Nigeria’s Public Service Reform Process: Human Resource Issues

By M J Balogun

2003
## Contents Table

1. Abstract ................................................................. 3

2. Human Resources and National Development .................. 4


5. Long-Term Measures ................................................. 16
1. Abstract

That Nigeria is going through a phase of rapid transition is beyond doubt. Variability in any case, is a constant feature of human societies. There was a time not too far in the past when the Nigerian economy was based on agriculture. Then for a few fleeting years, petroleum resources transformed the outward appearance of the economy. In recent years, oil wealth has proved to be so fickle and elusive a partner in development that frantic efforts have been, and are being, made to search for alternative sources of wealth.

Looking at the vicissitudes in the life of a nation, as we have just done in the case of Nigeria, it is tempting then to suggest that the single determinant of a nation’s growth is the quantum of resources it possesses. To put it in another language, a nation waxes or wanes depending on its natural resource endowment. If this hypothesis is not totally false, it is also not exactly true. The experience of the last forty or so years has demonstrated that one factor that has proved decisive in Africa’s development effort is the caliber of the available human resource. It is this factor, rather than any other, that has pushed the continent farther on the path of dependence, recession and economic decay. It is the only energy source that has the potential of igniting the engine of recovery and growth. If we are keen on a serious debate, we may even advance the proposition that of all the variables crucial to an understanding of the development process, the human resource stands out as an independent variable. It is the variable that operates on, and transforms, other variables to produce a given development scenario.

If the human resource is presumed to be so important, what then is its true nature, and in what ways can we support its development and growth? As argued in this paper, human resource is more than the complements of staff required to implement a specific policy or programme. It is even more than the “training” and “development” of manpower. We are getting close to the true character of human resource when, in addition to the preceding components, we look at the morale and motivation of the work force, the tactics and strategies adopted in deploying the workforce on agreed assignments, as well as the internal (management) and the external (socio-cultural) influences operating on the behaviour of employees.

Much as one would like to be “practical” and down-to-earth, the preceding attempt to define the scope of human resource management raises a serious but unavoidable conceptual problem. We began with the a priori assumption that the human resource is strategic. We even went to argue that the sub-optimal behaviour of this strategic resource is the fortes et origo of Africa’s troubles. It is
on the basis of its importance that we classified it as an independent variable. But then, the definition of the variable leads us to believe that its behaviour is also subject to the behaviour of other variables – notably, the methods and policies affecting the recruitment, training, motivation, deployment and utilization of personnel. Thus, within the twinkle of an eye, an independent variable has become very much dependent. This raises the question, how come?

The failure to solve the conceptual puzzle in human resource management is, in fact, the bane of previous efforts at devising practical and reliable strategies aimed at deriving optimum benefits from the allocation of this vital resource. To be specific, our failure to distinguish the point in time when human resource is considered strategic enough to “stand by itself” from that when it is so devalued that it becomes a “captive” of other variables (administrative, political, cultural, etc.) explains the inconsistency and the double-talk on the importance of human resources in national development efforts.

If we are able to establish the strategic nature of the human resource and, at the same time, identify the factors that militate against its optimum allocation, what policy measures can we propose to rectify any perceived anomalies? In specific terms, what actions can we urge employing authorities to take to derive maximum benefits from the monies and efforts which they invest on recruitment, training and manpower development as well as on the “sanitization” of the management environment against possible outbreaks of productivity-resisting diseases (notably, corrupt practices, mismanagement of diversity, sagging morale, bad time-keeping, willful elongation of procedures, and brain-drain).

In proposing a radical review of human resource development and utilization policy in Nigeria, this paper begins by discussing the role of human resources in the development process. It then proceeds to examine factors within the formal organization, and in the external environment, which determine the effective allocation of this vital resource. The third part of the paper focuses on short- and medium-term policy measures, while the fourth outlines a long-term plan aimed at countering the negative effects of the external environment.

2. Human Resources and National Development

The development of any nation depends to a very large extent on the caliber, organization and motivation of its human resources. In the specific case of Nigeria where diversity exerts tremendous influence on politics and administration, the capacity to increase the benefits and reduce the costs of this diversity constitutes a human resource management challenge of epic proportion.
During the colonial period, Nigeria’s economy was based on primary production – more specifically, on the production of primary commodities and raw materials for the export market. Although the population was relatively small, the country’s contribution to world trade in specific commodities was impressive. For example, in 1938, Nigeria’s population was less than 30 million, and even up to 1955 the figure could not have been higher than 35 million. Yet, within this period, 1938-55, when there were no more than 35 million Nigerians, the country recorded constant increases in the production of palm kernel, palm-oil and groundnuts, and was a major force to reckon with in the international exchange of the commodities. Tables 1, 2 and 3 depict Nigeria’s share of the world trade in palm kernels, palm-oil, and groundnuts, between 1938 and 1955.

Table 1: NIGERIA’S PALM-KERNELS EXPORT AS % OF WORLD TOTAL, 1938 – 1955

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1947</th>
<th>1949</th>
<th>1955</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tons exported (‘000)</td>
<td>312.0</td>
<td>316.0</td>
<td>397.0</td>
<td>433.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value (£ million)</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total world export of palm-kernel</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2: NIGERIA’S PALM-OIL EXPORT AS % OF WORLD TOTAL, 1938-1955

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1947</th>
<th>1949</th>
<th>1955</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tons exported (‘000)</td>
<td>110.0</td>
<td>121.0</td>
<td>159.0</td>
<td>182.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value (£ million)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total world trade in palm-oil</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Buchanan and Pugh
Table 3: NIGERIA’S GROUNDNUT EXPORTS AS % OF WORLD TOTAL, 1938-1955

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1947</th>
<th>1949</th>
<th>1955</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tons exported ('000)</td>
<td>180.0</td>
<td>250.0</td>
<td>355.0</td>
<td>528.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value (£ million)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total world trade in groundnuts</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Buchanan and Pugh

In explaining the vast contributions of a thinly populated Nigeria to world trade in primary commodities, we cannot but acknowledge nature’s bounty in the form of fertile soil, favourable weather and constantly good harvests. But over and above these natural advantages, the colonial administrators consciously applied the then rare skill of managing people and ensuring that they (the mass of the people) produced the goods and services required for the sustenance of the colonial economy. Indeed, the palm trees could have yielded the kernels without being cultivated, but the seeds and the oil would have gone to waste if plans had not been made to collect them for further processing. Groundnut cakes and oil would have gone to waste if plans had not been made to collect them for further processing. Groundnut cakes would not materialize unless the seeds were planted, the farms properly tended, and the crops harvested at the right time and transported to the collection depots or oil mills.

In realization of the Biblical warning that after his transgression in Heaven, Adam would have to toil and sweat before he could have his daily bread, the colonial authorities devised an ingenious plan of extracting as much work as possible from the colonized people. First, they instituted the system of labour contract – a system which no less a personality than Lugard regarded as more efficient than slavery. Secondly, the colonial power introduced the system of direct taxation, and insisted that the tax must be paid in a recognized and legally sanctioned currency. Since the African could not resort to trade by barter in discharging his tax obligations, he now had two options – to look for wage labour (e.g. in the coal mines or in construction projects) or to produce more cash crops (cotton, cocoa, groundnuts, hides and skins). Thirdly, to encourage increased agricultural production and facilitate the movement of commodities, the colonial regime (particularly between 1906 and 1936) gave priority to the development of infrastructural facilities such as roads, railway, ports and harbours, and internal communication services. In case the facilities proved inadequate as an incentive to production, the colonial administration encouraged the importation of European...
manufactured goods that had to be paid for with income generated from formal or informal employment. It was in fact this craving for prestigious European goods (ranging from the Raleigh bicycle to the Ford Motor Car) which served as the most powerful inducement to work. As we are likely to discover later, it was this same craving for imported manufactured items which proved detrimental to the development of self-reliance, and for that reason, of indigenous technical know-how.

In any case, the strategy adopted by the colonial regime did achieve its basic objective – i.e. the deployment of local human resources in such a way that primary commodities and essential raw materials were produced as and when required. The same strategy made possible the construction of infrastructural facilities and the extraction and exploitation of mineral resources such as coal and tin ore. At the very least, therefore, the colonial administration’s deployment of human resources did produce operatives, if not managers.

After the attainment of independence, and, particularly, towards the latter part of the 1960s, crude oil steadily emerged as a vital economic asset. Although the civil war (1967-70) prevented a full-scale exploitation of Nigeria’s petroleum resources, the cessation of hostilities in 1970 witnessed a sharp increase in oil revenue. This had the effect of transforming the shape and size of the economy. In contrast to the 1960s when the growth rate seldom exceeded 4 per cent per annum, the period 1970 to 1977 saw the economy grow at the rate of between 9.6 and 30.6 per cent.

While the external appearance of the economy conveyed an impression of growth, decay was gradually creeping in. in fact, a number of danger signals could be detected even at the height of the oil boom. First, what passed for growth was nothing more than the beguiling influence of what was essentially a wasting asset. Whereas oil exports continued to rise in volume and value, traditional exports – especially primary commodity exports - either stagnated or declined. In other words, the economy “grew” in the 1970s not because labour and other factor inputs were more productively deployed than before, but because nature was, in a manner of speaking, bestowing increasing resources on Nigeria. If we are looking for further proof of this statement, we may wish to compare the rate of population growth with per caput agricultural production. In the 1970s, the population grew at the rate of over 3 per cent per annum, while per capital agricultural production was lower than 2 per cent. Also, while the total population in the 70s approached 75 million, (more than twice what it was in 1955) Nigeria had by then lost the commanding lead which it possessed in the 1950s in the production and export of certain primary commodities. In a nutshell,
the more people there were, the less productive Nigeria’s food and agriculture sector tended to become.

If that is curious, then we need to look at another concurrent “development” in the 1970s – that is, the second danger signal which ought to have been promptly heeded. While the country earned an increasing amount of revenue from petroleum exports, the balance on the current account was apt to tilt towards the negative rather than the positive side. In 1970/71, current account deficit amounted to N500 million; in 1971/72, N229 million; in 1972/73, N315 million; and in 1976/77, N219.9 million. Only in 1975/76 was a surplus of N172.6 million recorded. The deficits are by themselves not disastrous for the economy – especially, if the economy had an in-built mechanism for transforming the goods financed under the deficits into productive assets. In the case of Nigeria, the deficits simply reflected an uncontrollable propensity to import capital goods, raw materials, and consumer items, without a clear programme for the development of indigenous capacity in the areas.

We need to make necessary allowance for the fact that the early 1970s was a period when Nigeria was faced with a huge challenge in the areas of national reconciliation, reconstruction, and rehabilitation. Government had no choice but to earmark large sums for these urgent tasks. We must also recall that the Government did make a serious attempt to promote self-reliance. As a matter of fact, a sizeable proportion of the oil revenue went into financing a comprehensive indigenous enterprises promotion (otherwise known as the “indigenisation”) policy. The disappointing response of the new (indigenous) entrepreneurs was the problem. Instead of accepting the challenge by initiating new managerial and technical processes, some of the new “owners” of enterprises were either content to operate as fronts for aliens or continued to rely on the industrialized economies for leadership in management and technology. Even industrial raw materials had to be imported with the result that if foreign exchange became scarce the factories had to close down or to operate at reduced capacity.

The third danger signal noticeable in the 1970s was the emerging culture of replacement and the abandonment of the repair and maintenance culture. While the replacement of unserviceable equipment or mechanically faulty motor vehicles saves the owner a lot of headache, it is wasteful in terms of the additional financial outlays involved, and more especially, in terms of the loss of the training opportunity which repairs and maintenance would have offered. In effect, the replacement culture which evolved with the oil boom of the 1970s aggravated Nigeria’s technological dependence situation and did an incalculable harm to the development and utilization of the nation’s stock of human resources.
There are reasons to believe that attitudes are changing. After the oil shock of 1982 and the series of belt-tightening measures which accompanied it, it became clear that even metal scraps and “carcasses” of motor vehicles could be put to good use. At any rate, with the shortage of foreign exchange, it is becoming increasingly difficult to import new machinery and equipment or obtain spare parts for existing ones. Necessity, they say, is the mother of invention. In Nigeria, necessity has led mechanical workshops to experiment with the idea of “cannibalising” one equipment to “save” another.

However, the earlier practice of waiting for, or merely reacting to, external leadership in science and technology has cost Nigeria very dearly. It resulted in financial resource leakage, and aborted whatever plans there might have been to promote indigenous technological development. It was like losing the chance of a lifetime.

I must stress that by focusing on what might have been, I do not wish to create the impression that Nigeria’s current socio-economic crisis arose out of the fact that within the period of oil boom, the Nigerians stopped working. If anything, the rush to make a quick Naira led many a Nigerian to sleep less and toil more. However, and from the point of view of optimum allocation of effort, we may argue that a disproportionate amount of time was spent on pursuits whose impact on the long-term health of the economy was questionable. And practically every Nigerian has a share of the blame. The political leaders did not map out a clear-cut policy on self-reliance and on indigenous technological development.

The senior managers, administrators and professional personnel were either too impotent to influence policy in the direction of self-reliance, or they saw no need to tamper with what was essentially a neo-colonial (and dependent) socio-economic arrangement. Their subordinates in the executive and technical cadres could not be expected to think differently. Theirs, in any case, was to implement laid down policy, avoid “mistakes”, and generally steer clear of trouble. The clerical and operational staff might be interested in change, but that change must have direct and immediate impact on their limited earnings. As all the classes have lately discovered, the wrong channeling of energies has reversed the gains of yester-years, and substituted economic decline for economic growth. The development strategy which evolved over the years, and the implementation of the strategy, has placed the economy in a situation of dependence. In such a situation, the human resource is merely a follower rather than an initiator of technology. The consequence is obvious. The leaders decide the fate of the followers. For instance, if factories in the industrialized economies turn back
Nigeria’s cotton, cocoa and other commodities, the only option available to Nigeria (in the absence of alternative uses) is to step down the production of the commodities. In fact, during the second world war when the British diverted resources to the war effort, cocoa farmers (now knowing what to do with the harvest on their hands) set their plantations on fire!

No doubt, therefore, human resources play a crucial role in national development. Yet, as the next section shows, policies governing the development and utilization of the resources might fail to grapple with the major problems in human resource management.


A number of factors tend to influence the optimum allocation of human resources. Among them are the policies relating to recruitment, training, employment conditions, and the deployment of personnel. Equally important are the prevailing management environment, socio-economic conditions, and the traditional work culture. Let us take this one by one.

Recruitment Policies and Practices

The contribution of the human resource is likely to be determined largely by the caliber of people recruited into an organization. In most cases, employers focus on the qualifications and experience of candidates being considered for vacant positions. While this is *prima facie* useful, it does not necessarily follow that the credentials make the employee. Even when we discount the possibility of forgeries and certificate racketeering, academic training by itself might not adequately prepare a person for a job. The same thing applies in the case of experience which might neither be “cognate” nor “relevant”. In fact, instead of focusing mainly on educational qualifications and experience, recruiting bodies would need to go further and probe deep into the aptitudes, attitudes, personal character of candidates for certain jobs. Certainly, jobs in the security and law enforcement agencies, financial institutions, customs, immigration and the postal service would, in view of the public attention they have attracted, benefit from a professional approach to staff selection.

The need for federal character in the recruitment of public personnel has generated a lot of controversy in recent years. There is nothing wrong with the principle. It is only the application that we have to watch. Federal character, as I once argued, mean looking far and wide for the *best* and the *most* competent.
However, in practice, the principle may be subverted, especially if it is interpreted as a crude form of ethnic balancing. In a diverse society like Nigeria, the public service cannot evade the issue of representation. When an agency is dominated by individuals from one ethnic group, the un-represented groups are likely to cry foul, and for good reasons too. It is only when the diversity of a nation is properly reflected (or “mainstreamed) in decision-making structures that the fairness of decisions could be constantly tested.

It goes without saying that the issue of diversity does not end with recruitment. It extends to the day-to-day management of inter-personal and inter-group relations in public agencies. It is therefore imperative that senior managers be exposed to the appropriate sensitivity training so that the networks of relations would be properly and adequately managed.

**Training and Manpower Development**

Closely related to the problem of recruitment is, therefore, that of training and manpower development. Presumably, those to be recruited would first have to be trained. It was in realization of the importance of pre-entry training that priority was attached to the establishment of primary, secondary, vocational, and technical schools, and universities. In 1970, there were 3,515,820 primary, 310,054 secondary, vocational, and technical schools in Nigeria. By 1978, the number had increased to 11,410,360; 1,223,200 and 43,088 respectively. And while there were only 5 universities in 1962, Nigeria has no less than 21 today. Therefore, at least, in terms of the basic, pre-entry training, candidates for different classes of jobs seem to be well catered for.

The problem again lies in the gap which exists between, on the one hand, the formal academic training offered by the schools and the universities, and, on the other, the practical requirements of the jobs. No where is this gap as wide as in the technical/vocational area. A secondary school graduate can, with little preparation, move straight to an office and carry out basic clerical or book-keeping functions. With additional training, he/she would be ready to perform secretarial and ICT-related duties. However, for the tasks of electrical wiring, air-conditioning and refrigeration, maintenance of electronic and mechanical equipment, even attendance at the technical and vocational schools may be considered an inadequate preparation. The reason for this is that the technical schools have concentrated on text-book solutions, and distanced themselves from the world of work. What was said earlier on about dependence on externally developed technology applies here. Unless and until the polytechnical institutions start to dismantle complicated equipment and fabricate spares, their contribution
to human resource development would remain minimal. As for the universities, they would need the support of the government and the private sector in aligning their academic research with the development needs of the country.

We have so far focused on the pre-experience training institutions. The challenge facing the post-experience ones is equally daunting. The 1970’s witnessed the establishment of a few of them, in addition to those which had existed before and immediately after independence. For example, the Centre for Management Development (CMD), the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) came into being at about the same time (1972/73). NIPSS was established in 1978. I understand that plans for the establishment of a new Civil Service College are at advanced stage, although I am yet to come across a convincing argument for this latest proposal.

Prior to the establishment of these institutions (in fact, as far back as 1956) an Institute of Administration had been set up in Zaria to organize training programmes for senior and intermediate level personnel of government and the native authorities in the North. When the universities of Ife, Lagos and Nigeria came into being in 1962 they too set up their own institutes or schools of administration. The first major problem then is that of ensuring that the post-experience institutions’ activities are coordinated and that unnecessary overlapping or duplication of effort is avoided. The second problem is how to find the resources which the institutions undoubtedly require to fulfill their mandates. Then, there is the question of how to ensure the relevance of their activities, particularly during this period of economic emergency.

**Employment Policy and Conditions**

The third factor influencing the performance of the human resource is the employment policy, and particularly, the impact of the policy on employment conditions, and on morale and motivation of the employees. At an AAPAM Roundtable which took place in Kampala, Uganda in November 1988, Professor Gelase Mutahabe (the AAPAM Secretary-General) and my humble self argued that a possible explanation for the massive brain-drain in many African countries was the demotivating employment policies and practices. The assumption by the employer that the stock of human resources is limitless has led to the total disregard of the most elementary principle of motivation. The on-going socio-economic crisis has worsened the situation by throwing many able-bodied persons out of their jobs. It goes without saying that an employment policy which is founded on the assumption that the supply of labour exceeds demand would not
seek out the best brains or make a serious effort to develop the employees’ productive capacity.

**Management Environment**

The management environment may reinforce the negative tendencies in the employment policy. In the 1970s, a number of administrative review/reform commissions were established by African Governments principally to make the management environment conductive to efficient allocation of resources. At least one of them, the Ndegwa Commission (in Kenya), called attention to factors within the managerial environment that tended to hinder the productivity of human resources, viz.:

(a) reluctance by manager to delegate operational responsibilities, with the result that the managers neglected their policy and innovate responsibilities and focused on administrative routine (leaving subordinates with little or nothing to do);

(b) lack of communication within departments and between one department and another (resulting in duplication of effort, and lack of coordination);

(c) failure to specify targets or hold subordinates responsible for specific results areas (with the consequence that some junior officers misunderstood, or were ignorant of, the purpose of their jobs);

(d) centralization of authority at the ministry headquarters.

In their own ways, the Udoji Commission (Nigeria) and the Wamalwa Commission (Swaziland) addressed the issue of the managerial environment. It was in fact in an attempt to install “results-oriented” structures in place of the hierarchical, and status-oriented ones that the Commissions recommended the introduction of accountable management systems. Unfortunately, the aspects of the review Commissions’ proposals relating to structural reform were either simply “noted” or implemented in a half-hearted manner. In some cases, recommendations which subsequently proved harmful to the health of certain sub-sectors (particularly public enterprises, universities and research institutes) were implemented. An illustration is the concept of unified grading and salary system (UGSS) which transferred the hierarchical attributes of the civil service to organizations that were in need of innovative approaches to problems.

**Supervisory Problems**
Weak and/or bad supervision may also have adverse effects on human resource development and utilization. For example, when a superior officer consistently fails to monitor the performance of subordinates or leaves them to their own device, laxity and indifference may set in. If s/he neglects his responsibility to train or counsel newly recruited staff, s/he cannot assist his organization in integrating the theoretical training of the staff with the practical requirements of the job. But perhaps as damaging as (if not more damaging than) non-supervision is highhanded treatment of subordinates. A supervisor who victimizes his workforce or refuses to see any redeeming side of his close associates is a serious liability to his organization. Instead of rallying the staff behind the goals of the organization, he would tend to promote discord and bitterness. This is particularly significant in Nigeria where the typical public office brings together individuals from diverse cultural settings.

External environmental factor

I have alluded to the influence of the environment when I referred to Nigeria’s diversity. Ethnic, religious, language, cultural, and gender differences exert influences on inter-personal and inter-group relations. It is therefore of utmost essence that the public manager be aware of how to handle and manage such differences. The projected reform of the public service should also incorporate diversity management strategies.

Another important environmental issue that future reform efforts should address is that of corruption. In fact, this subject is so important to deserve separate, in-depth treatment. I am therefore attaching a copy (in page proof format) of a forthcoming article in vol. 5, no. 2 Spring 2003 issue of Public Integrity. Readers should kindly note that before returning the proof to the journal, I inserted in the final draft the Government of Nigeria’s strong reservations on a Time magazine article written by Stephen Faris on Nigerian on 17 April 2002.

4. Human Resource Development and Utilization: Short- and Medium-Term Measures

The short- and medium-term measures which are likely to facilitate the judicious allocation of human resources include the streamlining of employment policies, the improvement of the management environment, and the evaluation and redefinition of the role of training institutions and manpower development agencies.
If the country is to derive maximum benefits from its investment on human resources, it should make a serious and sustained effort to motivate all categories of personnel. Motivation includes, but is by no means limited to, financial rewards and incentives for increased productivity. Government needs, as a matter of priority, to identify productive units and assign measurable targets to them, the attainment of which should attract specified rewards or benefits. The Republic of Tanzania experimented with this idea in its customs service, and the result exceeded all expectations. The parastatal bodies with economic or quasi-economic objectives (NITEL, NEPA, Nigeria Airways, etc.) have nothing to lose, and probably a lot to gain, from a carefully designed programme of target-setting that is closely related to a motivation package. Even in the regular civil service, we are likely to find agencies or units offering services while at the same time operating in the market place. Any market-related operations should come under the new arrangement of target-setting and motivation.

Material rewards are, however, not the only tools of motivation. The senior mangers and administrators in fact look for more. They expect to be appreciated for the contributions they are making to national survival and development. If they are not considered worthy of national honours or merit awards, they at least would not like to be prematurely retired or publicly disgraced. Motivation, as far as they are concerned, means not losing sleep over when the axe is going to fall.

Equally important to the effective utilization of human resources is the reform of the management environment. Anything which constitutes a barrier to efficient resource allocation (be it hierarchy, grading of posts, systems and procedures, allocation of responsibilities, supervision styles, or civil service rules and regulations) should be closely reviewed and properly streamlined.

As part of the short- and medium-term measures, steps should be taken to evaluate, rationalize, and coordinate the role of the training institutions, and of the management development agencies. The latter, (the management development agencies) are the central coordinating and policy organs. In Nigeria, the Office of the Head of the Federal Civil Service is the body charged with this vital responsibility for providing central guidance in manpower development matters. In order to fulfill this role properly, the Office needs to be staffed with highly competent and experienced personnel. it is also necessary for the Department to establish a data bank on all classes of personnel requiring different types of training. The data bank should develop computer files on all the officers, focusing attention on their personal and career history (and of course, making it possible for Office to keep track not only of those who have participated in what
type of training, but also who should or should not be on the payroll). The civil service in any case should now join the ICT revolution, and ensure that key processes (payroll, pensions, etc) are computerized. I do not have to emphasize the importance of electronic connectivity. In addition to the development of “intranet” facilities (linking one government agency to another, and to their “customers”), the time is ripe for the Government of Nigeria to be effectively linked to the outside world. At the very least, the agencies responsible for trade, industry, internal security, and the like should enhance their capacities for information sharing and networking. All of these have wide-ranging human resource management, utilization, and development implications.

The Office of Head of the Federal Civil Service also needs to sponsor an institutional evaluation study which would enable it to determine which institution is best placed to do what. While the intention is not to divide the institutions into water-tight compartments, there is need to establish centers of excellence in various areas (public sector, public enterprise, industrial, technical, technological, medical, and pharmaceutical training etc.).

With particular reference to public sector training, there is a further need to design a comprehensive and properly sequenced training programme as a prelude to allocating responsibilities among the existing institutions.

5. **Long-Term Measures**

The long-term human resource development measures cannot be divorced from national development policy and strategy. One basic question must be answered: Is Nigeria desirous of leaving its own mark on technology or is it content to remain an innocent by-stander? If our development policy settles for the latter option, there will no point proceeding with the discussion on human resource development. If, however, we are seriously interested in becoming a technological power, then the discussion is likely to be productive. But that is not all. It is not enough that we express an interest in technological development. This interest must be reflected in the formulation of a viable industrial policy and in the total rejection of “assembly-plant” or “trading post” strategy. Even our system of tendering and award of contracts would have to change. More than ever before, those awarding the contracts must come out with clear specifications on (and the prototypes of) what is to be constructed, the source of the material and manpower that would be required in implementing the project, and the scope which the contract has for the development of local know-how.
It is also not enough that we should be desirous of becoming an industrial force to reckon with. We must have the will and the ability to forego short-term benefits in favour of long-term development. To this extent, we should no longer shy away from a critical assessment of habits, practices, values, traditions and institutions which have for long kept us at the rear of the development race. The Bible says that if your left hand debars you from doing what is right, cut it off. In the Holy Quran, the Almighty Allah enjoins upon the believers to reject the ways of their ancestors especially if the ancestors have decided to purchase darkness at the price of light. Is it not time that we have in Nigeria a national coalition of minds seeking nothing but the greatness of a country that was once toasted as the black man’s beacon of hope?

The manpower development institutions should place an increasing role in the dissemination of development-oriented values. For a start, they should be more open and less timid in discussing the ethical basis of our traditional values. In addition, adequate time should be set aside to enable the programme participants to brainstorm approaches to the articulation of a work ethic emphasizing excellence/constant search for perfection, discipline, loyalty to the nation, and the rejection of neoptic and corrupt tendencies.

Finally, any human resource strategy incorporated in the public service reform process must have as its underlying objective the enhancement of public service capacity to close current performance deficits (in law enforcement, power generation, postal and telecommunication services) and launch Nigeria along the new digital orbit.