

## Strategic Human Resource Management: Driving Organizational Performance in Educational Institutions

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### Abstract

*Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) has emerged as a key driver of organizational performance across sectors, yet its application in educational institutions remains underdeveloped, particularly in resource-constrained contexts such as Nigeria. This conceptual paper addresses three research questions: how SHRM principles can be conceptualized within educational settings, what theoretical mechanisms link SHRM to performance, and what conceptual framework explains this linkage. Drawing on Resource-Based View, Behavioral Perspective, AMO Framework, High-Performance Work Systems, and Contingency Theory, the paper defines SHRM as the vertical and horizontal alignment of HR practices with institutional strategic goals. Organizational performance in education is conceptualized across academic, operational, and stakeholder outcomes, mediated by psychological climate, human capital, and organizational citizenship behavior. Applying the framework to the Nigerian situation, the paper identifies practical strategies for enhancing HR management despite severe funding constraints, teacher shortages, and brain drain. The analysis reveals that fragmented, administrative HR approaches dominate Nigerian institutions, while strategic alignment remains rare. The paper concludes that context-adapted SHRM—emphasizing workforce planning, developmental performance management, participative decision-making, and external partnerships—can drive sustainable performance. Theoretical contributions extend SHRM to non-profit, service-intensive bureaucracies. Practical implications guide educational leaders and policymakers in designing coherent HR systems under resource limitations.*

**Keywords:** Strategic Human Resource Management, Organizational Performance, Educational Institutions, Teacher Effectiveness, Institutional Culture, HR Alignment

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**Cite this as:** Ahmad, A. A., Hashim, M. N., Bashir, A., & Nasiru, N. (2026). Strategic Human Resource Management: Driving Organizational Performance in Educational Institutions. *Rima International Journal of Education*, 5(1), 181—200. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.65760/rijessu.v5.1.13>

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## Introduction

Educational institutions across the globe are transitioning from traditional operational models to performance-driven organizations. This shift reflects the growing recognition that achieving academic excellence, operational efficiency, and stakeholder satisfaction requires a deliberate and integrated approach to managing human capital. However, the path to improved performance is fraught with persistent challenges, including severe funding constraints, high teacher turnover rates, and mounting accountability pressures from governments and accrediting bodies (Zerrad & Schechter, 2025). Despite the acknowledged importance of human resources in this sector, many primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions still manage their workforce using fragmented, administrative-focused practices rather than coherent, strategic frameworks. Scholars note that while international interest in strategic human resource management (SHRM) within the educational context is increasing, empirical research on its application in schools and universities remains limited (Tuytens *et al.*, 2023).. This gap is particularly evident in the limited conceptual integration of SHRM into the educational management literature, where human resource functions often operate in isolation from institutional strategic planning.

This conceptual paper addresses these issues by systematically investigating three core research questions. First, how can SHRM principles be effectively conceptualized within the unique organizational context of educational institutions? Second, what are the theoretical mechanisms through which SHRM drives organizational performance in the education sector? Third, what conceptual framework explains the linkage between SHRM and performance outcomes in schools and universities? The scope of this analysis focuses on formal educational institutions, including primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. This study adopts an organizational-level perspective, examining systemic outcomes rather than individual teacher performance in isolation. By concentrating on the institution as the unit of analysis, this paper seeks to move beyond anecdotal accounts of effective HR practices and provide a structured understanding of how strategic human resource systems contribute to broader organizational success.

This study makes significant contributions to both theory and practice. From a theoretical standpoint, the paper extends established SHRM frameworks,

which have been largely developed in for-profit corporate settings, to the context of non-profit, service-intensive, professional bureaucracies (Baluch & Ridder, 2021). In doing so, it responds to calls for more contextually relevant models that recognize the unique mission-driven nature of educational work. For practitioners, including principals, deans, and HR administrators, this paper provides a conceptual roadmap for moving beyond transactional personnel management toward strategic decision-making. Recent empirical evidence supports the practical value of this approach: districts and universities that adopt strategic developmental HR systems experience higher student achievement, lower teacher turnover rates, and fewer staff vacancies than those using other HR typologies (Gassanova & Kozhakhmet 2023). By articulating a clear conceptual framework, this paper aims to equip educational leaders with the theoretical foundation needed to align their human resource practices with institutional goals and drive sustainable organizational performance.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

This section establishes the theoretical basis for conceptualizing Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) in educational institutions. Four complementary theories—Resource-Based View, Behavioral Perspective, AMO Framework, High-Performance Work Systems, and Contingency Theory—provide a robust foundation for understanding how human resource practices drive organizational performance in schools and universities.

#### **A. Resource-Based View (RBV)**

The Resource-Based View positions human capital as a primary source of sustainable competitive advantage. According to this theory, organizations achieve superior performance when they possess resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and organized (VRIO). In educational institutions, teachers and administrators constitute exactly this type of strategic asset. Teachers bring specialized pedagogical knowledge and relational skills that directly determine student learning outcomes. School leaders shape instructional climate, resource allocation, and strategic direction. These human resources create value because effective teaching raises student achievement, and competent leadership improves operational efficiency. Teacher quality remains rare because only a subset of education graduates possess advanced instructional skills and resilience for challenging classroom environments. The

imitability of effective teaching stems from its tacit nature: a teacher cannot simply replicate another's successful strategies without deep contextual understanding and practice. Finally, educational institutions must organize these human resources through coherent recruitment, development, and retention systems. Studies confirm that school districts adopting a VRIO-aligned approach to teacher management report higher student performance and lower turnover than districts treating teaching as a replaceable commodity (Tuytens *et al.*, 2023; Zerrad & Schechter, 2025).

### **B. Behavioral Perspective of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM)**

The Behavioral Perspective argues that HR practices function primarily to shape and reinforce employee behaviors that advance organizational goals. Rather than focusing solely on skills or knowledge, this theory directs attention to discretionary role behaviors such as extra effort, collaborative problem-solving, and pedagogical innovation. In educational settings, HR systems can encourage or discourage these behaviors through specific design features. Performance appraisal systems that reward collaborative curriculum development rather than isolated classroom performance encourage teachers to share effective practices. Career progression policies that recognize mentoring and peer coaching foster knowledge transfer across grade levels or departments. Recruitment processes that select for growth mindset and collegiality produce a workforce more willing to engage in school-wide improvement initiatives. Research on Belgian primary and secondary schools demonstrates that principals who intentionally align HR practices with desired teacher behaviors achieve higher levels of teacher collaboration and instructional innovation compared to schools using administrative-only HR approaches (Tuytens *et al.*, 2023). The behavioral perspective thus provides a direct mechanism linking HR practice design to organizational performance outcomes.

### **C. Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) Framework**

The AMO Framework specifies that employee performance results from three independent but interacting factors: ability, motivation, and opportunity. Ability refers to the knowledge, skills, and competencies employees possess to perform their roles effectively. Motivation encompasses the psychological forces that drive effort toward organizational goals. Opportunity denotes the situational conditions and discretionary space that enable employees to apply

their abilities and motivation. HR practices influence each pathway. Selection and professional development systems build ability. Performance feedback, recognition, and career advancement structures shape motivation. Participative decision-making, team teaching arrangements, and autonomy over instructional methods create opportunity. Educational institutions that systematically address all three pathways outperform those focusing on only one or two dimensions. For example, a school that invests heavily in teacher training (ability) but restricts classroom autonomy (opportunity) or fails to recognize excellent teaching (motivation) will see limited performance gains. A study of Lahore University of Management Sciences applied the AMO framework and found that integrated HR practices targeting ability, motivation, and opportunity simultaneously produced significantly higher faculty research output and student satisfaction than piecemeal interventions (Raza, 2025).

#### **D. High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS)**

High-Performance Work Systems represent bundles of complementary HR practices that together produce synergistic effects on organizational performance. Core HPWS components include selective staffing, extensive training, formal performance appraisal, competitive compensation, and employee participation mechanisms. In educational settings, selective staffing means recruiting candidates not only for current qualifications but also for fit with institutional mission and capacity for professional growth. Extensive training moves beyond one-day workshops to sustained, job-embedded professional development aligned with school improvement goals. Formal performance appraisal uses multiple measures (classroom observations, student growth data, peer reviews) and links results to developmental support. Competitive compensation rewards effectiveness and retention of high-performing educators. Employee participation includes teacher involvement in curriculum decisions, school committees, and strategic planning. Critics question whether HPWS principles translate directly from manufacturing or service industries to educational contexts. However, evidence from Australian higher education institutions shows that universities implementing HPWS bundles experience lower faculty turnover and higher research productivity than those using isolated HR practices (Khan & Tarafder, 2020). The key adaptation involves modifying incentive structures away from individual competition and toward collective academic achievement.

## **E. Contingency Theory**

Contingency Theory rejects one-size-fits-all prescriptions for HR strategy and instead argues that effective HR systems must align with organizational context. For educational institutions, critical contextual variables include institutional size, funding source (public vs. private), mission orientation (academic vs. vocational), and regulatory environment. Large urban school districts face different HR challenges than small rural schools. Private universities with substantial endowments can offer higher salaries and more professional development resources than public institutions facing legislative budget caps. Research-focused universities require HR practices that incentivize publication and grant acquisition, while community colleges need systems that reward teaching excellence and student support. Regulatory environments shape flexibility: unionized public schools must negotiate HR changes with collective bargaining units, while private schools retain greater autonomy. Contingency theory therefore predicts that no single HR model maximizes performance across all educational contexts. Instead, principals and administrators must diagnose their institutional conditions and design HR practices that fit those specific parameters. Research on strategic human resource management in nonprofit organizations confirms that contextual alignment explains more variance in organizational performance than the adoption of any particular HR practice bundle (Baluch & Ridder, 2021). Educational leaders who ignore contingency factors risk implementing incompatible HR systems that produce frustration rather than improvement.

## **Key Constructs and Conceptual Definitions**

### **A. Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM)**

Strategic Human Resource Management refers to the deliberate alignment of an organization's human resource policies and practices with its strategic goals. In educational institutions, this alignment operates along two dimensions. Vertical alignment ensures that every HR activity—recruitment, professional development, performance appraisal, and compensation—directly supports the institution's mission, whether that mission emphasizes academic excellence, inclusive education, or vocational readiness. For example, a school whose strategic goal is improving literacy outcomes would vertically align its professional development budget toward evidence-based reading instruction and its performance appraisal system toward classroom observations of literacy teaching. Horizontal alignment demands internal consistency across

HR practices so that they reinforce rather than contradict each other. A university that selects faculty based on collaborative teaching skills but then appraises performance solely on individual publication output creates horizontal inconsistency that confuses faculty behavior. Research on strategic HRM in Flemish primary and secondary schools found that schools achieving both vertical and horizontal alignment reported significantly higher teacher commitment and student achievement than those with fragmented HR approaches (Tuytens et al., 2023). Without this dual alignment, HR practices function as disconnected administrative tasks rather than as a coherent strategic system.

### **B. Organizational Performance in Educational Institutions**

Organizational performance in educational settings encompasses three distinct but interrelated outcome categories. Academic outcomes represent the core mission of any educational institution: student achievement measured through standardized tests, graduation rates, grade progression, and college or career readiness. These indicators directly reflect the quality of teaching and learning processes. Operational outcomes capture the efficiency and stability of the institution's internal functioning. Key operational measures include teacher retention rates (lower turnover reduces recruitment and training costs), student and staff attendance (chronic absence signals disengagement), and resource efficiency (maximizing learning outcomes per dollar spent on personnel and facilities). Stakeholder outcomes reflect how external groups perceive and interact with the institution. Parent and student satisfaction surveys, community reputation, employer assessments of graduate preparedness, and accreditation status all fall into this category. A growing body of evidence indicates that these three performance dimensions interact dynamically. High teacher retention (operational) improves student achievement (academic), which in turn raises parent satisfaction (stakeholder). Conversely, high turnover damages all three. Recent research on Pakistani universities demonstrates that institutions systematically tracking all three performance categories achieve more sustainable improvement than those focusing narrowly on exam scores (Raza, 2025).

### **C. Mediating Mechanisms**

Three mediating mechanisms explain how SHRM practices translate into organizational performance in educational settings. First, psychological

climate refers to employees' collective perceptions of trust, justice, and support within the institution. When teachers perceive fair performance appraisals, transparent promotion decisions, and genuine administrative support for classroom challenges, they respond with higher engagement and lower burnout. SHRM practices directly shape this climate: consistent and transparent HR policies build trust, while arbitrary or secretive processes destroy it. Second, human capital encompasses the actual pedagogical skills, leadership competencies, and content knowledge possessed by faculty and administrators. Strategic recruitment brings high-potential candidates into the institution, while sustained professional development continuously upgrades their capabilities. Unlike physical resources, human capital appreciates with strategic investment. Third, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) captures extra-role contributions that fall outside formal job descriptions but enable institutional effectiveness. Examples include veteran teachers mentoring new colleagues without compensation, faculty volunteering for accreditation committees, or administrators sharing successful intervention strategies across departments. Research on Australian higher education institutions confirms that high-performance work systems increase OCB by fostering reciprocal obligation between employees and the institution (Khan & Tarafder, 2020). These three mechanisms—psychological climate, human capital, and OCB—operate as intervening variables: SHRM practices affect them directly, and they in turn drive academic, operational, and stakeholder outcomes.

### **Strategies for Enhancing Human Resources Management in Nigerian Educational Institutions**

The preceding sections have established that strategic human resource management (SHRM) constitutes a critical driver of organizational performance in educational settings. However, applying these principles in the Nigerian context requires addressing a distinct set of structural and operational challenges. Nigeria's education sector faces severe funding constraints, with the national budget allocation to education stagnating at just 6–7 percent, far below the UNESCO-recommended 20 percent. This underfunding has produced a national teacher shortage of 194,876 in public primary schools alone, with secondary schools similarly affected. The 2025 education budget of N3.5 trillion, representing seven percent of the national budget, left a shortfall of approximately N290 billion for teacher salaries alone. Under these constraints, enhancing human resources management demands pragmatic

strategies that maximize existing resources while advocating for systemic reform.

### **A. Strategic Workforce Planning and Data-Driven Recruitment**

Effective HR management begins with accurate workforce data and systematic planning. Many Nigerian educational institutions operate without reliable human resource information systems, leading to mismatches between teacher supply and demand. Strategic workforce planning requires institutions to conduct regular teacher demand forecasts based on student enrollment trends, subject-specific shortages, and attrition rates. Recent evidence from Colleges of Education in Oyo State demonstrates that institutions implementing structured human resource planning achieve significantly higher organizational performance than those relying on ad-hoc arrangements (Oyeniran, 2025). Recruitment practices must move beyond credential verification to include competency-based assessments, teaching demonstrations, and value congruence evaluation. The UNESCO-EU Expand, Integrate and Strengthen Systems (EISS) programme specifically targets opaque teacher recruitment and deployment policies by strengthening government capacities to assess teaching needs and develop evidence-based policies for teacher recruitment, deployment, and management. Similarly, the World Bank-funded HOPE-Education programme (\$552 million) aims to enhance the skills of 500,000 public school teachers across all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, supported by a robust education management information system that enables evidence-based decisions (Tyohemba, 2025). Kwara State provides a practical model, having recruited over 3,400 new teaching and non-teaching staff between 2024 and 2025, with emphasis on STEM subjects and community-based education.

### **B. Talent Management and Strategic Retention**

Retaining qualified academic staff remains a persistent challenge across Nigerian tertiary institutions. A study of Ogun State universities confirmed that effective talent management practices positively influence employee productivity and organizational performance (Obisanya *et al.*, 2024). However, research across Nigerian tertiary institutions reveals that the efficacy of current HRM procedures remains poor, with effective communication, remuneration and compensation, and employee appreciation emerging as the three most important practices for improving retention (Ayobamidele, 2025).

Private universities in Southwest Nigeria have demonstrated that strategic management strategies—including career development pathways, research support, and recognition programmes—significantly improve academic staff retention when properly implemented (Oyalabu *et al.*, 2023). Covenant University provides a specific case: recognition programmes significantly influence employees' behavioural outcomes, leading the institution to recommend continuous evaluation and adjustment of recognition policies to maintain talent retention competencies. Institutions should implement performance-based bonuses, periodic salary adjustments, staff welfare packages, hardship allowances, and tailored recognition programmes that acknowledge the distinctive contributions of both academic and non-academic staff.

### **C. Professional Development and Capacity Building**

Continuous professional development transforms underqualified teachers into effective classroom practitioners. The 2021 Education Sector Analysis reported that at least 20 percent of teachers in public basic education schools in Nigeria lack formal qualifications, with this figure nearly doubling in private schools. Addressing this deficit requires both pre-service and in-service training programmes aligned with institutional goals. The EISS programme partners with six training colleges across Adamawa, Bayelsa, Enugu, Katsina, Plateau, and Oyo states to develop expanded teacher education programmes with a focus on resilience in fragile contexts. Research from Northeast Nigerian universities confirms that training and development have significant positive effects on employee performance, job satisfaction, and academic staff retention. The SERVICOM Presidency has explicitly stated that continuous implementation of professional development programmes enhances teachers' skills and teaching methods, thereby boosting quality service delivery (Anyanwu, 2024). Practical strategies include mobile-based communities of practice, as demonstrated by the CL4STEM project for science and mathematics teachers; the NextGen Teachers Bootcamp, which has trained over 1,000 educators across four states; and digital literacy and English proficiency workshops conducted by the National Commission for Colleges of Education in partnership with the British Council.

### **D. Performance Management with Developmental Focus**

Performance management systems in Nigerian educational institutions frequently operate as punitive compliance exercises rather than developmental

tools. Evidence from South-western Nigeria indicates that all four dimensions of HRM practices—recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation management—directly determine both perceived quality and perceived relevance of tertiary education (James & Fagbenle, 2025). Effective performance management requires regular classroom observations using standardized protocols, goal-setting conferences that align individual objectives with institutional priorities, and actionable improvement plans linked to professional development resources. The HOPE-Education programme's emphasis on digital tools, modern pedagogy, and inclusive teaching practices provides a framework for linking performance assessment to targeted capacity building (Tyohemba, 2025). Institutions should also adopt 360-degree feedback mechanisms that incorporate student evaluations, peer reviews, and self-assessments, moving beyond the sole reliance on administrative judgment.

#### **E. Compensation, Recognition, and Welfare Enhancement**

Compensation remains the most immediate lever for improving teacher motivation and retention, yet Nigeria's budget shortfall of N290 billion for teacher salaries in 2025 highlights the scale of the challenge (Wahab, 2025). While federal and state governments must address this structural underfunding, individual institutions can implement supplementary strategies. The National Minimum Wage of N70,000, though recently increased, remains inadequately implemented across several states (Jide, 2025). In response, institutions should advocate for full implementation of approved incentives, including the special salary scale, harmonised retirement age (now implemented by 22 states and the FCT), and low-cost housing schemes for rural teachers. Non-monetary recognition programmes—teacher of the month awards, public acknowledgment at institutional events, leadership opportunities on committees, and sabbatical or research leave privileges—provide cost-effective alternatives that nonetheless improve morale. Research confirms that underpaid teachers are less motivated and struggle to meet student educational needs, making competitive compensation a non-negotiable foundation for any strategic HR system (Wahab, 2025).

#### **F. Participative Decision-Making and Voice Mechanisms**

Teacher participation in institutional decision-making improves both job satisfaction and organizational outcomes, yet Nigerian educational institutions

often operate with top-down governance structures. Establishing teacher-led academic committees, instructional councils, and anonymous feedback systems creates formal channels for staff input on curriculum choices, resource allocation, and school policies. The HOPE-Education programme's emphasis on strengthening education systems includes building connections between teachers, students, and communities (Tyohemba, 2025). Research on HRM practices in Nigerian tertiary institutions confirms that employee participation ranks among the three most important practices for improving retention, alongside remuneration and recognition (Ayobamidele, 2025). Institutions should also establish regular staff forums where administrators report on strategic decisions and solicit input before implementation. The National Coordinator of SERVICOM has specifically recommended community engagements that foster partnerships with parents, local organizations, and community leaders, thereby integrating teacher voice with broader stakeholder participation (Anyanwu, 2024).

### **G. Leveraging Policy Reforms and External Partnerships**

Individual institutions cannot solve systemic HR challenges alone. Strategic HR enhancement requires engagement with ongoing policy reforms and external partnerships. President Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda has placed education, digital economy development, and human capital advancement at the centre of national development strategy (Lokoja, 2025). The administration's seven-year moratorium on establishing new federal universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education allows the government to refocus resources on improving existing institutions rather than diluting them. The \$500 million HOPE-GOV programme, implemented in partnership with the World Bank, specifically aims to strengthen financial and human resource management in basic education and primary healthcare. Educational institutions should actively participate in these programmes, draw down available matching grants (noting that N54 billion in UBEC matching grants remained unaccessed as of March 2024), and advocate for the full implementation of teacher welfare packages (Jide, 2025). The European Union's investment in teacher resilience and professional development across six states provides a template for how external partnerships can supplement domestic funding.

Based on the preceding analysis, Nigerian educational institutions should implement an integrated set of strategies: deploy data-driven workforce

planning systems to match teacher supply with enrollment demand; adopt competency-based recruitment and value-aligned selection; implement continuous professional development through both traditional workshops and mobile-based communities of practice; establish developmental performance management systems linked to career progression; advocate for full implementation of approved salary scales and welfare packages while supplementing with non-monetary recognition; create formal teacher voice mechanisms in institutional governance; and actively leverage World Bank, UNESCO, and EU partnership programmes for capacity building and system strengthening. These strategies, implemented in concert rather than in isolation, constitute a coherent SHRM framework adapted to the resource constraints and structural realities of Nigerian educational institutions.

### **Challenges faced by Human Resource Management in Nigerian educational institutions**

Human Resource Management in Nigerian educational institutions is confronting an accumulation of severe and interconnected challenges. The challenges can be grouped into four main categories: chronic underfunding, severe shortages and attrition, political and administrative constraints, and quality deficits.

#### **A. Chronic Underfunding and Resource Scarcity**

The most fundamental challenge is chronic underfunding. While the federal education budget increased in nominal terms, rising from N1.54 trillion in 2023 to N3.52 trillion in 2025, it has consistently remained between 6% and 7% of the national budget (Akintola, 2025). This is far below the UNESCO recommendation of 15-26% (Femi, 2025).

The immediate consequence is a direct shortfall in the resources needed to pay teachers. An analysis of the 2025 budget revealed a shortfall of approximately N290 billion between the N1.64 trillion allocated for personnel costs and the N1.93 trillion required for teacher salaries. This funding gap makes it difficult to recruit and retain qualified teachers (Wahab, 2025). Beyond salaries, the lack of resources has led to "inadequate infrastructure and low staff morale". Many universities are forced to rely on Internally Generated Revenue for basic operations, which should be directed toward research and development (Femi, 2025).

## **B. Severe Staff Shortages and the Brain Drain Crisis**

Chronic underfunding has directly fueled a severe manpower crisis across the education sector. In the basic education sub-sector, the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) reported a shortage of 194,876 teachers in public primary schools nationwide, with secondary schools also in a critical state (Agbajileke, 2025; Moses, 2025). This shortage is compounded by the fact that many state governments have failed to recruit new teachers for over five years.

The tertiary education sector is facing an even more acute challenge: a devastating "brain drain." Over the past five years, the University of Lagos (UNILAG) lost nearly 1,800 of its 3,000 academic staff—60% of its workforce—who fled abroad for better opportunities (Lawal, 2025). Across the country, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) revealed that no fewer than 309 professors resigned within a nine-month period in 2025. At UNILAG, 239 first-class graduates employed as lecturers left within seven years, with only 17 remaining.

This exodus is driven by a combination of "poor remuneration, uncondusive working conditions, and low motivation" (Femi, 2025). This has resulted in an untenable faculty-student ratio of 1:60 at UNILAG, compared to the global benchmark of 1:16. The National Universities Commission (NUC) confirmed that this "brain drain is already undermining Nigeria's global competitiveness in the education sector".

## **C. Political Interference, Ineffective Recruitment, and Policy Gaps**

The HR challenges are worsened by political and administrative issues. The recruitment process is often undermined by "favoritism in recruitment and external interference in disciplinary actions" (Mafindi, 2024). There is also a lack of institutional autonomy, with ministries, departments, and agencies frequently interfering in the functions of university governing councils, including their power to hire and disengage staff.

Furthermore, a significant policy implementation gap exists. While the federal government approved a special salary scale, a harmonised retirement age, and low-cost housing for rural teachers in 2020, these welfare packages remain unimplemented in most states (Agbajileke, 2025; Moses, 2025). Similarly, the full implementation of the N70,000 national minimum wage for teachers has stalled in at least ten states.

#### **D. Quality Deficit: Unqualified Teachers and a Demoralised Workforce**

The shortage of qualified personnel has forced many schools to hire unqualified staff. Over 47 million pupils in primary and junior secondary schools are taught by some 354,650 teachers, "many of whom are unqualified" (ThisDay, 2025). This is particularly prevalent in unregistered private schools, where proprietors often lack the skills to make proper hiring decisions (Punch, 2024). The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) has threatened to publicly expose such unqualified teachers.

This situation has produced a demoralised and demotivated workforce. Teachers and lecturers report "low motivation, high absenteeism and attrition" (Oballum *et al.*, 2024). The consequences are directly felt in student outcomes, as a demoralised workforce struggles to meet the educational needs of students. As Professor Yakubu Ochefu, Secretary General of the Committee of Vice Chancellors, summarised, Nigerian universities are battling "poor funding, inadequate manpower and infrastructural decay" which have led to "demoralised workers with consequences on student outcomes".

#### **Conclusion**

This conceptual paper set out to examine how Strategic Human Resource Management can drive organizational performance in educational institutions, with a specific application to the Nigerian context. The analysis has addressed three core research questions. First, SHRM principles are conceptualized within educational settings through vertical alignment of HR practices with institutional mission and horizontal consistency across recruitment, development, appraisal, and compensation. Second, the theoretical mechanisms linking SHRM to performance include the AMO framework (ability, motivation, opportunity), behavioral shaping of discretionary effort, and mediating pathways of psychological climate, human capital, and organizational citizenship behavior. Third, the proposed conceptual framework specifies antecedents (strategic recruitment, aligned professional development, developmental performance management, equitable compensation, participative decision-making), mediators (teacher engagement, instructional climate, adaptive capacity), moderators (leadership style, institutional autonomy, external environment), and outcomes (student learning, reduced turnover, institutional reputation).

The application to Nigerian educational institutions reveals a persistent implementation gap. While the theoretical benefits of SHRM are well established, Nigerian schools and universities face chronic underfunding (education budgets at 6–7% of national expenditure), a national teacher shortage exceeding 194,000 at primary level, and a devastating brain drain that has seen universities lose up to 60% of academic staff. These challenges are compounded by political interference in recruitment, stalled implementation of approved welfare packages, and a demoralised workforce where unqualified teachers remain prevalent. Despite these constraints, the paper has identified actionable strategies: data-driven workforce planning, competency-based recruitment, continuous professional development through mobile platforms, developmental performance management systems, non-monetary recognition programmes, formal teacher voice mechanisms, and active leverage of external partnerships (World Bank HOPE-Education, UNESCO-EU EISS, UBEC matching grants). These strategies, implemented as integrated bundles rather than isolated fixes, constitute a context-adapted SHRM framework for resource-constrained environments.

The paper makes three theoretical contributions. It extends SHRM literature beyond for-profit corporate settings to non-profit, service-intensive, professional bureaucracies. It reconceptualises organizational performance in education as a multi-dimensional construct (academic, operational, stakeholder) rather than a single metric. It identifies unique mediating pathways (instructional climate, adaptive capacity) that are specific to educational contexts. Practically, the paper provides educational leaders, HR administrators, and policymakers with a conceptual roadmap for moving from transactional personnel management to strategic human capital development, even under severe resource limitations.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. As a conceptual paper, the proposed framework has not been empirically tested in Nigerian educational institutions. The analysis relies on secondary data and published reports, which may contain reporting biases. The focus on formal primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions excludes non-formal and vocational education sectors. The moderating effects of regional variations (e.g., North-East conflict zones vs. South-West relatively stable states) are not fully explored.

Future research should empirically validate the proposed conceptual model using mixed methods: longitudinal surveys tracking SHRM implementation

and performance outcomes in a sample of Nigerian schools, comparative case studies of high-performing versus low-performing institutions with similar resource endowments, and action research on the adoption of specific practices (e.g., teacher voice committees, mobile-based professional development). Researchers should also investigate unintended consequences of strategic HR reforms, such as increased teacher stress from performance monitoring or exclusionary effects of competency-based recruitment in rural areas.

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