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Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Paradigm Shift in Retooling Human Resource Cycle Operations for Staff Productivity in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

The title of the paper is, "Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Paradigm Shift in Retooling Human Resource Cycle Operations in Nigerian Universities". It is a discourse of conceptual reviews germane for the 21st Century universities which encompassed the following areas: conceptualisation of artificial intelligence; artificial intelligence as a digital technology for enhancing staff recruitment and staff selection process; staff development programmes; staff appraisal and staff remuneration for staff productivity as well as the nexus between the human resource cycle operations and staff productivity. Reviewed literature depicted that, AI chatbots facilitate screening, short listing and scheduling of candidates for interviews and also transmit relevant information to applicants. It has the ability to effectively sort out resumes and screen such unbiasedly thus providing unparalleled opportunities for all participants which are hallmarks for productivity in the future. It was therefore concluded that, artificial intelligence digital technologies would foster staff productivity if utilised. Suggestion made among others was that artificial intelligence digital technologies should be employed in the management of the human resource cycle operations in universities as this would enhance staff productivity in Nigerian Universities.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence Digital Technologies, Staff Recruitment, Staff Selection, Staff Development, Staff Appraisal, Staff Remuneration.

Introduction

Education has often been adjudged as a veritable tool for national development because of its etymological background. The term education was derived from three Latin words namely: "educatum", "educare" and "educere". Although their derivatives may differ in certain aspects but their underlining meanings are the same (Amie-Ogan & Amie-Ogan, 2015). Educatum means the act of teaching and training while educare means "to bring up" or "to raise" and educere means "to lead forth" or "to come out". These derivatives portray that, before the recipients got engaged in education, they groped in utmost ignorance, total darkness and obscurity but their involvement in the education process enlightened them, thereby achieving social, economic and political emancipation (Ibid, 2015). It can therefore be deduced that education enables its recipients to be abreast with necessary skills, abilities, and knowledge to navigate the 21st Century.

However, in navigating choice career paths in institutions of learning, its administration would need necessary digital technologies. This has brought today's organisations to limelight in their quest for best strategies to having a competitive edge over their rivals with artificial intelligence being adopted in all facets of organizational life. The world of work all over the world tend to experience some form of dynamism as it endeavours to meet the goals of global competitiveness, diversity and inclusiveness. It is worthy of note that Covid-19 pandemic in the less developed countries initiated the use of digital technologies and adaptive workplace principles which increased flexibility and knowledge sharing at the workplace with skills such as collaboration, teamwork, creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking (Amie-Ogan, Epelle & Oguru, 2023).Gradually, the 21st Century workplace is experiencing a paradigm shift from simple technologies to a more complex and robust digital technology known as artificial intelligence. The concept of artificial intelligence dates as far back as ancient times when Greek myths explained how mechanical men were created by gods. This wild imagination was furthered by scientific innovativeness which led to artificial intelligence being coined by John McCarthy and his co-researchers at a conference held at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire in 1956 and from thence was referred to as the father of artificial intelligence (Rajaraman, 2014). Artificial Intelligence (AI) had since then evolved tremendously and widely as well as been appreciated as a field of Computer Science. Artificial Intelligence (AI), is a field of Computer Science that focuses on developing intelligent machines that can perform tasks that require human intelligence such as understanding language, making decisions and solving problems. In recent times, AIis well utilized in sectors such as: Healthcare, Medicine, Agriculture, Hospitality, Banking, Engineering, Business Enterprises and Educational Institutions.

Universities as educational institutions which are often referred to as ivory towers require quality employees in terms of qualifications, knowledge, skills, abilities, experience and physical fitness, and to achieve the afore mentioned indices in Universities, AI ought to be employed for human resource cycle projects to ensure productivity of staff. Employee productivity is the quantifiable measure of an employee's output or efficiency in completing their assigned tasks or responsibilities within a specific period (Simpplr, 2024). Productivity in an organisation is brought about by efficient and effective use of organizational resources and the most important resource which is a great asset to any organization is the human resource. Where human resources of an organization are thoroughly exposed to proper recruitment and selection processes the best recruitees would undergo a thorough screening procedure to fill up

vacant positions, thus giving their best for organizational progress coupled with good remuneration, training and development and promotion (Amie-Ogan, 2023). Hence the discourse on, "Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Paradigm Shift in Retooling Human Resource Cycle Operations for Staff Productivity in Nigerian Universities".

Concept of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a field of science concerned with designing of computers and machines that can reason, learn and act in such a way that would normally require human intelligence. Operationally, it is defined as a set of technologies that are based primarily on machine learning and deep learning with emphasis on the use of data analytics, predictions and forecasting, object categorization, natural language processing, recommendations, intelligent data retrieval and more (Googlecloud.com). Kaplan and Haenlein (2019), defined AI as a system's ability to interpret external data correctly, to learn from such data, and to use that learning to achieve specific goals and tasks through flexible adoption. Similarly, Aggarwal and Kathuria (2023), defined AI, as the use of technology to perform tasks that require human intelligence while referring to it as machine intelligence. In essence artificial intelligence is the collaborative functioning of machines in the similitude of human intelligence which tend to surpass human capacity in the actual workplace. Human beings have feelings and are therefore susceptible to frailties of boredom and tiredness but machines keep working for longer time as far as proper maintenance culture is observed.

Artificial Intelligence as a Digital Technology for Enhancing Staff Recruitment and Selection Procedures for Staff Productivity.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming different areas of human resource management, namely in the recruitment and selection procedures, which play key roles in improving staff productivity globally in universities. AI-driven technologies are replacing traditional recruitment methods due to their ability to improve efficiency, accuracy and fairness in selecting candidates for academic and administrative jobs. Traditional approaches to recruitment such as paid announcement over the radio and television, advertisement in dailies (National and Local Newspapers), visiting youth service orientation camps, visiting universities to recruit prospective graduates and visiting neighbouring states and countries abroad for recruitment are typically cumbersome, time-consuming and influenced by human prejudice (Amie-Ogan, 2023). However, the adoption of AI in recruitment is more than just a technological process as it signifies a paradigm shift in institutions' traditional approach of

hiring to a modern approach which has proved to be substantial in all ramifications for staff productivity. The Nigerian University system needs well-qualified academic and administrative personnel in pursuit for high educational standards which can only be achieved through the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in the recruitment and selection procedures. There is no doubt that, the adoption of AI in the hiring process offers Nigerian Universities a leeway for tackling anticipated setbacks to their hiring process. Traditional recruitment approaches frequently entail a laborious task of manually reviewing a humongous number of applications which is both time-consuming and prone to errors and prejudices. Human recruiters may inadvertently exhibit bias towards particular candidates due to subjective considerations, resulting in suboptimal hiring outcomes. On the contrary, Artificial Intelligence (AI) can automate the earliest stages of the recruitment process through resume screening. This can be achieved through the use of algorithms that objectively evaluate candidates' qualifications, gender, age, experience and level of education based on established criteria. The possibility of reducing prejudice makes the selection process meritocratic, leading to improved quality of hiring and ultimately enhancing staff productivity (Babalola, Adeyemo, & Onifade, 2020)

In addition, AI technologies can improve applicants screening process by employing sophisticated tools like predictive analytics and machine learning. These technologies have the capability to analyse extensive quantity of data regarding candidates' previous achievements, educational histories and perhaps psychometric evaluations in order to forecast their future job performance (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). Such data-driven insights assist human resource or hiring managers to make better informed selections, ensuring that the selected applicants are not only competent but also have the capacity to flourish in their roles, duties and responsibilities. This is particularly essential in the academia where the productivity of staff members is considered to be a function of the quality of instructional delivery, research and community service outputs. By selecting individuals with the highest potential for productivity, AI would helpin the strategic goal of boosting the overall efficacy of Nigerian Universities (Obikeze & Onwe, 2022).

Additionally, AI may streamline the selection process by automating regular operations, such as scheduling interviews, sending follow-up emails and even performing initial interviews using AI-powered chatbots (Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2019). These automated solutions may engage applicants in real-time, providing them with vital information and addressing queries which would enhance candidates experience. A great recruitment experience is vital for attracting top talents since it represents the institution's efficiency and modernity. Furthermore,

by freeing up human resource managers and executive managers (recruiters) from routine chores, AI helps them to focus on more strategic activities, such as communicating high-potential prospects and ensuring that the recruitment process corresponds with the University's long-term goals. This strategic goal is vital for establishing a productive workforce that can contribute to the institution's academic and administrative success (Akinyele & Akinbode, 2021).

Another key advantage of AI in recruitment is its capacity to collect and analyze enormous datasets to uncover trends and patterns that might not be immediately obvious to human recruiters. In this instance, AI can evaluate data from past recruitment cycles to discover the characteristics of successful hires which can then drive future recruitment methods. This data-driven strategy does not only enhance the effectiveness of recruitment but also ensures that the University consistently improves on its hiring methods based on empirical evidence. With this approach, AI contributes to the formation of a more robust and adaptive workforce, capable of handling the increasing difficulties of the higher education sector in Nigeria (Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2019). Furthermore, the incorporation of AI in the recruitment procedure coincides with the broader trend of digital transformation in higher education, which is necessary for sustaining competitiveness in a fast-changing global educational architecture. Nigerian Universities, like their counterparts globally, should progressively adopt digital technologies to boost their operations and service delivery. The introduction of AI into their recruitment processes have positioned them at the forefront of digital revolution which is important for attracting and maintaining top talents in a very competitive market. This intentional deployment of AI does not only boost staff efficiency but also strengthens the University's reputation as a forward-thinking institution, which is crucial for attracting students, faculty and research findings (Ezeani & Onuoha, 2023).

AI represents a paradigm shift in the recruitment and selection procedures in Nigerian Universities, giving a range of benefits that contribute to better staff efficiency. By automating routine operations, minimising biases, delivering data-driven insights and integrating with the broader digital transformation agenda, AI enables institutions to attract and retain the most qualified and skilled staff. This, in turn, has a favourable impact on the overall efficacy and competitiveness of these institutions in the higher education sector. As Nigerian Universities continue to traverse the challenges of the 21st century, the strategic integration of AI into their

human resource practices will be important for accomplishing their academic and administrative goals.

Artificial Intelligence as a Digital tool for Enhancing Staff Development Programmes for Staff Productivity

Artificial Intelligence (AI) will profoundly impact staff development programmes in Nigerian Universities, particularly in boosting staff productivity. These programmes are vital for preparing personnel with the requisite skills and knowledge to adapt to the evolving needs of the educational sector. AI-driven solutions have aided in transforming the methods staff development programmes are developed, delivered, and assessed; ultimately encouraging a culture of continuous learning process and professional progress. Integrating AI into staff development programmes is beneficial because it has the ability to tailor learning experiences. AI algorithms have the ability to assess data on individual staff performance, learning preferences and career objectives thus enabling an environment of individualized training. This individualised approach guarantees staff members to receive targeted training which addresses their specific needs, resulting in more effective learning outcomes and better productivity. Accordingly, Adeoye (2022), emphatically stressed that, AI can identify gaps in a staff member's skill set and offer related courses or training sessions thereby expediting the learning process and minimising the time required for skill acquisition. It was reiterated that, AI supports the continual assessment of staff development programmes, delivering real-time feedback to both participants and administrators. This feedback loop enables an instant change of training material and methodology hence ensuring that the programmes remain current and effective. Also, AI-powered analytics can analyse the success of staff members over time, finding trends and projecting future training needs. This proactive approach to staff development does not only enhance individual performance but also contributes to the overall productivity of the institution (Okafor & Ojo, 2023).

Furthermore, AI provides more efficient staff development initiatives by accessing data on the efficiency of different training techniques and materials. AI can readily assist administrators optimize the use of available resources thus ensuring that investments in staff development reap optimal returns. This efficiency is particularly critical in Nigerian Universities, where funding constraints curtail the scope of staff development activities. AI's capacity to prioritize training needs based on data-driven insights allow institutions to spend their resources on the most impactful programmes, hence boosting staff productivity (Adetayo, 2021).AI also plays a

crucial role in facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange among staff members through AI-powered platforms where workers simply access and share resources and participate in online discussions and collaborate on projects. This enhanced collaboration does not only enrich the learning experience of staff but also develop a sense of community and shared purpose among staff members which is vital to increasing productivity. In corroboration, Ibrahim (2022), asserted that, AI can facilitate mentorship programmes by linking less experienced personnel with mentors who hold the required skills, thus enhancing professional development and productivity. The inclusion of AI into staff development programmes in Nigerian Universities would retool how these programmes are delivered as they are made to be more personalized, efficient, and collaborative. By harnessing AI's capabilities in staff development programmes, Universities are sure of having versatile staff who will be well-equipped to tackle herculean tasks in 21st Century learning and research environments, ultimately leading to higher productivity and institutional success.

Artificial Intelligence as a Digital Tool for Enhancing Staff Appraisal for Staff Productivity

Staff appraisal refers to staff evaluation. It is a force to reckon with in the human resource cycle because the process informs human resource managers on the strengths and weaknesses of staff so as to know those to be promoted, trained or developed. Hence playing a crucial role in promoting productivity in organizations especially Nigerian Universities. The introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has caused a paradigm shift on how staff assessments are handled, moving away from out-of-date, manual processes to more dynamic, data-driven alternatives. This transition carries enormous implications, one of which is boosting staff efficiency since AI technologies offer the capacity to improve and customise the evaluation process in ways that were previously unattainable.

In the traditional approach of staff appraisal, evaluations are often conducted periodically, either annually or within a duration of three (3) years which is mainly on subjective judgments by supervisors and managers. This approach while frequently used, has several disadvantages. It can be prone to biases, lacks real-time feedback and often fails to capture the entire scope of an employee's accomplishments over time. Moreover, the manual nature of these appraisals can make them cumbersome, time-consuming, and inconsistent, resulting to unhappiness among workers and inefficiencies in performance management (Obisi, 2020). Conversely, the integration of AI into staff appraisal systems addressed several of these concerns. AI-driven evaluation systems employ modern algorithms and machine learning techniques to examine a

huge array of data points, thus delivering a more comprehensive and impartial assessment of staff performance. These systems continuously monitor multiple performance indicators which include: work completion rates, peer reviews and even engagement levels thus providing a holistic perspective of an employee's contributions. This continuous feedback loop allows for real-time modifications to be made whereby in the work environment personnel are more aware of their performance and could take proactive efforts to enhance it (PwC, 2023).

There is an advantage worthy of note in the application of AI in staff appraisal. This is its ability to decrease biases and promote objectivity. Traditional assessments often suffer from flaws like recency bias, where recent performance disproportionately influences the entire judgement, or halo effects, where one positive or negative attribute overshadows other elements of performance. AI systems, in contrast, can process performance data over extended periods and across various dimensions, decreasing the impact of such biases and guaranteeing that appraisals are more equitable and accurate (Deloitte, 2021). This neutrality is vital in Nigerian Universities where different faculty and administrative staff demand free, fair and open evaluatory methods to sustain motivation and productivity. Similarly, AI-enabled assessments can be adapted to the specific demands and goals of individual employees. Personalized appraisal frameworks can be designed, taking into cognizance the specific tasks, responsibilities and career objectives of each staff. This personalisation enables for more relevant feedback and development opportunities, linking staff aims with the broader objectives of the University. For example, a professor may obtain AI-driven insights on how their research output compares with colleagues in related fields, or how their teaching approaches effect student engagement, allowing them to focus on areas that will most boost their productivity and career growth (Khan, Riaz & Ali, 2021).AI also boosts the scalability and efficiency of the appraisal process. In big institutions like Universities, performing detailed appraisals for every staff can be a challenging process. AI systems can manage huge volumes of data and generate insights with speed and accuracy, enabling human resource departments to conduct appraisals more regularly and with less administrative burden. This increased frequency of assessments ensures that, performance difficulties are discovered and handled soon, rather than waiting for an annual review cycle, which can be too late to alter any course successfully (Jiang, Koo & Wang, 2019). Moreover, AI's predictive analytics capabilities can also play a vital role in anticipating future performance and spotting potential difficulties before they exist. By evaluating trends in performance data, AI can identify which individuals are at risk of burnout which might be ready for leadership roles or which teams may require additional help to accomplish their targets. This foresight

allows the University management to take proactive measures such as providing additional training or resources to guarantee that staff productivity remains high (PwC, 2022). In relation to Nigerian Universities where the learning environment is fast being innovative and there is a rising demand to increase academic standards, the integration of AI in staff appraisal systems can be a game-changer. By giving more accurate, impartial, and timely appraisals, AI could help to guarantee that, personnel are not only meeting their current tasks but are also developing in ways that contribute to the long-term success of the University system. This, in turn, generates a culture of continual improvement where personnel are motivated to strive for excellence, knowing that their achievements will be properly and appropriately rewarded. The application of AI in staff appraisal in Nigerian Universities represent a significant development in the management of human resources. By overcoming the constraints of traditional appraisal methods, AI promotes objectivity, efficiency and personalization in performance evaluations which culminates in the promotion of staff productivity as well as contributes to a more motivated, engaged and capable workforce, vital for the continuous success and competitiveness of Nigerian Universities in the global educational scene.

Staff Remuneration for Staff Productivity

Staff remuneration plays an important part in boosting productivity in organisations and Nigerian Universities are not an exception. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in the human resource cycle projects, mark a fundamental shift in managing remuneration which directly affects staff productivity. Effective remuneration plans are critical, not just for attracting and keeping talents, but are also for encouraging personnel to reach better levels of performance and dedication to company goals (Aguinis, 2019). In conventional contexts, staff remuneration in Nigerian Universities often follow rigid frameworks, typically connected to qualifications, years of experience and job grades. While these systems provide equity and openness, they can fail to reflect individual contributions effectively, resulting in potential discrepancies between performance and rewards (Gohari, Ahmadloo, Boroujeni & Hosseinipour, 2019). AI offers a solution to this problem by providing more dynamic and individualised remunerative system by accessing data related to staff performance such as teaching efficacy, research output and administrative role. AI-driven systems can adapt compensation to reflect individual contributions more effectively (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020). This performance-based approach ensures that people who significantly contribute to the University's success are rewarded appropriately, therefore establishing a culture of excellence and encouraging higher productivity (Kiron, 2021).

Additionally, AI boosts the transparency and effectiveness of payment procedures. Traditional methods of payment are frequently time-consuming and prone to human errors and prejudices. AI systems can process and evaluate vast volumes of data fast, ensuring that remuneration decisions are both fair and data-driven (Bhardwaj, Singh & Sharma, 2020). The afore mentioned statement denotes that, AI tools have the ability to decrease administrative load on human resource departments as well as promote trust among personnel, since it is certain that the compensation of employees is chosen by objective criteria rather than subjective judgments (Fountaine, McCarthy & Saleh, 2019).

The impact of AI on payment extends beyond setting pay scales. It offers predictive analytics that can foresee future remuneration demands based on trends in staff performance and market conditions. This allows colleges to remain competitive in attracting top talents while ensuring that their remuneration policies are sustainable on the long run (Brynjolfsson & McAfee,2017). It was assertively argued that, AI can uncover potential discrepancies in remuneration across different groups, enabling institutions to resolve any injustice proactively and promote a more inclusive work environment (Tambe, Cappelli & Yakubovich, 2019).

Probing further without much equivocation, unravelled that utilising AI's function in retooling staff compensation could serve as a major driver in improving productivity in Universities in Nigeria which can be achieved by matching remuneration more closely with individual performance and contributions. AI is known to inspire staff to thrive and ensures that universities can attract and retain the greatest personnel in a competitive academic setting (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020). Thus, the integration of AI in human resource cycle operations presents a paradigm shift that has the potential to greatly boost staff productivity and by extension the overall efficacy of Nigerian Universities.

The Nexus Between Utilisation of Artificial Intelligence and Human Resource Cycle Operations for Staff Productivity

It is imperative to look into the causal link between staff productivity and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in HR cycle operations which stem from recruitment to staff productivity, particularly in Nigerian Universities' setting. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in the Universities have the potential to improve productivity in human resource management as noticeable among other fields where it is becoming a more disruptive force. By automating repetitive processes, artificial intelligence (AI) technologies like machine learning algorithms and natural language processing greatly increase the productivity of HR

operations. There is no gainsaying that, AI-driven technologies can expedite hiring procedures by sorting through a lot of applications and finding qualified applicants faster than using conventional techniques (Chen, Li & Yu,2020). According to Khan, Riaz and Ali (2021), automation minimises human biases and also cuts down on time and resources spent on hiring, resulting in more impartial and equal hiring processes. Consequently, HR departments are able to focus their resources on more strategic tasks which may result in an institution-wide productivity. All of these point to the fact that, when AI tools are employed in servicing human resource cycle projects, the Universities in Nigeria would record a high productivity rate amongst staff. AI improves staff efficiency through sophisticated performance management systems in addition to recruitment (Adeniji & Osinbanjo, 2022). AI-driven analytics systems are able to track workers performance in real time, giving feedback and pinpointing areas that need to be improved upon (Jiang, Koo & Yakubovich, 2019). Additionally, AI digital technologies are able to swiftly address performance issues because of the continuous feedback loop which promotes an environment of continual development and progress. According to Davenport, Guenole, and Malhotra (2020), the capacity to customise training and development initiatives based on data-driven insights guarantee that, resources are distributed wisely by meeting the needs of each worker and encouraging increased productivity.

AI is also known to make human resource planning and management more efficient by forecasting future personnel requirements and allocating resources optimally. HR departments can foresee and rectify possible skill gaps before they have an impact on productivity by using predictive analytics, which can analyse past data and estimate future patterns (Baryshnikova,2022). AI has a part in both staff retention and engagement. Artificial intelligence (AI) powered engagement solutions are able to assess employee sentiment and engagement levels, giving insights into variables influencing morale and output (Gupta, Jain & Gupta,2021). Universities can lower turnover rates and increase staff satisfaction by implementing targeted interventions early enough by recognising patterns and possible difficulties. In the view of Schaufeli and Bakker (2019), since engaged workers are more likely to be driven and devoted to their jobs, high levels of employee engagement are strongly correlated with higher production. Therefore, the need for staff engagement should be prioritized.AI can also completely transform HR analytics by offering more in-depth understanding of staff dynamics. In the same vein Universities could make better informed decisions by using advanced data analytics to perform thorough studies of employee performance, remuneration and career advancement (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016). By using

these insights, Universities can further improve productivity by creating HR strategies and policies that are more productive and in line with institutional objectives.

Conclusion

With little resources and high employee turnover rates occasioned by brain drain to developed countries, Nigerian Universities are faced with peculiar challenges. However, integrating AI into human resource cycle projects has the potential to significantly increase productivity and efficiency. Therefore, AI technologies should be seen as energy and time saving useful tools for use in boosting staff recruitment, selection, engagement, performance appraisal, training, development and remuneration processes while increasing staff productivity in Nigerian Universities in the present and future.

Suggestions

The following suggestions were made based on the discourse.

1. Funding for Universities should be prioritized so that artificial intelligence tools could be incorporated into the Human Resource Departments for better human resource cycle projects such as recruitment, selection, performance appraisal, training and development and remuneration.
2. Artificial Intelligence tools should be used for staff recruitment and selection so as to get the most qualified personnel to manage University education for an enhanced productivity.
3. Staff training and development should be AI powered in order to individualize the process for productivity.
4. Performance appraisal of staff should be AI powered as this would wholesomely appraise staff without bias thereby promoting objectivity as it has the ability to process performance data over extended periods and across various dimensions.
5. Remuneration of staff should be done by AI powered tools for an encompassing process that would lead to staff productivity and retention in the Universities. This is because AI driven systems readily adapt remuneration to reflect individual contributions more effectively.

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