

## Developing a National Manpower Planning Policy for Nigeria: The Shifts and New Fundamentals

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### Abstract

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There is a resurgence of interest in manpower planning in Nigeria. The study shows that historically, manpower planning has been overlooked in the development planning process of the country and the result is the current human development crisis, expressed as poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, being experienced. In the context of the Nigerian Economic Recovery and Growth Plan, manpower planning is needed to bring the development policy agenda into fullness and reverse the crisis. This paper attempts to provide the background to and the fundamental elements on which a national manpower planning policy can be designed for Nigeria, noting the shifts that inform manpower planning. The manpower planning policy envisaged is an umbrella type with linkages to micro and sectoral policies, including social protection policy. The elements and issues that should be embodied in the manpower planning policy are identified. The conclusion is on optimistic note that manpower planning is still relevant but requires a new operational framework.

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**Keywords:** manpower planning, poverty, unemployment, investment, social inclusion, policy and planning deficit.

### Introduction

The history of manpower planning is embedded in swings of evolution and dissolution and continuity and discontinuity while retaining its immanent relevance. At its peak in the 1970s, manpower planning was widely considered as a 'solution' and guide to the human capital enterprise (Mahmet, 1972). However, it lost its appeal during the 1980s, usually called the 'lost development decade', given the deterioration in human development, especially in the developing countries (Bohrat and Tarp, 2016). The concerns for the victims of the decay in human development often call for shifts in favour of poor people and their organisation that legitimately find expression in manpower planning, for example, to 'empower' the people (Green, 2008). There is a resurgence of interest in manpower planning following the current global crisis confronting human capital development and in the wake of dysfunctional labour market. Direct intervention with a 'new vigor and a new twist' is now demanded (The Economist, April 27, 2013). An approach that finds new solutions to old problems is being invited. Given its antecedent, manpower planning could be seen as outlandish in this context. However, the new retooled intervention framework envisaged which puts government in the driving seat is considered appropriate for seeking the solutions (The Economist, April 27, 2013: 9 and Ekpo, 2016).

The Federal Government of Nigeria in its efforts to bring about transformative change in the country has designed a medium term development plan called 'Economic Recovery and Growth Plan' (ERGP). The plan covers the period 2017-2020 and focuses on three strategic objectives restoring growth, investing in Nigerian people and building a competitive economy (FMBNP, 2017:10). The broad vision of ERGP is to engender inclusive growth, paying particular attention to the welfare or wellbeing of Nigerians by increasing social inclusion, creating jobs and improving the human capital base of the economy.

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This means investing in social programmes and providing social amenities, targeted programmes to reduce regional inequalities and instituting interventions to create jobs, reduce unemployment and underemployment, especially among youth. Investment must move beyond the 'hard' terrain to include the 'soft' infrastructure (FMBNP, 2017:15).

In providing the details of the strategy for the attainment of this objective, ERGP specifies in its strategy 45 'Develop a national manpower policy to match job skill requirements and education programmes' in pursuit of the programme of job creation. In setting this strategy, the Federal Government of Nigeria should take cognizance of current constraints that might challenge its realization. First, the task of matching job skill requirements and education programmes is in the realm of manpower planning. Second, as it stands today, the institution or agency assigned this function has been incapacitated or emasculated. Third, manpower planning is no longer a popular concept or buzz word, even though the problems for its attention are mounting higher on daily basis. These concerns provoke a rethink on manpower planning within the context of Nigeria (Ukpong, 2013). The recent provision of ERGP on manpower planning therefore provides an opportunity to debate, rethink and burnish on the relevance of manpower planning as a veritable development tool and field of endeavour. It is important to note the currency and national spread of interest in manpower planning in Nigeria. Beside the ERGP, at the sub-national level, on Wednesday, November 15, 2017, Akwa Ibom State Government created a new full fledged Ministry called Ministry of Labour, Productivity and Manpower Planning and subsequently swore in a Commissioner at its helm (The Post, 2017). This is a pointer to the national momentum on manpower planning.

Developing a manpower planning policy for Nigeria at this stage is long overdue given the lingering crisis of generalized human resources wastage, boldly expressed by the twin problems of poverty and unemployment and the challenge of planning deficit in the country. These challenges are not new to Nigeria, having been placed on the public domain and academic agenda for a long time now (Umo, 1998; Yesufu, 2000; Umo and Ukpong, 2010 and Diejomaoh, 2013). The issues or probematique for resolution are multifaceted; are social, economic and political in dimensions and are increasing. A stylized presentation shows them as:

- Monocultural economy and jobless growth
  - Flawed employment and poverty strategy
  - Dysfunctional management and regulatory framework
  - Inadequate budgeting commitment to social sector investment
  - Collapse of investment and crisis of financial intermediation
  - Absence of implementation, monitoring and evaluation programmes
  - Feeble and discordant labour market analysis
- (Umo and Ukpong, 2010; 602-607).

The probematique involves several agencies and stakeholders which must be brought together to 'match' their actions for common or synchronized outcomes. The absence of such coordination produces the wastage being experienced. Such absence is obvious in Nigeria as asserted by Diejomoah (2010: 580) - 'One major concern is that inadequate data exist on the cost of investment projects in all the sectors and where such data exist, the employment implications of the investment projects are not a concern of the programme planners and implementers in the sector'. This concern rightly belongs to the manpower planners. The only central agency created by law in Nigeria to handle this function, the National Manpower Board, had been merged with the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) in 2008. Manpower planning rests on a tripod planning, development and utilization. It is the planning arm that coordinates the tripartite enterprise (Ukpong, 2001A). The new task of designing a manpower policy must pay attention to this institutional imperative and the current lacuna.

There is need for the new task to take into cognizance new shifts that have emerged in the realm of development planning with implications for Nigeria. As Mehmet (1972) has asserted, manpower planning is relevant and useful to development policies by focusing on current problems and conditions in employment markets and the driving forces to define its methodology than resorting to abstract macro-planning aimed at forecasting long term manpower requirements which had been highly fashionable in the 1960s 1980s. Manpower forecasting is obsolete with advances in technology which have raised and killed occupations and jobs (Mason, Reeson and Sanderson, 2017; Frey and Osborne, 2016 and Ukpong, 2009).

The new context of manpower planning sees investment in people as the key to addressing the problem of exclusion with the government playing the lead role in providing the interventions (Ekpo, 2016 and Umo, 2012). The functions of government in this context are many including local officials assisting individuals to find jobs (Ross and Holmes, 2017) and government creating jobs in sectors that are employment-sensitive through its investment. Economic diversification is a top priority to this present administration of President M. Buhari (FMBNP, 2017 and Ekpo, 2016). Besides, government's intervention is necessary to provide level-playing field and stabilization as the labour market in Nigeria is feeble and 'far from egalitarian' (Streeck, 2015:254) even with the infusion of 'social capital' (Ukpog, 1995).

In setting the task of designing a manpower planning policy for Nigeria, ERGP has not explicated the dimensions (of the task) as identified above. As recently indicated in another study that involved amplifying a policy undertaking under the Plan, it is incumbent on the experts to facilitate the process of simplifying and guiding policy formulation and implementation (Ukpog, 2017A; 2017B and 2017C). The manpower planning policy called for by ERGP is a supporting development policy type in the mould of an umbrella. Those who seek to craft the national manpower planning policy must provide answers to two questions to guide the task, namely, what is the fundamental problem(s) that the new manpower policy is called upon to solve and how best can it be structured to achieve this? This paper attempts to provide the background to and the fundamental elements on which a national manpower planning policy can be designed for Nigeria, noting the shifts that inform manpower planning.

The data for the paper were drawn from the same sources for the previous related studies and publications (Ukpog, 2013; 2017A; 2017B and 2017C). Other data for updates came from Nigerian institutions' vast troves of data including the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), NISER and the archive of National Manpower Board (NMB). The data are both primary and secondary in nature. According to the World Bank (2017), data from National troves can be used directly to create models and make policy recommendations.

### **Conceptual Underpinning**

Youth unemployment is rising globally, giving rise to what is called 'generation jobless'. The phenomenon is not new but calls attention to two forces at work, population pressure and dysfunctional labour markets. The traditional and familiar responses of 'reforming labour markets and improving education' have not worked, invoking therefore new shifts or measures in planning with a 'new vigour and a new twist... and new technology...with powerful tools' (The Economist, April, 27, 2013:9 and 52). The planning in focus is manpower planning to address the planning deficit as the case in Nigeria. According to Diejomoah (2013), 'there is espoused need for Nigeria to be engaged in more effective development planning ...that will be more closely linked to what we call effective utilization of its greatest asset, human resources'. This is a case for a revisit to manpower planning as a credible development strategy, under a new approach mediated by technology and multi-disciplinary perspective. Manpower planning is a dynamic and integrative enterprise.

Three sets of forces have influenced current thinking and debates in manpower planning. Technology and innovations have greatly altered the world of work and policy environment. Technology interfaces with policy settings producing new structures and task patterns (Ukpog, 2017B). Technology, in particular digitization as expressed in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning response, has decomposed occupations, raised new categories and replaced human beings entirely in some instances (Mason, Reeson and Sanderson, 2017). This awareness is not new in Nigeria as the National Manpower Board (NMB) had earlier in 1998 called national attention to this development under the insights gained from a unique labour market analysis project it called vacancy rate analysis project (VARAP). VARAP also alerted the nation of the low skills contents of employment at the time (Ukpog, 2001B; 2003). Unfortunately, attention was not paid to this early warning. Beside occupational decomposition and displacement, technology has also introduced methodology and new vistas of categorizing occupations, for example according to susceptibility to computerization. On this basis, some occupations have 'disappeared'. It is evident that the process of creative destruction, following technological interventions, has created enormous wealth as well as disruptions in the world of work (Frey and Osborne, 2013). The second major shift in manpower conceptualization is about the driver of the process. In the current dispensation of diversification, government is seen as an economic agent with the crucial role of driving the process (Ekpo, 2016). Diversification is adopted as development strategy to restore and sustain growth, create jobs and achieve real poverty reduction. Nigerian economy is highly dependent on a single commodity, oil, for economic activities, fiscal revenues and foreign exchange, while importing raw materials and intermediate goods to sustain the manufacturing sector.

The economy is skewed as well towards consumption than investment. The negative outcomes from the labour market and its impact on the wellbeing of citizens have been linked to the negative economic setup. As presented under ERGP, it is the formal decision of Government to diversify the economy under six priority sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, solid minerals, services, construction and real estate and oil and gas. This prioritization has impact on the labour market and participation.

Government is the lead driver of the process of diversification and a 'new' theoretical framework of explaining this arrangement is advanced by Ekpo (2016). It indicates roles and resource base for execution which have human resource and human capital development base. 'By diversification, we imply states relying on other types of investments (other than the oil) with associated benefits and risks to guarantee economic growth and development' (Ekpo, 2016). State or government is assigned a production function with the assumption that increased government expenditure would enhance aggregate output.

In other words, government's expenditure as public investment, for example, in infrastructure (hard and soft) enables the diversification process. Also, during periods of inadequate aggregate demands, putting money in the hands of household and their families through social protection measures on livelihood like public work (Ukpong, 2017C) - would not only increase consumption, enhance output but fight poverty and unemployment. Government plays an active role in driving the process. However, it is its strategic thinking 'that would ginger the private sector to want to invest in various areas of the economy (diversification), contribute to growth and make profit. The private sector is an engine of growth and not development... It is government that is an engine of development utilizing the benefits of growth to ensure diversity, equity and fairness. It is government that is concerned about education, health, employment, poverty, inequality and security' (Ekpo, 2016; 2012).

The third shift in manpower planning conceptualization is identified by Ekpo (2016) above but extensively discussed by Umo (2012: 101-112) as investment-led poverty reducing employment paradigm (IPREP). IPREP is a response to the gaps in extant poverty-employment concepts and strategies which are identified to include inadequate attention to investment as 'prime' driver of poverty reduction, inadequate linkage to employment crisis, stand-alone and isolated poverty programmes, fragility of growth-targeted poverty reduction assumption and conceptual inconsistencies. IPREP is derived from the ILO-UNDP Jobs for Africa (JFA) programme which was piloted in 10 African countries between 1998 and 2001 with reported success.

IPREP is an approach which recognises the centrality of investment as a means of generating employment which can in turn reduce or eliminate poverty. 'It can be seen as re-invention of crude Keynesianism which poses employment as a function of investment' (Umo, 2012:106). IPREP has eight strengths which can positively impact on the poverty - employment nexus:

- Holistic perspective-poverty is embedded in the employment crisis.
- Centrality of employment through full employment policy-integrate employment/poverty concerns in micro and sectoral policies.
- Investments as arrow head makes all elements and types of investment employment intensive and sensitive.
- Broad participation in poverty- fighting effort mobilize all stakeholders into poverty-fighting efforts, including social overhead capital or human capital.
- Potentials for development inclusiveness and equity- avoid susceptibility to worsening income and opportunity inequality and social exclusion.
- Application of results-based monitoring and evaluation IPREP is amenable to the application of modern public management tools and technology for impact measurement.
- Success as a pilot test demonstrated as a resounding success.
- Experience in US contemporary history benchmarked against success story of poverty reduction.

The four key elements of IPREP investment, poverty reduction, employment and growth - are central to the manpower planning enterprise and cohere with the other two thematic shift issues already identified. In summary, following Mehmet's (1972) approach which calls for a disaggregated manpower planning focused on current problems and conditions in employment markets and the driving forces, we have presented above a conceptual framework which is informed by Nigeria's ERGP.

The fundamental shift elements that should underpin the new manpower planning policy are technology, government's active and lead role in the current diversification process of the economy and the mobilization of investment, including social capital, to confront poverty and unemployment in inclusive manner. In this perspective, the manpower planning policy envisaged is an umbrella type with linkages to micro and sectoral policies, including social protection policy.

### **The Domain of Manpower Planning**

In this section, we present, in brief, the concept of manpower planning with a view to drawing out its essence and continued relevance. It is useful to state at this beginning that manpower planning takes place at two levels: macro (national) and micro (enterprise). Speaking strictly technically, the concept of manpower planning aptly applies at the national level while it is appropriate to refer to the activity at the enterprise level as human resource planning; a restricted consideration. Our focus is at the national level.

By simple definition, manpower planning is the strategic and dynamic alignment of a nation's human resources with its development aspiration, given the critical role of human capital as the driver of development process. This implies that, manpower planning is a "continuous exercise" just as development planning is, reflecting the changes in national objectives, for example, technology and knowledge. It anchors a national development plan (by whatever name it is called), which it gives expression to. Manpower planning provides the framework of action within a plan through which the available human resources are effectively developed and optimally utilized. (Yesufu, 2000:365).

The manpower enterprise as implied above has three components namely; manpower planning (coordination), manpower development (training) and manpower utilization (employment). The tripod is expected to work in harmony. It is the responsibility of the first leg of the tripod, manpower planning, to ensure this harmony through continuous (re)alignment of the other two components. Employment crisis (unemployment/underemployment) is commonly the most familiar symptom of dislocation or misalignment of harmony within the tripod (Ukpong, 2001A). Any coordination failures underpin what is commonly called 'gap between the world of work and the world of learning' and the consequences are bitter.

The essence of manpower planning therefore is to ensure the balancing act between the available and potential human resources of a nation and their optimal utilization. It is a programming activity, enhanced by technological and knowledge advancements. This is the domain task of manpower planning. The details of this domain task have been simplified by Ojo (1986) as provided in Box I. However, additional activities as mediated by changes have emerged and should be added to the list. A significant one to update the domain list with is the analysis of labour market.

#### **Box I: The major domain tasks of Manpower Planning**

Identifying the requirements for manpower for various sectors of the economy. Planning of formal education, on-the-job training, in-service programmes, adult education and life - long learning; Analysis of the structure of incentives and the utilization of manpower, including unemployment and underemployment, and proposing appropriate measures for alleviating them; Developing the necessary organisations and institutions to be responsible for the execution of manpower programmes, and Developing the management and labour techniques, working conditions and industrial relations in order to ensure maximum productivity.
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**Source: Ojo (1986:1-2)**

The concept of manpower denotes the productive capacity of the labour force of a given entity. It is the totality of the economic resources which represent the skills and attitude resulting from education and training. Manpower is the human capital that undertakes development efforts. For some reasons, the use of the word 'manpower' to describe the above concept of capabilities of the working population has been questioned just as the hitherto dominant element in manpower planning approach, forecasting, has been criticised. Today, it is fashionable to speak of human resources planning, workforce planning and so on, reflecting the changes and new concerns. However, the subject matter of manpower planning, remains the same as conveyed by Jones (2013:16)

*“With ‘homegrown’ workforce ageing, employers are turning to skilful immigrants to meet their workforce needs. Recent legislation, neighbouring immigration laws and a prosperous economy render Canada a desirable migrant destination. As such, workforce experts are expecting a possible influx of skilled immigrants into Canada over the next few years. Currently, Canada welcomes approximately 200,000 new immigrants each year and by 2030, it is expected that 80 percent of the country’s labour market growth will be reliant on immigrants. Nonetheless, the changing dynamics of the Canadian workforce introduces a new set of opportunities, issues and consideration.”*

The domain issues for manpower planners or workforce experts are clearly outlined above, including the anticipation of changes in the economy and society alongside existing socio-economic challenges and designing programmes for their non-disruptive integration into the national development.

### **The History of Manpower Planning in Nigeria**

Manpower planning both as an academic and practising activity is a derived field. This, perhaps, explains the controversies that have dogged it since inception. It is generally agreed that pressures on the labour market underpin or give impetus to manpower planning. The origin of manpower planning is located in the pressure of World War II, when manpower economics asserted influence on the management of the labour markets in Western Europe, United States of America, the Soviet Union and Japan. According to Smith and Bartholomew (1988), manpower planning emerged during this era when ‘emphasis was on manpower as a scarce resource... wastage was costly and so there was a strong interest in reducing it’. The reverse today is the surplus as sign-posted by mass unemployment which presents the same concern about wastage.

The 1960s was the zenith for manpower planning and by 1970s, it had evolved from a phase of growth to one of consolidation (Smith and Bartholomew, 1988). The fortune of manpower planning follows changes in economic climate. The boom and bust in economic prosperity have their marks on manpower planning. Drawing extensively from the experiences of the developing countries, during the lost development decades of the 1980s and 1990s, there was considerable debate on the relevance of manpower planning during this period. Championed mainly by the World Bank and led by its chief protagonist, Psacharopoulos (1991;1994), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), there was a strident call to abandon manpower planning and replace it with labour market signalling (LMS), later modified to labour market analysis.

Manpower planning was criticised principally on account of its forecasting methodology. According to Psacharopoulos (1994:15).

*“The art of manpower planning is certainly in disarray... ‘planning’ is becoming a word to avoid. The optimism with the central planning of the post-World War II years has collapsed, as is evident from the respective economic performance of countries that attempted to plan (ranging from India to the Soviet Union) and of laissez-faire countries and areas such as the US and Hong Kong. The same applies to manpower planning.”*

It was expected at this point a major shift in conceptualization from manpower economics to labour economics and the emergence of the situation of labour market analysis replacing manpower forecasting. But this has not turned out to be exactly so. What has emerged is the manpower forecasting approach (MFA) being modified in order to provide some different approaches in the labour market analysis (Spalleti, 2008). Indeed, new approaches to manpower analysis have become both inevitable and available given the impact of the forces of globalization and knowledge economy (Ukpong, 2009; Richard and Amjad, 1994; Reddy, 2005).

The beginning of the history of manpower planning in Nigeria is succinctly provided by the “father of Nigeria manpower planning”, Professor T.M. Yesufu in the classic published for the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) in 1969, ***Manpower Problems and Economic Development in Nigeria***. The evolution of manpower planning in Nigeria was subsequently updated by him (Yesufu, 2000). Nigeria gained independence in 1960 at the time manpower planning was approaching its zenith. Following the trend, the Ashby Commission was appointed to look into the manpower needs of the country over the next twenty years.

It was however, Professor F.H. Harbison (who with C.A. Myers are generally regarded as the ‘two fathers of manpower planning’) who recommended within the Ashby Commission, the establishment of ‘appropriate organisational arrangement to assess continuously the manpower needs and to formulate programmes for effective manpower development throughout the Federation’ (Yesufu, 1969:91). Accordingly, the National Manpower Board (NMB) was established in 1962 with the National Universities Commission. It worked under the supervision of National Economic Council with the Ministry of Economic Development having responsibility over it.

It was established without any enabling law and by 1965 following the departure of its pioneer Executive Secretary, Professor T.M. Yesufu, NMB had been reduced to a 'junior' parastatal in association with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (Yesufu, 2000:71). As it were, NMB did not make any inputs in the first National Development Plan, 1962-1968 as it had been fully prepared before its inauguration in 1962. The manpower implications content of the Plan prepared subsequently by NMB was not used to revise the Plan as was expected. This pattern of overlooking NMB persisted and it remained 'virtually, stonily ignored by successive military administrations' (Yesufu, 2000:71).

However, following the intervention of the UNDP and ILO in their programmes, Manpower Planning Phases I & II, covering the period 1986 and 1993, the manpower enterprise received a boost in Nigeria. The details of the programmes and outcomes are well recorded elsewhere (Ukpong, 2001A; 2001B and 2003). It enabled the transformation and upgrading of NMB into a parastatal with an enabling law, under the National Planning Commission (NPC). NMB quickly reinterpreted its mandates away from a narrow scope to broad ones. By 1995, it had expanded its scope to include employment planning and organised an international conference on Full Employment Strategy in Nigeria. The immediate outcome of the Conference was the design of a National Employment Policy, backstopped by ILO. Although the policy was approved by the Federal Executive Council, it was not implemented because of the sudden regime change that followed its adoption. NMB went further to attempt bridging the 'gap' in the manpower enterprise by organising the National Tripartite Forum for the tripod stakeholders of manpower, starting in 1998.

NMB also in the efforts to strengthen its data base for planning, canvassed for national harmonization of concepts, definitions and measurement of labour statistics in the country. The National Workshop on Employment Statistics held in Abuja, May 28-30, 1997 paved way for the adoption of national standards on labour statistics, indicating a progressive shift towards the labour market analysis approach. Besides training its staff at both ILO International Training Centre, Turin, Italy and Bureau of Labour Statistics, USA on labour market analysis, NMB actually shifted focus to labour market information system (LMIS), a wider system of manpower analysis (Spalleti, 2008). It changed the orientation of its survey from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) which it inherited to Labour Market Study. It introduced the Vacancy Rate Analysis Project (VARAP) as the nucleus of the LMIS in Nigeria, an initiative that was well received in the private sector (Oni, 2008).

The most fundamental shift occurred when NMB integrated poverty monitoring component to the LMIS. In 1999, NMB as the coordinator of LMIS in Nigeria, was commissioned by ILO to prepare a Programme Support Document (PSD) under its Jobs for Africa: Poverty Reducing Employment Strategies for Sub-Saharan Africa (JFA-PRESSA). The initiative was to establish a national labour market information and poverty monitoring system. The proposal was accepted for implementation; funded by the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). The same PSD was adopted as prototype for ten other African Countries that were to implement the expanded LMIS.

Unfortunately, it was at this height of national and international success and recognition that NMB as a manpower agency was merged with NISER in 2006 (in pursuit of 'reforms'), prompting the idea of an apparent dissolution of manpower planning mandate in Nigeria. Writing earlier, Yesufu (2000:91), majestically stated that the reorganised NMB had been 'reactivated and given a new sense of self and official esteem'. Ogunrinola (2008) was also of the same view that NMB played a key planning role and should be encouraged to continue on a renewed or innovative approach.

Manpower planning cannot be wished away simply on the ground of the criticism of its manpower forecasting technique, or administrative narrowing, given the renewed pressure on the labour market, calling for intervention. As already stated, attention to manpower planning is derived from the interventionist tradition in economics and social science in general. At the moment there are a number of compelling forces expressing the necessity for manpower planning which are identified below.

### **The Resurgence of Manpower Planning**

There are both domestic and global pressures compelling a revisit to manpower planning. It is necessary to highlight some of these, especially those already identified in the previous sections of the paper. Four of such drivers, simply called the 4Ds of manpower planning are highlighted here:

### The Demographic Demands

The Nigerian population is basically youthful. The Nigeria population profile reveals that the Nigerian youth dominate the population now and in the long future. Broadly defined to include the labour force, the youth comprises 70 percent of Nigeria's population and with the current population growth rate of 2.8 percent per annum, Nigeria's population will double in 2037 to 334 million people and the youth will still contribute 70 percent of this number.

**Table 1: Incidence Of Poverty By States In Nigeria, 2006-2016**

S/N	STATE	2006 (%)	POPULATION IN POVERTY (2006)	2016 (%)	POPULATION IN POVERTY (2016)
1	ABIA	22.81	648,984	25.50	950,473
2	ADAMAWA	62.91	1,999,771	18.79	798,281
3	AKWA IBOM	35.68	1,392,187	39.97	2,191,226
4	ANAMBRA	18.66	779,374	11.38	629,065
5	BAUCHI	76.97	3,581,232	30.34	1,983,421
6	BAYELSA	23.59	402,095	41.64	948,543
7	BENUE	48.97	2,082,795	17.14	984,147
8	BORNO	50.15	2,091,948	32.77	1,920,382
9	CROSS RIVER	38.12	1,102,711	20.65	798,384
10	DELTA	40.12	1,649,913	13.97	791,172
11	EBONYI	41.29	898,825	31.08	895,223
12	EDO	30.76	994,422	19.08	808,151
13	EKITI	37.36	896,130	12.78	418,008
14	ENUGU	29.90	977,029	23.79	1,049,405
15	GOMBE	71.62	1,693,842	44.67	1,454,885
16	IMO	26.59	1,044,208	22.57	1,220,756
17	JIGAWA	85.51	3,729,020	37.70	2,197,217
18	KADUNA	45.29	2,768,602	20.52	1,693,385
19	KANO	56.88	5,347,609	34.84	4,555,989
20	KASTINA	62.61	3,632,275	20.35	1,593,673
21	KEBBI	79.43	2,586,725	28.34	1,258,310
22	KOGI	77.50	2,568,439	22.26	995,799
23	KWARA	73.47	1,737,864	14.73	470,313
24	LAGOS	55.16	5,026,913	13.05	1,637,853
25	NASARAWA	56.46	1,055,450	30.81	777,458
26	NIGER	57.19	2,261,734	23.64	1,313,497
27	OGUN	28.13	1,055,133	10.12	528,033
28	ONDO	37.23	1,288,542	12.69	592,838
29	OSUN	27.61	943,479	3.92	184,459
30	OYO	22.70	1,266,677	15.78	1,237,288
31	PLATEAU	56.66	1,816,874	38.12	1,601,208
32	RIVERS	30.58	1,589,681	38.02	2,776,952
33	SOKOTO	73.47	2,720,171	56.74	2,835,916
34	TARABA	55.90	1,282,870	24.67	756,588
35	YOBE	76.31	1,771,491	41.63	1,371,349
36	ZAMFARA	72.81	2,387,183	32.18	1,453,064
37	FCT	39.19	551,058	18.52	660,076
			<b>69,623,256</b>		<b>48,332,791</b>

**Source:** National Bureau of Statistics

Ordinarily, there is so much expectation in the 'demographic dividend' (today's mass of young people moving into its productive years) inherent in a youthful population. It had aided the rise of the Asian Tigers and the growth miracle of the Celtic Tiger.



However, such huge opportunity is not guaranteed Nigeria unless hard planning is undertaken to ensure that all the 'extra people' are fed, educated and given opportunities to avoid becoming jobless, disgruntled and posing challenges like taking up arms and other negative activities as currently witnessed. This is the realm of manpower planning. As shown (Akande, 2014; Zhu, 2016), the worsening unemployment situation in Nigeria (see Fig. 1) is a youth crisis. The youth account for the majority of the unemployed and underemployed in Nigeria (estimated at 17.6 million in Q3, 2016), and this problem will only get bigger as the population continues to grow (FMBNP, 2017:108).

**Fig.1 Unemployment rate in Nigeria, 1995 - 2016**



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)

### Planning Deficit

It is generally well established now that Nigeria, like most African countries, does not engage in hard planning. There is a yawning gap between expression of aspiration and accomplishment. As already reported, Nigeria's First National Development Plan, 1962-1968 had no manpower implications content, (presumably given the date of inauguration of NMB in 1962). But the manpower implications of the plan that was subsequently prepared by NMB was not used for revision. The gap created has persisted and recurs consistently. Although, the Federal Government of Nigeria has formally acknowledged 'manpower as a necessary basis for planning all other sectors of social and economic development' (Yesufu, 1969), that is yet to be implemented. Development plan without explicit manpower component implications is incomplete and cannot promote transformation and human development. The current development paradox being experienced is the obvious outcome. Economic growth (average 4.8 percent annually during 2011-2015) has failed to translate to the well-being of the generality of Nigerians. The deepening prevalence of poverty expresses this challenge (see table 1). Although the incidence of poverty has nationally declined from 49.7 percent in 2006 to 33 percent in 2016, many states still maintain more than 50 percent poverty rate between the two periods.

In general, the human conditions have not recorded corresponding improvements (vis-à-vis the growth rate), sustaining the current calls for social protection measures nationally (Ukpog, 2017A). Growth on its own cannot translate into human development until its derivatives are channelled by the human agency to selected ends. This makes it imperative to have a 'roadmap towards attaining the goals of human development' (Umo and Ukpog, 2010). This is the domain of manpower planning.

### Human Resource Dilemma

There are several challenges intrinsic to manpower planning that must be carefully resolved as part of planning process. A few are identified and presented in stylized manner:

- i. **The dynamics of the labour market:** The labour market is expected not only to play active but a lead role in some sense of being self-adjusting. But the Nigerian labour market is 'highly underdeveloped and ineffective' (Yesufu, 2000:364). It is also small in terms of private sector market mechanisms.

- ii. In the present circumstance, government led interventions through manpower planning is inevitable. At global level, this imperative is present as asserted by Ross and Holmes (2017) that 'even in the midst of a prolonged economic expansion with a low national unemployment rate, jobs are not always available and not everyone who wants work can find it'.
- ii. **Skills mismatch:** The issue of inverted skills pyramid is still prevalent in the country, throwing up pocket of shortages in emerging professions and sectors (Popoola, 2013). These imbalances can only be addressed carefully through manpower planning (Umo, 1998).
- iii. **High rates of unemployment and poverty:** This has been well illustrated in almost every sector of this paper, and elsewhere, as a dominant challenge (see Figure 1 and Table 1, for instance).
- iv. **The proportion working in the public sector:** On the average, it is just about one percent of the African population that constitutes the public service (Nigeria, 1.08 percent). Several manpower implications are inherent here (Ukpong, 2010).
- v. **The expanding population of expatriates:** There is a new wave of reliance on expatriates to drive the key and high- technical sectors of the economy. The number is burgeoning, especially at the top, according to a recent report (Akanbi, 2013)

All these shifts in the labour market call for reforms that allow the country's human resources to be meaningfully used throughout the economy.

### The Demands of Global Labour Market and Technology

Globalization and technological innovations are posing challenging demands to the labour market and the educational and training systems that require careful responses. These have been analysed and documented for Nigeria and elsewhere (Ukpong, 2009; 2010 and Muro, Liu, Whiton, and Kulkarni, 2017). For instance, as knowledge becomes available, it tends to decompose occupations and/or split a profession into several professions and specialties, creates new cadres of occupation and specialization, and so on. This is why some occupational categories like stenographer have disappeared from the international (and national) occupational classification (ISCO) system and new ones like 'experts who think for living' (consultant) may appear.

Again, knowledge explosion, technological advancements and open international borders make opportunity for easier access to expertise, skills and flow of investment to create jobs. They also present at the same time threats of growing brain drain, loss of advanced human capital, higher cost for expatriates and displacement of indigenes from job positions as already being recorded in Nigeria (Akanbi, 2013). This reflects a dynamic and complex labour market that requires new skills to study, understand and analyse. Labour market analysis itself is a new field with fewer manpower planners who are competently qualified to handle. Manpower planning is justified for its positive contribution in helping to identify shortages, surplus and equipping the workforce with tools to increase growth and meet global competitiveness (Parmar and Makwana, 2012).

### The Elements of the New Manpower Planning Policy

The 4Ds of manpower planning highlighted in the last section attempt to identify the fundamental problems or issues which manpower planning policy should address in Nigeria. It is required to 'complete' or fill the gap in the development plan policy in Nigeria, foster social inclusion, promote growth, guide occupational transformation or transitivity and deal with the dynamics of the labour market. We briefly identify the elements of the structure and core issues that the new manpower planning policy should embrace:

- i. **Policy Space:** Historically, manpower planning has been crowded out in the development process of the country since the manpower planning machinery missed the first boat of the 1962-68 National Development Plan (Yesufu, 2000:70). It has since remained so (Diejomaoh, 2010). A mandatory manpower planning policy role needs to be instituted and executed within the framework of national development plan. The fresh mention in ERGP is a good beginning but the real test is in seeing that that strategic target of ERGP is executed.
- ii. **Institutional Mandates:** This involves claim and demonstration of monopoly over a set of activities that must be performed and are central to the prosperity of the economy and society. The core question that determines this is what will the nation lose or what will it cost the nation if this activity is not performed? Although the form of the activity may change, its existence cannot be extinguished without major consequences. In the present context, the mandate will be shaped by current pressures which include:

- Sustainability of recent growth being driven by exogenous factors (including expatriate skills) and translating same to equitable distribution of opportunities for income and job, for instance.
- The demographic challenge of the youth bulge which is expected to grow so quickly, accelerating the challenge of job creation.
- The structure of labour market (workforce) with an exceptionally high proportion (about 74 percent) of labour force being engaged in wage employment, low human capital level with majority of workers being employed in the fringes of the economy and in low productivity jobs.
- Lack of education and job trainings worsened by skill mismatch.
- The prioritization of economic activities (the six sectors defined by diversification for instance) and recognition of their changing contribution currently the manufacturing sector is shrinking and becoming more capital intensive, hampering the capacity to absorb significant volume of labour and the agricultural share of employment is declining with the service sector absorbing a large share of the labour force (Ajakaiye, Afekhen, Olufunke and Nabena, 2015)
- The drive for inclusive growth in the face of rising inequality and high poverty rate requires special attention being paid to the employment issues and social transfers to the vulnerable and the working poor as well as human capital development including social capital.

iii. **Coordination Mechanism:** Manpower planning policy is by nature pluralistic in outlook. It incorporates and harmonises the interests of the tripartite stakeholders. Ability to do so requires an institutional framework. Manpower planning is an institutionalized activity. The higher the institutional recognition and rating, the more the acceptance and respect accorded its outputs. The current low institutional rating accorded manpower planning should be reversed. At the moment, the mandates of NMB had been transferred to NISER without the corresponding measures of safeguarding the continuous discharge of same and without repealing the law that established the institution. Nigeria demonstrates the tendency of shooting down mandate delivery in the name of reforms (Umo and Ukpong, 2010). As at now, there is an apparent absence of institutional arrangement to coordinate and interface meaningfully in the domain of manpower planning.

iv. **Presence of Executive Capacity:** Demonstration of executive capacity is required on two fronts. The ability and possession of goodwill that enables the mobilization of investment to meet the enlarged institutional mandates are key to the manpower planning enterprise. Also, multi-disciplinary expertise to deliver the mandates is critically required. Both sides of the intervention will ensure revitalization of the manpower planning in Nigeria. The manpower planning enterprise in Nigeria is in dire need of re-invention. This has to be done in three aspects giving a credible voice to the continuing centrality of the mandates of manpower planning (advocacy), raising a critical mass of competent core foot soldiers (professional manpower planners, capacity building/training) and connecting the enterprise with relevant policy makers and end-users of products (promotional). The last time manpower planning received a boost in Nigeria, it was on account of UNDP/ILO playing the champion. New champions are needed.

## Conclusion

There is a huge planning deficit in Nigeria, identified simply in this paper as the 4Ds, which manpower planning is called upon to fill and give full expression to development planning. The alarm raised by George Psacharopoulos that manpower planning is in disarray and that there is no more room for planning in general has turned out to be misleading. The rising economic and political powers of BRICS countries, which contain some of the countries he made reference to, demonstrate what manpower planning can achieve overtime. India is today a celebrated success story because of the capability of its manpower which has been carefully planned since the decade of the zenith of manpower planning.

The success recorded by Skill Development Scotland (SDS) is a bold statement on the continuing relevance of planning at institutional scale on behalf of or by a government itself (Masterson, 2013:37). Utilizing historical perspective, our analysis of the manpower planning enterprise in Nigeria indicates that overall, the manpower planning enterprise is still relevant with considerable strength to meet the country's planning deficit. Notwithstanding earlier theoretical and methodological reservations expressed about the forecasting techniques of manpower planning, it is evident that manpower planning is still needed to address some emerging and old issues calling for planning and associated with state intervention in development process. However, today's manpower planning must function with enlarged domain mandates, using multidisciplinary approach and technological tools that are already available.

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