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Multinational Corporations and Skills Development in Nigeria: The Case of Unilever Nigeria PLC

Jiboku, Joseph O., Ph.D.

Department of Sociology

Olabisi Onabanjo University

Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State

GSM: +2348033804375

E-mail: jibokujoe@yahoo.com

Abstract

The quest for skills development perhaps accounts for why developing countries like Nigeria attract multinational corporations (MNCs) to their territories to invest in their economies. MNCs are the custodians of skills vital for social and economic transformation of any nation. However, despite their skills advantage, Nigeria presents a paradox where the long existence of numerous multinational corporations has not translated into the development of local skills which are essential for sustainable development and transformation. Some of the MNCs have shot down operations while some have relocated without the Nigerians being able to operate these companies even on a reduced capacity. In the light of this negative scenario, this paper examined the skills development programmes and strategies of Unilever, Nigeria PLC. Unilever is an old company whose business operations date back to the colonial period and has remained a household name in home care manufacturing. The paper adopted qualitative method of research based on primary data obtained from interviews and secondary data from relevant literature. It situated its arguments on the Human Capital Theory and the Profit Pathology narrative. The paper contended that national institutional framework is required in Nigeria to align multinational skills development practices with the country's skills development aspirations in order to maximise the MNCs' skills development benefits.

Key Words: Multinational Corporations, Skills, Governance, Social Development, Economic Development, Transformation, Sustainability

Understanding Multinational Corporations

Multinational corporations (MNCs) have acquired a number of nomenclatures through the years, such as "transnational enterprise" (corporation) (Poon & Sajarattanochoe, 2010, p. 291; UNCTAD, 2002, p. 291), "international corporations" or firms, "global corporations" (Wang, and Chen, 2015, p. 78; and "denationalised corporations" "supranational" and

“cosmocorporations” (Kuşluvan, 1998, p.163). Despite the varying descriptions, there is near consensus among scholars that MNCs have existed for several years, dating back to the 18th century, and that they are enterprises that own or possess income-generating assets in more than one country. They include firms with both equity and contractual involvement in more than one country, as businesses have become more diffused in a globalising world in which the trend and emphasis is a knowledge and technology-driven society. A general conceptualisation of a multinational is an enterprise which has some equity investment or contractual involvement such as management contracts, franchising, and leasing agreements in more than one country (see Kuşluvan, 1998, p. 168). Scholarly discourse on MNCs revolves around a number of themes, however, the focus of this paper is on the effects of multinational activities on host countries’ skills development as exemplified by Nigeria

The motive of MNCs attracted scientific and public attention from the moment of their appearance, and especially from the beginning of their intensive growth during the 1960s. In the last few decades, MNCs have been an important subject of political, economic and ideological debates leading to the emergence of MNC apologists who see them as a benign engine of growth, social and economic transformation (see for instance, Dulupçu and Demirel, 2009). Some see them as custodians of skills which are capable to transforming host countries’ economies. However, the situation in Nigeria is such that MNCs have been in operation for years without the development of local skills. Nigeria still languishes in lack of skills despite the many years of MNC operations. There appears to be disconnect between MNCs skills development programme and national skills development aspirations. The main objective of this paper is to examine the skills development practices of Unilever Nigeria PLC in light of Nigeria’s skills development challenge.

Multinational Corporations and Skills Development – A Review

Some scholars have argued that human capital formation is enhanced through MNCs’ involvement in technology ‘transfer’ (or technology sharing). Technology transfer, the argument goes, is accompanied by training and skills development imparted to affiliates and local subsidiaries for greater productivity. This is not just through the introduction of new machinery, equipment, expatriate managers and technicians but also through the training and empowerment of local employees at different levels. This vital discourse has prevailed over a long time (Blomstrom & Kokko, 2001, p. 9). It equally features in the contemporary scholarly debates (see Wang, and Chen, 2015). A relatively long-held view is that MNCs promote skills development through the establishment of training institutions for their personnel and for the benefit of allied organisations and their employees (Agbodike, 1998, p. 168). MNCs are therefore seen, from these perspectives, as agents of change in host countries (Vance et al., 2014).

On the other hand, there are critics who view multinational corporations and the whole range of their activities as being driven by self-interest and ‘irreversible’ commitment to exploitation and maximisation of profit through the use of political, economic and technological advantages, particularly in developing countries (Stiglitz 2002, Bakan, 2004). These scholars view MNCs as agents of capitalists who are in business to perpetuate the capitalist tenet of profit maximisation in their subsidiaries and are therefore less concerned with skills development in a given host country. Thus, scholars who hold such position argue that there is a need for government to act as a mediating force to curb the ‘excesses’ of MNCs (Bohm et al., 2008, pp.169-182; Erunke & Kigbu, 2012). Against this background, the next section of the paper attempts to view MNCs’ skills development in Nigeria through the theoretical lenses of Human Capital theory and the Profit Pathology narratives.

Theoretical Contexts of Multinationals and Skills Development

Human Capital Theory

According to the proponents of Human Capital Theory, investment in human capital by organisations will go a long way in the overall development of society as such investment would have multiplier effects on social wellbeing and job prospects of a trained person. A skilled person is more socially engaged in the activities of his society as he sees him or herself as a valuable member of the society unlike an unskilled person who might view him or herself as “incomplete” member of the society because of little contributions made at informal level due to lack of skills. The fundamental role of human capital for socio-economic transformation is well espoused in the literature (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). Conceptually; the foundation of human capital is based on knowledge and skills acquired by an individual through education, vocational training or other learning activities (OECD, 2009, p. 2). Human capital therefore implies investments that are made in people or that people make in themselves to improve their creative potentials or skills, empower themselves in the labour market and by extension increase productivity (Rosen, 1999). In effect, training and capacity building invested in people (employees) for better productivity are all embodiments of human capital. Investment in human capital plays an important role in a country’s economic development. In essence, this means that when all other factors are controlled, countries with higher human capital may have higher economic growth. A higher level of human capital has a correlation with a nation’s productivity which is considered a very important source of social and economic transformation.

In a comparative study of Western and developing countries, Todaro (1986) concluded that the economic growth and transformation of Western countries were clear indicators of their investment in the improvement in skills or human capital as the leading source of their economic growth and development. As Schultz (1992, p.6) asserted, competent and skilled manpower is not only important in the quest for development but empirical evidence reveals that it was the “secret” for the quick recovery of Western Europe and Japan after the devastating effects of the Second World War which almost led to the total ruin of this axis of the world. This perhaps explains the high level of Western countries’ investment in education for human development. The fast-growing Asian economies such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore are remarkable models of the vital role of human capital to economic growth and transformation. Despite the fact that these countries were not rich in natural resources and minerals, they have managed to grow faster than many other countries, because they have had high quality and highly skilled human capital (Becker, 1993). The success of the Asian Tigers through investment in human capital perhaps added momentum to the quest for skills development in Nigeria. The government has established skills development institutions to facilitate development of human capital in the country. In addition, it might also have spurred the country into the extension of liberal incentives to attract foreign direct investments through the MNCs' as a strategy of tapping into their skills advantage. However, the skills challenge still persists in Nigeria due to factors which could be attributable to inadequate funding and capacity development of skills development institutions, among other endogenous factors.

Becker (1964) analysed the concept of human capital within the context of the labour market, and viewed employees to be of prime importance in wealth creation, economic prosperity and the survival of society. Emphasising the core importance of human capital, Becker (1992) concluded that to discuss social and economic growth and development outside the concept of human capital would be as paradoxical as to discuss the former Soviet Union without the

doctrine of Karl Marx. This emphasises the centrality of human capital to economic transformation of any country. Human capital is similar to what Marxists refer to as the infrastructure of society upon which the other superstructures rest (Marx, 1890). It serves as the foundation for societal transformation. In Nigeria, the quest for social and economic transformation has not been accelerated due to inadequate investment in the development of human capital. The effect has been the dearth of essential skills necessary for development.

In essence, acquisition of skills has multiplier effects on the trained employees beyond efficiency on the job. On the flip side, lack of skills portends grave consequences for the society. This arguably, accounts for poverty, unemployment and associated criminal activities in the Nigerian society such as the Niger Delta. The Boko Haram Terrorism ravaging the North East of the country that is accredited to be the poorest region in Nigeria could also be the aftermath of lack of skills, unemployment and poverty. Development of skills especially of the youth might be a sustainable approach to a lasting peace necessary for development in Nigeria. Human capital is seen by Ghalandarzahi and Safdarie (2012, p.164) as a prerequisite for development because the extent of growth and rate of development depends on the quality and quantity of an efficient workforce. Human capital provides potential and a springboard for change and improvement, optimises the use of physical and tangible capital, increases the efficiency of production, and accelerates the rate of economic growth (Ghalandarzahi & Safdarie, 2012, p.164).

The Human Capital Theory is useful because of its strength in analysing issues on training and skills development in the socio-economic transformation of any country. In this paper, human capital theory is useful as an analytical tool for understanding Nigeria's skills situation as well as efforts of the government to address the skills challenge through the establishment of the skills development institutions. Moreover, conscious of the importance of skills, organised private sector and other stakeholders in the Nigerian economy have also been enabled through appropriate legislation to establish skills development institutions to facilitate human capital development in the country. However, the theory does not interrogate the training and skills development imparted on employees in the host countries of MNCs. This fundamental underlying agenda impact on skills development and human capital formation in host countries and remains a challenge for their socio-economic transformation especially in developing world. In addition, as espoused by the human capital theory, while acquiring skills are good for individual and society, the inherent inequalities in the society that affects access to acquisition of skills by the vast majority especially in developing countries appears not to have been recognised and accounted for by the human capital theory. To further shed light on the phenomena of skills development and MNCs, the paper adopts Profit Pathology narrative as a complementary model for yet another nuance on the subject matter of inquiry.

The 'Profit Pathology' Narrative

Multinational corporations undoubtedly have contributed to improvement in quality of life globally through the production of goods and services. However, the modus operandi of MNCs has been benignly described by Bakan (2004) as 'pathological' taking cognisance of their ruthless pursuit of business interest. The profit motive of MNCs, according to Bakan (2004), knows no bounds, and anything and everything could be done to ensure profit maximisation, whether moral or immoral, legal or illegal, humane or cruel as long as it leads to profit. Such pursuit manifests in recklessness and disregard for safety of people and the environment. A case in point is environmental degradation as a result of the activities of numerous oil MNCs in the Niger Delta area in Nigeria. MNCs are sometimes alleged to be insincere and cunning in realising profit motive; they undermine standards and societal

norms; they are unconcerned and could as well be described as callous in their pursuit of profits.

It is in reaction to the MNCs' profit pathology behaviours that Corporate Accountability International (CAI) an NGO has been in the fore front of leading public campaigns and sensitisation of the people against what it called 'irresponsible' and dangerous activities of MNCs as some of their actions are known to have had devastating effects on people and environments. A good example was the aggressive and unethical marketing of infant baby formula by the world beverage giant Nestle which resulted in the death of many children in the developing poor countries. Other unsavoury manipulations of public policies abound in different parts of the world resulting in dire consequences. Another popular example is the case of ITT and the alleged destabilisation of Chile which eventually culminated in the overthrow of the legitimate government of Salvador Allende, all for protection of economic interest.

Some MNCs are so wealthy and powerful because of their huge investments that they interfere in the internal affairs of their host countries; they suppress legislations where such impinge on their economic interests; they could close plants or relocate to compel host countries to grant them concessions. And because MNCs control the world's big organisations, they therefore determine what is produced, how it is produced, and for whom, where and when, among other decisions. They influence governments and thus ensure remote or subtle manipulation of rules to satisfy their selfish profit purposes (Bakan, 2004; also see Stiglitz, 2002). The Pathological Profit narrative therefore explains the manipulations of MNCs in order to facilitate profits. Bakan (2004) for instance, did not see MNCs as agents of technology transfer or entrepreneurial skills development as all these endeavours are guided directly by their profit motive. From this theoretical expose, an inference could be drawn that MNCs will engage in any form of protectionism, be it skills or technology, in order to ensure profit maximisation.

The 'Profit Pathology narrative' has clearly revealed the ruthless pursuit of profit by MNCs but with no genuine spill-over from their activities, that are of benefit to the host countries. Any form of benefit that might accrue is secondary and may therefore be unintended.

Methodology

This paper examined training and skills development programmes and strategies within the Nigerian multinational corporate sector, with the aim of identifying the inconsistencies with national skills development aspirations. It presents Unilever Nigeria PLC as its case study. This will enable the paper to draw a conclusion as to whether this company's skills development programmes are relevant to the national aspirations beyond corporate objectives. This paper emanates from a completed doctoral study which examined skills development programmes and strategies in the Nigerian multinational corporate sector using three companies Lafarge, Unilever and MTN as case studies. However, the focus of this paper and findings that are presented in it are based on Unilever. The paper adopted qualitative research methodology in obtaining and analysing data. Qualitative method of research seeks to explain a phenomenon of study from the contextual perspective of the research participants. It is flexible and allows for interactions with the research participants (see Babbie & Mouton 2001).

Both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data were gathered from three discourse constituencies (state, MNC and organised labour federations) by means of Key informant interviews, and in-depth semi-structured interviews with senior officials. A review

of relevant literature also provided useful secondary data. Three Key informant interviews were held with government policy making establishments concerned with skills development and utilisation. The government establishments are: Federal Ministries of - Employment and Productivity; Centre for Management Development (CMD) and the Industrial Training Fund (ITF). The key informants helped to shed light on government's orientation on training and skills development expected in the country by employers of labour.

It is important to note in this section that while the doctoral study (from which this paper emanates) unravelled the training programmes of three MNCs and interviews were held with officials in the companies, the paper presents excerpts of interviews obtained in Unilever Nigeria PLC which is the company focused. Unilever was purposely selected because it is the pioneer and a household name in home care manufacturing in Nigeria with long period of business activities. Not only that it is a company that is of vital relevance to the issue of skills development and utilisation, it has a large labour force with high level of attraction to job seekers in its area of operation. The interview participants were senior officials whose responsibilities were central to skills development and utilisation in the company.

Findings

Skills Development in Nigeria - State Aspiration and Focus

The government has the responsibility of providing enabling environment through legislative policy framework for training and skills development. This is exemplified by the numerous institutions established for the realisation of this objective (Umo, 1996, Ejere, 2011). Government has also taken the initiative of establishing a number of training and skills development institutions to ensure training and skills development of the citizenry. One of these vital agencies of government is the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity, Abuja. A senior official of the Ministry said:

Government has been encouraging the multinational corporations to set up training schools for their employees to acquire relevant skills for their organisations and allied industry. Officials of the Ministry visits such training centres run by multinational corporations for inculcation of soft skills and standardisation of their training programmes.

The official of government stated further that:

The various Industrial Skills Centres being operated by parastatals under different ministries provide holistic training. Besides specific vocational and technical skills that make them professionals, towards the end of their programmes, trainees are usually exposed to management and entrepreneurial skills which will help facilitate adaptation of their technical skills and self-employment.

The statements made by the official reveal the desire of government; and with economic downturn that has reduced employment opportunities, the government is demonstrating the need for holistic training and skills that will allow for self-employment. A Director in the ministry explained:

The ministry plays supervisory role and usually mandated MNC employers to train those recruited. The ministry ensures standardisation of the training and skills programmes provided by companies. And after the completion of training programmes, the trained employees are encouraged to come to the ministry for practical examination to enable them acquire Trade Test Certificate with which they

can access employment within the economy and for career progression through subsequent higher certifications.

The commitment of the government through its agencies demonstrates that employees should be trained by employing organisations and after acquiring the necessary trainings and skills programmes, such employees could come to the ministry for evaluation and certification of their competencies to enable them access job opportunities beyond the environment of their trainings. Such certification confers recognition and wider choices on such trained individuals especially those that do not have secondary school qualification. The senior official of the Federal Ministry of Employment and Productivity also stressed the importance which the government attaches to vocational education as a means of developing the skills of the citizenry through the establishment of skills acquisition centres in different parts of the country.

In addition, the concern of government that employees should have skills required beyond their immediate organisations was also buttressed by an official of the Centre for Management Development (CMD), a government think-tank. This interviewee noted that:

Consulting at the Centre, could lead to identification of need for training, when skill gaps are identified, of course there is nowhere in the world where you don't find skill gaps, especially in a developing country. We have more gaps than the advanced western world. In such situation, the Centre designs training programmes to address such identified gaps.

The study also revealed the importance of certification for vocational and technical skills as wider employment opportunities are also facilitated with certification of training and competency. The certificate holder becomes a beacon within their local communities, especially in the developing world. The importance of certification for wider employment opportunities makes it an important issue in human capital formation in Nigeria. The senior official of the Federal Ministry of Employment and Productivity also noted:

This department is into the skills development and certification for the whole country. There are industrial skills training workshops all over the country. Beyond this, my department sets out to give the minimum skill required by the economy to trainees who come for Trade Test Certificate. The certificates are: Trade Tests Three, Two, and One. Three is the lowest while One is the highest for technicians.

The importance of certification of training was further buttressed by a senior official of CMD, one of the policy think tanks of government, the official emphasised that the Centre not only certifies training but also concerned with certification of trainers to ensure standards. He said:

Unfortunately one of the challenges we have in terms of training, development, skills, capacity building, is the fact that there appears to be no institutional framework for all these. Only recently the Centre for Management Development (CMD) was empowered to regulate training and development. Now, CMD is regulating it. To be a trainer, there are two programmes must attended at the centre. The first is Basic Manpower Development Workshop; that is Train-the-Trainer. It is for all interested in training others irrespective of profession. This lasts for two weeks; after that, the trainer would be required to come back for the second part which is the Advanced Manpower Development Workshop which also lasts for two weeks. After that, participants are licensed to practice as trainers with certificate. The certificate enables the trainer to get government training contract or consultancy.

All these responses demonstrate the commitment of government to enable workers, especially the unskilled who are more vulnerable to exploitation, to be trained and empowered. In essence, government not only sets the platform for training and skills development through legislation but is also involved directly in setting examples through the establishment of skills acquisition centres and evaluation of trainees for certification purpose. The idea of government is further buttressed with the view of yet another senior official of a government's parastatal – Industrial Training Fund. He said:

A person trained in auto-mechanics will be able to apply the knowledge in different organisations with mechanical equipment... Not only are they given entrepreneurial skills to be able to manage businesses, they are also encouraged to form cooperative societies as avenues of sourcing credit facilities for individuals' establishment of businesses.

Skills Development in Nigeria: Aspirations of the Organised Labour

The organised labour is an important social partner in the economy of Nigeria and so the view of the organised labour was also sort in skills development where top officials of the two central labour movement movements gave vivid opinions and aspirations of their labour federations on issues of skills development in Nigeria's multinational corporate sector. The respondents from organised labour were of the view that employers should impart skills that would be amenable to change, especially in the global environment which has been characterised by rapid technological innovations. Such skills could then be put to other uses in the event of economic change. Below is how a senior official of NLC the oldest and largest labour federation in the country articulated his views:

When an employee is skilled, he has a lot of potentials in him. What he decides to do with the skill is a different ball game. He could decide to get a new job where he knows his skills are required. He knows that he will be valued and be highly priced because of skills acquired, he has expertise with skills and competency in a particular area of production. Developed skill creates ample opportunities for an employee especially in this age of high labour mobility.

At TUC, the second labour federation, a senior official at the headquarters responded thus:

Knowledge is power and for someone to be empowered, he/she must have skills. We cannot have development without people being masters, having skills that have relevance beyond an industry. So, the country is the way it is now because of lack of policies, lack of competencies, capacity to do what it would have wanted to do. The union would have expected that when multinationals come and establish companies, they will be able to uplift people by imparting skills to them. Not that the union is against multinationals making profit, but that when they make their profit, they should also leave something behind that will have a long lasting impact on skills and competencies of people recruited to work in factories. It is one of the challenges that we are facing because the government is not serious about it and the companies take undue advantage.

It is possible to glean from the assertions of officials from the two labour federations that the organised labour constituency as revealed by labour officials desired that in the course of working for MNCs, the workers would be trained and acquire skills that would give them value and better opportunities well into the future. Such acquired skills will empower such worker and as well enhance job mobility.

Having examined the desire of the state and the organised labour in skills development in Nigeria, the next section of the paper focuses on the Unilever Nigeria PLC, which is the multinational company of consideration in this paper to examine whether its training and skills development programmes and the extent to which such programmes are in line with Nigeria's national aspirations on skills development.

Skills Development in MNCs' in Nigeria: Lessons from Unilever

The study revealed that different forms of training programmes exist in Unilever which could be broadly classified into on-the job training and off-the job training. The different skills training programmes are aimed at developing employees' skills which will not only be relevant within the company but beneficial to them beyond the factory. In addition, the paper revealed the extent to which the training and skills development programmes of Unilever aligned with the national discourse on training and skills development, for instance, to what extent the company's training objectives and programmes have helped in realising the goals of human capital formation at the national level as seen by important stakeholders in the company who work in areas of the company that are essential to skills development and utilisation.

A manager in Unilever Nigerian PLC stated:

Unilever has a long history of success in Nigeria. So many new companies in the home care sector have employees who have worked here. In fact, they know that these employees are competent with the work. Hardly will you find an employee of Unilever who is not doing anything outside. In the Nigerian home care product environment, Unilever is actually called a training school.

In similar vein, another Unilever Manager buttressed the above statement when he said the training strategy of Unilever Nigeria PLC has a lot of advantages to the employees' empowerment. He stated thus:

In the Nigerian environment, Unilever is called a training school because of the high number of people that have passed through the company to other companies. For example, I know of a man that worked here before and later left. He started his own small manufacturing company. He produces some of our products for us as he sometimes get contract for an arm of our production. For example, if we can't meet market demand at a particular time, we contract him to supplement. Apart from that, the skills acquired in Unilever, if put together by an individual, could make one to actually stand alone and become an entrepreneur. Working in the factory makes such workers know the processes of soap making, detergent and others. Such workers could work on their own as small scale manufacturer which many are into.

The discourse with the Managers in Unilever Nigeria PLC painted the picture of an MNC that places a high premium on training and skills development agenda that encouraged entrepreneurship and employment generation in Nigeria.

An important point that could be highlighted from this interview response is that the training programmes of Unilever are tailored to emphasise the issue of empowerment. The study found that Unilever skills development programmes are relevant to the lives of the employees beyond their enterprises. The employees could work in other similar establishments; some could establish small scale industries.

Notwithstanding the laudable objectives of Unilever's programmes, the study specifically identified that Unilever, Nigeria Plc engages in sub-contracting of employees after some employees might have left the company.

The statements made by the officials in Unilever reflect the extent to which Unilever tactically keeps experienced employee within its control having acquired the productive 'secrets' of the company that has sustained it for almost a century of operations in Nigeria. However, this strategy of sub-contracting of experience employee when market demands, over the years, raises fundamental questions about the issues of skills transfer, technology transfer and domiciliation efforts of Unilever in Nigeria despite close to a century of successful business operations. One question to ask is: Could such personnel not be left off the company after having spent a considerable numbers of working life in the company before formal disengagement? Again, with many youths graduating from Nigerian Universities, could the company not employ one among the graduates in the chemical sciences and train such person for the career development in the company rather than tactically holding on to a retired employee?

It is instructive to note in addition that from the key informant and in-depth interviews conducted in the three skills development and utilisation constituencies (state, organised labour and multinational), the interviewees expressed individual constituency's commitment to training and skills development beyond the enterprise in line with national aspirations on skills development. Given this scenario, the concerns of this paper are: Why does unemployment and joblessness almost always result from the restructuring of companies in Nigeria? In the phase of unfavourable employment conditions by employers and untoward labour practices often experienced in recent time in MNCs, why do people try to remain on their jobs rather than look for other jobs or opt out for self-employment? These are issues that call for reflections.

Discussion and Conclusion

The interview responses obtained from three discourse constituencies – state, organised labour and the multinational corporate sector - revealed a commitment to national skills development aspirations. The study showed that the three identified discourse constituencies (State, Organised labour and MNC) all aligned with the need to ensure effective mechanisms for ensuring that their training and skills development programmes are relevant to empowerment, skills portability and employment mobility, entrepreneurship and employment generation, technology transfer, and technology domiciliation among others. However, claims are not always the same thing as reality as there exists in Nigeria a glaring skills disjuncture between local employees and expatriate employees of MNCs. This disconnect is exemplified by the continual presence of expatriate managers and technicians that operate in these companies.

The issue of concern in this paper is that the long period of the operations of many multinational corporations in Nigeria has not resulted in the development of sufficient local technicians and specialists nor in a significantly reduced reliance on expatriate technicians and professionals. The few employees who have been able to acquire the productive 'secrets' of the company are tactically 'caged', economically held 'captive' and kept within reach and control through sub-contracting in order to ensure such emerging local entrepreneurs do not constitute market threat to Unilever's vast consumer market in Nigeria. In addition the company's production skills diffusion is equally prevented in order to continue to maintain dominance of the economy. In view of the fact that Unilever operates in over a hundred countries of the world and the company continues to expand operations, in Nigeria could the

company not have embarked on training of young graduates to replace old hands that have retired and currently being engaged in production sub-contracting?

This finding points to a deliberate attempt to make these specialised skills unavailable in perpetuity which negates the national aspiration on skills development. Considering the seeming disjuncture, therefore, this paper recommends the aligning of multinational companies' skills development programmes with national objectives on training and skills development. In ensuring this objective, the relevant board of technical and vocational education in Nigeria (which is responsible for the standardisation of technical and vocational skills) should monitor the training of employees. Such extant establishment staffed by professionals, will help in ensuring compliance by the MNCs with national objectives on the type of training and skills development which would be beneficial to the economy and be broadly in line with national aspirations on skills development beyond corporate objective. Except adequate monitoring is provided by this agency of government, MNCs will continue to do the business as usual where profit maximisation might be pursued ruthlessly as Bakan revealed in his pathological profit narrative. Thus, skills development programmes will be implemented with little or no bearings with national aspirations. This situation would be to the detriment of human capital development -- an objective which MNCs publicly proclaim that they pursue as part of their corporate objective in Nigeria as in other countries where they operate.

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