

## **The Future of Work: Organizational Behaviour and Sustenance**

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**ABSTRACT:-** This paper discussed the future of work and its implications on organizational behaviour and sustenance. The study is designed as a theoretical paper and specifically discussed the future of work based on factors such as workplace diversity, competition and market growth. Assessing their impact on the behaviour and sustenance of organizations especially as regards the technology, structure and culture of the organization. The study specifically addresses the future and implications of change in work for Nigerian organizations given their own unique experiences and prior challenges with regards to organizational technology and the development and implementation of consistent policies which match their own problems. It was concluded that the specific modification and alignment of technology, structure and culture with the trends and futuristic tendencies of its market, especially with regards to diversity, competition and market growth, repositions it strategically and enhances its behaviour and sustenance.

**Keywords:-** Organizational behaviour, sustenance, technology, culture, structure, diversity, competition, market growth

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Organizations – their behaviour and actions are determined by their goals and the nature or attributes that characterize their environment (Ahuja, 2000; Brown, 1998). In this way organizational forms and functions can be considered as patterned to suit their survival and sustenance by adapting their systems and processes to the dynamics of their current environment and market features. Argote (1999) argued that while it is important that organizations address the current gaps and problems of their markets and contexts, it is also imperative that they adopt flexible features and systems which allow for quick modifications to change and which are receptive to the growth and emerging features within their various contexts. As such it is evident that the behaviour and sustenance of organizations are premised on its capacity for addressing the present needs of its workplace, market as well as planning for its placement in the future with regards to changes or advances in technology, structure and culture (Brown, 1998; Nelson & Quick, 2011; Daniels, 2002). These factors are considered as influencing the strategic positioning and functionality of organizations on the long-run especially since they are considered as reflecting the behaviour of the organization in response to future of work and the direction of change within its market or environment (Thomas, 1995).

Studies (Guan & Ma, 2003; Kotter, 2002; Dupuy, 2001) which have addressed the growing dynamics, future and trends of the work environment and its impact on organizations have often addressed this from the standpoint of theories and models based on ideologies drawn from the experiences and encounters of organizations within highly developed contexts and economies. Elivira and Cohen (2001) and Osisioma (2004) argued that such models are incompatible with the experiences of organizations within less developed contexts such as Nigeria. Osisioma (2004) argued that organizations within countries like the United States and China are dominant players in the global technology market and their competition often determines the pace and direction of change for businesses and organizations within other countries – especially those in Africa. As such the experience of changes and competition in the technology market may offer different and unique experiences for organizations within highly dissimilar and unique contexts. Osisioma (2004) noted that while the openness towards change and proactiveness for most Nigerian based organizations is lower and more rigid, those of organizations within more advanced nations such as the United States are more receptive and flexible.

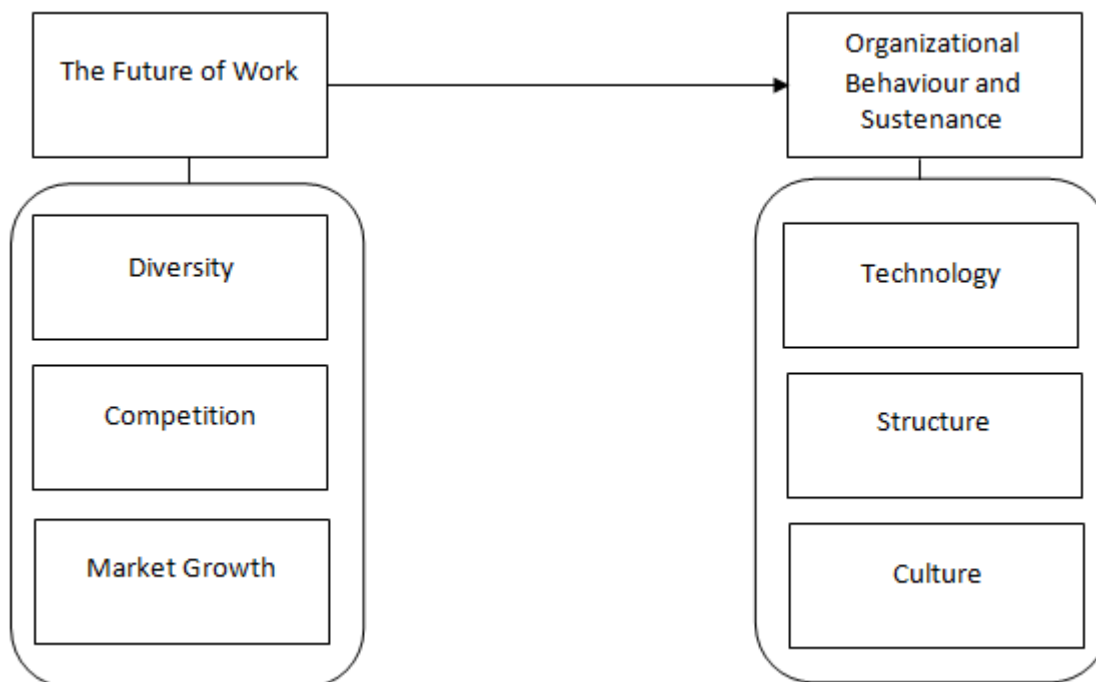
Given the observed gap in studies which have addressed the implications of the future of work within contexts such as Nigeria, and the noted mismatch between foreign ideologies or models and the context of Nigeria, this paper discusses the possible changes and forms of the future of work with regards to diversity, competition and market growth, and its impact on organizational behaviour and sustenance as expressed through technology, structure and organizational culture. This paper is therefore justified on the basis that it offers

content which departs from existing theoretical postulations about the impact of the future of work on the behaviour and sustenance of organizations by focusing on literature which addresses the issue from the standpoint of organizations within developing contexts such as Africa, particularly Nigeria. This as such brings into light a unique perspective about the experiences of Nigerian based organizations and their readiness or preparedness for the future.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In view of the stated purpose of this study – which is the review of the impact of the future of work on the behaviour and sustenance of organizations, the following objectives are stated as specific issues to be discussed in this paper:

- i. Discuss the future of work in line with workplace diversity, competition and market growth
- ii. Discuss the behaviour and sustenance of organizations in line with technology, structure and culture
- iii. Discuss the implications of the future of work for organizational behaviour and sustenance.



**Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the future of work and organizational behaviour and sustenance**  
Source: Dimensions are adapted from Thompson (1998) and measures from Wischnevsky (2004).

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is the institutional theory. The theory describes a bases on which organizations are able to survive given their capacity for adopting and operating within the frameworks which define their societies or operational contexts (Azhar, 2008). This also implies a willingness to flow and adopt features in terms of technology, structure and culture which can be said to offer substantial repositioning for the organization even as its environment and market changes. The institutional theory identifies the organization as a significant part of the society as considers the organizations behaviour and outcomes of sustenance as determined by the changes and development within its external context (Azhar, 2008). In adopting this theory as a foundation for this study, it is the position of this paper that organizations have a higher tendency for survival and sustained operations where their behaviour (technology, structure and culture) are flexible, suited and aligned to the expectations of their environment and the futuristic expectations or demands of work and markets.

### The Future of Work

Change as noted is the only constant there is. This statement describes the volatility of the business world, work relationships and market. As such the growing dynamics of the society indicate that relationships and exchanges are ever evolving and that the future will impact uniquely on the activities and affairs of organizations. Thomas (1995) described the pace of change in relation to business exchanges and market characteristics as hyper-dynamic. According to him, the choices and decisions of organizations in their work

will emerge from their experiences and observations of the changes in their market. Three notable factors are taken into consideration with regards to the future of work, namely – the diversity of the workplace, the competition related with such work and market growth.

**Diversity:** This describes the differences and unique attributes which characterize and differentiate peoples, or groups. Diversity is considered a major factor in the functioning of societies. With government actions geared towards addressing immigration, racial and inter-ethnic issues, diversity poses a major concern especially for organizations within highly multi-lingual and multi-ethnic contexts such as Nigeria. Cox and Blake (1991) opined that while diversity in the past was not accorded much attention within the public and private sector of Nigeria, recent developments with regards to migration, urbanization and the religion, have contributed to a more diverse and multi-religious and multi-ethnic workplace and environment.

Organizations are therefore saddled with the responsibility of balancing ideals, values and orientations such that group ideologies are synchronized with those of the organization. Elvira and Cohen (2001) stated that diversity is a major factor and poses a critical issue in the market and future of work as well as businesses around Africa. This is as reports indicate the growing conflicts between ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria, the xenophobic driven attacks on foreigners, and the growing conflict between White and black farmers in Zimbabwe, suggesting a growing trend of distrust and poor cooperation between groups and a weak integrative framework (Adjai& Lazaridis, 2013); nonetheless, the responsibility of diversity and its effective management is considered a task for organizations today, even as it is expected to impact on the future of work.

**Competition:** The growing rivalry and drive for market share is such that defines the business world today. Arthur and Huntly (2005) noted that organizations are constantly looking out for improved means and opportunities to enhance their competitiveness and to be able to offer superior services which stand out. This as Bougrain and Handeville (2002) noted is rooted in the desire for survival and profitability. In another study Ito (1995) highlighted on the growing competition between multinationals and local or indigenous firms in Nigeria which has further increased work pressure and expectations on the work performance of the Nigerian employee. From his point of view, Ito (1995) argued that privatization has driven the competitiveness of most Nigerian industries, especially that of manufacturing and telecommunication. In the past these sectors were considered as redundant and solely dependent on the funding and protection of the Nigerian government, however, the privatization has offered a new level of competition which is observed to drive most of these sectors. At this stage, one can consider the level of competition within the Nigerian business environment as challenging and with a high tendency for becoming more dynamic and unpredictable in the future (Dauda, 2010; Ito, 1995).

**Market growth:** Studies indicate a growing rate of business start-ups and entrepreneurial activities in the recent years. Ahls (2001) ties this trend primarily to the growing population and low amount of paid jobs available. This impacting on not only a strong competition over left available jobs but also a high rate of new venture creation or Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs). The disproportionate distribution between the growing population and the availability of jobs has necessitated a shift from paid white-collar jobs to the establishment of new ventures – thus enlarging the market and its opportunities therewith (Dupuy, 2001). This growth also has serious implications for the depth of business interactions with regards to partnerships, transfer of knowledge, human capacity building and service internationalization of Nigerian organizations (Ito, 1995). The growth also identifies with the need for identity and placement within the market and the capacity for sustained uniqueness given the growing amount of businesses and even client base.

### **Organizational Behaviour and Sustenance**

The behaviour and sustenance describe those features, actions and attributes of the organization that define it and which facilitate its survival and sustained operations. Cameron and Quinn (2006) stated the behaviour of the organization identifies more with those features that characterize and determine the actions or preferences of the organization. According to him, these features are embedded in the systems and processes of the organization, its policies and values and also its relationships and the ordering of tasks. This position corroborates with the views expressed by Ahls (2001) that to understand the behaviour of the organization, one must begin with understanding its technology, its structure and its culture. According to him, these factors define the organization and determine its level of functionality, adaptability and openness towards issues such as change. While some have further identified leadership as a major feature and behaviour moulding factor of the organization; Bartol and Srivastava (2002) described leadership as an expression of the structure and culture of the organization. Stating that leadership within the organization is premised on the values and experiences that have over time shaped the relationships and structuring of the organization.

**Organizational Technology:** This describes those systems, procedures and techniques which afford the organization an improved and efficient level of functionality and process. It is a dimension of behaviour which defines the information processing capacity of the organization and its utility of knowledge in a manner that is competitive and innovative. Technology is a vital feature of the organization as it determines its level of change readiness and functionality. Nelson and Quick (2011) observed that technology within Nigerian organizations is highly relative. First, the cost of technology is a major consideration is its choice and utility,

second – the availability of the required expertise and knowledge in handling and operating the technological system is also important, third – the applicability and suitability of preferred or adopted technology to the contextual needs or gaps identified within one’s own market or business environment (Ezekiel, 2007; Yan et al, 2004).

**Organizational Structure:** The structure of the organization describes the ordering of its relationships and its tasks in a manner that defines responsibilities and role expectations. The structure of the organization determines the arrangement of its tasks the allocation of responsibilities (Ahls, 2001). It is fundamental to effective leadership as it specifies features such as the span of control, decision-making processes, communication channels as well as the flow of authority. Ahls (2001) noted that the structure of the organization is critical to its sustained operations and the coordination of its related activities and actions. Ahls (2001) describe structure as providing form and stability to the organization, noting however that structure should be flexible and designed to strategically position the organization adaptively and resilient within its market and business environment.

**Organizational Culture:** The culture of the organization describes its shared values, norms, policies and all practices or actions that are considered as accepted and which give the organization its identity by distinguishing it from similar groups. Organizational culture describes the inherent characteristics of the organization. Ernst (2001) describes it as pervasive and as such, extending to all sub-groups or members within the organization and integrating of all levels of the organization. The culture of the organization is an encompassing framework which also dictates relationships and behaviour within the organization. It drives the organization by offering it what Kotter (2012) described as a spirit.

### **Future of Work: Organizational Behaviour and Sustenance**

Organizations are considered as strategic based on their capacity for long-term plans and decisions which are geared towards repositioning them to meet the requirements of their markets and environments. The implications of factors such as diversity, competition and market growth for the organization are such that invariably impact on its wellbeing and functionality. Looking at the Nigerian business environment, Osisioma (2004) argued that a lot has changed and is yet changing in line with organizational technology, structure and culture – all in a bid to adapt and sustain operations. Ito (1995) argued that most indigenous firms within Nigeria have been able to adapt and expand operations on a commendable scale and even outside the country. While there are instances of failure and business closure in some cases, reports suggest that a good number of manufacturing firms, banks and other entrepreneurs have been able to internationalize and compete favourably within their global market space. This suggests possible growth and competitiveness even in the future.

Positioning for the future and the strategic goals of the organization requires a constant assessment of the policies and cultural values of the organization. Cox and Blake (1991) opined that it is imperative for organizations to constantly seek out platforms upon which they can effectively harness the creativity offered by diversity. Cox and Blake (1991) noted that diversity is inevitable and as such it is essential that organizations not only learn about the various diversity-based factors that define their workers but also adopt policies that emphasize on representativeness and employee voice. The design of policies in this way are considered to reflect the organizations overall position towards diversity in the long-run. This as such offers significant implications for the culture and norms of the organization which are also expected to present the organizations overall values and views with respect to diversity and the evidence of dissimilarities between groups within the organization.

In the same vein the level of competition and growing market population offer significant implications for the technology and structure of the organization. Studies indicate that given the rise of globalization and the need for more efficient market penetration, firms have begun to turn to and embrace the idea of virtual organizations. This according to Bougrain and Handeville (2002) describes organizational features that are not physical or tangible but which rely rather on a network of communication flow and knowledge transfer. Hence one finds an interplay of technology and structure with recent studies identify most virtual organizations as operating using structures described as flatarchies comprising primarily of a leader (or what can be described as an anchor) and then a network of knowledge workers (Argote *et al*, 2003; Alayi & Leidner, 2001). This as argued offers a more efficient and fluid approach towards environmental turbulence especially since organizational features are not physical but rather based on knowledge transfer and communication.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

This paper discussed the implications of the future of work for organizational behaviour and sustenance. The discussion bothered on the implications of diversity, competition and market growth on the behaviour and sustenance of organization with regards to technology, structure and organizational culture. Literature review identified the changes in business environment and future of work within scopes that are affected by diversity, competition and market growth as having a substantial impact on the organization’s choice of technologies, their structure and culture.

The paper identified possible growth and preference for virtuality and flatarchies as some of the alternative's organizations can opt for as a way of enhancing their adaptability through efficient operations which are fluid and non-physical. On the part of diversity, it was noted that policies and the emphasis on representative systems and platforms would go a long way in ensuring minorities are recognized and groups are effectively integrated into the overall values and orientation of the organization. The conclusion arrived at follows that the specific modification and alignment of technology, structure and culture with the trends and futuristic tendencies of its market, especially with regards to diversity, competition and market growth, repositions it strategically and enhances its behaviour and sustenance.

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