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**HUMAN RESOURCES IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:  
MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS AND EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION  
IN THE AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICES**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. MALLOCATION AND POOR UTILISATION . . . . .	3
III. ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION OF MANPOWER . . . . .	5
1. Orientation of New Employees . . . . .	6
2. Training . . . . .	7
3. Relations Between Training and Personnel Management . . . . .	10
4. Linking Training to Research and Consultancy . . . . .	12
5. Career Development . . . . .	12
6. Staffing, Evaluation and Promotion . . . . .	15
7. Incentive Packages . . . . .	17
8. Decentralisation of Administration . . . . .	24
9. Communication . . . . .	25
IV. SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	26
FOOTNOTES . . . . .	29

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

One of the most important objectives of economic development in many African countries since independence has been to increase the rate of growth of industrial output per head. In the attempt to attain this objective, many of the countries have placed a great deal of emphasis on the promotion of industries which use mainly imported technology and technical know-how from the developed nations. Because of the considerable contribution of technical know-how or technological knowledge to industrial development in developed as well as developing countries and the attendant problems of adjusting to technological change, the analysis of the causes of economic growth since the 1960s has been focused mainly on the functional relationship between inputs and outputs of various factors of production.

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<sup>1\*</sup> I owe a debt of thanks to my wife Prof. Theresa M. NDONGKO, formerly of Ecole Normale Supérieure, University of Yaounde and now Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Buea (Cameroon), from whose paper on Human Resource Management in Cameroon I drew tremendous inspiration and insight.

It has also been observed in many countries that the effective use of technical know-how requires a labour force in which that knowledge is embodied through education, training and professional experience. In Africa as well as in many other developing countries of the world, the capacity to absorb "appropriate" technology from the industrialized nations has depended largely, therefore, on its possessing well educated and trained technical cadres or skilled manpower. This is necessary because only properly trained and competent professionals are capable of assessing the merits and demerits of the latest technologies developed in the developed countries; and making those choices regarding which technologies to import for promoting industrial development in Africa.

The recognition of the importance of human resources in economic development is as old as the science of economics itself. Adam Smith, for example argued that the acquisition of talents and skills by an individual through education, study or apprenticeship is a fortune not only to himself but also to the society to which he belongs. Alfred Marshall similarly, argued that "the most valuable of all capital is that invested in human beings".<sup>1</sup>

Over the years, however, development planners in Africa have tended to pay little explicit attention to the human resources factor. This is perhaps attributable to the earlier limitations in the conception of labour as a factor of production. Conceptually, there was a misdirection of emphasis as eminent economists like Theodore Schultz, Simon Kuznets etc. toyed with the estimation of returns from investment in human development.

However, in recent years, developments in some developed countries have clearly demonstrated that a nation could make spectacular achievements by virtue of the skills, ingenuity and technical know how of its people. Such developments include, among others, the unprecedented economic recovery of Germany from devastations of the Second World War, the tremendous success

of the United States and the former Soviet Union in the post-war technological race and the economic resurgence of Japan.

In addition to the realisation of the crucial role of human resources in the development process, the so-called population explosion and the issue of unemployment have further drawn attention to the importance of human capital and have contributed to a re-thinking in the intellectual community that the assessment of a nation's economic well-being should not be based exclusively on such economic indicators as the Gross Domestic Product, per capital incomes and the rate of capital formation.

Employment generation is not considered as important as growth in per capital income, and accordingly in recent years topics like employment, income distribution and rural transformation have featured prominently in development plans of many African countries as well as in discussions in the international community. To this extent, Diejomach has argued that a very important aspect of any nation's manpower resources is how they are utilised. Full utilisation of a country's manpower resources, he continues, will contribute not only to increased total productivity of the economy but also to a more equitable income distribution profile as well as to greater political stability.<sup>2</sup>

## II. MALALLOCATION AND POOR UTILISATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Despite the apparent importance of skilled manpower in the economic growth of African countries, I strongly hold the view that the problem of the present low industrial output per head in many of these countries is not the shortage of skilled manpower but that of poor and inefficient allocation and under utilization of the available trained nationals. Even in those African countries where industrial output per head is high, it is not as a consequence of effective utilization of the available manpower but as a result of the presence of foreign consultants

and foreign private investors who dominate the key sectors of the economy and for the most part import their own trained personnel to manage and carry out their economic activities.

The problem of poor utilization of available trained personnel in many African countries has arisen from the fact that political favourites, who for the most part are not professionally equipped with the necessary skills, are very often appointed to head national development institutions or to manage industrial development projects and programmes which are financed mainly by multilateral and bilateral aid and foreign private funds. Their inability to understand the development process, the complex social and economic problems and the underlying structural factors influencing industrial growth in their countries, have resulted in a misallocation and mismanagement of industrial programmes and the initiation of unviable projects.

Most disturbing is the fact that in most African countries the advice of civil servants and qualified experts is largely ignored by inexperienced government officials who are only interested in making their presence and authority felt rather than taking decisions that are in the national interest. This has generally led to considerable deterioration in efficiency and poor relationship between technocrats and politicians and has also greatly reduced the productivity of trained manpower. This has, in addition, resulted in the wastage of development resources which have been generated from the tax systems of developed nations African states and the contributions of bilateral and multilateral aid agencies towards the training of Africans.

As a consequence of this undesirable situation, many highly experienced African technocrats have tended to seek better employment opportunities in the developed countries and international development organizations because of frustration. Furthermore, many nationals of African countries who have undertaken advanced studies abroad through the assistance of

multilateral and bilateral aid agencies, have very often preferred to remain in the advanced countries because their countries of origin do not offer them the opportunity of utilising effectively their acquired skills and talents acquired during long years of professional training. It is mainly for this reason that there has been a continuous drain of skilled manpower particularly to France, Britain and the U.S.A., despite the increasing need for such qualified personnel in Africa.

Because of the magnitude of the resources which have been channelled into the training of African manpower in the developed countries, under the auspices of various technical assistance programmes, both the developed countries and African countries should normally be concerned with the quality and effective use of the available manpower. For this reason, section III of this paper is devoted to suggesting alternative ways mitigating the poor use of human resources in the African countries.

### **III. ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION OF MANPOWER.**

The term human resources or manpower as some people define it, refers to the totality of the energies, skills and knowledge available in a country. For example, the Directorate of Manpower of the Government of India has defined human resources as the managerial, scientific, engineering, technical, craft men and other skills which are employed in creating, designing and developing organizations and in managing and operating productive and service enterprises and economic institutions".<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, however, in many African countries the problem of effective utilization of human resources in both the private and public sectors of the national economy has continued to persist, even after so many years of political independence. In fact, the public service which employs over 50% of the labour force has shown very little or no interest in the efficient management of human resources which are a vital factor in

national economic development. However, in view of the importance of human resources in national development, the question arises as to what are the alternative ways of ensuring effective utilization of the available human resources in Africa with a view to promoting harmonious, stable and self-sustained economic development of the continent. As an attempt to answer this question, the various alternative ways of ensuring effective utilization of human resources for rapid and sustained African economic and social development will now be examined.

### III.1 Orientation of New Employees.

It is common practice in many African countries for the government to employ and post new graduates to the various jobs without organizing any orientation courses or seminars for the new employees. Consequently, many public sector and even private sector employees are often recruited and deployed without consideration for their specialisation and as such, they are generally frustrated since they are usually assigned tasks for which they have little knowledge or preparation. In Cameroon, for example, the government has been involved in a massive recruitment of young University graduates in the public service, starting with the 1983 and 1986 recruitments where 1,500 and 2,000 graduates, respectively were employed. Out of the 2,000 employed in 1986, 831 were sent to the Ministry of National Education, some of whom were sociologists, lawyers and economists who have never been to any teaching training institution.<sup>4</sup>

Without the requisite background training in education and coupled with lack of orientation, it is evident that the new recruits have not find their jobs interesting. Consequently, they have been frustrated and their level of productivity has been extremely low. For this reason, there is great need for orientation exercises to be organized by the various African Ministries and institutions with the aim of introducing the recruits to the objectives and expectations of the organizations and the institutions which they serve.



### III.2 Training

In view of the skill shortages faced by the public service and private sector in Africa and the role training can play in overcoming them, one would expect the African countries to put more emphasis on public service training than the developed countries. Available evidence indicates, however that, despite the impressive growth record since 1960, professional training still receives less emphasis in many African countries than in public sector organisations in developed countries and multinational corporations. For example, the United States and Japanese governments offer training opportunities to nearly a quarter of their employees every year.<sup>5</sup>

However, in many African countries as well as other developing areas, only a small share of the public servants are exposed to training. The low level of training in many African countries can be explained partly by the fact that public service organizations spend less on training, and partly by the fact that what is spent on training goes to more expensive programmes of long durations. For example in the case of Cameroon, civil servants are often sent to the Cameroon National School of Administration and Magistracy, the Higher Teachers Training College, the then Douala University Centre and other training schools for a period of two or more years to update and acquire new skills in their different areas of specialisations. This training is however concentrated on pre-entry and immediate post-entry courses for professional and administrative elites to the neglect of inservice training and the training needs of the junior staff who make up more than half of the 54,000 employees of the Public Service in Cameroon.

There is no doubt that this situation portrays a dismal picture of the status of Public Service training not only in Cameroon but in many African countries. These deficiencies which are not only peculiar to Cameroon can, however, be overcome. In this regard, it is important first of all to realize that a

flexible and dynamic public service and private sector requires a responsive and forward-looking training system which can encourage an effective utilisation of human resources. Furthermore, it is important to note that as the demands placed upon the public service change, so does its composition and the function it performs. Similarly, as the staff move from job to job, retire or leave the public service, suitable replacements must be found to take their place. An effective training system must therefore anticipate and respond to these changes on time.

Building such training system as observed by Ozgediz requires action in a number of interrelated areas. Generally, in Africa training is given very little emphasis. This is so because it is often regarded as an element of personnel management. Many people believe that training can be acquired on the job. As a result, training is seen by most people as a luxury and an activity that has little effect especially if it will not result to a change of grade.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, most public servants seldom apply for training, unless they want to have a break from their daily routine schedules.

Inservice training is a way of life for all employees, particularly supervisors and managers, especially as it enables the beneficiaries to easily integrate with other aspects of management.<sup>7</sup> In this regard, frequent performance assessments can lead to the identification of problem areas for which training programmes can be designed and implemented. In every organization human resources should be seen as the most important and most valuable asset of the enterprise; a view that can facilitate justification of further investments in this important factor of production.

Considering the problems often faced in the area of training, it is imperative that the status of training in African countries be raised. The methods used by Malaysia's National Institute for Public Administration have proved quite successful and could be adopted by these countries. The methods include:

locating training in the powerful central personnel agency, make training have operational and budgetary autonomy, having it headed by a senior civil servant whose personal prestige and integrity underscores the seriousness with which the government views its work, creating a council of senior representatives from government ministries to provide continuous feed-back and advice, offering competitive salaries to its instructors and providing them with opportunities for further development and finally taking training evaluation seriously and modifying programmes on the basis of evaluation results and feedback from the participants.

Though some training institutions in some African countries like Cameroon have adopted a number of the above options such as "offering competitive salaries to instructors and providing them with opportunities for further development", a lot still has to be done with respect to those aspects of training which relate to location, leadership, council members, evaluation, etc. Training can attain a greater status if it is made an element of major policy initiative by the African governments. In Malaysia for example, training is an integral component of the government's New Economic Policy, which lays stress on improving public sector employment and promotion opportunities for ethnic Malays. Training in African countries, therefore, could be tied closely to changes in national economic policies.

According higher status and authority to training may not lead to better performance unless measures are taken to ensure greater accountability of the training system. For this reason, training evaluations should be given higher priority and the system should be responsive to the most urgent needs of the clients. In order to have productive training, the users of the training should be brought into the picture, that is to say, that they should be involved in the preparation of training plans and policies. For example an advisory group of senior officials from African Ministries like in the case in Malaysia can be helpful. Further, the views of managers or duty post holders such as

chiefs of bureaus, chiefs of services and even directors as they are referred to in Cameroon, should be sought as to the training needs of their staff.

Training plans should also spell out ways of meeting identified needs. Although training institutions have always been announced in the radio by different African government ministries, it is important that such institutions be published in papers specifying whether it is through oversea training, instruction at African Universities, training in government institutes, or training through collaborative Ventures with private enterprises and multinationals. In view of the fact that many newspapers in most African countries hardly get to all the segments of the population, such announcements could also be carried out in the different churches and national party meetings.

### **III.3 Relations Between Training and Personnel Management**

Training whether in the public or private sector is an integral part of personnel management function, and therefore, policies and plans on training should be closely linked with policies governing other aspects of personnel management. Recruitment policies, for example should go hand in hand with plans for entry-level training. In the same vain, rotations and transfers should be viewed not only as a personnel reassignment measure but also as a staff development vehicle. Most importantly, training should be closely related to career development, performance assessment, and promotion policies. It goes without saying that all training aim at generating some type of change in the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes or behaviour of the trainees. Such changes must therefore be valued by the organisation if the trainees are to be motivated to undergo training and apply what they have learned upon completion of their course.

It is important for the authorities in African ministries and other organisations to realise that if the worker believes that the changes resulting from training will not mean much for him in the form of promotion or career advancement, he may refrain from enrolling or may attend the course reluctantly. This problem can be solved by making training an integral part of career development. Malaysia has been successful in this aspect. For example, at the Malaysian Institute of Public Administration, each trainees' performance is formally assessed before a public servant can be promoted. That is, people selected for training needed for promotion must be those with a track record of good performance and good behaviour at work.

Heads of services and heads of departments should be made to understand that people learn more at work than in training centres, and consequently the work place should be seen as a primary location for learning. Furthermore, rotational assignments of short durations as practised by commercial banks could be utilised by the public services, since such methods are known to have equipped workers with better skills than formal training programmes. In addition, apprenticeship programmes can have higher payoffs than institutionalised courses. These alternatives could be made part of the career development plan for each worker and be implemented by his head of department.

Career prospects of trainers should be another consideration in linking training and personnel policies. To raise the status of the training function, African institutions should give successful trainers oversea assignments and consultancy opportunities. Apart from this, the staff of training institutions could be assigned to regular civil service jobs which would bring them more closely in touch with operational work and stimulate new ideas for training.<sup>8</sup>

#### III.4 Linking Training to Research and Consultancy

This option could enable the staff of many African training institutions to develop upto-date indigenous training materials instead of "lifting" foreign techniques which cannot easily be adapted to our local needs. For example, the most successful training institutions in other developing countries have all benefited from the linking of training to research and with consultancy as in the case of the Asian Institute of Management in the Philippines and the Indian Institute of Management.

In establishing the link between training, research and consultancy, African policy makers should keep in mind that the main mission of public training institutions is training. This means that efforts should be made not to turn the training institutions into an academic centre. Therefore, research and consultancy should be performed only to the extent that they are capable of making the training programmes more meaningful to African public servants.

#### III.5 Career Development

Many African public services at the moment have not provided opportunities for career development. In support of this, Mogford has noted that in Cameroon, for example, very little has been done to encourage or promote management training officially and man has hardly been thought coherently as a manager. Cameroon, he continues, "was born, ministries created, but the most important aspect of development was ignored, that is to develop man as a manager of the system, the plan, the project, other men and money".<sup>9</sup> As a result of this absence of career development, a considerable number of public servants have been forced to move from one service to another in search of jobs that best fit their backgrounds and aspirations. There is need, therefore, to arrest the situation, if the public service hopes to make an effective use of the available human resources.

One important way to improve motivation and to facilitate the training of public officials in African countries, is to define possible career paths, and to make sure that advancement in the public service depends on experience, the upgrading of skills and performance. An effective device would be to establish schemes of services by spelling out career paths for the most common skills or occupational categories of staff. This is important because according to an internal World Bank survey conducted in 1982, only 30 percent of the developing countries have established such schemes for scientists and about 40 percent have them for economists, statisticians, personnel administrators, and engineers. Specialist cadres are most common for accountants (56 percent of the countries surveyed) and tax administrators (53 percent).<sup>10</sup>

However, it should be pointed out that public service management and subsequently economic development cannot be achieved without executive leadership. Consequently, a high level cadre of this type will have to be built up not only because such talent is scarce in Africa but because African countries like many other developing countries should have a mechanism by which to provide a proper balance between the forces demanding bureaucratic accountability to political leadership and those demanding that career civil servants be insulated from undue political control and interference.

Different approaches to career development have been adopted by many developing countries from British, French or American models. Selection for the elitist cadres patterned on the British or French administrative systems take place mainly at the time of entry into the civil service; whereas United States civil servants must have considerable experience and specialisation before they join the established Senior Executive Service.

Those who are likely to hold executive posts in government for a long period are systematically nurtured in the British and French models. A key feature of this type of grooming is the

"esprit de corps" among the members of this select group. The American system, on the other hand, is more open to lateral mobility; it does not obstruct the entry of experienced outsiders or force government officials who wish to take up opportunities elsewhere to forfeit pensions and other benefits.

At this stage of development, African countries can borrow a suitable executive leadership development model from the models outlined above. An open system will certainly be advantageous in the sense that it permits the interchange of staff between the public, parastatal and private sectors. In this way, it would encourage the transfer of ideas and proven managerial practices and capability. Establishing a scheme of service for specialists or executives is not enough. The scheme has to be implemented so as to avoid both excessive internal mobility and congestion at different points in the career path.

Another way of ensuring that employees of the public service as well as those of the parastatals chart career paths for themselves is for African governments to avoid the frequent shuffling of civil servants. This practice will in no way help them to perfect their careers. This will certainly encourage the workers to perform at their best if they are given the time to know their job, set out their own personal objectives for performance achievement and develop means through which the objectives can be attained.

Agreeing with this view, Ozgediz (1984) writing for the World Bank on "Managing the Public Service" argued that frequent shuffling of civil servants can have serious repercussions on institutional performance. That kind of shuffling he continues, seems relatively common in developing countries, where more than one-third of key economic decision-makers such as permanent secretaries of finance, the national planning directors and the central bank governors, etc. have been changed three or more times during the last five years.



Finally, efforts should be made to ensure that job description and career development are made to go hand in hand. Such an approach will help reduce duplication of work and make it easier for chiefs of bureaus, chiefs of services and directors to evaluate the work of their subordinates. Besides, it will also help them in the task of directing and advising these subordinates on issues of career development.

### III. 6 Staffing, Evaluation and Promotion

#### 6.1 Staffing of the Public Service

The performance of any institution depends on the capabilities and capacities of the men and women who run the organisation. Consequently, in order to make effective use of human resources in Africa, central personnel offices in different organisations and institutions should be staffed with competent specialists. In many African countries, like in many other developing countries, the personnel offices are staffed with generalists. Supporting this view, Ozgediz (1984) pointed out that an internal World Bank Survey conducted for the World Development Report 1983 revealed that there are special career cadres for personnel administrators in only 40% of the 45 developing countries for which data were available.

This implies that the activities of most personnel officers go little beyond record keeping and drafting of personnel procedures. In addition, more advanced techniques for studying personnel issues such as organisational development, system analysis, manpower planning, job evaluation, position classification, performance assessment, counselling, staff development and various statistical methods are rarely used. Consequently, the personnel offices in many African countries are staffed with public servants who are in less demand elsewhere and who prefer passive administrative tasks over more challenging and controversial management problems which require concrete policy research and analysis.

To alleviate this problem of capability and efficiency, a few short-term and long-term solutions could be tried out. They consist of (a) replacing existing staff with competent specialists, (b) improving the status and career prospects of personnel specialists, and (c) seconding those in responsible positions like chiefs of Bureaus, chiefs of services and even directors, from time to time for a term of service in personnel offices in order to enhance their awareness and commitment to personnel policies. Exchanges such as these are likely to generate greater demand for better human resources management especially for those administrators who are responsible for implementing personnel policies.

Like in many of the developing countries, the public service in Africa has become the greatest employer of all times. With this rapidly growing workforce, it has become imperative that African governments changed from manual record keeping to computer information system which is less cumbersome and time saving. The present system of record keeping has caused a lot of headaches, untold hardship and bottleneck problems to some African countries; so much so that some employees are forced to leave their places of work for their national capitals to have their files and documents processed.

The implication of this selective treatment of files and documents is that some workers go without salaries for months if they are unable to visit administrative capitals for the purpose of "chasing their dossiers". Those who decide to chase the dossiers may stay away from work for weeks and even months. The solution to this problem is the introduction micro-computers which are relatively inexpensive means for quick and accurate information storage, retrieval and processing.

## 6.2 Evaluation of Personnel

If one had to ask why one Public Service in many African countries evaluates the performance of its employees, answers

will be unanimous; SALARY INCREMENT purposes. However, the objectives of evaluation go beyond salary increment purposes. Additionally, (a) employees' evaluation are done to find out if the organisational objectives are being met, (b) for reward and promotions, (c) to find out employees' needs and (d) to motivate the employees.

Civil servants in Cameroon, for example, are evaluated annually for salary increment purposes. Every year, civil servants are given evaluation forms (mark sheets or bulletin dé notes) which are filled by them and handed over to their immediate bosses who award them the necessary marks which must not be less than 12/20 if the civil servants are to be advanced from one grade level to another. Unfortunately, however, this happens to be the most subjective way of evaluating civil servants who are constantly being transferred from one ministry to another. This practice has negatively affected output since a person who has just been taken up a new job will have to spend at least a year getting use to the job, his new environment and the expectations of his head of department. This also means that a civil servant who is recruited or transferred to another ministry close to the evaluation period, which generally begins in January and ends in March of each year, will probably not receive a fair evaluation since his new boss may not know his capabilities and weaknesses.

If one were to carry out an objective evaluation of the performance of civil servants in the public service today, one would certainly find a large number of senior civil servants earning high salaries. The wage differential will be high since there are many redundant officers. This implies that the government is paying too much for low productivity at one level, and too little for high output at another. To ensure justice and improve performance, the level of salary scales should be determined by a number of things one of which is the complexity of job and its overall contribution to the goals of national development.

Assuming that the person to be hired has got the skills, experience and qualifications to fill the post, then his salary should reflect the level of the responsibilities of the position. His performance should be continuously evaluated to ensure that he is carrying his duties well. In other words, performance should be the hall mark for determining and maintaining salary levels. This will require the public service to emulate the prevailing practices in the private sector which thrives on maintaining high output. At the same time, the public service should as a matter of necessity define its objectives as clearly as possible. This will serve as a precondition for performance evaluation. Such a philosophy will enable the public service first to determine the purpose for which it exists and then to determine the type and magnitude of human resources it requires.

To achieve this objective, the African public service will have to become a "people oriented" or "man oriented" service. The philosophy of the public service will have to take a 360° turn. To this extent, the public service will be forced to ask questions such as: what are the prospects for advancement of employees entering the various services of the public service? How much should the public service pay "X" and how does the public service determine what is paid to the employee? The answers to these questions will enable prospective employees to find out about other benefits which go with the job and the regulations of the public service.

Another area is the job itself. With the goals of the service clearly defined, the new recruits as well as the old employees have to accept the goals of the public service as their own goals and all their energies should be directed to achieving them. Given this type of evaluation system, the African public service could be assured that the man hired or being hired will make an effective contribution for achieving the objectives of national development and above all, that the management techniques and practices in place are adequate to ensure that people work within the Framework of national objectives.

### 6.3 Promotion of Staff

Many African public services have no established promotion procedures. Seniority, performance and experience are usually not considered when it comes to promotions in the public service. There are many cases where lower category officers are appointed as Heads of Services or Directors over those in higher categories. In this regard, Mogford (1983) writing for US AID pointed out that, "A civil servant in Cameroon has only the right to his grade and has no other claims in terms of hierarchy or seniority of posts. He can be moved in and out of posts at government will, be it up or down. He can be asked to accept any post in the echelon of service structure - a chief of service can be a director or higher tomorrow or vice versa. He will then earn or lose the post allowance depending on the thrust of the move. If he is asked to withdraw, then he will have no post but will continue to earn his grade salary."<sup>11</sup> This practice has frustrated many qualified, experienced and productive workers.

Consequently, there is need for African countries to establish Public Service Commissions which can cater for the appointments and promotions of civil servants. To ensure that African governments have upto-date information on the available human skills in their countries, it is also necessary that Manpower Boards be created. These Boards should be responsible for compiling and keeping up-to-date records of the available skills. The Boards should however work hand in hand with the Public Service Commissions, especially with respect to providing the Commission with a list of skilled manpower, which will certainly be of great assistance especially in regard to appointing the right people to the right places.

### III.7 Incentives Packages

There is no doubt that in many African countries there are many qualified people with the relevant skills. However, what they lack is the ability to motivate the available trained

manpower with a view to making them perform to the best of their ability. Any attempt to start setting things right should begin from the work itself. The public service in many African countries definitely has to make work interesting by coming up with the following arrangements: (a) a new pay scheme has to be established and implemented; (b) a dynamic supervision scheme has to be introduced; (c) a conducive attractive working environment should be paramount; and (d) challenging and realistic goals should be set for public servants since such goals can be highly motivating.

### 7.1 Work Incentives

The primary focus of attention of the Public Service in Africa should be the work itself, since an interesting job could make the problem of motivation much less severe. If carrying out a task is rewarding and satisfying, we do not have to rely as heavily on rewarding outcomes. Studies have revealed however, that job design typically results in reduced absenteeism, high turn-over, increased duty performance and high morale. To this extent, therefore, the job content has to be improved. This can be done simply by modifying the scope, breadth and responsibility associated with the task assigned to an individual. Modifying job content is a productivity enhancing measure that can be taken by chiefs of bureaus, chiefs of services and even directors.

### 7.2 Salaries and Working Conditions

In many African counties where most of the high schools and university graduates are still first generation peasants' children, there is need for the public service to offer attractive compensations in the form of salaries and bonuses based on performance at the end of the year. This will go a long way in solving some of their financial problems which result from the African extended family system. Non-salary incentives should also be considered. For example, the working environment and career development scheme must be competitive with alternative

job opportunities especially in cases where critical skills are in short supply.

Large private-public salary differentials should be avoided by the public service if the African governments are to avoid the flight of skilled professionals to parastatals and the private sector. Apart from salary considerations, individuals enter or stay in jobs for other reasons such as status, interest and security. The level of motivation or incentive could rise or fall depending on the availability of some of the non-material incentives.

It should be noted, however that non-salary benefits are sometimes the root causes of wastage in many African countries especially in the public service. For example, the issue of travel and night allowances paid to civil servants and other workers of the public service is a case in point. For example, in Cameroon, with the increase in night and travel allowances for top civil servants from 15,000 Francs CFA to 25,000 Francs CFA for domestic travel and from about 20,000 to 50,000 francs CFA for international travel, the middle and top level officials now have a strong incentive to spend most of their time travelling abroad or within the country; thereby leaving their responsibilities to unskilled and inexperienced subordinates or closing down their offices until when they return.

In view of the adverse effects of such the national practice on economy, efforts should be made to control such fruitless travel, such overnight allowances should only be paid if the individual travels a specified distance. This implies that the public service would have to come up with a new non-salary scheme designed and controlled so that perverse behaviours is not encouraged; while at the sametime, the possible gains from having feasible compensation package are not scarified. Discretionary benefits are best given to some professionals whose skills are in short supply (e.g. statisticians, computer specialists, etc.)

Given the Cameroon experience, African policy makers should ensure that a gross imbalance does not arise between public and private sector salaries by conducting regular reviews of public sector salaries, preferably, as low profile internal exercises. Supporting this view, Heper has cited the examples of Singapore and Malaysia where public sector salaries are reviewed and adjusted frequently to compensate for differences between the public and private sectors, and none of the two countries has experienced a major brain drain problem.<sup>12</sup> Such reviews should therefore take into account non-monetary benefits resulting from public and private employment and should eliminate or perhaps modify perks like night and travel allowances that produce perverse behaviours.

### 7.3 Participatory Management

It is often argued that the good performance of civil servants lower down the hierarchy is probably an index (barometer) of the capacity of the senior staff to manage the junior staff properly. African top civil service managers would have to make this their motto, if they expect to manage an efficient and productive work-force. They could start off by using non-material incentives such as getting the subordinates to take part in decisions that affect the latter at work. For example, civil servants could be asked to decide whether they prefer a five day work week, (that is Monday through Friday) or a six day work week (that is Monday through Saturday).

Furthermore, considerate supervisory behaviour and a challenging job are incentive in themselves and could certainly create conditions under which effective performance and high productivity could be desired by the individuals. Line managers in the African Public Services would have to recognise a subordinate's achievements. Subordinates should be given a chance to be "visible", to be known for their work and accomplishments. This is the best type of motivation which could cost the boss nothing.



Generally, when people know that they can get personal credit for their work, and that their suggestions can be identified as theirs when passed up the ladder, and that their boss is not afraid to let them stem into the lime-light, they could do everything to carry out their duties efficiently. The supervisor or manager in the Public Service should also know that recognition alone will not motivate the employees except the manager takes into account the emotional security and self-expression of employees. Consequently, the Chiefs of bureaus, chiefs of services and directors must therefore create a climate in which employees can "trust" them.

These heads of services have to adopt considerate supervisory behaviour, to the extent that such behaviour has a positive effect on motivation, particularly if it is practised in response to high job performance. For example, empirical works conducted in the United States and United Kingdom have shown a significant correlation between supervisors' "attitude towards men" and the productivity of work units. The key to this in the work setting, is for the supervisors to find the right balance between employee centred as against production - centred supervision that would be conducive to high productivity. This task requires training in methods of supervision.<sup>13</sup> Needless to emphasize, such training is lacking in many African countries.

To sum up this section, it is important to reiterate that an individual will be motivated to perform better if he is convinced that his performance will lead to the outcomes he values and that his low performance will generate outcomes he does not favour. Material incentives such as pay, allowances and perks, help form a link between motivation and performance through external rewards or stimuli. By contrast, non-material incentives such as participation, considerate supervisory behaviour and a challenging job, create conditions under which effective performance itself can be a goal desired by the individual, "rather than a means towards the attainment of the

individual to organisational goals and to doing an effective job.<sup>14</sup>

### III. 8 Discentralisation of Administration

With the dramatic increase in the number of people employed by the public and private sectors in Africa since independence, it has become necessary for the governments to decentralise the administration so as to ensure an efficient management of human resources. This implies that top managers, chiefs of bureaus, chiefs of services, directors, etc. should try as much as possible to delegate authority and responsibility to other personnel. Such an approach to human resources management could eliminate delays in the treatment of dossiers and massive travels to the administrative capitals for the purpose of chasing files. This also means that Provincial and Divisional administrative units should be given more administrative responsibilities. To this extent, they will be able to recruit, pay, evaluate, promote and discipline their employees without necessarily having to refer their cases to the central administration for appropriate action. As a result, workers will not only save time, energy and money but will be able to spend more hours at work.

It may be argued that in many African countries, a decentralised administration will give way to the decentralisation of personnel functions. This could be beneficial since it is an accepted theory that line managers such as chiefs of bureaus, chiefs of services, etc. can manage and administer better if they are given control over the use of all resources, including human resources. In the case of Cameroon, a decentralised personnel system, which the people have longed for since reunification, could only be useful if it is a part of a larger decentralisation effort which is now being advocated. This is because decentralising only the personnel function in an other-wise centralised system can create insurmountable problems of ensuring performance accountability.

Even when some aspects of personnel management such as recruitment, training and promotions are decentralised, there could still be a need for an independent agency like the Public Service Commission to oversee the "merit principle". In carrying this measure, care should be taken because a premature decentralisation of the personnel function may create insurmountable coordination problems between the Public Service Commission and the decentralised personnel units. To minimise such problems, a strong corporate management at the centre is a necessity. The corporate management responsibility over personnel matters could be given to a cabinet - level entity as it is the case in Tanzania, Sudan and Guyana.<sup>15</sup>

### III.9 Communication

In many African countries, the approach to personnel management has by and large neglected communication which happens to be the backbone of human resources management. The lack of emphasis on this aspect of personnel management has however led to many bottlenecks and half-hearted commitment on the part of top civil servants. Interdepartmental communication is virtually non-existent; let alone interministerial communication. To expect any reasonable results in the form of productive work, the public service in Africa would therefore have to create an atmosphere where employees have the right to communicate ideas, suggestions, and opinions to their superiors without fear of humiliation and reappraisals.

Chiefs of bureaus, chiefs of services and director would have to become good listeners than talkers. They would have to refrain from the (bully) tyrannic or confrontational attitude which has engulfed a good number of them. Top management should be encouraged "to talk to" and not "talk down to" the subordinates. Communication should be a two way street and not one way as is the case in many African public services.

Above all, group activity which is quite unknown in the work context has to be encouraged. This means that self development should be seen through team development. Employees therefore should constantly be given the opportunity to take part in discussions with their chiefs or preferably "brainstorming" sessions should be carried out before any decisions affecting their status and career are taken.<sup>16</sup>

#### IV. SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from the foregoing analysis, that the public service which employs the majority of the labour force in Africa has done nothing despite the extreme necessity to ensure the efficient utilisation of the manpower they have employed. This is reflected by the fact that most workers are not generally assigned any specific functions. Those who are even assigned duties especially the junior workers are never supervised.

Evaluations whose results should be used to reward performance are often subjective. Promotion and appointment are not often based on merit. Apart from that, workers especially the junior staff are hardly informed of the objectives and expectations of the organisation. They are hardly involved in making the decisions that affect them directly. Few of them are sent on inservice training to up-date and acquire new skills, and very few of them benefit from missions.

This practice has definitely frustrated and reduced the productivity level of a determined and committed worker who took up the job with the zeal and hope of making a livelihood out of it. This explains why most public service workers come late to work, spend most of the time outside their offices (perhaps roaming the streets in search of other avenues from where they can derive the satisfaction which is denied them at the job side) and eventually close early without any queries from top level management.

Needless to emphasize the implications of the proposed ways of effective utilisation of human resources and which could go a long way in complementing the existing traditional economic criteria for judging the utilisation of skilled manpower in African countries, are many and varied. In the first place, they could reduce, if not eliminate the wastage of trained manpower resources that has characterized development efforts in many African countries. To this extent, nationals with the relevant skills would be able to help in the design, management, and execution of economic and social development projects in the public and private sectors of their national economies.

Secondly, it would provide the international donor agencies with a more convincing reason for channelling their resources to the training of African nationals because tax payers in developed nations are becoming uneasy about the increasing commitment of their governments to aid Africa. This is because many critics of foreign aid in the donor countries argue that their economies cannot justify the strain of such a philanthropy. Thirdly, it would enable those African nationals with specialized skills and higher educational training to participate in the formulation of industrial development programmes and in the decisions regarding the allocation of industrial projects. This will raise their morale, enhance their productivity and efficiency.

Finally it would provide a partial solution to the problem of the "Brain Drain" to which both African states and other developed countries have devoted considerable amount of time in seeking for feasible solutions. To this extent, the number of highly trained African nationals who often seek employment opportunities in the developed countries or in the international development agencies would decrease. Further, those highly trained African experts already working in the developed countries and international organisations would be encouraged to return to their home countries, because of the possibility of being given responsibilities which reflect their skills, experience and level of educational training.

It should be pointed out, however, that the various ways for effective utilisation of human resources suggested in this paper do not pretend to provide solutions to all the problems confronting African countries in the efficient allocation and utilisation of their manpower resources. Rather, it is hoped that their implementation would increase the industrial output and productivity per additional dollar made available to African countries for their development, particularly on the public service.

The identification of promising skilled personnel and the provision of corresponding responsibilities in the decision making process, especially in the area of management of industrial projects in both the private and public sectors would no doubt reduce the wastage of human capital in many African countries and thus improve the performance of the public service.

## FOOTNOTES

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