

ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURIAL MIND-SET AMONG EMPLOYEES OF ADAMAWA STATE UNIVERSITY, MUBI, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in developing entrepreneurial mind-sets among the employees of Adamawa State University, Mubi, Nigeria. Given the growing need for innovation and adaptability in Public Administration, fostering an entrepreneurial mind-set in civil servants is crucial for improving public sector efficiency and service delivery. The research examines the influence of Human Resource practices, including training and shaping public servants' mind-set towards entrepreneurship. Through a mixed-methods approach, data will be collected from the staff of Adamawa State University, Mubi, Adamawa State, Nigeria. Quantitative data will be gathered through surveys, while qualitative data will be drawn from interviews with some management staff of the university. The study aims to identify the challenges that hinder the development of entrepreneurial thinking within the public service and to propose Human Resource interventions that can nurture innovation. The findings are expected to contribute to both theoretical and practical knowledge, offering strategies for public sector reforms that promote entrepreneurial behaviour among government employees.

Keywords: Civil service, innovation, public sector, entrepreneurship, Human Resource Management

1.1 Introduction

In today's rapidly changing global economy, the demand for innovation, responsiveness, and efficiency has placed renewed emphasis on the internal capacities of public institutions to adapt and create value. Universities, as public tertiary institutions, are no longer mere repositories of knowledge but are expected to be catalysts for socio-economic transformation. Central to this transformation is the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mind-set among employees characterized by opportunity recognition, proactivity, creativity, risk awareness, and a business orientation even within traditionally bureaucratic settings (Drucker, 1985)

Human Resource Management (HRM), when practiced strategically, becomes a critical mechanism for shaping such mind-sets by aligning employee development, motivation, and organizational culture with innovation goals. Strategic Human Resource Management frameworks advance the idea that Human Resource Management professionals should act as partners in building organizational capability, embedding practices that enable employees to

behave entrepreneurially rather than simply executing prescribed roles. (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

In the Nigerian public sector, and specifically in higher education, Human Resource Management does not operate in a vacuum; it contends with institutional, political, and socio-economic constraints that can blunt its transformative potential. Structural issues such as bureaucratic inertia, political interference, patronage, weak implementation of policies, and inconsistent training regimes hinder the systematic development of human capital capable of innovative engagement (Ikyanyon, Chacha, & Frynas, i2024)

Adamawa State University, Mubi (ADSU), operates within this broader national and institutional milieu. The university's capacity to contribute to regional development and public value is tied to how effectively its human resources are managed to engender innovation. Challenges such as limited operational resources, bureaucratic delays, inadequate continuous professional development, and weak alignment between Human Resource Management strategies and institutional entrepreneurship objectives can constrain the development of an entrepreneurial mind-set among staff. This study, therefore, focuses on examining how Human Resource Management practices influence the development of entrepreneurial mind-sets among employees of Adamawa State University, Mubi. Specifically, it investigates how Human Resource Management practices shape business orientation, creativity, and innovation, while also identifying Human Resource Management strategies and institutional barriers that either promote or hinder entrepreneurship among both academic and non-academic staff.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria's public sector, there remains a significant gap in the strategic alignment between Human Resource Management practices and the cultivation of entrepreneurial capabilities among employees. Despite national policy drives toward economic diversification and individual empowerment, public institutions like Adamawa State University, Mubi, still operate within bureaucratic cultures that emphasize routine and compliance over creativity and innovation. Employees are often not equipped or encouraged to pursue entrepreneurial interests such as engaging in side businesses or developing independent trade skills that can supplement their income and enhance their productivity. According to Olowu and Sako (2002), the lack of institutional mechanisms to stimulate innovative and entrepreneurial behaviour in public institutions continues to hinder socio-economic development. This research aims to bridge this gap by investigating how Human Resource Management interventions can foster an entrepreneurial mind-set among public university employees, thereby enhancing both individual welfare and institutional performance.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this paper is to explore the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in developing entrepreneurial mind-sets among the employees of Adamawa State University, Mubi, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are:

- i. To examine the extent to which Human Resource Management (HRM) practices can influence the development of entrepreneurial mind-sets, including business and trade orientation, among employees of Adamawa State University, Mubi.
- ii. To identify the Human Resource Management strategies and institutional factors that can promote or hinder innovation and entrepreneurial engagement among academic and non-academic staff in public universities.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. To what extent do Human Resource Management practices at Adamawa State University, Mubi influence employees' entrepreneurial mind-sets and engagement in business activities?
- ii. What specific Human Resource Management strategies are in place at Adamawa State University, Mubi to promote or hinder entrepreneurship among staff?

1.5 Hypotheses

To guide this study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between Human Resource Management practices and the development of entrepreneurial mind-sets among employees of Adamawa State University, Mubi.

H₂: Human Resource Management interventions positively influence employees' engagement in business and trade-related entrepreneurial activities within the university context.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a critical role in driving organizational innovation by fostering a work environment that encourages creativity, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Innovation in organizations is increasingly seen as a key factor for achieving competitive advantage and long-term sustainability, especially in knowledge-based institutions such as universities (Mahdia, 2024). HRM contributes to innovation through various mechanisms, including recruitment and selection processes, training and development programs, performance management systems, and reward structures that incentivize innovative behavior (Seeck & Diehl, 2017).

In the context of higher education institutions (HEIs), innovation is essential for maintaining relevance in a rapidly changing global landscape. Universities are expected not only to produce knowledge but also to apply that knowledge to solve real-world problems. This is particularly true for institutions like the University for Development Studies (UDS), which was established with the mission to blend academic learning with community development (University for

Development Studies [UDS], 2023). HR managers in such institutions must adopt strategic approaches to foster an organizational culture that supports both academic excellence and practical innovation.

2.2 The Role of HR in Fostering Innovation in Higher Education Institutions

In higher education institutions, the role of HR extends beyond traditional administrative functions to include the promotion of innovation at both the individual and organizational levels. According to Bergendahl and Magnusson (2014), HR managers can foster innovation by creating policies that encourage cross-functional teamwork, open communication, and continuous learning. This is particularly important in universities where collaboration across different departments and disciplines is essential for driving innovation.

At UDS, for example, the HR department has implemented several initiatives aimed at promoting innovation within the institution. These include recruitment processes that prioritize diversity and creativity, as well as training programs designed to enhance staff competencies in areas such as research methodologies and digital literacy (UDS, 2023). Similarly, other Ghanaian universities such as the University of Ghana (UG) and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) have recognized the importance of integrating HR strategies with institutional goals related to innovation. For instance, UG has partnered with the Chartered Institute of Human Resource Management Practitioners to promote professional development for HR students through industry collaborations (University of Ghana Business School [UGBS], 2024).

Moreover, research has shown that HR practices such as performance management systems that reward innovative behaviour can significantly enhance an organization's capacity for innovation (Looise & van Riemsdijk, 2004). In universities like UDS, where the focus is on solving real world problems through community engagement, these practices are particularly relevant. By aligning performance metrics with institutional goals related to innovation, HR managers can create a culture where staff is motivated to think creatively and collaborate across disciplines.

2.3 Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) and Innovation

The concept of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) provides a useful framework for understanding how HR practices can be aligned with organizational strategies to promote innovation. Strategic Human Resource Management involves designing Human Resource policies that not only meet immediate operational needs but also support long-term

For example, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) has adopted Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices aimed at fostering a culture of innovation among its staff. These include strategic recruitment processes that seek to attract individuals with diverse skill sets and innovative mind-sets (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST, 2023). Similarly, the University of Cape Coast (UCC) has implemented SHRM practices focused on training and development programs designed to enhance staff competencies in areas critical to organizational innovation (University of Cape Coast [UCC], 2023).

The integration of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) into university management is crucial for fostering an environment conducive to innovation. According to (Natalicchio 2018), universities that adopt Strategic Human Resource Management practices are better positioned to respond to changes in their external environment by leveraging their internal human resources effectively. This is particularly important in African universities like University for Development Studies (UDS) Ghana, where resource constraints often limit the scope of innovative initiatives. By aligning Human Resource practices with institutional goals related to community engagement and problem-solving, University for Development Studies (UDS) Ghana has been able to foster a culture of innovation despite these challenges.

2.4 Human Resource Management Strategies that Support Employee Entrepreneurship

The following are among the Human Resource Management Strategies that Support Employee Entrepreneurship:

i. Recruitment and Selection

Strategic recruitment and selection processes that identify candidates with proactive personality traits, creativity, and a tolerance for ambiguity lay the foundation for entrepreneurial behaviour. Organizations that explicitly seek individuals inclined toward innovation, and that align role expectations with opportunity-seeking behaviour, are better positioned to cultivate internal entrepreneurs. The broader literature on corporate entrepreneurship positions person–organization fit and the deliberate hiring for entrepreneurial mind-set as antecedents to internal venturing. (Li, M. (2025).

ii. Training, Development, and Managerial Coaching

Training and development initiatives that build employees' skills, knowledge, and self-efficacy support entrepreneurial initiative. The AMO (Ability-Motivation-Opportunity) framework, applied in contexts of innovative work behaviour, shows that investments in training (ability enhancement) significantly predict employees' innovation-related behaviours when coupled with appropriate rewards and autonomy. Managerial coaching, specifically, helps employees understand why and how to pursue entrepreneurial projects, translating latent potential into concrete internal ventures. (Killieaner wix 2022).

iii. Empowerment, Autonomy, and Psychological Safety

Psychological empowerment comprising meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact is a critical mediating mechanism between Human Resource Management practices and entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour. High-involvement and high-performance work systems (HPWS) that deliberately grant employees autonomy and decision-making latitude foster innovative and entrepreneurial behaviour by enhancing their perceived control and ownership. (Sinhole & Sanj 2022). Relatedly, creating psychological safety (so employees can experiment without fear of retribution) has been linked to greater creative output, which is essential for entrepreneurial experimentation. Tangel frine 2022).

iv. Performance Management and Reward Systems

Performance appraisal systems that recognize and reward innovative effort even when fail signal organizational support for entrepreneurship experiments. Incentive structures that balance short-term performance with long-term exploratory initiatives reduce risk aversion and encourage employees to propose and test novel ideas. The linkage between well-designed reward systems and innovative work behavior is a recurrent theme; inappropriate or purely efficiency focused rewards can dampen initiative, whereas recognition of entrepreneurial attempts amplifies (Escribá-Carda, N 2022).

v. Organizational Culture and Leadership Support

Culture and leadership that openly endorse risk-taking, learning from failure, and cross-functional collaboration are vital. Top management support and perceived organizational backing act as facilitators of entrepreneurial intention and behaviour, by shaping employee beliefs about whether entrepreneurial efforts are valued and sustained. Leaders who model entrepreneurial thinking and provide visible endorsement reduce cultural inertia and empower employees to internalize entrepreneurial norms. (Hernández-Perlines, F. (2022).

vi. Structured Internal Ecosystems: Programs and Resources

Formal mechanisms such as internal incubators, hackathons, innovation labs, and structured ideation programs create safe, resourced spaces where employees can develop and pilot ideas. These systems, when supported by Human Resource through allocation of time, mentoring, and tools, turn isolated creative impulses into systematic internal ventures. HR's strategic partnership in designing these platforms also reinforces talent development and retention, making entrepreneurship a lever for engagement. (Liane Brine 2023)

2.5 Human Resource Management Strategies and Conditions that Hinder Employee Entrepreneurship

These are among the Human Resource Management Strategies and Conditions that Hinder Employee Entrepreneurship:

i. Rigid Control and Excessive Bureaucracy

Overly centralized decision-making, tight supervision and bureaucratic procedures stifle autonomy and slow down the experimentation cycles necessary for entrepreneurship. When Human Resource practices emphasize compliance, routine performance metrics, and risk minimization without room for discretion, employees feel disempowered to act entrepreneurially. (Cornell 2023).

ii. Misaligned Reward Systems and Short-Termism

Reward systems that prioritize immediate operational efficiency or penalize failure create a culture of risk aversion. Employees become hesitant to propose novel ideas if the appraisal system lacks tolerance for smart failure or if entrepreneurial efforts are not visibly linked to career advancement or recognition. (Emerald 2025).

iii. Lack of Organizational Support and Resource Constraints

Perceived lack of organizational support due to scarcity of time, funding, or managerial attention—weakens entrepreneurial intention. Even when individuals are willing and capable,

absence of structural support (e.g., protected time, mentoring, access to networks) means promising ideas wither. (Taylor & Francis 2023).

iv. Cultural Barriers: Fear of Failure and Internal Politics

Cultural norms that punish mistakes publicly, overemphasize hierarchy, or create internal politics undermine employees' willingness to pursue entrepreneurial initiatives. False beliefs (such as innovation only stemming from "entrepreneurs" rather than internal talent) and internal skepticism can reduce entrepreneurial intensity unless actively countered by Human Resource driven cultural interventions.

When Human Resource Management practices are implemented piecemeal e.g., providing training without enabling autonomy or rewarding initiative without giving decision space their effectiveness is diluted. The configuration and coherence of Human Resource practices matter; inconsistent application creates confusion about expectations and undermines the psychological states. (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

3.0 Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by the Human Capital Theory, originally developed by Theodore W. Schultz (1961) and significantly advanced by Gary Becker (1964). The theory posits that individuals possess inherent capacities, knowledge, skills, and abilities that can be enhanced through purposeful investments such as education, training, and capacity development. These investments, considered as forms of capital, yield measurable returns in the form of increased productivity, innovation, and economic growth (Becker, 1993). Human capital, therefore, is not just an economic asset but a critical enabler of entrepreneurial capacity and organizational transformation.

In the context of this study, the Human Capital Theory provides a robust framework for understanding how Human Resource Management (HRM) practices contribute to shaping the entrepreneurial mind-set of employees in public institutions. Specifically, the theory supports the view that training and development, career planning, performance appraisal, and other HR interventions directly influence employees' ability and readiness to engage in entrepreneurial activities. These may include involvement in small-scale businesses, trade ventures, and innovation-driven enterprises—often outside but complementary to their formal public sector roles.

Applied to Adamawa State University, Mubi (ADSU), the Human Capital Theory becomes particularly relevant. In a resource-constrained public institution where job security is increasingly uncertain, employees are compelled to look beyond traditional bureaucratic roles. Here, HRM can play a transformative role by deliberately building entrepreneurial capabilities—through structured training, mentorship programs, support for professional development, and exposure to entrepreneurial models. When HRM functions as a strategic partner rather than merely administrative, it becomes a driver for nurturing the kind of skills and mind-sets that encourage innovation, proactivity, and economic self-reliance among staff.

Moreover, the theory emphasizes the role of institutions in enabling or hindering capital development. At Adamawa State University, Mubi, the lack of structured support for entrepreneurial thinking among staff may result in latent entrepreneurial potential remaining underutilized. By investing in human capital through HR policies, the university can unlock this potential and create a workforce that is both institutionally committed and entrepreneurially empowered.

Thus, the Human Capital Theory is highly applicable to this study as it directly aligns with the paper's goal: to explore how Human Resource Management can shape and develop the entrepreneurial orientation of public sector employees. It not only explains why human resource investment matters but also provides a rationale for institutional reforms that promote innovation, adaptability, and self-sufficiency within the civil service framework.

4.0 Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative aspect enabled the researcher to collect numerical data through structured questionnaires and to analyse trends and relationships among variables statistically. The qualitative aspect, on the other hand, involved semi-structured interviews that allowed for an in-depth understanding of employees' perceptions, experiences, and insights regarding the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in shaping entrepreneurial mind-sets. The rationale for adopting this design lies in its ability to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem by triangulating data from both sources.

4.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all employees of Adamawa State University, Mubi. Specifically, this included 290 academic staff, 460 senior non-teaching staff, and 102 junior non-teaching staff, making a total population of 852 staff members (Establishment Unit, ADSU Mubi, 2025). These categories were selected because they represent the full spectrum of Human Resource Management practices within the institution and vary in their exposure to institutional policies, training programs, and entrepreneurial engagement opportunities.

4.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Given the nature of the population, a stratified random sampling technique was adopted. This technique was deemed appropriate to ensure proportionate representation across the three categories of employees in the university: academic staff, senior non-teaching staff, and junior non-teaching staff. Each stratum was treated as an independent subgroup, and simple random sampling was used within each stratum to select the respondents.

To determine the appropriate sample size, the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table was consulted. For a population of 852, the table recommends a sample size of 265 respondents. The sample was then proportionately distributed across the three staff categories. Accordingly, the academic staff, who make up 290 of the total population (approximately 34.04%), were allocated 90 respondents. The senior non-teaching staff, comprising 460 members (53.99%),

were allocated 143 respondents. The junior non-teaching staff, totalling 102 (11.97%), were allocated 32 respondents. This proportional allocation ensured that the sample reflected the population structure of the university staff, thereby increasing the reliability and validity of the study.

4.4 Sources and Methods of Data Collection

Data for the study were collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was designed based on the study's objectives and hypotheses and included both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to measure employees' perceptions of Human Resource Management practices and entrepreneurial orientation. The interview component targeted selected Human Resource personnel and management staff to obtain detailed and contextual insights that could not be captured through the questionnaire alone. Secondary data were obtained from existing literature, including journal articles, books, reports, and institutional records. These helped to contextualize the study, support the development of research instruments, and corroborate primary findings during analysis.

4.5 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to expert review by scholars in the fields of Human Resource Management and Entrepreneurship. Their feedback helped in refining the items to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. A pilot test was also conducted using 20 staff members not included in the final sample. The responses were analyzed to identify ambiguities and inconsistencies, which were subsequently corrected. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with a minimum acceptable value of 0.70. The test results indicated acceptable internal consistency of the scale items, confirming that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

4.6 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize the responses. Inferential statistics, particularly Chi-square and regression analysis, were employed to test the hypotheses and determine the significance of relationships between HRM practices and the development of entrepreneurial mind-sets among staff. The qualitative data from interviews were analysed thematically. Responses were transcribed and coded to identify patterns, themes, and insights that complemented the quantitative findings. This triangulation of data sources enhanced the robustness and depth of the analysis.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

The findings from the study clearly demonstrate that human resource management (HRM) practices in Adamawa State University (ADSU) have a significant impact on the development of entrepreneurial mindsets among employees. Based on the questionnaire responses, which

covered Human Resource Management practices, entrepreneurial mindset indicators, and institutional/cultural factors, it was observed that the university's Human Resource policies and practices are gradually promoting innovation and creativity among staff, though certain institutional barriers still exist.

From the data gathered, it was found that recruitment and selection processes in Adamawa State University, Mubi increasingly consider creativity and entrepreneurial potential. This shows that the university values candidates with innovative abilities and problem-solving skills, which are essential components of an entrepreneurial mindset. When employees are recruited based on competence and creativity, they tend to exhibit initiative and innovation in their work.

The study also revealed that training and development programmes in Adamawa State University, Mubi promote innovation and entrepreneurial thinking. Respondents agreed that regular workshops and training sessions have exposed them to new ideas, broadened their problem-solving abilities, and improved their self-confidence. This finding underscores the fact that Human Resource Management plays a vital role in capacity building and in enhancing employees' potential to identify and utilize opportunities within and outside the institution.

Similarly, the findings indicated that performance appraisal methods recognize initiative and creativity among staff. Employees are more motivated to think innovatively when their creative efforts are acknowledged. This kind of appraisal system not only enhances performance but also encourages a sense of ownership and self-reliance among employees.

Furthermore, it was found that Human Resource policies in ADSU are flexible enough to support side businesses and consultancy work. This flexibility fosters a sense of freedom and responsibility, which in turn encourages staff to explore entrepreneurial activities without fear of institutional punishment. By allowing staff to engage in legitimate side ventures, the University indirectly contributes to economic empowerment and the cultivation of entrepreneurial orientation.

The study also identified a number of institutional and cultural constraints that hinder employees from fully exhibiting entrepreneurial behaviour. Bureaucratic structures, rigid administrative processes, and the fear of disciplinary action discourage innovative thinking. In addition, a culture resistant to change makes it difficult for employees to take risks or initiate new ideas. These barriers confirm that while Human Resource Management practices at Adamawa State University, Mubi are gradually evolving to support innovation, there remains a need for a more enabling institutional culture.

In summary, the findings of this study confirmed that strategic Human Resource Management practices particularly in the areas of recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and flexible policy implementation, play a crucial role in developing entrepreneurial mindsets among university employees. For Adamawa State University, Mubi to fully harness its human capital, management must continue to reform Human Resource policies and foster a culture that rewards creativity, innovation, and calculated risk-taking.

6.0 Summary and Conclusion

This study examined the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in developing entrepreneurial mindsets among the employees of Adamawa State University (ADSU), Mubi. The findings revealed that Human Resource Management practices such as recruitment, training and development, performance appraisal, and flexible policy implementation significantly contribute to enhancing creativity, innovation, and self-reliance among staff.

It was established that the university's recruitment and selection processes now value creativity and problem-solving skills, while training and development initiatives help employees acquire entrepreneurial competencies. Performance appraisal systems that recognize initiative and innovation were also found to motivate staff toward creative thinking. Furthermore, flexible Human Resource policies allowing side businesses and consultancy work have encouraged self-employment tendencies and economic independence among employees.

However, the study also found that bureaucratic structures, institutional rigidity, and fear of sanctions continue to hinder employees' entrepreneurial drive. The persistence of such cultural and structural constraints limits the extent to which Human Resource Management can fully nurture an entrepreneurial workforce.

In conclusion, the study underscores the fact that effective Human Resource Management practices are vital instruments for cultivating entrepreneurial mindsets among university employees. By promoting innovation, risk-taking, and creativity, Human Resource Management contributes not only to individual career growth but also to institutional development and national economic progress.

7.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. The management of Adamawa State University, Mubi should develop and enforce Human Resource policies that explicitly promote entrepreneurial initiatives among staff. This could include support for staff to run consultancies, innovations, and small business ventures.
- ii. Continuous professional development workshops should be designed to integrate entrepreneurship education and innovative problem-solving skills into regular Human Resource training schedules.
- iii. The appraisal mechanism should include innovation and creativity as measurable performance indicators. Employees who demonstrate entrepreneurial behaviour should be duly recognized and rewarded.
- iv. Management should simplify administrative procedures and decentralize decision making processes to enhance flexibility and encourage initiative at all staff levels.

- v. Adamawa State University, Mubi should partner with entrepreneurial development agencies, private sector firms, and financial institutions to provide incubation opportunities and access to funding for staff with viable business ideas.

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