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INFLUENCE OF HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES ON MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of human resource practices on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 14,305 staff from 14 public universities in North Central Nigeria. A sample of 429 staff was used for the study. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used in the selection process. A 35-item structured four-point rating scale questionnaire titled "Human Resource Practices and Management Questionnaire (HRPMQ)" with over all reliability coefficient of 0.85 was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts, two in Educational Management in the Department of Educational Foundations and one in Mathematics Education in the Department of Science and Mathematics Education, all in Faculty of Education Benue state University Makurdi. Data collected from the field were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean Scores and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions and Chi-square (χ^2) test of goodness of-fit was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicated that recruitment and selection have significant positive influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. It was concluded that human resource practices have significant positive influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. It was recommended among others that university administrators should make it a priority and ensure that all the rigorous processes involved in conducting recruitment exercises are followed so that qualified experiences and competent staff of all categories are employed not just for the efficient and effective management of the universities but for the purpose of actualizing the set objectives of the university system.

Keywords: Human resource practices, management, recruitment, selection

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Introduction

Management of public universities has in recent times seemed to be faced with an increasing competition in rapidly changing environment characterized by advancement in information technologies, globalization, deregulation and continuous public demands for quality university education. Also, the global demand for effective management of public universities seems to heighten significantly due to growing students' populations, limited resources and the need for universities to compete in a knowledge-driven global economy. While other nations such as United States of America, Germany, Great Britain and Canada may be experiencing effective management of public universities. While African countries such as Kenya, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Nigeria are facing the challenge of ineffective management of public universities related to issues of inadequate planning, organizing, coordinating, poor commanding, inconsistent assigning of university activities to staff and students, not properly issuing instruction and guideline for universities activities to be performed, poor monitoring and evaluation of university progress of activities as well as not taking corrective measures to ensuring university objectives are achieved. Other challenging areas of management includes: funding, quality assurance, resource provision, ineffective staff performance and low productivity (Materu, 2017). These challenges may appear to have negative influence on management of public universities which in turn may reduce the quality of teaching, research and community development in Nigeria especially in North Central Nigeria.

Management entails activities such as proper planning and handling of school facilities, maintenance of sound school discipline among staff and students, provision of instructional materials, availability of qualified personnel, effective supervision and sound administrative policy (Elujekwute, Okigbo & Elujekwute, 2021). In another opinion, Osuala (2016) states that management is the process of achieving organizational goals through the coordinated performance of five specific functions, namely; planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling. Management of public universities is an approach directed at harnessing the human and material resources for the purpose of achievement university goals and objective in an efficient manner (Ukpai, 2013). It may also be seen as the organizational and administrative practice used to operate public universities. Bua (2020) maintains that it involves decision-making structures, policies and practices that govern the university's financial, academic and administrative affairs. Effective management of public universities is crucial because it impacts the quality of education, research output, resource allocation and overall institutional success (Yawe & Ivagher, 2016). When there is ineffective management, organizations hardly achieve their mandates. This means that achieving mandates of public universities in Nigeria as outlined in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic Nigeria (FRN), 2014), such as promoting quality teaching, research and community development could be possible through appropriate human resource practices.

Human resources include academic and non-academic staff of universities (Olorunfemi, 2020). Olorunfemi further states that they are living and active input that that operates the other factors of production. According to Ogwuche (2016), human resource is those engaged in an organized setting to undertake assignments and work by schedules and jurisdictions towards an expected end. On the other hand, human resource practices involve the policies and practices applied in dealing with human resources of an organization (Robinson & Lee, 2021). In another view, Smith and Davis (2017) state that a human resource practice is used for acquiring, developing, motivating, managing and gaining the employee's dedication. The purpose of human resource practices is to ensure that the employees of an organization are used in such a way that the employer obtains the greatest

possible benefit from the abilities and the employees obtain both material and psychological rewards from their work.

For human resources of an organization to put in their best to achieve maximum result, human resource managers must adopt appropriate human resource practices (Olorunfemi, 2020). According to Robinson and Lee (2021, p.213), there are a number of human resource practices which include recruitment and selection practices, placement practices, training practices, promotion practices, employee relations practices, performance management practices, reward management, grievance procedure and pension or social security. Smith and Davis (2017) also identify human resource practices as recruitment practices, selection practices, training, career planning, employee relations and diversity inclusion practices. This study is focused on recruitment and selection practices as specific variables of the study.

Recruitment practice is the process of attracting qualified candidates to apply for job openings in educational organizations (Smith & Davis, 2017). Recruitment practices if properly put in place could enable educational managers to fill vacant positions with appropriate staff. Where recruitment is ineffectively conducted, unqualified staff may be selected and this may have negative consequence on the recruitment process leading to appointment of staff. The main aim of recruitment in education is to develop and maintain adequate human resources upon which the universities can depend, when it needs additional workers. Human resources managers in public universities have to follow due process to conduct recruitment exercise in public universities. By following due process, recruitment could be done internally and externally to fill vacant position through proper selection of qualified applicants.

Selection practice is the next process after recruitment as a human resource practice. This process deals with choosing the right candidate from a pool of applicants for placement to performance various activities in organizations. It is necessary that once managers have shortlisted a pool of candidates for various vacancies through recruitment process, they need to find out whether each applicant is qualified for the position and likely to be a good performer (Bua & Ada, 2018). The process is aimed at a goal match between job requirements and the candidate's skills and motives. Poor selection may lead to ineffective performance in organizations. Public universities have many activities to be performed by the human resources. Such activities are academic and administrative activities. For these activities to be well carried out, proper selection must be done so that qualified personnel would be placed in the right position to perform the required task. It has been argued that many schools fail to achieve their set goals due to ineffective selection (Bua & Ada, 2018). Selection of high quality and qualified human resources is necessary in enhancing management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. However, in human resource practice, it is not just importance to select staff who are successful in the interview but to also ensure that they are giving the training required of them to begin the job.

Ideally, no university can highly achieve its goals when the human resources practices are not well managed to put in their best potential to performing various duties. The perceived negative relationship between human resource practices and management of public universities in North Central Nigeria calls the for the need to investigate influence of human resource practices on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria with regards to variables such as recruitment and selection.

Statement of Problem

Management of public universities is significant for the actualization of national and sustainable development through the fulfillment of tripartite mandates of universities which are promotion of teaching, research and community services. However, the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria seems to face significant challenges which may be as a result of ineffective human resource practices. Despite the critical role of human resource practices in enhancing institutional performance, there are concerns about efficiency in management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Observation by the researcher and relevant educational stakeholders such as university vice chancellors, human resource managers, academic and non-academic staff seems to indicate that there is a disconnection between human resource practices and optimal university management. This disconnection may manifest in ineffective recruitment and selection.

As public universities strive to maintain competitiveness, ensure quality education, and retain top talent, the relationship between human resources practices and management becomes critical. It seems that the process of recruitment is not properly executed hence, unqualified staff are recruited in many public universities rather than qualified staff. Also, selection is not seemingly done based on merit. These issues appear to heighten the concern of the researchers and relevant stakeholders since many staff seem to fail in fulfilling their personal and institutional mandates in many public universities in North Central Nigeria. This is perceived to be negatively affecting management public universities. It is based on this concern that the researcher seeks to investigate relationship between human resource practices and management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of human resource practices on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the influence of recruitment practice on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the influence of selection practice on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the influence of recruitment practice on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of selection practice on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Recruitment practice has no significant influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.
2. Selection practice has no significant influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 14,305 staff from 14 public universities in North Central Nigeria. A sample of 429 staff was used for the study. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used in the selection process. A 35-item structured four-point rating scale questionnaire titled "Human Resource Practices and Management Questionnaire (HRPMQ)" with over all reliability coefficient of 0.85 was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts, two in Educational Management in the Department of Educational Foundations and one in Mathematics Education in the Department of Science and Mathematics Education, all in Faculty of Education Benue state University Makurdi. The instrument was designed on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA=4), Agreed (A=3), Disagreed (D=2) and Strongly Disagreed (SD=1).Data collected from the field were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean Scores and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions and Chi-square (χ^2) test of goodness of-fit was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

The results are presented, analyzed and interpreted as follows:

Research Question 1:

What is the influence of recruitment practice on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria?

The data that provided answer to the research question is presented on Table 1.

Table 1: ***Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of the Influence of Recruitment Practice on Management of Public Universities in North Central Nigeria***

No	Item Description	N	SA	A	D	SD	$\overline{X}$	*SD*	Decision
1	Proper recruitment process enhances improved quality of instruction in the university.	408	229	141	26	12	3.44	0.74	Agree
2	Recruitment helps to satisfy the strategic objectives of the university at minimal cost.	408	158	120	81	49	2.95	1.03	Agree
3	When recruitment does not follow the right process, it results to employment of unqualified staff who would be less productive to the university.	408	218	151	17	22	3.38	0.80	Agree
4	When due recruitment process is followed, competent staff are employed to add value to the university system.	408	218	161	11	18	3.42	0.75	Agree
5	University management does not find it difficult to handle issues of conduct of examination when proper recruitment process is followed.	408	196	143	28	41	3.21	0.95	Agree
	Cluster Mean/Standard Deviation						**3.28**	**0.86**	**Agree**

Source: Field Study 2025

Table 1 shows that items 1-5 had mean scores of 3.44, 2.95, 3.38, 3.42 and 3.21 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.74, 1.03, 0.80, 0.75 and 0.95 respectively. Based on the criteria for decision-making, it means that the mean scores for all the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. This means that respondents indicated that Proper recruitment process enhances improved quality of instruction in the university. They also agreed that recruitment help to satisfy the strategic objectives of the university at minimal cost. When recruitment does not follow the right process, it results to employment of unqualified staff who would be less productive to the university. Furthermore, they agreed that when due recruitment process is followed, competent staff are employed to add value to the university system. In addition, maintain that university management does not find it difficult to handle issues of conduct of examination when proper recruitment process is followed. The cluster mean of 3.28 was also above the cut-off point of 2.50. The standard deviations are small which shows that there is homogeneity in respondents' responses for the items raised. This implies that recruitment practice has positive influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Research Question 2

What is the influence of selection practice on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria?

The data that provided answer to the research question are presented on Table 2.

Table 2: ***Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of the Influence of Selection Practice on Management of Public Universities in North Central Nigeria***

No	Item Description	N	SA	A	D	SD	$\overline{X}$	*SD*	Decision
6	Proper selection process enhances quality control in the university system.	408	214	154	21	19	3.38	0.79	Agree
7	Quality instruction is also enhanced when due process is followed in the selection of staff of the university.	408	220	141	31	16	3.38	0.79	Agree
8	It is more difficult to process examination in the university when due process is not followed in the selection of staff.	408	190	154	29	35	3.22	0.91	Agree
9	Admission process is poorly handled as a result of poor selection process of staff of the university during recruitment.	408	201	140	37	30	3.25	0.90	Agree
10	Quality output is enhanced in the university when the right caliber of persons with the required skills are selected for the available jobs.	408	204	181	13	10	3.42	0.68	Agree
	Cluster Mean/Standard Deviation						**3.33**	**0.81**	**Agree**

Source: Field Study 2025

Table 2 reveals that items 6-10 had mean scores of 3.38, 3.38, 3.22, 3.25 and 3.42 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.79, 0.79, 0.91, 0.90 and 0.68 respectively. Based on the criteria for decision-making, it means that the mean scores for all the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. This means that respondents agreed that proper selection process enhances quality control in the university system. They indicated that quality instruction is also enhanced when due process is followed in the selection of staff of the university. They maintained that it is more difficult to process examination in the university when due process is not followed in the selection of staff. Furthermore, they agreed that Admission process is poorly handled as a result of poor selection process of staff of the university during recruitment. Moreover, they agreed that quality output is enhanced in the university when the right caliber of persons with the required skills are selected for the available jobs. The cluster mean of 3.33 was also above the cut-off point of 2.50. The standard deviations are small. This shows that there is homogeneity in respondents' responses for the items raised. This implies that selection practice has positive influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Hypotheses Testing

In order to test the seven hypotheses of this study, the chi-square (χ^2) test of goodness of fit was used to test the options of respondents at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1

Recruitment practice has no significant influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Table 3: ***Chi-square test of the Influence of Recruitment Practice on Management of Public Universities in North Central Nigeria***

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Level of Sig.	df	χ^2	P-value	Decision
SA	28	102.0	0.05	3	291.69	0.00	Sig.
A	33	102.0					
D	143	102.0					
SD	204	102.0					

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 102.0.

Table 3 reveals that χ^2 =291.69; df =3 and p = 0.00. Since p-value of 0.00< 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that Recruitment practice has no significant influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria was therefore, rejected. This implies that recruitment practice has significant positive influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2

Selection practice has no significant influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4
Chi-square test of the Influence of Selection Practice on Management of Public Universities in North Central Nigeria

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Level of Sig.	df	χ^2	P-value	Decision
SA	22	102.0	0.05	3	252.88	0.00	Sig.
A	26	102.0					
D	154	102.0					
SD	206	102.0					

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 102.0.

Table 4 shows that χ^2 = 252.88, df =3 and p = 0.00. Since p-value of 0.00< 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that Selection practice has no significant influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria was therefore, rejected. This means that selection practice has significant positive influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this study revealed that recruitment practice has significant positive influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. This indicated that proper recruitment process enhances improved quality of instruction in the university. Recruitment helps to satisfy the strategic objectives of the university at minimal cost. When recruitment does not follow the right process, it results to employment of unqualified staff who would be less productive to the university. When due recruitment process is followed, competent staff are employed to add value to the university system. University management do not find it difficult to handle issues of conduct of examination when proper recruitment process is followed. The finding is in agreement with that of Beng, Morris, Gorard, Kokotsaki and Abdi (2020) which revealed that recruitment of teachers regularly reduces workload and significant impact teachers' job performance. The finding is also in line with the finding of Babarinde, Olujuwon, Abegunrin and Jimoh (2019) which indicated that recruitment pattern of teachers has significant impact on management of public secondary schools in Lagos State. It was also found that the recruitment process significantly influences school performance in Lagos State.

The second finding of the study showed that selection practice has significant positive influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. This implies that proper selection process enhances quality control in the university system. Quality instruction is also enhanced when due process is followed in the selection of staff of the university. It is more difficult to process examination in the university when due process is not followed in the selection of staff. Admission process is poorly handled as a result of poor selection process of staff of the university during recruitment. Quality output is enhanced in the university when the right caliber of persons with the required skills are selected for the available jobs. The finding is related to that of Adeyemi, Dumade and Fadare (2015) which revealed that selection practices significantly influence organizational performance. The finding also aligns with that of Koech, Chepkilot and Waiganjo (2020) which revealed that selection has significant positive influence on management effectiveness in public secondary schools in Baringo County, Kenya.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was established that recruitment and selection practices have significant positive influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. It was concluded that human resource practices have significant positive influence on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Recommendations

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

1. University administrators should make it a priority and ensure that all the rigorous processes involved in conducting recruitment exercises are followed so that qualified experiences and competent staff of all categories are employed not just for the efficient and effective management of the universities but for the purpose of actualizing the set objectives of the university system.
2. University management should as a matter of all seriousness ensures appropriate selection criteria are not only adopted in identifying and selecting competent staff that could enhance management effectiveness but also enable fairness in the selection processes such that the universities will continue to uphold her culture and value system.

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