Technological Advancement: Issues, Challenges and Perspectives for Human Resource Practice in Nigeria

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Abstract. The adoption of modern technology in the 21st century poses considerable threat to most developing countries such as the environmental factors like economic system and level of development as the bane affecting domestic organisation. This has shaped human resource management and employment relations in most organisations in Nigeria. The study adopted System Theory by Talcott Parsons which sees organization as sub-system that interacts within a given environment (products, services and information) on how human resource practitioners are seen as the link to have requisite personnel experts in handling the operations of the organisations. The paper revealed that human resource management is challenged with effective performance, diversity in employees' values, federal character and economic downturn. However, for effective and efficient human resource management in the 21st century, the paper recommended that the human resource practitioners should upgrade the human resource professional skills, provision of requisite expertise of personnel in handling affairs of the organisations as well as utilisation of information technology.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Human Resource Practitioners, Organisations, Technology, 21st Century

1. Introduction

It is indisputably lucid that the organisational growth and development, be it public or private enterprise is hinged solely on the quality of the personnel that constitutes the workforce. Human resource management has evolved to become an indispensable academic field of study as well as an important function in the management of organisations.

Armstrong (2006) conceives the concept human resource management as a strategic and logical approach to the management of an institution most valued assets (referring to the personnel who works within an organization, as individuals or a group of people with the priority of achieving the set-goals of such firm). Arising from this conception, the human resource department of an organization is saddled with the responsibility to utilize workers potentials in delivering the services to meet the strategic goals of the management (Johanson, 2009). Human resource unit is basically concerned with how people are managed within organisations with great emphasis on the systems, policies and structure (Collins and Wood, 2009). The human resource department is seen as the heartbeat of any organisation because it is generally responsible for a number of functions which include job advertisements, recruitment, selection and placement of employees, policy formulation, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and remuneration like managing pay and benefits of emolument for employees (Paauwe and Boon, 2009). It is worthy of noting that human resource unit is concerned with industrial and employment relations in maintaining a balance of organisational practices with regulations that arise from collective bargaining, negotiations and governmental laws (Klerck, 2009).

The 21st century organisations and businesses are growing both in size and shape at a very rapid rate which is hinged on technology, globalisation and the competitive environment of numerous businesses. Today's organizations must be dynamic, proactive and responsive to its immediate environment and face challenges in order to survive in the volatile labour market. It is of immense importance to the management to invest in its recruits or its workforce

so as to improve individuals' competencies which could invariably lead to corporate capacity that can become real and flexible source of competitive advantage for organisation to position itself strategically. Be that as it may, in doing this, there are some major resources used to manage organisation which include human resources, materials, machines, (facilities and energy), money and information. Thomas, (2007), and Bawalla and Adegbite, (2019) asserts that for organisation to achieve its desired goals in this epoch there is a great need for management to have efficient and effective operations, good financial base, managing people as well as managing information and more importantly, must be very conversant with latest advancement of technology in the 21st century. The personnel of an organisation are often considered the most important resources because it takes people to get anything done in the organisation, on whatever the assignment. Thus, the workforce is often seen as the most vital aspect of corporations.

The primary aim of human resource management in this era of modern technology is to ensure that the personnel making up the workforce are well-utilised and managed effectively. More so, the personnel officers carryout the duty to formulate and implement policies, and design programs to ensure manpower development and improve the entire performance of the organisation. Globally, there is need for human resource practitioners and professionals to have a well-equipped workforce and so as to be able to respond to the increased competition of mobile talents, changes in both workforce attitudes and composition, routine in management and employees relations as well as the rapid development in human resource technology. The modern technological advancement had contributed immensely for technical knowledge, expertise, skills and abilities which requires the human resource practitioners to deal with the accelerating pace and unforeseeable dynamic events within the global context in various organisations (Fajana, Owoyemi, Elegbede and Gbajum-Sheriff, 2011). This could be seen as a barrier in achieving efficiency and effectiveness on human resource management. Some of the issues paved way for low priority of the management, short-term view of addressing human resource management issues, lack of requisite skills and technical savvy to match this era of globalisation and also, in implementing human resource management policies and practices, lack of guidance of human resource programmes to achieve long-term impacts for human resource initiatives and lack of strategic human resource management. For effectiveness and efficiency as well as for organisation to position itself strategically, there is need for human resource

practitioners to address how to add value to their workforce; type of personnel needed for service delivery at a particular time of employment; how to develop and train these personnel; how the mangers are capable of knowledge dissemination; the application of innovation and inventions of new technology in the workplace as well as ensure that the management representatives in the positions of authority fascinate workers involvement and commitment in a turbulence period, most especially what is being encountered arising from the upgrading of most organisation to digital base.

However, it is apparent that the era of 21st century has shaped industrial relations, employment relations and more importantly, human resource management with a lot of enormous herculean tasks before human resource practitioners, professionals and managers which pose as a threat to the production of products, personnel, goods and service in workplace and society at large. It is against this backdrop that the study sought to focus on the issues and challenges of human resource management in the 21st century in Nigeria.

2. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to look into the issues and challenges of human resource management in 21st century in Nigeria. The main aim of doing this is to examine the perspectives of system theory by Talcott Parsons (1951) on the premise that an organization are perceived as sub-system that interact with it is environment in order to survive and such that the system are interrelated and interdependent of different part that are natural or man-made. This would obviously enhance our understanding and knowledge on various shapes and dimension in which human resource management in organisation are managed and some bottlenecks encountered based on some environmental factors that are beyond the management control due to advancement of new technology in 21st century.

3. Theoretical Exposition: Systems Theory (Talcott Parsons, 1951)

The study is anchored on structural functionalism theory which is derived from ideas of cause and effect, part-whole and necessary requirement for institutions to work together. Talcott Parsons (1951) explained how order or equilibrium was maintained among the various elements were considered to be mutually supportive and tending toward a dynamic equilibrium.

The structure of the society is seen as the sum total of social relationships governed by norms, values and culture, educational system, health and political system among others. Thus, an institution is seen as a structure made up of interconnected parts which play different roles towards achieving the main aim. On the reverse, Parson's identified the essential mechanism for the achievement of social order as common value integration, that is, system integration through the value consensus. These prerequisites can be refers to as challenges that the system must proffer solution in order to survive. These include the imperatives of Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration and Latency or Pattern Maintenance (popularly known as AGIL functions).The answer to the prerequisites above must be institutionalized if society is to continue in existence. In other words, the solutions must be organized in the form of ordered or patterned social relationship, that is, institutions that persist through time.

Organisations depends on their social settings to survive and in terms of the available resources like clients/customers who buy goods and services, suppliers of materials and resources, labour power in terms of workers that provide labour or management, investors and shareholders and regulations of government policies. However, the open-system approach was first applied to organisation by Katz and Kahn (1966), and this was based on Theory of Organisation Behaviour. This implies the identification of organizational behaviour in terms of operations of input, output and feedback between an organisation and its external environment. One of the shortcomings of System Theory is measurement and on the issue of whether the means by which organisation survives really matters or not. Robbins (1990), describes measuring as a means of process of an organisation which can be difficult when compared to measuring specific end goals of the goal attainment approach of the organisation.

Applying this to study in perspective, organisations often interact with their immediate environment, the interaction such as products, goods, services and exchanging of information goes a long way in shaping the mode of operations that exist within the organisation and environment. The human resource practitioners, managers and officers are often seen here as the bridge builder or link in ensuring that right people are put in the place to manage the affairs of organisation most especially, in this present era of the 21st century. It is presumed or perhaps assumed that this present epoch has shaped employment relations and industrial relations matters in such a way that the human resource practitioners and

mangers must keep abreast on the advancement of new technology and globalisation so as to be able to strategically position the organisation for any turbulence or future occurrence of any issues that poses as a threat to organisation and its immediate environment.

4. The Historical antecedents of Human Resource Management

The historical antecedent of human resource management can vividly be trailed on the need of proper management of workers in an organisation, which is of necessity to the productivity and success of the organisation. In the beginning of the last century, scholars in the field of industrial management such as Fredrick W. Taylor, Henry Mayol and Max Weber established the fact that employee productivity, proper organisation and supervision in the workplace are very central to the overall performance to organisation productivity. Subsequently, in the mid-1950s, Mary parker came up with the idea of the need to pay attention to workers needs and interests in organisation. This later metamophsied into the study of motivation and job satisfaction by scholars such as Abraham Maslow and Frederick Herzberg who were able to establish that there is need to consider the employees' needs and personal interest so as to motivate employees towards actualization of organisational goals and objectives.

In view of this, there is need for human relations movement emphasizing on ''human welfare'' for workers in organisation. The administrators meant for these roles were tag "welfare secretaries" and were later confirmed and known as "personal administrators". Arising from this, the workers in the organisation adopted collective bargaining as a means to collect better pay, allowances and better working conditions. After the Second World War, personnel management was regarded as administrative function which is solely related with operational matters relating to job advertisement, recruitment, selection, placement, training, development and performance appraisal were directed towards individual employee while the industrial relations on the other hand were regarded as to focus on trade unions, and handling of grievances and disputes which were concerned with collective labour issues.

However, the growth of human resource management is attributed to collective bargaining, industrial relations which are adopted globally as the most important method of determining employees'

remuneration (pay packet) and the conditions of employment. Attention moved away from individual employee to the polices of human resource management as specified by the organisation in which the management began to see industrial relations as an area of strategic initiative in terms of the fact that collective bargaining is seen as the rule making process to resolve issues based on key procedural and substantive rules governing the employment relations. This brought about a plus that it encourages workers to shape the decisions affecting them, the democratic activity that exists between the trade unions. The new development by the human resource management paved way for shift for employees, as employees are regarded as the vital asset of in the organisation, this affirmed the fact that employees should be valued at their workplace, together with the issues of how they are managed as well as the capability of employees for transforming the organisation of which they are part. It is equally crucial for organisation to train and develop workers on the basis that they are seen as the physical assets of the organisation and also, ensure that ideal employees are recruited to facilitate organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

5. The Advancement of Technology and Human Resource Management Issues

In this 21st century, it is no doubt that advancement of new technology is assumed to be interconnected globally. Technologies are often regarded as the process of making economy dominated by capitalist models. However, for effective and efficient service delivery within the workforce due to the fact that today's businesses are transacted on both international and national scale which involves the movement of goods and services, technology, capital, managerial knowledge and trade across the national boundaries. Also, globalisation has turned the universe to a global village through the fast communication network. The global economies have become increasingly integrated due to the advancement of technology (Bhaqwatti, 2004). The success of modern organisations across the globe could be attributed to quality of human resource that runs the affairs of the management as well as the competitiveness within the environment. This can be measured based on information, knowledge, engineering and technology at its disposal. The internet has made communication networks to be very flexible and easy and this encourages marketing to take place with all activities of work transactions are done on one's desk without moving out. The acceptance of management to be involve global market means such organisation is internationally

accepted for its goods and services. Besides, it is important for human resource practitioners to adapt to the basic requirements for international needs in terms of aligning the peoples, good and service produces, ideas and information needed to meet the local needs.

The factors such as the regional range to be covered, diverse culture, distinctive in social and legal practices and cross-border migration of funds, products (goods and services), and people that foreign organisation faces add a need for competency and sensitivity that is not found in the local firm (Vance and Paik, 2006). In so doing, human resource officers in this epoch are geared to strive, to balance, and to think outside box (globally) and act locally. For organisation in Nigeria to adapt to human resource management in line with advanced technology (globalisation), there are some environmental factors that often pose threat that affect the domestic organisation in running effectively as identified in this 21st century by (Anyim, Ikemefun and Mbah, 2011). These factors are in most cases beyond or outside the organisation to control. These include:

Economic system and the level of economic development (capitalist; economic system based on competition between businesses, mixed economy in terms of government intervention or mixture of capitalism and socialism. On the level of economic development can be viewed in the aspect of the country or nations' economies in terms of developed, developing and underdeveloped).

Legal system (the legal systems is often a constraint with strict or unfavourable statutory laws, regulations and administrative policies. These statutory laws are in most cases seen as hindrance to most organisations as human resource officers are bent on complying to these stipulated legal system environments.

Political system (the political environment entails the power play, ideologies, government policies and regulations on industrial relations matters which deal with affairs and management of human resource management in the organisations.

Educational and Language (the educational system and language vary from one country to another and this often constitute barriers to trade or transact business across the border.

Socio-cultural and Ethical environment(the social-cultural and ethical environment are often related to the values, norms, customs and traditions of organisation and perhaps the way the system operates in terms of reward system or management as well as other factors associated with the organisational culture and structure.

5.1 Factors Influencing Human Resource Management in the 21st Century
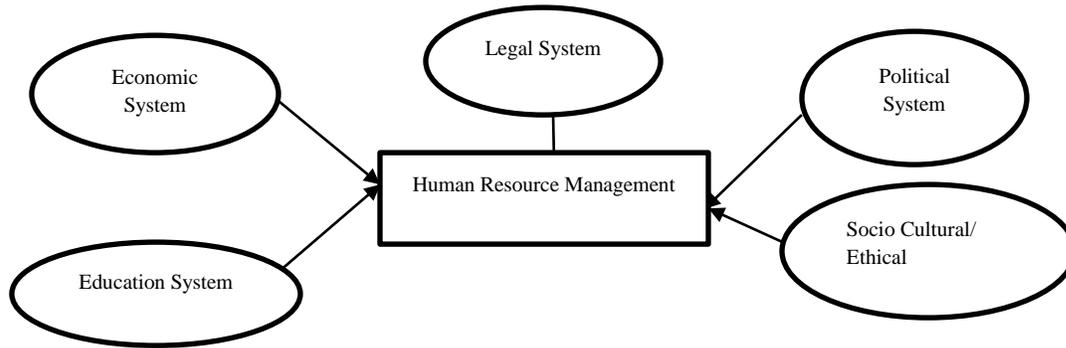
Source: Anyim, Ikemefun and Mbah, (2011)

5.2 Challenges of Human Resource Management in Nigeria

Employees are most difficult set of people to manage in any organisation. The human resource management department faced a lot of challenges and bottleneck in ensuring that organisations were strategically positioned so as to accomplish the organizational goals. The human resource management specifically dealt with recruitment, selection, training and development, employees' relations, performance and so on. Due to this complexity associated with human resource management, the human resource officers and practitioners were faced with some challenges and some these issues are discussed below as adduced by Anyim, Ikemefun and Mbah, (2011)

Lack of Effective Performance: The outcome of good performance invariably leads to improvement in productivity. Deficiency in productivity often paved way for labour turnover, decline in standard of living and economic downturn. In light of this, human resource practitioners were geared to ensure that right personnel are put in the right places so as to achieve the organisational goals for the betterment of employment relations. The human resource practitioners perform significant functions to improve the quality of products and greater outputs performance for organisations.

Labour Matters and Social Legislation: The various new policies of benefits and fringe allowances, Health Insurance Scheme (NIS), new pension reforms, gratuity schemes and National Housing funds etc. could be seen that it has added to organisational budget cost in which the management (employer) will have to play the role of recruitment and selection of applicants and most importantly, in maintaining and disposing of their workers.

Differences in Employees' Values: The difference in employees' values has to do with work ethics in organisations. Organisations strive to hire and keep employees who work in a manner compatible with their own corporate culture and behaviour to create an emotional sense of belonging to the institutions. Employees are to comply with management directives on work ethics such as punctuality, honesty, diligence etc. By and large, in recent times, there was great decline in work ethics in workplace such as corruption, maladministration, moonlighting, absenteeism, and late coming to work. This phenomenon has become so worrisome that the human resource practitioners were faced with in this turbulent period of economic recession and the harsh environment in this 21st century. This had paved way for corrupt practices, lack of transparency, indiscipline and wasteful spending.

Quota System and Federal Character: The term quota system simply means an even distribution of resources and personnel in organisation or area or at the regional level. Although, it is often associated with public organisations where the government investments and businesses were expected to abide to the principle of federal character in employment related matters. The human resource practitioners were faced with enormous tasks in ensuring that employment procedures were strictly complied with the principle of federal character and ensuring such appointments or employment procedures were based on merits and standards.

Labour/Employees Dissatisfaction in Workplace: Human resource management is also challenged with the high rate of unionism of workers, poor morale and disinterest of employees in organization. The depletion of human resource personnel (brain drain), poor attitudes to work, industrial disputes and conflicts and strikes have also been on rampant in the workplace.

Corporate Social Responsibilities by the Management: It has always been the case that enterprises or organisations operating within the social environment made life unpleasant for the host communities with diverse forms of contamination via environmental or water as well as destruction of other natural resources, it was expected that such organisations payback to the host communities in terms contributing to the social, well-being and development of social amenities back to the communities. For instance, the corporate social responsibilities can be in form of educational development to young ones, sporting activities and other social amenities that would be of relevance to the host communities and most importantly, its contributions to the major sector of the economy.

Role of Government in Industrial Relations Matters: Over the years, government was seen an umpire in industrial relations in Nigeria, It set out the stipulated and statutory procedures for employment relations practices which was being tagged as "guided democracy". The government enacts various legislations and laws from time to time and as such situations compiled with the directives of International Labour organisation (ILO). The issue here is that, human resource practitioners were expected to be vigilant and keep abreast of employment legislations on a regular basis.

Internal Environmental Factors on the part of Employer: It is obvious that there were competitive pressures in the 21st century, so organisations were faced with challenges of internal factors such as technological advancement of inventions and innovations. This was however seen as a contributing factor to human resource management and planning, for most organisations in the aspect of supply and demand of manpower for resources.

Economic Downturn: A downturn in economic as to do with a decline in economic activities which invariably paved way for shortage of industrial production and as such led to unemployment. This tended to pose threat to industrial relations institutions and thus affected the external environment factor in negotiation as well as collective bargaining process. This had an adverse on human resource practitioners as it affected not only the productivity of organisations but human resource suffered most here as they would be the ones at the receiving end, on the basis of the rise in inflation of goods and commodities.

Reform of Public Service by Government: By reform, it means the amendment and improvement that government agencies and businesses are transparent, open and economic and devoid of unnecessary favoritism and corrupt practices that will undermine government institutions. It basically involves the re-orientation, re-positioning and re-organisation in order to ensure effective and open system of economic and financial management of government resources. The human resource practitioners were enjoined to be in forefront in this 21st century for recognition and respect of human resource management on related issues of employment relations.

Casualisation of Workers: Casualisation became prominent in the 21st century in Nigeria unlike in the 70s, 80s and 90s when it was not all that in existence. However, the decline or low productivity for most organisations was to minimise costs and profits which paved way for contract staff in manufacturing, construction and more importantly, in the banking sector. It is vital to note that permanent workers earn more than the contract workers and invariably, put the casualissation of workers to be at the receiving end due to the fact that this category of workers were not entitled to allowances, pension and gratuity. This act gave employers the liberty to sack and employ casual workers would earn little and this had generated a lot of controversies between the unions and management. The human resource managers were expected to wade in by providing guidance and advising the management on the needful.

Privatization of Human Resource: Privatization of human resource department in most organizations in Nigeria has become a trending issue. Majority of the organization consult outsourcing firms to perform the functions of human resource in their organization. Thus, the functions of the outsourcing firms in terms of recruitment, selection, training and development, remuneration, performance appraisal, workers motivation, employee engagement etc., in most cases does not conform to the standard of industrial relation practices.

Work-life Balance: Over times, this has been a trending issue in the world of work and has pose serious challenge for human resource managers. The level of globalization and the competitive environment of numerous businesses increase the workloads on daily basis which pose various problems in terms of stress and fatigue, psychological disorder, health issues among others to the workforce. In most cases, workers leave their occupation when they cannot maintain equal balance between their personal lives and their expected obligations.

From the foregoing, the main aim for human resource practitioners and mangers of human resource in this 21st century was the urgency to manage the drastic change in advancement of technology on how to adapt promptly within the context of human resource management on the appropriate competencies required. The constraints as identified had a great

potential for disputes and conflicts. Hence, there was need for human resource officers to develop social and diplomatic skills to avert any future occurrence of such conflicts. The issues like diversity, employment equity, reputation of organisations as well as the work/corporate ethics among others must be identified as the main factors for human resource professional's roles and capabilities.

5.3 Possible Solutions to Human Resource Management in Nigeria

Every business environment is bound to experience challenges and also competitive pressures faced in 21st century could be attributed to globalisation and liberalisation and this would result in future demand for organizational excellence. The complex world of multi-national businesses required a new strategic focus and new capabilities of human resource management. For human resource to be successful and make way, the human resource should not be defined by what it did but perhaps by service delivery in terms of oriented results based on organisation value to customers, investors and employees. Also, in within the global context and new roles there was the need to focus on staffing and compensation of employees. The following are the possible ways to human resource management in Nigeria and these include:

Heterogeneity of Workforce: This talks about workers being different from one another and also, made up of parts. Specifically, it focused on individual discrepancies in the place of work which consist different departments. Human resource managers were geared to ensure that employees were of equal value and no workers should be given preference over one another. While doing this, the personnel officers must also give attention to job satisfaction and commitment, and ensure that the creative performance of the workers is maximised due to the diversity requirements of employees' individual differences.

Diversity of Technical Savvy: The advancement of technology in the 21st century paved way for human resource practitioners to be diverse and multi-skilled. Human resource practitioners were enjoined to be more committed and devoted to the main strategic issues of management of human resource in organisations and society at large. The diversity of human resource brought about human capital development, skills and capabilities to management effectively the challenges of 21st century that were being encountered by human resource practitioners.

The Influence of Information Technology: With the internet facilities everywhere, it had made world a global village for connectivity of people, goods and services. There was free flow of information on ideas. With the interconnectivity, the human resource managers were expected to explore these ideas and information to shape the face of the management in the production of goods and service so as to ensure the actualisation of organisational goals and objectives. The information gathered brought about the positioning the organisations strategically in terms of new innovations and inventions in the 21st century.

Transformation/Innovation of Human Resource Practitioners: The need for human resource professionals to adopt transformation of new advancement of technology in the 21st century in order to remain relevant in this present epoch on human resource management related matters such as employment relations, industrial relations and management of trade and industrial unions. The changes in technology enable human resource practitioners to become agents of continuous transformation, involvement in processes, culture and values that help organization to achieve their mission and vision and more importantly, the change in capacity of organisation. Although change is inevitable and it always generates resistance in some cases, so human resource managers played a vital role in changed process of organisations.

Interference of Political Authority: The political interference in democratic settings often affected the formation of employment relations and other industrial relations matters. The human resource professionals helped in providing pieces of advice to the political authority so as to enable democratic optimal and enhance stability within the political structures of the country. A nation with crisis is expected to experience reduction in economic activities and this will affects the modus operandi of organisations. Thus, it was the duty of human resource practitioners to contribute immensely to the political structure of the country.

Provision of Requisite Expertise for Human Resource in Workplace: In order to explore and design the means of implementing human resource management functions in a more proactive, efficient and effective ways to reduce costs, the human resource practitioners were expected to be seasoned administrators and professionals with requisite knowledge on management of personnel in the workplace. The efficiency, effectiveness and quality of personnel had to be maintained and retained for prompt service delivery of activities in the workplace and could be attributed to the provision of expertise of human resource management.

Elevation of Human Resource Professional Skills: It is no doubt that there are enormous challenges for not human resource practitioners but

also for organisations and societies in general. However, for human resource professional to deal with this global issue and remain relevant in this 21ˢᵗ century, there was need for quality of human resource personnel needs to be improved. Personnel that managed and coordinated the workforce effectively showed they had integrity and such talents were encouraged for additional training and development to sharpen their skills. Frequent elevation and upgrading of human resource professionals' skills were also of robust necessity in development and management of organisations in this contemporary epoch.

Maintaining work-life balance: The needs to maintain work-life balance is an herculean tasks that must be embrace by human resource managers, professionals and managers in relation to good service delivery. It is the responsibility of the human resource managersto maintains moderate level of work-life balance among the workforce by creating a segregating line between work and leisure activities. Hence the manager has to work to avoid such scenario and they need to help employees in finding right work-life balance (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998)

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper concluded that there were enormous challenges for human resource management practitioners and professional in the 21ˢᵗ century which had shaped human resource management unlike what we had in the 70s, 80s and perhaps 90s. The reasons for this could be attributed to the advancement of new technology in the new millennium which shaped the models of products, information, goods and services and more importantly, the people that performed the ultimate tasks in the workplace. Furthermore, there had been some complexity associated with the issues bordering on human resource management in Nigeria, in terms of lack of effectiveness in performance, poor labour matters and social legislations, differences in employees values, the issues of quota system and federal character, role of government in industrial relations matters and perhaps the inefficient or misplaced priority of corporate social responsibilities by the management of some organisations to the host communities.

This paper focused on the main issues and challenges encountered in the 21ˢᵗ century being experienced by human resource practitioners in Nigeria. However, in the light of these challenges identified, there are some possible ways for the improvement of human resource practitioners and professionals, among these are the heterogeneity of workplace in which the

human resource should give preference and attention to the job commitment of personnel, the diversity of technical savvy of human resource practitioners in order to bring about human capital development, skills and capabilities of personnel. Similarly, the influence of information technology which had shaped the world to be a global village via connectivity of people, resources and services, the innovations of human resource practitioners as an agent of continuous transformation of change process for the actualisation of goals in the workplace. There is also the need for requisite expertise of human resource managers to be proactive, effective and efficient in-service delivery and more importantly is upgrading of human resource professional skills in discharging of duties appropriately.

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