 Improving Workers Productivity in Nigeria through Lifelong Education Opportunities

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Abstract
The need to improve workers productivity in Nigeria has been emphasized by employers of labour. Many scholars and researchers have attested to the potentials of education as one of the best ways of improving workers' productivity. The argument of this paper, therefore, is that education and training have to be a lifelong affair for workers to get best out from them. To this end, the paper discusses the status of workers' productivity in Nigeria, why Nigerian workers need lifelong education and lifelong educational opportunities for workers' productivity. The paper concludes that Nigerian workers' productivity will improve if employers of labour subscribe to opportunities embedded in Lifelong Education.

Keywords: workers productivity, Nigeria, Lifelong Education, opportunities

Introduction
Workers’ productivity is one of the important concerns of every employer of labour and it is always emphasized by organisations when the issue of organizational personnel is mentioned. Every employer of labour whether government or private believes that workers’ productivity translates into organizational productivity since workers are drivers of organizational products and services. Putting it succinctly, Akinyele (2010) remarks that the performance of a corporate organisation, which determines its survival and growth, depends to a large extent on the productivity of its workforce. According to Ezeamama (2019) attainment of a high-level performance through productivity and efficiency has always been an organizational goal of high priority. The wealth of a nation, as well as socio-economic well being of its people, depends on the effectiveness and efficiency of its various sub-components (Yessufu, 2000; Akinyele, 2005; Akinyele, 2010) which are handled by its workforce.

Productivity is defined as an asset of which a person shows concerning his job. It is an efficiency gained due to the person job type (training, producing or servicing). It can be defined either as the skill of a person is doing his job and task (Ezeamama, 2019). Labour productivity is defined as labour output per day (Akindele, 2003). Productivity measures how efficiently resources are employed, It is defined as the ratio of a specific measure of output to a specific measure of input per unit of labour and is measured as the total output divided by the members of units of labour employed to produce that output (Aiyetan & Olotuah, 2006). It is important to note that productivity of labour is low in Nigeria (Yessufu, 2000; Aiyetan & Olotuah, 2006; Akinyele, 2010, Akinyemi, Ofem & Ikenomore, 2012; Sodipo, 2014) when workers’ productivity is compared with their counterparts in other parts of the world.

The low productivity level of labour in Nigeria has been one of the serious concerns to employers of labour, particularly in the public services. It is one of the key issues the government talks about at every Workers' Day. The effort to increase workers productivity formally began in 1963 when the Morgan Commission recommended the setting up of a National Wages Advisory Coilllci. Since then, the concern for productivity, especially in the public sector, has increased with intensity, culminating to the establishment of the National Productivity Center under the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity (Osoba, 1999; Umeh & Usman, 2000). The primary duty of the National Productivity Center, as spelt out by Decree No. 7 of 1987, is to stimulate productivity consciousness among Nigerian workers and to develop and supply the right technical solutions to productivity problems across all sectors of the National economy (Akinleye, 2010).
Low productivity among workers has been attributed to some factors; workers’ motivation (Aiyetan & Olotuah, 2006), environmental impact (Akinyele, 2010), job satisfaction (Ezeamama, 2019), education and training (Andries & Sauermann, 2011; Yusuf & Zakari, 2013; Asava, 2014). One prominent thing about these factors is that a worker can only give what he possesses. This means that the productivity of a worker lays among other factors his skills, knowledge, ideas and information which are tied to his level of education and training. The import of this point is that the higher the education of a worker the higher his productivity all things being equal and vice versa.

There is no doubt that globalization, technology advancement and societal dynamics have brought a lot of changes in all aspects of human lives including where a man works, how he works and what he works with. The demands of working places have changed rapidly as a result of changes brought by globalization, tastes, needs as well as concerns of clients and customers. This requires that for workers to survive, they must continue to learn and avail themselves of training and retraining opportunities for personal growth and development as well as their productivity. Chan (2010) contends that globalization has brought about changes in trade, economic social and educational issues and to survive in the global economy, businesses need to invest in advanced technology, modern machinery, and human capital to keep up with the changes in this volatile environment. It is important to add that heavy investment in human capital will go a long way to help in assisting workers to meet up with demands of work as occasioned by changes.

In this direction Zmeyov (1998) states “the main goal of education today is to provide individuals with a multifaceted training, and principally with knowledge and skills for creative activities, for adapting to changes in the natural social environment …… and for lifelong learning (p.104). Therefore, lifelong learning education orientation should be adopted by employers of labour for their staff to get the best out of them in the form of high productivity. The focus of this paper, therefore, is to advocate for the use of lifelong education as an avenue for improving workers’ productivity in Nigeria.

Workers’ Productivity in Nigeria

In many developing economies with large endowments of labour, measuring the productivity of labour is an important way to understand the dynamics occurring in the labour market, and useful in providing insights to policymakers regarding trends in unemployment, job creation and wages. Ultimately, these have implications for higher economic output and poverty reduction (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The most vital problem in a company is its employee productivity (Ezeamama, 2019). Productivity refers to the amount of input required to produce a unit of output. It is typically computed as a ratio of output to the input utilised. While the total factor productivity for an economy can be computed this way, this can often be a difficult task, and a more specific and commonly used measure of productivity is labour productivity. Specifically, labour productivity refers to the quantity of labour input required to produce a unit of output. This is often the case, even though it is recognised that labour is NOT the only input utilised in the production process. High labour productivity can be an important signal of the improvement in real incomes (wages of labour) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Economic growth in Nigeria, though stable in the past few years, started to experience some a downward trajectory in 2015, with the first quarter of 2016 recording negative growth. The constraints on productivity of labour and other factor inputs continue to put a drag on overall economic growth and this was further exacerbated in the first quarter of 2016. Coupled with the high unemployment rate, the Nigerian economy faces a considerable threat to realising its full growth potential due to productivity challenges (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

National Bureau of Statistics (2016) reported that labour productivity fell to N605.27 in Q1 2016, from N706.95 in the previous quarter and 669.57 in the same quarter of the previous year. Thus, for the period under review both quarterly and year on year declines of 14.4% and 9.6% were recorded respectively. While the total number of hours worked was estimated to increase by 16.8% between Q1 2015 and Q1 2016, and by 0.3% relative to the previous quarter, nominal GDP increased by 5.8% and decreased by 14.1% over the same periods. Notably, Q1 2016 also recorded the lowest year on year growth rate in real GDP in the rebased period, of negative 0.36% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016).
The implications of low productivity are in multiple. It affects employees' morale, hinders efficiency and affects profit margins. Employers of labour are negatively affected in terms of returns in their investments and profitability. It hampers wage growth stocks public dissatisfaction. In the long-run economic growth is badly affected. Declining productivity in Nigeria has become a persistent concern of economic and business analysts over the years (Bowman, 1994; Burnstein & Fisk, 2003; Balk, 2003; Akinyele, 2010) and actions to get it improved have been advocated. These actions include working on: the workers’ motivation (Aiyetan & Olotuah, 2006), environmental impact (Akinyele, 2010), job satisfaction (Ezeamama, 2019), education and training (Andries & Sauermann, 2011; Yusuf & Zakari, 2013; Asava, 2014). This paper is trending the path of those who subscribed to providing education and training opportunities for workers to improve their productivity. Why Nigerian workers need lifelong education is hereby addressed.

Why workers need Lifelong Education?

There is no doubt that education is a lifelong affair. This is because; change is a constant phenomenon in human existence. For a person to be relevant, useful, active, effective and efficient in everyday activities he/she must embrace learning throughout his/her life. Education, whether formal or non-formal, is basic to improve living. Given education, a person is most likely to become productive and expected to continuously seek new knowledge, skills and methods to improve himself and his environment. Lifelong education according to Indabawa (2002) is a problematic term to define. It does appear that there is no uniformly accepted notion. Indeed, the Hamburg Action Plan 1997 sees it as a fundamental right of all, which must be promoted by all and sundry. To Taylor (2001) lifelong education means the social, cultural and economic development of individuals and groups through education and learning throughout their lives. It also focuses exclusively on instrumental education, learning is seen as the development of a range of specific skills training to meet the urgent need for new and varied abilities in the workforce. With increasing technological change and development of the so-called ‘knowledge-based society’, continuous learning and retraining are argued to be a high priority to ensure economic competitiveness. Javis (1990) in his contribution indicates that lifelong learning or education is a process of learning, which occurs throughout life... one that stretches initial education, through continuing education. Indabawa (2002) argued that for Africa, lifelong learning should not only extend initial education but also pay serious attention to situations where individuals did not have the opportunity for education at all. To Bryce, Frigo, McKenzie and Withers (2000) lifelong learning is a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environment. Lifelong education goal is to enable everyone throughout his life whether through his work or his leisure activities, to develop his personality.

The knowledge-based economy, new technologies, the growing speed of technological changes and globalization all influence the needs to improve the workers’ skills and competences (Colardyn, & Bjornavold, 2004; Marjan & Peyman, 2012). This is best done through Lifelong Education. Lifelong education according to Marjan & Peyman (2012) is the continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual. It not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development but also competitiveness and employability.

In a working organization, organizations must provide long and systematic training and development programs for their employees. This is because every aspect and activity of an organization involves people. For instance, a manager in an organization will not be successful until he has subordinates beneath him who are well equipped with skills, talent and knowledge (Asava, 2014). To manage an organization both large and small requires staffing them with competent personnel. The formal educational system does not adequately teach specific job skills for a position in a particular organization. Few employees have the requisite skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies needed to work. As a result, many require extensive training to acquire the necessary skills to be able to make a substantive contribution towards the organization's growth (Barron & Hagerty 2001 cited in Asava, 2014) which are best acquired through lifelong education. Hildebrand (2008) identified the following benefits of lifelong learning:
i. It sharpens the mind: As getting older, continuous learning helps to keep the mind sharp and improve memory. It is a known fact that learning, in general, has beneficial effects on the brain. Research has shown that people with more education are less likely to have dementia in old age (Marjan & Peyman, 2012). So learning continuously will help in sharpening one’s mind.

ii. It sharpens the confidence: Sometimes, when someone has not stepped out of their routine for a while, they haven’t taken on a new challenge or applied themselves to learning something new, they may find the experience a bit daunting. With LLL this fear is more easily overcome. LLL helps to gain confidence inability to learn and to share the information with others; gain confidence in who we are and what we have to offer.

iii. It sharpens the interpersonal skills: Opportunity to socialize can help to greatly improve our interpersonal skills. When we are learning, we are engaged in life; we are engaged in those around us. And when we share what we know, we help others learn and further enhance our relationships.

iv. It sharpens the career opportunities: For anyone who has aspirations of moving their career to the next level, LLL will very much need to be part of the package. Not only can learning enhance the skills we already have, but it also provides the opportunity to learn a new skill or trade and improve chances of career growth.

v. It sharpens the ability to communicate: Learning generally employs the skills of reading, listening and writing; skills essential to the ability to communicate. Enhancing these skills improves our ability to write a business letter, compile a marketing report, give a department presentation or even speak one-on-one with the company president.

If lifelong education has the above benefits to workers to improve their productivity, then what are the lifelong education opportunities for workers?

Lifelong Education Opportunities for Improving Workers’ Productivity in Nigeria

Workers have been described as indispensable machinery through which goods and services are produced (Yusuf & Zakari, 2013) and their efficiency in discharging their responsibilities lays with how well trained, skilled and educationally equipped. The dynamic nature of work situations and constant changes in the needs of clients and customers have called for continuous learning opportunities for workers. This is the reason why Yusuf and Zakari (2013) contended that the employment patterns and trends, as well as technological changes of our society, have called for continuous learning opportunities of workers to be able to fit into the scheme of work dynamic situations and conditions. These opportunities are embedded in lifelong learning programmes as submitted by (Ananthalakshmi & Ming, 2019) and they could be on-the-job and off-the-job (Ananthalakshmi & Ming, 2019).

On-the-job training programmes

On-job training is a kind of training where employee learning takes place at his actual place of work and while doing his actual job. On job training becomes more important when the objective is to build economies around high productivity (Ahmad, Mustabsar, & Omer, 2016). An employee can practice as they learn through this method (Ananthalakshmi & Ming, 2019). It is an important method of training when it comes to task-oriented activity such as handling machinery. Such training is necessary to ensure each step or procedure is followed according to the sequence. The training would allow an employee to have a clearer picture in carrying out the duty and employee tend to understand better through on-the-job training as compared to a reading book or manual (Ananthalakshmi & Ming, 2019). Yusuf (2015) listed some on-the-job training opportunities that workers can benefit from. The list includes staff induction and orientation programme which is meant to get employees familiar with the organizational workings and situations. Other programmes are staff meetings/briefings, staff seminars, staff committees and knowledge management forum among others.
Off-the-Job Training Programmes

These methods require trainees to leave their workplace and concentrate their entire time towards the training objectives. These days’ off-the-job training methods have become popular due to limitations of the on-the-job training methods such as facilities and environment, lack of group discussion and full participation among the trainees from different disciplines, etc (Mtulo, 2014). Hence, this is provided away from the immediate workplace. Thus might be at a specialist training centre or a college or a company’s premises. This type of training can be particularly use put for developing transferable skills that can be used in many different parts of the business (Mtulo, 2014). Wright and Geroy cited in Ananthalakshmi and Ming (2019) posit that off-the-job training is significant especially for specialized or technical skills and is usually conducted by an expert of its field. Examples of off-the-job programmes include special courses and lectures, conferences and seminars, selected readings, apprenticeship training, etc.

Conclusions

To promote productivity among Nigerian workers lifelong education opportunities must be embraced. Learning must take place twenty hours a day, seven days a week and fifty-two weeks in a year by workers. Employers of labour must explore opportunities embedded in on-the-job and off-the-job training if they want workers to perform maximally and getting best out from them.

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