

Role of Human Resource Management (HRM) Practices in Enhancing Service Delivery within Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the role of human resource management practices in enhancing effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State. Two research questions guided the study, which used a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of all 375 principals of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. We selected the entire population using a purposive sampling technique. We collected data using the Human Resource Management Practices for Effective Service Delivery (HRMPESD) instrument. Experts from the Department of Educational Management at Rivers State University validated the instrument, determining its reliability coefficient of 0.84 through split-half statistics. Five research assistants distributed a total of 375 questionnaires, and they retrieved 360 of them, resulting in a 96% response rate. The data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that human resource management practices for effective service delivery included involving teachers in decision-making processes, encouraging participation in training programs, and enhancing career development opportunities for teachers. The study recommended that principals should enhance teachers' involvement in decision-making by creating structured platforms such as regular staff meetings, policy review committees, and feedback mechanisms. Principals should also collaborate with educational authorities and non-governmental organisations to provide funding and logistical support for teachers' participation in workshops, seminars, and training programs.

Keywords: Human Resource Management Practices, Decision-Making, Workshops, Seminars, Training, Service Delivery.

Introduction

Human resources in any organisation are the most critical resource upon which the country's economic future depends. They represent an aggregate of skills and attitudes resulting from education and training that equip the labor force with the capacity to plan, organize, and carry out economic processes when properly allocated (Aghenta, cited in Adeyemi, 2014). Their core mandate is to manage, nurture, educate, and prepare the prospective human resources of the society. Wali and Ololube (2016) proposed that human resources possess multiple dimensions, encompassing both national and institutional perspectives. From the national point of view, human resources mean the knowledge, skills, creative abilities, talents, and aptitudes obtained in a population, while institutional enterprise represents the totality of the inherent abilities acquired, knowledge, and skills as

exemplified in the talents and aptitudes of an employee. In the context of this study, human resources in our school system work toward attaining school goals and objectives and comprise principals, their deputies, heads of departments, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, students, guardians, and so on. In order to achieve our educational objectives, we must ensure proper control over human resources to fulfil their obligations; therefore, effective management of human resources is crucial at all levels of our education system. McNamara cited in Adeyemi (2014) remarked that human resources management includes a variety of activities such as deciding what staffing needs are, the needs of managers, and how to hire employees to fill those needs; recruiting and training the best employees; and ensuring they are high performers in dealing with performance issues. Human resource management is a strategic, integrated, and coherent approach to the employment, development, and well-being of people working in an organisation (Armstrong, 2016). In a broader sense, human resource management is described as efforts and procedures of developing, motivating, and evaluating the entire human resources required by the organisation to achieve its goals. The importance of human resources in the attainment of organisational goals cannot be overestimated. Onah (2013) asserts that all the activities of an enterprise are initiated and determined by the persons who make up the institution; the school plant, offices, computers, automatic equipment, and modern equipment are unproductive except for human effort and direction. Without proper management of human resources, even the best-designed organisation with necessary equipment cannot achieve its optimum potential.

In Rivers State, the task of managing human resources in secondary schools rests with the Ministry of Education through the Senior Secondary School Boards Education Board (SUBEB), respectively. These government agencies are responsible for recruiting, deploying, disciplining, and promoting staff under their care. Human resource managers in an organisation (schools) adopt management practices that serve as a motivating factor for employees to put in extra effort in their duties. Human resource management practices seem to matter a lot, as survey findings confirm that there is a direct relationship between performance and human resource management practices (Boxall and Purcell, 2016). However, an investigation reveals that 60% of a school's impact on student achievement is attributable to the school principal and teachers' effectiveness. These are the most important school factors that drive school success, with the principal accounting for 25% and teachers 35% of a school's total impact on students' achievement (Kazi 2014). The school's human resources, therefore, play a crucial role in the implementation of various school policies and programs initiated to attain the overall objectives of the school. The teaching staff, for instance, inculcates desirable knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values in learners, while the non-teaching staff helps the school leadership to direct and coordinate the other human, material, and financial resources needed to achieve school objectives. It is necessary to clearly indicate that the extent to which human resources effectively contribute to achieving educational goals largely depends on how they are managed. It is

on this basis that this study seeks to examine the human resource management practices that enhance effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Concept of Human Resources

Human resources simply mean people, manpower, the individual, and society with all its needs and aspirations. Ankur (2015) defines human resources as the total knowledge, skills, creativity, talent, and aptitude of an organization's workforce, as well as its values and attitudes. Tobotdip (2017) noted that human resources are human beings who have the quality and capacity to manipulate the other resources in a productive process towards realising the organisational objectives.

Emechebe (2019) defines human resources in any organization as people's abilities, skills, and knowledge, which, when properly coordinated and managed, determine the success of the organization. In whatever way we define it, "human resources" refers to individuals who work for an organization with specialized skills and knowledge to enhance the achievement of the organization's goals.

Concept of Human Resource Management

Human resource management in education refers to the activities involved in getting the right teaching and non-teaching staff to work toward the attainment of educational goals. Husaini (2011) describes human resource management as the process of establishing, implementing, and assessing policies, procedures, techniques, and programs related to individuals in a workplace. Simply put, human resource management is concerned with all aspects of how people are employed and managed in an organization. It primarily focuses on managing individuals' roles to achieve optimal results. Oku (2009) summarizes human resource management in education as the aspect of education management that pertains to the development and maintenance of an efficient and effective school staff. The goal of human resource management is to facilitate the most effective use of employees in achieving an organization's goal. In the school, the human resource factor that contributes to school effectiveness includes:

- a powerful management team;
- a well-motivated, committed and skilled workforce (teachers); and
- stable and cooperative working relationship with teaching and non-teachings.

Aims of Human Resource Management

According to Adeyemi (2014), the aims of human resource management in a school to include the following:

- i. To develop the kinds of personnel that would effectively perform the various tasks
- ii. To provide effective leadership
- iii. To create climate conducive to maximum productivity
- iv. To influence members of staff in performing effectively
- v. To assess what constitute the needs of the organization

- vi. To meet the needs of the employees
- vii. To maintain and improve staff welfare services (Pp,671).

The responsibilities of human resource management include planning, organising, mobilising, regulating, acquiring, developing, compensating, integrating, sustaining, punishing, and terminating (Tu and Huyen, 2021). Human resource management is primarily concerned with managing the functions of individuals in achieving optimal results. Human resource management in education is a panacea for achieving quality products in the education system. This implies that effective management of human resources in education results in the production of students with high academic standards. Suffice it to say that good management of human resources (teachers, students, and non-teaching staff) increases the capabilities of achieving organisational goals (Qutni, Kristiawan, and Fitriani, 2021). It also involves creating personnel policies and procedures that support business objectives and strategic plans, with the primary objectives of acquiring and cultivating talents and improving communication and cooperation among workforce members.

Human Resource Management Practices in Secondary Schools

In Nigeria, secondary school education is the form of education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary level. The National Policy on Education enshrines the broad aims of secondary education as preparing students for a useful life within society and for higher education. The Junior Secondary School (JSS) and the Senior Secondary School (SSS), each with a three-year duration, make up the six-year duration of secondary education. Human resources, including teachers, students, and non-teaching staff, require adequate attention in the workplace to enhance effective service delivery in secondary schools. Boxall and Purau (2016) identified key management work practices that, if jointly applied, would improve performance in the workplace. This includes:

- Career development and opportunities for advancement
- Training opportunity
- Job influences and challenge
- Involvement and communication
- Performance management and appraisal process
- Work-life balance

Career development and opportunities for advancement - These are essential motivation and retention tools because workers value greater autonomy, varied work and opportunities to acquire new skills.

- i. Training opportunities: Through training staff enhance their commitment to duty. On the job training or stretch assignments are frequently more useful to staff compared to formal training.

- ii. Job influence and challenge: This is an area that deeply influences people's experience of work. Where people have some influence over how they do their job, and where they find their job demanding and challenging, they are much more likely to have job satisfaction.
- iii. Involvement and communication: The opportunity to contribute to decisions and have a sense of involvement is valued by most employees. Effective communication is vital for any organization to succeed.
- iv. Performance management and appraisal processes: Performance reviews should focus far more on performance planning and improvement than on retrospective appraisal.
- v. Work life balance: This practice emerges as an important area that influences staff attitude towards their employer or Boss. It is important to consider work life balance for all categories staff than been segregate.

Staff members consistently display negative attitudes towards poorly applied management practices and policies in the workplace.

The management of human resources in education is a complex process, as it requires effective management of both teachers and students to achieve set goals and objectives. In secondary schools, the principal's task is to attract, develop, motivate, and retain staff. Thus, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as cited in Uriri, Ineye-Briggs and Okwu (2021); Ineye-Briggs, Uriri, and Nwisagbo (2023); and Ineye-Briggs (2023), outlined the broad responsibilities of managing human resources, including recruitment, deployment, promotion, development, and discipline, among other areas.

Effective Service Delivery

Service delivery simply refers to rendering a service or duty to someone in need of it. Effective service delivery entails establishing a mutually beneficial outcome for both the organization and its employees (Russel 2021). Russel also asserted that the provision of effective service delivery is contingent upon the availability of the necessary resources. In the school system, the available resources are the teachers, non-teaching staff, and students. They must be available in quality and quantity to enhance effective service delivery. There must be systematic procedures and a formal set of agreements with one another. One of the key components of successful service delivery is organizational culture, in which staff members are committed to the organization's vision and values and should be willing to work together. In addition, organizational policies should be clear and consistent, and staff members should be willing to work together as a team.

Engaging teachers in decision-making processes is pivotal for enhancing service delivery in public secondary schools. Empirical studies have explored various strategies employed by principals to engage teachers, highlighting the positive outcomes of such involvement. Olorunsola and Olayemi (2011) examined teachers' participation in decision-making in secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Their findings indicated that teachers were highly involved in decisions related to student affairs, staff matters, and school discipline. This

participatory approach was associated with improved teacher morale and a more collaborative school environment. Similarly, a study by Ossai and Okokoyo (2023) in Delta State, Nigeria, found that principals' decision-making strategies significantly influenced teachers' productivity. The research highlighted that when principals adopted participatory decision-making approaches, teachers exhibited higher levels of job satisfaction and effectiveness. In Rivers State, Nigeria, research by Nwanna et al. (2020) explored the relationship between principals' leadership behavior, decision-making, and teachers' job performance. The study revealed a positive correlation between participatory decision-making and enhanced teacher performance, suggesting that involving teachers in decisions fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to school goals. Adeyemi (2019) conducted a study in Southwest Nigeria to investigate the impact of principals' participatory decision-making and motivation on teacher effectiveness. The findings indicated that teachers' involvement in decision-making processes led to increased motivation and effectiveness in their teaching roles. These studies underscore the importance of principals engaging teachers in decision-making processes. Such involvement not only enhances teachers' job satisfaction and productivity but also contributes to the overall effectiveness of service delivery in public secondary schools. By fostering a collaborative environment, principals can leverage the collective expertise of their teaching staff to achieve educational objectives more efficiently.

Encouraging Teachers to Attend Workshops, Seminars, and Training Programs

Principals play a pivotal role in enhancing the professional capacity of teachers by encouraging their participation in workshops, seminars, and training programs. These initiatives are critical for continuous professional development (CPD) and ensuring effective service delivery in public secondary schools. Professional development activities equip teachers with new skills, methodologies, and technologies necessary for addressing contemporary educational challenges. Studies have shown that principals who prioritize teacher development foster a culture of learning and innovation within their schools, thereby improving their overall academic performance (Akinbode, 2021; Eke & Nwosu, 2020).

One way principals achieve this is by facilitating access to training opportunities. A study by Adebayo and Ojo (2019) in South-West Nigeria found that principals who actively disseminate information about upcoming workshops and seminars significantly increase teacher participation. Moreover, such principals often collaborate with educational authorities and non-governmental organizations to sponsor these programs, reducing the financial burden on teachers.

Additionally, principals motivate teachers to attend these programs by integrating professional development into the school's performance evaluation criteria. According to Okafor and Aniche (2020), principals in Rivers State encouraged teachers to engage in CPD activities by linking participation to career advancement opportunities and promotions. This approach not only motivates teachers but also ensures that they remain committed to

lifelong learning. Encouragement also involves providing logistical and moral support. For instance, principals may organize on-site training programs or adjust teachers' schedules to accommodate off-site workshops. As noted by Nduka (2022), creating a supportive environment where teachers feel valued and empowered to improve their skills is essential for effective service delivery. Furthermore, principals can recognize and reward teachers who actively engage in CPD activities, as this fosters a positive attitude toward continuous learning.

In the context of public secondary schools, the role of the principal as an instructional leader is crucial. Leadership that emphasizes the importance of professional growth positively impacts teacher performance and student outcomes (Akinbami, 2023). For example, in their study on professional development in public schools in Bayelsa State, Johnson and Etim (2021) reported that schools with high levels of teacher participation in workshops and seminars were more effective in delivering quality education. While existing studies underscore the beneficial effects of principals involving teachers in decision-making and professional development on service delivery, there is a dearth of research examining the specific implementation of these strategies in public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria, to tackle unique contextual challenges and enhance outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

School leaders face the challenge of managing their human resources as educational systems around the world continue to develop. Specifically, in Rivers State public secondary schools, teachers and non-teaching staff have worked for over ten years without promotion, teachers have been overloaded due to inadequate staff, and students are taught without instructional materials. All these factors could potentially negatively impact the quality of service delivery provided by teachers and non-teaching staff, who rely on each other for support. What human resource management practices could we implement to improve the situation? Based on the foregoing, the study examines human resources management practices for effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to examine the role of human resource management practices in enhancing effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The study objectives are as follows:

- i. To determine how principals engage teachers in school decision-making processes to enhance effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers state.
- ii. To determine how principals Encourage teachers to attend workshops, seminars, and training to enhance effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers state.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study

- i. How do principals engage teachers in school decision-making processes to enhance effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State?
- ii. How do principals encourage teachers to attend workshops, seminars, and training programs to enhance effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Methodology

A survey research design was used to investigate human resource management practices for effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The population of the study consisted of all the three hundred and seventy-five (375) senior secondary schools in Rivers state as at 2022/2023 academic session. The researcher selected senior secondary school as it represents the intermediate level of our education system, preparing individuals to acquire basic skills and knowledge. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the 375 respondents for the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. The sampling technique used in the study ensures that only knowledgeable respondents are selected since not all the staff in public secondary schools may have direct involvement or insights into human resource management practices. A self-designed questionnaire titled: Human Resource Management Practices for Effective Service Delivery Questionnaire (HRMPESD) was used for data collection developed on a four-point modified rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (AG) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used as response options and with a criterion of 2.5 was the reference point at which to agree or disagree on an item. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Department of Educational management, Rivers State University. A reliability coefficient of 0.84 was obtained using split half method. Five research assistants assisted in retrieving 375 copies of the questionnaire. However, three hundred and sixty (360) were retrieved representing return rate which was used for statistical calculations. The data collected were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation.

Results

Research question one: How do principals engage teachers in school decision-making processes to enhance effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores on how principals engage teachers in school decision-making processes to enhance effective service delivery in public secondary schools

S/N	Item Statement	Sum	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Involvement of teachers in decision-making processes in the school.	1030	2.961	1.721	AG
2	Encouraging teachers to provide input in school policies	1052	2.922	1.709	AG
3	Involving teachers in the promotion and recognition process	1032	2.866	1.692	AG
4	Motivating teachers through recognition and rewards.	950	2.638	1.54	AG
5	Ensuring routine staff appraisal with teacher feedback.	1076	2.988	1.728	AG
6	Enhancing teachers' career development through mentorship.	1035	2.875	1.695	AG
7	Assigning teachers to meaningful and challenging tasks.	1047	2.908	1.705	AG
	Aggregate x & SD		2.88	1.66	AG

The data in Table 1 reveals the various strategies principals use to engage teachers in decision-making processes to enhance effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State., with an overall mean score of 2.88 and a standard deviation of 1.66, aggregate mean score of 2.89 and standard deviation of 1.66 indicate that respondents generally agreed on the strategies listed for engaging teachers in decision-making. The consistency in responses demonstrates a positive perception of the strategies employed by principals to involve teachers in decision-making processes. The findings reveal that principals employ a range of strategies to engage teachers in school decision-making processes, including routine staff appraisals, policy input, and recognition. These practices not only enhance teacher engagement but also contribute to more effective service delivery in public secondary schools.

Research Question Two: How do principals encourage teachers to attend workshops, seminars, and training programs to enhance effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation scores on how principals encourage teachers to attend workshops, seminars, and training programs to enhance effective service delivery in public secondary schools

S/N	Item Statement	Sum	Mean	SD	Remarks
8	Principals disseminate information about training opportunities.	1043	2.897	1.70	AG
9	Principals provide financial or logistical support for attendance	1030	2.861	1.720	AG
10	Principals encourage participation by linking training to career advancement	1040	2.888	1.699	AG
11	Principals collaborate with educational bodies to sponsor training.	1082	3.005	1.732	AG
12	Principals recognize and reward teachers who attend training programs	1038	2.883	1.689	AG
13	Principals organize on-site training sessions	1024	2.844	1.685	AG
14	Principals adjust schedules to enable off-site participation.	1010	2.805	1.674	AG
15	Principals provide moral support for continuous professional development.	940	2.611	1.515	AG
	Aggregate x & SD		2.85	1.68	AG

The data in Table 2 reveals that principals in public secondary schools employ various strategies to encourage teachers' participation in workshops, seminars, and training programs, with an overall mean score of 2.85 and a standard deviation of 1.68, indicating general agreement among respondents. The highest-rated strategy was collaboration with educational bodies to sponsor training (mean = 3.005, SD = 1.732), suggesting its significance in enhancing teacher participation. Other effective strategies include disseminating information about training opportunities (mean = 2.897, SD = 1.70), recognizing and rewarding attendance (mean = 2.883, SD = 1.689), and linking training to career advancement (mean = 2.888, SD = 1.699). Actions such as providing financial or logistical support, organizing on-site training sessions, adjusting schedules for off-site training, and offering moral support were also rated positively. These findings highlight that a combination of financial, logistical, and motivational strategies are crucial for encouraging continuous professional development among teachers, contributing to improved service delivery.

Discussion

The findings of this study corroborate existing literature emphasizing the importance of principals engaging teachers in decision-making processes and professional development initiatives to enhance effective service delivery in public secondary schools.

The data from Table 1 reveal that principals employ a range of strategies to engage teachers in decision-making processes, such as routine staff appraisals with teacher feedback, policy

input, and recognition. The aggregate mean score of 2.89 and a standard deviation of 1.66 indicate general agreement among respondents regarding the effectiveness of these strategies. This aligns with Olorunsola and Olayemi (2011), who found that teacher involvement in decision-making processes, particularly in areas such as student affairs, staff matters, and discipline, enhanced teacher morale and fostered a collaborative school environment in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Similarly, Nwanna et al. (2020) established a positive correlation between participatory decision-making and enhanced teacher performance in Rivers State, highlighting that this practice fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to school goals.

These findings suggest that when principals actively involve teachers in decision-making, they not only promote transparency and inclusivity but also harness the collective expertise of their staff to achieve educational objectives. The recognition and assignment of meaningful tasks further contribute to teacher motivation and performance. Despite the positive outcomes highlighted, existing studies, including those of Ossai and Okokoyo (2023), indicate the need for more context-specific research to address unique challenges faced in Rivers State.

Table 2 illustrates how principals encourage teachers' participation in workshops, seminars, and training programs, with an overall mean score of 2.85 and a standard deviation of 1.68, indicating general agreement on the listed strategies. Notably, collaboration with educational bodies to sponsor training scored the highest (mean = 3.005, SD = 1.732), underscoring its significance in facilitating teacher development. Other effective strategies include disseminating information about training opportunities, recognizing and rewarding attendance, and linking training to career advancement opportunities. These strategies are consistent with findings by Adebayo and Ojo (2019), who reported that active facilitation of training opportunities by principals significantly increased teacher participation.

Furthermore, Okafor and Aniche (2020) emphasized the effectiveness of linking professional development activities to promotions and career advancement. The findings also align with Nduka (2022), who highlighted the importance of providing logistical and moral support to teachers. In a broader context, Johnson and Etim (2021) found that schools with higher levels of teacher participation in professional development activities delivered better educational outcomes, demonstrating the pivotal role of continuous professional development in effective service delivery. While these findings align with existing research on teacher engagement and professional development, the contextual nuances of public secondary schools in Rivers State remain underexplored. Previous studies primarily focused on general strategies without addressing the unique challenges within the region, such as resource constraints, policy implementation gaps, and logistical barriers. Addressing these gaps is crucial for optimizing outcomes and tailoring strategies to meet the specific needs of public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Conclusion

Principals play a critical role in enhancing service delivery by engaging teachers in decision-making processes and encouraging professional development. These practices improve teacher morale, job satisfaction, and performance, thereby contributing to a more collaborative and effective school environment. However, further research is needed to explore how these strategies can be adapted to address the contextual challenges faced by public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Principals should enhance teachers' involvement in decision-making by creating structured platforms such as regular staff meetings, policy review committees, and feedback mechanisms. This participatory approach will foster a sense of ownership, improve morale, and enhance collaboration, ultimately contributing to effective service delivery in public secondary schools.
2. Principals should collaborate with educational authorities and non-governmental organizations to provide funding and logistical support for teachers' participation in workshops, seminars, and training programs.

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