit (see figure 1.0). The diagram also shows that the NMB had three main departments each of which is headed by a Director. They are:

- ❖ Manpower development and utilization;
- ❖ Personnel management, finance and supplies;
- ❖ Manpower coordination, research and statistics.

The first department had two units, namely the Education and Training unit and the Population, Employment and Productivity unit. Each unit was headed by a Deputy Director. The Education and Training unit was further subdivided into two administrative offices consisting of Formal Education and Training and Informal Education and Training. Each administrative office was headed by an Assistant Director (AD). The Formal Education and Training section managed training at the tertiary and sub-tertiary levels while the Informal Education and Training section was concerned with informal education and training at both general and special levels of education.

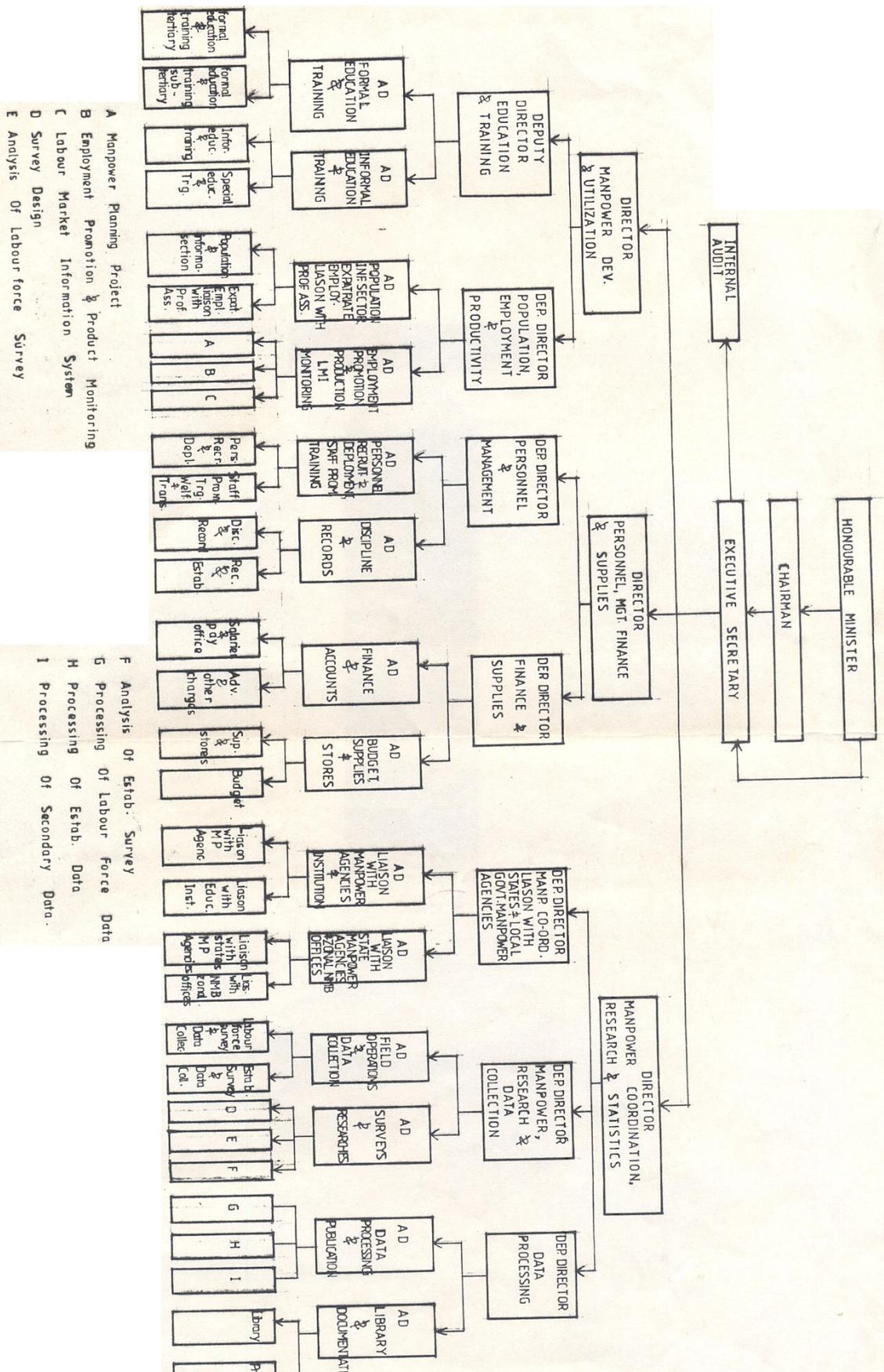
The Population, Employment and Productivity unit as indicated in Figure 1.0 also had two subsections, the population, information and expatriate employment section, which liaises with professional associations, and the employment, promotion and labour market information (LMI) monitoring section. This latter section was concerned with manpower planning projects, employment, promotion and productivity monitoring, as well as the Labour Market Information system. Each of the two subsections under the Population, Employment and Productivity unit was headed by an Assistant Director (AD).

Figure 1.0 also shows that the Department of Personnel, Management, Finance and Supplies was also comprised of two units headed by Deputy Directors. The first unit addressed issues relating to personnel and management, while the second was concerned with matters relating to finance and supplies. The personnel and management unit had two subdivisions headed by ADs: the personnel recruitment and deployment, staff promotion and training section, and the discipline and records section. The former was in charge of personnel recruitment and deployment as well as staff promotion, training, welfare and transfer, while the later was responsible for the maintenance of discipline and records. The Finance and Supplies unit also had two subsections, the finance and accounts section and the budget, supplies and stores section. Each was headed by an AD. The former was concerned with salaries, pay offices, advances and other charges, while the later was concerned with supplies, stores and budget.

The third department, Manpower Coordination, Research and Statistics, has three units: Manpower Coordination (in liaison with states and local government agencies), Manpower Research and Data Collection, and Data Processing. Each is headed by a Deputy Director. The Manpower Coordination unit was comprised of two sections; one liaised with Manpower Agencies and Institutions, while the other liaised with State Manpower Agencies and Zonal Offices of the NMB. Both sections were headed by an AD. The first section had two offices. The first office worked in liaison with Manpower Agencies while the second office worked in liaison with Educational Institutions. The second section also had two offices, one of which worked in liaison with State Manpower Agencies, while the other worked with NMB zonal offices.

Figure 1.0 show that the Manpower Research and Data Collection unit was subdivided into two sections consisting of the Field Operations and Data Collection section and the Surveys and Research section, each headed by an AD. The Field Operations and Data Collection section had two offices, the office of the labour force survey and data collection and the office of the establishment survey and data collection. The surveys and research section had three offices lettered D, E, and F. As shown in Figure 1.0, D was in charge of survey design, E was responsible for the analysis of the labour force survey and F took care of the analysis of the establishment survey.

Figure 1.0: Organizational Structure of the National Manpower Board (NMB)



- A Manpower Planning Project
- B Employment Promotion & Product Monitoring
- C Labour Market Information System
- D Survey Design
- E Analysis Of Labour force Survey

- F Analysis Of Estab. Survey
- G Processing Of Labour Force Data
- H Processing Of Estab. Data
- I Processing Of Secondary Data.

SOURCE: NATIONAL MANPOWER BOARD, LAGOS.

The Data Processing unit had two sections: the data processing and publication section and the library and documentation section, each headed by an AD. The data processing and publication section had three offices lettered G, H and I. G was responsible for processing labour force data, H was responsible for processing establishment data and I took care of processing secondary data.

### **Human resource planning activities of the NMB**

The result of the data analysis shows that the human resource planning activities carried out by the NMB can be grouped into five main categories. The first of these categories includes collecting, collating and analyzing educational data at all levels. It also includes the organization and analysis of data on employment, the labour force and levels of unemployment in the Nigerian economy. This was done to determine the state of educational growth and development and the state of work force development. The second major human resource planning activity revealed by the study is the estimation of the nation's work force stock and requirements. This was done for all occupations and sectors through forecasts and projections. Thirdly, the NMB again through forecasts and projections, offered regular policy inputs and advised government on the formulation of appropriate human resources development policies and employment issues. The fourth activity involved the coordination of human resource planning activities as well as conducting research on human resource and employment issues. Finally, the NMB checked on the expatriate quota positions of private and public companies on a regular basis.

### **The scope of NMB's human resource planning activities**

In terms of the scope of the NMB's human resource planning activities, this study revealed the following:

- (a) The NMB liaised closely with the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) to generate educational statistics used in monitoring human resource trends and patterns at the different levels of Nigeria's educational system. The FME, as a member of the governing council of the NMB, collaborated with the Board in the exchange of data and in the formulation of education related policies.
- (b) As a result of the symbiotic relationship between the NMB and tertiary education commissions like the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), the NMB assisted in the formulation of the programmes and policies of these parastatals. The NMB also coordinated their activities and those of other government human resource development agencies such as the National Directorate for Employment (NDE), the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), the Centre for Management Development (CMD) and the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) through seminars, meetings and the articulation of their programmes in the Rolling Plans.
- (c) The NMB was closely associated with the Ministry of Labour and Productivity, and its parastatals (such as labour exchange offices, and the professional and executive registry) and worked to obtain relevant data for monitoring labour productivity, labour utilization and employment promotion issues.
- (d) The Ministry of Economic and National Planning, also known as the National Planning Commission, was the Supervising Ministry of the NMB. As a subsidiary of the Commission, the NMB prepared the manpower section of the National Development Plans.
- (e) The activities of the NMB cut across all states of the federation in both public and private sectors. All skills and professional levels in all occupations were monitored by the NMB.
- (f) Finally, the study revealed that with its headquarters in Lagos, the NMB planned to establish four zonal offices in Owerri, Bauchi, Minna and Akure. Each state of the federation was encouraged to set up a human resource planning committee. The zonal offices were to serve as a link between the NMB and local

governments to ensure that all establishments in both public and private sectors were covered in field surveys.

### **Techniques Adopted by the NMB in Human Resource Planning**

This study reveals that the NMB used the following techniques in establishing the human resource requirements in each sector:

- (a) Direct approach to employers in each sector: the information generated through this approach was collated and analyzed to ascertain the rate of employment.
- (b) Normative approach: the desirable human resource ratio was determined and applied on current stock to estimate future human resource requirements in each occupation or sector.

This study also shows that apart from field operations, where junior enumerators were used to administer questionnaires, other activities including the collation, analysis and presentation of information were carried out by high and middle level staff of the NMB.

### **Problems that inhibited the human resource planning activities of the NMB**

The following were some of the central problems that inhibited the human resource planning activities of the NMB. They are listed in order of consequence as revealed by this study:

- (a) Lack of highly disaggregated, comprehensive and reliable data for human resource planning and forecasting.
- (b) Lack of effective human resource planning machinery at state and local levels. States were yet to set up human resource committees and units as required by the NMB
- (c) Difficulties in the coordination of human resource planning activities amongst human resource planning agencies and educational institutions due to inadequate funding. This ineffective coordination resulted in the duplication of efforts and overlapping programmes and policies of the agencies and institutions.
- (d) Shortage of work facilities, equipment and well-trained, highly-motivated human resource planners required for effective performance.

This study also reveals that even though the NMB was first established in 1962, it was dissolved in 1984 following a military intervention in politics. It was fully reconstituted with the enabling decree 18 of May 1991 and inaugurated on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October, 1992. In spite of these political changes, the operational efficiency of the Board remained adversely affected by the above identified challenges.

### **Summary of findings**

The results of this study show that the NMB was a corporate body under the National Planning Commission and was chaired by a part-time chairman. Its operational activities were coordinated by an executive secretary. It had three major departments that carried out the tasks of work force development and utilization; work force coordination, research and statistics; and personnel management, finance and supplies. The departments were divided into units which were further divided into sections and finally into offices. The departments were headed by Deputy Directors who coordinated the operational activities of the NMB. The NMB had five major categories of activities:

- (1) Collection, collation and analysis of data on education at all levels; analysis and organization of data on employment, labour force and unemployment levels in the Nigerian economy.
- (2) Estimating Nigeria's manpower stock and requirements in all sectors.
- (3) Providing advisory services to the government on human resource development and employment issues.
- (4) Coordinating manpower planning activities, research and studies on human resources and employment.

- (5) Regularly monitoring the expatriate quota positions of private and public companies.

The human resource planning activities of the NMB consisted of human resource development at different levels in the Nigerian education system, formulation of education policies in liaison with the Federal Ministry of Education, coordinating the activities of human resource development agencies such as NDE, ITD, ASCON, NUC, NCCE, and NBTE among others. The Board worked closely with the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity to monitor the Ministry's area of concern and to promote employment in all skills and professional levels, in all occupations within the federation. In human resource forecasting, the Board made use of the Employers' Opinion Method and Normative Density Ratios in its yearly forecasts.

Finally, this study reveals that staff shortages, a dearth of statistical data, inconsistent government policies on human resource planning activities, as well as inadequate funding were the major problems that challenged effective human resource planning in Nigeria.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the NMB was structured into three major departments, with a total of seven sub-departments, each of which had two units for administrative convenience. This arrangement conforms to the federal government specifications for the Board (Federal Government Gazette No. 22, Volume 78 of 1991). As constituent parts of the board, the departments and units performed specific functions. As with most administrative structures, this arrangement made room for the delegation of functions and the ensured coordination of activities.

As mentioned in the presentation of findings, the NMB was responsible for collecting, collating and analysing data on all levels of the education system and employment related issues in all sectors of the national economy. Based on these activities, the Board estimated Nigeria's human resources stock and requirements in all sectors, and advised the government on the same. It also monitored the expatriate quota of private and public companies in the country. These activities ensured the constant monitoring of the nation's human resource development and utilization in all fields so as to channel its economic growth and development towards desired ends. These activities also ensured that the country's economic sectors were not unduly dominated by foreign human resources, while at the same time enabling the Board to make projections on future human resource requirements in Nigeria.

This study also shows that the NMB worked closely with the Federal Ministry of Education, as well as the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity. The Board also monitored the activities of all human resource development agencies in Nigeria including the NDE, ASCON, NUC and NBTE among others. This scope of activities enabled the Board to formulate human resource development and utilization policies. It also ensured optimum implementation of such policies. This conforms to the federal government's specifications for the Board (FGN, 1991).

The NMB adopted the Employers' Opinion Method and the normative approach in its yearly manpower forecasting. The Employers' Opinion Method is considered suitable for short-term planning as was practiced by the Board, but Blaug (1970) considers it seriously deficient because of the high risk of relying on guesswork. Although Psacharopoulos *et al* disapprove of the use of forecasts to predict a country's future manpower requirements, because the reliability of past forecasts have been questioned by renowned economists on grounds of validity, forecasts even on a short-term basis constitute a necessary foundation for human resources planning and development.

Staff shortages, a dearth of statistical data, inadequate funds, politicized human resources planning activities and inconsistency in government policies were the major challenges faced by the NMB in its human resources planning efforts. This is in line with the observations of Adesina (1990) and Agabi (1999). These challenges were further compounded by the inadequacy of trained teachers in vital subject areas and the shortage of basic instructional facilities in schools as observed by Undie *et al.* (2004), Akpotu *et al.* (2004), Adeniyi (2008) and Ololube (2009). In essence, meaningful and effective human resources planning needs to be backed by an adequate number of personnel with relevant training. It also needs to be sufficiently funded, depoliticized and backed by consistent government policies on human resources planning. The same support also needs to be extended to all education institutions at all levels because they constitute the primary processing ground for the next generation of skilled human resources in the desired combinations or ratio.

## CONCLUSION

Human resource planning practices in Nigeria, as carried out by the NMB, were not very effective in realizing the nation's human resource planning objectives. This was largely due to inadequate funding, a shortage of qualified staff in human resource planning offices, insufficient data on manpower related issues (arising mostly from the human resource planning techniques adopted by the NMB) and the level of political awareness in the country. The NMB engaged in short-term planning using the Employers' Opinion Method of forecasting future human resource requirements. For a country as big and vastly populated as Nigeria, this method would require a large number of skilled personnel and adequate financial support both of which the Board lacked and the inadequacy of which rendered the forecasting technique grossly ineffective. This is also in consideration of the fact that the NMB was expected to cover all economic sectors in all parts of the country.

The National Manpower Board (NMB) did develop an adequate structural arrangement. The Board also carried out its functions in accordance with the specifications of Decree No. 18 that made it a statutory body (FRN, 1991). It was rendered ineffective in the performance of its statutory duties by poor funding, in particular, and inadequate resource support, in general. Its problems were compounded by policy inconsistency on the part of the federal government which tossed it about from 1962, when it was first established, until it was rendered moribund by its 2006 'merger' with the Nigeria Institute of Social and Economic Research. This merger, that did not include the expansion of NISER's functions to reflect the absorption of the functions of the NMB, represents a major challenge in human resource planning and development in Nigeria.

Operational effectiveness and efficiency will be difficult to achieve in any human organization that depends on regular, adequate funding and information from other organizations/institutions if the required amount of funds and relevant information are not provided on time and in the right measure.

This study provides background information on the NMB for the general public. It reveals the challenges faced by the NMB in the course of performing its statutory functions. The causes of these challenges are exposed and suggestions aimed at the resolution of such problems are proffered.

The results of this study will be very useful in the field of educational management as a preparation guide for prospective planners and administrators as this study reveals the problems that inhibit educational planning in Nigeria. This information is necessary when designing appropriate strategies that will facilitate the reduction and possible elimination of manpower problems in Nigeria.

## Recommendations

NISER has operated in Nigeria since 1960 and has survived the whims and caprices of various political dispensations. With two liaison offices in Lagos and Abuja, and six zonal offices in Akure, Bauchi, Enugu, Minna, Port Harcourt and Sokoto, it is clearly functioning on stronger ground than did the NMB. However, the enormous weight of national human resource planning and development, placed on it through its merger with the NMB, suggests that six zonal offices are not enough if the right information is to be collected in the right volume. This study therefore recommends as follows;

1. NISER should receive greater financial allocations than it did before the merger to enable it to establish additional zonal offices. This increase in funding should be reflective of inflationary trends in the country.
2. NISER should have at least one zonal office in every state to enable it to adequately liaise with local agencies and institutions. This will help it to generate the information needed to guide its human resource activities. Information is power and education without the pertinent information is a waste of both time and energy.
3. NISER should publish its research findings on human resource development and utilization in succinct and affordable volumes. Free copies of such publications should be placed in school libraries, especially at secondary and tertiary levels of education. This will expose learners and teachers to information on areas of national interest in human resource development. It will also help to direct research and instructional interest to the desired areas of national human resource development and ultimately help to bridge the gap between the information desired and the information available.

## Suggestions for further research

This study focused primarily on the activities and challenges of the National Manpower Board with the purpose of guiding the present situation towards a better future in human resource development and utilization. This path to a better future now rests on the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research. A comprehensive study of the activities and challenges of NISER in human resource development and utilization is hereby suggested. There is also a need to include NISER's field workers in the sample of potential respondents. Their field experience will help to enrich the results of such study.

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