

EMPLOYABLE STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING HUMAN RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT FOR QUALITY EDUCATION DELIVERY IN UNIVERSITIES IN
SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study is a survey research carried out to determine the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in universities in South East Nigeria. The study was guided by two research questions and one hypothesis. Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire that was subjected to validity and reliability tests. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the hypothesis was tested using t-test statistic. The results of the study showed, among others, that the employable strategies for improving human resource management in universities are increased funding of universities, increased staff motivation and adequate training of university administrators in human resource management. Based on these findings, it was recommended that there should be increased funding of universities, university administrators should be adequately trained in human resource management, university staff should be adequately motivated for maximum performance, among others.

Introduction

University is the highest level of every educational system and it is a major vehicle for economic and social development. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), the mandate of the university is to teach and develop high level relevant manpower, conduct research for development and provide community service. Onokerhoraya and Nwonye (1995) also noted that universities are responsible for equipping individuals with the advanced knowledge and skills needed for positions of responsibility in government, business and other professions. This means that universities are expected to produce high level manpower that can respond positively to the nation's socio-economic development goals and aspirations.

It is germane to note that the achievement of the above laudable goals of a university depends to a large extent on availability of human resources and their proper management. Human resources have been conceptualized in different ways by different authors. For instance, Maduagwu and Nwogu (2006) defined human resources as the most vital resources of an organization which comprise human beings, their skills and capabilities. To Herkimer (2008), human resources are the people working in an organization and the totality of the knowledge, skills, competencies, talents and other attributes that allow them to contribute to their personal and social well being as well as those of the organization and the wider society.

Based on the above definitions, one can conclude that human resources essentially refer to the people working in an organization who possess different specializations, capabilities and roles required for the effective and efficient realization of the goals of the organization. However, in the context of this study, human resources are operationally defined as the teaching and non-teaching staff of a university whose responsibilities are to supply the physical labour, technical and professional knowledge and skills needed for the delivery of quality education in the university.

It is, however, deducible from the foregoing views that human resources are pivotal to the accomplishment of quality education delivery in universities. Therefore, they require proper management. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1993) defined human resource management as the organizational function through which educational institutions procure, develop, utilize and motivate their staff effectively and efficiently for the achievement of the desired educational objectives. This definition shows that it is human resource management that enables universities to recruit and select qualified and competent employees, organize, direct and control them for the delivery of quality education. Cartwright (2005) and Cumming (2008) amplified this viewpoint when they posited that human resource management enables educational organizations to plan their organizational structure through proper and effective recruitment and selection, development and appraisal of personnel to fill the roles designed into the structure. No wonder Ezeocha (1990), Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu (1992), and Ogbonnaya (2004) emphasized that there is need for educational institutions including universities to manage their human resources effectively and efficiently for the delivery of quality education leading to the achievement of their overall educational goals.

However, evidence on ground seems to suggest that universities' human resources are not properly managed as to engender quality education delivery. For instance, Ezeani (2007) remarked that universities' human resources are not properly managed because qualified teaching and non-teaching staff are not adequately provided and maintained in the universities which adversely affect teaching and learning. In the same vein, Amahua (2008) was worried that both teaching and non-teaching staff of universities are not adequately motivated to discharge their appointed duties effectively and efficiently.

Consequent upon the above claims, one wonders how quality education can be delivered in the universities. Mbagwu (2008) and Babuloni (2010) attributed this ugly state of affairs in universities to the problems encountered by universities in the management of their human resources and called for their conscious and systematic improvement. The National Universities Commission (2012) also cautioned universities in Nigeria (South East inclusive) to look for ways of improving their human resource management for the purpose of accomplishing quality education delivery. Incidentally, the researcher was deeply worried by the dearth of empirical knowledge of the strategies for improving human resources management for the accomplishment of quality education delivery in universities. Consequently, it was the problem of this study to fill this knowledge gap by empirically determining the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in universities in South East Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to investigate the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in universities in South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. ascertain the problems encountered in human resource management for quality education delivery in universities in South East Nigeria.
2. determine the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in universities in South East Nigeria.

Research Questions

For the purpose of guiding the study, the following research questions were posed:

1. What are the problems encountered in human resource management for quality education delivery in universities in South East Nigeria?
2. What are the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in universities in South East Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study and it was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho: There is no significant difference ($P < .05$) between the mean ratings of heads of units and senior administrative staff of universities on the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in universities in South East Nigeria.

Research Method

Survey research design was adopted in carrying out the study. Ali (2006) observed that survey research design aims at investigating and explaining events in their natural setting without any manipulation of what is being observed. This design was, therefore, deemed appropriate for this study as it aimed at investigating and explaining the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in universities. The study was carried out in the ten public universities in South East Nigeria.

The population of the study was 831 respondents, comprising 677 heads of units and 154 senior administrative staff who are at the rank of Senior Assistant Registrar and above in the ten public universities in South East Nigeria. The entire population was used for the study as a result of its manageable size. A researcher- developed structured questionnaire titled "Improving Human Resource Management Questionnaire (IHRMQ)" was the instrument used to collect data for the study. It consisted of two parts, Parts A and B. Part A had 3 items designed to obtain information on the personal data of the respondents, while Part B comprised 16 items arranged in two clusters- Clusters A and B and they were designed to elicit responses pertinent to the research problem.

The response mode of the instrument was structured along a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), 4 points; Agree (A), 3 points; Disagree (D), 2 points; and Strongly Disagree (SD), 1 point. Thus, 2.50 was the criterion mean. To determine the validity of the instrument, its initial draft was subjected to face validation by three experts, two in Educational Administration and Planning and one in Measurement and

Evaluation of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The comments and observations of these experts were used to modify and produce the final draft of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was further ascertained by trial-testing it on 20 staff of the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State which are not involved in the study but shared similar characteristics with the target population. Cronbach Alpha method of reliability estimate was used to determine the internal consistency of the items and a reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained and deemed high enough to consider the instrument reliable in collecting the required data for the study.

Direct Delivery and Retrieval Technique (DDRT) was used by the researcher and ten research assistants to collect data for the study whereas the data so collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics which include mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the inferential statistics which include t-test statistic was used to test the null hypothesis that guided the study and it was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results of data analysis are presented on the tables below in accordance with the research questions and hypothesis that guided the study.

Research Question One

What are the problems encountered in human resource management for quality education delivery in universities in South East Nigeria?

The data for providing answers to the above research question are presented on table 1 below:

Table I: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Respondents on Problems Encountered in Human Resource Management for Quality Education Delivery in Universities

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Heads of Units N= 677		Snr. Admin. Staff N = 154		Total \bar{X}	Total SD	Decision
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD			
1	There are insufficient funds for the procurement and management of human resources.	2.80	1.03	2.45	1.07	2.74	1.04	Agree
2	There is misappropriation of university funds for effective human resource management.	2.78	1.03	2.38	1.05	2.70	1.04	Agree
3	Political interference exists in the recruitment and selection of university staff.	2.57	1.01	2.39	1.10	2.54	1.03	Agree
4	There is lack of professional library for the professional development of staff.	2.56	1.04	2.52	1.06	2.56	1.05	Agree
5	There is inadequate training of university administrators in human resource management.	2.66	1.03	2.44	1.11	2.62	1.05	Agree

6	There is the problem of moral laxity among university staff.	2.61	1.05	2.46	1.16	2.59	1.07	Agree
7	The staff are not adequately motivated to perform maximally.	2.66	1.02	2.82	1.12	2.69	1.04	Agree
8	There is irregular staff performance appraisal to determine the strengths and weaknesses of staff for maximum performance.	2.65	1.08	2.76	1.13	2.67	1.09	Agree
Grand Mean		2.66	0.41	2.53	0.42	2.64	0.42	Agree

The result on table 1 above shows that the total mean ratings of the respondents for items 1-8 are 2.74, 2.70, 2.54, 2.56, 2.62, 2.59, 2.69, and 2.67 respectively. These mean ratings have standard deviations of 1.04, 1.04, 1.03, 1.05, 1.05, 1.07, 1.04, and 1.09 respectively. The data show that the respondents agree that all the 8 items in Cluster A are the problems encountered in human resource management for quality education delivery in universities because their total mean ratings for these items are all above the criterion mean of 2.50.

The total standard deviations which fall between 1.03 and 1.09 reveal that the responses clustered around the mean. The implication of this is that there was not so much difference in the mean scores of the respondents.

Research Question Two

What are the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in universities in South East Nigeria?

The data for answering the above research question are presented on table 2 below:

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Respondents on Employable Strategies for Improving Human Resource Management for Quality Education Delivery in Universities

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Heads of Units N= 677		Snr. Admin. Staff N = 154		Total \bar{X}	Total SD	Decision
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD			
9	Increased funding of universities for adequate provision and management of human resources.	3.10	0.90	2.89	1.02	3.06	0.93	Agree
10	Proper management of	3.08	0.90	2.75	1.06	3.02	0.94	Agree

	universities' funds for the effective and efficient management of their human resources.							
11	Increased transparency in the recruitment and selection of university staff.	2.86	0.96	2.52	1.08	2.80	0.99	Agree
12	Adequate provision of professional libraries for the professional development of staff.	2.79	0.96	2.53	1.04	2.74	0.98	Agree
13	Adequate training of university administrators in human resource management.	2.74	0.99	2.68	1.11	2.73	1.01	Agree
14	Being more determined to maintain discipline and control among staff.	2.79	1.04	2.90	1.06	2.81	1.04	Agree
15	Increased motivation of the staff for maximum performance.	2.92	1.00	3.07	1.00	2.95	1.00	Agree
16	Conducting periodic staff performance appraisal in order to constantly identify the strengths and weaknesses of staff for maximum performance	2.96	1.06	3.07	1.12	2.98	1.07	Agree
Grand Mean		2.91	0.42	2.80	0.45	2.89	0.42	Agree

Data presented on table 2 above indicate that the total mean ratings of the respondents for items 9-16 are 3.06, 3.02, 2.80, 2.74, 2.73, 2.81, 2.95, and 2.98 respectively. These mean ratings have corresponding standard deviations of 0.93, 0.94, 0.99, 0.98, 1.01, 1.04, 1.00, and 1.07 respectively. Looking at the result, one can see that the respondents agree that all the items in Cluster B are the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in universities in South East Nigeria because their total mean ratings for these items are all above the criterion mean of 2.50.

The total standard deviations which fall between 0.93 and 1.07 show that the responses clustered around the mean, meaning that there was not so much difference in the mean scores of the respondents.

Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant difference ($p < .05$) between the mean ratings of heads of units and senior administrative staff of universities on the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in universities in South East Nigeria.

The summary of t-test analysis for the above hypothesis is presented on table 3 below:

Table 3: Summary of t-Test Analysis of the Hypothesis

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Level of Sig.	Decision
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Heads of Units	677	2.91	0.42	829	2.82	1.96	0.05	Significant
Snr. Admin. Staff	154	2.80	0.45					

$\alpha = 0.05$, S= Significant

Data presented on table 3 above illustrate that a calculated t-value of 2.82 was obtained at 829 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Based on the fact that the calculated t-value of 2.82 is greater than the critical table value of 1.96, the null hypothesis of this study is, therefore, rejected as postulated. The implication of this is that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of heads of units and senior administrative staff of universities on the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in universities.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study have shown that there are problems encountered in human resource management for quality education delivery in universities. These problems include: insufficient funds for the procurement and management of human resources, misappropriation of university funds for effective human resource management, political interference in the recruitment and selection of university staff, lack of professional library, inadequate training of university administrators in human resource management, moral laxity among university staff, inadequate staff motivation for maximum performance, and irregular staff performance appraisal.

The above findings are in alignment with the views of Ezeani (2007) and Amahua (2008) that there are problems encountered by universities in the management of their human resources and that these problems hamper their ability to adequately provide, maintain and motivate their staff for quality education delivery. The results of the study, however, attest to the claim that quality education delivery has eluded universities in recent times because it is impossible for any university to accomplish quality education delivery amidst the identified problems. This ugly situation, therefore, calls for the determination of strategies that can be employed to improve human resource management for the goal of quality education delivery in universities hence, the need for the present study.

The findings of the study also revealed that the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in universities include: increased funding of universities for adequate provision and management of human resources, proper management of universities' funds for the effective and efficient management of their human resources, increased transparency in staff recruitment and selection, adequate provision of professional libraries for the professional development of staff, adequate training of university administrators in human resource management, more determination to maintain staff discipline and control, increased staff motivation for maximum performance, and conducting periodic staff performance appraisal to constantly identify staff's strengths and weaknesses for maximum performance.

The above findings agree with the views of Mbagwu (2008) and Babuloni (2010) that there are strategies which universities can employ to improve their management of human resources and deliver quality education. The findings are also consistent with the view of NUC (2012) that there are ways of improving human resource management in universities which universities have to look out for. Therefore, in the opinion of the respondents, the identified improvement strategies are the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in

universities. Indeed, this research finding has exposed the fact that the perceived strategies for improving human resource management in universities can actually be employed by universities in improving their human resource management practices for the benefit of delivering quality education that will engender the production of quality graduates requisite for sustainable national development.

The t-test analysis of the null hypothesis that guided the study presented on table 3 indicated that there was a significant difference between the mean ratings of the two groups of respondents on the employable strategies for improving human resource management for quality education delivery in universities. Thus, the null hypothesis of this study was rejected as postulated. This finding can be explained by the fact that these two groups of respondents perform different functions and they are, therefore, bound to have significant different opinions on issues pertinent to this study.

Implication of the Findings

The findings of this study have, among other things, identified the strategies that can be employed to improve human resource management for quality education delivery in universities. Infact, if these improvement strategies are unattended to, the existing problems of human resource management in universities will remain unsolved and their achievement of quality education delivery will continually be jeopardized. Consequently, the implication of this finding is that there is need for these strategies to be employed by university administrators so as to enable them improve their human resource management and accomplish quality education delivery.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the discussions that followed and the implication highlighted, the following recommendations were made:

1. There should be increased funding of universities in order to enable them have sufficient funds to effectively manage their human resources.
2. Universities should also take concrete steps to diversify their sources of revenue in order to enable them generate sufficient funds for effective human resource management.
3. Professional libraries should be adequately provided for the professional development of university staff.
4. University administrators should be adequately trained in human resource management.
5. The university staff should be well motivated in order to enable them perform maximally for the achievement of quality education delivery
6. The ministries of education and educational policy-makers should formulate relevant policies that will compel university administrators to adopt the identified strategies for improving human resource management for the benefit of quality education delivery in universities.

Conclusion

Human resource management is fundamental to the delivery of quality education in universities. Unfortunately, universities in South East Nigeria do not manage their human resources effectively and efficiently as a result of the problems they encounter in the

process of their human resource management. These problems include: insufficient funds for the procurement and management of human resources, misappropriation of university funds for effective human resource management, political interference in the recruitment and selection of university staff, inadequate training of university administrators in human resource management, inadequate staff motivation for maximum performance, moral laxity among university staff, among others. However, some strategies can be employed to improve human resource management in universities thereby enabling universities to deliver quality education and produce quality graduates who can make significant contributions to sustainable national development. These strategies include, among others, increased funding of universities for adequate provision and management of human resources, proper management of universities' funds, adequate training of university administrators in human resource management, increased staff motivation for maximum staff performance, more determination to maintain staff discipline and control, and conducting periodic staff performance appraisal to constantly determine staff's strengths and weaknesses for maximum performance.

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