



## Lecturers' Participation in Capacity Building Programmes in South-South Nigeria: Implications for Sustainable Development

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**Abstract.** This survey study examined university lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes in south-south Nigeria and its implication for sustainable development. It focuses on the extent of lecturers' participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and mentoring aspects of capacity building programmes. One research question and two hypotheses were drawn to direct this investigation. A stratified random sample of 320 lecturers was drawn from a population of 3203 lecturers in four federal universities located in this area of study. Data were collected using an instrument called "Capacity Building Programme Participation Questionnaire (CBPPQ)", constructed by the researchers. Data collected were subjected to statistical analysis with the use of descriptive statistics, Population t-test and Independent t-test. Findings revealed that university lecturers participate mostly in conferences than any other capacity building programme. Lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes is significantly low with respect to workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and mentoring. There is no significant difference between male and female lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes. It was recommended that enabling environment should be provided whereby university lecturers are encouraged to participate fully in capacity building programmes.

**Keywords:** University lecturers' capacity building; Sustainable development.

### 1 Introduction

Capacity building programmes have been adjudged to be critical factors in Nigerian universities, culminating in their positions as major determinants of lecturers' professional advancement. Apart from gaining pedagogical and content knowledge, lecturers' participation in the programmes enhances

capacity building effectiveness in universities. It transforms role performance abilities and skills of lecturers in such a way and manner that they meet and fit adequately in the challenges of their jobs. Without it, a missing gap evolves whereby universities become shadows of themselves.

Capacity building, according to United Nations Environment Programme (2006), is building abilities, relationships and values that will enable organisations, groups and individuals to improve their performance and achieve their developmental objectives. It often refers to strengthening the skills, competences and abilities of people and communities in developing societies so they can overcome the causes of their exclusion and suffering. It includes human resource development which is the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively (Wikipedia, 2011).

Philbin (1996) defines it (the concept of capacity building) as a process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that individuals, organisations and communities need to survive, adapt and thrive in the fast changing world. It focuses on understanding the obstacles that inhibit people, institutions, governments, international organisations and non-governmental organisations from realizing their developmental goals while enhancing the abilities that will allow them to achieve measurable and sustainable results.

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (2006) points out that capacity building takes place on an individual level, institutional level and societal level. On an individual level, it requires the development of conditions that allow individual participants to build and enhance existing knowledge and skills. It also calls for the establishment of conditions that will allow individuals to engage in the process of learning and adapting to change. On an institutional level, it involves aiding pre-existing institutions and supporting them in forming sound policies, organisational structures and effective method of management. At the societal level, it supports the establishment of a more interactive public administration that learns equally from its actions and from feedback it receives from the population at large. It is more than a training programme. It is based on needs analysis and audits capability and potential. It requires the design of strategic interventions that employ and challenge the enhancement of strengths, exploit opportunities, confront constraints and supplement gaps and limitations (Southwell, Gannaway, Orell, Charmers & Abraham, 2005).

The main function of universities is to train the future generation of citizens and develop capacity in all fields of knowledge, both in technology as well as in the natural, human and social sciences (Akbar, 2003). This function is executed through the impartation of relevant knowledge and skills to people and lecturers to enable them acquire the requisite competences that enhance

value-adding decision-making processes, and as well develop the requisite capacity to effectively handle challenges enshrined in their job positions and ultimately improve their job performance (Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development Studies, 2010).

Basic information and education institutions in nations all over the world. They are generators of knowledge (through research, analysis, information, integration and discussion). They store knowledge in their libraries and they pass on knowledge and information through formal instruction, forums, non-formal education and publications (Colle & Yonggong, 2002). Universities, therefore require enhancement of their capabilities to generate and disseminate knowledge from time to time if they are to remain relevant in the present world realities where globalization holds a pride of place. This will enable them meet yearnings and aspirations of the citizenry by ensuring that their roles meet the demands of the present time, and as well as that of the future. In order to do this, universities' capacity building has to be an enhancement or enlargement process within the context of systems of work with engineered capacity limits, aimed at increasing of installed capacity to do work, that is the engineering or re-engineering of structures for the performance of functions (Amoda, 2003).

Therefore, increasing capacity is the goal of capacity building and capacity increasing is always actions taken to prevent collapse of stressed structures in universities. This by implication means that every capacity building decision begins with demand exceeding supply. The pressure is demand; the response is supply. What is demanded in our universities is more than what is already in supply. (Amoda, 2003).

However, capacity building efforts of universities in south-south Nigeria has been hampered by institutional inadequacies, chief among which is paucity of funds. This has negatively affected institutional provisions for lecturers' participation in conferences, seminars, workshops and ICT training. The consequence of this is low research productivity among lecturers, because these programmes play vital role in enhancing research capacity. It therefore follows that poor funding results to poor participation in capacity building programmes and to a greater extent to poor research productivity and lastly poor ranking of universities in the world. It is based on these issues that this study is geared towards providing answer to this question: What is the extent of lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes in terms of workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and mentoring, and its implication for sustainable development of universities?

### **1.1 Research Question**

Which capacity building programme has the highest level of participation by university lecturers?

## **1.2 Hypotheses**

1. University lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes in terms of workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and mentoring is not significantly low.
2. Male and female lecturers do not differ significantly in their participation in capacity building programmes.

## **2 Literature review**

Capacity building demands for effective and efficient administrators. This is so because it is more of an institutional affair, and so requires purposeful and result-oriented administration to drive it. However, inefficiency has proliferated under such circumstances whereby many institutions of higher learning in Nigeria are flats operating under system collapse stress (Amoda, 2003).

Capacity building has three different dimensions namely: building awareness, building analytical capacity and building decision-making capacity. Building awareness involves offering activities, presenting new topics or demonstrating new methods through workshops, seminars and conferences. The presentations are meant to create awareness about a particular activity, topic or method so as to enable beneficiaries apply them in performing assigned tasks. Building analytical capacity involves designing a capacity building programme using interactive style of presentation. It uses exercises, case studies, field visits and other elements of experiential learning, which promote critical thinking among the beneficiaries. Building decision-making capacity has to do with laying emphasis on learning-by-doing as well as formal education. The beneficiaries are exposed to professionals to receive training on project completion. By so doing, the beneficiaries acquire learning-by-doing experiences. These have different targets: human capacities and institutional capacities. Each one involves different stakeholder groups and requires a different strategy. A lot of capacity building activities that is currently offered through workshops, seminars and conferences remain at an awareness raising level. It is the analytical and decision-making capacities that are needed to sustain a constant process of change (United Nations Environment Programme, 2006).

According to this body, a wide range of approaches is available to build capacities including training, formal education, capacity building projects, networking and others. A training workshop usually can go as far as building human capacities at an awareness raising level. If specifically designed, training may also succeed in building analytical capacity.

Chase (2005) reported that academic staffs feel that their development is greatly affected by freedom to attend conferences as this enhances their professional status, raises their awareness of new developments in the field. Thus, conferences provide opportunities to those academics that participate in them to share information and ideas with the experienced ones; experienced academics to transmit institutional, planning and management skills that can help new academic staff to break the isolation, reflect on a day's experience and redirect efforts for the following days (Hayden, 2003).

Nakpodia (2001) reported that seminars are organised for personnel in school organisations to keep them adequately informed of certain developments in academics or education which are vital for the performance of their primary functions. This accounts in no small measure in enhancing their role performance skills and provide on-the-job training to expose them to new techniques concerning content and pedagogy (Jacob & Lefgren, 2001).

Workshops focus on academic staff training and development which facilitate the imparting of specific skills, abilities and knowledge to them. Sergiovanni and Elliot (2000) found that in workshops, participants are actively involved in contributing data, solving a problem or conducting an analysis using quantifiable data. The results in form of feedback enable participants to compare their reactions with those of others and thereafter the results are discussed and analysed to develop generalizations and implications for practice.

Akuegwu, Udida and Nwi-ue (2007) found that academic staff access to training on ICT equipment is significantly low. That is, academic staff has little or no exposure to training on ICT equipment. This means that academic staff opportunity to receive training on the operation of ICT equipment is yet to bear fruit. Thus, the capacity building effort in this area is still in low ebb.

Mentoring supports professional growth and renewal, which in turn empowers faculty as individuals and colleagues (Boice, 1992). Teaching and research improve when junior faculty are paired with mentors, job satisfaction and organisation socialization greater. Not only do protégés become empowered through the assistance of a mentor, but mentors themselves also feel renewed through the sharing of power and the advocacy of collegiality (Luna & Cullen, 1995).

### **3 Methodology**

The area of this study is south-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria. This zone constitutes the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria, with six states. Four federal government-owned universities are located in this zone. These universities are used in this study.

This survey designed study had 3203 as the population of lecturers in the 4 universities. A stratified random sample of 320 lecturers was drawn from this population, meaning that 80 lecturers was draw from each university. This sample was drawn in such a way that male and female lecturers were represented adequately.

Data were collected with one researchers-constructed instrument called "Capacity Building Programmes' Participation Questionnaire (CBPPQ)". It contained 2 sections – A and B. Section A was made up of 6 demographic variables, while section B arranged on a four-point rating scale had 30 items, 6 of which measured each of the five variables isolated for the study. In all, the instrument contained 36 items. The instrument was face-validated by experts in measurement and evaluation, while the trial test which was conducted by administering 50 copies of CBPPQ to 50 lecturers in a university not used for this study. The scores obtained were analysed using Cronbach Alpha Method. The results gave rise to a reliability coefficient which ranged from 0.69 to 0.92. With these figures, it was confirmed that the instrument was reliable enough in achieving the objectives set for the study.

The administration of the instruments was handled personally by the researchers and with the help of research assistants, a measure which ensured that the sampled subjects completed the questionnaire correctly. By this a hundred percent returns rate was achieved for the instruments.

The data collected were analysed statistically using Mean rating, Population t-test (test of one sample mean) and Independent t-test. Summaries of the results were presented in tables.

## 4 Results

**Research question:** Which capacity building programme has the highest level of participation by university lecturers? The variable identified in this question is capacity building programme participation by lecturers. Mean rating statistical technique was used to analyse the data collected. Summaries of the results were presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Mean rating of Lecturers' Participation in Capacity Building Programmes (N = 320)

| Variable     | Mean  | Standard Deviation | Rank            |
|--------------|-------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Workshops    | 15.48 | 3.23               | 5 <sup>th</sup> |
| Seminars     | 15.49 | 3.34               | 4 <sup>th</sup> |
| Conference   | 15.81 | 3.31               | 1 <sup>st</sup> |
| ICT Training | 15.53 | 3.27               | 3 <sup>rd</sup> |
| Mentoring    | 15.68 | 3.17               | 2 <sup>nd</sup> |

Information provided in this Table 1 indicated that Conferences had the highest mean participation ( $\bar{X} = 15.81$ ), followed by Mentoring ( $\bar{X} = 15.68$ ), ICT training ( $\bar{X} = 15.53$ ), Seminars ( $\bar{X} = 15.49$ ) and lastly Workshops ( $\bar{X} = 15.48$ ). This means that lecturers participate mostly in conferences and least in workshops. Thus, capacity building among lecturers is witnessed most in conferences and the lowest in workshops.

**Hypothesis one:** University lecturers' level of participation in capacity building programmes in terms of workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and mentoring is not significantly low. The only variable in this hypothesis is university lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes. Population t-test (test of one sample mean) was used in analysing data collected. Summaries of the results are presented in Table 2

**Table 2.** Lecturers' Level of Participation in Capacity Building Programmes (N=320)

| Variable     | Expected Mean ( $\mu$ ) | Observed Mean | Standard Deviation | t      |
|--------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------|
| Workshops    | 15                      | 15.48         | 3.23               | 85.87* |
| Seminars     | 15                      | 15.49         | 3.34               | 83.05* |
| Conference   | 15                      | 15.81         | 3.31               | 85.58* |
| ICT Training | 15                      | 15.53         | 3.27               | 84.37* |
| Mentoring    | 15                      | 15.68         | 3.17               | 88.47* |

\*Significant at 0.05; df = 319; critical t-value = 1.966

The results presented in Table 2 revealed that lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes is significantly low with respect to Workshops ( $t = 85.871$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Seminars ( $t = 83.050$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Conferences ( $t = 85.583$ ,  $p < .05$ ), ICT Training ( $t = 84.372$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and Mentoring ( $t = 88.474$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The null hypothesis is by these results, rejected because the obtained t-values are found to be higher than the critical t-value of 1.966 at 0.05 level of significance and 319 degrees of freedom.

Further observation of the results in Table 2 indicated that the observed mean level of lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes is higher than the expected mean level of lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes of 15.00. Statistical comparison of these observed mean values and the expected mean value of 15.00 using population t-test (test of one sample mean), positive t-values were obtained. This means that university lecturers have low participation in capacity building programmes.

**Hypothesis two:** Male and female lecturers do not differ significantly in their participation in capacity building programmes. The independent variable is gender, while the dependent variable is lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes. Independent t-test statistical technique is used to analyse

data obtained from the two variables. Summaries of the results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Difference between male and female lecturers in their participation in capacity building programmes

| Variable     | Male (N=216) |      | Female (N=104) |      | t      |
|--------------|--------------|------|----------------|------|--------|
|              | Mean         | SD   | Mean           | SD   |        |
| Workshops    | 15.40        | 3.38 | 15.72          | 2.84 | -0.889 |
| Seminars     | 15.52        | 3.44 | 15.37          | 3.15 | 0.385  |
| Conference   | 15.87        | 3.37 | 15.78          | 3.19 | 0.231  |
| ICT Training | 15.58        | 3.22 | 15.49          | 3.13 | 0.237  |
| Mentoring    | 15.66        | 3.12 | 15.72          | 3.30 | -0.154 |

Not significant at 0.05; df = 318; critical t-value = 1.966

Results of hypothesis 2 presented in Table 3 held that male and female lecturers do not differ significantly in their participation in capacity building programmes with respect to Workshops ( $t = -0.889$ ,  $p > .05$ ); Seminars ( $t = 0.385$ ,  $p > .05$ ); Conferences ( $t = 0.231$ ,  $p > .05$ ); ICT Training ( $t = 0.237$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and Mentoring ( $t = -0.154$ ,  $p > .05$ ). With these results, the null hypothesis is retained because the obtained t-values are found to be lower than the critical t-value of 1.966 at 0.05 level of significance and 318 degrees of freedom.

Further examination of the results revealed that male lecturers have higher mean participation in capacity building programmes in terms of Seminars ( $\bar{X} = 15.52$ ), Conferences ( $\bar{X} = 15.87$ ) and ICT Training ( $\bar{X} = 15.58$ ) than their female counterparts. This means that these capacity building programmes yield more benefit to male lecturers than their female colleagues. Similarly, female lecturers have higher mean participation in Workshops ( $\bar{X} = 15.72$ ) and Mentoring ( $\bar{X} = 15.72$ ) aspects of capacity building programmes than their male counterparts. This implies that female lecturers derive more benefits from these capacity building programmes than their male colleagues.

## 5 Discussion of Findings

Results of the research question held that conferences had the highest level of participation by lecturers in capacity building programmes in universities, followed by mentoring, ICT training, seminars and lastly workshops. This means that lecturers participate mostly in conferences and least in workshops among the capacity building programmes.

The reason for conferences having the highest level of participation by lecturers in capacity building programmes is not far-fetched. Conferences accomplish two principal roles in the lives of lecturers – exposure to new techniques in teaching and learning thereby updating knowledge and serving as avenues for research publications. Thus, lecturers are willing to spend their personal resources on conference attendance to achieve these goals.

This finding is corroborated by the outcome of Akuegwu, Udida and Bassey's (2006) study that lecturers' attitude towards conference attendance is significantly high and that it is in conferences that lecturers learn new skills, techniques, knowledge and experiences that enhance their professional career. The research publication that arises from conference participation facilitates capacity building of universities and culminates in their rankings among the best or otherwise in the world.

Results of hypothesis 1 disclosed that lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes is significantly low with respect to workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and mentoring. This paves way for the rejection of the null hypothesis and the retention of the alternate one.

This finding suggests that lecturers' participation in capacity building is below expectation. That is, it is far from being ideal and as such does not produce the desired result.

This low participation of lecturers in capacity building programmes in universities can be attributed to poor funding which universities have been grappling with over the years; a situation Udeaja (2005) described as a reoccurring decimal especially since 1998. As a result of this universities find it cumbersome to sponsor their lecturers to these programmes or even organise some themselves, with a consequence of low capacity building to universities. However, it is pertinent to point out that poor funding affects lecturers' participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and ICT training, and not mentoring.

The outcome of Akuegwu, Udida and Nwi-ue's (2007) study laid credence to this finding. They found that academic staff access to training on ICT equipment is significantly low. Thus, the low participation of lecturers in ICT training implies that capacity building in this area is equally low.

As part of this finding, mentoring was found to be significantly low. This is a bit surprising because mentoring is more of tutelage of junior lecturers by senior ones, which is useful and powerful in understanding and advancing organisational culture, providing access to informal and formal networks of communication and effecting professional stimulation to both categories of faculty members (Luna & Cullen, 1995). This finding means that mentoring in the universities studied has not provided these benefits to the lecturers, and as such, capacity building that would have resulted there from is lacking. Thus,

this aspect of capacity building programme in universities has not been properly and adequately exploited.

The outcome of hypothesis two revealed that male and female lecturers do not differ significantly in their participation in capacity building programmes in universities. Thus, the null hypothesis was retained, while the alternate hypothesis was rejected.

This finding suggests that the extent to which male lecturers participate in capacity building programmes in the aspects of workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and mentoring is the same extent to which their female counterparts participate in them. Despite the fact that these categories of lecturers differed in their mean (X) participation in these capacity building programmes, however, it was not tangible enough to warrant a significant impact. It therefore follows that gender is not a factor in lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes in universities.

A plausible explanation for this finding is that male and female lecturers work in the same university environment, exposed to the same working conditions and the same university administration. Therefore, the provisions made available for male lecturers to participate in capacity building programmes are the same provision made available to their female folks. Moreover, both categories of lecturers are given the same support by their respective university administrations regarding participation in capacity building programmes. Therefore, given the same prevailing circumstances lecturers are exposed to in their participation in capacity building programmes in the universities, the level of participation is bound to be the same. This finding corresponds with the position of Plato in Ekanem (2005) that men and women have equal ability and can attain the same height, given the same opportunity.

## **6 Conclusion and Implications for Sustainable Development**

Based on the strength of the findings, the conclusion drawn from this study are: university lecturers participate mostly in conferences than any other capacity building programme. Lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes is significantly low with respect to workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and mentoring. There is no significant difference between male and female lecturers in their participation in capacity building programmes. The kernels of these findings are that despite the fact that lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes in universities is significantly low, they still find a way to participate actively in conference because of the obvious dividends it

yields to them. Gender is not a factor in lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes in universities.

Capacity building programmes has revolutionized university system by ensuring exchange of ideas, knowledge and experience, which contributed to universities' abilities to attain their goals and objectives. The following implications are articulated from the findings of this study:

University lecturers participating mostly in conferences than any other capacity building programme implies that all efforts of lecturers are channelled towards this programme to the detriment of others, because of its enviable role in their promotion and university ranking globally. Therefore the goals which are supposed to be derived from other capacity building programmes at present will suffer a setback and by extension that of the future.

The low participation in capacity building programmes in respect of workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and mentoring by lecturers implies that these programmes are lowly attended to by lecturers and as such, the benefits they are supposed to derive from them are lacking. This therefore follows that universities in South-South region of Nigeria have not been reaping the gains of capacity building programmes the way they are supposed to. This will affect their development at the present and also jeopardize that of the future

The no significant difference in male and female lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes implies that capacity building programmes is regarded the same way by male and female lecturers. None perceived it as more important. The importance attached to participation in capacity building programmes by male lecturers is the same importance attached to them by their female counterparts. Therefore, the new knowledge, techniques and experiences that would have resulted from lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes, which to a large extent enhances university development, are not acquired as supposed to. As such, South-South Nigerian universities are not living up to the expectation of performing creditably the roles for which they are established. This accounts for their inability to meet the present needs. Hence, the fear of what becomes the future expectations of the university system.

## **7 Recommendations**

Enabling environment should be created in universities whereby lecturers are encouraged to participate massively in workshops, seminars and conferences organised externally. This will not only equip them with new skills, techniques, knowledge and experiences necessary to enhance or build their job performance

capacity at the individual levels. The capacity derived from these programmes by lecturers can place them on a better pedestal to tackle present and future challenges in their jobs. For universities, lecturers' participation in these programmes will give them the enablement to be relevant in the present time as well as in the future - a measure that will enhance their rankings both within and outside the country.

ICT training of lecturers in universities should be accorded a top priority by university authorities. This should be done by providing ICT facilities as well as sponsoring lecturers to participate in the training both within and outside the campus. This has become necessary because ICT is relevant in virtually every academic work, ranging from classroom teaching and management of students' results to research productivity. Therefore, exposure to training in ICT on the part of lecturers will enable them carry out their job responsibilities uninterruptedly and without hindrance as well as sustain their interest in their respective university jobs. This will accord the universities the opportunity to function effectively, meet their present needs and that of the society without jeopardising the future needs.

University management should put in place modalities whereby mentoring of junior lecturers by senior ones should be vigorously pursued and promoted. This will not only enhance the empowering capacity of the universities on their lecturers, but will also improve teaching and research, job satisfaction and organisational socialization of their lecturers. This in turn will enable the universities to play their roles creditably in the present time and improve on them in the future.

Funding of universities by government should be improved upon by meeting the UNESCO benchmark of 26 percent of annual budgets. This will place the universities on sound footing to successfully meet the present challenges without compromising that of the future. It should be realized that university education is capital intensive. Without adequate funding, universities will exist as shadows of what university education is all about. Not only that, we as a nation, will only succeed in churning out young men and women as graduates who will not possess or possess poor communication skills, problem solving abilities and application of creativity in managing life situations - necessities relevant in the present world realities.

University authorities should look inwards by sourcing for funds to organise workshops, seminars and conferences internally. This will enable lecturers who may not have the opportunity to participate in external ones to participate in the internal one. As such, the benefits lecturers derive from participating in external capacity building programmes will be available internally. This will also enable them enhance their job performance capacity and also contribute towards the growth and development of universities. This will no doubt, go a long way in promoting the potential continuity of universities in this zone and other parts of

Nigeria, and also give them the leverage to occupy a pride of place among their peers in the world.

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