**Optimization of the Nigerian Workforce for Enhanced Productivity and Human Capital Development: A Case Study of Selected Teaching Staff in Universities**

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**Abstract**

*The productivity of teaching staff in Nigerian public universities remains suboptimal, factors affecting staff productivity and human capital impacting the quality of graduates and their contributions to the labor market. This study investigates the development in 92 public universities (44 federal and 48 state) across Nigeria’s six geopolitical zones. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were gathered through structured questionnaires from teaching staff and qualitative interviews with faculty Deans. Quantitative data were analyzed using Stochastic Frontier Analysis, while qualitative data were interpreted through Thematic Analysis.*

*Findings reveal that lecturers struggle with the tripple burden of teaching, research, and administrative tasks, alongside overcrowded classrooms and limited student engagement. These challenges hinder academic performance and productivity. Additionally, pressure to increase enrollment often results in the admission of underqualified students, compromising teaching effectiveness. The study also highlights issues of nepotism in academic appointments, which weakens staff competence and overall workforce productivity. Although the expansion of universities has increased access to education, it has diluted educational quality.*

*Low lecturer remuneration, insufficient staff training, and underfunding of development programs like TETFund further demotivate staff and stifle productivity. External societal factors, such as student involvement in internet fraud and weak policy enforcement, also negatively affect academic environments.*

*To improve human capital development, the study recommends better-defined roles for staff, consistent performance monitoring, and meaningful engagement. Enhanced training programs, merit-based hiring, and a focus on both student quality and enrollment numbers are essential. The Nigerian government must implement robust policies and ensure adequate funding to support long-term improvements in educational quality and workforce readiness.*

*Keywords: Optimization, Nigeria, University, Human Capital and Productivity*

* 1. Introduction

One of the identified means of rapid growth and nation’s economic development is its human capital development (David et al, 2021). Education through university is said to bring about equity, social, economic and personal development. *Universities are centers for human capacity building that serve to change the physical and psychological aspects of any nation. According to* Akpan and Etor (2012) human capacity building through university is to bring out the talent, knowledge and innate abilities for service to humanity, In the face of rapid information deployment and changing world of education, universities are to strengthen skills, enhance competencies and ability of individual to innovate, adapt and thrive in the face of challenges. In order to get quality graduates out of university system, quality teachers are not only the pre-requisites but also for them to carry out their duties of teaching, marking, supervision, correction and research at the right time within the confine of the set-out curriculum. The success of a university system depends on learning environment and the efficient management system put in place (De-Juan-Vigaray et al, 2024). Capacity building through education is to shape minds, attitude, values and skills to effect organizational and societal change (Salajegheh et al, 2024). Uffor and Uwaru (2024) expressed that, capacity development cannot be attained when there are inccesant strike by workers in the universities, political instability, poor funding, poverty, poor remuneration of staff, high level of illiteracy, unemployment and poor infrastructure.

Akpan and Etor (2012 explored the challenges bedeviling Nigerian universities ranging from poor infrastructure, student engaging in cultism, examination malpractice, certificate racketeering, poor attitude to learning, internet fraud, paucity of quality staff, defective curriculum, sorting for grades, admission process with corrupt practices and lack of transparency. Lecturers are facing other challenges in balancing teaching, research, and administrative duties, compounded by overcrowded classrooms and insufficient student engagement. Inadequacy of teaching staff and procreation of universities without quality teachers or use of those already occupied that degenerated into delivering half of the required lectures are bane of human capacity development in Nigeria.

The products of these institutions are scientists, lawyers, doctors, lecturers, teachers, engineers and accountant who are probably produced through these challenges and corrupt practices which can make one to conclude that they are “half baked” graduates. The cumulative effect is to have sub-optimal output based on little input received to produce these graduate students. Having a good capacity-building and virile academic institutions can contribute to social stability because of knowledge that will be received, student will learn and understand how to navigate tensions, avoid violence, build mental capacity and resilience, reduce early child labour or marriage, prevents drop-out, assist in navigating emotional trauma and become peaceful in the society (Offor and Uwaru, 2024).

The central human capacity to university education is the lecturer. They ensure continuous training, teaching moral values and characters of students are shaped by the lecturers. The more the quality of lecturers, the better the students ([Oziengbe & Obhiosa, 2014;](https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=120108#ref76) [Saka & Salami, 2014](https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=120108#ref85) and Abubakar et al, 2022). A number of researchers worked on human capacity development in the universities bur focused on ICT training, educational performance of students and impact of training on staff development (Chioke et al, 2023; Amie-Ogan and Adolphus, 2021 and Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2014). Therefore, the three objectives of this study are: to determine the productivity levels of teaching staff, to examine the challenges hindering optimal performance of human capital development in the university and assess the impact of training on academic performance of staff of the selected universities.

**2.0 Literature Review and theoretical underpinning**

**Human capital Development**

The concept of human capital as expressed by [Becker (1993)](https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=120108#ref15) and [Becker (2002](https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=120108#ref14)) refers to knowledge, skills and creativity possessed by an individual person. Schultz (1993) said that “human capital” is characterized by improving organization’s assets and employees for productivity increase and competitive advantage. It is regarded as training, education, knowledge and skills received by mostly the employees to increase organizational performance. A framework for human capital development postulated by Swanson and Holton (2001) suggested that input or resources put in place will leader to educational training and outcome of source training that can now be put into use as graduates for production or citizenship processes that will yield significant results of earnings or efficacy.

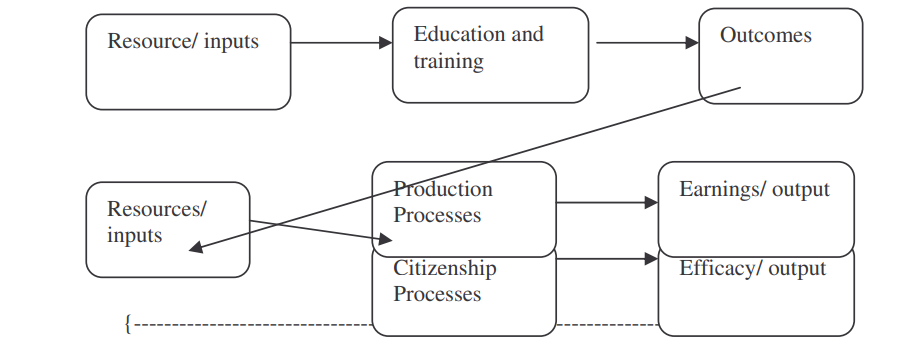


Figure 2.1 Model of Human Capital by Swanson Holton (2001)

The development of Human Capital theory as propounded by (Schultz, 1993) pointed out that, human labour can be traded and it is for sale or can be bought. The capital in reality can be schooling, training or financing medical care. It means that, it can raise earning, it can improve health and it can raise the value as it appreciates the life of the possessor over time (Marimuthu et al, 2009). Collins and Druten (2003) noted that, there is a link between how workers are being recruited and the performance of employees. The argument was that, proper selection procedures, correct performance appraisals, benefits and rewards, training and development are direct factors that can promote employee’s performance.

In the context of university’s education for capacity building, the concept seeks to explore the recruitment of lecturers, their qualifications, competency and passion for teaching, following required curriculum, attending to their responsibilities, teaching, grading students, supervising and hand-on training for specialized courses for total human capital building and development.

**Lecturers’ Performance metrics**

Since it has been established that the quality of lecturers determines the quality of student produced in the universities (Molefe, 2010). Lecture’s dimension of job requires the competencies in the following areas as explained by Spitzer, 2007; White, 2008 and Molefe, 2010): communication skill, interpersonal skill, change management, leadership skill, innovation and creativity skill, decision making skill, commitment to quality skill, self-development skill, subject mastery skill, leaned assessment skill, originality skill, professional relations skill, research skill, judgement skill, student-stakeholders skill, development of others skill, project management skill, listening skill, organizational skill, critical analysis skill and ability to see thing from diverse perspectives.

The framework developed for this exercise is that the performance of lecturers in universities is a function of their teaching effectiveness, research output and service contribution to the society. This is moderated by the ethical standards puts up by the society and the feedback from the students (see Figure 2.2).

Lecturers’ performance

Student’s feedback

Ethical standards

Teaching effectiveness

Research output

Service contributions

**Figure 2.2: Framework for lecturer’s performance**

Selvanathan et al (2019) explained that talent management should be part of human resource management in the university. Retaining and employing talented workforce requires motivation, salary, promotion and other incentives. Baker et al (2015) conducted an assessment to determine standardized way to for academic performance in AACSB-accredited business school. The objectives were to capture effective teaching and service performance. Results indicated that, quality of instruction, practice of innovation and commitment are the factors responsible for performance.

**Empirical review**

Akuegwu et al (2013) examined the influence of lecturers in capacity development in South western Nigeria for sustainable development. Using T-test for their findings, it was observed that, the lecturer’s participation in capacity building was low. It was low in ICT, workshop, training, conferences and seminar. Ihuigwe (2020) conducted a research to investigate the development and productivity of lecturers in Rivers State. The research was conducted with survey design and noticeably, the induction and orientation programmes do not have any influence on lecturers’ performance but staff development and training do. Umezulike (2021) performed reliability coefficient test to deduce the lecturer’s index in South Eastern Nigeria and found out that lecturers are less incline to ICT, and they needed upgrade and training in the use of technology equipment, internet, interactive-white board, video conferencing and other technological innovation in adult education. Dual mode universities operating both physical and online educational services are unable to optimize their services as found out by (Dada et al, 2020). Amie-Ogan et al (2021) berated how politicians and mediocre were being recruited into academia which in the long run has significant impact on the society. Ololube (2018) espoused on the failure of policy makers in tertiary institutions with good policies but poor implementations. Amie-Ogan et al (2021) found out that, sabbatical programme and ICT influenced the performance of staff in universities in Rivers State.

Brimah and Oduwole (2024) conducted a research on appraisal of job productivity of academic staff in Kwara State university. They found out through cross-sectional survey and regression analysis that, institutions that are fond of appraisal of academic staff improves engagement, human capacity and overall performance. A number of factors were considered in Baker et al (2015) in universities’ education: class size, commitment of teachers, evaluation and monitoring, core teaching, curriculum assessment, innovation put in place, accreditation and all that.

3.0 Methodology

A multistage random sampling technique was employed, using a mixed-methods research design to collect data from a sample of 92 public universities—44 federal and 48 state universities—across Nigeria’s six geopolitical zones. Within each university, six departments were randomly selected, with eight teaching staff from each department included in the study. Structured questionnaires were distributed to collect information on staff development, training, and daily activities, while qualitative interviews were conducted with Deans of the selected faculties to assess productivity and human capital outcomes. Stochastic Frontier Analysis was used to analyze quantitative data, while Thematic Analysis was applied to the qualitative data. The ethical standard was upheld to keep respondents and participants anonymous during the entire process of data collection.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The first was to perform the Stochastic Analysis based on the responses gathered from the respondents. The objective here is to examine the performance against the training received by the lecturers. The areas of assessment include: teaching, research and contributions. The equation for variables can be defined as:

𝑙𝑛𝑦𝑖𝑡 = 𝛽0 + 𝛽1𝑙𝑛𝑥 1𝑖𝑡 + 𝛽2𝑙𝑛𝑥 2𝑖𝑡 + 𝛽3𝑙𝑛𝑥 3𝑖𝑡 + 𝑉𝑖𝑡 − 𝑈𝑖𝑡 (1)

𝑦𝑖𝑡: lecturer’s perfomance i during period t;

𝛽0=this is termed the intercept in equation 2

𝑥 1𝑖𝑡 *: in the equation means this is the number of teaching i during consideration for the time t;*

𝑥 2𝑖𝑡 *: means this is the number of research i in time t as shown in the equation 1;*

𝑥 3𝑖𝑡 *: connotes contributions in solutions to problems i in time t;*

𝛽 *1-k: means from* 𝛽 *1 to* 𝛽 *k of which unknown parameters to be considered as k = 0, 1,2, 3;2*

*Vit: in equation 2 are depicted as random variables which are assumed to be N (0, σV ), and lonely of the Uit;*

*Uit: are representing non-negative random variables of the technical inefficiency and d to be as half-normal with N (0,2 σU );*

*η : is what we considered to be calculated with respect to*𝑥 1.𝑛*; σV: is regarded as noise term parameter*

Table 4.1: Output from Stochastic Analysis

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Maximum like hood calculations** |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Estimate Std.Error** | **z value** | **Pr(>|z|)** |  |
| (Intercept) | 1.81E+00 | 7.32E-01 | 14.2165 | < 2.2e-15 \*\*\* |
| log(teaching) | 4.01E-01 | 3.78E-02 | 7.2271 | 3.674e-12 \*\*\* |
| Log(research) | 2.08E-01 | 3.30E-01 | 0.74 | 0.5093404 |
| log(contribu) | 2.60E-02 | 2.12E-02 | 1.7459 | 0.07811 \* |
| sigmaSq | 5.12E-03 | 1.04E-03 | 4.8605 | 3.268e-06 \*\*\* |
| gamma | 1.00E+00 | 4.36E-04 | 2310.6516 | < 1.2e-16 \*\*\* |
| sigmaSqU | 0.269002 | 0.137968 | 2.024 | 0.0429740 \* |
| sigmaSqV | 0.167408 | 0.031782 | 2.7761 | 0.0046408 \*\* |
| sigma | 0.714571 | 0.059587 | 7.9005 | 1.274e-14 \*\*\* |
| sigmaU | 0.508122 | 0.668724 | 4.0479 | 5.164e-05 \*\*\* |
| sigmaV | 0.342644 | 0.011896 | 5.3483 | 1.358e-08 \*\*\* |
| lambdaSq | 2.204866 | 1.780996 | 1.238 | 0.2154686 |
| lambda | 1.560879 | 0.527711 | 2.428 | 0.0145867 \* |
| varU | 0.092326 | NAP | NAP | NAP |
| sdU | 0.343383 | NAP | NAP | NAP |
| gammaVar | 0.467815 | NAP | NAP | NAP |
| Signif. codes: | 0 ‘\*\*\*’ 0.001 ‘\*\*’ 0.01 ‘\*’ 0.05 ‘.’ 0.1 ‘ ’ 1 | | | |
| log likelihood value: | -77.5174 |  |  |  |
| cross-sectional data |  |  |  |  |
| total number of observations = 14 |  |  |  |  |
| mean efficiency: | 0.58425 |  |  |  |

Table 4.1 succinctly shows the output from the responses gathered and loaded on R-studio for data analysis. The mean efficiency of 0.58425 indicated that the optimal level is still average and can be said to be low for the human capital development. Mean efficiency of above 0.7 showing something above 70% can be said to be very good. When looking at the error due to noise level, it can the value of gammar Var is irrelevant because of the value that equal to 1.

4.1 Thematic Analysis for qualitative Data

Dean 1:

Q1: What can you say about the productivity of faculty staff in your university?

Well, there are lecturers who are good and qualified to teach in this university. The only issue is how do you motivate them?

Q2: What can you say about the ratings of your graduates?

Sincerely, these students can compete with their counterparts globally.

Q3: What are the challenges for academic performance?

I have said it that, staff are to be motivated. Aside salary, supervision, marking and workshop and conferences are to be used to motivate staff.

Q4: Does the training received by the staff have impact on their human capital development?

Definitely, when a staff goes for training, it improves their perspectives, connect them and enhance quality of teaching not only locally but also internationally.

Dean 2:

Q1: What can you say about the productivity of faculty staff in your university?

Nobody can be productive unless he is happy. Go to global universities. Why are we not on the first 1000 universities in the world? The payment is poor. How much is what a professor earns in Nigeria? Go to South Africa, you will see what I am talking about. Anyway, we are trying our best in spite of low incentive.

Q2: What can you say about the ratings of your graduates?

Fantastic! Ask about this University. If you are a product of this university then you should be proud of yourself. Do you know the number we admit each year? Only few are able to graduate at the end of the day. Our students can go to anywhere in the world.

Q3: What are the challenges for academic performance?

Technology, research and innovation in the Nigerian universities is low. Though Tetfund is trying, we cannot do without government supports. Funding, research output, lack of equipment and technical know hoe. Sometimes you are willing to do something but you cannot because of non-availability of technology, power and other facilities.

Q4: Does the training received by the staff have impact on their human capital development?

No matter how small, even if you attend ordinary conference, you will gain. You will make friends and you can from there collaborate.

Dean 3:

Q1: What can you say about the productivity of faculty staff in your university?

I cannot deny that some lecturers are not supposed to be here. What do you do? Once they do not have problem doing their job even if they teach rubbish, you may not be able to ask them to leave the job without any god reason. Averagely, we have quality staff who are responsible and can teach anywhere in the world if al necessary things are put in place.

Q2: What can you say about the ratings of your graduates?

Students of this university can be compared to any other student in the world in their various disciplines.

Q3: What are the challenges for academic performance?

Staff recruitment with nepotism and discrimination, students’ attitude to studies practicing yahoo-yahoo (internet fraud), balancing teaching, research, and administrative duties, compounded by overcrowded classrooms and insufficient student engagement. There is problem of electricity, research funding and academic strike.

Q4: Does the training received by the staff have impact on their human capital development?

Training and Development is the best thing that can happen to a teacher. The more you teach the more you need to be taught and expand your knowledge.

Dean 4:

Q1: What can you say about the productivity of faculty staff in your university?

The productivity is not the first question you should ask. How can they be productive when lecturers are few? On a daily basis you see that every politician at federal level wants to compensate his or her community with university. We are embarking on low quality for mass literacy! I will not deceive you, the standard is still poor. Staff are just doing their wok because they are supposed to do it. Nobody is happy. Students are not serious but you will meet us here if you want to lower the standard.

Q2: What can you say about the ratings of your graduates?

Some are here to study while some are here for certificate. So, it depends on their motive.

Q3: What are the challenges for academic performance?

We have a lot of challenges from staff inadequacy, to power, to political influence, strike because of pay, lack of incentives and others. balancing teaching, research, and administrative duties, overcrowded classrooms. Students are now on fraud and other unethical engagements. Recruitment of some lecturers are influenced by political power and those people may not have qualities to teach.

Q4: Does the training received by the staff have impact on their human capital development?

Why not. Let me ask you, if you are speaking a language and I teach you another, are you not better of? So, no matter how, training and staff development will enhance teaching, self-development and boost morale.

Dean 5

Q1: What can you say about the productivity of faculty staff in your university?

We engage them and so there is no reason for indolence and laziness that will warrant you not to be productive.

Q2: What can you say about the ratings of your graduates?

The graduates are good.

Q3: What are the challenges for academic performance?

Challenges are many oooo. You experience the problem of power, you experience the problem of strike, cultism, political tussle and staff welfare.

Q4: Does the training received by the staff have impact on their human capital development?

No doubt, staff development is enhanced through human capital development.

Dean 6:

Q1: What can you say about the productivity of faculty staff in your university?

Productivity in the university is about quality of research, teaching and impact they make on the society. So, in terms of teaching, we are trying our best. Research is being hindered by funding and motivation. Publication fee and lack of motivation.

Q2: What can you say about the ratings of your graduates?

We are trying our best and the student can be compared with other students in other universities.

Q3: What are the challenges for academic performance?

Strike, payment of areas, funding, power problem, balancing teaching, research, and administrative duties, overcrowded classrooms. Student hostel and staff accommodation are bad.

Q4: Does the training received by the staff have impact on their human capital development?

Training is part of human resource management. It enhances human capital, build connections and help to increase productivity.

### **4.2 Thematic Analysis**

#### **1. Faculty Productivity**

**Theme: Motivation and Work Environment**

* Common views: Faculty productivity is hindered by **poor motivation**, **low pay**, **lack of supervision**, and **work overload**.
* **Supporting quotes:**
  + Dean 1: “The only issue is how do you motivate them?”
  + Dean 2: “Nobody can be productive unless he is happy... payment is poor.”
  + Dean 4: “Nobody is happy... staff are just doing their work because they are supposed to do it.”
  + Dean 6: “Research is being hindered by funding and motivation.”

**Theme: Structural and Systemic Barriers**

* Overarching idea: Staff productivity is also limited by **poor recruitment practices**, **political influence**, and **staff shortages**.
  + Dean 3: “Some lecturers are not supposed to be here.”
  + Dean 4: “Every politician… wants to compensate his community with university… low quality for mass literacy.”

#### **2. Graduate Quality**

**Theme: Competitiveness and Global Readiness**

* Consensus: Most deans view graduates as **globally competitive** and capable, despite systemic challenges.
* **Supporting quotes:**
  + Dean 1: “These students can compete with their counterparts globally.”
  + Dean 2: “Our students can go to anywhere in the world.”
  + Dean 3: “Students... can be compared to any other student in the world.”

**Theme: Mixed Student Motivation**

* Some deans question the **intentions and commitment** of students.
  + Dean 4: “Some are here to study while some are here for certificate.”

#### **3. Challenges to Academic Performance**

**Theme: Infrastructure and Funding**

* Most cited issues: **Power outages**, **inadequate funding**, **lack of equipment**, **strike actions**, and **poor facilities**.
* **Supporting quotes:**
  + Dean 2: “Funding, research output, lack of equipment… non-availability of technology, power.”
  + Dean 6: “Strike, payment of arrears, funding, power problem…”

**Theme: Governance and Recruitment Practices**

* Concerns: **Nepotism**, **political interference**, and **unqualified hires** undermine academic quality.
  + Dean 3: “Staff recruitment with nepotism and discrimination.”
  + Dean 4: “Recruitment of some lecturers are influenced by political power.”

**Theme: Balancing Multiple Roles**

* Faculty struggle with **teaching**, **research**, **administrative tasks**, and **overcrowded classrooms**.
  + Dean 3: “Balancing teaching, research, and administrative duties.”
  + Dean 6: “Overcrowded classrooms…”

**Theme: Student Misconduct and Culture**

* Issues like **internet fraud (Yahoo-Yahoo)** and **cultism** are cited.
  + Dean 3: “Students… practicing yahoo-yahoo.”
  + Dean 5: “Cultism, political tussle…”

#### **4. Impact of Staff Training**

**Theme: Positive Influence on Human Capital**

* Unanimous agreement: Staff training enhances **knowledge**, **teaching quality**, **international exposure**, and **collaboration**.
* **Supporting quotes:**
  + Dean 1: “It improves their perspectives… enhance quality of teaching.”
  + Dean 2: “Even if you attend ordinary conference, you will gain.”
  + Dean 4: “Training… will enhance teaching, self-development and boost morale.”
  + Dean 6: “Training… build connections and help to increase productivity.”

**Discussion of findings**

The sub optimal level of productivity can be seen from the mixed analysis from qualitative and quantitative studies. The Stochastic Analysis was on average scale while the participants agreed on poor situation arising from lack of good condition of service in the university.The challengesare **poor recruitment practices, political influence,** staff **shortages, Power outages, inadequate funding, lack of equipment, strike actions,** and **poor facilities.** These are the same challenges mentioned by (Ogunode et al, 2020). **Nepotism, political interference**, and **unqualified hires from students issues** like **internet fraud (Yahoo-Yahoo)** and **cultism are the major problems. This is in support of the studies by Okolo and Gregory (2021) on challenges facing higher education in Nigeria. It can be observed that during this period, staff managed to teach and produce graduates at their capacity that may not be optimal. Human capital development is very important for knowledge, teaching quality, international exposure,** and **collaboration.**

**5.0 Conclusion and recommendations**

This research has been able to reveal that the productivity of the workforce in the selected universities is sub-optimal. A number of factors have been recognized to cause this sub-optimality. Hence there is need to address them one after the other. It starts from government, recruitment, to academic policies across faculties, monitoring and evaluation of these faculties, teaching staff orientation and personal development. Also, the student’s activities be reviewed for better performance and focus on academic performance. The resultant effect of laxity in quality of education will always bounce back to the society. Therefore, schools and government with individual lecturers must determine to ensure that quality of education is not compromised.

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