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PERSPECTIVE ON TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA



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CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Ogunode Niyi Jacob, PhD

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja

niyijacoogunodejacob@gmail.com

[07030108329](tel:07030108329)

Eze, Ifeoma Nonyelum

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria, Nigeria.

ifeomanonyelumeze@gmail.com

Dr. Ayodele Ebunolu Nwisagbo

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

ebunolu.nwisagbo@rsu.edu.ng

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4395-8739>

Conrad Ugochukwu Ukozor., Ph.D.

Department of Educational Management, University of Abuja, Nigeria

conradorare@gmail.com

Olowonefa Jethro Abiodun, Ph.D

Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria. ayodeleolowo1965@mail.com

Victor Olugbenga Ayoko

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, National Open University of Nigeria.

victorayoko@gmail.com

Nuhu Ummul Qulsum, PhD

Department of General Studies, Faculty of Education, Abdulkadir Kure University, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria.

Dr.Imoukhuede O G

Proprietor & CEO (Ambassador Global Academy, kwali Abuja).

Adebayo Adeniyi Daniels

Department of Environmental Science, Federal Polytechnic, Ugep, Cross River State, Nigeria.

adebayodaniels@fedpolyugep.edu.ng

Dr. Afolabi Iyabode Omolola

nicelolly68@gmail.com

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Esther Amina Akuh, PhD

Department of Educational Foundations, Federal University Lokoja, Nigeria. estheraminaakuhq2@gmail.com

Orcid ID:0009-0002-3381-8688

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CHAPTER THREE

**HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN
TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

By

Dr. Ayodele Ebunolu Nwisagbo

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education,
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

ebunolu.nwisagbo@rsu.edu.ng

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4395-8739>

Abstract

Human resource management (HRM) is central to the sustainability, performance, and competitiveness of tertiary education institutions in Nigeria. Effective HRM practices influence teaching quality, research productivity, employee morale, and student success. This chapter explores the concept, roles, and functions of HRM in tertiary education, with emphasis on its contribution to workforce development, institutional efficiency, and national development. It highlights core HRM elements—recruitment, training and staff development, performance management, compensation, employee relations, and workplace safety—while analyzing challenges such as underfunding, corruption, political interference, frequent strike actions, recruitment embargoes, and the growing problem of trainee abscondment. These problems weaken the effectiveness of HRM and limit institutional growth. The chapter proposes actionable solutions, including increased funding, granting autonomy to institutions, leveraging digital technologies, ensuring fair recruitment processes, improving staff welfare, and strengthening policy implementation. The chapter concludes that effective HRM is indispensable for quality assurance, innovation, and global competitiveness of Nigerian tertiary institutions, and for their ability to produce competent graduates capable of driving national transformation.

Keywords: Human resource management, tertiary education, Nigeria, workforce development, institutional sustainability

Introduction

The importance of human resource management (HRM) in tertiary institutions in Nigeria cannot be underestimated, as it plays a crucial role in the overall success and sustainability of these institutions. Proper management of human resources ensures the recruitment, retention, and development of a skilled and competent workforce, which is essential for delivering quality education. Effective HRM practices include recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and employee relations, all of which help attract and retain talent, enhance staff capacity, and promote a positive work environment.

One of the main reasons why human resources management is important in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is because it directly impacts the students' learning experience. A well-managed workforce results in motivated and engaged employees who are committed to providing the best education for their students. This, in turn, leads to higher student satisfaction and academic success. Moreover, human resources management is also crucial for the financial stability of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. By effectively managing their human resources, these institutions can control costs, reduce employee turnover, and improve productivity. This, in turn, leads to better financial performance, making the institution more competitive and sustainable.

Another important aspect of human resources management in tertiary institutions is diversity and inclusion. Nigeria is a diverse country with various cultures, languages, and backgrounds. Human resources managers play a vital role in promoting diversity and inclusion within the institution's workforce. This not only creates a more inclusive work environment but also prepares students to thrive in a diverse society. The importance of human resources management in tertiary institutions in Nigeria cannot be overstated. It is essential for the success and sustainability of these institutions, as well as for providing quality education to students. Effective human resources management leads to a motivated and skilled workforce, financial stability, and diversity and inclusion, all of which contribute to the overall success of the institution (Nwisagbo & Urii, 2023).

The quality of HRM directly affects students' learning outcomes, as a well-managed workforce fosters employee motivation, innovation, and commitment to teaching and research (Omebe, 2014). HRM also impacts institutional financial stability by reducing turnover, optimizing productivity, and fostering sustainable management practices (Cole, 2002). Moreover, HRM promotes diversity and inclusion—critical in a multicultural society such as Nigeria—by encouraging equitable workforce policies (Nwisagbo & Urii, 2023).

This chapter is organized under the following subheadings:

1. Meaning of Tertiary Education
2. Concept of Educational Human Resource Management
3. Basic Elements of HRM in Tertiary Institutions
4. Roles of HRM in Tertiary Institutions

5. Functions of HRM in Education
6. Problems Militating Against Effective HRM in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions
7. Possible Solutions to HRM Challenges
8. Summary
9. Review Questions

Clarification of concepts

Tertiary Education

Tertiary education is an education designed for post-secondary education. Tertiary education is a social agent of progress and development in a society and that aids technological advancement. Tertiary education is designed to help in the development of nations by providing the high as well as the middle level manpower needed for the social, economic and political advancement through the programme of teaching, learning, research and community services (Ogunode, Edinoh, & Odo, 2023). This places tertiary education at the apex in the ranking of educational institutions and is designed to accommodate knowledge acquisition and production. Tertiary education refers to institutions of higher learning that provide facilities for teaching and research and are authorized to grant academic degrees such as bachelor, master and doctorate (Ogunode & Adamu, 2021).

The word tertiary, simply means of the third rank or order, and tertiary level of education in Nigeria, based on the aforementioned meaning, implies that tertiary education in Nigeria is the third order of education which can also be referred to as higher education (Okai, & Botimi –Slaboh 2019). Tertiary education is synonymous with higher education in Nigeria. This is the aspect of education that is in charge of producing the output required by the society for national development (Nwisagbo & Uriri, 2023). Tertiary education is a front liner amongst the tiers of education and is considered as the icon for national development and transformation, implying that every skill, knowledge and information gained through this means is the vehicle for productivity, wealth creation, prosperity, good health and healthy living, competitiveness, communication, expansion, scientific and technological advancement (Ofojebe & Chukwuma, 2015).

The term tertiary or higher education in Nigeria is used to refer to the education obtained in higher institutions. It is however accepted by most stakeholders that the importance of higher education lies in the fact that it imparts in-depth knowledge, understanding, and professionalism that seem to advance the students to new frontiers of performance, achievement and attitudes in different aspects of life and engagements (Olorundare, 2014). Tertiary Education is the type of education that a person undergoes after the basic secondary education. It could be in a University, Polytechnic and college of education. Tertiary education is post-secondary and this is where students specialize in the core area of their pursuit which could be sciences, arts and vocational (Johnstone, Arora & Experton, 1998).

The goals of Tertiary Education shall be to: Contribute to national development through high level manpower training; provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians; provide high quality career counseling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work; reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market; promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service; forge and cement national unity; and promote national and international understanding and interaction (FRN, 2013). In order to realize the objectives of the tertiary institutions in the areas of personnel recruitment and development, every tertiary institutions established the department of human resources management.

Concept of Education Human Resources Management

Human resource management as the set of organizational activities directed at attracting, developing and maintaining an effective workforce. Human resource management concerns the procurement or recruitment, staffing, welfare, maintenance, training and retraining, placement, promotion, motivation relationship, compensation or rewards, transfer and discipline of staff. It lies at the care of the efficiency of the organization. Human resource management is a basic function of management that determines the performance of staff in any organization. This simple implies that when staff in the education systems are adequately recruited, selected and supervised, inducted and adequately rewarded, and provided for, properly developed, appraised and promoted on the job, they will be committed to the job, remain dedicated and productive in the education systems. In summary, HRM refers to the coordination of workforce activities to achieve organizational goals. Hence, human resource management in education is the process of motivating workers to maximize their performance in order to obtain maximum output starting from the day they are recruited (Griffin1997).

Human resource management is organizing, coordinating, and managing an organization's current employees to carry out an organization's mission, vision, and goals. This includes recruiting, hiring, training, compensating, retaining, and motivating employees. HRM staff also develops and enforces policies and procedures that help ensure employee safety. The HRM team manages adherence to federal and state laws that may work to protect employees' private information and ensure their physical safety and mental and emotional well-being. Organizations of varying sizes and industries rely on HRM to keep business running smoothly and efficiently (Coursera 2023). Human Resource management implies utilizing people to perform duties and functions in the school (Oduma, 2012). Human resources are easily recognized as the most important resource out of the resources required for the production of goods and services. Human resources are the key to rapid socio-economic development and efficient service delivery (Onah, 2008).

Basic elements of Human Resource Management (HRM) in Tertiary Institutions

The human resource management field includes recruiting new staff, evaluating staff performance, ensuring fair compensation and benefits, training staff and supporting education and development, and protecting the health and safety of all employees. These are critical cornerstones of the work of HRM professionals. Some of the basic element of HRM in tertiary institutions according to (Coursera 2023, Nwisagbo & Uriri, 2023).

Recruitment of staff

An effective recruitment process is at the foundation of HRM. If you can recruit good talent, you can build on their skills and invest in employees for years to come as they add value to the organization. Equally important is company culture. You want employees that add to the culture of the organization. Some common recruiting tools HRM may use include job aggregators like Indeed or Simply Hired, video interviewing, or even social media sites like LinkedIn.

Evaluation and performance management

HRM uses data to track employee performance to ensure a highly trained and capable workforce. The data compiled can also be used to change staff training methods, implement a merit-based system for raises, and more. HRM professionals use formal measures like performance reviews and informal methods like interviews or surveys.

Compensation

Compensation can mean salary, commission, benefits, time off, and other non-monetary benefits. HRM looks to the industry standard to set salary rates, commission rates, and benefits. This ensures fairness and allows for a consistent company standard. Some organizations may use performance reviews to adjust an employee's salary, among other measures.

Staff development and learning

Engaged employees are effective employees. HRM understands the importance of a workforce that is challenged but also supported. Most employees want opportunities for advancement and to feel competent and valued in what they bring to an organization. Part of HRM is providing these learning opportunities to employees. This might include tuition reimbursement programs, on-the-job training options, conferences, conventions, or certification programs. Aside from individual learning, HRM can also use employee development and learning to help employees adapt to organizational changes, such as system upgrades, technology shifts, and new policies.

Staff health and safety

The safety and well-being of an organization's employees are critically important aspects of HRM. Employee health and safety covers a lot, such as safety against harassment, discrimination, or bullying in the workplace. It can mean physical safety that would involve building fire code

compliance. It can also mean adherence to labor laws that protect an employee's rights in the workplace. Safety in the workplace means cybersecurity or safeguarding an employee's personal information. A lot goes into protecting all aspects of employees' health and safety, and it is the job of HRM professionals to ensure that protection. A few ways HRM professionals may go about this is by installing security cameras, enforcing internet usage rules, implementing a zero-tolerance policy, or creating restricted access areas (Coursera 2023).

Roles of Human Resource Management in Tertiary Institutions

There are many functions of human resource management in tertiary institutions. Some of these functions includes;

Strategic Role:

Human resources are critical for effective educational functioning. Human resources were once relegated to second-class status, but its importance has grown dramatically in the last two decade. Again, its new importance stem from adequately recruited, selected and supervised, inducted and adequately rewarded, provided for, properly develop, appraised and promoted on the job. They will be committed to the job, remain dedicated and productive in the education system. It also represents a significant investment of the educational efforts. If managed well, human resources can be a source of competitive strength for the education. Strategically, human resources must be viewed in the same context as the financial, technological and other resources that are managed in any organization (Onah, 2008).

Operational Role:

According to Mathis and Jackson (1997). Operational activities are both tactical and administrative in nature. Griffin (1997) noted operational role from the legal perspective because some have regulated various aspects of employee-employer relations. Human resources management is therefore, interested in compliance with equal employment opportunities and observation of labour laws; examples; applicants must be oriented to the organizations, supervisors must be trained, safety problems must be resolved; wages and salaries must be administered. A wide range of activities typically associated with the day-to-day management of people as provided by laws and regulations must be performed efficiently. It is this collection of activities that has often been referred to as the personnel function, and the newer strategic focus of human resources management has not eliminated. In summary, it is difficult to produce one general interpretation of what human resource management means today (Omebe, 2014).

Functions of Human Resources Management in Education

Human resource management in education is a set of practices and methods of integrating and maintaining the teaching staff in the school so that the school can achieve their purpose and as well as meet the goals for which they were established. It is the motivation and co-ordination of the

activities and effort of the teachers in school in order to obtain maximum output from them and consequently achieve the goals of education optimally. The roles of hrm include the following: staff maintenance, staff relations, staff development, procurement of staff and job performance reward.

Staff Maintenance

This concern making the work environment conducive for workers, pertinent practices include; promotion and transfer, motivation, staff safety, security and health services. It is pertinent that educational establishments have sound policies in respect of staff transfer and promotion to ensure that justice and fairness prevail in dealing with staff. As work to be performed in the school is important, the mood of the man to perform the job is equally important. For maximum and productive goal attainment, the school head must ensure the comfort and happiness of the workers. That can be done through prompt payment of salary, and ensuring a safe and healthy working environment (Omebe, 2014).

Staff Relations

There must be a good communication network in the school to enable workers to be constantly informed of the progress being made in the school. Workers should be encouraged to participate in planning and decision making in the school. Workers should be encourage by recognizing the staff as human beings with feelings, interest, needs and emotions and treating them as such with fairness and respect (Omebe, 2014). HRM also protects employees. Human resource (HR) professionals manage legal documents, policies, and regulations, identify what applies to their organization, and find effective ways to educate employees and enforce company policy. HRM aims to be an ally or partner to employees. HRM emphasizes employee development while protecting employees from discrimination, workplace hazards, and unfair compensation (Nwisagbo, Uriri, Ineye-Briggs, 2023).

Staff Development

This is the process of appraising staff performances and identifying their key skills and competence that need development or training to improve their skills for better performance. It involves providing development programme and training courses that are suitable for the programme. The success of educational organization hinges on the strength and quality of the staff members. There is need to change through training and to improve and grow in competence. This can be done through in-service training, conference, workshop and seminars (Omebe, 2014). HRM aims to create a highly skilled workforce and boost confidence and competence so that employees are motivated to contribute. A human resource manager or department might provide: Tuition reimbursement programs, On-the-job training, Mentorships within an organization and Career development programs to help employees explore their potential (Coursera 2023).

Procurement of Staff

Human resource management functions start with the process of recruitment and selection by which educational institutions get the best personnel to interpret and implement the curriculum programmes. Staffing of schools is a job performed by the ministry of education through its agencies in the federal and state government. Procurement of staff in education deals with obtaining people with appropriate and necessary skills, abilities, knowledge and experience to fill the vacant teaching posts in schools (Omebe, 2014).

Job Performance Rewards

This involves the design and administration of rewards for jobs performed. It is very important that management, ministry of education and its agencies take the issue of reward system very seriously. Staff performance would increase substantially if they are adequately compensated according to the quality and quantity of work done (Omebe, 2014, Nwisagbo, *et al* 2023)). HRM has a strong focus on company culture and job satisfaction. Much of what motivates employees comes from the culture in which they work. Employee engagement programs can foster an inclusive and collaborative workplace culture. Although culture can be challenging to measure and quantify, it's an important function of HRM to retain and recruit employees (Coursera 2023).

Problems Militating Against Effectiveness of Human Resources Management in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

There are many challenges militating against human resource management in Nigeria' tertiary institutions. Some of these challenges includes; inadequate funding, corruption, political influence, strike actions, government embargo and abscondment of trainees.

Inadequate funding

Inadequate funding is a major problem militating against human resource management in the Nigeria' tertiary institutions. The tertiary institutions are underfunded by the government and other stakeholders in charge of management. Udida, Bassey, Udofia, and Egbona, in Ogunode, and Emmanuel (2023) maintained that the major issue in educational development is shortage of funds. One of the most serious problems threatening the survival of the educational systems is that of dwindling level of public funding in the face of rising demands and hence rising cost of higher education. This shortage of funds affects job performance and the growth of the institution. Higher educational institutions cannot perform optimally without funding. This situation calls for increased fund initiative from both the government and educational stakeholders so as to sustain the tempo and growth of education industry (Ihua-Jonathan & Nwisagbo, 2024). The inability of the Nigerian government to objectively accept and implement the 15% -20% funding formula for education recommended by the UNESCO impact negatively on the performance and sustainability of higher education. Thus, it has become obvious that Nigeria's neglect of the funding formula is detrimental to higher educational institution performance and development aspiration as quality

performance is the veritable instrument for sustenance of education system. This neglect has further precipitated crises in the entire higher educational systems as effective teaching, research and service are no longer taking place seriously.

Corruption

Corruption in the administration of tertiary institutions in Nigeria has affected the operations of human resources management in handling recruitment processes. Corruption as a concept does not easily yield itself to one size fits all definition. This is why people see it as a “difficult concept to define”. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2008) defined corruption as a misuse of entrusted power for private gain through bribery, extortion, nepotism, or embezzlement. Transparency International (2010) defined corruption in a simple way as abuse of entrusted power for private benefit. Both of these definitions are significantly related to what is happening in public primary schools. Corruption in public primary schools is defined as the systematic use of public office for private gain whose impact is significant on access to quality or equity education (Hallak & Poisson, 2001). Taaliu (2017) noted that the process of recruitment, promotion and deployment of teachers is mired by corruption in the forms of ethnicity and nepotism. Appointment of teachers by taking bribe and appointment of under qualified teachers or appointing teachers who do not have a teaching certificate will spell doom for delivery of quality teaching and learning. These non-professional teachers do not even know the philosophy of education and teaching methodologies. The implication of abused recruitment in the high institutions includes; poor delivery, limited access to higher education and low students’ outcomes (Osipian, 2007). Corruption in the tertiary institutions has undermined the activities of human resources manager hereby affecting their performance in the various institutions across Nigeria (Ihua-Jonathan & Nwisagbo, 2024).

Political influence

The root disturbing problems militating against effectiveness of human resources management and sustenance of tertiary institutions in Nigeria could be related to political influence in recruitment of staff in the institutions. Many academic staff and non-teaching staff has been employed in the various institutions through political influence. Political influence abuse the recruitment process designed by the human resource department. Yawe, Ivagher, and Ijov (2015) and Ogunode, Ajape and Jegede (2020) maintained that politicians have at least a slot in any recruitment processes in the Nigerian higher institutions. Sometimes their candidates may not qualify; they influence their employment against the policies of the institutions. The activities of political officeholders and politicians in Nigerian higher institutions are a threat to the sustainability of higher education policies. The political influence in the various universities in Nigeria has prevented effective human resources management.

Strike actions

Strike actions in the Nigerian tertiary institutions also affects the operation of human resources management in Nigeria' tertiary institutions. Different unions in the tertiary institutions often embarks on strike actions to demand for their rights. Government in different times have made promised and entered into agreement on welfare issues concerning the staff and have refused to implement such agreement entered into with the different unions. Occasional, these unions embark on series of strikes to demand implementation of such agreement. These actions always affect the activities and programme of human resources department on training of staff and recruitment of new staff. Strike actions in the tertiary institutions slow down or even suspends the entire activities of the institutions.

Government Embargo

Government policies on placing ban or embargo on recruitment in public institutions in Nigeria often affects the operation of the various human resources management in the tertiary institutions. This is because Nigerian tertiary institutions directly or indirectly they are linked to the central administration of the federal government. Ogunode and Emmanuel (2023) noted that the federal government's embargo on staff recruitment in the university system has affected the activities of human resources management in the universities. Human resource management is done by the department of human resources. The department has a manpower planning programme developed and planned for each university in Nigeria. Based on these plans, many public universities are due for massive recruitment in the year 2020 while others are for minor recruitment. Due to the embargo on recruitment in Nigeria from 2021 majorities of the universities were not approved to recruit. This recruitment embargo caused a shortage of academic and non-academic staff in most public universities. There is a shortage of manpower in Nigerian universities which is why the (National Universities Commission 2021) argued that universities should be isolated from the Federal Government's circular on the embargo on new employment owing to the shortage of lecturers. The commission noted that 100,000 academic staff members were attending to 2.1 million students in Nigerian universities.

Abscondment of trainees

Absconded of trainee after completion of their studies in abroad is a major problem facing the human resources department of every higher institution in Nigeria. In 2023, Charles, (2023) reported that the Executive Secretary, Tertiary Education Trust Fund, Sonny Echono, has described as alarming the number of Nigerian university lecturers studying abroad under TETFund sponsorship and have absconded. Echono said TETFund would make the absconded lecturers refund money expended on them or be repatriated. Edema, (2024) reported that TETFUND secretary noted that 50% of students sponsored abroad don't want to return. Recently, ESUT Monitor (2024) reported that Nigeria's Tertiary Education Trust Fund, TETFund raised alarm that

no fewer than 137 academics sponsored to study abroad have absconded. The Executive Secretary, Sonny Echono, disclosed this on Tuesday when he appeared before the house of representative ad hoc committee in Abuja. The Executive secretary noted that efforts are ongoing to recover the money extended of the affected scholars. The executive secretary noted the scholars who were sponsored by TETFund for “higher education” abroad refused to return to the country after the completion of their academic programmes. “Some of the scholars that have been sponsored, unpatriotically when they go, they enjoy the government scholarship, acquire a higher degree, then refuse to come back. Is it a pressing problem facing the Nigerian tertiary institutions and the Fund. It has become a major crisis,” he said “. The scholarship requires that academic to return after the completion of their training. Tertiary institutions and TETFund having been battling with the problem of sponsored foreign trainee abscondment in Nigeria (Ogunode., Ukozor, & Agbo. (2024).

Possible solutions to problems militating against effectiveness of resources management in tertiary institutions in Nigeria

1. Government should increase the budgetary allocation to tertiary education in Nigeria. This will enable various tertiary institutions to embark on recruitment, staff training and carry out other training services needed to enhance staff development in the institutions.
2. Government and administrators should deploy technologies into the tertiary institutions to curtail the high rate of corruption in the areas of ghost workers.
3. Government should grant autonomy to tertiary institutions to reduce the political influence in the system. Administrators of tertiary institutions should look outside the box to increase their internally generated revenue.
4. Government should implement all agreement entered into with unions groups in the tertiary institutions to avoid strike actions and this will support stable academic calendar in the tertiary institutions.
5. Government should remove the tertiary institutions from centralized personnel management system. This will help the tertiary institutions have power to recruit at their own.
6. Government should increase the salaries of academic staff and provide conducive environment to reduce the high rate of trainee abscondment.

Summary

Human resource management is indispensable to the success and sustainability of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. HRM functions—such as recruitment, staff development, staff relations, and job performance rewards—are central to the attainment of institutional goals. However, challenges such as underfunding, corruption, political interference, strikes, recruitment embargoes, and trainee abscondment hinder effective HRM. Addressing these challenges requires increased

funding, institutional autonomy, technological adoption, and policies to retain trained staff. Effective HRM not only enhances workforce performance but also contributes significantly to educational quality, national development, and global competitiveness.

Review of Questions

1. What is tertiary education?
2. What is Education Human Resources Management?
3. List four Basic elements of Human Resource Management (HRM) in Tertiary Institutions;
4. Explain four Roles of Human Resource Management in Tertiary Institutions;
5. List five functions of human resources management in education;
6. List five problems militating against effectiveness of human resources management in tertiary institutions in Nigeria;
7. List five possible solutions to problems militating against effectiveness of resources management in tertiary institutions in Nigeria

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