

Economies of Scale of Worker's Continuing Professional Development in Selected Universities in South-South Nigeria

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Abstract

The return to scale constitutes a significant investment index in the determination of the quantum of resources that are deployed in investment decision on workers' continuing professional development. Such investment decision is always predicted on the expected outcomes to the individual, institution and the society in context. Several investments in the development of human capacity on the job have been made, but the return to scale of such seems not to have been positively correlated with the quantum of resources invested in terms of productivity and performance among workers in most universities. This paper thus found out that, given the commitment and policy instrument to avail workers the rights of continuing professional development, the multiplier effects do seem evident in diligence, commitment, honesty, dedication, productivity and improved performance on the job among most administrative staff in universities. This author therefore concludes that, given the policy on the rights of workers to get trained on-the job, the outcomes of such training must reflect on the overall performance index, otherwise, institutions should carry out a forensic analysis of the types of continuing professional development programmes that workers participate in, whether or not, they are consistent with the vision and mission of the institutions in terms of economies of scale of workers' professional development to the individual, institution and the nation.

Keywords: Continuing, Professional Development; Economies of Scale; Worker's Education; Administrative Staff.

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Introduction

The demand for workers' continuing professional development is a derived demand because its' multiplier effects can be measured absolutely or relatively by the standard of performance improvement, adaptation to best practices, optimization of resource utilization and efficiency in performance indicators. However, workers' continuing professional development must be conceived as an institutional policy objective as may be driven by the vision and mission statements of such entity respectively. When conceived as a mission statement, it requires that investment be made on a continuous basis to sustain the expected outcomes of such investment in human capital. Investment made on workers' continuing professional development even though seen by the worker as part of organizational support programmes, the ultimate concern is the economies of scale which the organization stands to gain either in the short or long run respectively.

Thus, in the determination of the investment index on workers' continuing professional development in universities, the return to scale in terms of effectiveness and efficiency in the use of universities resources is critical to the determination of the quantum of resources that are deployed on investment decision with respect to workers continuing professional development. In the university system, there are different categories of services namely teaching, research and community services which fall within the domain of the academics. On the other hand, there are other non-teaching services which are classified as administrative or support services to the main academic services. These support services are carried out by the non-teaching staff who are often referred to as administrative staff. However, their services are very critical to the overall attainment of the goals of the university system through affective processing and management of records such as students results, enrolment, graduations security, establishment, admissions, facilities, discipline, communication, promotion, scholarship, endowment, finance, grants, library, accommodation, and other attendant records or activities that ensure the continuity of the university system. These services among others are carried out by workers in the administrative, or non-teaching classification, who are regularly exposed to continuing professional development through continuing education on-the-job.

Review of Literature

This continuing professional development (CPD) becomes inevitable because, it encompasses all types of facilitated learning opportunities for the attainment of credentials as obtained through the formal, coursework, conferences, informal learning opportunities situated in practice. Speck & Knipe (2005), described the process as intensive and collaborative, ideally incorporating an evaluative stage. Continuing professional development depicts the means, methods and streams by which workers maintain their knowledge **insitu** and skills as related to their professional lives. As a structured approach to informal learning, continuing professional development helps to ensure competence to practice, taking in knowledge, skills and practical experience.

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (2014) defines CPD as a commitment to continually update their skills and knowledge in order to remain professionally competent and achieve their true potentials. The Association of Personal Assistants refers to CPD as any process or activity that provides added value to the capability of the individual through an increase in professional knowledge, skills and personal qualities necessary for the appropriate execution of professional and technical duties often termed competence.

Characteristically, continuing professional development is “continuing” because, learning on the job never ceases, regardless of age or seniority. It is professional on account that, it is focused on professional competence in a professional role; and concerned with development because, the goal is to improve personal performance and enhance career progression, which arguably is much wider in scope and content than just formal training courses. Besides, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2008) noted that, continuing professional development (CPD) should be continuous, as professionals are expected to always be looking for ways to improve performance; driven by the learning needs and development of the individual, and must be evaluative rather than descriptive of what has taken place since it represents an essential component of professional and personal life, never seen as an optional extra.

Nevertheless, the overall benefits of CPD cannot be measured only by the perceived individualized outcomes, but the economies of scale of workers CPD in the university system must be quantified through evaluative rather than descriptive outcomes. Performance improvement is the central focus in professional role through continuing professional development. As a measure of its’ economies of scale, continuing professional development on the job in the university system is geared at developing or enhancing process skills, sometimes referred to as leadership skills, as well as task skills. Such process skills are evident in effectiveness skills, team functioning skills, and system thinking skills. It is the evident of these skills through evaluation that justify the economies of scale of workers’ continuing professional development.

Consequently, the National Professional Development Centre on Inclusion (2008) highlighted eight approaches through which workers’ continuing professional development can be sustained namely: case study method; consultation; coaching; communities of practice; Liaison study; mentoring; reflective supervision; and technical assistance. Through these approaches, it was noted that continuing professional development can guarantee effectiveness skills, team functioning skills and systems thinking skills.

Statement of Problem

Despite windows of opportunities among administrative workers in the university to attain economies of scale as measured in effectiveness, efficiency, team functioning skills, leadership skills as encapsulated in process skills; there seems to be obvious structural causes of performance problems arising from notable deficiencies in performances as attributable to obsolete knowledge, low adaptability to new innovations, ineptitude and compromised morale, coupled with indifferent disposition to productivity and performance. These, this paper considers as constituting training

gaps which continuing professional development programmes can mitigate, given that workers are opportuned to participate actively in the process.

Research Questions

Arising from the above, the following questions were raised to guide this research.

1. How would workers' continuing professional development enhance optimization of resources and efficiency in workers' performance in a university system?
2. What are the variants of workers' continuing professional development for effective management of the university system?
3. How does continuing professional development impact on the economies of scale of university management?
4. How does investment in workers continuing education contribute to the overall performance index of workers in the university system?
5. What are the limiting factors to the economies of scale of workers' continuing professional development in the university system?

Research Objectives

Among other things, it was reasoned that this research must achieve the following objectives, instant and inclusive as to:

- i. find out how workers' continuing professional development enhances the optimization of resources and efficiency in workers' performance in the university system;
- ii. establish the impact of workers' continuing professional development on the economies of scale of university management;
- iii. determine the variants of workers' continuing professional development for effective management of university system;
- iv. ascertain the relationship between investment in workers' continuing professional development and overall performance index of workers in the university system; and
- iv. find out the limitations to the economies of scale of workers continuing professional development in the university system.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. This is because, the variables is an on-going phenomenon that can be observed, described and analyzed through the collection of primary data.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The population comprised 2500 estimated members of the non-teaching staff from two universities in the core south-south Nigeria namely; Niger Delta University (1200) and University of Port Harcourt (1300) representing state and federal

university respectively. A purposive random sampling technique was adopted to select a total of 125 specific participants representing 5% of the total population estimates from the two selected institutions respectively.

Instrumentation and Data Analysis

The instrument used in data collection was a self-structured and validated questionnaire titled: Workers' Continuing Professional Development Scale (WCPDS). The reliability of the instrument was ascertained through the Pearson Product Moment Co-efficient (PPMC) after it was twice administered on similar staff from a different university in the zone but whose staff did not participate in the study. A reliability value of 0.74 was achieved after the correlational test.

A total of 125 copies of the instrument were administered while 100 copies were certified completed accurately for data analysis. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Result and Discussion

The data analysed involve the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The results show that there were more female participants (52%) than their male counterparts (48%) in the non-teaching career profession in the selected universities. Majority of the participants were within the age bracket of between 30-34 years (32%), and 41 years above (24%) while the least age brackets presented were between 25-29 years (8%). The demographic results also showed that respondents with highest educational qualification were holders of first degree certificate (44%), followed by the holders of the higher degree certificate (28%), while other categories included holders of national certificate of education (12%), and senior school certificates (14%).

The non-teaching staff that participated in the study were categorized into senior staff (44%), and senior administrative staff (56%). These categories of participants were the most appropriate respondents for the study. Also, those who had served the universities for between 6-10 years accounted 35%, followed by those who had put in between 11-15 years (32%) in active service. These groups represent the highest representation in that categories. The types of continuing professional development programmes for which the staff had participated include; workshops training (36%) seminars and conferences (32%) respectively. The mode of sponsorship for these professional development programmes included tetfund (48%), self-sponsorship (28%) and university assisted (24%). It was also evident that executive officers (60%) were mostly involved in training, followed by administrative officers (26%) and secretaries (14%) within the senior cadre while under the junior staff cadre, clerical staff (60%) were mostly involved in continuing professional development.

Research Question 1.

How would workers' continuing professional development enhance optimisation of resources and efficiency in workers' performance in the university system?

Table 1: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation Score Workers' Continuing Professional Development And Optimisation of Resources and Efficiency in Workers Performance.

Variables	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	\bar{X}	SD
Training enhances my skills competence on the job	40(160)	36(108)	16(32)	8(8)	100(308)	3.08	0.939
Conferences attended provide opportunities to be exposed to best practices in one's responsibilities/duties	26(104)	20(60)	36(72)	18(18)	100(254)	2.54	1.068
Promotion has been accelerated due to the application of skills and knowledge gained through training	14(56)	70(210)	6(12)	10(10)	100(288)	2.98	0.769
Participation in various seminars and conferences provided staff with additional work outlook and experience	16(64)	34(102)	14(28)	36(28)	100(230)	2.30	1.124
I am more productive now than ever before due to the regular training received	12(48)	74(222)	6(12)	8(8)	100(290)	2.90	0.704
I perform at peak level and surpassing my target due to the additional skills acquired	50(100)	44(132)	4(8)	2(2)	100(342)	3.42	0.669
I now work to achieve set target with little or no wastages	32(128)	48(144)	16(32)	4(4)	100(308)	3.08	0.800
I am adaptable to the functions of different units and departments in my institution	34(136)	38(114)	22(44)	6(6)	100(300)	3.00	0.899
Training enhances staff scheduling of assignments	44(176)	48(144)	6(12)	2(2)	100(334)	3.34	0.685
I have a time utilization efficiency scale	30(120)	58(194)	6(12)	6(6)	100(312)	3.12	0.769
I maintain a flexible schedule of duties as a result of further training on the job	36(144)	54(162)	6(12)	4(4)	100(322)	3.22	0.733
I am always at my duty post on time, but not always	46(184)	20(60)	18(36)	16(16)	100(296)	2.96	1.0136
Grand Mean						2.99	0.658

Cut-off Mean = 2.50; N = 100

From table 1 above, it is obvious that the mean scores for seven, out of the twelve variables were above the cut-off mean of 2.50. Besides, the Grand Mean score of 2.99 is also greater than the cut-off mean score. This implies that, workers' continuing professional development would significantly enhance optimization of resources and efficiency in workers performance in universities in South-South, Nigeria. A critical review of the variable in item 6 showed that with exposure to continuing professional

development, workers' now attain peak level of performance thereby achieving set targets due to the additional skills acquired through the training.

Research Question 2: What are the variants of workers' continuing professional development for effective management of the university system?

Table 2: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation Score on the Variants of Workers' Continuing Professional Development for Effective Management of the University System.

Variables	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	\bar{X}	SD
Seminar provides opportunities for updating of knowledge that promotes best practice and thus, ensure effectiveness of system operation	54(216)	26(78)	8(16)	12(12)	100(322)	3.22	1.031
Training in operational skill provides additional technical-know-how for improved performance	42(168)	36(108)	14(28)	8(8)	100(312)	3.12	0.935
There is usually additional remuneration or rewards (attached) to participation in training programmes	15(64)	76(228)	4(8)	4(4)	100(304)	3.04	0.602
Regular on-th-job or of off-the training ensures that one is creative and innovative in minds	32(128)	56(168)	4(8)	8(8)	100(312)	3.12	0/820
Professional development enhances the sustenance of the work procedures and operational efficiency of organization	40(160)	36(108)	16(32)	8(8)	100(308)	3.08	0.939
Seminars on staff development ensures regular appraisal of worker's orientation	52(208)	40(120)	4(8)	4(4)	100(340)	3.40	0.752

Positive attitudinal disposition to achievement of task	42(168)	40(120)	10(20)	12(12)	100(292)	2.92	0.907
Worker's continuing professional development in universities is vital for high quality scholarship	26(104)	52(156)	10(20)	12(12)	100(292)	2.92	0.918
Research & academic excellence	56(208)	36(108)	4(8)	8(8)	100(322)	3.32	0.866
Grand Mean						3.15	0.863

Cut-off Mean = 2.50; N=100

Table 2 above shows the mean and standard deviation scores for the variants of workers' continuing professional development for effective management of the university system. The mean scores for all the variables, except for item 20 are greater than the cut-off mean. Thus, these variables are therefore capable of enhancing effective management of the university system giving that workers' are continually accessed to continuing capacity building through continuing professional development. For example, the mean score for item 18 is 3.40 which is not only greater than the cut-off mean, but significantly greater than the grand mean score of 3.15.

Research Question 3: How does workers' continuing professional development impact on the economies of scale of university management?

Table 3: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on Impact of workers' Continuing Professional Development on Economies of Scale of University Management.

Variables	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	\bar{X}	SD
Enhanced student/staff records management system	48(192)	24(72)	16(32)	12(12)	100(308)	3.08	1.061
Improved staff/student relations	58(232)	30(90)	8(16)	4(4)	100(342)	3.42	0.086
Promotion of academic discipline and moral values	36(144)	50(150)	10(20)	4(4)	100(318)	3.18	0.770
Goal attainment in its vision and mission	28(112)	52(156)	8(16)	12(12)	100(296)	2.96	0.920
Stable academic session	28(112)	42(126)	18(36)	12(12)	100(286)	2.86	0.964
Regular processing of students records	52(218)	44(132)	0(0)	4(4)	100(344)	3.44	0.701

such as results, registry, transcripts, and other							
Attraction of endowments and chairs	28(112)	54(162)	14(28)	6(6)	100(300)	3.00	0.804
Community services	48(192)	38(114)	8(6)	6(6)	100(328)	3.28	0.854
Sustained linkages, collaboration and advancement	24(96)	62(156)	16(32)	8(8)	100(292)	2.92	0.854
Quality assurance in product development	22(88)	48(144)	28(56)	2(2)	100(290)	2.90	0.759
Sustenance of academic and research activities	28(112)	54(162)	8(16)	10(10)	100(300)	3.00	0.876
Flexible reward system	12(48)	52(156)	28(56)	8(8)	100(268)	2.68	0.770
Staff development	34(136)	46(138)	14(28)	6(6)	100(305)	3.08	0.848
Grand Mean						3.06	0.846

Cut-off Mean = 2.50; N=100

Table 3 indicates the mean and standard deviation score on how workers' continuing professional development impact on the economies of scale of university management. From the presented, it is obvious that all the mean scores for the variables are greater than 2.50 which represent the cut-off mean. Besides, the grand mean score of 3.06 is also greater than the cut-off mean, an indication that, workers continuing professional development impact positively on the economies of scale of university management in south-south, Nigeria. The economies of scale are evident mostly in enhanced record management system ($x = 3.08$; $SD = 1.061$), regular processing of students records such as results, registry, transcripts among other ($x = 3.44$; $SD = 0.701$) and staff development ($x = 3.08$; $SD = 0.848$).

Research Question 4: How does investment in workers' continuing education contribute to the overall performance index of workers in the university management?

Table 4: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation on how investment in continuing Professional Development Contribute to Workers' Performance index in University System.

Variables	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	\bar{X}	SD
Staff mentorship and student internship	26(104)	20(40)	36(72)	18(18)	100(252)	2.54	1.068
Maintenance of facilities for systems operations	16(64)	34(102)	14(28)	36(36)	100(230)	2.30	1.124
Systems efficiency	12(48)	76(228)	2(4)	10(10)	100(290)	2.90	0.732
Reduction in running	44(156)	48(144)	6(12)	2(2)	100(334)	3.34	0.685

cost							
Resource allocation efficiency	30(12)	58(174)	6(12)	6(6)	100(312)	3.12	0.769
Sustenance of staff general well-being	36(144)	54(162)	6(12)	4(4)	100(322)	3.22	0.733
Poor evaluation of capacity is evident in the system	46(184)	20(60)	18(36)	16(16)	100(296)	2.96	1.136
Grand Mean						2.91	0.892

Cut-off Mean = 2.50; N=100

Table 4 above shows the summary of the mean and standard deviation scores respectively on how investment in workers' continuing professional development contribute to the overall performance index of workers in the university system. Apart from the fact that empirically, all the mean scores are greater than the cut-off mean of 2.50, it is evident that investment in workers continuing professional development contribute significantly to system efficiency ($x = 2.90$; $SD = 0.732$), reduction in the running cost of financing professional development ($x = 3.34$; $SD = 0.685$), resource allocation efficiency in workers performance ($x = 3.12$; $SD = 0.769$) and maintenance of facilities for effective systems operation ($x = 2.54$; $SD = 1.068$). In general, investment in workers continuing professional development contributes positively to the performance index of workers in the university system in south-south, Nigeria.

Research Question 5: What are the limiting factors to the economies of scale of workers continuing professional development?

Table 5: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on Factors Limiting the Economies of Scale of Workers' Continuing Professional Development

Variables	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	\bar{X}	SD
Negative attitudinal disposition work after training	12(48)	66(198)	14(24)	8(8)	100(282)	2.82	0.744
Training seen only as organisational support programme not-organised indeed	46(184)	40(120)	8(16)	6(6)	100(326)	3.26	0.848
Non-prioritization of capacity development is usually evident in the process	26(104)	36(108)	18(36)	20(20)	100(268)	2.69	1.072
Workers continuing Professional development process needs to follow up	32(128)	40(120)	12(24)	16(16)	100(288)	2.88	1.037

its systematic approaches which are gradual and not once and for all exercise							
Inadequate budgetary allocation to workers' professional development limits participation	38(152)	54(162)	4(8)	4(4)	100(326)	3.26	0.719
Many workers do not utilize the opportunity of professional development to enhance the systems performance	48(192)	42(126)	8(16)	2(2)	100(336)	3.36	0.718
Negative attitudinal disposition work after training	36(144)	42(126)	10(20)	12(12)	100(302)	3.02	0.974
Training seen only as organisational support programme not-organaised indeed	36(144)	44(132)	14(28)	6(6)	100(310)	3.10	0.859
Grand Mean						3.05	0.871

Cut-off Mean = 2.50; N=100

Table 5 above shows the mean and standard deviation scores respectively on the factors limiting the economies of scale of workers' continuing professional development in the university system. The results indicate that, the cut-off mean of 2.50 is below all the mean scores for all the eight variables measured. Besides, the grand mean score of the factors (3.05) is also greater than the cut-off mean score. This implies that certain variables exist as constituting limiting factors to the economies of scale of workers' continuing professional development in the university system.

Discussion of Findings

The crux of this research on workers' continuing professional development is the attainment of professionalism in practice. Non-teaching staff in various universities are also regarded as professionals in their various disciplines. As professionals, there is a distinguished level of competence and skills expected. This is because, a profession is associated with:

- i. skill based on theoretical knowledge, the provision of training and education;
- ii. a test of the competence of members administered by a professional body;
- iii. a formal professional organisation which has the power to regulate entry to the profession; and

iv. a professional code of conduct (Armstrong, 2003:75).

Therefore, the exposure of non-teaching staff to various forms of continuing professional development programmes is a certification of the first criteria of professionalism. This is on account that, professionalism which depicts the practice of specific skills, based on a defined body of knowledge can only be relevant when it contributes to the workers efficiency through the demonstration of skill competence, and performance improvement.

The result of this study has further lay credence to the fact that continuing professional development usually enhance process skills, leadership skills task skills, effectiveness skills, team functioning skills and system thinking skills which Jasper (2006) considered as consistent with optimization of resources (human and materials) as well as attainment of efficiency in workers' performance. This result is therefore consistent with some of the goals for which workers' continuing professional development in many organizations inclusive of the university system are set.

Meanwhile the research also found out the variants of workers' continuing professional development among non-teaching staff in the university system. Consistently, the finding supports the submission of the National Professional Development Centre (2008) that identified among others the following:

Coaching: - to enhance a workers' competencies in a specific skill area by providing a process of observation, reflection and action;

Mentoring:- to promote a worker's awareness and refinement of his or her own professional development by providing and recommending structured opportunities for reflection and observation.

Reflective supervision:- to support, develop, and ultimately evaluate the performance of employees through a process of inquiry that encourage their understanding and articulation of the rationale for their own practices.

Hence, through seminars, workshops conferences and on-the-job training, workers are exposed to skills competence in their various professions within the synergy of the university system. With respect to the impact of workers' continuing professional development on the economies of scale of university management, recall that, a positive economies of scale was recorded. This supports the submission of Mc Ber (2000) cited in Anderson (2004) who noted that, in professional development of initial training, and continuous professional development, capacity is aimed at improving and sustaining commitment to do everything possible for the attainment of the vision and mission statement of the system.

The impact also includes development expectations that are characterized by initiatives, information seeking skills and drive for improvement. These impact reduce wastages, promotes effectiveness, encourage efficiency and enhance significant improvement in performance index among the workers that are exposed to training and re-training. The findings also lay credence to the report of Purcell, Kinne,

Hutchinson, Bayton & Swart (2005) on the impact of continuing professional development that noted among others that, it contributes to:

the development and successful implementation of high performance work practices, particularly those concerned with job and work design, flexible working, resourcing (recruitment, selection and talent management), employee development (increasing skills and extending the skills base), reward, and giving employees a voice (Cited in Armstrong, 2003:16)

In other words, continuing professional development significantly impact on the economies of scale of university management through the promotion of high performance work practices, enhanced flexible working situation, increasing skills and extension of the skills base of the workers. All these translate to the quantum of returns in terms of the development of high level manpower through efficient service delivery. Besides, a measure of the performance system must also be defined in the context of the available skills. Continuing professional development is concerned with staff commitment to work, improved performance and self-development skills which are not exclusive of careers and employability service in the university system.

Finally, there are limiting factors to workers' continuing professional development which are either personally or institutionally driven respectively. Such personal factors are not strictly isolated from the human behavioural disposition measured in terms of indifferent attitude, inability to utilize training opportunities and outright refusal to attend continuing professional development programmes. These negate total commitment and the dedication expected of the workers. Institutionally, poor budgetary allocation and inconsistency in the policy driving the process significantly limit the benefits of workers continuing professional development in the university system. Beside, poor evaluation capacity coupled with the non-prioritization of workers' continuing professional development constitute negating factors in the process.

Conclusion

This study on economies of scale of workers' continuing professional development is based on situational variables from selected universities in South-south, Nigeria. The research has underscored that, workers' continuing professional development is an on-going human resource development practice by the university system. Beside the fact that workers' participate in the programmes, the benefits in terms of optimization of resources, attainment of efficiency, and its significant contribution to effective management of the university system, it is also obvious that the economies of scale of the process to the internal efficiency of the university system is very significant. Although there are some human and institutionalized factors that impact negatively on the process, these are however not significant to the economies of scale of the process.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this study, the following recommendations are put up as options:

1. There is the need to maintain a statutory budget for staff professional development within the university internally generated revenue structure without dependence on external agencies. This will guarantee continuity in the process.
2. There is the urgent need to motivate staff to actively participate in workers' continuing professional development. The process should encourage more of mentoring, technical assistance on the job, coaching and reflective supervision.
3. There is the need to institute an evaluative system for workers' continuing professional development programmes in the university system.
4. Rewards are critical to the sustenance of workers' continuing professional development.
5. Comparative efficiency of the variants of workers' continuing professional development must be periodically determined among the members of non-teaching staff of universities in South-South, Nigeria.

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