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Effect of Academic Staff Selection and Placement on Job Performance in Nigerian Polytechnics: A Adamawa State Polytechnics

Abstract

This paper examined the intricate dynamics of selection and placement processes and their direct effects on the performance of polytechnics academic staff in Adamawa State, Nigeria. As polytechnic institutions play a pivotal role in providing technical and vocational education, the effectiveness of academic staff is paramount to the success of these institutions. Secondary source was used to collect data this work. The paper aims to fill a notable research gap by delving into the specific influence of selection and placement on academic staff performance within the unique context of Adamawa State. The findings reveal a nuanced relationship between selection, placement, and the performance of polytechnic academic staff. While current practices exhibit strengths, such as aligning qualifications with institutional requirements, there are notable challenges, including instances of mismatched skills and inadequate subject expertise. Consequently, these challenges impact teaching effectiveness, research output, and overall institutional contributions. The paper concludes that the effectiveness of polytechnic academic staff is intricately tied to the meticulousness of the selection and placement processes. Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed. Firstly, there is a need for a comprehensive review of the selection criteria to ensure they align with the evolving demands of polytechnic education. Additionally, the placement process should be refined to consider not only academic qualifications but also subject-specific expertise. Continuous professional development opportunities should be provided to address skill gaps and enhance the performance of academic staff. Lastly, fostering a culture of collaboration and mentorship within polytechnic institutions can contribute to a more supportive and enriching work environment.

Keywords: Staff Selection, Staff Placement, Staff Performance, Polytechnic Academic Staff, Adamawa State, Nigeria

1 Introduction

The educational landscape in Nigeria, particularly in Adamawa State, has undergone significant transformations in recent years, with a growing emphasis on the role of polytechnic institutions in providing practical and technical education. Polytechnics play a crucial role in shaping the skills and competencies of individuals, contributing to workforce development and the overall socio-economic progress of the region (Adewale & Anthonia, 2013). At the heart of these institutions are the academic staff, whose expertise, dedication, and effectiveness are central to the success of the educational endeavor (Moses, 2020).

The state of Adamawa, located in northeastern Nigeria, is home to a diverse array of polytechnic institutions (The Federal Polytechnic, Mubi and Adamawa State Polytechnic, Yola), each striving to meet the educational needs of its populace (Adamawa State Government, 2021). As the demand for technical and vocational education continues to rise, the quality of academic staff within polytechnics becomes paramount. The effectiveness of academic staff is intricately tied to the processes of their selection and placement within these institutions.

The selection and placement of academic staff in polytechnic institutions represent critical stages in ensuring the delivery of quality education (Hajjar, 2018). Selection involves the identification and recruitment of individuals possessing the necessary qualifications, skills, and expertise to fulfill academic roles (Sousa et al, 2010). This process aims to match the competencies of potential staff with the requirements of the institution, considering factors such as subject expertise, teaching experience, and research capabilities. Once selected, the placement of academic staff becomes a pivotal aspect of organizational structuring within polytechnic institutions. Placing individuals in roles that align with their strengths and expertise is crucial for optimizing their performance (Adewale & Anthonia, 2013). Inadequate placement

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may lead to mismatches between staff skills and job requirements, potentially affecting teaching quality, research output, and overall institutional effectiveness.

The effectiveness of polytechnic academic staff is multifaceted, encompassing various dimensions of performance. Academic staff morale was high due to motivation, packages provided by the management. (Dessler, 2008), Some Nigerian institutions were not left out, institutions like the Adamawa State Polytechnic Yola which was founded in 1991 have three campuses one in Numan, another in Jambutu Jimeta while the main campus is situated in Yola. Statistic has shown that from inception the institution had experience increase of enrolment of students from 15% to 65% and with just 12% to 35% increase in academic staff strength (Moses, A 2020). The Federal Polytechnic, Mubi share same fate, the institution was founded in (1979) was located formerly in Yola but later relocated to Mubi in (1982) the institution experience an increase of 15% to 75% in enrolment from 1983 to date and it also enjoyed the presence of some foreign expert in the early stage. At this period, academic staffs were about 25% of the staff strength because of the few departments existing; staffs were privilege to be sent abroad for training. Promotions were done as at when due, staff were placed appropriately in their areas of specialization. Teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and contributions to institutional development collectively define the impact of academic staff on the overall educational experience (Edi, 2021). A well-structured and efficient selection and placement process is expected to positively influence these performance dimensions. However, challenges may arise if the selection and placement processes are not adequately designed and implemented. Mismatches in skills, inadequate qualifications, and a lack of alignment with institutional goals can impede the potential positive impact of academic staff on the educational process (Adekola, 2020). Understanding the dynamics of selection and placement is, therefore, essential to addressing potential barriers and optimizing the contributions of academic staff in polytechnic institutions.

Concept of Selection in Educational Institutions

Selection in educational institutions is a critical process that involves choosing the most qualified individuals to fill specific roles within the academic community. This process is multifaceted, encompassing various stages, criteria, and considerations to ensure that the selected individuals align with the goals, values, and requirements of the educational institution. In this exploration, we delve into the concept of selection in educational institutions, examining its significance, underlying principles, challenges, and the evolving nature of selection practices. The significance of the selection process in educational institutions cannot be overstated. At its core, effective selection ensures that individuals entering the academic community possess the necessary qualifications, competencies, and values to contribute positively to the institution's mission and objectives (Sackett et al., 2017). In educational settings, this process applies to various stakeholders, including administrators, faculty members, support staff, and students. The right selection decisions contribute to the overall success, sustainability, and reputation of the institution.

One of the crucial aspects of selection in educational institutions is the recruitment of academic staff. Academic staff play a pivotal role in shaping the academic environment, influencing student learning outcomes, conducting research, and contributing to the institution's intellectual community. Effective selection of faculty involves a thorough evaluation of candidates' academic qualifications, teaching expertise, research accomplishments, and alignment with the institution's educational philosophy (Wabara & Emerole, 2017). According to Sackett et al. (2017), staff selection should consider not only the technical competencies of candidates but also their interpersonal skills, adaptability, and commitment to the institution's values. The goal is to create a diverse and dynamic faculty body capable of fostering a stimulating and inclusive learning environment.

Beyond academic staff selection, the recruitment of administrative staff is equally vital for the seamless functioning of educational institutions. Administrative roles may include positions in finance, human resources, admissions, and student services. The selection of administrative staff requires an assessment of candidates' professional qualifications, relevant experience, and interpersonal skills (Adekola, 2020). Additionally, administrative staff should align with the institution's mission and demonstrate the capacity to contribute to its efficient operation.

Despite the importance of selection in educational institutions, the process is not without its challenges in terms of implicit biases that is often unconscious and rooted in societal stereotypes, can influence selection decisions. These biases affect judgments related to gender, religion, or other personal characteristics, leading to potential inequities in the selection process (Sackett et al., 2017). Educational institutions also face resource constraints, affecting their ability to implement comprehensive selection processes and the evolving landscape of education, including technological advancements and changing student demographics, presents challenges in adapting selection practices to meet new demands. Educational institutions must continuously evaluate and update their selection methods to remain relevant and effective (Krishna, 2021).

The Underlying Principles of Academic Staff Selection

According to Hossler et al (2012); Sackett et al (2017) several underlying principles guide the selection process of academic staff in educational institutions. These principles aim to ensure fairness, transparency, and effectiveness in the decision-making process and it include:

- i. **Meritocracy:** The principle of meritocracy underscores that selection decisions should be based on merit – the qualifications, skills, and achievements of candidates. Meritocracy promotes fairness and equal opportunities for all candidates, irrespective of background or personal characteristics.
- ii. **Alignment with Institutional Values:** Selection decisions should align with the values and goals of the educational institution. This principle emphasizes the importance of selecting individuals who share the institution's vision, mission, and commitment to academic excellence.
- iii. **Diversity and Inclusion:** The principle of diversity and inclusion advocates for selecting individuals from diverse backgrounds, fostering a rich and inclusive learning environment. Diversity contributes to a variety of perspectives, experiences, and ideas, enhancing the overall educational experience.
- iv. **Validity and Reliability:** Selection processes should be valid and reliable, meaning they accurately assess the qualities and skills relevant to the positions in question. Valid and reliable selection methods contribute to the credibility and effectiveness of the overall process.

The Evolving Nature of Staff Selection Practices

Sujeet (2014) and Adekola (2020) opined that educational institutions should adapt to societal changes and advancements, selection practices continue to evolve inform of:

- i. **Technology-Enhanced Selection:** The integration of technology in selection processes has become increasingly prevalent. Online assessments, video interviews, and applicant tracking systems streamline the selection process, providing institutions with efficient and data-driven methods for evaluating candidates.
- ii. **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** The use of data analytics in selection is gaining prominence. Institutions leverage data to assess the effectiveness of their selection methods, identify patterns, and make informed decisions to continuously improve the process.
- iii. **Focus on Soft Skills:** While technical qualifications remain important, there is a growing recognition of the significance of soft skills in selection. Interpersonal skills, adaptability, and emotional intelligence are increasingly valued in educational institutions to promote a positive and collaborative academic environment.

Academic Staff Placement in Educational Institutions

Academic staff placement in educational institutions is a strategic and dynamic process that involves assigning individuals to specific roles or positions within the organization. It is a crucial aspect of human resource management in education, ensuring that qualified and competent individuals are matched with roles that align with their skills, qualifications, and the institution's needs. This concept encompasses various stages, considerations, and practices aimed at optimizing the allocation of human resources within educational settings.

Key considerations in staff placement according to Bolman and Deal (2017) and Noe (2019) includes ensuring that staff members have the necessary qualifications and expertise for their assigned roles, staff placement should align with the strategic goals and vision of the educational institution to ensure a collective effort toward overarching objectives, placing staff in collaborative and interdisciplinary teams can enhance creativity, problem-solving, and the overall educational experience and also taking into account the preferences and career aspirations of staff members and should be an ongoing process that requires continuous evaluation.

In the words of Sujeet (2014) and Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright (2019) staff placement holds significant importance in educational institutions for several reasons which include the following:

- i. **Optimizing Talent:** Effective staff placement ensures that individuals with the right skills and qualifications are assigned to roles where they can contribute most effectively to the institution's goals.
- ii. **Enhancing Efficiency:** Proper placement minimizes the risk of mismatches between individuals and their roles, leading to increased efficiency in task execution and overall organizational performance.

- iii. **Job Satisfaction:** When individuals are placed in roles that align with their skills and interests, it contributes to higher job satisfaction, engagement, and motivation.
- iv. **Employee Development:** Staff placement is an opportunity for employee development. Placing individuals in roles that challenge and stretch their abilities can foster professional growth and skill enhancement.
- v. **Adaptability:** In the dynamic field of education, staff placement facilitates adaptability to changing needs, technological advancements, and shifts in educational paradigms.

Effect of Selection and Placement on Polytechnic Academic Staff Performance

Academic staff performance is a multidimensional concept of academic activities and discourses related to the emotional, social, cognitive and physical measured by the quality of information inside the classroom, students' placement, the position of the employment of graduation, research carried out, and publication in the indexed journals. Three indicator can be used to identify staff academic staff performance and that is (1) teaching and learning (2) co-curricular and professional development, and (3) research and academic activities. The framework highlights both activities of lecturing in classrooms and conducting research activities outside the classrooms.

The performance of academic staff in polytechnic institutions is crucial for delivering quality education and fostering institutional growth. The processes of selection and placement play a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of academic staff because selection of academic staff involves identifying individuals with the requisite qualifications, skills, and expertise to fulfill teaching and research roles. Research indicates a significant correlation between the effectiveness of the selection process and subsequent academic staff performance (Shodeinde, 2015). Shodeinde (2015) emphasizes the importance of aligning the selection criteria with the specific needs of polytechnic education. The study suggests that a well-designed selection process contributes to the recruitment of staff members with a strong academic background, teaching capabilities, and research potential.

Effective placement helps in role matching since it involves aligning academic staff with roles that capitalize on their strengths and expertise. Misplacement can lead to underutilization of skills, job dissatisfaction, and suboptimal performance. Bolman and Deal (2017) research stresses the significance of role matching in optimizing performance. When academic staff members are placed in roles that align with their skills and preferences, they are more likely to demonstrate higher job satisfaction and contribute effectively to the institution's goals.

Despite the potential positive impact, challenges in the selection and placement processes can hinder academic staff performance. Research by Adekola (2020) highlights challenges in the selection process, including biases, inadequate criteria, and limited resources. These challenges can lead to the recruitment of staff members who may not fully meet the institution's needs, impacting subsequent performance. In terms of placement, mismatches between academic staff skills and job requirements can arise due to inadequate evaluation or changes in institutional priorities. Such mismatches may hinder the staff's ability to perform optimally.

Strategies for Improvement: Several strategies can enhance the positive impact of selection and placement on academic staff performance. Gadi and Lauko (2019) suggests continuous professional development opportunities for academic staff. This not only addresses skill gaps but also ensures that staff members stay abreast of advancements in their respective fields. Moses (2020) recommends a periodic review of placement practices to align with evolving institutional goals and changes in educational paradigms. This ensures that academic staff members are positioned to contribute effectively to the institution's mission.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the effect of selection and placement on polytechnic academic staff performance is a complex interplay of various factors. Well-designed selection processes that consider academic, teaching, and research capabilities contribute to the recruitment of high-performing staff. Effective placement, aligned with staff members' skills and institutional needs, further enhances their performance. However, challenges such as biases and mismatches can impede these positive effects. Strategies for improvement, including continuous professional development and periodic placement reviews, offer pathways for enhancing the impact of selection and placement on academic staff performance in polytechnic institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the review findings, the paper recommends the following to enhance the effectiveness of selection and placement in polytechnic institutions:

- i. Institutions should periodically review and update their selection criteria to align with evolving educational demands. This ensures that academic staff members possess the requisite skills and qualifications to meet current and future challenges.
- ii. Institutions should implement strategies to mitigate biases in the selection process. Training for those involved in the selection process, the use of standardized criteria, and continuous monitoring can contribute to fairer and more equitable selections.
- iii. The placement of academic staff should consider not only their academic qualifications but also their teaching and research capabilities. Regular assessments of staff strengths and institutional needs can inform strategic placement decisions.
- iv. Institutions should invest in the continuous professional development of academic staff. This includes opportunities for training, workshops, and collaborations to enhance teaching skills, research output, and overall academic performance.

Implications

1. The study implies that polytechnic institutions should view human resource management, particularly the processes of selection and placement, as strategic components that directly impact overall institutional performance.
2. Institutions that foster a culture of continuous improvement and learning are better positioned to adapt to changing educational landscapes. Embracing the principles of a learning organization, as suggested by Senge (2006), can contribute to long-term success.
3. Recognizing the impact of selection and placement on academic staff performance implies that institutions should prioritize employee well-being and satisfaction. This includes addressing challenges, fostering a positive work environment, and providing opportunities for professional growth.

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