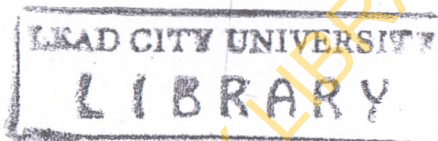


Fundamentals of
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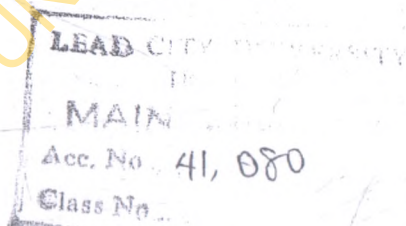
I.B. Bello-Imam
B.O. Oshionebo
S.A. Ojeifo

Fundamentals of Human Resource Management in Nigeria



edited by

**I.B. Bello-Imam
B.O. Oshionebo
S.A. Ojeifo**



2007

Published by

I.B. Bello-Imam

Dean, School of Management and Entrepreneurial Studies

Lead City University, Jwericho, Ibadan

0803-4988988

©

I.B. Bello-Imam

B.O. Oshionebo

S.A. Ojeifo

First Published 2007

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ISBN: 978-2194-58-2

Book design and produced by:

College Press & Publishers Limited

5A, Baale Akintayo Road, Jericho GRA, Ibadan

08036694838, 08023539923, 02-2001249

Preface

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a burgeoning topic in management studies. This study involves the recruitment, training and retraining as well as sustenance of a talented and energetic workforce to support organizational vision and mission overtime. A panoramic overview of the existing literature in this area of learning shows that there is a dearth of indigenou and classic version which could better explain the peculiarities of the Nigerian case. This book, entitled *The Fundamentals of Human Resource Management in Nigeria* is a bold attempt to solve this yearning problem.

The idea of writing this book came from Reverend S.A. Ojeifo, who is the Head of Department of Business Administration, Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, Nigeria. His initial idea was favourably greeted by Mr. Basil O. Oshionebo and my humble self. We hasten to observe that these ideas should have fizzled out were they not complementarily received by the coterie of scholars that we assembled from Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State and Lead City University, Ibadan.

Assembling the galaxy of scholars for this book was not an easy task, neither was the coordination of the exercise whose most tedious aspect was the review as well as the corrections of the identified mistakes in the various chapters. The editors are immensely grateful to all those especially the anonymous reviewers and numerous typists that facilitated in various ways, the production of this book.

It remains for us to commend this volume to all those scholars and practitioners that are interested on the topic of Human Resources Management anywhere on the globe.

I.B. Bello-Imam
Oshionebo &
Rev. S.A. Ojeifo
August 2007

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Chapter Five

Managing People At Work

Amodu Akeem and Aluko Adeniran

'Man, know thyself'

- Socrates

Executive Summary:

The chapter raises a number of philosophical questions as regards the phenomenon 'Managing People at Work'. Questions raised include, for example, 'how best do we conceive management philosophy?', 'how best do we treat people at work?', 'what exactly do we mean by work?' and, with particular reference to Nigeria, the chapter seeks to answer the question 'what is the appropriate attitude to work?'

The chapter seeks to situate appropriate responses to these questions through the use of the analytical tools of philosophy. Through the use of conceptual clarification and expository analysis, for example, the chapter critically identifies two types of management philosophy vis-à-vis their attendant philosophical conceptions of the person.

The chapter arrives at what it calls the 'Sociability Approach' to managing people at work. The Sociability Approach is a man-centered approach which seeks to draw the attention of Human Resource Managers to that which makes the human resource 'human'.

5.1 Philosophical Base

The concept of managing people at work is so wide that it could be viewed from various perspectives. The management of people, for example, involves issues of psychology, sociology and ergonomics, among others. Psychologists are for example interested in such issues

as *motivation* and *attitude*. For Sociologists, the study of the *behaviour* of *individual* workers or *group* of workers is ultimate. Ergonomists, on the other hand will be interested in the issues of *comfort*, *efficiency* and *safety* in the workplace.

In any attempt to outline how best to address the question of managing people at work, there is, however, an underlying perspective which is fundamental to whichever perspective we intend to adopt. This is the *philosophical perspective*. It is precisely in this sense that we appear justified in discussing the philosophical base of the concept of managing people at work. The significance of this discourse is underscored by the fact that the philosophical base of any view on the concept of managing people is analogous to what a foundation is to a building.

With respect to managing people in general, the philosopher, for example, will be interested in questions such as: why should we manage people? If we have to manage people, how ought we to ensure that people are well managed? What exactly do we mean by people? And, given that the word *people* is a broad concept that covers ideas such as persons and personnel, among others, it is philosophically instructive to attempt to answer the question: what really is a person? An adequate answer to the last of these questions will provide the foundation for answering the central question of our discourse: how ought we to treat persons at the workplace? The last of these questions is perhaps the most fundamental question in Management Philosophy. At this juncture, it is heuristic that we carry out a conceptual analysis of the expression *Management Philosophy*.

5.2 Management Philosophy: Conceptual Clarification

By Management Philosophy we mean clearly articulated thought systems indicating how it is that available resources are to be organized towards actualizing set goals. Given this, we will agree that every Management Philosophy will state in clear terms how humans are to be organized, alongside other non-human resources in attaining organizational goals. By non-human resources, we

will refer to machines, raw materials and other such resources or factors of production. Of all the resources of production, the human resource – the people, the personnel, the workers – occupy a pivotal position in Management Philosophy. Without the human (person or personnel) who operates machines or cultivates the land, the machine, land and other non-human resources will remain dormant. It is the human resource that activates production. Thus Management Philosophies seek to articulate theories on how to stimulate effective and efficient activation of both human and non-human resources.

The need for managing people is a characteristic of all forms of social organization: family, group, nation, and business organizations, among others. Just as nations ordinarily seek to manage citizens, groups, clubs and associations seek to manage the individual interest of their members in an attempt to actualize what is collectively identified as the common interest. It is in the same line of thought that we may submit that business organizations seek to recruit and manage people in the attempt to realize the overall business goal of maximizing profit.

Thus, the concept *people* is of significant social concern. When we make reference to citizens, members, human resources and personnel, we are referring to people in specific contexts; to members of the human race: humans. We can hardly make sense of the idea of managing people whether at the workplace or any other identified social group without making sense, first, of the idea of the human or person.

5.3 The 'Human': A Conceptual Analysis

From etymological perspective, the word 'human' derives from the Latin word *humanus* meaning 'human being' or 'person'. Thus, the concept 'human' is socially used to refer to those phenomena relating to, or characteristic of human beings or persons: kindness, compassion and imperfection, for instance. This is the underlying idea behind expressions such as 'human nature', 'humanity', 'the

humanities' and 'the human race', among others. But what exactly do we mean by 'human being' or 'person' or 'man'?

Philosophers have variously theorized on the concept of a person. For the philosopher, for example, it is important that we seek an adequate understanding of the world we live in. Foremost among the phenomena to be understood is the essence of man. The concept *man* is, here, etymologically and generically employed to refer to persons or human beings. The Socratic exhortation 'man, know thyself' is apposite in describing the need for man to understand 'man'. It then becomes instructive that in seeking to manage people we need, first, to articulate a theoretical response to the traditional philosophical question: what kind of being is man?

The seemingly simple question 'what kind of being is man' is one that has generated a plethora of often opposing theories (Xirau and Fromm, 1976; Stevenson, 1976; Crombie, 1963; Descartes, 1968; Dreyfus, 1979; Goldman, 1970; Hume, 1978)

For the purposes of this chapter, we classify the various theories about man along the following approaches: the scientific approach, and, what we may want to describe, as the sociability approach. Before we begin to outline the intellectual content of these approaches, it is pertinent to note that each of these approaches provides corresponding philosophical base for what may be identified as the two dominant positions on how best to manage human resources: Traditional Authoritarian Management Theories and Modern Management Theories. In the next two sections we shall attempt to give an analytical outline of the content of the two broad approaches to (defining) man vis-à-vis their attendant Human Resource Management Theories or Philosophies.

5.4 Scientific Approach to 'Man' in Relation to Traditional Authoritarian Management Theories

Science provides one of the most comprehensive pictures on the nature of the universe and, by implication, the theory of man. Science is a discipline characterized by the use of systematic observation and experiment in the attempt to understand the physical world and natural phenomena. Thus, in answer to the question 'what is the

nature of human being?’ or ‘what kind of being is man?’ the scientific response would be one founded on a physicalist metaphysics: that is, man is nothing over and above the physical.

Scientific theories of man would submit, in general, for example, that the totality of the phenomenon called man is explainable in terms of man’s physico-chemical properties and processes. Paradigmatic of the scientific theories of man is J. J. C. Smart’s Mind-Brain Identity Theory (Descartes, 1968). According to J. J. C. Smart, for example, there is nothing irreducibly mental about man. What is called the ‘mind’ is in fact a function of that part of the body called the brain. Man is likened to a machine. This mechanistic conception of man accordingly explains human behavior in terms of physical causes and processes.

Corresponding to the scientific or mechanistic conception of man is the traditional authoritarian management theory with its attendant view on how best to manage human resources. Characteristic of the Traditional (or Classical) Management Theory is the view that there exists a body of rules or universal principles on which good practices can be modelled (Wilson, 1999). Thus, the worker is expected to reason in a manner that can best be described as deductive. An efficient worker (human resource) will then be one that is thoroughly rule-following. The rules or procedures for the smooth running of organizations are viewed to exist *sui-generi*, or in themselves. Apart from the fact that they exist in themselves, they are the ideals for organizational practices. To act in contrast to this body of organizational ideals, universal principles or rules is to exhibit inability to think deductively. Organizational efficiency is the paramount consideration in Traditional Management.

Traditional or Classical Management Philosophy, thus, situates the human person (or worker) in a mechanistic organization where his actions are highly regulated. The underlying conception of the human being that underlies Classical Management Philosophy can then be best described as *mechanomorphic*; the view that man is best describable in scientific or mechanistic terms (Amodu, 2003).

An identifiable scholar in the tradition of Classical Management Philosophy is Fredrick W. Taylor. Traditional Management's idea of the overriding importance of organizational efficiency is, for example, reflected in Fredrick Taylor's classical submission that jobs and individuals should be matched. Thus, central to the task of the Manager is, first, the identification of workers with required skills and intelligence; and, second, the subsequent matching (or fitting) of workers so identified with particular jobs. The result is a highly regulated or mechanical environment where work is a routine. Bureaucracy is institutionalized and the manager is in bureaucratic control. He designs job descriptions, monitors and evaluates all activities.

The bottom line therefore is that Taylor advocates the scientific division of labor which underplays democratic management practices in favor of techno-structured behavior. The Tayloristic job-fitting and job-routinizing outlook is largely characteristic of Traditional Management Philosophy.

These perhaps accounts for the weakness of Classical Management Philosophy. The expectation that humans should act like machines, and do (or, specialize in) just one kind of job, will naturally throw up behavioral problems: employee dissatisfaction with the idea of routinized work could lead, for example, to increased absenteeism, among others.

The strictly formal organizational structure of Classical Management Philosophy is therefore characterized by a deep lack of sensitivity to that which makes 'human resources' *human*. Persons are not treated as *persons*. The ultimate consideration is efficiency; and the ultimate principle, rationalization.

5.5 Sociability Approach to Man in Relation to Modern Management Theories

Opposed to the scientific attempt to define man in rather physicalist and mathematically calculable terms is the attempt to define man in terms of his *sociability*. Our choice of the term *sociability* is dictated

by the fact that these approach derives from a society-centered conception of man. Central to this approach is the view that man is most importantly, a social being: a being capable of identifying and complying with the norms of his group; a being capable of making independently rational and socially acceptable choices. In a nutshell this approach to man (people, personnel, human) is characterized by social or emotive considerations. Factors like feelings, moods, friendships and associations, thus, inform the content of the sociability perspective.

Instantiating the sociability conception of man is what has been identified as the normative concept of a person. According to this conception that which distinguishes man from non-humans – the mind – is not definable in simply scientific terms, such as the processes in the human brain; rather man, and his corollary, mind, is conceived in terms of disposition or ability to carry out, or demonstrate the possession of, certain capacities – intelligence, emotion and desire among others. Thus, in the light of the normative or sociability approach, there is more to man than the physical properties and the measurable processes characterizing man. Mental phenomena such as *motives, intentions, consciousness* and *rationality* define the very essence of man.

To treat man in a manner that fails to take into cognizance his core essence is to *de-man* man or, better still, to de-humanize man. This is where the scientific conception of man, perhaps inadvertently, leads us. Science is wont to make us treat fellow humans as machines; beings without emotions, needs nor sense of freedom and responsibility.

Given the above sociability conception of man, the pertinent question as it relates to our focus is how will this conception of a person address the question of how best to manage human resources. This is where we find an interesting relation between what we describe as the sociability approach to man and what today is referred to as Modern (Human Resource) Management Philosophy.

At the heart of Modern (Human Resource) Management Philosophy is the focus of attention on people as a way of

improving organizational effectiveness. The modern glossary of business terms is gradually witnessing a conceptual shift from the use of 'Personnel Management' to 'Human Resource Management'. In fact, in today's business community it is almost absurd and odd to speak of Modern Personnel Management. It is however modern to refer to the traditional task of managing people as 'Human Resource Management'.

The conceptual revolution against the use of 'Personnel Management' in favor of 'Human Resource Management' is perhaps informed by the modern realization that there is more to the *person* than the traditional belief in the man-machine semblance. Man, unlike machines, needs to be motivated; his morale needs to be boosted to enhance productivity. Thus, managing people goes beyond simply organizing persons for the purpose of maximizing profit. An effective Human Resources Manager will have to realize, in dealing with employees, that he is dealing with humans; with beings who have blood flowing in their veins; with beings who have social ties; beings, who as persons, deserve respect, fair treatment and just compensation; beings that not only possess human rights, but also Labor Rights; beings that are neither gods nor angels; beings that are dynamic and adaptive. Thus today's Human Resources Manager is challenged. He needs to be a social engineer of some sort – managing emotions, desires and relationships of varied types while taking cognizance of organizational aspirations.

The Human Resources Manager finds himself in a renewed workplace where decentralization and networking is at the center stage. The new workplace abhors routinizing human resources in favor of a humanized work force. The traditional Authoritarian task of the Manager – that of maximizing managerial control of work and breaking work down into its constituent tasks – is dehumanizing. In response to the anti-person posture of traditional management approach is a gradual restructuring of organizations, such that workers can work in groups, clusters, or teams. Team spirit is encouraged (Cole, 2002). Social bonds are further strengthened

and the organization in turn benefits from the emergent relationships and healthy competition between teams.

The growing literature on teamwork is in fact suggestive of a new concept of the workplace. A critical analysis of the works of Adair (1986), Belbin (1993) and Woodcock (1979), among others, points to an emergent line of thought that may best be described as *Teamism*. The concept teamism will refer to a management system founded on the principle of organizing the work force into small groups where the efforts of individual members are seen as complementing each other. With teamism, workers not only get more involved in the everyday running of the organization to which they belong, they are also afforded a platform for socialization. As team members interact in the attempt to actualize common objectives, they are afforded a number of socially benefiting opportunities: learning from each other, strengthening social skills, and cultivation of moral values such as honesty, loyalty and trust, among others.

If Fordism instantiates what we identified as Classical Management Philosophy, Post Fordist practices will be said to characterize Modern Human Resource Management (Elger and Smith, 1976). As part of the humaneness of Post-Fordist practices, work is flexibly organized; cooperative decision making is institutionalized; skills building, teamwork, and custom production are encouraged; the person is conceived as a sociable being, and treated as such. These, in the language described above, is teamism. Thus Post-Fordist industrial practices are teamist in orientation. Teamism is the orientation in a wide range of present day industries such as machine tools and computer software. To this end, we subscribe to Max de Pree's apt submission that 'the best management process for today's environment is participative management based on covenantal relationships' (De Pree 1974). It could be submitted therefore that, to a good extent, Modern Human Resource Management takes into cognizance the perennially relevant philosophical injunction of Socrates: 'Man, know thyself'. An effective implementation of Max de Pree's idea of participative management would, for example,

involve participant's objective understanding and practice of the Socratic (ethical) values; justice, love, and virtue, among others.

5.6 The Nigerian Worker and Attitude to Work

At this juncture, we may begin to raise a number of questions with reference to working. With particular reference to the Nigerian environment, for example, we may ask the twin question 'how best do we conceive work (as implied in the idea of workplace)?' and, 'what ought to be the attitude to work?'

The concept of *work* does not answer to a straight forward definition. Thus, social scholars and management experts do not agree on whether 'work' is an objective or subjective phenomenon. There is lack of consensus on what to include or exclude as work, and how to classify the various forms of work. This is perhaps due to the fact that the available definitions of 'work' tend to be influenced by cultural, ideological, ethical and religious considerations, among others. In addition, some forms of exercise and physical engagements are regarded as work in some contexts and not in other contexts. Within the Nigerian context for example, playing football has become a handsomely rewarding work. Similarly prostitution, once considered deviant work, has become 'big business' (Wilson, 1999).

For a working definition of 'work' we however adopt the submission that work represents 'the use of physical strength or mental power in order to do or make something' (Hornby 1998). Work can also be viewed as what an individual does as an occupation especially in order to earn means of livelihood. As a matter of fact, one of the main reasons people give for working is to earn money. In a recent British survey on reasons people give for working, 68 percent of respondents said they worked in order to provide for basic essentials. In the survey, 26 percent said they did not work for money but for 'expressive' reason (intrinsic rewards like a sense of enjoyment, satisfaction, and a sense of achievement (Wilson, 1999).

According to Fiona Wilson (1999) 'work occupies a substantial proportion of most of our lives'. It can be a symbol of personal value while also providing economic status and reward. It can also be regarded as a punishment. Work and employment structure our lives. Wilson Fiona went further to classify work into four types: the first is recognized and rewarded work which is paid; the second type is reproductive labour and concerns the efforts involved in raising one or more children to adulthood; a third type of work is maintenance labour, that is, cooking, gardening and laundry; the fourth type is unpaid work, voluntary work for charities, churches and other religious. Our focus in this paper is what Wilson regards as 'rewarded work, which is paid'

It is every manager's interest to raise the productive level of its workforce. That way, the manager ensures that workers justify what is paid for particular jobs. The question of justifying what is paid for particular jobs or work raises the question of workers' attitude to work. As regards paid work, we may ask, for example 'what do we mean by attitude to work?' and what, among others, ought to be the appropriate attitude to appropriately paid work? But, first, what do we mean by attitude?

Attitude can be defined as an opinion or general feeling about something. Attitude represents 'a way of thinking' Hornby (1998). Thus we infer that a person's attitude to work represents the way s/he thinks about work or the general feelings that a worker has towards work. Since actions are essentially manifestations of thoughts, an individual cannot go beyond his or her thought concerning anything, be it work, or life in general.

5.7 Attitude of Nigerian Workers To Work

The above conceptual clarification of the twin words *work* and *attitude* prepares the background for our analysis of the attitude of Nigerian workers to work. Commenting on the attitude of an average Nigerian to work, Eze (1981) opines that "many achievement – oriented, shrewd observers of Nigerian people at work have always come out with a common impression that

generally Nigerian workers are lazy, slow, sleepy, reluctant to act, unconcerned, and deceitful in their approach". He adds further the impression that one is likely to infer from the attitude of the average Nigerian worker (though, with little empirical basis): "these workers are said to lack the zeal, the briskness and the momentum of hard working people... they dislike to hear anybody talk about efficiency, dedication, honesty, competence, determination and productivity – all of which characterize achievement people in a production oriented society" (Eze 1981)

Eze's comment on Nigerian employee can be said to be apt and precise especially with respect to workers in the public sector of the Nigerian economy. Workers in the private sector of the Nigerian economy can perhaps not be said to fit squarely into this description. This possibly is due to the fact that the process of monitoring and evaluation is efficiently instituted and implemented in most of firms in the private sector of the Nigerian economy.

Now, if Eze's comment depicts the attitude of the average Nigerian worker to work, the question that arises is: What are the reasons for this negative attitude to work? Or put differently, why the unproductive attitude of the average Nigerian worker? These questions become more pertinent when we realize the traditional importance placed on *work* by virtually all the ethnic groups in Nigeria. Among the Yoruba, for example, the primacy of work is emphasized in the expression *ise logun ise* (hard work is the antidote to poverty).

To the extent that the average Nigerian worker is culturally brought up to have a positive attitude towards work, it becomes worrisome to note that this positive attitude to work and to life generally has given way to what has been described as 'hedonistic materialistic culture' (Anyà 1987). Thus, the average Nigerian worker prefers and embraces a way of life characterized by pleasure and the get-rich-quick mentality; a life where the 'worship' and celebration of material wealth takes centre stage over and above hard work and diligence. Thus, the obviously rewarding traditional work ethic is fast giving way to leisure ethic.

In the light of this mindset, Nigerian employees appear to have characteristically developed a very poor attitude to work. From the moment an average employee is hired, he goes about with the mindset of undermining the organizational objectives with a view to maximizing his personal gains in the form of illegal and crude accumulation of wealth for himself and his immediate family. Thus, there is little or no commitment that is required to boost organizational goals and productivity.

This negative attitude to work is reinforced by the 'culture of god-fatherism' which makes it possible for even the obviously lazy employee to gain promotion and occupy strategic positions in the workplace. Experience appears to convince an average Nigerian worker that there is no relationship between productivity and promotion or enjoyment of organizational favors. Nwachukwu (1998) expresses this clearly with his submission, concerning the Nigerian work environment, that employee's appraisal is dependent on congeniality, booth-licking and god-fatherism and that those who are specially gifted to practice these move fastest in the organizational hierarchy" (Nwachukwu, 1988).

This negative worldview needs to change to improve productivity. Nigerian researchers and management experts should begin to take a critical look at Nigerian cultures with a view to identifying aspects of the Nigerian culture that can be mobilized to develop a workplace ethic for sustainable social harmony and enhanced productivity; an ethic for improved attitude to work that will appeal to the generality of the workforce.

In addition, there is the need for managers in the workplace to be sufficiently skilled in the art and science of managing people. Nwachukwu (1988) once noted that 'managers are the hub on which the entire organization rotates. They set the pace, influence efficiency by the choice of technology to be employed and determine the organizational climatic that prevails. Thus, an organization is productive or is not productive depending on how labour is utilized'. However, in line with what has been identified as the Sociability Approach to managing people at work, it should be added that

an organization is productive or is not productive depending on how labour is treated. Labour or the workforce is not just another tool to be utilized in the process of production or service delivery. The worker or laborer wants to be treated with respect. Treating a worker with respect at the workplace will imply paying him what is appropriately commensurate with his effort; encouraging him to have a sense of organizational belonging via participation, at least, if only minimally, in the decision making process; and, among others, making him realize his place or role in the big picture.

5.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the idea of 'managing people at work' implies the art of getting things done through people. Thus, persons or people are fundamental to organizational quest for economic relevance and survival. Persons live within particular socio-cultural contexts and have particular metaphysical outlooks, as illustrated with the Nigerian experience. What this implies is that the requisite skill or ability to manage people at work will be informed, to some degrees, by the socio-cultural and metaphysical realities within which managers have to operate. To a very large extent however, the ability of the Human Resource Manager to successfully manage people at work is better developed, regardless of the socio-cultural milieu within which he finds himself, if he adopts the sociability approach which advocates treating persons as persons.

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