

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: AN EMERGING TECHNIQUE IN MANAGING HUMAN RESOURCES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS FOR GLOBAL RELEVANCE

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**ABSTRACT:** The groundswell of artificial intelligence has changed the landscape of organizations all over the world and the most valuable assets which are the human resources and their management are not exempted. Human resource management in tertiary institutions is geared towards ensuring workforce productivity with intent of achieving predetermined educational goals. This paper was a discourse on artificial intelligence: an emerging technique in managing human resources in tertiary institutions for global relevance. It explicated the use of artificial intelligence in the management of human resources and the need to adopt learning management systems for tertiary education delivery. Some notable challenges militating against the use of artificial intelligence among others were disparities in internet access and professional knowledge on the use of digital tools. The paper, therefore suggested among others the up-skilling and reskilling of lecturers on the use of artificial intelligence in the management of human resources.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Human Resource Management, Tertiary Education Delivery, Global Relevance.

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### INTRODUCTION

Tertiary education is widely acknowledged as being pivotal to the socio-economic development of any nation. It is that level of education acquired after post-basic education in Nigeria. The National Policy on Education (FRN 2014) clearly stipulated its composition to include: Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigerian French Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, Institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs) and Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers Institutes (NTI). It is saddled with the responsibility of providing the manpower needs of the society. These are the ivory towers that groom future professionals such as the teachers, human resource managers, architects, doctors, pharmacists, engineers, quantity surveyors, accountants and lawyers among others.

Tertiary education is a community of humans with various intellectual capacities assembled to accomplish goals through activity oriented educational objectives. Notably, it could be unequivocally asserted that tertiary education is intrinsically linked with the development of individuals in the society due to knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies garnered in these institutions of higher education. It therefore behooves managers of tertiary education to ensure that learners are equipped with basic skills, experience and capabilities that are relevant to global competitiveness. For tertiary education to be globally relevant and competitive, its' pedagogies and curricula contents must be technologically driven. This brings to the fore, the integration of digital technology in teaching and learning in tertiary institutions (Baporikar, 2018; Ololube et al., 2009).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the upturn of digital technology in most organizations has drastically changed their architecture and tertiary education is not an exception. Digital technology for tertiary education delivery is the use of digital tools, computer systems and resources in imparting skills and knowledge to learners to achieve educational goals. The use of technologies in institutions of learning to enhance students' academic performance has incorporated artificial intelligence (AI) as learning and a human resource management tool. In fact, artificial intelligence is used in organizations to augment human efforts to actualize organizational goals. Artificial intelligence is a constellation of many different technologies working together to enable machines to sense, comprehend, act and learn with human-like levels of intelligence. It is the process of using a machine or computer in simulating human intelligence and performance of cognitive tasks.

It is imperative to note that the advanced economies have a paradigm shift from physical contact in the process of managing human and other resources to innovative and creative use of machines in the place of human beings to assure innovativeness, workflow and productivity. The adoption and integration of artificial intelligence in the management of human resources, namely in the recruitment and selection processes have yielded enormous benefits to organizations. AI has enhanced efficiency in the process of recruitment of staff, payroll, self-service and access to policies and procedures in organizations. It is perceived that the less developed economies are yet to fully adopt the use of AI in human resources management and this process has denied teachers and students the benefits of artificial intelligence in human resource management. It is against this backdrop that the study discussed Artificial Intelligence: An Emerging technique in Managing Human Resources in tertiary Institutions for Global Relevance under the following subheadings: Overview of Tertiary Education, Human Resource Management and Artificial Intelligence; Utilization of Artificial Intelligence in the Management of Human Resources; Utilization of AI in Tertiary Institutions; Global Relevance of AI; Challenges of Using AI in Tertiary Institutions; Conclusion and Suggestions.

## **Overview of Tertiary Education**

Tertiary education is globally acknowledged as education which engenders middle and higher levels of manpower development where potentials are sharpened and virtues and values inculcated in individuals to enable them to contribute to the development of society. Tertiary education is also called higher education. It consists of the universities and inter-universities centres like the colleges of education, and polytechnic and offering corresponding courses where skills and knowledge are instilled to the learner after secondary education. Tertiary education is the third stage of education, given after post-basic education, where the learners are willing and

have passed the prescribed examination and met the requirements for tertiary education. (Brick, 2006; Onyeike, 2015; Iheoma et al., 2021). The composition of tertiary education encompasses undergraduate and postgraduate students in the ivory tower of intellectualism (Nwankugha, 2015).

Tertiary education is a knowledge-driven industry where the manpower needs of society are nurtured, developed and produced for the socio-economic development of society. The national policy on education (FRN, 2014) identified the goals of tertiary education to include providing high manpower training and in the process reducing the manpower shortage, promoting and encouraging scholarship through accessible and affordable quality learning and ensuring a lifelong learning programme that will instil in students skills and knowledge that will make for self-reliance in the world of work. In the same vein, Anozie (2021) observed that tertiary education is established to provide veritable goals among which are: teaching and imparting knowledge, seeking and discovering truth, centre of ideas and learning, social interaction, culture and tradition transmission. It was also argued that tertiary education helps disentangle individuals from the shackles of poverty and ignorance. Other roles of tertiary education are the transmission of national goals, growth and development of society through capacity development of individuals that appreciate the environment, national integration of cultural values, transmission of national ideology, cementing national unity and substance of democratic values among others (Onyeike, 2015).

### **Human Resource Management (HRM)**

Human beings play a vital role in the attainment of education tasks, mission and accomplishment of objectives in tertiary education. It is a knowledge-driven organization which depends on the ability, expertise, commitment and competence of the workforce in determining the success or failure of the organization. There is no gainsaying that the workforce or employees are a significant component in the management of tertiary education. It is on this note that the administrators of tertiary education provide high-quality manpower for the attainment of the core values of education namely teaching students, research, and community development.

Human resource management (HRM) is the process of ensuring that organizational staffs do their work under the most privileged conditions that would make them work for the success of the organization continuously. Jones and George in Amie-Ogan (2023) defined human resource management as all the activities managers engage in to attract and retain employees and to ensure that they perform at a high level and contribute to the accomplishment of organizational goals. It was reiterated that human resource management is categorized under five components namely: recruitment and selection; training and development; performance appraisal and feedback; pay and benefits and labour relations. In the view of Mattjik et al. (2020), it involves acquiring, training, appraisal and compensation of the employees and the provision of a just and fair welfare package so that organizational goals can be achieved.

Armstrong (2009) viewed human resource management as a strategic and coherent approach to the management of organizations most valued assets (the people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievements of its objectives). The essence of human resource management is the provision of a conducive work environment where the employees can maximize their potentials while leaders mobilize resources for the attainment of organizational goals. In tertiary institutions, HRM ought to ensure that the right workforce is provided with a conducive work environment and globally accepted conditions of service that

would enhance the attainment of tertiary education. It is therefore incumbent on the managers of tertiary institutions to engender employees' job satisfaction as well as the development of their competence so as to enhance the attainment of educational goals.

### **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

The influx of information and communication technology has prompted different digital technology that has permeated every facet of educational management. The concept of Artificial Intelligence in the management of tertiary education has taken the central stage since the era of COVID-19. It is instructive to note that AI has been in existence since the search for how to use computers as an interactive mode in enhancing learning outcomes. AI was coined by John McCarthy in 1956 and was referred to as the father of artificial intelligence when he and other scientists hosted the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on artificial intelligence at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019; Rajaraman, 2014). Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to learn and make decisions like humans (Schlosser, n.d)

Artificial intelligence is the use of computer programmes, electronic devices and other digital systems to simulate intelligence hitherto preserved by humans. Artificial intelligence otherwise known as machine intelligence is the use of technology to perform tasks that require human intelligence (Aggarwal, & Kathuria, 2023). An elaborate definition of AI was given by Haenlein and Kaplan (2019) to mean a system's ability to interpret external data correctly, to learn from such data and to use that learning to achieve specific goals and tasks through flexible adoption. AI is a machine that shows behaviours that are indistinguishable from humans and exhibits intelligence in the performance of various tasks toward the attainment of predetermined objectives. Artificial intelligence is used in the performance of tasks formerly reserved for humans like communication, recruitment, selection and employee services among other functions.

### **Functions of Human Resource Management in Education**

Human resource management is a set of practices and methods that are channelled towards motivating, encouraging, and integrating the workforce into the educational system to maximize their performance to obtain maximum results (Omebe, 2014). Hence, the primary function of the human resource manager is the effective use of the human resources and organizational activities in a manner that will boost the development of the workforce and help to achieve organizational goals in a harmonious environment. The functions of human resource management in business enterprises correlates with educational institutions thus the need for improvement as it relates to global practices. Amie-Ogan (2023) asserted that human resource management is the science of luring, obtaining and motivating employees to maximally achieve organizational and personal goals. Min and Thanh (2014) enumerated the objectives and functions of HRM as:

- To create a motivated workforce with high morale, expertise knowledge with desirable relations that help in the attainment of educational goals.
- Providing training development programmes that will match the growth of the organization.

- To attract and maintain talented employees that will help to achieve the educational objectives
- To boost efficiency and positive competitors, fair acceptable leadership and favourable entrepreneur culture.

Other core functions of human resource management are:

- **Staffing, Recruitment and Selection:** This involves the process of advertising, recruiting, and selecting the people with appropriate skills, knowledge, and competence to fill in jobs.
- **Training and development:** This is achieved through faculty workshops, conferences, seminars, orientations, and refresher courses. It is imperative to emphasize that mentorship is another important avenue through which mentees acquire skills and experiences from experienced teachers.
- **Rewards, Compensation and Benefits:** This deals with the payment of salary and promotion of human resources. It also involves a safe work environment, health and welfare policies and comfortable office accommodation among others.

### **Artificial Intelligence and Global Relevance**

The influx of digital technological tools and the advancement of the internet and social media have changed the landscape of human activities and how educational content is transmitted from the teachers to the learners. It has created a vista of opportunities and challenges. The integration of AI in tertiary education has opened the frontline in the effective management of educational resources. This portends that the effective integration of digital technology in tertiary education would help in global visibility and relevance. Global relevance of tertiary institutions in the said instance is to instil in learners skills and values to be active participants in the global economy. It is making the students global citizens and inculcating global values that would not only help in solving future challenges but also help in the trajectory of economic globalization.

### **Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Management of Human Resources**

Human Resource Management has evolved for a long time but the utilization of the labour force and the practices relating to the management of people and subsequently management of personnel started after the Industrial Revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Aggrawal & Kathuria, 2023). It is from this point that literature describing human resource management practice and the use of individuals and the environment for the effective attainment of organizational goals started emerging. It is imperative to emphasize that various theories and human relation practices which emerged before and beyond the Industrial Revolution Era such as the Classical Perspective, Humanistic Perspective, Management Science Perspective, the Systems Theory, Contingent View, Total Quality Management, The Learning Organization and The Technological-Driven Workplace are used effectively to manage human resources of organizations before the emergence of artificial intelligence. However, it is not within the purview of this discourse to trace the evolutions of the various theories of human relations practice. Suffice to note that the integration of artificial intelligence in the management of human

resources in tertiary education has gained recognition globally with advanced economies resourcefully leveraging on it.

Notably, the use of artificial intelligence (AI), in the management of HRM is at the front burner of human resource management practitioners. It becomes paramount for managers and administrators of tertiary institutions to leverage on the use of AI as an emerging technological tool to enhance both their pedagogical and administrative practices in order to attain global citizenship and visibility. Nicastro (2020) opined that the application of AI can help practitioners to analyze, predict and diagnose employees' data to enable them to make informed decisions. In a similar vein, Ololube and Wome (2025) noted that HRM has grown exponentially in recent times and can be used by human resource managers in four different ways: recruitment, employee development, engagement of employee service and employee attrition.

AI plays a significant role in the recruitment exercise whereby it involves the use of algorithms and machine learning to analyze data, learn from it, and provide insight that can help organizations make informed decisions (Schosser, n.d). The author further opined that AI can scan the applicants' resumes, cover letters and even social media profiles to identify the best candidates. AI-powered software can be used in screening, shortlisting and scheduling of candidates for interviews and communicating interview dates to applicants. AI-powered software can effectively sort out resumes and screen them unbiasedly by providing equal opportunity to all applicants (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). The use of AI in e-recruitment or online recruitment in finding potential job candidates is quicker, cheaper, and more efficient. It helps the human resource managers to focus on more intellectual and strategic tasks, reduce workload and enhance productivity.

Employee training and development are fundamental in the improvement of skills and knowledge of the employee towards the attainment of organizational goals. Training is to ensure that the employee is groomed with the knowledge and skills of the current tasks while development is training the employee beyond the current tasks. It is enlightening to note that artificial intelligence has contributed to the training of employees in skills and competences that enhance the attainment of predetermined goals. Artificial intelligence-empowered tools enhance interactions with employees through personalized digital learning and digital career advisor thus allowing employees to advance their careers with a wealth of experience (Maity, 2019; Kaur et al., 2023). In the same vein, AI-powered algorithms collect data, analyze and sort them out based on different parameters such as age, previous learning experience, educational background, work experience performance activities and behaviour of individuals and use it to create personalized learning programmes (Pandya & Jonah 2020).

The integration of artificial intelligence in human resources management has enhanced the effectiveness and efficiency of employee engagement in answering their queries. AI-powered chatbots provides twenty-hour support services to employees and prospective employees concerning the organization. In the same vein, AI-powered chatbots can engage prospective employees in conversations and recommend jobs relevant to their skill and experiences (Leong, 2018). It can also provide answers related to the organization, goals, location, ethos, business and assessment process.

The use of Chatbots have provided effective communication between the employee and the organization. Chatbots are AI-powered software that provides personalized conversation using natural language (Nwile, C. B., & Edo, 2023). Nwile and Edo (2023) further stated that chatbots do not only provide virtual assistants that communicate with employees through a variety of online channels but also aid candidate competency assessment, candidate engagement,

and onboarding activities for new hires. Other AI-powered chatbot activities are: identifying job openings, submitting online applications and scheduling interviews and candidates background checks among others. With these multi-task functions and 24/7 communication, the AI-powered chatbots can resolve issues by answering questions raised by employees seamlessly and also to help build employee satisfaction.

The integration of artificial intelligence-powered chatbots have redefined human resource management in every facet. It provides a seamless interaction between employees and management, leading to improved performance, a high level of workers engagement and satisfaction as well as better decision-making. In so doing, it helps the organization to increase productivity and long-term success. Nicastro (2020) exposition on AI and employee retention unraveled that AI enables an organization to predict turnover by identifying key drivers of employees' satisfaction and develop personalized career development plans and in the process reduce the rate of employee attrition and maximize employee retention.

### **Integrating AI in Tertiary Education**

The upsurge in technology, especially artificial intelligence has advanced at a phenomenal rate in recent times. Artificial intelligence is rapidly displacing many human beings in a variety of fields and tertiary institutions are not exempted. The adoption of machines that perform tasks hitherto the responsibility of humans has generated concern among scholars especially its integration into tertiary education. This has changed not only pedagogical content but the process and procedures of teaching and learning. It is enlightening to state that AI is not a buzzword in the citadels of learning but is now a household name that is used in fascinating teaching and learning in the developed nations. The use of AI has provided efficient assistants in online teaching and learning, personalized learning and has the potential to grade exams, create assignments, assess homework and coordinate attendance (Nwile & Edo, 2023). AI-powered software performs tasks like problem-solving, answering questions, and constant communication and other intelligent tasks typically associated with humans (Owan, et al., 2023).

The use of video conferences and other AI-powered software in teaching and learning has made education accessible irrespective of geographical location thus providing remote instruction and connectivity with students and teachers in remote areas. Examples of such tools are Google Meet, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams among others. AI-powered software has provided effective communication between the teacher and his students in real-time and in the process teachers and students acquire communication and technological skills that enhance teaching and learning. The use of social media platforms have also provided a veritable podium where teachers and students connect and share educational resources unhindered. Without any equivocation it could be readily said that the usage of artificial intelligence has significantly improved lecturers' competence in research and teaching. The availability of search engines viz: Microsoft Academic Search, Annual Reviews, Elsevier, ebook Academic Collection, Chrome, and Google Scholars among others have helped teachers and students improve their content and research expertise. Spilka (2022) emphatically posited that AI-based algorithms are used to improve the efficiency of research and at the same help in the exploration of new topics. In addition, the use of AI has undoubtedly accelerated and promoted research with various AI-powered data analysis devices such as the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), Minitab GraphPad Prism and Microsoft Excel etcetera.

Another significant area where AI has unhindered access to tertiary education is through automated transcription and translation. AI-powered software can translate lecture materials and educational materials into different languages making them accessible in real-time. Examples of such AI-powered tools are Amazon Transcribe, Google Voice etcetera. Also, AI Natural Language Processing enables students' to improve their grammar and spelling and in the process develop their critical skills. AI-powered tools like Grammarly, Perfectit and others not only correct spelling and grammar but also give instant feedback on suggestions, punctuation, and the structure of sentences. These tools in no small measure enhance the writing ability of the students and their productivity.

Virtual Assistant is another AI-powered tool that needs consideration and desired integration into tertiary education. Virtual Assistant is an AI-powered tool designed to perform tasks or services for an individual (Gupta, 2023). It was reiterated that Virtual Assistants can be used in education in the following ways: personalized learning, answering questions, setting reminders, language learning, course enrollment and constant feedback on students' courses, assignments and grades. Examples of virtual assistants are Google Assistant and ELSA Speak, a virtual assistant that helps individuals to learn English and Socratic languages designed to help students with Mathematics and homework (McFariand, 2023). There is no gainsaying that AI-powered software is of significant benefit to education especially tertiary education whereby it helps to improve efficiency, productivity, enriched reference materials, and thesis presentation. The groundswell of integrating artificial intelligence in tertiary education will not only make learning activity-based but also increase the engagement level of students, increase their learning interest and thereby enhancing their performance. AI-powered software can also be used for surveillance in schools especially in the area of monitoring students' activities and ensuring that unruly behaviours are nipped in the bud.

### **Challenges of Using AI for Tertiary Education**

Despite the benefits of utilizing artificial intelligence for tertiary education especially in the area of human resource management, there are setbacks for effective utilization. The first challenge is the procurement of artificial intelligence tools. They are very expensive and cannot be afforded by the poor and less endowed in society thus increasing the digital divide between the rich and poor in society. This factor hinders access to digital technology, creates disparities in internet access, computers, expertise in digital tools and basic infrastructures that would enhance the use of artificial intelligence. In simple terms, not all students and teachers have access to digital tools and professional development. Closely associated with lack of purchasing ability is the technical know-how or teachers' competence in the handling of digital tools. Most lecturers lack the competence to make use of digital tools for the attainment of job designs.

It is interesting to note that artificial intelligence is trained by humans and it can be programmed and infiltrated with human bias (Beicheva, 2023). More so, despite its proficiency in enhancing teaching methodology and data analysis it cannot replace human factors, especially in the development of critical thinking and creativity. It is also argued that the internet does not forget thus the impact of AI on privacy is immense (Tundrea, 2020). This corroborates with the view that AI can be used to analyse large amounts of data for decision-making. Similarly students' sensitive information can be manipulated and used for the wrong reasons without students knowing that their information is used to make decisions that affect them.

Another factor militating against the use of artificial intelligence for tertiary education in Nigeria is the ability to adopt artificial intelligence into tertiary education curricula and effectively providing the basic skills and infrastructure that would enhance the attainment of educational goals. The educational system in Nigeria is underfunded and therefore lacks adequate funds for the procurement of digital tools and professional development that would enhance productivity.

## **CONCLUSION**

Artificial intelligence is engineered to make learning more engaging and better collaborative through the performance of difficult and simple tasks hitherto reserved by human intelligence. It mimics human intelligence in performing tasks originally meant for human resources viz: personalized training and development, employee training, recruitment and employee services among others. It is interesting to note that the advanced economy is ingeniously investing in artificial intelligence for tertiary education and the benefits are enormous in all facets of educational management. The adoption of artificial intelligence in the stead of human resources has helped in proficiency in teaching and learning, improved teacher competency and unhindered access to education irrespective of location and time. The use of artificial intelligence has not only provided a vista of opportunities but has challenges such as procurement of digital tools, and development and training of human resources among others. For tertiary education to remain relevant there is need for the effective integration of digital tools in pedagogical content.

## **Suggestions**

Based on the challenges inhibiting the effective adoption of artificial intelligence in tertiary education in Nigeria the following suggestions are made:

- The Federal Government of Nigeria should provide a legal framework for the adoption of artificial intelligence and the use of learning management systems for teaching and learning in tertiary institutions for an improved students personalized learning and development of critical and problem solving skills.
- The budgetary allocation to education should not be less than the 26% bench mark of UNESCO. This is to enable the procurement and use of artificial intelligence tools for teaching and learning in tertiary institutions.
- The administrators of tertiary education should partner with the private sector on the procurement of artificial intelligence tools for recruitment, selection and professional development of lecturers so as to get the best fitted for jobs in tertiary institutions.

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