



## **THE NIGERIAN WORKER AND VALUE RE-ORIENTATION IN A DEPRESSED ECONOMY**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper is on Nigerian worker and value re-orientation in a depressed economy. There is no gain saying the fact that the Nigerian economy is depressed. The paper explains the concept of a depressed economy, characteristics of a depressed economy, imperative for capacity building, values and value reorientation. Agents of value re-orientation: the family, the school and the religious groups. The paper draws a conclusion and recommends among others, that the federal government should intensify efforts at creating job opportunities for the teeming youth population and that society should de-emphasized ostentatious living and reward integrity by putting the right people in the right places.*

**KEY WORDS:** *work, workforce, Nigerian workers, values, value re-orientation, depressed economy*

### **Introduction**

Work plays vital roles in man's life. This is because man's economic viability, social mobility and psychological stabilization are derivable from work. Work, according to Okorie (2000), consists of exerting physical or mental energy or labour for the accomplishment of a specific purpose or object.

Armstrong (2012) described work as involving the exertion of effort and the application of the knowledge and skills to achieve a purpose. In the context of this write-up, work refers to the exertion of physical and mental efforts/skills by individuals or group of people in the production of goods and services to satisfy the human basic necessities.

Today, human needs, and indeed, the needs of any society have transcended the basic necessities of food, shelter and clothing. They now encompass the needs for wealth creation, poverty reduction, political and economic independence, and global competitiveness. Therefore, members of the society have to satisfy these needs by working. Those who work to bring about this satisfaction are those that constitute the society workforce.

Every society thrives with knowledgeable, competent and skillful workforce to propel the nation's economy. The Nigerian worker is constantly in need of training and retraining to meet the demands of a dynamic labour market occasioned by globalization and technological advancement. There is no exaggerating the fact that the Nigeria worker is operating in a depressed economy. The galloping manner of inflation, the rising cost of everything as a result of the naira-dollar disparity, the high rate of unemployment and



underemployment, the dwindling performance of the public and the private sectors of the economy, inadequate facilities in public institutions of learning due to inadequate funding, the poor state of roads and the generally poor standard of living of the average citizens are all indicators that the Nigerian economy is in a state of depression.

A depressed economy is an economy which experiences a prolonged period of recession or a significant and prolonged down-turn in the economy. Such an economy is characterized by:

- Declining business activities
- Rising unemployment/underemployment
- Increasing public fear and panic as a result of social insecurity
- Consumers confidence and investments decrease causing shutdown in the economy with over 62% of Nigerian 170 million people living in extreme poverty (CIA World Factbook, 2016).

The Nigerian workers are daily being confronted with human induced challenges ranging from political, social and economic predicaments. Gone are the days when Nigerian workers at any level of economic strata could conveniently provide for their immediate family and still have something left for their extended family members. Those were the days when workers' monthly pay could conveniently take them home and sustain them till the next pay day. These days the Nigerian workers' pay is so grossly inadequate that it can hardly take them to the bus stop. The Nigerian workers are the worst hit in the face of high level of inflation without corresponding increase in pay.

Yet in the face of technological influx, the worker remains the key agent of change. No technological advancement can be attained without the presence of the worker. No matter how sophisticated the state of technology is, its potential can only be maximized by the human capability to operate it. Thus, Denga (2010) maintained that human capacity is more precious than gold, uranium or petroleum resources.

Therefore, labour – the human factor, remains the most vital factor of production. Its development constitutes an imperative investment for economic, social, political, technological, industrial, and aesthetic development. The Nigerian workforce is constantly in need of capacity building.

### **Imperative for capacity building**

The Nigeria worker is consistently in need of training and retraining to meet the demands of a dynamic labour market occasioned by globalization and technological advancement. Capacity building is an initiative geared toward knowledge acquisition, knowledge and skill upgrading or retooling as well as attitudinal overhauling to bridge the gap between the knowledge/skill possessed and the skill needed as a result of innovations in work methods to meet the demands of the highly competitive labour



market at the point of entry, advancement and retention (Okute, 2013). This is to reflect occupational characteristics and relevance in line with individual and societal value system. Denga (2010) referred to capacity building as the capability to perform or function effectively, efficiently and economically on a sustainable basis without much dependence on external sources. Effective human capacity building enhances work performance and productivity and facilitates diverse skills upgrading for increased productivity with the right values.

### **Values and value reorientation**

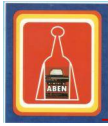
Value reorientation simply refers to the effort to reclaim lost values. Values have to do with principles of right and wrong that are accepted by an individual or social group. In the opinion of Okute (2013), values have to do with moral and ethos and acceptable norms, and for a group of people or society, those virtues they cherish as important. Values include honesty, integrity, good neighbourliness, religious tolerance and those virtues that define the value system of a people or society.

Value reorientation implies radical change/departure from the present practice of corruption, terrorism, insecurity, hostility and all forms of vices that impede progress. Value reorientation according to Nwoju (2016) is aimed at inculcating good values that can help Nigeria out of her numerous predicaments and focus the nation towards greatness.

Value system is the sum total of ideas, beliefs upheld by a group of people, society or nation. Value system can be developed through what is learnt and experienced. Nations' constitutions are used to establish the framework for social, legal and ambitious future of a nation or a group of people. The constitution establishes the relationship between citizens and their rulers, defines rule for good and bad practices, lays down laws against taboos and emphasize essential practices regarded as core values. The constitution is used as a means of identifying the values or value system of a nation, which presumably should be extended beyond national boundaries to effect positive change.

Resistance to change is not a new phenomenon. In cognizance of this fact Mahatma Ghandi (1949-1948), said that it is the reformer who is anxious for the reform and not society from which we should expect nothing better than opposition, abhorrence and moral persecution. In Nigeria, successive governments, in a bid to fight moral decadence and effect change of value system in public offices, business classes and among the youth have brought about various programmes like

- War against indiscipline (WAI)
- Mass mobilizations for social justice and economic recovery (MAMSER)
- War against corruption among others.



These programmes failed to achieve the desired outcome for obvious reasons.

Among the reasons for their failures are that the programmes were poorly implemented, and those charged with the responsibility for their implementation lacked the moral values to champion such a course, since they could not live by example. This underscores the need for Nigerians to reclaim their lost values. Nigerians must go back to the drawing board - the family, the school and the religious groups as agents of value reorientation.

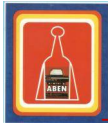
### **The family as agent of value reorientation**

The family refers to a group consisting of parents and their children. Okute (2014) defined a family as a group of people comprising parents and their children forming a household. In African context, the family also consists of other blood relations living together as a household. The family is a mini society from which every society emanates. The family is the child's first agent of socialization and integration. The family is the first school, and parents are the first teachers. Parents must return to their natural responsibility of moulding the character of their children. Adams (2012) stressed that parents and family have the most direct lasting impact on children's learning and development of social competence. Parents' active involvement in the tasks of forming the character of their children will help these children to strive to achieve more, adjust better, and exhibit positive attitude in schools and wherever they find themselves in the larger society.

These days some parents go out to work, abandoning the responsibility of proper upbringing of their children to househelps. These househelps can neither help themselves nor the children. Rather they end up inculcating delinquent habit in the children, who grow up to become nuisance in the society. Parents should spend some time with their children, and teach those values which the children should imbibe and translate into their lives to the pride of their parents and the good of society. It is unfortunate that some parents have neglected their responsibilities in the home in pursuit of money, career and fame. The essence of all the struggle is to provide not only the physiological needs of the family but also the moral and psychological basis that will make individual family members to function effectively as agents of change in the larger society.

### **The school as agent of value reorientation**

Education has been globally acknowledged as the bedrock of national development and social transformation. The school has a special role to play in reclaiming societal values through the formative years of the Nigerian child in the school. The child's first contact with the larger society away from parents is the school. Societal value transmitted to the young through the school curriculum and upheld by these young school pupils or students have great impact on the moral value of the individual child and the societal value system. As pointed out by Okute and Chukwurah (2011), the quality of



education that ensures sustainable development is rooted in the societal ideologies and philosophy.

The Federal Republic of Nigerian in her national policy on education (FRN, 2008) section 1, sub section 2, stipulated that the overall philosophy of the nation is to:

- a. Live in unity and harmony as one indivisible indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice
- b. Promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding

The national policy on education (FRN, 2008) section 1 (3) further stipulated that Nigeria's philosophy of education is anchored on the following beliefs:

- a. Education is an instrument for national development and social change.
- b. Education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria.
- c. Education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society.
- d. Education is a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges
- e. Education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, and relevant to the needs of the society.

It is against this backdrop that the Nigerian society looks up to the school at all levels of learning for the inculcation of the right values in her citizens. Learning is a life long process, and there are presently various opportunities for self-development and new knowledge acquisition, knowledge/skill upgrading for all categories of workers. Apart from accredited universities, polytechnics, monotechnics and colleges of education providing programmes of study toward workforce development, there are various institutions offering diversified courses. Such institutions include;

- Federal Training Centres (FTC).
- The Administration Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON)
- National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies and various State Management Development Institutes.
- Online learning environments now provide access in time and place convenient for the learner.

These can be utilized to meet the retraining and skills upgrading needs of individuals for personal and work improvement.

### **Religious Groups and Value Reorientation**

Nigeria is a multi-religious society as it is multi-cultural. There is freedom of worship or religious affiliation as entrenched in the Nigerian constitution (1999) that every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The Nigerian Constitution (1999), section 4 (1) emphatically forbids the State from having official religion. The heterogeneous ethnic characteristics of Nigeria compels freedom of



worship. The various religious groups should teach their adherent the value of peaceful coexistence. From the foregoing it is obvious that the family the school and the religious groups are key stake holders in reclaiming our societal values.

### **Conclusion**

In this era of change, Nigeria needs not only good morally conscious public office holders but men and women who have the moral rectitude to effect positive change for the good of all. The present state of affairs where Nigerians who embezzle money or loot the public treasury for personal ostentation are heralded and applauded should be condemned.

### **Recommendations**

1. The federal government should intensify efforts to salvage the present economic, political and security challenges by creating jobs for the teeming population to reduce extreme poverty.
2. Stimulation of small businesses is by creating enabling environment for business to thrive
3. Review of public/private sector economy - There is need for a strong framework for public private sector. Nigeria should review her public/private sectors, so that government can control the over arching sectors of the economy.
4. Appointments to public positions that have direct bearing with the societal needs should be based on merit and integrity rather than on political god fatherism.



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