

An Overview of Human Resource Management Practices in the Nigerian Construction Industry

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Abstract: Pursuant to the adoption of practices utilized in workplaces from other countries; and the dearth of study that adequately investigate human resource management practices (HRMPs) that enhanced the performance and productivity of human resources (HRs) and construction professionals (CPs) in the Nigerian construction industry, this research examined the general overview of the Nigerian construction industry HRMPs. A review of the literature was employed and sourced from published journals and conference articles from Web of Science and Scopus databases. The review's outcome revealed no HRMPs model developed for the Nigerian construction industry, no standalone national competition policy or law on HRM-related issues, and no independent authority in Nigeria in charge of implementing HRM laws or policies. Further, local content law is absent for the Nigerian construction industry to develop and promote HR participation in the industry. The review findings signified the importance of a developed HRMP model and policies recommended for promoting HRM practices in the Nigerian construction industry. The outcome of this review will be of immense benefit to HRs and CPs for improved performance and productivity in the Nigerian construction industry and Africa as a continent.

Keywords: HRMPs, HRM policies, HRM evolution, Construction industry, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Human resource management practice is fast becoming a strategy utilized by every organisation towards gaining a competitive edge. Agreeably, HRMPs have been defined as activities used in attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining employees towards effective utilization and survival of HRs and organisational achievement (Gope, Elia & Passiante, 2018). Accordingly, Placide, Gwaya and Wanyona (2019) defined HRMPs as a means through which workers' skills, attitudes, and behaviour are influenced and shaped to ensure work is done and achieve organisational goals and objectives. Different authors have viewed HRMPs; they all centered on how the most valued assets- the people are managed to realize its goals and objectives.

The construction industry is a labor-intensive sector that contributes to the economy of a country. According to Durdyev and Ismail (2012), the industry is large, responsive, and it has roles and linkages through the workforce. Assertively, Windapo (2016) stated that the workforce is responsible for the activities within the construction industry. Conversely, Chieng, Arokiasamy and Kassim (2019) opined that since employees' expertise is an essential ingredient through which competitive advantage is achieved in a rapidly expanding global economy, a construction organisation needs to implement effective HRMPs that make the best use its employees. However, in Nigeria today, there is a lack of studies on HRM practices in the Nigerian construction industry that assessed the indigenous construction firm's HRMPs. This review carried out a general overview of HRMPs in the Nigerian construction industry, intending to recommend areas where HRMPs can be promoted in the construction industry. In achieving this stated aim, the overview of the Nigerian construction industry; the evolution of HRM policies in Nigeria; an overview of HRMPs studies, and HRM policy framework in employment-related issues in the Nigerian construction industry (NCI) were examined.

2. A brief background of Nigeria

Nigeria is situated in the Western part of Sub-Saharan Africa, bordering the Gulf of Guinea, between Benin and Cameroon (Central Intelligence Agency, CIA, 2017). Figure 1 shows the map of Nigeria indicating her surrounding neighbouring countries with international borders, major cities, among others, with Abuja the national capital. Nigeria is made up of several tribes with over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups, but the three major tribes are Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo. Great Britain colonized the country until it gained independence in 1960. Furthermore, it is ranked 21st largest economy in nominal GDP with a real GDP growth rate as estimated in 2017 to be 0.8% of the GDP. The country covers a total area of 923,768sq km, about six times the size of Georgia but slightly twice the California size. Its estimated population in July 2021 is 219,463,862. The country is well endowed with natural resources such as natural gas, tin, iron ore, niobium, coal, limestone, arable land, zinc, lead, and petroleum which the country depends on as its main source of revenues and foreign exchange. Due to economic crises, Nigeria's economy has been driven by agriculture, telecommunications, and services (CIA, 2017). However, the country is faced with other notable challenges but not limited to the inadequacy of power supply, lack of infrastructure, insecurity, inefficient property registration systems, and delays in legislative reforms (CIA, 2017). Currently, Nigeria is a lower-middle-income country (World Bank, 2017).



Map of Nigeria

Source: The World Factbook (2021)

3. Overview of the Nigerian construction industry

The NCI, significant in its way, shares similar characteristics with other developing countries' construction sectors. These characteristics may include low skills levels and productivity, nature of construction processes, time and cost overruns, risks, high labour turnover, interference at the selection stage, amongst others resulting from complex social-cultural, contextual, and structural issues prevailing in other developing countries (Dania, Larsen & Ewart, 2014; Ameh & Daniel, 2017; Daniel, Oshineye & Oshodi, 2018). The construction industry is dominated by main or specialist contractors, private or public clients, mostly the owner and financiers of the projects, and consultants who ensure project delivery within the right budget, time, and specifications. According to Dania, Larsen and Yao (2013), it ranges from small, medium and large enterprises to technically competent multinational construction firms. Owing to the lack of capacity of most small enterprises to undertake massive civil engineering construction projects, multinational construction firms are evident in the Nigerian construction organisation and other developing countries.

In construction organisation, there is provision for both the standard forms of contract claims and advance payment. Amucheazi and Nwandem (2020) informed that the standard forms of contract claims are provided to guide and inform contractors, employers, and arbitrators on what should be known before making any claims. These standards are: for road works (The Federal Ministry of Works Standard Conditions of Contract); for building (The

Federal Ministry of Works and Housing Standard) as well as the FIDIC (Federation Internationale Des Ingenieurs-Conseil) Red Book. Accordingly, Aje and Adedokun (2018) highlighted standard forms of contracts for advance payment in accordance with the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) in meeting the principles of modern contracting. These include FIDIC; General Conditions of Contract for Construction Work; New Engineering Contract known as Engineering and Construction Contract, and The Joint Building Contracts Committee. As part of the contract, no additional payment is made once the mobilization fee had been paid to contractors unless a performance certificate is raised.

The government of Nigeria is regarded as the biggest client because majorly it finances developmental projects in the country (Idoro & Okun, 2009). Most government-funded projects are managed by the Nigerian MDAs (ministries, departments, and agencies). Based on the government's interest, the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing (FMWH) is responsible for government project implementation and management in Nigeria (Idoro & Okun, 2009). Subsequently, departments/units have been established at the state level for similar purposes, such as the ministry of works and infrastructures of FMWH and private firms. To ensure fairness and frank award of government/public projects, a regulatory body named the Bureau of Public Procurement Act 2007 was implemented (Dim & Ezeabasili, 2015). The Act was established for its effective pre-tendering and tendering processes, project management, and contract regulations.

3.1 The importance of the Nigerian construction industry

Based on the literature reviewed, the activities of the construction industry are the same as indigenous firms' activities. Accordingly, Waziri, Mustapha and Idris (2017) revealed that the NCI comprises small indigenous firms. Invariably, the significance of the construction industry is the same as that of construction firms. The construction industry plays a vital role by improving the infrastructure needed for socio-economic development (Dania et al., 2013). The CI is also an active sector that provides the physical needs of the diverse millions of people. These infrastructures include but are not limited to good roads, health and educational facilities (buildings), and economic infrastructure (bridge) (Dania et al., 2014; Oke, Ogungbile, Oyewole & Tengan, 2016). The construction industry's contribution to the GDP has been extensively reported (Waziri et al., 2017; Osuizugbo, 2020). Furthermore, Waziri et al. (2017) reported that the sector employs over 5% of the entire country's labour force. This is in line with Ofori (2012) study that the construction industry employs about 10% of the working population in all countries. The construction industry is also known for affecting other sectors of the economy for its services and products (Osuizugbo, 2020). For instance, the construction industry depends on the Nigerian cement industry for its products (Moses, Simon, Olusegun & Mubarak, 2017; Ojo, Yusuf & Aremu, 2020). Furthermore, Ojo et al. (2020) revealed an estimated value of 4.0 percent of the cement sector's Nigerian construction consumption output. A trend outlook of cement demand in Nigeria (Akinyoade & Uche, 2018) shows an increase in cement production, an indication of growth in the manufacturing industry due to the construction sector demand. Notably, the government is the key player in the construction business in the NCI. To achieve construction industry potentials, priority should be given to HR in promoting growth and development.

3.2 Challenges of the Nigerian construction industry

As emphasized earlier, construction industries are supported by the Nigerian economy, which extends to other sectors. Despite this, the industry is overwhelmed with several challenges. These challenges in the Nigerian construction industry are classified and discussed under three groups: project implementation, management and performance challenges, industrial challenges, and economic challenges.

Project implementation, management, and performance challenges: In project implementation, management and performance varied challenges are encountered, which are human-related. Okoye, Ngwu and Ugochukwu (2015) reviewed the literature regarding management challenges facing construction practice in Nigeria. The study revealed top challenges such as scheduling (time), quality, cost, and safety as management challenges facing the construction industry. Waziri et al. (2017) also revealed factors affecting the adoption of IT usage in the NCI, which has made organisations lag behind compared to their counterparts in other developing countries regarding acceptance, usage, and adoption. These factors include high-level resistance to acceptance and unwillingness to invest because of the country's economic situation, and most of the partners are not into e-business. Osuizugbo (2020) revealed challenges facing building production management (BPM) in Nigerian construction firms. These include BPM unproductiveness, non-existence of buildability and maintainability analysis, lack of professionalism, and unauthorized practices. Idoro and Okun (2009) evaluated the time-overrun related challenges in Nigerian federal government projects, which need urgent attention to reduce delays in projects caused by project team members. They revealed the government as a major contributor to time-overrun as perceived by project leaders, followed by the government's main contractors and officials. Similarly, Mujaddadi and Daniel (2020) identified risks such as financial, construction, environmental, and design risk as challenges involved in construction work during the project life cycle, leading to financial loss and project stoppage. Furthermore, poor construction project performance has been a serious concern to the construction industry (Oke et al., 2016). The authors identified and grouped factors affecting project performance under four groups: cost, productivity, time, and quality. However, the study revealed that the design cost of the project, complexity of the project, unavailability of resources, and quality of equipment and raw materials are factors promoting poor project performance in the NCI. Therefore, the challenges of poor project performance are attributed to a lack of collaboration among professionals (HR) involved in carrying out construction works. As mentioned earlier, Nigeria is faced with notable challenges such as a lack of infrastructure. Lack of infrastructure could be attributed to the NCI failure and abandonment. Accordingly, Dim and Ezeabasili (2015) reported that non-adoption and implementation of modern procurement strategy result in abandonment and construction projects' failure. These are attributed to poor pre-tendering and tendering processes, poor integration and management of the supply chain, political interference and inference, and corruption among procurement officers.

Industrial challenges: As mentioned earlier, government projects are implemented and managed by an established body of the federal government. Still, the construction industry activities are not well coordinated. Amade (2012) laments the need for established partnering through collaborative approaches among project team partners in the NCI. The author points at factors that hinder partnering in construction project delivery: corruption, additional costs, career prospects, and loss of confidentiality. Scholars, including Dodo (2014); Agbade, Manu, Agbade and Mahamadu (2016), have described the non-existence of regulatory bodies in charge of health and safety plans and practices as a challenge to the NCI. This has posed severe threats to workers and non-workers due to reports on accidents occurrence during construction activities. The industry's lack of capacity in terms of financial problems has hindered the participation of construction firms in large-scale construction activities and limited their performance and contribution to economic development (Ugochukwu & Onyekwena, 2014; Ali, Awad, & Abdulsalam, 2019). Further, Frank, Rong, Batool, Paul and Tungom (2017) lament the low level of effective technology transfer in the Nigerian construction sector. The authors acknowledge that technology transfer brings effective performance among local talents and skills needed for industry expansion. However, the high rate of corruption cases and acquiring raw materials from other countries, amongst others, hindered the transfer of technology in the NCI.

Economic challenges: Presently, Nigeria's economy is expressing recession which impacts financial pressures on all sectors of the economy. Due to this, activities of the construction industry have drastically reduced, which resulted in staff downsizing, non-recruitment of employees, folding-up due to inability to adapt to the economic situation. Further to this, for most firms to survive, contractors opt for reduced tender pricing, cost control, improved site management procedures, effective management relation with clients, and business diversification (Olowa, Amuda & Adebisi, 2018). However, despite the NCI challenges, the economic viability and contribution of the CI to the Nigerian economy are vital.

4. Overview of HRMPs studies in the Nigerian construction industry

Though HRM has been recognized in the NCI (Ameh & Daniel, 2017), however, dearth of studies assess indigenous construction industry HRMPs, determine the attributes of HRMPs in the construction industry, or develop models that enhance construction industry HR performance and productivity in Nigeria. This has left the indigenous firms in Nigeria to adopt practices utilized in workplaces from their counterparts. Specifically, this has hampered the performance and productivity of the NCI (Fajana, Owoeye, Elegbede & Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011).

HRMP studies in the NCI have focused on challenges facing HRMPs. For example, Ameh and Daniel (2017) identified globally mobile talent competition, high experience labour force avoidance, reduction in cost per hire, right person recruitment, right candidate occupying vacancies advertised within a firm, attracting high reputable staff from other firms. In addition, Yaro (2014) attributed the recruitment challenges, an element of HRMPs in the public service, including construction firms, to be political office holder's interference in the recruitment process that involves sentiments. In other related studies, Ifediora et al. (2020) argued that HRMPs in Nigeria are affected by inappropriate recruitment and selection practices and the non-availability of workers' involvement in project implementation, contractor's wrong appointment, lack of health, safety and welfare programs. Further, Chukwuemeka (2006:46) revealed challenges facing HRM practices as government policies, and legislation that deals with minimum wages, federal character involvement in the recruitment and selection process. Furthermore, Orga and Ogbo (2012) informed that challenges facing HRMPs include inconsistent labour union law, conflict and high turnover, overload of information, a mix of the workforce, workforce changing demand, and employers changing demand.

In addition, Chukuma (2015) revealed poor productivity improvement, implementation of quota system in employment as HRMPs challenges in Nigeria. Further, Ajayi, Akinsiku and Salami (2019) highlighted challenges of HRMPs in Nigeria: lack of business strategy, organizational structure, organisational size, organisational mission/vision, priorities of managers, and lack of commendation on work done. Thus, whereas much is known of the challenges of HRMPs in the NCI, there is a dearth of studies that develop a model on HRMPs to enhance HRs indigenous construction firm's performance and productivity. Hence Ameh and Daniel (2017) opined that gaps in HRMPs studies due to lack of research could be attributed to the non-usage of such practices in the NCI. So, based on this affirmation, there is a need to address the gap in knowledge by developing a HRMPs model for the NCI. Further, though the challenges facing HRMPs appear to be known, few studies seek to determine which of the obstacles critically face the NCI. Against this backdrop, there is a need to establish the critical challenges confronting HRMPs implementation in the NCI.

5. Evolution of HRM policies in Nigeria

After Nigeria gained independence on the 1st of October 1960, several economic and developmental reforms were undertaken by the civilian governments of the first republic, successive military, and the civilian of the fourth republic. These reforms bring about development and the potential for continuous growth in many sectors of the economy. One of the major economic reforms after independence is labour laws (Obodo, 2017). Before independence, Nigeria's early labour laws were dictated; this resulted in the agonizing and traumatic experience of the workforce because of an imbalance in power of both the employer and the employee (Obodo, 2017). After independence, the labour laws were enacted relating to employment contract improvement on Nigerian workers' welfare and economic condition. These laws are workers' work conditions, safety and health at the workplace, wages and salary, trade unions, trade disputes, conciliation, and arbitration. Accordingly, the author informs that the labour law enacted helps regulate gross defects on HRM activities such as contract of employment in Nigeria, conditions of work, the safety of workers at the workplace, right to wage, hours of work, settlements of disputes, termination of contract and pension. HRM laws and policies draw their sources from the provisions of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The constitution enjoins the parliament under Section 16(1)b to enact relevant laws, and in consultation with the executive arms of government, formulate and ratify laws to promote the welfare, freedom, happiness of every citizen in the society that is healthy to Nigerian economy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

Currently, there is no standalone national law or policy on HRM that regulates the management of infrastructures and workers in the construction industry and other national assets in Nigeria (Fajana et al., 2012; Obodo, 2017). In support of this, Nnedinma, Boniface and Keith (2014) concluded that the failed occupational safety and health system (OSH) in the NiCI is due to the non-availability of statutory regulations and provision of OSH. However, there are ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) that monitor and carry out infrastructural activities that involve HRs on the national asset of the Nigerian government. The MDAs include the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, the Federal Road Maintenance Agency (FERMA), and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), amongst others (Idoro & Okun, 2009; Odediran, Opatunji & Eghenure, 2012). Conversely, the Nigerian government had adopted and applied various developmental plans since her independence: the 1st National Development Plan (1962-1968); the 2nd National Development Plan (1970-1974); the 3rd National Development Plan (1975-1980), and the 4th National Development Plan, which never came through (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011; Emmanuel, 2019). There was

another long-term developmental plan between the early 1990 and 1998 due to a continuous search for optimal strategy (Emmanuel, 2019). However, different plans were introduced by the Federal Government towards upgrading the existing basic infrastructures in the country between 2003 and 2019. Such policies include but not limited to the structural adjustment programme (SAP), Vision 2010, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) 2003-2007, Vision 20: 2020, Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) which is of recent till date (2017) (Marcellus, 2009; Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011; Emmanuel, 2019). All these policies and plans are put in place to map out strategies that will enhance developmental advancement in Nigeria.

However, there was a notable step in developing HRM framework in the area of training introduced by the government (Clardy, 2003). The idea that Nigeria does not have an "emotionally intelligent HR" brought about the HRM framework (Drigas & Papoutsi, 2019). Equally, institutions such as the Nigeria Society of Engineers (NSE), Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria (COREN), Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), Council of Registered Builders of Nigeria (CORBON), and Nigeria Institute of Civil Engineers (NICE) amongst others have constantly been agitating for a developed HRM framework in Nigeria for HRs in government construction sectors.

6. HRM policy and legal framework in employment-related issues in the Nigerian construction industry

The Labour Act, Ch L1 Laws of Federation of Nigeria 2004, Section 91 was promulgated to govern employment-related issues principally in Nigeria between an employer and an employee (The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

However, the Labour Act, established by Labour Act Chapter L1 of Labour Decree No 21 of 19974 in 1999, was created to provide comprehensive legislation on work conditions and employment conditions. Fundamentally, it was designed to protect workers against employers' abuses in employment (Nwokpoku, Monday, Nwoba & Amaka, 2018). In relation to the general contract of employment in Nigeria, especially in the construction industry, HRM is regulated by the Nigerian Labour Act, the Nigerian Labour Act 1974, the Nigerian Factories Act 1956, the Trade Union Ordinance of 1938, Trade Unions Act 1974 (amended 2005), Trade Disputes Act 1976 (amended 2004), Pension Act 1979 (amended 2004) (Nwokpoku et al., 2018). The Nigerian Labour Act stipulates a contract offer and acceptance, which is definite, done through the offeror to the offeree. According to section 7(1) of the Act, the employer must give terms of his/her employment to the employee within the three months of the worker's period. Further, the Nigerian Labour Act 1974 deals with the provision of payment of wages Act 1960, enacts that wages of a worker shall be in a legal tender but if otherwise, it shall be illegal, null, and void. According to section 5(2) of the Act, an employer may deduct from his worker's wages any contributions under the provision of the consent of such worker. In addition, the Nigerian Factories Act 1956 governs the safety and health of workers at the workplace. Section 14(10) of the Act stipulates that while work is ongoing, the work environment shall not be overcrowded to avoid the risk of injury to the health of workers therein, while Section 28 of the Act state that no person shall be employed at any machine unless a worker has received sufficient training in work among others. Nonetheless, these Acts were promulgated as decrees during the military regime in Nigeria. The National Assembly revalidated the Act as Laws of the Federation of 1999. These laws help workers to agitate for their fundamental rights in an organisation.

7. Conclusion

The review assessed HRMPs in the NCI. From this study, the relevant literature reviewed about Nigeria showed that previous studies relating to HRMPs focused extensively on the challenges facing HRMPs in the Nigerian construction industry. Thus, the factors that determine HRMPs are empirically unknown. Also, there is a dearth of studies that develop models to help firms manage their HR in the construction industry. Also, Nigeria has no standalone national competition policy or law that holistically addresses HRM-related issues. However, there is Act Chapter L1, Section 91, The Labour Decree No 21 for the Protection of Workers Against Employers Abuses in Nigeria. Again, there is no independent authority in Nigeria responsible for the implementation of HRM laws or policies. Further, there is a lack of standalone local content law for the NCI to develop and promote the participation of HRs of indigenous construction firms in the industry.

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