Personnel Management Skills Needs of University Administrators in Federal Universities South-east, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated personnel management skills needed by university administrators in Federal Universities in Southeast, Nigeria. Specifically, it determined: personnel management skills needed by administrators in universities; ways university administrators could imbibe the needed skills in personnel management, challenges in imbibing the needed skills by university administrators and strategies in ameliorating the challenges. Four hypotheses (HOs) were tested at 0.05 level significance. Area of the study was Southeast, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was used. Population was made up of 488 university administrators. Data were collected using questionnaire. Mean, standard deviation and t-test at 0.05 level of significance were used for data analysis. Findings revealed 13 Personnel management skills ($\overline{X}_g \geq 2.50$) needed by university administrators. Other findings are 15 ways ($\overline{X}_g \geq 2.50$) the group could imbibe the needed skills. Further findings are five challenges in imbibing the skills needed by university administrators including inadequate ICT facilities ($\overline{X}=3.31$), and others. Other findings are six strategies for imbibing needed skills. There is no significant difference (P>0.05) between the mean responses of male and female university administrators on the four HOs tested. Three recommendations were made based on the findings.

Keywords: Personnel, Management, Skills, Needs, University, Administrators, Challenges.

Introduction

University is an institution of tertiary education and research which awards academic degrees in several disciplines. In Nigeria university education is the highest level of tertiary education that awards graduate and post graduate degrees National Policy on Education (NPE, 2023). National Universities commission (NUC, 2024), stated that universities are the nation's knowledge industry that improves the productive capacity of the labour force through research and technological innovations. There are three stages of education in university in Nigeria. These are: first Degree, Master's degree, and Doctorate Degree programmes. University education prepares students for careers, enhancing employability and earning potential, fosters critical thinking, problem-solving and specialized knowledge in chosen professional fields ((NUC, 2024)). In support of this assertion Bigilar and Etale (2024) and (Echeng, Usoro, etal (2024) stated that the impact of

professional development on personnel in Universities cannot be overemphasized. According to them, professional development of university administrators contributes to effective personnel management. It also contributes to economic development, social mobility, informed decision making and civic engagement (Fabian, 2022). In consonance with this statement, United Nations Development Programme Report, (UNDPR, 2022) stated that advancing human development programme contributes positively, in university administration.

Those who are in charge of managing these affairs in the university are known as university administrators. University administrators include; Vice chancellors, deputy vice chancellors, Deans of faculties, Registrars, Bursars and Heads of departments. University administrators play crucial roles in ensuring that the university runs smoothly and achieves its mission through adequate personnel management.

Personnel refers to the body of employees who fill the various positions in an organization. The concept personnel management in university encompasses those activities which must be taken into consideration in employing and managing staff. These employees are the essential elements in an organization whose knowledge, skills and aptitude should be put into consideration before their recruitment to work (Ojo, 2023). Personnel management is recognized as a critical tool for managing academic and administrative tasks, encompassing staff, students, and every aspects of personnel duties (Frederick, 2022 and Esobhawan, 2023). Personnel management plays a

pivotal role in enabling university administrators perform their duties efficiently (Okpe and Obikwelu (2020); and Kulno (2021). Adequate personnel management in university goes a long way in influencing lecturers' productivity and service delivery (Adeyemi, 2021). Stressing on workers' welfare and productivity, International Labours Organization (ILo, 2021) stated that knowledge of personnel management skills needs and training is necessary as they provide a comprehensive understanding of the skills needed by administrators in personnel management.

Personnel management skills needed by university administrators for effective functioning include: communication skill, interpersonal relation skill, problem solving skill, time- management skill, adaptability skill, coaching and development skill, performance management skill, supervision skill, decision making skill, compliance and risk management skill (Adeyemi 2021 and Otu 2022).

Communication skill is very crucial in the management of university system. Communication means imparting or exchanging information by verbal, non-verbal, written, and visual. Effective communication in universities enhances teaching, facilitates administrative and management processes, and provides valuable data for decision making which promotes leadership skill (Wachira, *et al* (2019).

Leadership skill involves guiding and influencing individuals or teams towards a common goal in an organization. Good leadership in university system is vital for driving academic excellence and fostering innovation and time saving in execution

of official duties. Time management skill is the abilities to plan, organize and control how time is effectively used to accomplish task and achieve goals which encourages staff adaptation in work place.

Adaptability skill in personnel management is the ability to adjust to new condition or changing circumstances and technologies in an organization (Hafifah and Gunadi, 2024). It means being flexible and open to change or innovation. Innovation in institutions of learning calls for coaching and development of staff (John, 2021).

Coaching and development skill in personnel management refers to providing opportunities for growth and development of staff. Coaching and development of personnel requires close supervision in order to achieve the required results.

Supervision skill in personnel management refers to the process of overseeing and guiding staff members to ensure they perform their duties effectively. It also requires providing support, guidance, and development opportunities to staff members. The key aspects of supervision according to Wachira et al (2019) and Frederic (2022) among others include; monitoring performance, providing feedback, guiding, and identifying development needs of personnel. Benefits of staff supervision include; enhanced job satisfaction, improved team work and better performance management. In support of this assertion, Afangideh, et al (2020) and Frederick (2022) stated that Performance management skill involves evaluating the performance of staff in their daily duties. The main focus of university education is to develop human abilities and behaviours deemed good for the society. The level of poor personnel Management University in Southeast Nigeria calls for administrators with divergent skills in personnel management. University administrators are seen as people who provide vision and direction for university education, develop and implement strategic plans, manage resources, provide innovative ideas, and build relationship with stake holders and students for achievement of educational objectives. However, it is worrisome that most federal universities in South-South, Nigeria seem to be ineffective in providing the needed services due to poor funding of federal universities that does not give room for in-service training of lecturers and university administrators on new technologies. It is believed that by adopting the skills needed by university administrators in personnel management, administrators will go a long way in helping the universities achieve her objectives. It thus becomes necessary to evolve the skills needed by university administrators for efficient personnel management in federal universities in Southeast, Nigeria, hence this study.

Objectives of the study
This study focused on personnel management skills needs of university administrators in federal universities in Southeast Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined:
(1) personnel management skills needed by university administrators in Federal Universities in Southeast, Nigeria
(2) ways university administrators could imbibe the needed skills in personnel management

(3) challenges to imbibing the needed skills by university administrators

(4) strategies for ameliorating challenges to imbibing needed skills by university administrators

Hypotheses (HOs)

There is no significant difference between mean responses of male and female university administrators at 0.05 level of significance on:

HO_1: personnel management skills need of university administrators in Federal Universities in Southeast Nigeria.

HO_2: ways of imbibing the needed personnel management skills needed by university administrators Federal Universities in Southeast, Nigeria

HO_3: challenges to imbibing personnel management skills needed by administrators in Federal Universities in Southeast, Nigeria

HO_4: strategies in imbibing personnel management skills needed by administrators in Federal Universities in Southeast, Nigeria.

Methodology

Design of the Study: The design of this study was survey research design.

Area of the study: The study was carried out in southeast geo-political zone of Nigeria, which is made up of five states. G It has three senatorial zones. There are five Federal Universities in the research area.

Population of the study: This was made up of 488 university administrators (male 276 and female 212) comprising five Chancellors, 10 Deputy Vice Chancellors, five Registrars, 180 Deans of Faculties, 11 Directors, and 277 Heads of Departments) from the five federal universities (source: Personnel Unit of the Various Universities, 2023) These groups were chosen because they are the high ranking officers in the various universities used and can explain the prevailing situation in the university with regards to the skills needs of university administrators'

Sample for the study. The sample size of the study was 210 comprising (138 males and 72 females). Three universities were purposively selected from the five universities in the area based on the age and sizes of the institutions. The oldest and biggest universities were selected. A total of seven faculties were also purposively selected from the three universities and 10 lecturers were also purposively selected from each faculty. These gave a total number of 210 (138 male and 72 female) respondents.

Instrument for data collection: Questionnaire was used for data collection. It was developed based on the specific objectives and literature review. The response options for the items were strongly agree (SA) 4pionts Agree (A) 3points Disagree (D) 2 points and strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point. The questionnaire was validated by three university experts, in Educational Management. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha formula. The reliability coefficient of the sections all together was 0.77. Cronbach Alpha was used because the instruments were not dichotomously scored.

Data Collection Method: A total of 210 copies of the questionnaire were distributed by hand with the help of three research assistants to the respondents. A

total of 208 copies were properly completed and retrieved. That gave 99 percent return rate.

 Data Analysis Techniques: Mean, standard, and t-test at 0.05 level of significance were used for data analysis. Any item with a mean rating of 2.50 and above was regarded as agreed. The t-test statistics was used to test the four null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Any hypothesis whose probability level was less than or equal to 0.05 level of significance was rejected, otherwise it was accepted.

Results

Table 1: Mean Responses, Standard Deviation, and t-test on Personnel Management Skills Needed by Administrators in Federal Universities in Southeast, Nigeria

S/N	Personnel Management Skills	$\overline{X}_M$	SD_M	$\overline{X}_F$	SD_F	$\overline{X}_g$	t-vale	p-value
1	Communication skill	3.31	0.83	3.23	0.78	3.27	0.66	0.068
2	Leadership skill	`3.33	0.82	3.31	0.81	3.32	0.064	0.079
3	Problem solving skill	3.33	0.83	3.31	0.77	3.32	0.65	0.067
4	Time management skill	3.21	0.79	3.23	0.74	3.22	0.63	0.852
5	Interpersonal relation skill	3.31	0.83	3.35	0.77	3.33	0.66	0.067
6	Coaching and development Skill	3.32	0.86	3.24	0.61	3.33	0.63	0.231
7	Performance management skill	3.31	0.83	3.24	0.78	3.33	1.66	0.068
8	Supervision skill	3.24	0.78	3.33	0.78	3.33	0.66	0.068
9	Decision making skill	3.33	0.81	3.26	0.77	3.32	0.65	0.068
10	Compliance and risk management skill	3.31	0.83	3.24	0-78	3.33	0.66	0.068
11	Payroll skill	3.24	0.86	3.26	0.78	3.25	0.65	0.068
12	Adaptability skill	3.34	0.79	3.36	0.74	3.35	0.651	0.067
13	ICT skill	3.31	0.83	3.23	0.78	3.27	0.66	0.068

N_m (Number of Male Administrators) = 138; N_F (Number of Female Administrators) = 72; $\overline{X}_M$ = Mean for Male Administrators, SD_M; = Standard Deviation for Male Administrators; $\overline{X}_F$ =Mean for Female Administrators; SD_F= Standard Deviation for Female Administrators; t-value = calculated; $\overline{X}_g$= Grand Mean; Df = Degree of Freedom

Table 1 shows 13 management skills ($\overline{X}_g$ = 3.22 to 3.35) needed by university administrators in Federal Universities in Southeast, Nigeria. Table 1 also shows P-values of 0.068 to 0. 852 which are all greater than 0.05 implying no significant difference at 0.05 level of significance (p>0.05) at 219 degree of freedom. Thus, null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of the respondents with regards to skills needs of university administrator in staff personnel management is accepted.

Table 2: Mean responses, Standard Deviation, and t-test on Ways Administrators Could Imbibe Needed Personnel Management Skills in Federal Universities in Southeast, Nigeria

S/N	Ways for Imbibing Skills	$\bar{X}_M$	SD_M	$\bar{X}_F$	SD_F	$\bar{X}_g$	t-value	p-value
1	Organizing conferences for administrators	3.33	0.81	3.26	0.78	3.29	0.66	0.63
2	In-Service training of university administrators	3.28	0.84	3.25	0.81	3.26	0.72	0.074
3	Mentorship programs	3.34	0.82	3.26	0.77	3.33	0.65	0.067
4	Sustaining good staff/administrators relationship	3.31	0.79	3.33	0.74	3.32	2.63	0.972
5	Stay updated on laws and regulations governing personnel management	3.34	0.82	3.26	0.77	3.30	0.66	0.67
6	Increased funding of federal universities	3.39	0.86	3.51	0.61	3.45	0.63	0.067
7	Network with colleagues	1.28	0.78	1.42	0.77	1.35	0.66	0.68
8	Professional certification	3.33	0.81	3.26	0.78	3.29	0.66	0.67
9	Participation in professional association	3.28	0.81	3.26	0.78	3.29	0.66	0.72
10	Stay current with education trends	3.31	0.79	3.25	0.81	3.26	0.65	0.972
11.	Develop effective communication skill	3.28	0.78	3.42	0.77	3.32	2.63	0.972
12.	Collaborate with high rank professors	3.34	0.82	3.26	0.77	3.32	0.63	0.972
13	Participate in professional association	3.31	0.79	3.25	0.81	3.26	0.65	0.72
14	Seek feed back	3.28	0.81	3.26	0.78	3.29	0.66	0.72
15	Pursue professional certification in human resource management	3.34	0.82	3.26	0.77	3.32	0.65	0.72

N_m (Number of Male Administrators) = 138; N_F (Number of Female Administrators) = 72; $\bar{X}_M$ = Mean for Male Administrators, SD_M; = Standard Deviation for Male Administrators; $\bar{X}_F$ =Mean for Female Administrators; SD_F= Standard Deviation for Female Administrators; t-value = calculated; $\bar{X}_g$= Grand Mean; Df = Degree of Freedom

Table 2 shows 14 ways ($\bar{X}_g$ ≥2.50) university administrators could imbibe the skills needs in personnel management in Federal Universities in Southeast, Nigeria. The Table also reveals t-value ranging from 0.63 to 2.63 and p-value ranging from 0.67 to 0.972 which are all greater than 0.05 and therefore not significant at 0.05 level of significance (p>0.05). This means that the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of the respondents with regards to ways of imbibing skills needs of university administrators in personnel management is accepted.

Table 3: Mean Responses and t-test on Challenges to Imbibing Needed Personnel Management by Administrators in Federal Universities in Southeast, Nigeria

S/N	Challenges	$\bar{X}_M$	SD_M	$\bar{X}_F$	SD_F	$\bar{X}_g$	t-value	p-value
1	Inadequate ICT facilities	3.36	0.853	3.26	0.856	3.31	0.735	0.463
2	Poor knowledge of computer assisted devices by university administrators	3.33	0.853	3.26	0.856	3.31	0.735	0.463
3	Poor funding of universities	3.28	0.871	3.19	0.898	3.23	0.689	0.492
4	Inadequate workshops for lecturers to update their knowledge	3.34	0.824	3.24	0.847	3.29	0.864	0.389
5	Poor performance management of university administrators in mentoring	3.31	0.886	3.26	0.731	3.28	0.616	0.678

N_m (Number of Male Administrators) = 138; N_F (Number of Female Administrators) = 72; $\bar{X}_M$ = Mean for Male Administrators, SD_M; = Standard Deviation for Male Administrators; $\bar{X}_F$ =Mean for Female Administrators; SD_F= Standard Deviation for Female Administrators; t-value = calculated; $\bar{X}_g$= Grand Mean; Df = Degree of Freedom

Table 3 shows five challenges ($\bar{X}_g \geq 2.25$)in imbibing skills needs of university administrators in personnel management by university administrators in federal universities in Southeast, Nigeria. The Tabke also shows that the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of the respondents with regards to challenges in imbibing skills needs of university administrators in personnel management is accepted.

Table 4: Mean Responses and t-test on Strategies for Imbibing Needed Personnel Management Skills by Administrators in Federal Universities in Southeast, Nigeria

S/N	Strategies	$\bar{X}_M$	SD_M	$\bar{X}_F$	SD_F	$\bar{X}_g$	t-value	p-value
1	Adequate funding of federal universities	3.36	0.853	3.26	0.856	3.34	0.735	0.463
2	Sending lecturers on in-service training to update their knowledge.	3.33	0.853	3.26	0.856	3.29	0.735	0.463
3	Provision of new teaching facilities.	3.28	0.871	3.19	0.898	3.23	0.689	0.492
4	Adequate workshops and seminars for lecturers to update their knowledge	3.34	0.824	3.24	0.847	3.31	0.864	0.389
5	Making Fund available for administrators' research works	3.31	0.886	3.26	0.731	3.29	0.416	0.678
6	Collaborative mentoring on new technologies	3.33	0.853	3.26	0.856	3.29	0.735	0.463

Table 4 shows six relating to strategies ($\overline{X}_g$ ≥2.50) in imbibing skills needed by university administrators in personnel management in Federal Universities in Southeast, Nigeria. The Table also shows that the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of the respondents with regards to strategies in imbibing skills needs of university administrators in personnel management in federal universities in Southeast, Nigeria is accepted.

Discussion of the findings
The analysis of the mean responses of male and female university administrators on the skills needed by university administrators in personnel management in federal universities in Southeast, Nigeria showed that the grand mean ratings of the respondents on the skills needed by university administrators in personnel management showed that all the thirteen (13) items had strong benefits for the skills needs of university administrators in personnel management in federal universities in Southeast, Nigeria. There was no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female university administrators on the skills needs of university administrator as it will help new university administrators to gain knowledge of the skills needs required of them for optimal performance. This finding is in line with Afangideh and, Aleru (2020) and Bawa (2023) who maintained that acquisition of personnel management skills will promote quality

service delivery among university administrators.

The analysis of mean responses on the ways university administrators could imbibe the skills needed in personnel management showed that male and female administrators are of the opinion that all the fifteen (15) items except item seven (7) are ways University administers could imbibe the skills needed in personnel management. This finding is in agreement with the findings of John (2021), Frederick, (2022) and Ojo (2023) who reported that in-service training, mentorship programmes, among others of university administrators has the capacity of increasing the needed skills in university administrators.

Analysis of the mean responses of male and female administrators on the challenges in imbibing the skills needed in personnel management by university administrators showed that items 1-5 are challenges in imbibing the needed skills. These items among others include; inadequate ICT facilities; Poor knowledge of computer assisted devices by the university administrators among others. These items had strong benefits which showed that all the five items in table 3 are the challenges in imbibing the skills needed in personnel management by university administrators. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Hafifah and Adeyemi (2021) and Gunadi (2024) who recommended that university administrators should be assisted to update their knowledge through frequent workshops and seminars to assist them

effectively in discharging their duties as university administrators.

The analysis of the responses of male and female administrators on the Strategies in imbibing the needed skills of university administrators in personnel management showed that all agreed that items 1-5 are strategies in imbibing the skills needed in personnel management in Federal Universities in Southeast, Nigeria. These items among others include: adequate funding of federal universities, sending lecturers on in-service training to update their knowledge. This finding is in agreement with Ene (2018), and Fredrick (2022) who stated that increasing skills needs of university administrators in personnel management diversifies pool of talents and increases creativity. Also, Elisha (2021) and Fabian (2022) were of the view that skills acquisition is vital in personnel management as it contributes to employment opportunities and economic growth among administrators.

Conclusion

The study highlighted management skills needed by university administrators in personnel management as well as ways university administrators could imbibe the skills. The study revealed challenges university administrators encounter in imbibing the skills as well as strategies university administrators would employ in imbibing the skills.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.
1. Acquisition of skills needs of university administrators should be made compulsory for all lecturers in federal universities in Nigeria

2. ICT facilities should be made available in universities for effective teaching and research work
3. TET fund grants should be given to lecturers and university administrators at least once every year

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