

Human Resource Management and Its Impact in Healthcare Services in Nigeria

Article by Oyewole Oluwaseun Oduwusi
Department Human Resources, APIN Public Health Initiatives, Nigeria
E-mail: wolewusi@yahoo.com

Abstract

Human resource management in healthcare system play indispensable roles as it enable effective healthcare service delivery through staff performance monitoring and evaluation, compensation as well as recruitment of competent employee. This study reviewed the impact of practicing human resources management on the quality of healthcare service in proffering efficient treatment to patients. The study shows that effective human resources management great impact in efficient healthcare services and can significantly improve the performance of healthcare workers. The study recommends the necessity to measure the routine of the Head of human resources department in healthcare sectors before stabilizing performance development process as well as continuous improvement in staff capacity building for effective service delivery while more research should be done on this subject as it relates to patients' safety.

Keywords: *Human resource management, health care services, Nigeria.*

Introduction

In the healthcare services, human resource management (HRM was defined by WHO (2000) as the different kinds of clinical and non-clinical staff responsible for public and individual health intervention. In a more broad term, Human Resources Management (HRM) is a dynamic management task in the field of healthcare services as it plays an active and vital role in the success of the restructuring of the health sector (Howard *et al.*, 2006). This aspect of management deals with the development of both individuals and the organization in which they function. HRM is not only involved in securing and developing the talents of individual workers, but also in implementing programs that enhance communication and cooperation between those individual workers in order to support organizational development (Elarabi1 & Joha, 2014). Numerous documented literatures have disclosed the roles of human resources management in developing the quality of healthcare services and found that the incentives and providing motivation to work and follow the system of bonuses by competencies improve the performance of individuals working in hospitals (Patrick, 2011; McKinnie, 2011). Organizations in general deploy Human Resources (HR) departments with the aim of improving performance. Despite great roles played by the HR department in the health sectors, a number of healthcare systems are still experiencing poor service delivery. This study therefore aimed at reviewing the impact of human resource department in healthcare services in Nigeria and to offer considerable suggestions.

Theoretical models on HRM

According to Patrick (2011), Human Resources Management (HRM) is responsible for the attraction, selection, training and assessment and rewarding of employees as well as overseeing organizational leadership and culture and ensuring compliance with employment and labor laws. Naturally, the definition of human resource management would be incomplete without further explaining what the terms of 'human resources' and 'management'. First and foremost, people in work organizations, endowed with a range of abilities, talents and attitudes, influence productivity, quality and profitability. People set overall strategies and goals, design work systems, produce goods and services, monitor quality, allocate financial resources, and market the products and services. Individuals, therefore, become 'human resources' by virtue of the roles they assume in the work sectors. Employment roles are defined and described in a manner designed to maximize particular employees' contributions to

achieving organizational objectives (Zairi, 2007). A common definition of HRM remains an enigma and, in many aspects, what HRM is purported to represent has not moved beyond some key principles laid down in the 1980s (Fombrun *et al.*, 1984; Hendry and Pettigrew, 1986; Guest, 1987; Storey, 1989; Armstrong, 2000). Human Resources Management is defined as a system of activities and strategies that focus on successful management of employees and working staff inside the organization to achieve the goals of the organizations (Valverde & Ryan, 2006). Armstrong (1999) defined HRM as the aspect of management that specializes in the management of people in work organizations. HRM emphasizes that employees are critical to achieving sustainable competitive advantage, that human resources practices need to be integrated with the corporate strategy, and that human resource specialists help organizational controllers to meet both efficiency and equity objectives. Some scholars claim that HRM can lead to specifically measurable business outcomes (Huselid, 1995). Equally, HRM has its critics (Sisson, 1994; Legge, 1995) both of whom view HRM as a symbolic excuse to enhance managerial legitimacy where the management of individuals has been intensified within an enterprise culture (Keenoy and Anthony, 1992).

Factors affecting healthcare practices in nigeria

Chan and Mak (2012), reported that the mediating role of perceived safety climate in the relationship of HRM and organizational performance in healthcare delivery cannot be overemphasized as organizations can benefit from effective HR practices by paying attention to employees' safety issues, which in turn result in better organizational performance. According to Raufu (2002), shortage of competent health care providers constitute the greatest challenges confronting the healthcare system in Nigeria. As a result of inadequate infrastructure and poor compensation packages, a considerable number of physicians, nurses and other medical professionals evade to developed countries in search of fulfilling and lucrative positions (Awofeso, 2008). Chankova *et al.* (2007), stated that Nigeria healthcare challenges are depended upon the following factors: (i). insufficiently resourced and neglected health systems; (ii). Poor human resources planning and management practices and structures; (iii). unsatisfactory working conditions characterized by: heavy workloads; lack of professional autonomy; poor supervision and support; long working hours; unsafe workplaces; inadequate career structures; poor remuneration/unfair pay; poor access to needed supplies, tools and information; and limited or no access to professional development opportunities; (iv). Internal and international migration of health workers. According to WHO (2007), these have been compounded by other socioeconomic and political factors in the environment as the overall availability, accessibility, quality and utilization of health services decreased significantly or stagnated in the past decade and the proportion of households residing within 10 kilometres of a health centre, clinic or hospital is 88% in the southwest, 87% in the southeast, 82% in the central, 73% in the northeast and 67% in the northwest regions. HRM is an essential function of both public and private organization sector as it deals with the management of an organization's workforce, or human resources.



Figure 1. Flow chart showing healthcare challenges of HR

Importance of HRM in healthcare services

The role of human resource management in healthcare services is more concerned with the development of both health workers and non-health workers in both privates and public health sectors. Keating (2011), stated that human resource professionals in the health sectors carryout fundamental activities in monitoring daily routine activities of the healthcare workers as well as regulate and implement staff recruitment, performance and appraisal. Since human resource management in healthcare services can greatly influence health system involving healthcare workers with a complex mixed of skills and motivations through evolving training and development workshop on staff engagement and performance (Uneke *et al.*, 2007). Effective HRM practices have been found to positively influence outcomes connected to organizational commitment, service delivery and patient care in health sectors therefore making it a crucial element in promoting healthcare quality and safety (Pereira *et al.*, 2013). According to Elvira (2013), the significant role of human resource department in healthcare services is to find qualified candidates for various positions in health care institutions thereby, working closely with them and training them on the responsibilities that individual are required to carry out hence ensuring that they comprehend their job description

Recruitment of competent staff that will build and encourage patients-focused culture

HR can impact in healthcare services by recruiting competent employees who fit into the organization's culture, focusing on retention and contributing to learning initiatives that increase employee engagement as regarded to patient's safety (Becker, 2012). Most important component of maintaining patient safety is making sure employees buy in to a healthcare organization's values and culture. Russell (2018), similarly reported that health care facility needs the expertise of qualified and reliable members to ensure adequate delivery of health care services, limit complaints from patients and prevent sanctions from authorities which is being evaluated by the HR manager. HR manager must ensure that the performance of recruits and employees is up to par and must address disputes arising between employees and management and finding working solutions to address such disputes (Russell 2018).

Training and development of health workers

The HR professionals must carefully design programs that benefits the overall organization as well as the individual. The training initiatives includes apprenticeship, internship, job rotation, mentoring and new skills programs (Greenlaw & John, 1986).

Performance appraisal of health workers

Performance appraisal and training activities of health workers happened to be one of the primary function of human resource department in health care system as it provides feedback on the staff performance which allows them to evaluate the appropriateness of their behaviour in the eyes of their coworkers and correct weaknesses and improve contributions (Minehan, 1997).

Healthcare workers remuneration and compensation

Compensation refers to HRM duties related to payment of employees' wages and provision of incentives. Greenlaw & John (1986), asserted that HR professionals are typically charged with developing wages and salaries system that accomplish specific organizational objectives such as employee retention, quality, satisfaction, appraisal and motivation.

Implementing health human resource planning (HHRP) reform

Health human resource planning provides health managers a systematic way to make staffing decisions in order to better manage their human resources based on a health worker's workload, with activity (time) standards applied for each workload component at a given health facility (WHO, 2010). An essential component of planned HRH targets is supply and demand modeling, or the use of appropriate data to link population health needs and health care delivery targets with human resources supply, distribution and productivity (Dreesch 2005). According to Health Canada (2011), in resource-limited countries like Nigeria, HRH planning approaches are often driven by the needs of targeted programmes or projects, for example those responding to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

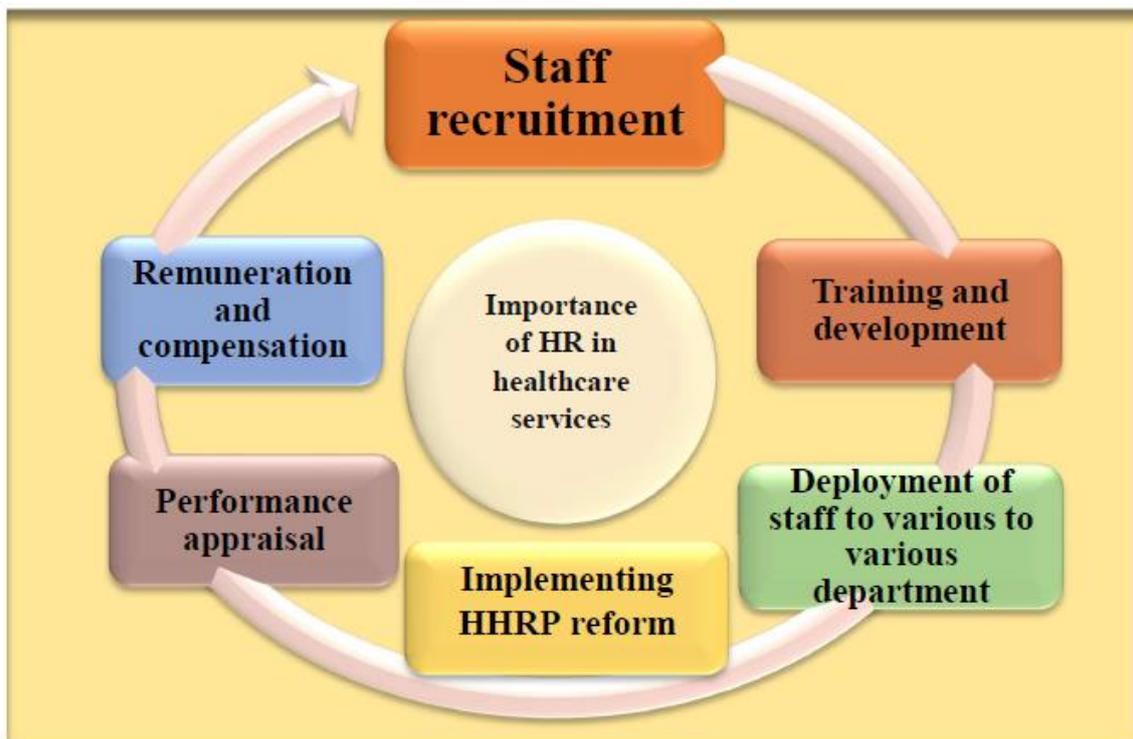


Figure 2. Flow chart showing the various roles of HRM in healthcare services

Strategies for effective HR practice in healthcare services

Pfeffer & Veiga (1999), stated that giving employee the privilege to contribute their ideas in an organization will enable them work harder due to their increased involvement and commitment. HRM practices enhance the social climate of the organization, creating higher levels of trust and cooperation among employees which in turn, drives performance (Collins & Smith 2006). Across the globe, healthcare reform committees have criticized the control-based people management approach employed in hospitals. This has provided the impetus for ongoing recommendations for hospitals to adopt a

commitment-based approach to HRM (Boselie *et al.*, 2003). According to Snell (1992), managers can make the strategic choice of a specific control mode, including behaviour control, output control, or input control in order to equip the workplace with employees who have the right skills and abilities to do their job effectively. Behavioural control seeks to regulate employee actions through standardized jobs through HR structuring work and operating procedures and ensuring that employees adhere to established rules through managers closely monitoring behaviour (Ouchi, 1997). Input control focus on the socialization of employees to the values of the organization as well as significant investments in recruitment and training of staff (Lawton & Parker, 1999). Output control focuses employee behavior through goal setting (Hill & Hoskisson, 2007). This entails communicating standards and goals and then providing staff with discretion in methods used to pursue established targets (Snell 1995).

Conclusion and recommendation

The impact of human resource management in the health care system very imperative. The HR professionals in health sectors should have a vibrant planned direction and clear objectives to advance the management of employees and staff in health care system.

With respect to the current challenges affecting healthcare practices in Nigeria and the numerous impact of human resource management in this sector, the following recommendations are made in order to enhance effective service delivery.

- It is to measure the routine of the Head of human resources department in the healthcare services before stabling performance development process as well as continuous improvement in staff capacity building for effective service delivery.
- It is paramount to engage healthcare workers in the higher practical responsibilities in order to involve them with confidence in their daily discharge of duties.
- Addressing health workers remuneration and wages will create more impact in HR practices in public and private health sectors.
- This study recommend further researches to be carried out to further propose more strategies for effective HR service delivery in healthcare settings.

References

- [1.] Armstrong M. (1999). A handbook of Human Resource Management Practices. Kogan Page Limited.
- [2.] Awofeso N. (2008). Managing brain drain and brain waste of health workers in Nigeria. WHO 2008. Available at: http://www.who.int/bulletin/bulletin_board/82/stilwell1/en/.
- [3.] Becker ASC. (2012). Review on Human Resources' Role in Improving Patient Safety & Quality of Care.
- [4.] Boselie P, Paauwe J, Richardson R. (2003). Human resource management, institutionalization and Organizational performance: a comparison of hospitals, hotels and local government. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 14(8):1407–29.
- [5.] Chankova S, Nguyen H, Chipanta D, Kombe G, Onoja A, Ogungbemi K. (2007). Catalyzing Human Resources Mobilization: A look at the situation in Nigeria. Abt Associates Inc. May 30, Global Health Council Annual Conference, Washington. DC.
- [6.] Collins CJ, Smith KG. (2006). Knowledge exchange and combination: the role of human resource Practices in the performance of high-technology firms. *Academic Management Journal*, 49(3):544–60.
- [7.] Dreesch N (2005). "An approach to estimating human resource requirements to achieve the Millennium Development Goals." *Health Policy and Planning*, 20(5):267–276.
- [8.] Elvira, N. (2013). The Importance of Human Resource Management to the Health care System. *Journal of Economic Management and Financial Markets*, 8(4):
- [9.] Federal Ministry of Health (2000). Health Systems Development Project II. FMOH, Abuja, August, 2000.
- [10.] Greenlaw PS. & John PK. (1986). *Personnel Management: Managing Human Resources*. New York: Harper & Row.
- [11.] Health Canada (2011). Health Human Resource Strategy (HHRS). Accessed 12 April 2011.
- [12.] Hill CW, Hoskisson RE. (2007). Strategy and structure in the multiproduct firm. *Acad Manag Rev*. 12(2):331–41.

- [13.] Keating, M. (2011). Managing professionals: exploring the role of the hospital HR function Aoife McDermott, Cardiff University Business School, Cardiff, UK. *Journal of Health Organization and Management*, 25(6).
- [14.] Lawton R, Parker D. (1999). Procedures and the professional: the case of the British NHS. *Social Science Medical Journal*, 48(3):353–61.
- [15.] Minehan M. (1997). Technology's Increasing Impact on the Workplace. *Human Resource Magazine*, 168.
- [16.] Ouchi, W.G. (1997). The relationship between organizational structure and organizational control. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 95-113 15.
- [17.] Simon, C. H. & Chan, W. (2012). High performance human resource practices and organizational performance. The mediating role of occupational safety and health. Department of Management and Marketing The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, China, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Vol. 3 No. 2.
- [18.] Pereira D, Greenfield D, Ranmuthugala G, Braithwaite J. (2013). Centre for Clinical Governance Research in Health, Australian Institute of Health Innovation, University of New South Wales.
- [19.] Pfeffer J, Veiga JF. (1999). Putting people first for organizational success. *Acad Manag Exec*. 13(2):37–48.
- [20.] Raufu A. (2002). Nigerian health authorities worry over exodus of doctors and nurses. *Biomedical Journal*, 325:65.
- [21.] Russell A. (2018). Business Management: The Role of HR Manager in Health Care. Baylor College of Medicine.
- [22.] Snell SA. (1995). Control theory in strategic human resource management: the mediating effect of administrative information. *Acad Manag J*, 35(2): 292–327.
- [23.] Uneke C, Ogbonna A, Ezeoha A, Oyibo P, Onwe F, Ngwu B (2007). Innovative Health Research Group. The Nigeria health sector and human resource challenges. *The Internet Journal of Health*, 8(1).
- [24.] Valverde, M. & Ryan, G. (2006). Distributing HRM responsibilities: a classification of organizations, Universitat Rovira Virgili, Department of Business, Avinguda Universitat, Tarragona, Spain: Emerald Group Publishing Limited. 35(6).
- [25.] World Health Organization (2007). Country Cooperation Strategy: Federal Republic of Nigeria 2002-2007. World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa Brazzaville.
- [26.] World Health Organization (2010). Workload Indicators of Staffing Need (WISN): User's manual. Geneva, 2010 – http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/wisn_user_manual/en/
- [27.] World Health Organization (2000). Health Report 2000 Health Systems: Improving Performance Geneva. <http://www.who.int.lib.uwo:2048>.
- [28.] Wright, P. (2011). The 2011 CHRO Challenge: Building Organizational, Functional, and Personal Talent. Cornell Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies (CAHRS).
- [29.] Zairia, M. (2002). Building human resources capability in health care: a global analysis of best practice – part I. *Health Manpower Management*, 24(3), MCB University Press.