



A Critical Analysis of Determinants Influencing the Effectiveness of Academic Staff Training and Development in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract. This paper critically examines the key determinants influencing the effectiveness of academic staff training and development in Nigerian tertiary institution. Using qualitative content analysis, the study explores institutional policies, funding mechanisms, faculty motivation, infrastructural capacity, and external influences that shape staff development outcomes. The findings reveal that although significant progress has been made—particularly through interventions by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund)—persistent challenges such as inadequate institutional funding, weak policy implementation, politicized access to training opportunities, and low faculty engagement hinder the effectiveness of training programs. The paper concludes by proposing actionable recommendations, including strengthening institutional frameworks, improving resource allocation, enhancing motivation systems, and promoting international collaborations to boost academic staff development in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Academic staff development, Training effectiveness, Tertiary education, Nigerian universities, Institutional policy.

1. Introduction

The strength of any higher education system is largely determined by the competence and ongoing professional growth of its academic personnel. Echoing this view, John Dewey's well-known assertion that "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself" underscores the idea that the vitality of educational institutions is directly tied to the continual development of those who teach and conduct research. In today's knowledge-driven global landscape, tertiary institutions function not only as hubs for learning and inquiry but

also as catalysts for national progress. Their capacity to produce graduates who can compete on an international scale is therefore dependent on the expertise, instructional flexibility, and research capability of their academic staff. As such, staff training and development remains a crucial priority, especially in Nigeria where tertiary education institutions are confronted with rapid growth, shifting economic demands, and increasing expectations for enhanced academic quality.

There is a strong scholarly consensus that professional development is indispensable to institutional success. Knowles (1980), a foundational figure in adult learning, emphasizes this by stating that "the capacity to be a continuing learner is the most distinguishing characteristic of the human species," highlighting the necessity of lifelong learning among educators. Likewise, Senge (1990) maintains that "the only sustainable competitive advantage is an organization's ability to learn faster than the competition," suggesting that institutional advancement is fundamentally tied to the learning and development of its staff. Consequently, initiatives such as pedagogical training, research capacity workshops, funded academic exchanges, and sabbatical programs are essential in promoting excellence within higher education.

In the Nigerian context, the outcomes of academic staff training and development efforts have drawn increasing concern. Despite significant investments by government agencies such as the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), numerous obstacles continue to hinder the effectiveness of these programs. These include insufficient funding at the institutional level, administrative inefficiencies, politicized access to training opportunities, poor

infrastructural support, and misalignment between training programs and institutional or national priorities. Reflecting on reforms in Nigeria's higher education sector, Okojie (2010) observed that "the expansion of the system has not been matched by corresponding improvement in quality," pointing to the challenge of growth without adequate human resource enhancement.

Additionally, the factors that shape the effectiveness of training initiatives are diverse and interconnected, spanning institutional culture, governance practices, resource availability, leadership approaches, and the motivation and attitudes of staff toward continuous learning. Armstrong (2014) captures this interdependence by noting that "training does not operate in a vacuum; it succeeds to the extent that the environment into which it is introduced allows it to flourish." Understanding these complex determinants is essential if Nigerian tertiary institutions are to design development programs that yield meaningful and measurable improvements in academic performance and overall institutional quality.

Given these realities, a thorough examination of the determinants that influence the effectiveness of academic staff training and development in Nigerian higher education is both relevant and urgent. This study aims to critically explore these factors, identify existing gaps, and propose ways to strengthen the design, implementation, and assessment of training initiatives. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to ongoing efforts aimed at enhancing the quality, relevance, and international competitiveness of Nigeria's tertiary education system.

Academic staff training and development are critical components in enhancing the quality of higher education, particularly in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Over the past decades, various initiatives have been introduced to improve the teaching and research capacities of academic staff. However, while the intention behind such initiatives is commendable, there remains an ongoing concern about their effectiveness.

Academic staff are central to the delivery of quality education, and training programs are designed to equip them with updated pedagogical techniques, research skills, and the capacity to engage in academic leadership. In Nigeria, however, the success of these programs has been inconsistent due to multiple

influencing factors, including institutional policies, resource allocation, faculty motivation, and external pressures (Ogunyemi, 2022; Adebayo, 2021).

This paper critically examines the factors that influence the effectiveness of academic staff training in Nigerian universities.

2. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative design based on content analysis. Secondary data were extracted from peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, books, conference papers, and institutional publications published between 2018 and 2025. Sources were selected based on relevance to staff training, development, and tertiary education management.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study utilizes the Human Capital Theory as a theoretical paradigm. The human capital theory was postulated by Becker (1964). The main assumption of the theory is that investments in people through education, training, and skill acquisition, enhance productivity and efficiency. Becker argues that such investments yield both individual and societal returns in the form of improved performance, innovation, and economic advancement. Academic staff training is seen as a strategic investment that increases staff competence, research output, and teaching quality. The theory helps explain why institutions that adequately fund training initiatives tend to experience higher academic productivity. It supports the argument that inadequate funding, poor incentives, and misaligned training programs reduce the expected "returns" to both staff and the institution.

4. Conceptual Discourse

4.1 The Concept of Training and development

Some authors use the terms "training" and "development" as synonyms. However, some view the two concepts as being different. Jones, George and Hill, (2000) believe that training primarily focuses on teaching organizational members how to perform their current jobs and helping them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to be effective performers. Development on the other focuses on building the knowledge and skills of organizational

members so that they will be prepared to take on new responsibilities and challenges. In the view of Adamolekun (1983), staff development involves the training, education and career development of staff members. According to Armstrong, (2006) “Training is the systematic development of the knowledge skills and attitudes required by an individual to perform adequately a given task on the job. To him training involves learning of various kinds and in various situations. A survey of literature shows that Training and Development are defined in a narrow as well as in a broad sense for example, Jackson and Schuler (2000) refers to training as the act of improving competencies needed today or in the future while development refers to improving competencies over the long term. Mathews et al. (2004) argues that training is concerned with providing an individual with the opportunity to learn what he/she needs in order to do their job more effectively. Also management training is considered to be a process of enhancing an employee’s capacity to handle greater responsibilities successfully; Singh and Vinnicombe, (2003).

According to Ngu (1994), training and development can be said to be the process of behavioral modification or molding of workers in order to integrate organizational needs with their characteristics. Wright (2003 in Mamman and Aminu, 2014), views training as a planned effort to facilitate the learning of job-related knowledge, skills and behavior by employees. He defines “Development” as acquisition of knowledge, skills and behavior that improve employees’ ability to meet the future challenges of the existing job. The importance of training and development in organization cannot be over emphasized. The purpose of training and development has been identified to include: creating a pool of readily available and adequate replacements for personnel who may leave or move up in the organization; enhancing the company’s ability to adopt and use advances in technology because of a sufficiently knowledgeable staff; building a more efficient, effective and highly motivated team, which enhances the company’s competitive position and improves employee morale; and ensuring adequate human resources for expansion into new programs (Okoton and Erero, 2005).

5. Determinants of Training Effectiveness in Nigerian Tertiary Institution

5.1 Funding Adequacy and Sources

The availability of funding remains one of the most influential variables affecting academic staff development. Studies indicate that most tertiary institutions depend heavily on the **Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund)** for postgraduate training, conference sponsorship, and research support. Ogunode, Ukozor and Agbo (2024) argue that consistent funding enables institutions to organize structured and continuous development programs which, in turn, positively influence staff performance. Similarly, Oguejiofor, Nzeribe and Ugwuogo (2024) found that TETFund support significantly affects academic staff retention in public universities in southeastern Nigeria.

5.2 Policy Frameworks and Implementation Processes

Even when funds exist, policy-related issues often constrain training outcomes. In their conceptual work, Dangana, Oyidi and Jev (2025) highlight problems such as inconsistent policy implementation, fragmented training strategies, and weak follow-up mechanisms. Empirical findings from Idakwoji and Makolo (2022) further reveal that many training activities in Colleges of Education are irregular and unevenly distributed, often due to administrative bottlenecks and favoritism. These policy weaknesses contribute to inequitable access, reduced morale, and diminished training effectiveness across institutions.

5.3 Motivation and Reward Mechanisms

Motivation consistently emerges in the literature as a key determinant of training success. Cletus et al. (2024) found that many Nigerian lecturers lack motivation as a result of low salaries, limited research funding, and inadequate working conditions. These factors reduce their willingness to participate actively in professional development. Under Expectancy Theory, when reward systems—such as recognition, promotion, or research grants—are weak or absent, staff may perceive little value in applying new skills from training. Conversely, well-structured reward mechanisms increase engagement and encourage staff to transfer learning to their academic duties.

5.4 Institutional Infrastructure and Capacity

The institutional environment strongly influences whether training can yield meaningful change. Studies such as Adebayo and Touray (2016) indicate that insufficient infrastructure—particularly ICT facilities, laboratories, libraries, and teaching resources—hinders staff from applying new knowledge. Adebagbo and Adewoye (2024) further show that digital competence varies among Nigerian lecturers, and that inadequate ICT infrastructure limits the effectiveness of technologically oriented training programs.

Thus, institutional capacity acts as both an enabler and a constraint on the practical outcomes of training.

5.5 Relevance of Training and Needs Alignment

Training programs are most effective when aligned with actual staff needs and institutional goals. Research by Idakwoji and Makolo (2022) demonstrates that mentoring, ICT training, and in-service programs significantly enhance staff performance when they respond to clear developmental gaps. Dangana et al. (2025) also advocate for continuous professional development models instead of isolated workshops to ensure the content remains relevant and impactful.

Needs assessment, therefore, is a central determinant of training effectiveness, helping institutions avoid generic or poorly targeted training initiatives.

5.6 Staff Retention, Job Satisfaction, and Commitment

Training has been linked to improved job satisfaction and retention. Sunday and Isa (2023) report that academic staff who participate in ongoing professional development show greater job commitment and are less likely to leave their institutions. This is crucial in the Nigerian context, where turnover and brain drain remain pressing challenges. Enhanced job satisfaction arising from professional growth helps stabilize the academic workforce and improves institutional performance over time.

5.7 Leadership, Organizational Climate, and Culture

Leadership and organizational climate indirectly affect training outcomes by shaping policy priorities, funding decisions, and staff

engagement. Although not always explicitly examined, leadership-related issues appear frequently in discussions about T&D effectiveness. According to Dangana et al. (2025), leadership commitment is essential for establishing a culture of continuous development and ensuring that training initiatives are integrated into institutional strategy.

Supportive leadership fosters a learning-oriented culture, whereas bureaucratic or authoritarian systems tend to suppress motivation and innovation, reducing the impact of training.

5.8 Evaluation and Monitoring of Training Outcomes

One of the most visible gaps in the Nigerian literature is the lack of systematic evaluation of training programs. Although several studies link training to improved performance, few follow up on long-term outcomes. Ogunode et al. (2024) provide conceptual evidence connecting training to improved teaching, research, and community engagement, but longitudinal studies remain scarce. Similarly, Idakwoji and Makolo (2022) measure short-term effects but do not explore sustained changes.

Without consistent evaluation, institutions struggle to measure the return on their training investments and to improve program quality.

5.9 External Influences

In addition to internal factors, several external influences affect the effectiveness of staff development in Nigerian universities. One of the most significant external factors is government policy. Akinlolu (2023) argues that government neglect of higher education, which often manifests in inconsistent funding and a lack of support for academic innovation, negatively impacts staff development programs. The government has the power to shape the policy environment for higher education, yet many policies are not adequately implemented or are subject to change based on political circumstances.

Furthermore, external collaboration plays a significant role in faculty development. International partnerships, collaborations with NGOs, and industry linkages can provide opportunities for Nigerian faculty members to gain access to cutting-edge research, technology, and training resources. Akinlolu

(2023) emphasizes that Nigerian universities must increasingly look outside their borders for professional development opportunities, as local resources and expertise may be insufficient to meet global academic standards.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The effectiveness of academic staff training and development in Nigerian tertiary institutions is shaped by a combination of institutional policies, resource availability, faculty motivation, and external influences. While several universities have made significant efforts to enhance staff development, the challenges of underfunding, inconsistent policy implementation, and low faculty engagement continue to hinder the effectiveness of these programs.

To address the challenges identified, the following recommendations are proposed:

Strengthening Institutional Policies: Nigerian universities should adopt comprehensive and clear staff development policies that align with both institutional and national educational goals. These policies should prioritize continuous professional development as an essential element of academic life.

Increasing Resource Allocation: Adequate funding must be allocated specifically for staff training programs. Universities should invest in digital platforms, modern classrooms, and access to research tools to enhance training quality.

Enhancing Faculty Motivation: Universities should create clear pathways for career advancement linked to training outcomes. Financial incentives, promotions, and public recognition for staff who engage in professional development should be implemented.

Fostering International Collaborations: Nigerian universities should actively seek international collaborations and partnerships with foreign universities, organizations, and industry stakeholders to secure funding, expertise, and research opportunities.

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