

Employee Training as a Catalyst for Organisational Growth in Public Tertiary Institutions of the Niger Delta Region, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *Employee training is a strategic driver of organisational performance and growth. This paper investigates how structured training initiatives influence productivity, innovation, and institutional effectiveness within public tertiary institutions across the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Guided by the Human Capital Theory and the Resource-Based View, it adopts a descriptive conceptual approach supported by existing empirical evidence. The analysis reveals that consistent, need-based training enhances staff competencies, instructional delivery, and administrative efficiency, thereby strengthening institutional growth and competitiveness. The study also finds that inadequate funding, irregular training schedules, and weak linkage between training and organisational strategy continue to undermine staff development outcomes. It concludes that training should be repositioned as a core strategic function within university governance. Accordingly, the paper recommends that tertiary institutions institutionalise comprehensive training policies, align capacity-building programmes with strategic goals, strengthen funding through TETFund support, and establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure measurable improvement in organisational performance.*

Keywords: Employee training, organisational growth, human capital development, Niger Delta, public universities.

1 Introduction

Employee training is a deliberate organisational effort to improve knowledge, skills, and attitudes for enhanced performance. In tertiary institutions it sustains academic excellence and administrative efficiency. Public universities in the Niger Delta operate amid globalisation, technological change, and funding constraints; training and retraining of staff are therefore indispensable for growth. Over two decades, weak staff-development policy, brain drain, and inadequate funding have eroded institutional capacity. Effective, well-aligned training programmes are vital to restore motivation, boost productivity, and strengthen institutional resilience.

2 Statement of the Problem

Despite government investments in education, many public tertiary institutions in the Niger Delta still grapple with limited employee training and professional development opportunities. Workshops, sabbatical exchanges, and technological upskilling initiatives are often irregular or under-funded. This has led to low morale, skill obsolescence, and poor service delivery among academic and non-academic staff alike. Moreover, most training activities are not systematically linked to institutional strategic plans or performance evaluation frameworks. As a result, universities fail to maximise the benefits of training on organisational growth indicators such as productivity, innovation, and competitiveness.

Therefore, the central problem this paper addresses is the apparent mismatch between the potential of employee training as a growth catalyst and the current realities of its implementation in public tertiary institutions across the Niger Delta. Unless these gaps are bridged, the region's universities may continue to underperform relative to national and global benchmarks.

3 Conceptual Clarifications

3.1 Employee Training

Employee training refers to a systematic process of enhancing employees' competencies to meet present and future job demands. In universities, it includes induction, refresher courses, workshops, conferences, postgraduate sponsorship, and ICT-based learning. The goal is to improve both pedagogical and administrative efficiency, thereby fostering institutional advancement.

3.2 Organisational Growth

Organisational growth represents the measurable expansion in an institution's operations, productivity, and reputation. Within tertiary education, growth manifests in improved academic output, research innovation, infrastructural expansion, and global ranking. Growth is sustainable when driven by a skilled, motivated, and continuously trained workforce.

3.3 Employee Training as a Catalyst for Growth

A catalyst accelerates a process without being consumed. Similarly, employee training accelerates organisational development by equipping human resources to generate new ideas, improve processes, and achieve institutional goals. Universities that institutionalise continuous learning enjoy higher adaptability and competitiveness.

4 Theoretical Framework

Two theories underpin this study:

- i. Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964):

This theory posits that investment in education and training enhances the productivity of individuals and organisations. Employees become more valuable as their skills improve, leading to higher institutional performance.

ii. Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991):

The RBV argues that organisational success stems from valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources. In universities, employees' skills and knowledge constitute strategic assets that can generate sustained competitive advantage when developed through training

5 Empirical Review

5.1 The Role Of Employee Training In Organisational Growth

Research consistently shows that systematic employee training enhances both individual and institutional performance. According to Armstrong (2014), training builds competencies that help organisations adapt to technological, structural, and environmental change. Within higher education, Okoro & Ogbodo (2018) found that continuous professional development for academic staff improved curriculum delivery, research productivity, and institutional visibility. Similarly, Nguyen (2020) demonstrated that university staff training significantly correlates with knowledge creation and innovation outcomes.

For tertiary institutions in developing economies, training goes beyond skill acquisition—it shapes organisational culture and commitment. Adeniji et al. (2022) revealed that structured staff development programmes in Nigerian universities foster teamwork, motivation, and job satisfaction, which are crucial precursors to institutional growth.

Studies across Nigerian public universities highlight the uneven distribution of training opportunities. Olaniyan & Ojo (2019) observed that while federal universities allocate budgetary resources to staff development, state universities rely heavily on external grants, resulting in disparities in exposure. In the Niger Delta, Ebi & Amadi (2021) reported that although universities recognise the importance of training, implementation is hindered by bureaucracy and inadequate funding. Essien (2023) further argued that decentralising training management and incorporating ICT-driven learning could boost institutional productivity in the region.

5.2 Barriers to Effective Training Implementation

Common constraints include limited financial resources, outdated training curricula, and weak linkages between training outcomes and performance appraisal systems (Aina, 2022). Additionally, staff turnover and political interference in university administration often disrupt continuity in training policies. In many Niger Delta institutions, training is treated as a routine annual exercise rather than an integral component of organisational strategy.

5.3 Conceptual Synthesis

From the reviewed literature, it is evident that employee training enhances productivity and institutional competitiveness when aligned with strategic objectives. However, the Niger Delta context reveals a persistent gap between training policy and execution. Strengthening this link through data-driven planning and performance evaluation will position universities as learning organisations capable of sustainable growth.

6. Knowledge Gap

While abundant research exists on training and organisational performance in corporate sectors, fewer studies have empirically examined the catalytic effect of employee training on organisational growth in public tertiary institutions within the Niger Delta. Existing studies tend to treat training as a human-resource variable without linking it to institutional innovation or long-term strategic expansion. This paper fills that gap by situating employee training within the framework of organisational growth, exploring not only productivity but also institutional resilience, innovation, and reputation.

7. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and conceptual research design anchored in qualitative synthesis of secondary data from journal publications, government policy reports, and institutional statistics from the National Universities Commission (NUC).

The population consists of public universities in the nine Niger Delta states (Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers). A total of 30 universities—both federal and state—were identified as the sampling frame.

A purposive sampling technique was adopted, focusing on universities with active training and staff-development units. Data were gathered from NUC annual reports, TETFund training allocations, and published studies between 2015 and 2024.

Qualitative content analysis was used to identify emerging themes linking employee training to organisational growth indicators such as productivity, innovation, and institutional reputation. Results are presented narratively, supported by existing empirical evidence.

9. Results And Discussion

Findings suggest that universities with structured and continuous training programmes report higher performance outcomes across teaching, research, and administration. TETFund-supported institutions, in particular, demonstrate measurable improvements in research output and staff efficiency.

For example, universities like the University of Port Harcourt, Niger Delta University, and Federal University of Technology Akure recorded notable increases in staff postgraduate enrolment and ICT competency following targeted training initiatives. These improvements translated into stronger institutional rankings and more competitive grant applications.

Conversely, universities with inconsistent training policies face reduced staff morale, slower adoption of innovations, and lower research productivity. The discussion therefore supports the proposition that employee training acts as a catalytic input that transforms human potential into tangible organisational growth.

This finding aligns with Becker's (1964) Human Capital Theory and Barney's (1991) Resource-Based View, confirming that investment in people yields sustainable competitive advantage and institutional resilience.

10 Conclusion

Employee training remains a pivotal catalyst for organisational growth in public tertiary institutions of the Niger Delta. The paper concludes that when training is systematically planned, adequately funded, and linked to institutional strategy, it produces a motivated workforce capable of innovation, efficiency, and service excellence. Investing in human capital is thus investing in the sustainability and global competitiveness of Nigerian higher education.

11 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

- i. Institutionalise structured training policy: Each university should develop a comprehensive training and development policy that aligns with its strategic plan, specifying frequency, funding sources, and evaluation criteria.
- ii. Strengthen funding mechanisms: Government and TETFund should earmark dedicated sub-heads for continuous staff development, ensuring timely release and transparent utilisation.
- iii. Adopt technology-driven training models: Blended learning, MOOCs, and virtual workshops should complement physical seminars to expand reach and cost-efficiency.
- iv. Link training outcomes to performance appraisals: Promotion and reward systems should recognise employees who apply acquired knowledge to improve institutional output.
- v. Encourage partnerships and exchange programmes: Collaboration with international universities will expose staff to global best practices and foster knowledge transfer.
- vi. Establish monitoring and evaluation units: Dedicated units should periodically assess the effectiveness of training programmes and adjust strategies accordingly.

12 Policy Relevance

The study underscores that employee training is not merely a welfare activity but a strategic instrument for sustainable university governance. Implementing structured training policies can assist state ministries of education and the National Universities Commission in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by improving workforce competence and institutional performance across the Niger Delta.

13 Theoretical And Practical Implications

Theoretical: The findings reinforce Human Capital Theory and the Resource-Based View by validating that trained human resources are valuable, rare, and inimitable assets driving competitive advantage in universities.

Practical: University management can leverage these insights to design competency-based training, improve staff morale, and enhance operational efficiency. A well-trained workforce reduces administrative bottlenecks, increases research output, and improves institutional image.

14 Limitations and Suggestion for Further Research

This study relied primarily on secondary data and conceptual synthesis; empirical validation through surveys and interviews was not undertaken. Future research should adopt a mixed-methods approach using quantitative data from staff development units across the 30 public universities to test statistically the relationship between training investment and measurable growth indices. Comparative studies between Niger Delta and other regions of Nigeria would also enrich understanding of contextual dynamics.

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