

## **Systematic Training Gap in Nigerian Public Enterprises**

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**Abstract:** *Public Enterprises were established in order to fill the wide gap between what is available in terms of provision of capital and expertise, in the private and public sectors of the economy. In order to maintain the required level of competence and expertise, public enterprises need to train and retrain personnel on a regular basis. Personnel, especially at the management/senior level, must master both the special, technical or professional and managerial skills, necessary for running the enterprise. When a personnel from public enterprise organisation is sent on training, the objectives of such nominations often differ from the requirements of “Systematic Training” approach, indicating the existence of “Systematic Training Gap” in such organisations. This in itself is connected to a myriad of challenges faced by Nigerian Public Enterprise. The peculiarities of these challenges as outlined each have implications for training and retraining. The “gap” indicates that something is missing in the practice of training management in that organisation. The systematic gap is the non-application of “Training Needs Analysis” and “Programme Design” components of training function, before implementation. It could be present by not adopting the systematic approach, or using other approaches without first of all conducting “Training Needs Analysis” followed by “Programme Design”. Managers adopt other approaches instead of Systematic approach, and they have genuine reasons for doing so, but the long-term effect on the organisation is undesirable. “Coaching” and “Effective Supervision” could be applied as ways of saving funds on training of personnel.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Public Enterprises were used as pivots of development especially in the third world countries where colonization played a major role in their chequered histories. Developing countries are often blamed for embarking on enterprises that ordinarily has to be undertaken by private sector organisations, but a deep reflection about the circumstances leading to the establishment of public enterprises, shows that the countries had no alternative but to use public enterprises on a considerable scale especially to kick-start development. Public enterprises were established in order to fill the wide gap between what is available in terms of provision of capital and expertise, in the private and public sectors of the economy.

Hence, they were set up as centers of expertise and competence in the economy; therefore, they ought to be exemplary, in assemblage of competent personnel in their areas of operation. In this regard, it is expected that public enterprise organisations ought to ‘parade’ a team of well trained, well managed and well informed personnel. Without this competence from which expertise derives, the public enterprises would not be able to carry out their mandates. In order to maintain the required level of competence and expertise, public enterprises need to train and retrain their personnel on regular basis. Personnel of public enterprises are expected to undergo several courses as they move from one level of performance to the other, due to the rapid technological and industrial changes taking place globally.

Every organisation depends on the competences of its employees in order to achieve its mission. To achieve its desired results, therefore, the human resources of an organisation must perform according to required standards. To do this, the human resources, especially at management level, must master both the special, technical or professional and managerial skills, necessary for running the enterprises. Each managerial post, thus, requires two types of training inputs. First, there is the education and training, needed to perform the technical or professional aspect of the job, and second, there is the managerial training, needed for an economic, efficient and effective performance of the job. When

properly mounted or executed, training ensures the acquisition of the right knowledge, skills, attitudes etc required to ameliorate below expectation performances of employees.

Seeing that the individual requires at least two kinds of training – professional, and managerial; and that training is required for different levels of performance, it therefore suggests or indicates that managers or personnel in Public Enterprises, due to the nature of their jobs, need to undergo series of training on both aspects of their jobs. Given the number of personnel in the entire public enterprise organisations, it suggests that training institutions would be very busy round the year, training organisation’s personnel. But, the experience is that public enterprise organisations do not seriously Endeavour to improve the competences of their personnel, whether in their professional or managerial areas. Training Institutes, at least from the Nigerian experience, are often under subscribed, and an examination of the course participants available indicates that public enterprises rarely subscribe. This is indicated in the table below:

*Total Number of Participants Trained By the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (Ascon) From 2008 – 2013*

Year	Regular (Two Week Training Programmes)
2008	1,893
2009	1,538
2010	1,499
2011	1,022
2012	892
2013	588
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,432</b>

**Source:** *Examination of Records (ASCON)*

Even the professional, areas of the enterprises are not taken care of, leading to serious inadequacies in the performances of Nigerian Public Enterprises. Given this characteristic neglect of systematic training in public enterprises, how do they bridge performance gaps and how could they be made to satisfy customers’ expectations? What factors lead to this neglect of systematic training and how could these be remedied? These are some of the questions that this study set out to tackle.

## **2. CONCEPT OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES**

Public enterprises are sometimes called “Parastatals”. They can also be called: Government Owned companies, Statutory Corporations, State sponsored bodies, or State Owned Enterprises. It does not matter what they are called; suffice it to say that they occupy a very crucial niche in the development of any nation, irrespective of the ideological inclination. Names are usually given to them according to the role that they perform, the degree of autonomy that is exercised over them, and the direction of ideological preference of the country where they are found, their management structure, nature and origin. (Fernandes and Sicherl, 1981).

Public enterprises exist as hybrid organisations, possessing some of the qualities of the private organisations, that is, the firms and some of the traditional machinery of government (that is, the Civil Service). Public enterprises therefore represent the interaction of two dimensions – the Public dimension and the Enterprise dimension.

The involvement of governments in the establishment and management of public enterprises shows clearly that they serve public purpose. Thus, one of the major differences between public and private lies in the definitions of their purpose. Private enterprises are usually set up to serve the motives of the owners. In this instance, private interests override the public interest with profit maximization as the ultimate goal. The goals of public enterprises on the other hand must represent the policies of the nation in context.

## **3. DEFINITION OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISE**

It is important to have a working definition of Public Enterprise for the following reasons: firstly, a definition is required for statistical purpose. “Scholars and researchers need to be able to precisely delineate the boundaries and frontiers of public enterprises for cross-national studies. To understand with greater clarity the conceptual basis, the identity and character of public enterprises”, (Fernandes and Sicherl, 1981). According to them, it will help to:

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- Evolve national approaches to the role of public enterprises;
- Articulate the goals and objectives of public enterprises in general and specific goals and objectives of each enterprise in particular;
- Prepare and implement corporate plans and strategies for public enterprises;
- Evolve and implement suitable organisational and managerial policies for public enterprises;
- Design training programmes for public enterprises managers; and
- Establish an effective basis for evaluating the performance of public enterprises.

There are to be found in literature, various definitions viewed from various perceptions and background. But because of the dual nature of the roles of public enterprises, a universally acceptable definition has been very difficult (Abdul, 2002). Fernandes and Sicherl (1981) defined Public enterprises from two standpoints – the statistical and the conceptual. On statistical, they defined Public enterprises as an organisation where the government has a percentage share – holding of 50% or more, and must be an organisation composed of two dimensions – the enterprises and the public dimension.

Gbeja (2002) noted that public enterprise is a generic term covering a wide range of institutions, organisations and companies wholly or partially owned by the state. In the Nigerian context, he defined a public enterprise as “government owned organisations/institutions outside the conventional Civil Service administrative structure of machinery of government. They are usually self accounting and their employees are directly appointed by the organisations themselves rather than through the Civil Service Commission”.

Although intellectually appealing, the definitions above do not aptly capture the scenario in Nigeria and also in many other countries. In the Nigerian situation, any extent of involvement of Government, however little, usually qualifies it to be a public enterprise. A working definition of a public enterprise was provided in the Privatisation and Commercialisation Decree No. 25 of 1988. It defined a public enterprise as:

Any corporation, board, company or parastatal established by or under any enactment in which Federal Military Government, or any of its departments, ministries or agencies has ownership or equity interests and shall include partnership, joint ventures or any other form of business organisation.

Public enterprises are manifestations of the enterprise of governments – involving the exhibition of entrepreneurial spirit outside the formal machinery of the civil service. The unique nature of public enterprises places them in a position to reap the advantage of borrowing the best of management practices from two worlds – the core Civil Service and the Private Sector. These definitions mark a clear departure from the view held by some commentators (Ramanadhan, 1977; Fernandes, 1986) who viewed public enterprises as economic entities in which assets are wholly or partially owned by the government. Rondinelli (2008) defined it as “government-owned or controlled commercial entities that generate all or most of their revenues from the sale of goods or services on a full or partial self-financing basis, and in which the government or a public body/agency participates by way of having shares or representation in its decision-making structure”.

#### 4. CLASSIFICATION OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES IN NIGERIA

The 1981 Report of the Presidential Commission on Parastatals acknowledged that in many instances, governments set up organisations that are partly or wholly financed by it. The Commission classified public enterprises into seven major categories. They are:

- Those are essentially regulatory, social, economical, cultural, political or educational.
- Research Institutions, Teaching Hospitals, Universities and other post-secondary institutions of learning awarding degrees and diplomas and dependent on government funding.
- Essentially regulatory, social, political, economical, cultural, or Educational (other than Research institutions, post-secondary institutions and Teaching Hospital) and independent of government for funding (e.g. Central Bank of Nigeria).

- Quasi-Commercial (including broadcasting) and dependent on government funding e.g. the National Sports Commission, the Nigerian Television Authority, and River Basin Development Authorities.
- Essentially Commercial or industrial but dependent on government funding. Examples are the Ajaokuta Steel Company Ltd. and the Nigerian Ports Authority.
- Commercial or Industrial, wholly owned by government and independent of government funding. The Federal Mortgage Bank is an example.
- Commercial or Industrial, with government controlling interest, independent of Government funding.

Looking at the magnitude of performance expected of public enterprises and the level of specialisation required to perform their statutory functions. It is important that personnel of these need to be competent in order to provide the necessary goods and services. Hence, training and retraining of personnel is a **sine qua non** for them. The kind of training desirable for them are supposed to be methodical and properly focused if they must be able to achieve the desired results. We saw in the opening paragraphs of this study that the manager needs two kinds of training in order to perform: the professional/technical knowledge and the managerial competence. Hence, public enterprise organisations, employing the large number of personnel as they have, and striving to perform in order to implement Government Policies, must provide intensive training for its personnel.

## **5. CHALLENGES FACED BY PUBLIC ENTERPRISES**

There is no doubt that every country in the world irrespective of their political ideologies has public enterprises that play some roles in their corporate existence. Nigeria, as we have noted is not an exception. They are also not immuned to the challenges that pervade their establishment and management. This statement was put graphically by Aboyade (1974) when he stated that:

“It became impossible to manage with firmness, capital development projects approved by the board after unnecessary haggling took months to gain ministerial approval; appointments to posts were controlled by members of the board, and ministry’s interference in addition to ministerial dictation on practically every issue was the norm. These practices gave rise to abuses that led to public enquiries in almost all the important corporations in the country.”

In addition to those here mentioned by Aboyade (1974), Abdul (2008) gave some and these are collectively listed below:

- Inadequate funding
- Infrequent release of capital allocation
- Frequent changes in government policies
- Frequent board changes
- Politicization of appointments
- Lack of skilled manpower
- Frequent government intervention in management decisions
- Pricing policies dictated by government
- Political instability
- Poor/inexperienced Leadership
- Lack of clearly defined mission/vision
- Lack of clear and articulate corporate plans
- Economically unviable location of many enterprises
- Under utilization of plants, equipment and other facilities
- Use of antiquated machines/production processes.

- Bureaucratic delays in decision making leading to inability to take advantage of changes in market dynamics.
- Unstable security of tenure of management teams.
- Absence of performance evaluation criteria.

All of these factors individually and collectively listed above affect training and retraining either in the amount of resources available, the quality policies put in place or managerial decisions on where, how and when the training should take place.

### 6. THE CONCEPT OF TRAINING

The major purpose of training in an organisation is to achieve effective performance from its employees that are sent for training at all levels. It is the assumption that training improves the performance of the recipients; hence, employees are exposed to training programmes. How the organisation goes about the activity of selecting personnel and training implementation depends upon many factors including management and supervisory style, organisational climate, nature of the work environment etc. Often, training is done for the wrong reasons and in the wrong way, but Managers agree that training brings improvement in performance and productivity. What then do we mean by training and how do we determine who should be trained and by what method? These are the questions to be treated in the next section.

### 7. DEFINITION OF TRAINING

Today's organisations regard attendance at any training event as a serious investment that must provide value for money and relate to the objectives of the business. So, what is training? In the view of Kenny, Donnelly, and Reid (1979:2) training is helping an individual to learn how to carry out satisfactorily the work required of him in his present job. In line with Kenny et al's (1979) view that training is geared towards job performance, Marsick (1987:3) stated that training usually refers to short-term activities that emphasize practical skills immediately applicable to the job. In other words, when an employee is involved in an activity that has to do with acquisition of skills to be applied on the job, we refer to it as training. This definition indicates that if learning is not directed towards practical application of same, then it could not rightly be referred to as training. It also implies that when organisational members are sent on training, then one expects or rather, they should apply knowledge and skills acquired from that training to the job, and otherwise, they could not claim to have been trained.

Defining training from another perspective, Laird (1978:9), stated that it is the acquisition of the technology which permits employees to perform to standard. This reference to the standard aspect of organisational life is supported by Robinson (1988:12) who said that training means to develop a person's behavior pattern, in the areas of knowledge, skills or attitude in order to achieve a desired standard or level of performance. By these definitions, one understands Laird (1978) and Robinson (1988) as saying that training is for the attainment of set standards. In other words, every organisation operates on set or desired standard of operation. Therefore, where one is not measuring up to the set standard, he or she is sent on training, to bring him/her up to the required standard. It is important to note that the expected results set the standard of performance, compelling employees to work towards the achievement of desired results, based on set performance standards. This also implies that anybody who is not performing according to the set standards is not giving the desired results, and needs to be put in line through training programmes.

Reilly (1979:22), defined training as the development of a person's knowledge, skills and attitudes for a vocational purpose. In the same vein, Maduabum (1996:4) defined it as the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes required to perform a given job or group of jobs, duties or tasks. Both Reilly (1979) and Maduabum (1996) agree that training provides the individual with knowledge, skills and attitudes to help the person to be more effective in the performance of a specific job. In other words, that knowledge, skills and attitudes being required for effective performance on the job, then in a situation where one is deficient in any of them, he/she needs to go on a training programme in order to acquire it. This by implication means that nomination to training programmes should be an indication that one has not got all that is required to perform on a job, and which must be obtained through training. Our discussion so far depicts that training is an activity that aims at satisfactory job performance, adherence to set performance standards; and provision of requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes for effective performance.

## 8. SYSTEMATIC TRAINING

A systematic training procedure is the pivot of a successful implementation of training in organisations. Training is described as a “change agent”, that is, its purpose is to effect a change in knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is oriented towards job requirement and there are different approaches to training. We have, according to Boydell (1976:33-5): the organisation development approach; the welfare approach; the political approach; administrative approach; and the systematic (systems) approach. Out of the five approaches highlighted above, the systems approach is widely agreed by Managers as most preferred. In the systems approach to training, there are different segments, and the movement from one segment to another is in a step-by-step fashion which is referred to as systematic or methodical. According to Maduabum (1992:184), the different segments include:

- Identification of Training Needs (ITN);
- Designing of training programmes;
- Implementation of training programmes; and
- Evaluation of training.

In order to appreciate the rationale for the preference of systematic training, an overview of the steps would suffice:

## 9. IDENTIFICATION OF TRAINING NEEDS (ITN)

Identification of Training Needs also known as Training Needs Analysis (TNA) is always the first step in the training system. In fact, it is the pivot of training since every other activity or segment in training depends on what is needed and not needed. It is widely acknowledged that there has to be an assessment of “what is” and “what ought to be” before a training need could be established. This assessment is done through what is termed as “Training Needs Analysis” (TNA). It is an examination of the organisation’s present operations, expected operations, present and manpower requirements in order to identify the number of staff and manpower categories needing to be trained and retrained; individual training needs which will enable a person to reach the required standard of performance in the current job or the future job (Osborne, 1996:138). The complete process of training needs analysis according to Peterson (1992:14) means specifying those gaps or discrepancies in performance that actually exist between what people are capable of doing now, and what you want them to do in the future.

In using the term ‘Training Needs’ we are implying that there are weaknesses somewhere in the system which demand strengthening by means of training in some form or other. Osborne (1996:43) is of the view that a training need exists when the gap between “actual” and

Required” performance i.e. training gaps, can be most economically matched by a training intervention. This view is supported by Robinson (1988:37) who defined training need as the gap which exists between the true requirements of a given job and the present capabilities of the incumbent. Both Osborne (1996) and Robinson (1988) could be regarded as using performance gap as an indication of training need, Peterson (1992:14) simply defined training need as a need for human performance improvement that can best be met by training of some kind. Craig (1976:9) stated that:

A training need may be described as existing any time an actual condition differs from a desired condition in the human or “people” aspect of organisational performance or more specifically, when a change in present human knowledge, skills, or attitudes can bring about the desired performance.

Turell (1980:14) concluded that a training need is revealed if the results we get from the present organisation structure or present procedures are below an acceptable standard. This we can interpret to mean that when an organisation or a procedure within it is operating below an acceptable level of effectiveness, it may be because the people who work and operate procedures have not been sufficiently well developed and trained. In other words, they have a training need.

## 10. WHY WE NEED TO ASSESS TRAINING NEEDS

The above section, ordinarily, would have sufficed for why training needs should be assessed, but it could be complemented by the statements of some authorities that had done in-depth study on training. In the view of Reilly (1990:17):

A tremendous amount of training resources are wasted when training needs are not properly assessed. First, training may not be the appropriate response to a particular organisational problem. Secondly, when training is the correct response, it is important to identify what kind of training. Thus, managers and trainers should try to find out where training might improve the performance of an organisation before they commit resources to training.

Goldstein (1989:26) stated that training needs assessment provides information where training is needed, what the content of the training should be and who within the organisation needs training in certain kinds of skills and knowledge. He further explained that once an organisational analysis has been conducted to identify where training is needed (for example “X” department or work group) a task analysis determines the activities performed on the job and the conditions under which the jobs are done.

It could be seen that if training need is not assessed, one would not be exact on the kind of training to administer and who deserves such training. Managers are expected to be asking if training is likely to help solve the organisation’s problems, or whether the solution lies elsewhere. If training is the answer, or at least a potential answer, what kind of training would seem appropriate? The priority in training should be determined and strictly followed. The Manager or Supervisor is expected to lead the process of training needs assessment. This is because, he/she is supposed to know better than anyone else what the jobs of his subordinates entail, and he/she should be able to assess to what extent the requirements are being met.

We have just done an overview of Training Needs Analysis which is the first step in systematic Training Methodology. The next step in “systematic training” approach which is very crucial and also distinguishes this approach from the others is “Designing of Training Programmes”. Let us also do an overview of this step.

### 11. DESIGN OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Unless, and until the successful completion of the Training Needs Analysis is done, it would practically be impossible to embark upon the design and development of training programmes. The importance of programme design is in the fact that it is an important link in the training cycle, between an awareness of the training needs of an individual or a group, and the fulfillment of that need. In other words, programme design translates identified needs into action, resulting in need satisfaction or effective training. Furthermore, programme design constitutes an important element in the evaluation of training. Unless a training programme is properly and adequately designed, it is going to be difficult to tell whether or not the training programme has, in fact, fulfilled the need for which it was executed in the first instance. It is a detailed plan of the techniques and strategies to be used for ensuring that the training objectives are achieved.

### 12. THE ELEMENTS OF PROGRAMME DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Programme Design and Development as a technique of converting training objectives into a training programme, consists of the following steps:

- **Specifying, Selecting and Appraising the Target Population:** This requires knowing everything about the target population.
- **Drawing up the course Contents:** This consists of breaking up the several training objectives into its constituent parts, training methods for delivering the components (e.g. knowledge, skills and attitudes), and an estimate of training sessions or practices necessary to attain a particular standard of the objectives.
- **Resource Allocation:** It consists of making use of the simplifications of the different training methods to arrive at the total time and facilities required by the programme as a whole.
- **Inventory of Approaches:** At this stage, the inventory of possible approaches open to the manager/trainer is taken, to look for the cheapest means of getting to the same goal.
- **Sequencing.** This consists of breaking the contents into modules or topics and arranging such modules in a sequential manner. At the same time, the trainer/manager assigns a facilitator to each subject or module and this is then composed into a timetable.

The other two segments in systematic training, that is, “Implementation” and “Evaluation” are common to all the other approaches to training. Hence, need no special discussion in this study. We have tried to discuss an overview of “Training Needs Analysis” and “Programme Design” because they are the components that distinguish “Systematic Training” from all other approaches to training already identified in this study.

### **13. INCIDENCE OF SYSTEMATIC TRAINING GAP IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC ENTERPRISES**

The concept of “gap” refers to a space between two parts of an object/event because of something that is missing. In our treatment of ‘Training Needs Analysis (TNA) at an earlier section, we saw that Peterson (1992:14) refers to it (TNA) as “specifying those gaps or discrepancies in performance that actually exist between what people are capable of doing now, and what you want them to do in the future”. This makes it clear that when we talk of a “gap”, one is saying that there is something that ought to be, but is not there. This leads us to understanding that when we talk about “systematic training gap”, there is something missing about that concept. That there is something about “systematic training” which is not taking place in Nigerian Public Enterprises. What is it about “systematic training” which is not taking place in Nigerian Public Enterprises.?

In order to answer the above question, there is the need to revisit the five approaches to training which came up in the course of this study. A cursory background of the five approaches reveal as follows: Under Organisational Development Approach; decisions on training rely heavily on people’s feelings and attitudes as data. It also tends to concentrate on diagnosis of organisational climate, management style and inter-group conflict. Under the Administrative approach; it aims at carrying out prescribed tasks in the specified way by specified time, smooth running of training function; and comprehensive record system. In this case, rules, regulations, tradition, precedents, resource availability determine what training will take place. On the Welfare approach; it aims at ensuring that as many people as possible receive some form of training, it provides courses for all who want them; and creates no anxiety to those undertaking training about administrative, academic or work-related aspects of their course. The political approach aims at obtaining as much credibility, resources, power, influence, fame, prestige of the Manager and even trainee. In any of these approaches, mentioned, the peculiar problems of public enterprises earlier listed lend themselves very easily as they influence which of these four approaches to be adopted. But under the Systematic approach, training is methodical and done in stages or strict sequence, with the last one leading to the first. The first two stages are seen to be very crucial to the entire training activity. The first two stages under the “systematic training” approach are Identification of Training Needs (ITN) or (TNA) and “Programme Design” both of which had been treated in the fore-going sections.

Training practitioners and Managers agree that these two components of the Systematic Approach are very vital to the training activity and form the pivot of training since their absence leads to guess work and inaccuracies in training function. Very clearly, these two phases or stages are not emphasised by the other approaches to training which we had mentioned. This, therefore, constitutes the “gaps” in training function being referred to. Having seen the rationale for training needs analysis and programme design, one wonders how the training function could be effectively managed without their application. Other approaches simply require nomination for training based on social considerations, but in proper organisational setting, the emphasis is on competence, performance and productivity. These are the variables paramount in systematic training approach.

### **14. IMPLICATIONS OF CHALLENGES IN PUBLIC ENTERPRISES FOR SYSTEMATIC TRAINING**

From the previous sections, we have seen the importance of training and retraining – indeed when done systematically to the change of fortunes of Public Enterprises. It is important therefore if we are able to analyse these problems properly with the aim of devising solutions to them.

It is clear that inadequate funding of most public enterprises coupled with late releases of the paltry financial allocation have grave consequences not only for the management of the training function but for the running of all other aspects of the organisation. It is possible to have some enterprises that may not have trained their staff for upward of three to five years or more due to lack of funding. The



implication is that the staff would not have been kept abreast with the latest in technology, processes and procedures ultimately, contributing to low productivity.

Frequent Board and policy changes demand a reversal to status quo or a cancellation of efforts earlier made in a particular direction. The implication is that money, materials and time would have been wasted in what was not considered important. It may also lead to abandonment of projects from a culture of policy inconsistencies. While a set of management may place a high premium on training, others may not.

Lack of skilled manpower may itself be a product of faulty recruitment exercises. Building the skills of personnel employed through the proper process is by far easier and cheaper than for others that were not very qualified or experienced in the first place. Yet in many instances, this may be the norm where the public enterprise may have a large number of “untrainable” workforce.

Bureaucratic delays and bottlenecks have frequently been experienced by would-be participants who have applied and/or nominated for training and who have found it difficult to get the necessary financial releases. This may lead to over-reliance on the welfare approach to training as only those who are connected to the top management get trained eventually. Even then, the training most of the times are not focused on the areas that are of urgent need to the public enterprise.

Many public enterprises were established without clearly defined mission/purpose. In that case, they may have come into existence as a result of Political Party Manifestoes made during electioneering campaigns. While this in itself is not wrong, the problem starts when enough feasibility study, economic and social cost benefit analyses are not done. No sooner are they set up than they become difficult to manage. In this instance, what will be the purpose of systematic training when no structure exists in the first place as a platform for training?

Tribalism, nepotism, and sectionalism have only helped to allow only those from favoured segments of the society and who are close to top management to be sent on training at the expense of others who may need the skills much more and who are more better positioned to carry out the objectives of the enterprise.

### 15. TWO SIDES OF SYSTEMATIC TRAINING GAP

The existence of all of these problems notwithstanding, it has been observed that only a committed management approach to systematic training that completely derives from the objectives of the organisation will drive the enterprise forward. Where the organisation is coming from is not as important as where it is going. Remediation of past ills is possible when training is identified to be useful.

We saw earlier that a “gap” connotes that “something is missing” and (in this study) needs to be bridged. In considering the issue of “gap” in systematic training, we want to treat it from two perspectives: first, the non-application of systematic approach in training; and second, the nomination of personnel for training without first determining the need for same and method of achieving desired results.

Realising the role of Public Enterprises in the Nigerian economy, one expects a more “serious” approach to training in terms of selection and frequency. But the experience is that personnel are often sent on training programmes mainly by Administrative and welfare approach considerations. Hence, when participants return from training programmes, the issue of learning transfer is either not emphasised or envisaged. The training recipient returns to work, feeling “better qualified” than his/her counterparts, without considering what the organisation or work group would benefit from such training exposure. This connotes that attendance or participation in training programmes is not aimed at organisational survival, but rather, for the training recipient’s benefit. Hence, a public enterprise fails to improve, causing dissatisfaction to their numerous customers. Often, public enterprises’ officers on training do not bother to internalize instructions from instructors, since they would not be required to use acquired knowledge in their performance back at the work environment. The scenario being presented here is that the choice of training approach, which in many cases does not follow the systematic approach, creates a gap which could only be bridged through the application of systematic training approach.

Sometimes, training administrators and Managers become compelled to overlook the use of systematic training. This is experienced when the Manager bases his/her nomination on either the

need to “rehabilitate” a staff that has economic problems, or the need to compensate a work group that had not been included in training programmes for sometimes. All these are done on social basis, against the requirements of the systematic approach which emphasises competence and productivity.

“Gap” is also experienced in situations where an organisation practices the use of systematic approach by putting the training administrator/Manager under pressure to send an employee on a particular training even though there was no need for it. This kind of consideration takes place at very senior positions in an organisation, but sometimes features at lower level also. When a training programme has an international component, senior managers struggle to benefit from it, even though they do not need the skills.

The poor performance of many Nigerian public enterprises may be indicative of this kind of approach to nomination for training, neglecting the recourse to systematic training. The gaps so created are difficult to be bridged. When organisations nominate training recipients without the exercise of training needs analysis, no progress is made in the total organisational performance. Rather it leads to a waste of resources and constant customers’ dissatisfaction.

## **16. SYSTEMATIC TRAINING GAP REMEDIES**

Systematic training connotes or rather requires exposing personnel to training through first of all ascertaining their skills gap. Hence, one understands this exercise to suggest that when the skills gap of the individual is ascertained, the individual could be taken to a venue where knowledge and skills could be provided/acquired. That is, a venue away from the work environment. The manager is very much concerned about finding out what the employee needs to know but which he/she does not know, before training could be applied. Apart from ensuring that the individual learns what he/she really lacks, the Manager is concerned about huge capital outlay which may be wasted if training is not focused to required knowledge and skills. The Manager wants to derive value from money spent and wants to ensure wise spending.

There is an inexpensive type of training which may not require Training Needs Analysis. Hence, Managers who fail or could not carry out systematic training, could adopt this inexpensive approach to training. On-the-job training is relatively cheap and may not require all the arrangements made under systematic training approach. This method requires in the main, a “dedicated” supervisor, who would go round the work environment, identifying staff weaknesses and correcting them. By this method, the organisation may not need to pay for its personnel to learn in another environment, nor pay extra money to a “teacher” to deliver the instructions. But the emphasis is on “dedication” of the supervisor. In order to motivate supervisors for effective supervision of staff, “supervision allowance” could be paid as part of salary at the end of the month. This amount would be found to be far less than what could be paid to external training consultant during training away from work environment.

Apart from “effective supervision”, the Manager could adopt “coaching” as a means of training. This method has been found to be very effective and cost-free in organisations where a superior officer creates a particular time of the day or week for coaching. This should not be a “meeting” setting, but a serious session, devoted to provision of skills and knowledge for effective performance of work group members. Interaction with the “forces” reveals that superior officers create time to train their juniors on so many aspects of their job. No week passes without a superior officer enlightening subordinates on different aspects of their job. Their training is continuous.

In suggesting effective supervision and “coaching” by superior officers/managers, the problem of depth of knowledge by superior officers in public enterprises needs to be taken care of. Due to the inadequacies inherent in the Management of public enterprises, some individuals find themselves “superior” or “senior” to persons more knowledgeable than them. In such a situation, one finds a “boss” teaching or coaching someone more knowledgeable than him/her. Two remedies could be applied in such a case: First, anybody placed to superintend over any work group must have “good” knowledge of the work in that section/division. Second, where a superintendent does not fully know the technicalities of that section/division, a consultant could be brought in to perform these functions at an agreed frequency. This would still be cheaper than going on full release to a training programme away from the work environment.

“Effective Supervision” and “coaching” have an advantage over other forms of learning. When a skill is learnt on the job, the question of learning transfer is eliminated. The learner does not need to leave the venue and go to his/her work environment before transferring the skill acquired.

### 17. CONCLUSION

Virtually all public enterprises in Nigeria face one challenge or the other, the degree in intensity being a product of the closeness/importance or otherwise to the government. One thing that stands out clearly is that tremendous progress can be made on the mission/vision of the enterprise if training and retraining is given a pride of place. In doing this however, the right approach must be adopted for maximum return on training investment. The systematic approach stands out clearly in regard.

Without “competence” from which expertise derives, the public enterprises would not be able to carry out their mandates. In order to maintain the required level of competence and expertise, public enterprises need to train and retrain personnel on regular basis. Out of the five approaches discussed in this study, the “Systematic approach to training is widely recommended because it has different segments that are in step-by-step fashion. The first two steps: “Training Needs Analysis” and “Designing of Training Programmes”, set this method apart from other approaches. When these two steps are missing in the practice of training functions, we say that a “gap” exists. This gap could be identified from two perspectives. First from non-adoption of Systematic approach to training; and second, by adopting other approaches without considering the above two steps. Whenever training is conducted without these two steps being considered, training gap is sure to be present.

The Manager, desirous of saving funds or, who has no training vote or limited training vote, could train by adopting “coaching” and/or “effective supervision” of subordinates. The conditions for making this approach workable must be considered and satisfied.

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