



# Talent and Staff Knowledge Management Strategies of Academic Heads of Departments for Teaching Improvements in Rivers State Universities

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the talent and staff knowledge management practices of academic heads of departments for teaching improvements in Rivers State universities, two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive survey design was adopted and the stratified random sampling technique used in selecting the study sample of 100 and 180 lecturers from Federal and State Universities from the population of 1000 – 1 Federal and 3 State Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The respondents of the study responded to a validated 18 item instrument titled: Talent and Staff Knowledge Management Practices of Academic Heads of Departments for Teaching Improvement Questionnaire (TSKMPAHDTIQ) with a reliability of 0.92. Mean scores were used in answering the research questions while z-test was used in testing the research hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. The findings of the study revealed among others that academic heads of departments talent and staff knowledge management practices contribute to teaching improvements in Rivers State universities by helping to define the appropriate human capital requirement for selection into educational institutions among others. The study concluded that academic staff in universities will enjoy quality teaching when Academic Heads of Departments apply and utilize talent and staff knowledge management in their administrative and academic activities to improve teaching and learning. It was recommended among others that academic heads of departments should endeavour to identify and use new talent management techniques in order to sustain sound current and global practices for the improvement of teaching in universities.

**Keywords:** Talent Management, Staff Knowledge Management, Heads of Departments, Teaching Improvements and Rivers State Universities.

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## INTRODUCTION

Universities worldwide are learning organizations committed to discharging some basic functions for the advancement of the society. These functions include: teaching, research and community service and constitute what Obomanu (2008) refers to as the tripartite function of the university job for academics. The teaching job of the university academic covers presentations in classes, microteachings and other public presentations between university teachers and their clients. Research accommodate all aspects of knowledge creation and transfers, while community service approximates those services which universities render to their host communities and others as a way of returning part of the profits to the communities and thus contribute to the development of the society. This is what Inengim (2013) refers to as corporate social responsibility in education.

In organizations, be it the public or private sectors, educational or mainstream bureaucratic organizations, one particular attribute is inevitable and ever present. This is the fact that organizations are peopled by people and that is one characteristics that qualifies organizations as social entities. Agreed that individuals make up organizations suggest that, the individuals are from different backgrounds, orientations and callings, apart from possessing special gifts, abilities and aptitudes which enable them to perform well in organization. These attributes of organizational members suggest that they are of various diversities and possess different talents and these call for deliberate diversity and talent management programmes in organizations.

To CIPD (2007), talents consist of those individuals who can make a difference to organizational performance, either through their immediate contributions or in the long term by demonstrating the highest level of potentials. This is so because, as Armstrong (2009) enunciates, talented people possess special gifts, abilities and aptitudes which enable them to perform effectively. For Hanson (2007) as cited in Ntonga (2007), talents in organizations refer to the core employees and leaders who drive the business forward. In this study, talents are organizational employees in the education sector that possess special gifts, abilities and aptitudes to contribute to success in the education system.

Aside from giving a meaning to talented people in organizations, there are also those people who do not possess the gifts, abilities and attitudes which talented people have, but they also exist as members of organizations and groups. The question now is, how does the educational administrator handle those two groups of people and still get to the needed target of organizational improvement? This is where management of human resources or talent management comes in.

Archibong (2013) explains that talent management is a term that emerged in the 1990's, to incorporate development in human resources management. It is the process of identifying, developing, recruiting, retaining and deploying those talented people in the organization (Armstrong, 2009). Talent management is also the skill of attracting highly skilled workers, or integrating new workers and developing and retaining current workers to meet current and future needs.

They are basically five imperatives for implementing talent management programmes in organizations. These, in the opinion of Michael, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod (2001) included the following:

- Creating and winning employee value proposition that will make your company uniquely attractive to talents.
- Moving beyond recruiting types to build a long term recruiting strategy.
- Using job experience, coaching and mentoring to cultivate the potential in the managers.

- Strengthening your talents pool by investing in (A) players development (B) players and acting decisively on (C) players.
- Central to this approach is a pervasive mind-set – a deep conviction shared by leaders throughout the company that competitive advantage comes from having talents at all levels (p. 64).

The imperativeness of talent management in mainstream organizations also apply in educational organizations and is considered important if Heads of Departments in educational institutions wish to achieve successes in the teaching process. Therefore, to achieve effectiveness in talent management in organizations, Armstrong (2009), proposes nine basic activities to be indulged in by managers and administrators. These are; resource strategy, attraction and retention policies, talent audits, role design, talent relationship management, talent management, learning and development, management succession planning and career management.

Knowledge is designed as what people understand about things, concepts, ideas, theories, procedures, practices and the ways to do things around here (Armstrong, 2009). Blackler (1995) notes that knowledge is multifaceted and complex, being birth situated and abstract, implicit and explicit distributed and individual, physical and mental, developing and static, verbal and encoded. In this study, knowledge is therefore organizational stock of information on things, concepts, ideas, theories, procedures, practice and the ways things are done in organizations. Knowledge resides in individuals and when the individuals become organizational members, the individual knowledge, now becomes organizational properties. The scholar above notes, organizational operational, technical, and procedural knowledge can be stored in data banks and found in presentation reports, libraries, policy document and manuals. It can also be moved around the organization through information systems and by traditional methods such as meetings, workshops, couriers, master classes and written publications and through dissemination of .community practice.

Organizational knowledge also need to be circulated between among members of the organizations, between and within organizational, departments and across the organization. It is a process or practice of creating, acquiring, capturing, sharing and using knowledge, wherever it resides to enhance learning and performance in organizations (Scarborough, Swan, Preston, 1999). In educational institutions, there are basically two components in the knowledge management process. According to Oluwuo and Afangideh (2011), Ebigwe (2012), Jha (2011) and New Horison (2007), there are knowledge creation and knowledge transfer. In universities, heads of academic departments are solely in charge of the management of the teaching process and one way of doing it as proposed is through effective knowledge management as exemplified in creation and transfer, as these are expected to improve the teaching process for better performance.

### **Statement of Problem**

The issue of quality, no doubt, is of great importance and concern to all the stakeholders in education. In this assignment are the Academic Heads of Departments (HODs) whose management practices (both administrative and academic) are to enhance teaching improvements in universities for quality outcome. Undoubtedly, incredible efforts, human and other resources are put forth. Yet, talent and staff knowledge management in universities remain contemporary issues on pages of major newspapers on a daily basis. If talent and staff knowledge management is brought to bear on universities, the productivity of the university system will definitely improve.

## **Purpose of the Study**

- The purpose of this study is to determine how academic staff talent management practices of Academic Heads of Departments contribute to the improvement of teaching in Rivers State universities; and
- To investigate into how academic staff knowledge management practices of Academic Heads of Departments contribute to teaching in the universities in Rivers State.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions were used in investigating the problems:

- How do the academic staff talent management practices of Academic Heads of Departments contribute to teaching improvements in Rivers State universities?
- How do the academic staff knowledge management strategies of Academic Heads of Departments contribute to teaching improvement in the universities in Rivers State?

## **Hypotheses**

- There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of education lecturers from federal and state universities on how the academic staff talent management practices of academic Heads of Departments contribute to the improvements of teaching in Rivers State universities.
- There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of education lecturers from federal and state universities on how the academic staff knowledge management strategies of academic Heads of Departments contribute to teaching improvements in Rivers State Universities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research design was a descriptive survey. Answers were sought to the research questions posed and the hypotheses tested for results. The stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting the study sample of 100 and 180 lecturers from Federal and State universities from the population of 1000 – 1 Federal and 3 State universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The respondents of the study responded to a validated 18 item instrument titled – Talent and Staff Knowledge Management Practices of Academic Heads of Departments for Teaching Improvement Questionnaire (TSKMPAHDTIQ) with a reliability of 0.92. Mean scores were used in answering the research questions while z-test was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

## **RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** How do the academic staff talent management practices of Academic Heads of Departments contribute to teaching improvements in Rivers State universities?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on the responses of lecturers from federal and state universities on how the academic staff talent management practices of academic heads of departments contribute to teaching improvements in Rivers State universities

S/N	Items: Talent Management Variable	$\bar{x}_1$	SD	$\bar{x}_2$	SD	$\bar{x} \bar{x}$	Rank Order	Remarks
1.	Good talent resource strategies help in defining the appropriate human capital requirement for selection into educational organization	3.01	0.81	3.20	0.48	3.11	5 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
2.	The adoption of appropriate selection policies in talent recruitment in an indication that qualified personnel would be recruited to ensure improved teaching	2.87	0.86	3.47	0.57	3.17	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Agreed
3.	The adoption of viable retention policies help to retain sound academic with potentials to contribute to the improvement of teaching in universities.	2.88	0.85	3.58	0.58	3.23	1 <sup>st</sup>	Agreed
4.	Talent audits of academics help in identifying those academics with potentials to contribute to the improvement of teaching in universities.	2.85	0.88	3.17	0.49	3.03	9 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
5.	Talent audits of academics help in identifying the dangers of talented academics leaving the educational organization	2.85	0.90	3.25	0.77	3.05	7 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
6.	Academics that are presented with opportunities for further learning can be prompted to put in their best.	2.73	0.92	3.61	0.50	3.17	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Agreed
7.	Academics who have the opportunities for further development can improve their teaching performance overtime.	2.85	0.90	3.22	0.59	3.04	8 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
8.	Academics that are provided with opportunities to build effective relationship with colleagues can rely on such relationship to improve their teaching functions.	2.97	0.82	2.91	0.53	2.94	9 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
9.	Academics whose performance are effectively managed may be motivated for further development.	2.95	0.77	3.33	0.51	3.14	6 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
10.	Educational leaders who properly manage succession plans can succeed in the quest for improved teaching in schools.	2.76	0.87	3.12	0.47	2.94	10 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
11.	Improved teaching capabilities should be expected from academics who are provided with opportunities to develop their abilities.	2.76	0.98	3.59	0.54	3.18	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Agreed
	<b>Criterion <math>\bar{x} = 2.50</math></b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>3.59</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>3.08</b>		<b>Agreed</b>

Legend

$\bar{x}_1$ : Mean: Lecturers from Federal Universities

Disagreed

$\bar{x}_2$ : Mean: Lecturers from State Universities

Agreed

SD: Standard Deviation

$\bar{x} \bar{x}$ : Weighted mean

**Scale**

1.00–2.49

2.50–4.00

Data on Table 1 show that all the items (1-12) had weighted mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were adjudged the academic staff talent management practices of Academic Heads of Departments contribution to teaching improvements in Rivers State universities. In summary, with a grand mean of 3.08, above the criterion mean of 2.50, lecturers from federal and state universities agreed that Academic Heads of Departments talent management

practice contribute to teaching improvement in Rivers State universities by helping in defining the appropriate human capital requirement for selection into educational institution, ensuring that qualified personnel are recruited into the system, helping to retain sound academics with potentials to contribute to the improvement of teaching, by identifying academics with good potentials, identifying the dangers of talented academics leaving the system, ensuring appropriate designation of roles to academics, presenting academics with opportunities for further learning, presenting academics with opportunities and for further developments, providing opportunities for academics to build effective relationship with colleagues, ensuring effective management of academic staff motivation, managing academic staff succession plans, and providing academics with opportunities to develop their abilities.

**Research Question 2:** How do the academic staff knowledge management strategies of Academic Heads of Departments contribute to teaching improvements in Rivers State universities?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the responses of lecturers from federal and state universities on how the academic staff knowledge management practices of academic heads of departments contribute to teaching improvements in Rivers State universities

S/N	Items	Academic Staff Knowledge Management Variable	$\bar{x}_1$	SD	$\bar{x}_2$	SD	$\bar{x} \bar{x}$	Rank Order	Remarks
12.	Providing academics with opportunities to conduct independent researches can contribute to the improvement of teaching.		2.84	0.89	3.69	0.47	3.27	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Agreed
13.	Academics who are given opportunities to attend conferences gain new experiences that help in improving their teaching capabilities.		2.88	0.79	3.26	0.67	3.07	5 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
14.	Academics who are allowed freedom to meet with their colleagues gain new information for better performance of their teaching function.		2.67	0.91	3.18	0.41	2.93	10 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
15.	Academics who are exposed to public lectures gain new knowledge for improved performance in teaching.		2.68	0.94	3.41	0.49	3.05	7 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
16.	Allowing academics opportunities to go into experiments produce results that assists in fine-tuning teaching in higher education.		2.81	0.93	3.74	0.45	3.28	1 <sup>st</sup>	Agreed
17.	Regular publication of research report is a strong determinant of improved teaching in higher education.		2.91	0.79	3.28	0.68	3.10	4 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
18.	Opportunities of owing copyrights helps in the transfer of new knowledge that can bring improvement in teaching.		2.74	0.86	3.22	0.59	2.98	8 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
19.	Academics who are provided with opportunities for involvements in collaborative researches gather information that they utilize in improving their teaching capabilities.		2.73	0.98	3.21	0.67	2.97	9 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
20.	Academics who are exposed to publication events gain new knowledge for the improvement of their teaching activities.		2.89	0.89	3.22	0.42	3.06	6 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
21.	Allowing academics to be involved in consultancies can expand their knowledge horizon for improved teaching performance.		2.82	0.94	3.73	0.54	3.28	1 <sup>st</sup>	Agreed
	<b>Criterion <math>\bar{x} = 2.50</math></b>		<b>2.80</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>3.10</b>		<b>Agreed</b>

\*The legend and scale for Table 1 apply.

Data on Table 2 show that all the items (12-21) had weighted mean score above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were adjudged on how the knowledge management practices of Academic Heads of Departments contribute to teaching improvements in Rivers State universities. In summary, with a grand mean of 3.10, above the criterion mean of 2.50, lecturers from Federal and State universities agreed that the Academic Heads of Departments contribute to teaching improvements in Rivers State universities by providing academics with opportunities to conduct independent researches, providing opportunities for attendance at conferences, given freedom to meet colleagues, exposures to public lectures, providing opportunities for the conduct of experiments, regular publication of research reports, opportunities for owning copyright, opportunities for involvements in collaborative researches, exposure to publication events and allowing involvements in consultancies.

### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of education lecturers from federal and state universities on how the academic staff talent management practices of academic Heads of Departments contribute to the improvements of teaching in Rivers State universities.

Table 3: Summary of z-test analysis between the mean ratings of education lecturers from federal and state universities on how the academic staff talent management practices of academic heads of department contribute to the improvement teaching in Rivers State universities

Subject	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Cal. z	z-crt.	Df	Result
Lecturers from Federal Universities	180	2.86	0.87	5.5	1.96	278	Sig. (reject)
Lecturers from State Universities	100	3.30	0.53				

Data on Table 3 show summaries of subjects, means, standard deviations and z-test of difference between the mean ratings of education lecturers from Federal and State universities on how the Academic Staff Talent Management contribute to the improvement of teaching in Rivers State universities. The calculated z-value used in testing the hypothesis stood at 5.5 while the critical z-value stood at 1.96, using 278 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance.

At 0.05 level of significance and 278 degrees of freedom, the calculated z-value of 5.5 is far greater than the z-critical value of 1.96. Hence, there is a significant difference between the respondents. Based on the above observation, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of education lecturers from Federal and State universities on how the academic staff talent management practices of Academic Heads of Departments contribute to the improvement of teaching in Rivers State universities.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of education lecturers from federal and state universities on how the academic staff knowledge management strategies of academic Heads of Departments contribute to teaching improvements in Rivers State universities.

Table 4: Summary of z-test analysis between the mean ratings of education lecturers from federal and state universities on how the academic staff knowledge management strategies of academic heads of departments contribute to teaching improvements in Rivers State universities

Subject	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Cal. z	z-crt.	Df.	Result
Lecturers from Federal Universities	180	2.80	0.89	14.25	1.96	278	Sig. (reject)
Lecturers from State Universities	100	3.94	0.54				

Data on Table 4 show summaries of subjects, means, standard deviations and z-test of differences between the mean ratings of education lecturers from Federal and State universities on how Academic Staff Knowledge Management practices of Academic Heads of Departments enhance teaching improvement in Rivers State universities. The calculated z-value used in testing the hypothesis stood at 14.25, while the critical z-value stood at 1.96, using 278 degrees of freedom; at 0.05 level of significance.

At 0.05 level of significance and 278 degrees freedom, the calculated z-value of 14.25 is greater than the critical z-value of 1.96, hence there is a significant difference between the respondents. Based on the above observation, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative that there is a significant difference between the mean rating of education lecturers from Federal and State universities on how the academic staff knowledge practices of Academic Heads of Departments contribute to teaching improvements in Rivers State universities.

## DISCUSSION

It was found out that Academic Heads of Departments talent management practices contribute to teaching improvements in Rivers State universities by helping to define the appropriate human capital requirement for selection into educational institution, ensuring that qualified personnel are recruited into the educational system, helping to retain sound academics, sound academics with potentials to contribute to the improvement of teaching, identification of academics with good potentials, identification of the dangers of talented academics leaving the system, ensuring appropriate designation of roles to academics, presenting academics with opportunities for further learning, presenting opportunities to build effective relationship with colleagues, ensuring effective management of academics staff motivation, managing academic staff succession plans and providing academics with opportunities to develop their abilities.

Also, the third corresponding finding from hypothesis testing has it that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of education lecturers from Federal and State universities on how the academic staff talent management practices of Academic Heads of Departments contribute to the improvement of teaching in Rivers State universities. These findings confirm the exposition and earlier research findings by Armstrong (2009), Michael, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod (2001), Archibong (2013) and Ntonga (2007) on the contributions of academic staff talent management to the improvement of teaching in educational institutions. This change in the trend of events in schools may not be unconnected with the numerous talent management programmes which schools do organise for their academic personnels. This implies that talent management programmes improve teaching in educational institutions.

Another finding of the study is that Academic staff acknowledge management practices of Academic Heads of Departments enhanced teaching improvement in Rivers State universities by providing academics with opportunities to conduct independent researches,

providing opportunities for attendance at conferences, giving freedom to meet colleagues, exposures of academics to public lectures, providing opportunities for the conduct of experiments, regular publication of research reports, opportunities for copyright, opportunities for involvements in collaborative researches, exposures to publication events and involvements in consultancies.

Also, the corresponding finding from hypothesis testing has it that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of education lecturers from Federal and State universities on how the academic staff knowledge management strategies of Academic Heads of Departments enhance teaching improvements in Rivers State universities. These findings are in agreement with Armstrong (2009), Blackler (1995), Scarborough, Swan, Preston (1999), Oluwuo and Afangideh (2011), Ebigwe (2012), Jha (2011) and New Horison (2009). This may be the positive effects of knowledge synergic programmes which institutions of higher education organise for their academic personnel. This implies that the improvement in teaching in higher education which schools now boast of are caused by deliberate and individual knowledge management programmes.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that academic staff in universities will enjoy quality teaching when Academic Heads of Departments apply and utilize talent and staff knowledge management in their administrative and academic activities as these contribute to teaching improvement in Rivers State universities.

## Recommendations

- Academic Heads of Departments should endeavour to identify and use new talent management techniques in order to sustain contemporary practices for the improvement of teaching in universities.
- Universities authorities and concerned stakeholders in higher education should assist Academic Heads of Departments to run effective staff knowledge management programmes for their academics.

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