



**International Journal of Economics,
Environmental Development and Society
(IJEEDS)**

APPLICATION OF MANPOWER REQUIREMENT APPROACH (MRA) FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION, NIGERIA

Bismarck PATTA

Department of Educational Management
Faculty of Education
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Nigeria

Francis SAMBO

Department of Educational Management
Faculty of Education
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper discussed the application of manpower requirement approach with special focus on the achievement of sustainable economic development in the Niger Delta region. It identified three perspectives of sustainable development; being the social, economic and environmental perspectives. The concept of manpower requirement approach; manpower requirement approach and economic development; manpower requirement approach and sustainable economic development formed subtitles under which the approach was assessed. Manpower requirement approach was defined as a systematic process of using education to satisfy employment needs of economic units in the nation. The approach was linked to economic development in the Niger Delta region because it reduces employment. Sustainable economic development was defined as a nationally developed toolkit used to enhance economic welfare of citizens in the present and future generations. In conclusion, the approach was adjudged most suitable in the region. It was suggested that it should be used so as to reduce unemployment; and foster sustainable economic development in the region.

Keywords: Manpower, Approach, Economic Development, Sustainable Development, Niger Delta Region.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Patta, B., & Sambo, F. (2022). Application of manpower requirement approach (MRA) for sustainable economic development in the Niger Delta Region, Nigeria. *International Journal of Economics, Environmental Development and Society*, 3(1), 91-97.

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INTRODUCTION

Every great book is an action; and every great action is a book' said the German reformer, Martin Luther. Foundationally, formal education, being associated with literacy, is bound

with books and systematically designed programmes which in themselves are actions. There is no society that hate progress in the economic sense. For this reason, sustainable economic development is good for societies. To achieve this, education is indispensable. Education is a veritable instrument of economic development whose efficacy cannot be underestimated. Firstly, as a system of acculturation (Nyerere cited in Aminigo, 2007), it ensures the regulation of the society by means of transmitting worthwhile values for the sustenance of the society.

To this extent, it aims at teaching values. Secondly, as a productive system, it enhances the distribution of knowledge, embarking on the reconstruction of knowledge which helps in sustaining the society. Its productive activities make it to be termed society's reproductive system (Aminigo 2007). Lastly, as a product of the society, it is one of the most requisite instruments of change by which individuals in the society prepare for and handle change from one generation to the other. There is therefore more than one form of education, and the design of each is determined by certain factors which change in the society is one. Among the comity of nations, Nigeria assumes a conspicuous position in black Africa. In population size and number of available resources. These make some analysts call her the giant of Africa. However, "how are the mighty fallen.

Nigeria today ranks among one of the countries in the world with the highest number of people living in absolute poverty. Todaro and Smith (2012) noted that absolute poverty is worse than relative poverty. It is actually because of the need to curb the menace of poverty that development economists have dedicated their investigations to understanding the concept and drivers of the vicious circle of poverty and how to evade it. In most of their findings, education is identified as an indefatigable weapon against poverty. For poverty eradication, education should necessarily be designed to provide fundamental support for the effective functioning of economic units in the society. This is what manpower requirement approach is about. It is an approach that bring about the enhancement of requisite skills needed by economic units for their effective sustenance.

The downstream oil sector in Nigeria for example, has a dire need for increase in the supply of petroleum products in the country. The heightened demand has created supply from local refineries which is also called kpo fire. The production by these local refineries is not environmentally friendly. This has raised more sustainability questions in the Niger Delta region as these local refining activities interfere with other economic sectors particularly the agricultural sector. Fishing and farming is worst hit. If the skilled manpower, able to use existing technology to enable local refining of petroleum products to go on without negative effects on the environment and other agricultural activities is made available, more job creation will be achieved alongside steady supply of the products, which means more income.

This could lead to enhanced economic development in the region, since this implies increase in aggregate income generated from productive activities carried out in the region. Income increase is a significant component of economic growth. The availability of this skill in the region also helps bring sustainability into production in the region, because it will not destroy the flora and fauna which the environment is endowed with. Sustainable development has social, economic and environmental dimensions. These dimensions form the perspectives by which sustainable development is approached. When manpower available in the region enable economic units to cover all these three dimensions, sustainable development is achieved.

The achievement of sustainable development is necessary for the region. Once sustainable development as achieved in the above manner, it is no longer difficult to develop a kind of national tool kit, by which strategies are used to develop and use the local unique resources of the region for resolving its challenges and gain some quantifiable real-world benefits. This tool kit is referred to as sustainable economic development. It is a national

initiative, not an imported one. Manpower requirement approach (MRA) provides the above possibilities through education. With the success it has offered to the Kenyan economy, as noted by Mabele (2018), it will undoubtedly yield dividends in the Nigerian economy if it is properly applied. With the unbridled increase in unemployment in the Niger Delta region, and the related youth activism in the place, it will be worthwhile to apply the approach in the region, for sustainable economic development.

Manpower Requirement Approach (MRA)

Pscharopoulos (1987) maintained that physical capital is the main ingredient for economic development. This physical capital would be void without qualitative manpower. In fact, of all forms of capital, the human capital is most responsible for economic development. Sanor and Singer (2011) in agreement with this view, noted that Israel became a start-up nation with heavy reliance on only the human capital. One of the definitions given to the manpower requirement approach (MRA) that is very appealing is the one given by Owglen (2021). He defined it as a systematic approach used to provide strong fundamental support needed for effective functioning of economic units in the economy. It thus, relays on statistical data of manpower needs from sectors of the economy.

Mabele (2018) in agreement with the above added that manpower requirement approach implies use of statistical inputs from economic sources for the purpose of establishing present and future need for manpower by educational occupational categories. The data indicates where there is either surplus or deficit in terms of manpower availability. From this indication, areas of need are spotted out and areas where there is an overflow is also identified.

Aim and Objectives of Manpower Requirement Approach (MRA)

Aim and objectives of education are contextual due to the fact that education is also contextual. However, Mabele (2018) noted that the general aim of manpower requirement approach specified in Kenya is to avoid manpower shortages in the labour market. To achieve this, the following objectives were outlined:

- Estimate the required number of graduates in the economy
- Estimate the number of teachers at different levels and types of education in the country.
- Access the existing curriculum and give recommendations for a change.

Owglen (2021) noted that manpower requirement approach (MRA) aimed at satisfying present and future manpower needs of the economy. This is at the macroeconomic level. At the micro economic level, it aims at ensuring the availability of requisite manpower for firms and specific industries based on their present and future manpower needs. In essence, the approach has a macro and micro economic application. This position makes it suitable for the Niger Delta region, whose vibrance economically cannot exclude industries and firms as partakers. In reality, the pursuit of sustainable economic development will remain an illusion if skills and competencies required for this is missing, either in the public or private sector of the economy of the Niger Delta region.

Manpower Requirement Approach (MRA) and Economic Development

Manpower requirement approach (MRA) has a link with sustainable economic development because it is hinged on an able manpower by which economic units' function effectively in the economy. This relationship could be viewed better by looking at the link it has with economic development first. In view of the critical nature of the human capital and the fact that manpower requirement approach seeks to reduce unemployment, thereby enhancing the achievement of macroeconomic goal of employment, it is effective in enhancing economic growth through higher income generation. Economic growth precedes economic development. California Association for Local Economic Development (CALED) defined economic development as the creation of wealth out of which community benefits are actualized. It is an investment in growing an economy and enhancing prosperity and quality of life for its residents. They noted that economic development is much more than community development.

The pursuit of this therefore deserves an educational option that is designed to support economic units in ways that enable them function effectively and expansively. Where this expansion occurs, more jobs are created as well as more wealth. CALED (n.d) defined community development as a process of making the community a better place to live and work. Economic development however, is defined by Mydral cited in Okowa (2008) as an upward movement of the entire socio-economic system, in essence, it is much broader than community development. Due to the scope, it covers, it has the capacity to enhance the transformation of the region from underdevelopment. Economic development directly or indirectly leads to community development. Economic development is therefore strongly desired by nations for this reason.

To see more clearly how essential the need for economic development is for the nation, CALED gave a guide to achieving it at the local level. The approaches used to enhance economic development are given as follows:

- Business retention and expansion
- Business expansion
- Business creation

The above approaches absolutely result in creation of more employment. This shows that a strong bond exists between tire manpower requirement approach (MRA) and economic development since they both enhance employment rate. For instance, if the requisite skill for doing local crude oil refining in a way that other economic units like agriculture do not suffer, and the environment do not also get degraded, are adopted in the Niger Delta region, the supply of petroleum products from the Nigerian local economy will reduce the importation of same from outside the country. By so doing, the country is helped to gain some favourable balance of trade, while income generated from the venture and attendant job creation also reduce absolute poverty rate. Todaro and Smith (2011) maintained that reduction in absolute poverty rate, precedes sustainable development. Since economic development alone is not sufficient for improved quality of living in the region, sustainable economic development is preferred.

Manpower Requirement Approach and Sustainable Economic Development

Economic development being distinct from community development, also differ from sustainable economic development, United Nations Development Project (UNDP) noted that sustainable development is of great necessity for all nations of the world. Before advancing to

sustainable economic development, it is necessary to understand the essentials of sustainable development. In the course of their work, UNDP identified three principal challenges of development, which often coexist within the same country. They noted that solutions to these challenges should be tailored to address specific deficits and barriers.

These challenges are given as follows:

- Eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions.
- Acceleration of structural transformations for sustainable development.
- Building resilience to crisis and shocks.

Solving all three challenges as stated above puts a nation on the path to sustainable development. In the Bruntland Report (1987) sustainable development was defined as the idea by which human societies are bound to live and meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concepts of sustainable development identified by research gate (2020) are the following:

- Social concept
- Economic concept
- Environmental concept

These form three key perspectives of sustainable development. Under social concept comes, respect for the individual; equal opportunity diversity; employee assistance and human rights. Under economic concept comes consistently profitable growth; risk management; and shareholder returns. Under environment concept; comes permit and license compliance; bio diversity management and carbon management emissions, (research gate 2021). The achievement of sustainable development in the Niger Delta region, demands that concerted efforts should be made to harmonize these three perspectives, so that quality of life there is enhanced. Based on the above, Research Repository (2021) remarked that one common element within sustainable development, addresses all three concepts of sustainability. That is the futuristic element of sustainable development.

CNT (2020) posited that sustainable economic development is a national initiative built on a local economy's unique assets by which her individual challenges are addressed, providing quantifiable real-world benefits. It is viewed as a kind of toolkit by which strategies for working for local people, businesses and institutions are implementable practicalized. The structure and design of such a toolkit is dependent on an able manpower. Without this, it might not be realized since it is a national initiative. Manpower requirement approach is hence very handy for the development of such manpower necessary for sustainable economic development. For this reason, Psacharopoulos (1987) called tire manpower requirement approach, the most popular model for educational planning. It will surely not fail to yield dividends if used in Niger Delta, for the achievement of sustainable economic development in the region.

Steps in Manpower Requirement Approach (MRA) Application

At the micro level, Owlgen (2021) identified the following steps:

- Anticipate the growth of the individual sector and kind of magnitude it has.
- Develop rules for employing manpower in each sector of the economy.
- Specify physical targets for the development of each individual sector to be translated into manpower requirements using sector specific manpower norms

- Estimate educational equivalents of the manpower requirements.

At the macro level, Mabele (2018) identified three stages. These are revealed by the following questions.

- How many jobs will be vacant in the economy by the end of the target year?
- What kind of skills will be required in the economy by the end of the target year?
- How many students are required in the education system in order to produce the needed manpower to fill the vacancies available by the end of the target year?

Based on the above questions the following steps need to be followed:

- List the number of workers by sector or industry, education and occupational class for the base year
- Project the size of the total labour force required by the end of target year.
- Forecast total employment per sector or industry, determine the size of the labour force required in each section within the set period.
- Allocate employment by industry among different categories such as engineering, agriculture, teaching, nursing, legal profession, medics etc.
- Determine the type of education in terms of curriculum content and structure required to develop the desired manpower.
- Estimate the future labour supply by type of education
- Compute the required change in annual outflow internally and externally through retirements, possible occupational mobility and deaths.
- Determine the size of any migrant labour groups and their origin by region. That is, expatriates, missionaries, volunteers, foreign universities etc.
- Compute the required enrolments in each type of education to ensure a balance of entrants and outflow of the manpower annually to guard against surpluses and shortages in manpower

When the above is applied in the Niger Delta, it is necessary to include areas of the economy that deal with environmental remediation from further degradation. This is because, naturally production activities give outputs and wastes also. The development of the manpower able to use technology to either reduce waste or recycle them into usable forms is worthwhile. The gas burnt during crude oil exploration at flow stations and their refining at refineries either local or not, could by this means, be converted into usable economic value for the enhancement of the nation's economy.

CONCLUSION

Being acquainted with the daring need to reduce unemployment in the Niger Delta; the use of manpower requirement approach will give the economy leverage effect. To keep the nation abreast with existing employment needs as well as ahead of time with future needs such an approach is good. The benefits will spread from the region to other parts of the country. The futuristic element of the manpower requirement approach is essential for sustainable economic development.

Suggestions:

Based on the above conclusion, the following suggestions have been given:

- Manpower requirement approach will be suitable for planning education in the Niger Delta and should be adopted, because it will help in the reduction of the high rate of unemployment in the region.
- The goals of economic development in the region should be expanded to embrace sustainable economic development, because sustainable economic development promotes better quality of life in the society.
- Education should promote sustainable economic development in the region because, sustenance of the society a prerogative of education in the society.

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