

# The Role of Universities in Human Capital Development: Implications for National Transformation

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## Abstract

This study investigated the role of Universities in human capital development in Cross River State and its implication for national transformation. Ex-post facto design was adopted in the study. Two research questions and hypotheses respectively were raised to guide the study. A sample of 227 lecturers were drawn from a population of 1,517 lecturers from the two universities. The Role of Universities in Human Capital Development for National Transformation Questionnaire (TRUIHCDFNTQ) was used to generate data. The data were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. From the results, it was concluded that opportunities for attending retraining programmes and conferences/workshops had significant relationship with lecturers' transformation in terms of their teaching effectiveness and subsequent national transformation. Based on the findings it was recommended that; Government should provide funds to the universities to sponsor lecturers to attend retraining programmes.

**Keywords:** The Role of Universities, Human Capital Development, National Transformation.

## 1. Introduction

There is no doubting the fact that, education is the bedrock of national development and transformation. Acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences needed for useful lives of the citizenry in the society can be possible through education.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in her national policy on education asserts that "education is the instrument par excellence for effecting national development". What this implies is that at any point in time, education must respond to the need of national development. It also means that the operators of the education system (including teachers) must respond to changes as result of dynamic nature of education.

The role of teachers in educational goal attainment as well as national transformation is central and cannot be disputed. The same policy observes that "no educational system can rise above the level of its teachers".

From time to time, as successive governments take up the mantle of leadership, they come up with different national developmental plans. Many have come and gone without the implementation of such plans. Many factors incapacitate such plans. The factors include: inadequate capable human capital to execute such plans.

The present administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan in 2011 came up with a new national developmental plan christened "The transformation Agenda" (2011-2015). This presently is ongoing. The agenda which draws its inspiration from vision 20:20:20 seeks to bring about transformation in all facets the national life. Nigeria's vision 20:20:20, according to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia is a policy which states that "by 2020 Nigeria will be one of the 20 largest economies in the world, able to consolidate its leadership role in Africa and establish itself as a significant player in the global economic and political arena. Nigeria is said to be biggest economy in the West African sub region. The considerable resource endowment and coastal location gives the country potential for growth. But for about the past 30 years these potential seems not to have been harnessed hence history of economic stagnation, declining welfare, and social instability has undermined development. But recently, Nigeria has been experiencing a growth turnaround.

The previous administration earlier declared the intention to pursue the vision of placing Nigeria among the 20 largest economies in the world by 2020 and current administration is committed to the attainment of this vision. It is based on this vision that the present administration launched the transformation agenda

What does transformation connote? It means changing from one quality to a better and more attractive one. The world is full of competitiveness in all spheres. Hence, if Nigeria must be ranked among the first twenty (20) developed countries by the year 2020, then the transformation agenda is inevitable. According to Anyim (2012) "transformation of a country connotes rapid incremental changes in the development indices of that country i.e. comparatively high Gross Domestic product (GDP) and High Human Development Index (HDI), achieved through deliberate intervention policies, appropriately and faithfully implemented.

The transformation agenda in Nigeria according to Opara and Isa (2012) in Jarim and Danladi (2013) "is a deliberate attempt by the Goodluck administration to correct the flaws in the country's drive for development after many years of absence of long term perspective, lack of continuity, consistence and commitment to agreed policies" (p.4). The president in attempt to address the way business was done in government and therefore advocated for a drastic change through the national transformation agenda in all spheres of the economy.

In the education sector, Isa and Onyelelue (2012) stated that the Federal Government of Nigeria views Nigeria's sound educational background as the tool that will fast track Nigeria's problem. In order to achieve this vision, Isa and Onyelelue (2012) reported a one year strategy for the development of the following key areas:

- Strengthen the institutional management of education.
- Standards and quality assurance.
- Teacher education and development
- Access and equity
- Funding, partnership and resource mobilization.
- Technical and vocational education and training. (p. 8).

It is believed that the identification of these key areas will help in the reform measures.

Transformation is about people until habits and attitude change, nothing changes. The important inputs of transformation are technology, knowledge research and development. This obviously cannot be successful without the human being as a major player. These humans are referred to as Human Capital (HC).

Human capital has been defined variously by different authors. To Scultz (1993), it is a key element in improving a firm assets and employees in order to increase productivity as well as sustain competitive advantage. Marimuthu, Arokiasamy and Ismail (2009) opined that to sustain competitiveness in any organization, human capital becomes an instrument use to increase productivity. The study by Marimuthu, Arokiasamy and Ismail (2009) further maintained that human capital refer to processes that relate to training, education and other professional initiatives in order to increase levels of knowledge, skills, abilities, values and social assets of an employee that will ultimately lead to the employee's satisfaction and performance and eventually on firm's performance. According to Rastogi (2000), human capital is an important input for organization especially for employees continuous improvement mainly on knowledge, skills and abilities. Furthermore, organizations for economic cooperation and development (OESD 2001:18) defined human capital as "knowledge, skills, competences and attribute embodied individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being.

In school system, a human capital constitutes the teaching workforce. As a result of global innovativeness and competitiveness in technology and research, there is need for teaching workforce to be developed by the universities to meet current academic challenges. This can be achieved through in-service training and regular conference and workshop attendance. Noe, Hollenbeck Gerhart and Wright (2003) maintained that human capital development and enhancement impacts positively on organizational performance.

A study conducted by Seleim, Ashour and Bontis (2007) analyzed on the relationship between human capital indicators such as training attended and performance in software companies. The result showed high performance with high productivity which could be translated to organizational performances.

In another study researched by William (2006) on staff development programmes and secondary school teachers work performance in Uyo Senatorial District Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria, it revealed a significant relationship between staff training and teachers' job performance.

Etor (2011) projects some reasons why many workers need professional and further education. They include need to update their knowledge, skills, work habit in line with changes in technology and techniques of production etc. For instance, in the university system, their initial training were not taught certain courses. But as a result of constant curriculum reviews, certain courses or instructional method are now novel to them. The only way such can still remain relevant in the system is to be retrained, through workshops and conferences. A typical example is the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) and entrepreneurial skill courses in the universities. How can lecturers (the human capital) be agent of transformation if they themselves are not further developed to meet current challenges in the educational sector? Today, the use of the portal is being advocated for university accreditations. All these lead to a transformation in the education system but the Human capital that have to handle these things must be trained and retrained so as to acquire the skills and competences require to do the job. UNESCO (2002) affirms that the introduction of open distance learning (ODL) has stimulated the interest of educators and trainers in the use of the internet based and multi-media technologies and by recognizing that the traditional ways of organizing education requires reinforcement by innovative methods of the fundamental rights of all people to learn is to be fulfilled.

Apart from training programmes Whitehead (1990) pointed out that attending conferences and workshops improved head teachers' efficiency as it gives opportunity to relate with one another from different schools, share problems. Akpan (2008) found that conferences and workshop attendance provided a common ground for problem-handling initiative and therefore related significantly with high productivity.

## **2. Statement of the problem**

In recent times, Nigerian streets have flooded with millions of unemployed graduates who roam about search of already prepared jobs. Many of them who studied courses that require exhibition of practical skills could not

exhibit during job interviews. Lecturers have been blamed for not teaching students well while students have been accused of depending on exam malpractice for their acclaimed success.

Obviously worried about this unfortunate scenario, the Federal Government of Nigerian (FGN), became uncomfortable with such practices. Hence, its advocacy for national transformation and such has prepared a national transformation agenda (policy). This calls for a rethink in all sectors of the economy including education. This study is investigating ways, methodologies and strategies of repositioning these change agents (transformational) agents who are teachers and lecturers in Nigeria's higher institutions through the inculcation of required skills and competences. Hence it look at the possibilities embedded in the use of in-service training through conferences, workshops and seminars.

The problem of this therefore is, how can the Human capital (HC) that is responsible for inculcating knowledge, skills and competences required for effective university education be developed, through in-service training and conference/workshop attendance so as to bring about the desired national transformation through the products of the university. It is on this basis that the researcher embarked on this study.

### 3. Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Opportunities created by attending retraining programmes (conferences, workshops and seminars) by Nigerian university lecturers has no significant relationship with their effectiveness in teaching service delivery in Cross River State.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Retraining programmes by Nigerian universities in conferences/workshops and seminar attendance has no significant relationship with educational transformation in universities in Cross River State of Nigeria

### 4. Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was survey research design. The study area is Cross River State, one of the states in the south-south geo-political zone. The population of the study is made up of 1,517 lecturers from university of Calabar and Cross River State University of Technology, Calabar.

The research adopted a stratified random sampling method to select 15% of the population as sample for the study. Hence, 227 lecturers were used for that purpose. The instrument for data collection was a researchers' constructed questionnaire titled The Role of Universities in Human Capital Development for National Transformation Questionnaire (TRUIHCDFNTQ). It consisted of 20 items, 10 for each sub-variable. The instrument was given to experts in test and Measurement for validation. The internal consistency of the instrument was established using Chrombach coefficient alpha. The coefficient ranged from 062-0.78 after ascertaining the internal consistency, the instrument was then administered to the respondents. There was 100 percent return. The data were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient.

#### 4.1 Findings and Results:

##### 4.1.1 Hypothesis 1:

Opportunities created by attending retraining programmes (conferences, workshops and seminars) by Nigerian university lecturers has no significant relationship with their effectiveness in teaching service delivery in Cross River State.

Table 1: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation on Relationship between Retraining programmes and Effective Service Delivery. N = 227

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r - cal
Attending retraining programme	1226	2328				
Effective National Transformation	999	2169			3412	0.643

p < 0.05, df = 225, correlation r = 0.138

The result from table one revealed that at 0.05 level of significance and at 223 degree of freedom, the calculated r-value of 0.643 was greater than the critical r-value of 0.138. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result implies that attending retraining programme significantly relate to effective national transformation.

##### 4.1.2 Hypothesis 2:

Retraining programmes by Nigerian university teachers in conferences /workshops and seminar attendance has no significant relationship with educational transformation in universities in Cross River State.

Table 2: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation on the Relationship Between In-service Training and National Transformation. N = 227

Variables	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$ r - cal
Attendance at conferences			
Workshops	1231	2299	3426 0.638
Effective National Transformation 999	2169		

$p < 0.05$ ,  $df = 225$ , correlation  $r = 0.138$

The result of this table also revealed that at 0.05 level of significance and at 225 degree of freedom, the calculated r-value of 0.638 was greater than the critical r-value of 0.138. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result implies that lecturers attendance at conferences/workshops showed a high positive relationship with national transformation.

### 5. Discussion

The results in table one indicates that the calculated r-value of 0.643 is far greater than the correlation r-value of 0.138. The implication of this result is that human capital development in terms of providing opportunities for university lecturers to continuously update themselves through retraining programme will transform their traditional teaching methods to modern one. This will enhance their use of modern teaching equipment, develop their ICT skills, improve their subject matter mastery and increase their communication skills. The acquisition of skills and competences by lecturers will consequently transform the students will come out as products of the universities to transform the society. The result of this analysis is in consonant with the findings of William 2006 who found that staff training had a significant relationship with teachers' job performance.

This result also agreed with the findings of Seleim, Ashour and Bontis (2007) who revealed that employees who attended training became superstar performers with high productivity which could be translated to organizational performances.

The analysis of hypothesis two (2) revealed a very high positive relationship with effective national transformation in the sense that the calculated r-value of 0.638 was greater than the correlation r-value of 0.138. by implication, it means that when lecturers are exposed to attending conferences and workshops, they achieve knowledge, skills and competences in various dimensions that lead to transformation in their jobs. This in turn, affects the quality of teaching which they impact on the students who will eventually be transformed into useful agents of national transformation.

The result of this finding is in agreement with White (1990) who maintained that when head teachers attend conferences and workshops, it gives them the opportunity of interacting with their colleagues and by so doing, learn new skills of problem solving. This result further conforms to Akpan (2008) who found that conferences and workshops provided a common ground where unity fostered high problem handling initiative which in turn translates into high productivity in principals' administrative roles.

### 6. Conclusion

From the result of the findings, it was concluded that human capital development in terms of opportunities for attending retraining programmes and conference/workshop is a very important tool for lecturers' transformation in their teaching approaches. This in turn will transform the products of the university who hopefully will become veritable agents of national transformation by contributing positively to the development of the society.

### 7. Recommendations

Based on the result of the findings, the following recommendations are made;

- i. The government should fund the universities sufficiently so that lecturers can be sponsored to attend retraining programmes so as to update their knowledge, skills and competences.
- ii. University management should make conference/workshop attendance compulsory for all lecturers so as to continuously update the human capital for national transformation.

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