

## SUSTAINED PUBLIC POLICIES AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA: THE INEVITABILITY OF EFFECTIVE HUMAN RESOURCE ANALYSIS

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### **Abstract**

*Since after Nigeria's independence, keeping the country unified has not been an easy task. Several administrations tried several public policies, up to the moment there are clamors of marginalization and threats of secession. Through the use of extant literature as well as policy instruments, this paper attempts to examine the challenges from the perspective of human resource management (HRM) perspective. The study employs documentary analysis which is a social research technique and is a significant research machination in its own right and is a central part of most schemes of triangulation. The paper argues that the success of public policies which is evident in their continuity revolves around a number of factors and situations that are multifaceted in nature such as economic, social, political and technical. It was also concluded that the factors have a symbiosis rapport among them. It is recommended that comprehensive human resource analysis frameworks should be implemented because it is essential for aligning public policies with effective execution and fostering national integration in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** National Integration, Public Policy, Human Resource Management, Nigeria.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria as a nation is faced with a Herculean task of unifying the over 250 diverse ethnic cultures within its precincts which was attributed to an artificial colonial creation that the political scientists fondly called "the original sin" – *the amalgamation of the country in 1914*. Opinions divide across continuum that Nigeria's diversity represents its greatest weakness (Ebiem, 2012); and not very long ago a counter opinion surfaces that Nigeria's strength lies in its diversity (Osibanjo, 2017). Regardless of one's position on these arguments or perhaps reasons advanced by proponents of the arguments on both sides, the truth is, both arguments could be correct depending on the circumstances that avail. For the latter of course it could be Nigeria's golden opportunity to become a commanding force among comity of nations if adequately, those differences were utilized and turned to tactical development options that will

reposition Nigeria's economic status. For the former, perhaps nothing could be more detrimental than allow these differences to consume the nation, in multitude ways such as hate speeches, ethnicity, and egotistical political leadership among others. As Nigerians, no one would have conceived the idea of secession all things been equal.

It has become a continental issue that during the post colonial era, scholarly disputations in the African continent centers on finding answers to integration issues especially in countries with complex cultural and religious backgrounds like Nigeria. For example, effective policies abound by successive governments to foster national peace and unity of the country. Moving the federal capital from Lagos to Abuja to begin with, was done to foster unity by taking the capital to an area that doesn't belong to any dominant tribe in the country. In the end, it appeared that it only remained on paper, as Abuja was later seen as belonging to the North thus, "*the revenge element*" as lamented by many. National Youth Service Corps was also created to unite and consolidate Nigeria's unity where youths were posted out of their states of origin to stay and serve for a year to get acquainted with the way of life of their fellow country men and women in other states. However, the indigene – settler issue sets in and destabilized the whole process. Youths were forced back to their states of origin for fear of being maltreated as second class citizens in those places where they served if eventually they get employed there.

Federal Character System was also initiated to counter the alleged lack of adequate representation by the federating states in Nigeria which poses threat to the country's integration and security. Nonetheless, this policy seemingly focused mainly on the quota model; i.e. numbers matter much than the quality. In the end; suspicion, fear, mistrust and insecurity were born out of the policy and above all meritocracy has long been jettisoned. Education Policies also were severally used to sustain Nigeria's unity, as evidenced in several attempts by successive governments from establishment of unity secondary schools to the unification of tertiary institutions in the country all in the end were crippled for one reason or the other. This research argues that virtually all these polices seem to have neglected the efficacy of human resource analysis that might be vital to sustaining national unity and that, is the uniqueness of this research effort as it aims to examine why previous public policies fail to address integration issues in Nigeria

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs documentary analysis which is a social research technique and is a significant research contrivance in its own right and is a central part of most schemes of triangulation. It refers to the various procedures involved in analyzing and interpreting data generated from the examination of documents and records relevant to a particular study (Bowen, 2009).

## RELATED LITERATURE

### *National Integration*

Irrespective of the communities, culture and religion persons belong to, or the languages they speak, they should be aware that they have a common identity as they belong to the same country and sing the same national anthem. National integration goes beyond just the national feeling but the spirit, thought and behavioral determination of citizens to a common course. National integration also captures trying to avoid disruptive instances that would put the country off balance and make it difficult to differentiate an interest that is national from an

insular interest. In a related fashion though differently put, Radhakrisna (2021) believes that National interest is an innate feeling in the minds that is absorbed through education and not built by “bricks and mortar or mould and hammer”. Complimenting this opinion, Gani (2021) pointed out that National integration hinges on a sense of a common citizenship acquired through socio-psychological and educational processes.

There are several controversies as to why keeping Nigeria’s unity is for all time a challenge; some accused the colonial masters for putting different people together that shouldn’t have been together in the first instance, others believe it is the political structure that is not suitable to the kind of size of the country, to some; it is because the country’s resources are unbalanced. In view of this a number of people are till date cynical about the chances of survival of Nigeria’s unity. However, a good number of others including myself are optimistic about the likelihood of the continued existence of the country’s unison. One thing is certain, Nigerians fail as a people to utilize its diversity to think differently towards national development, hope is not lost though.

### ***HRM an Indispensable Necessity in the Public Sector***

Three decades back, in the 80’s to be precise; there were agitations for a push in support of tactical inventiveness within HR departments across organizations globally. The movement was brought to bear as a result of researches connected to the impact of employee-related issues on organizations’ envisioned accomplishment of tasks. Together, these strategies are from time to time referred to as people management strategies. This implies an all-inclusive move towards managing workforce, organization's culture, the organization and the environment. Its focus is way beyond just the recruitment, selection and placement; rather it encompasses the management and direction of the workforce in an organization and in a state in general. Human resource management is the calculated approach, a valuable and well-organized management of people in an organization to be able to give organizations and states a lift over peers and competitors. It is premeditated to make the best use of employees by ensuring that they become productive as well as be able to protect the organization and / or state from issues that might arise from the workers and the work in the future. The recent estimated employment to population ratio of the world (2021) indicates that 55.9 % of the world’s population is employed; out of which, Europe and central Asia has 53.12%, latin America and the caribbean 54.7%, the Northern America has 58.8 % and Africa has 57.4%; in Nigeria, 66.7% are employed as at January, 2021.(International Labour Organization, ILO, 2021; World Bank, 2021)

### ***The Public Sector Context of the HRM***

The public sector context of Human Resource Management receives rather cursory recognition even with the unique characteristics of the sector (Burke et al., 2013). This perhaps is true because the extent to which state funded services are influenced by government regulatory bodies and agencies and elected and or appointed boards. This is coupled with the unavoidable external influence put together have a collective impact added to their individualistic effects. Again, building on the arguments of Farhan and Horton (1996) who believe that the focus on the context of human resource in the public sector deserves more attention than it receives; Burke et al. (2013) further argued that public goods and services have huge relevance on public safety, cohesion and national development which is evidenced in the centrally administered services such as social welfare issues, tax matters, immigration and emigration issues to mention just a few. The sensitivity of these issues cannot be underscored as interests and lives of the citizenry hinge on them. To cap it all, the success or otherwise of the decisions regarding

public goods and services is determined by the robustness of the human resource which is saddled with such responsibility. This finds justification in the opinion of [Kristol et al. \(2012\)](#), who are of the view that public sector context of the human resource management, possesses a lot of strength as it handles policy convergence and to be able to ensure consistency; it also bears enormous pressure when it comes to policy evaluation and geared towards ensuring policy consistency.

### ***HRM and Societal Values: The Inseparables***

Right through history, no society ever contests the norm that organizations specifically and governments in general should have the back of their people for being peaceful, law abiding and patriotic or at least as a reward to the appeal of their contributions. [Ivancevich and Konopaske \(2013\)](#) reported that similar principle was personified in the American Dream that; anyone regardless of race or affiliation could rise to the highest position through hard work or at least based on the level at which they contributed. Not only in the west, such opportunity should be everyone's birth right even in Africa and Nigeria. This study finds support in [Duggan's \(2020\)](#) opinion who pointed out that apart from ensuring growth in organizations, financial success and financial security; HRM should be able to deliver positive results to the society and the planet by playing a gigantic role in environmental stewardship, corporate citizenship and human rights protection. In today's digital world, the economic success stories are not only narrated on the basis of technological advancements or strong economic policies but, a larger percentage of the narratives as [Collins \(2021\)](#) observed, are linked to a fully committed HR personnels who spearhead the focus of the state on the protection of human rights and carefully enacted, guarded and implemented corporate citizenship policies. Viewed differently from the perspective of workplace discrimination, which perhaps is the breeder of social injustices, scholarly arguments abound such as in the views of [Fisman and O'Neill \(2009\)](#); and [Strainback and Rascigno \(2011\)](#); they all believed that HR managers have no options than to radically avoid among other things, preconceived notions against their candidates which might lead to an unintentional sort of discriminatory treatments and, cultivate a healthy work climate that cements mutual trust between employees and the management as well as between citizens and the government. In Nigerian context for example, if public policies are made to only reflect individualistic, regional and cultural aspirations, patronage cannot be guaranteed, nationalism would be seriously challenged, the line of demarcation between "us" and "them" will be drawn with an indelible ink.

### ***HR Planning: The Plaudits of HR Demand and HR Supply***

In Nigeria, public policies often have a short lifespan and fail to achieve their intended positive outcomes, likely due to the lack of effective assessment or scorecard evaluations, leading to frequent replacements of these policies ([Nura & Tabiu, 2013](#)). These inconsistencies as many could argue, cannot be disconnected from the simple truth that the policies at times are "corrupt" right from inception. Again, if the policies are not "public" in nature and / or the policies are distanced from the societal values; the chances of those policies to last longer is very slim. In view of this, [Zula and Chermack \(2007\)](#) argue that, strategic HR planning that takes into account HR demand and supply in public policy making is even more critical than the implementation of those policies. This is true because, careful HR planning goes with policy goals which also guides towards the accomplishment of policy mission.

HR demand hinges on the basic policy inputs that result from the societal agitations and discussions in the policy formulation processes. These policy inputs mainly reflect on the

estimate of the future quantity and quality of people required and specific roles they should play to successful accomplishment of policy goals. At the Departmental and / or organizational levels, HR demand explains activity for each department. HR Supply from the other angle focuses on both the internal and external perspectives. The latter calls for sourcing the requisite manpower with the needed skills that cannot be found internally; to guard and guide policies to success. The former on the other hand utilizes the available personnel from within an organization regardless of departments and or / regardless of agencies. The HR supply takes into cognizance the skills, the knowledge, the number in terms of the required numerical strength, the level of technology requirement as well as the compensation which is dependent upon the level of education and experience.

### ***Robust HR Approach: A Timely antidote for Public Policy Laxity***

In a distant past, public sector varies greatly from the private sector. However, the line of demarcation gets thin and fades with time. In the challenging world of today, the line of demarcation is virtually none existing. Public sector today compete vigorously with the private sector on virtually every available opportunity and change, becomes evidently constant. Organizations compete to remain active and stable in the turbulent, rapid and challenging environment, thus, HR practices, strategies, welfare, benefit, cost reduction, union and management relations become the central focus of organization irrespective of sector.

To effectively collapse the border between public and private sector policies for the purpose of efficiency and effectiveness, public policies would have to be managed with an increased urgency. This argument reflects on the opinion of [Huselid et al. \(2005\)](#) who are of the view that an established framework for time reduction that fast tracks implementation of the designed policies, centers more on HR than on logistic provisions. Complimenting this view, [Yeo and Jeff Gold \(2010\)](#) reiterated that today's digital world demands urgency, top quality and cost-effective service delivery.

[Lucio and Stuart \(2011\)](#) pointed out that HRM strategies and practices are shaped by public policies that play important roles in sustaining and guaranteeing development politically, socially and economically. A contradictory view was traced to [Devanna et al., \(1982\)](#) who revealed that, HRM emerged in the wake of declining state roles. However, [Greenwood and Stuart \(2006\)](#) presented a rather complimenting view to the opinion of [Devanna et al., \(1982\)](#) by submitting that to facilitate transition and arrest sloppiness of public policy, HRM is an essential prerequisite.

### ***HRM: The Game Changing Change Manager***

It is without a doubt that the only permanent thing on earth is change as pointed out by the great Greek Philosopher Heraclitus (c.535 – 475 BC) Change is inevitable; its management requires a methodical approach, adequate knowledge and relevant tools. This is so because, many at times, in an attempt to appraise policies or possibly change them, important steps are missed out as such, the resultant change becomes a necessity for another change. When change is sought, vital precautions should be brought to bear; these include among other things, resistance to change, stress and strategy.

First, people are used to the existing policy situation and many would prefer to stick to the status quo and would anything to make sure the change did not happen. This perhaps may not be unconnected to the fact that some are benefitting from the existing circumstances at the expense

of others. In Nigeria today as revealed by [Chukwu \(2021\)](#), the country is faced with unparalleled beckon of varied overlapping security challenges of Boko Haram insurgencies, clashes between herders and farmers, banditry and kidnappings, separatists' insurgency and oil militancy. Virtually N8trillion was spent to curtail insecurity alone and over N762 billion to be borrowed as proposed by the federal government to curtail the security challenges in the country. The serious spending of huge amount of money in Trillions speaks volume of the sabotage in Nigeria ([Onyekazi & Okoroafor, 2018](#)). Secondly, policy changes may bring with them a lot of stress. This is because people have high expectations and underestimate the outcomes of changes; so those changes throw them off balance when they happen. Borrowing from the arguments of [Nura and Kirfi \(2015\)](#), to be able to checkmate stress, robust HR suggests for managing role conflict and role pressure beyond theoretical boundaries. Third, people expect a biological linear transition from one circumstance to another not knowing that at times, changes are "iterative, cumulative and reformulation in-use-process" ([Pettingrew & Whipp, 1991](#); cited in [Armstrong, 2006](#)).

It is noteworthy here that, changes in policy in terms of appraisal, overhaul or even replacement, requires sound enlightenment for people to be informed on why the change is sought, second, it should be borne in mind that there might be resistance due to a number of factors that are political, economic and social in nature. Thus, HR suggests a strategic and stepwise approach to change and, numerous options avail ([Bechard, 1969](#); [Lewin, 1951](#); [Quinn, 1980](#) & [Thurly, 1979](#)).

### ***HRM and People Resourcing Strategies: The Perspective of Public Policies***

People resourcing is a scorching HRM strategy that allows agencies to welcome people, retain them and release them if need be. This in other words explains that public policies should be cautiously monitored from policy making to post implementation evaluation. Actors in policy making and implementation should be objectively retained if they are productive and possess the desired quality. This should be regardless of regional affiliation. For example the subordination of meritocracy to quota principle in Nigeria informed us that when the desired is made secondary to somewhat political arithmetic, the system suffers and the neglected would be aggrieved, thus, temptations to protest against the ill treatment becomes a possibility. Again, constant assessment and re assessment of people's attitude and behavior to ensure that they are at all times congruent to what the policies need to succeed and last longer, is another perspective that explains people resourcing ([Armstrong, 2006](#)). This re assessment is key particularly in a multicultural, multilingual, and multi religious country like Nigeria. The philosophy behind people resourcing as lamented by [Mills \(1983\)](#), is to ensure that the right kinds of people are involved and retained in policy formulation and evaluation strategies; those who understand the policy directions, strengths, opportunities and challenges.

### ***Policy Score-carding and Appraisal: The Gamut of HR Potentialities***

Paying attention to the arguments of [Oakes \(2007\)](#) policies and policy evaluations are born the same day. In many circumstances, what used to be the practice is that policy evaluations are scheduled for arbitrary dates. From the organizational perspectives at times, evaluations of organizational policies are annually undertaken where actions to be taken and inputs needed for the update of the policy depend on the reports submitted by the raters. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century HR practice, policies are meant to focus on specific goals that lead to one another i.e. from point A to B with detailed minimum requirements. Consequently, every goal is evaluated to make sure that minimum expectations are met before progress is made to the next level. There is a lot of

wisdom in this; one, a paradigm shift from the normative approach of pre and post evaluations where evaluations are only done before the implementation and after implementation. Second costs would be slashed and third, opportunities avail as updates and innovations are made. While some scholars, such as Scheller et al. (2020), advocate for evaluating policies during their implementation, this study argues that it is more effective to schedule evaluations upon the completion of policy goals. This approach allows for necessary adjustments and refinements to be made based on the outcomes achieved. By this, going forward, challenges are reduced cost is abridged, complaints condensed and results assured. In a spectacularly heterogeneous and culturally unbalanced society like Nigeria, sensitive issues shouldn't be delayed until after they are fully implemented before they are evaluated as the consequence may not only be economic in nature, it may be social and political as well.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical frameworks provide essential lenses through which to analyze and interpret the complexities of policy implementation and human resource management. In the context of sustained public policies and national integration in Nigeria, understanding the interplay between policy formulation, execution, and the role of frontline implementers is crucial for addressing the challenges and enhancing policy outcomes.

Policy Implementation Theory, particularly as articulated by Michael Lipsky, underscores the critical role of frontline public servants—often referred to as street-level bureaucrats—in the successful execution of public policies. This theory posits that the efficacy of public policies is not solely determined by the policy design but also significantly influenced by how these policies are interpreted and applied by those responsible for their implementation (Lipsky, 1980). Street-level bureaucrats, including social workers, police officers, teachers, and other public service providers, are the ones who translate broad policy objectives into everyday practices and decisions.

According to Lipsky (1980), these implementers often face complex and unpredictable situations that necessitate discretion in their application of policy. Their decisions and actions can either facilitate or hinder the achievement of policy goals, making their role pivotal in the policy process. Therefore, the success of any policy is inherently linked to the capability, support, and resources available to these frontline workers.

In the context of Nigeria, where policies are frequently discontinued or fail to achieve their intended outcomes, the relevance of Policy Implementation Theory is particularly pronounced. Many public policies in Nigeria face challenges related to poor implementation, which can stem from inadequately trained personnel, lack of resources, or insufficient support.

Effective human resource management plays a fundamental role in this context. Ensuring that frontline implementers are not only well-trained but also well-supported and properly equipped is essential for enhancing policy outcomes. Human resource strategies should focus on providing continuous professional development, adequate training, and sufficient resources to these workers. Additionally, creating a supportive work environment and providing clear guidelines and support systems can help mitigate the risks of policy failure (Lipsky, 1980).

Investing in the capacity and capability of personnel responsible for policy execution aligns

with the principles of Policy Implementation Theory. By enhancing the skills, knowledge, and resources of street-level bureaucrats, Nigeria can improve the likelihood of policy success and sustainability. This approach ensures that policies are not merely theoretical but are effectively applied in practice, thereby contributing to more stable and effective governance and ultimately supporting national integration efforts.

## CONCLUSION

Policies in Nigeria are often discontinued due to flawed formulation. Such issues may arise from inadequate evaluation criteria, cumbersome techniques, or an overemphasis on outcomes rather than the processes leading to those outcomes. Additionally, if policies are shaped by personal rather than national considerations, their effectiveness can be compromised. From a human resource management perspective, even well-formulated policies can face challenges if not supported by properly trained implementers, a conducive environment, and adequate resources. McGregor's (1957) notion of avoiding "playing God" underscores that well-designed policies still require competent execution and support to prevent operational problems.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations are proffered:

### ***i. Develop Comprehensive Human Resource Analysis Frameworks***

Implement detailed frameworks for analyzing and understanding the human resource needs associated with public policy implementation. This includes assessing the skills, capacities, and training requirements of individuals involved in executing policies to ensure they are equipped to support sustained policy efforts and national integration.

### ***ii. Integrate Human Resource Considerations in Policy Formulation***

Ensure that human resource analysis is a core component of the policy formulation process. This means evaluating how policies will impact and be supported by human resources, considering factors such as workforce capabilities, training needs, and organizational structures. This approach helps align policies with the practical realities of human resource constraints and opportunities.

### ***iii. Strengthen Coordination and Capacity Building for National Integration***

Focus on building the capacity of human resources to promote national integration through coordinated efforts. Provide targeted training and development programs that address the specific needs of regions or sectors where integration challenges are most pronounced. Foster collaboration among different stakeholders to enhance collective capacity for policy implementation and national cohesion.

### ***iv. Monitor and Evaluate Human Resource Effectiveness Continuously***

Establish mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of human resource effectiveness in the context of public policy implementation. Regularly assess how well human resources are supporting policy goals and national integration efforts, and make adjustments as needed. This includes gathering feedback from implementers and stakeholders to ensure continuous



improvement and alignment with policy objectives.

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