

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined human resources management practices as an instrument for the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was all the Administrative Staff of all the Federal Universities in Nigeria numbering 1000. Simple random sampling technique was adopted using 400 Administrative Staff from 35 Federal Universities in Nigeria. The “Human Resources Management Practices Questionnaire (HRMpQ)” was designed by the researchers and used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was validated by experts. The instrument yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.85 using Cronbach Alpha method. The results were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. The findings showed that, the rationales for the adoption of Human resources management practices in Federal Universities in Nigeria include that, it improves the competency of motivated workforce to attain University goals and objectives, improves on the capabilities, skills and knowledge of the staff to tackle the current and future job challenges, improvement on employee job performance, among others. Furthermore, the impacts of training and development practices on the human resources management in Federal Universities include that, it increases the competency of the workers, high morale to do the job by the employees, enhanced skills, knowledge and other competencies on the job, the use of the competencies acquired on the job to improve productivity of the Universities among others. The study recommended among others that, the recruitment and selection processes of personnel should be objective to accommodate all strata of the employees, sensitization programmes in form of workshops, seminars and conferences for the workforce to update their skills and knowledge, adequate compensation of the employees on regular basis, among others in Federal Universities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Human resource, management, human resource management, universities

Introduction

Human Resource Management (HRM) practices have increasingly become a pivotal instrument in enhancing the overall effectiveness and sustainability of higher education systems. In the context of Nigeria, particularly within federal universities, HRM practices serve as a fundamental mechanism for managing institutional growth, administrative efficiency, and academic excellence. These practices—ranging from recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, to employee welfare—directly influence the ability of universities to fulfill their educational mandate. As education continues to be a cornerstone for national development, contributing to political, economic, and socio-cultural advancement, the strategic management of human resources emerges as essential for realizing these broader societal goals. Eriko (2021) observes that, education is a panacea for achieving natural and global development through the harnessing of the abundant human resources. Jones (2022) affirms that, education bring about change in human sphere where it is the greatest investment which nations of the world include Nigeria can embark upon for healthy living of her citizens. This position was affirmed by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) in her National Policy on Education when it states that, education in Nigeria is an instrument ‘per excellence’ for national development which cuts

across political, economic, socio-cultural aspects of Nigeria's life. By this, education is the process whereby individuals or citizens acquire the basic knowledge, skills, values, among others which enable them to be useful to themselves and the society in general especially, through University education.

The University education is an aspect of tertiary education which is principally created to produce high level manpower training, inculcate proper values and intellectual property, among others to Nigeria citizens through teaching, research and community service to enable them be functional in the society. According to the FRN (2014), University education aims among others, to contribute to national development through high level manpower training, forge and cement national unity, its development and inculcation of proper values for the survival of the individuals and society in general. The goals of the National Policy on Education specifically, the University education can be realized through the human capital resources available to it. This human capital resources are organized in such form that it will help fastened the attainment of the goals and objectives of University education in Nigeria. Human resources are primary to the actualization of educational goals and objectives. According to Edemenang, Adam, Salisu and Audu (2016), the Nigerian educational system likewise the school is an arena which accommodate various resources-human, financial and materials for the attainment of the predetermined educational objectives in Nigeria. Edemenang et al further observe that, these human resources include the students, teaching and non-teaching staff who are inputs that operate within the whims and comprises the University system. Operationally, human resources refer to the work force or the labour employed by the University management to attain the educational objectives of the institution. By this, human resources are one of the useful resources in Universities as human skills, experiences and other competences are aimed at the attainment of the educational goals and objectives. Thus, it is imperative that human resources available to Universities are managed so as to accomplish the desired objectives of the University education in Nigeria.

Management refers to the process of utilizing of the available human, material and financial resources in order to attain the organizational objectives. Edemjo (2021) explains management, as the appropriate use of human material and financial resources of the organization through planning, controlling, coordinating, provision of adequate staff, among others in order to attain the given objective(s). Daris (2018) describes management as the function of executive leadership anywhere. To Abel (2022), management is the process by which managers create, direct, maintain and operate purposive organization through systematic co-ordination by the co-operative efforts of man. From the above definitions, one can state that management is the process where man use the available human, material and financial resources through appropriate planning, coordination, control of human efforts, among others to attain the stipulated objectives of organization like the Universities in Nigeria. The University system comprise the human resources which are principally the academic and non-academic staff which are considered as essential ingredients of the institutions for the actualization of the goals and objectives to which they are set up for. According to Olatoye, Babajide and Lateef (2020), the academic and non-academic staff as essential assets to the University which are considered as instrument for the comparative advantage of the institution over others. This is possible where they are taken care of through the adoption of internally accepted management practices that will give attention and best in workplace through work skills and experience development. By this, Universities in Nigeria strive to give qualitative education through the employment of qualitative and talented staff, skillful and motivated workforce that will help to attain national educational goals and the specific educational objectives of the University. The Universities attain its goals and objectives through the production of skillful manpower

through teaching, research, and offer of community service otherwise known as, the human resources management.

Human resources management practices often refer to the awareness or ways through which the available human resources to organizations (educational institutions) are made to be efficient and effective directed towards the attainment of the desired objectives. According to Henrich (2022), the human resources management refers to the philosophy, policies, procedures, and practice related to the management of people within an organization. Robbins (2023) observes that, human resources management is a process consisting of the acquisition, development, motivation and maintenance of human resources to ensure effectiveness and efficiency for optimal productive result in the organization. By implication, human resources management concerns specifically, the achievement of optimality in organizational effectiveness, human capital management, knowledge management, and reward management, employee relations, meeting different needs and the dynamism of the labour relations. Operationally, human resources management hinges on the motivation of the workforce in organizations in order to achieve its objectives. From the discussion above, it has been observed that human relations management practices play a key role to the sustenance or otherwise of the organizations' existence. Edeth (2023) explains that, human resources management performs its basic functions to the organization, employees and the society in general. Edeth further explains that, the human resources management help in attracting and retaining the best people / brain in the organization as well as, the use of the right technology in the appointment of the right type of people on the job. Other notable roles of human resources management to the organization comprise, the planning on the right type of people in short, medium and long terms and by meeting the challenges of the organization ahead of time, among others.

The human resources management has a notable role to perform on the employees of the University system. Here, provisions are made to provide both the academic and the non-teaching staff, financial and non-financial incentives that will motivate the workers to operate optimally in the institution. Jacobs (2023) observes that, the material and non-material incentives offered to workers by the management of the University enable them weld the spirit of team work and offers them growth opportunities within the system. This will in no small measure enhance the productivity of the labour force. Finally, the human resources management of the Nigeria Universities also offer essential roles to the society at large. Okoro (2022) explains that, a goal- oriented human resources management efforts lead to productivity gains to the society. In this case, it enables the management of institutions (University system) to reduce cost, save scarce resources, enhance profits and offer better pay, benefits and better working conditions for the employees. The after effect in that it will lead to the growth and development of the society. Therefore, the roles of the human resource management of the Universities are based on some routines or practices which tend to be the backbone of the University system in the attainment of her educational objectives and the goals of the University education at large.

Therefore, the attainment of the goal or objectives of the University education in Nigeria is dependent on the efficient application of the routines or practices of human resources management such as recruitment and selection of staff, training and development, compensation and benefits, achieving work balance, among others. Therefore, one of the common routines or practices of the human resources management is the process of recruitment and selection of the right type of staff for the organization. According to Matthew (2019), human resource recruitment and selection practices generally are based on the organization's mission and the workplace culture. Matthew further states that, employers that recognize the value of workforce diversity embrace recruitment practices designed to attracting diverse applicants pool. Thus, recruitment practices underline recruiting activities

and functions such as sponsoring career at colleges, Universities and elsewhere with diverse student populations, advertising job vacancies across general ventures to reach a broad audience, internal recruitment of process, among others. According to Olatoye, Babajide and La (2020), this stage can be divided into stages of staffing process namely: identification of job spaces, advertising the job space, application and admission of intents, examination and assessment of applicants, selection of qualified applicants. By these practices, the employees selected will be willing and strong to put in more efforts in production process to achieve the desired objectives. Therefore, the application of human resources management practices in the selection and placement of employees in organizations such as the Universities play no small role to the attainment of the stipulated objectives,

Another form of human resources management practices (HRMP) tied to the effective management of Universities in Nigeria is the training and development of the employees or staff of the institution. Marks (2023) observes that, training and development of staff replacement may be in the form of on -the- job training or institutional training. In this case, the employee is required to enroll in resources like holiday training or sandwich programme in order to acquire more skills, knowledge and other competencies as required by each job. Ngobwase, Odeh, Agbe and Ako (2021) observe that, training and development are HRMP that include new employee orientation, job skills training, leadership training, and professional development among others. It is not enough to select/hire or place employees on a specific job, it is imperative that they are subjected to regular training and development by the University management to make sure that optimal production is guaranteed. Okonta (2023) states that, these activities improve employees job skills in their current positions and equip them with skills, knowledge and expertise for cross-functional work that can increase their value to the University system. Salas (2023) explains that, training and development of the staff of Universities enable them to update and advance staff skills, maximize their competitive advantage, expand services and adjust with the current global practices and achieve maximum goals and objectives. Therefore, any University management that wants higher productivity as the component agenda should embark on regular training, retraining and the several developments of its workforce for it to be actualized. This function is therefore in the operations of HRMP of the Universities in Nigeria.

Furthermore, another form of HRMP of educational institution such as the Universities in Nigeria is the compensation and benefits of its workforce. Compensation and benefits often are viewed as a whole, presenting a comprehensive view of how employers reward their employees. This is very crucial in the University system as it x-rays the total employees' wages and including salary, benefits and related taxes, among others. According to Jamie (2023), unlike recruitment and training, compensation plays a strategic role in attracting new and quality employees ensures and sustains the loyalty of those on ground which will in turn bring about a high level of productivity to achieving educational goals and objectives in case of the Universities. Thus, adequate compensation and benefits to the University staff will enhance the increased motivation, performance and productivity; hence they are crucial to the human resources management practices in the system. Lastly, the need to achieve work- life balance among the staff of the Universities in Nigeria is another basic function of the human resources management team in schools. In this case, implementing flexible work schedule, providing employees with telecommunication options and training supervisors to spot signs of work place, stress and suggests the organizational culture that supports employees achieving work balance. Wallance (2022) observes that, managing scheduling logistics, modifying technology for remote access and conducting training sessions are essentially transactional functions. By this, it helps to create results-

oriented work environment as it enables greater efficiency and thus, increase the time employees have to devote to family obligations and personal endeavors. Therefore, human resources practices are strategic in nature. It is an integral guidance system that coordinates all the activities of the University system geared towards the attainment of the educational goals and objectives as stipulated by the National Policy on Education in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Effective human resource management practices are fundamental to the smooth operation and success of any organization, particularly within the university system, where the attainment of educational goals and objectives heavily relies on the quality and efficiency of its workforce. Ideally, federal universities in Nigeria are expected to implement robust HRM practices such as strategic recruitment, continuous staff training, fair compensation, and consistent employee motivation in alignment with the provisions of the National Policy on University Education. However, in reality, these expectations are often not met. Persistent issues such as poor recruitment processes, inadequate training opportunities, inconsistent staff welfare programs, and limited motivation mechanisms continue to plague the Nigerian university system. A notable reflection of this gap was the eight-month industrial action by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in 2022, which underscored longstanding grievances related to the neglect of staff welfare and poor human resource practices in federal universities. Therefore, the problem of this study is that human resource management practices such as recruitment, selection, training, and motivation in federal universities in Nigeria appear to be inadequately implemented, thereby hampering effective institutional management and performance

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate human resources management practices as an instrument for the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study include to:

1. determine the recruitment and selection practices of the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria.
2. ascertain the impact of training and development practices on the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria.
3. investigate the impact of compensation on the human resource management of Federal Universities in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the recruitment and selection practices of the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria?
2. What are the impact of training and development practices on the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria?
3. What are the impact of compensation on the human resource management of Federal Universities in Nigeria?

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey design, which is suitable for systematically collecting data to describe and interpret existing conditions. As defined by Nworgu (2015), this design facilitates the systematic gathering of information on specific characteristics of a population, enabling the generalization of findings to the larger population. The target population for the study comprised 1,000 administrative staff across all federal universities in Nigeria. Using a simple random sampling technique, a sample of 400 administrative staff was drawn from 35 federal universities across the country. To gather data, the researchers

developed and utilized a structured instrument titled “Human Resources Management Practices Questionnaire (HRMpQ).” The questionnaire items were rated using a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point). A criterion mean of 2.50 was set as the benchmark for acceptance of responses. The instrument underwent face and content validation by three experts: two from the Department of Educational Administration and Planning, and one from the Department of Science Education, all at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach Alpha method was employed, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.85, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Out of 500 copies of the questionnaire distributed, all were duly retrieved and used for data analysis. The collected data were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviations. Any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was interpreted as agreed upon by the respondents, while items scoring below 2.50 were regarded as disagreed.

Results

Research question 1: What are the recruitment and selection practices of the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean responses of Administrative Staff in Federal Universities on the recruitment and selection practices of the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria.

| N = 400 | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------------------|------|---------------|
| S/N | Recruitment and Selection Practices of the Human Resources Management of Federal Universities in Nigeria | Administrative Staff | | |
| | | Mean(\bar{X}) | St.d | Decision |
| 1 | Interview are conducted for applicants seeking employment in the University | 3.00 | 0.35 | Agreed |
| 2 | The media is used to publicize the recruitment and selection process in the Federal Universities. | 2.70 | 0.37 | Agreed |
| 3 | Advertisement are made specify of the criteria for job selection | 2.50 | 0.38 | Agreed |
| 4 | Recruitment of staff are done when vacancies exist in the Universities in Nigeria | 2.80 | 0.36 | Agreed |
| 5 | Recruitment and selection of staff are thrown open to all job seekers for employment. | 3.00 | 0.35 | Agreed |
| 6 | Application that meets up with recruitment and selection practices are given jobs in the Universities. | 3.00 | 0.35 | Agreed |
| 7 | Staff of the University are recruited through internal advertisement | 2.50 | 0.38 | Agreed |
| 8 | Interviews are granted to the applicant during recruitment and selection problems in the University | 3.00 | 0.35 | Agreed |
| 9 | The criteria for recruitment and selection of applicants are not made known to them. | 2.50 | 0.38 | Agreed |
| 10 | Recruitment and selection of staff are based on objective principles of human relation practices. | 3.00 | 0.35 | Agreed |
| Grand mean = 2.8; St.d = 0.40 | | | | Agreed |

Data from research question 1 identified the recruitment and selection practices of the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Table 1 indicates that,

items 1-10 had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, which showed that, they are the main recruitment and selection practices of the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. This implies that, the recruitment and selection practices of the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria include: use of interviewers, media, advertisement, and recruitment of applicants where vacancies exist, open recruitment of staff, internal advertisement and objectivity of recruitment exercise, among others.

Research question 2: What are the impact of training and development practices on the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean responses and standard deviation on the impacts of training and development practices on the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria.

| N = 400 | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------|------|-------------------------------|
| S/N | Impacts of Training and Development Practices on the Human Resources Management of Federal Universities in Nigeria | Mean(\bar{X}) | St.d | Administrative Staff Decision |
| 11 | Improvement in the competency of motivated workforce to attain the Universities goals and objectives. | 3.00 | 0.35 | Agreed |
| 12 | Improves the skills, abilities, capabilities and knowledge of the workforce to tackle the challenges of the current and future job expectations | 2.50 | 0.38 | Agreed |
| 13 | Improves the employees performance and productivity in the University system | 2.70 | 0.38 | Agreed |
| 14 | Employees are better equipped to take up new responsibilities with the University. | 2.50 | 0.38 | Agreed |
| 15 | It enhances the growth and development of the Universities in Nigeria | 2.05 | 0.37 | Agreed |
| 16 | Training and development enhance industrial harmony | 3.00 | 0.35 | Agreed |
| 17 | It enhances the employees of the University system to develop their skills and knowledge on the job in a systematic manner for higher productivity. | 3.00 | 0.35 | Agreed |
| 18 | Staff development enables the employees of the Universities to be proactive in tackling work challenges for the present and the future. | 2.75 | 0.36 | Agreed |
| 19 | Training and development of the University employees provide the basis for higher wage demand by workers. | 3.00 | 0.35 | Agreed |
| 20 | It creates room for competitive level of productivity and quality. | 3.00 | 0.35 | Agreed |
| Grand mean = 2.8; St.d = 0.36 | | | | Agreed |

Data from research question 2 showed the impact of training and development practices of the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Table 2 indicates that, items 11-20 had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, which showed that, they are

the impact of training and development practices on the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. This implies that, the impact of training and development practices on the human resources management of Federal Universities in Nigeria include that, it improves the competency of motivated workforce to attain University goals and objectives, improves on the capabilities, skills and knowledge of the staff to tackle the current and future job challenges, improvement on employee job performance, enables the employees to take up new responsibilities, it enhances the growth and development of the Universities in Nigeria, improvement in industrial harmony, provides basis for wage demands and improvements, among others.

Research question 3: What are the impacts of compensation on the human resource management of Federal Universities in Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation responses of the administrative staff on the compensation and reward practices on the human resources management in Federal Universities in Nigeria

N = 400

| S/N | Compensation and reward Practices on the Human Resources Management in Federal Universities in Nigeria | Administrative Staff | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------------------|------|---------------|
| | | Mean(\bar{X}) | St.d | Decision |
| 21 | Salaries and bonuses are paid to staff and on when due | 3.00 | 0.35 | Agreed |
| 22 | Reward to the University staff is tied to job performance | 3.00 | 0.35 | Agreed |
| 23 | Employees are rewarded based on competence and ability on the job. | 2.50 | 0.38 | Agreed |
| 24 | Rewards and other incentives are given to workers to put in more productive effort | 2.60 | 0.37 | Agreed |
| 25 | The basis for the motivation of the employees of the Universities in through gift during festivals | 2.50 | 0.38 | Agreed |
| 26 | Compensation and reward given to the university employees are not publicly motivated | 2.65 | 0.37 | Agreed |
| 27 | Employees are rewarded regularly to retain them on the job | 2.50 | 0.38 | Agreed |
| Grand mean = 2.7; St.d = 0.37 | | | | Agreed |

Data from research question 3 revealed the compensation and reward practices by the human resources management in Federal Universities in Nigeria. Table 3 shows that, items 21-27 had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 and above, which revealed that, they are the main compensation and reward practices by the human resources management in Federal Universities in Nigeria. This implies that, the compensation and reward practices by the human resources management in Federal Universities in Nigeria include: payment of salaries and bonuses to employees, rewards paid to employees, competency and abilities are the basis for reward, more productivity are meted with rewards, motivation of the workforce through gifts, compensation and rewards to the employees are not politically motivated and objectivity is the key factors in all compensation and rewards to the employees, among others.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that the recruitment and selection practices of human resource management in Federal Universities in Nigeria are characterized by transparency and merit-based procedures. In response to research question one, Table 1 showed that items

1 to 10 had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating strong agreement among respondents. These practices include the use of interviews, media publicity, public advertisements, internal recruitment processes, and a commitment to objectivity in selecting personnel. This implies that Federal Universities in Nigeria prioritize open and competitive processes in staffing decisions. This finding aligns with the works of Mathew (2019), and Olatoye, Babajode, and Lateef (2020), who emphasized the democratic nature of staff recruitment in Nigerian universities. Olatoye et al. (2020) particularly noted that recruitment practices in Nigerian universities are merit-driven, discouraging mediocrity and enhancing operational efficiency and productivity.

The findings of the study revealed that training and development practices significantly impact the effectiveness of human resource management in Federal Universities in Nigeria. Regarding research question two, Table 2 indicated that items 11 to 20 also scored above the 2.50 benchmark, reflecting a positive perception of training and development programs. The practices identified include improved staff competency, increased morale, enhanced knowledge and skills, application of acquired competencies for institutional productivity, readiness to accept new responsibilities, and contributions to university growth and development. Furthermore, these practices justify staff demands for wage adjustments. The findings corroborate the positions of Okonta (2023), Salas (2023), Jamie (2023), and Okoro (2022), who all underscored the importance of ongoing training and capacity building in achieving the goals of the National Policy on Higher Education in Nigeria.

The findings of the study revealed that compensation and reward practices play a vital role in motivating staff and promoting productivity within Federal Universities in Nigeria. In relation to research question three, Table 3 showed that items 21 to 27 had mean scores above 2.50, signifying the acceptance of these practices as standard. Key elements of compensation and reward practices include regular payment of salaries and bonuses, reward based on performance and competency, recognition of high productivity, workforce motivation through various incentives, and objectivity in administering staff benefits. These findings are supported by the works of Jamie (2023), Wallace (2022), and others who highlighted the necessity of adequate compensation in driving staff commitment and performance. Specifically, Okoro (2023) emphasized that sufficient and fair rewards serve as a strong incentive for employees to contribute meaningfully towards achieving institutional objectives in line with global best practices.

Conclusion

University education in Nigeria was founded on the premise to provide a framework for the production of high level manpower to harness the abundant bounties of natural resources for national development in line with the National Policy on Higher Education in Nigeria. In doing so, the human resources management in Nigeria Federal Universities are to step up to this challenge by being able to hire competent, objective and highly motivated workforce for this purpose. It is in line with this baseline that the researchers made some useful recommendations to that effect.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. The human resource management of the Federal Universities in Nigeria should be objective in the recruitment and selection of their employees in line with the labour laws in Nigeria.
2. Sensitization programmes like seminar, workshops and conferences should be organized for the employees of the Universities to keep them abreast of the labour policies of the government and particularly the University system for higher productivity.

3. The employees of the University in Nigeria should be compensated with commensurate rewards to enhance their productive life.
4. Adequate training, re-training and development on the staff should be regular to enable them meet up with job specifications and challenges in the Universities in Nigeria.
5. The Federal Government should fund University Education in Nigeria based on best world practices.

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