
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT FOR IMPROVED UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated human resource development for improved university education in Rivers State. Three research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all three universities in Rivers State. The sample of the study consisted of 200 lecturers drawn from three universities using the Stratified Simple Random Sampling Technique (Male = 128 and female = 72). The researcher developed one set of instruments for data collection, which was titled: Human Resources Development for Improved University Education Questionnaire (HRDIUEQ). Experts in Educational Management validated this instrument, with a reliability index of 0.89 determined using Cronbach Alpha. The findings of the study revealed that the results of the independent samples t-test reveal that there is no significant difference in how male and female lecturers perceive the impact of human resource development on university education in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was concluded that Human resource advancement in universities faces major obstacles because universities have insufficient financial backing, while staff development possibilities and career growth initiatives are scant. Recommendation among others was that the government and university management should allocate more resources to training, workshops, and continuous professional development programs for lecturers and administrative staff.

Keywords: Human resource development, organizational performance, university education, instructional design.

Introduction

The world we live in today is knowledge-driven; it follows that the achievement of any level of development is contingent upon the quality of educational service. The need for qualitative education service calls for greater excellence in university (higher) education, upon which the hallmark of growth and development of any nation impinges. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004:6) defined tertiary education as “the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics, and those institutions offering correspondence courses.” The World Bank (2000) acknowledged the importance of university education for countries not to be left behind in the global economy based on knowledge.

In order for university education of any country to meet up with the challenges posed by globalization and increasing world complexities, it aims at producing the human resources (manpower) in their right quality and quantity; and as well develops them in order to achieve the above. This must be the reason why one the goals of tertiary education as stated by the FRN (2004) is “to contribute to national development through high level manpower”. Olulebe (2009) as cited in Agabi and Ogah (2010) writes that in most developing nations, human resources development is tied to education because it is seen as the path leading to development. The ultimate aim is to achieve economic advancement through the provision of relevant education and hence the production of the right combination of human resources. Human resource development (HRD) provides a framework for self-development, training programs and career progression to meet an organization’s skill requirements (Stare & Klun as cited in Nsirim, 2019). Heery and Noon (2001) and Price (2004) define human resource development as the process of encouraging employees to acquire new skills and knowledge through various training programs, courses, and learning packages. Heery and Moon (2001) further state that the main aim of human resource development is to build competency amongst employees so that the objectives of the institution can be achieved. Human resource development should be perceived as an engine that will drive the organization’s systems with proper application of skills, which will enhance performance.

According to Sullivan and Steven as cited in Pepple (2019), human capital development is about recruiting, supporting and investing in people through education, training, coaching, mentoring, internships, organizational development and human resources management. Again, Healthfield, as cited in Pepple (2019), defined human capital development as the framework for helping employees develop their personal and organizational skills, knowledge and ability. According to her, human capital development includes such opportunities as employee training career development, employee identification, tuition assistance and organization development. The main focus of human capital development is on developing the most superior workforce, to enable organizations and individuals to accomplish their work goals in service to customers. She also suggested that the shortage of skilled people can act as a limiting factor on individual organizations and the economy as a whole. This, therefore, is in the interest of individuals, organizations and the nation to maximize their human resources by investing in the skills of their workforce as well as their human capital.

There has been a purported claim of a positive relationship between education (higher/university), production and wages. This claim is based on the assumption of the human capital thesis. This thesis posits that the more schooled you become, the more productive you become. Helen (2002) is of the view that just as business invests in new plants and equipment today in order to increase productive capacity and obtain greater returns

later, so there is investment in people that does not result in present satisfaction but in future returns, pecuniary and otherwise. In essence, the more we invest in human capital through direct education, the more educated we become at the end and the more productive we (nation at large) become. Empirical evidence on the centrality of university education to human resources and national development abounds. Nzokurum, Awah and Inengim (2012), Harry (2010), Syrian (1997) and Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) in their independent studies asserts that the level of all round development enjoyed by the “Asian Tigers” (East Asia) is as a result of strong commitment to higher education and capital development.

Ravinder (2006) opined that the twentieth century has witnessed the miracles of human resources development activities reflected through increase in GNP and overall productive activities in industrially developed countries. Nigeria just like every other nation has pursued the actualization of human resources development through their direct ‘huge’ budgetary allocation especially for the funding of university education. But a paradox still remains, despite the huge investment on education (university education in particular), there is little evidence of growth in human resources development in specific high-level manpower (especially in the engineering sector) given the ever presence of expatriates heading key positions. If not checked would kill Nigeria’s dream/goal of becoming a self-reliant nation and create an impossibility of becoming one of the most industrialized nations as proposed in the Vision 2020 goals. Perhaps there could be some problems faced by Nigerian universities in achieving human resources development, there is therefore an urgent need to examine university education and human resources development. This paper will therefore examine the challenges and propose possible solutions.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework upon which this study is based lies on the human capital theory. This theory is a modern extension of Adam Smith’s wage differentials and was developed extensively by Becker (1964) in his book titled “Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with special reference to Education”. This theory stresses the positive relationship between increased education acquisition and productivity, skills and wages. According to this theory, it suggests that education or training raises the productivity of workers by imparting useful knowledge and skills, hence raising workers’ future income by increasing their life through earnings (Berker, 1994). It therefore calls for a continuous investment in education because it will not only increase pay but will also result in the human resources development of an employee or the educated. Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2010) opined that many of the developing nations have thus realized that the principal mechanism for developing human knowledge is the education system. Thus, they invest a huge sum of money in education not only as an attempt to impact knowledge and skills to individuals but also to impact values, ideas, attitudes and aspirations which may be in the nation’s best developmental interest.

Human capital theory arises out of any activity able to raise individual worker productivity, and this has been one of the most influential economic theories of Western education. This theory has proved beyond all reasonable doubt the reason why an individual is not satisfied with a particular level of educational attainment but rather strives to achieve more. One who becomes a graduate (first degree) holder would want to become a master and acquire a doctorate. This theory therefore justifies a large public expenditure on education in developing and developed nations.

Human Resources Development

Human resources constitute the ‘living’ aspect of the factors of production of land, labour and capital (fixed) and it as the most important aspect of the production factors. This is because, given all productive assets present, they cannot achieve production on their own without the human factor. In this light, the human beings working in an organization constitute the organization’s human resources. Human resources, also known as manpower, can be defined as the bulk of labour available for any particular kind of work. In more specific terms, “it is the bulk of human beings with the relevant skills, energies, talents, knowledge and attitudes that can be committed towards the production of goods and services (Gbosi, 2003:3). Economic development and growth are not pursued in a vacuum. It is the available human resources that determine the achievement of the above. Writing on this, Abdulkareem (2009) asserts that the quality and quantity of human resources determine a nation’s growth and development. It is the available human resources that mobilize and galvanize other resources for sociological, political, economic, scientific and technological development.

We are living in a dynamic society. The quality of human resources needed to solve a basic problem or achieve a particular level of development may not be effective in facing the challenges of tomorrow posed by the world's increasing complexities. Given this, there is a need for the development of these available resources to be functional always. Human resources development could therefore be defined as a set of distinct but interrelated activities, functions and processes that are directed at attracting, developing and maintaining a firm’s human resources (Lado and Wilson, 1994). To Sriyan (1997), it is the process of increasing the knowledge, the skills and the capacities of all the people in a society. In economic terms, it could be described as the accumulation of human capital and its effective investment in the development of an economy. The basic aim here is to increase the knowledge capabilities of the employees for a better performance in their job. The truth is that any human resource that is not continually developed, in less than no time would become irrelevant in society and as such constitutes a waste which does not contribute positively to both human and national development. The economic implication of the above is that production would decrease, a decrease in GDP and, summarily, an unachieved development goal.

Nigeria is not left out in this pursuit of human resource development. Nzokurum, Awah and Inegim (2012) wrote that at present, there are 108 universities in Nigeria (34 federal, 34 state, 40 privately owned) as reported by JAMB (2012). In addition to these are a lot of polytechnics and colleges of education. All these universities are geared towards achieving the broad goals of tertiary education as stated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004:36). Amongst the seven broad goals, two of them border specifically on human resources development (goals a & d). It stated thus:

- a. Contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training;
- b. Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of society.

The need for human resources development has caused the federal government to diversify the curriculum of higher education to include entrepreneurial education as a general study course. Agabi and Ogah (2010) write that the modification of educational curriculum at the earliest levels of education to include computer appreciation, introductory technology, integrated science and woodwork is also aimed at the attainment of the desired type of human resources.

Importance of university education in developing nations

University education is the highest academic ladder of any nation, of which its importance cannot be overemphasised. IIEP (2007) argued that universities play a crucial role in the generation of new ideas, the accumulation and the transmission of this knowledge. The above statement is true in that universities exist with the aim of teaching and more especially conducting research which will bring about new ideas, procedures, methodologies and better ways of doing things. These newly searched out ideas are not stored but transmitted from one generation to another through teaching. UNESCO (2007) is of the view that in today's information societies, knowledge drives economic growth and development. Higher education is the main source of that knowledge – its production, dissemination and its absorption by any society.

For any level of development to be achieved, there must be the right quality and quantity the presence of high-level manpower. To achieve this, university education becomes a means to an end. Education Pathways International (2010) writes that it provides not only the high-level skills necessary for every labour market, but also the training essential for teachers, doctors, nurses and so on. It is these trained individuals who develop the capacity and analytical skills that drive local economies and make important decisions which affect entire societies. Abdulkareem (n.d) writes that the Nigerian university system sprang out of the need for the development of high-level manpower to take on the challenge of a nation-building after independence.

In recent times, Jandhyala (2007) did an empirical study on higher (university) education, and the result showed that university education enhances the earnings of individuals and contributes to economic development, leading to a significant reduction in absolute as well as relative poverty and the reduction of child mortality rate.

Statement of the Problem

With one hundred and eight (108) universities and thousands of graduates turned out from these universities in Nigeria, one could confidently assert that we will be able to meet up with high-level manpower needs, but this is far from the truth. The researcher has noticed through empirical studies, observations and interviews that there is still in existence the preponderance of unemployable *graduates*. Employers of labour lament that many of our *graduates* can hardly meet the targets and challenges of their job without supervision and assistance. In the area of expressing themselves in spoken English, they are below average. The questions now are, with the level of funding of universities by the government and private participation, what has been the impact on human resources development? These challenges if not checked, would defeat the aim of university education, especially in the area of developing high-level manpower. It is in the light of the above that this paper seeks to examine the human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State

Aim and Objective of the Study

The aim of the study was as follows:

1. To highlight the impact of human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State.
2. To x-ray the challenges facing human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State.
3. To examine the strategies that can be adopted to combat the challenges faced by human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State.

Research questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the impact of human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State?
2. What are the challenges facing human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State?
3. What are the strategies that can be adopted to combat the challenges facing human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State?

Hypothesis

This hypothesis of the study will be tested at 0.05 alpha level.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female lecturers on the impacts of human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study will consist of all three universities in Rivers State. The sample of the study consisted of 200 lecturers drawn from three universities using the Stratified Simple Random Sampling Technique (Male = 128 and female = 72). The researcher developed an instrument for data collection titled: Human Resources Development for Improved University Education Questionnaire (HRDIUEQ). This instrument will have a total of fifteen items and will be patterned using the modified Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). This instrument will be validated by experts in Education studies and a reliability index of 0.89 was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected for the study will be analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and an independent samples t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. A criterion mean of 2.50 will be calculated to decide on the mean responses from the respondents.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the impact of human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State?

Table 1: Response to the impact of human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State

S/N	Impact of Human Resources Development for Improved University Education	Male N = 12 $\bar{X}$ SD		Female N = 72 $\bar{X}$ SD		Mean set	Remark
1	Human resource development programs have significantly improved the teaching quality of lecturers in Rivers State universities.	3.25	.61	3.27	.52	3.26	Agree
2	Human resource development initiatives have led to increased research output from faculty members.	2.67	.66	2.64	.57	2.66	Agree
3	Human resource development efforts have enhanced the administrative efficiency of university staff.	2.70	.65	2.77	.56	2.74	Agree
4	Participation in human resource development activities has positively impacted the career progression of university employees.	2.87	.71	2.94	.60	2.91	Agree
5	Human resource development programs have resulted in improved student learning outcomes.	3.25	.61	3.27	.52	3.26	Agree

The result in Table 1 revealed that all the items had mean scores above the criterion mean score of 2.50. This indicated that the items on the impact of human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State were accepted as agreed by the respondents.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges facing human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State?

Table 2: Response to the challenges facing human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State

S/N	Challenges Faced in Human Resources Development	Male N = 128 $\bar{X}$ SD		Female N = 72 $\bar{X}$ SD		Mean set	Remark
6	There is a lack of management support for human resources development initiatives.	2.94	.61	2.85	.68	2.91	Agree
7	There is insufficient funding allocated for human resources development programmes in Rivers State universities.	2.71	.66	2.66	.87	2.69	Agree
8	There is inadequate monitoring and evaluation of human resources development programme effectiveness.	3.10	.62	3.06	0.54	3.08	Agree
9	University staff lacks the time to participate in human resources development activities.	2.41	1.05	2.44	1.07	2.43	Disagree
10	There is poor communication regarding available human resources development opportunities.	3.17	2.16	3.24	1.08	3.21	Agree

The result on Table 2 revealed that all the items had mean scores above the criterion mean score of 2.50 except item 9 which had a mean score of 2.43 indicating that university staff lacking the time to participate in human resources development activities is not a challenge facing human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State.

Research Question 3: What are the strategies that can be adopted to combat the challenges facing human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State?

Table 3: Response of the strategies that can be adopted to combat the challenges facing human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State

S/N	Strategies for Combating Challenges in Human Resources Development	Male N = 128 $\bar{X}$ SD	Female N = 72 $\bar{X}$ SD	Mean set	Remark
11	Increased budgetary allocation for human resources development programs is essential.	3.14 0.62	3.17 0.53	3.16	Agree
12	A robust monitoring and evaluation framework for human resources development programs should be established.	2.53 0.40	2.69 0.59	2.61	Agree
13	Flexible human resources development delivery methods (e.g., online learning, workshops) should be implemented.	2.72 0.66	2.67 0.57	2.70	Agree
14	University leadership should prioritize and actively promote human resources development initiatives.	2.81 0.65	2.85 0.55	2.83	Agree
15	Implement mandatory human resources development participation for all university staff.	2.95 0.74	2.90 0.55	2.93	Agree

The result in Table 3 revealed that all the items had mean scores above the criterion mean score of 2.50. This indicated that the items on the strategies that can be adopted to combat the challenges facing human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State were accepted as agreed by the respondents.

Hypothesis

Group Statistics

	Lecturer Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Impact of HRD	Male	128	2.9480	.28604	.12792
	Female	72	2.9780	.28700	.12835

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Impact of HRD	Equal variances assumed	.014	.909	-.166	198	.873	-.03000	.18121	-.44788	.38788
	Equal variances not assumed			-.166	198.000	.873	-.03000	.18121	-.44788	.38788

The analysis examines whether there is a significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female lecturers regarding the impacts of human resource development on university education in Rivers State. According to the group statistics, the male lecturers have a mean of 2.9480 with a 0.28604 standard deviation, while the mean score for female lecturers reached 2.9780 with a standard deviation of 0.28700. The standard errors for the mean perceptions among male and female lecturers amount to 0.12792 and 0.12835, respectively. The obtained values show that both groups maintain similar perception levels.

To determine whether this difference is statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The Levene's test for equality of variances showed that the condition of equal

variances was not rejected by the obtained F-value of 0.014. The obtained F-value from this test amounted to 0.014 with a corresponding significance level (Sig.) of 0.909. The t-test results from the "Equal variances assumed" section can be used because the significance value of 0.909 exceeds the critical value of 0.05 thus demonstrating that the assumption of equal variances is not violated.

The independent samples t-test produced findings with -0.166 as the t-value while using 198 degrees of freedom. The significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) exceeds 0.05 substantially with a value of 0.873. Therefore, the difference in mean between male and female lecturers is not statistically significant. Based on these findings, there is no sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, meaning that the mean perceptions of male and female lecturers on the impacts of human resource development on university education in Rivers State do not significantly differ.

Discussion

This study confirms the vital role human resource development plays in the improvement of university education in Rivers State. Table 1 show that university employees predominantly acknowledge how human resource development implements positive effects on university functions across teaching quality, research output, administrative effectiveness, faculty advancement and student academic achievement. Research by Okebukola (2015) supports the findings of this study which demonstrate how human resource development programs have boosted lecturing excellence in universities. The study showed that human resource development initiatives have led to increased research output among faculty members. This is supported by Ekechukwu and Onwuka (2019) that university staff develop essential research abilities through capacity-building programs, grants and workshops which promote their motivation to conduct high-quality research. The study confirms that human resource development programs result in improved student learning outcomes. This is consistent with the assertion by Ofoegbu (2018) that well-trained lecturers, effective administration, and research-oriented faculty directly influence student engagement and performance. Educational outcomes for students improve both academically and professionally because teachers who possess contemporary teaching skills and research competencies establish advanced learning systems.

Furthermore, the findings of this study reveal that human resources development for improved university education in Rivers State faces several challenges. Amongst these challenges are lack of management support for human resource development initiatives, inadequate monitoring and evaluation of human resource development program effectiveness and poor communication regarding available human resource development opportunities. Numerous scholars confirm higher institution human resource development issues in Nigerian institutions through their documented observations. Adeyemi (2016) found that inadequate funding together with absent management backing pose significant barriers to human resource development within Nigerian university settings. Mohammed (2018) explained that insufficient assessment procedures and program evaluation for development programs present a major obstacle for university human resource development efforts in Nigeria.

The findings from the study highlight key strategies to tackle human resources development problems which enhance university education in Rivers State. It was revealed that increased budgetary allocation for human resources development programs is crucial. Effective training programs and professional development activities need proper financing to achieve the goals

of successful implementation. Adebayo and Olayemi (2018) support this finding by asserting that Nigerian higher institutions need adequate financial support to uphold human resource capacity-building efforts. Inadequate funding often limits access to essential training, thereby stalling professional growth among university staff (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2017). Human resources development programs require a sturdy monitoring and evaluation framework for proper implementation according to stakeholders. Proper evaluation methods enable tracking of progress together with highlighting weaknesses and ensuring accountability for professional development programs. Uche and Eke (2020) support the view that regular assessment and feedback evaluation techniques boost the performance of human resource policies in Nigerian higher education institutions. Proper monitoring systems are essential because development programs deliver poor results when implementation and oversight fail to take place effectively.

Implementing mandatory participation in human resources development programs for all university staff was identified as an effective strategy. Development programs become more effective when their participation becomes mandatory because they lead to better retention of information and implement best practices in academic settings (Adesina & Nwosu, 2023). These research findings demonstrate that universities need strategic investments combined with strong evaluation frameworks, along with flexible training approaches as well as top leadership support and compulsory staff participation to defeat their human resources advancement problems. Focusing on these strategies will bring substantial improvements to both staff capacity and educational quality, together with the bettering of academic conditions across Rivers State.

Conclusion

The study investigated human resource development for improved university education in Rivers State, focusing on its impact, challenges, and potential strategies for improvement. Human resource development stands as a fundamental factor in improving the competencies, skills, and effectiveness of academic and administrative staff. Human resource advancement in universities faces major obstacles because universities have insufficient financial backing, while staff development possibilities and career growth initiatives are scant. Furthermore, the results of the independent samples t-test reveal that there is no significant difference in how male and female lecturers perceive the impact of human resource development on university education in Rivers State. The research results demonstrate that gender does not cause significant differences in academic staff opinions regarding these issues so authorities must develop approaches that tackle all human resource development barriers at universities.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that:

1. The government and university management should allocate more resources to training, workshops, and continuous professional development programs for lecturers and administrative staff.
2. Regular training sessions, seminars, and mentorship programs should be organized to improve lecturers' teaching methodologies and research capabilities
3. Universities should implement regular performance assessment frameworks to ensure that human resource development programs align with institutional goals and contribute to educational excellence.

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