

# Impact of Talent and Creative Knowledge Management on Sustainable Organisational Performance of South-Eastern Nigerian Universities

**Prof. A. N. Onoh, Prof. F. E. Eboh & K. C. Nwokocha (Ph.D)**

Department of Management  
Abia State University, Uturu  
Abia State  
Nigeria  
blocker199@gmail.com

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## **Abstract**

*The high rate of competitions among several companies globally, has resonated research focus in recent times on talent and creative knowledge management as strategic tools for gaining sustainable organisational performance. This research is towards strategic theory and generic management model development based on talent and creative knowledge management of the human capital to achieve effective organisational performance. This research will adopt the human capital theory and the resource-based view theory to guide the research. It will adopt mixed philosophical mandates of both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies of critical contextual analysis of existing relevant secondary publications and primary data investigation. A multidimensional Institutionalised Strategic Talent Management (INCSTAL-Management) model will be suggested to illustrate how talent, creative knowledge management and Human Resource Training & Development can strategically lead to competitive advantage and effective performance.*

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**Keywords:** *Strategic talent management, knowledge management, human capital, training and development, competitive advantage, organizational performance.*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Recent strategic human resource research suggests that modern economic environment has experienced a paradigm shift from industry based that previously only focused on physical assets like factory, machines and equipment to a high technology, "information and innovation-based environment with a focus on expertise, talents, creativity, skills and experience of people - the company's human capital" (Effiok, Tapang and Eton, 2012:1). A critical analysis of this assertion shows that talent (high-performing human capital) development through training and development, creativity and knowledge management are core strategic human resource management practices that can interconnect to sharpen the knowledge competencies of the organisational human resource. Talent management (TM) has become a significant aspect of corporate strategic human resource management studies in contemporary times (Barren, 2008 & Nwokocha, 2014) focusing on the strategic and effective management of high performing set of organisational employees as talents.

Armstrong (2006:580) suggests that the concept of strategic talent management implies "management succession planning and development" or an integrated bunch of actions aimed at securing "the flow of talents in an organisation" as a valuable corporate resource. Scholarly works on talent management have consistently highlighted the need to engage effective talent recent rise in business competitions. Conversely, this suggests that the cause of poor organisational performances recently envisaged among many organisations, including

Universities as knowledge-creating organisations, can be attributed to a continuing shortage of available talents. This has given rise to the initiation of the "war for talent" (McKinsey, 1997) - a human resource theory which lays emphasis on attracting and retaining high performing employees in organisations (Bhatnagar, 2008, Davies and Davis 2010) to achieve organisational objectives.

Cappelli (2008) and Glen (2006) have emphasised that the availability of enough talented employees enables organisations to sustain competitive advantage and achieve increased performance. Since the effective performance of business organisations mainly depends on the fitness, knowledge, expertise and the competencies of employees (Fowler, 2013), this research set out to evaluate talent management as an essential strategic vehicle for effective human resource management and the sustenance of effective organisational performance.

## 1.2 Problem Statement/Justification of Research

Most organisations regardless of whether they are manufacturing or knowledge-oriented ones like the Higher Educational Institutions (Universities) depend on the creative knowledge of rare talents to realise difficult and high target performance objectives. Attracting, engaging and retaining organisational talents ostensibly is a challenging task since talents are in short supply, expensive to hire and at the same time, remain the means to organisational ends. Searching for a balance between effective talent management and its attendant financial cost burden is a challenge that has continued to attract the attention of researchers towards investigating the necessity to align talent management to business strategy. This is a problem, which is prevalent within the University Educational Industry (UEI) in Nigeria, especially the professional and scientific disciplines. The reason is that the nature of services provided by the Universities involves the need to engage enough talents who can impart academic knowledge using expensive and sophisticated modern high technologies like computers and laboratories for innovative research activities. The operation of these modern research instruments on a professional basis, require the strategic attraction, engagement, retention and effective management of suitable talents that have an adequate level of creativity and know-how to man the research oriented e-technologies. These rare classes of talents have aptly been described as *high-fliers* within the *talent war* proposition thus, suggesting the intricacies being envisaged in attracting, engaging and managing these calibre of workers especially in the knowledge-based industry represented by Nigerian Universities. The core objectives of Universities all over the world, constitute knowledge impartation and all forms of research activities. The only core set of human capital with the requisite competence to achieve these service delivery needs in the Universities are the lecturers who are indeed knowledge workers and, therefore, constitute the required talents to realise the organisational objectives.

In contemporary times, the issue of 'brain drain' (Morgan, 2006) being experienced in the Nigerian University Educational Industry (UEI) is increasingly alarming owing to the high salary costs of academic and associated staff. Thus, the major challenge facing the Nigerian Universities as knowledge-creating organisations can be said to include mainly the high cost of hiring available talents. This problem is persistent and contributes immensely to the poor and high cost of University Educational Services (UES) deliveries in a developing economy like Nigeria. The problems of poor performances and costly University educational service deliveries in recent times among Nigerian Universities as the sole providers of High Intellectual Properties (HIPs), are owing to the continuous scrambling for the retention of the services of the available few talents who are being highly paid for and expensively priced by similar foreign Higher Education Institutions with stronger currencies like the Great British Pounds sterling, the European Euros, the American Dollars, etc. This has continued to be the case as most of the computer software and hardware research gadgets, as well as laboratory components, are conceived and manufactured

overseas, the core training and development programmes required to transfer the skills, knowledge and know-how required to operate them by the available local talents are expensively available overseas. This problem scenario captures the perennial problems of acute talent turnovers with the attendant *pay war problem* facing organisational performance in developing economies and in particular, Nigerian Universities. The problem of brain-drain in Nigerian Universities suggests that there is a significant drop in the number of academic talents which accounts for declining global performance ranking recorded against Nigerian Universities recently. The above foregrounds the need to investigate impact of talent and creative knowledge management in sustainable organisational performance among Nigerian Universities.

### 1.3 Aim/Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research is to evaluate the impact of talent and creative knowledge management towards sustainable organisational performance, using relevant South-Eastern Nigerian Universities as the institutions of study. To achieve this aim the following specific objectives were pursued which included to:

- (1) Ascertain whether there is any significant contribution of effective talent management to sustainable organisational performance.
- (2) Determine the extent to which Nigerian Universities utilise scientific laboratory and computer supported technologies to promote creative knowledge and research activities.
- (3) Evaluate the extent to which Nigerian Universities promote Talent and Creative Knowledge Development through sponsoring T&D programmes.
- (4) Adduce an integrated strategic talent management model, which sustainable performance seeking organisations can adopt to achieve organisational performance.

### 1.4 Research Questions

Given that the knowledge creating-industry just like every other modern business industry globally is characterised by stiff competition, which if not well strategically confronted, will lead to the extinction of the weakling business organisations, the broad question behind this study is how can organisations assure effective performance through the use of e talent and creative knowledge management? Thus, the research questions of the research include:

- (1) What is the significance of effective talent management contribution to sustainable organisational performance?
- (2) To which extent do Nigerian Universities utilise scientific laboratory and computer supported technologies to promote creative knowledge and research activities?
- (3) To which extent do Nigerian Universities promote talent and creative knowledge development through sponsoring T&D programmes?
- (4) What integrated strategic talent management model can be adopted to achieve sustainable organisational performance?

### 1.5 Statement of Hypotheses

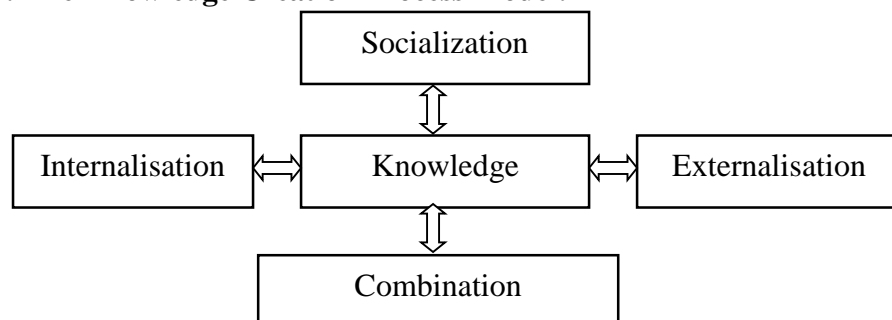
- (H<sub>01</sub>) There is no significant contribution of effective talent management to sustainable organisational performance.
- (H<sub>02</sub>) Nigerian Universities do not extensively utilise scientific laboratories and computer supported technologies to promote creative knowledge and research activities.
- (H<sub>03</sub>) Nigerian Universities do not promote talent and creative knowledge development through sponsoring T&D programmes.

## 2.0 Literature Review

Creativity refers to the innovative capability of educated employees or human capital of an organisation. According to Shalley, Zhou and Oldman (2004) and Amabile (1996), human resource creativity is the development of ideas, learning outcomes, and products or solutions that are seen to be novel and original, appropriate and potentially useful to solve an immediate need. Research suggests that every business requires both physical assets, a functional human resource as well as intangible assets for its success. Creativity and artful talent knowledge management are therefore two-pronged innate assets, which an organisation can apply to bring about innovations that are required to achieve organisational effective performance. This implies that talent and creative knowledge-based organisations are now more innovative and ostensibly outperform the financial bearing companies. Both knowledge and creativity can be imparted to the entire organisational workforce through planned training and development efforts to bring about organisational inimitable talents. Training and development activities help to fill up the knowledge gap.

Knowledge according to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), is a personal intellectual property (PIP) which is held bound in the individual but can be transmitted to others through socialisation, intemalisation. combination, and the externalisation process by means of seminars and debates, capacity building and workshops, which are forms of training and development processes. Brummet (1970), suggests that HMR talent, intellectual experience and creative knowledge management constitute core value system that can contribute in several ways to the improvement of organisational efficiency and wealth creation to achieve effective performance. Advanced human resource researches confirm that useful core value systems, intellectual experience, creativity and knowledgeable human resource among success-oriented organisations, are achievable through effective human resource training and development efforts. Cappelli, (2008) and Glen, (2006) have emphasised that the availability of enough talented employees enables organisations to sustain competitive advantage and achieve increased performance. Fowler (2013), suggests that effective performance of business organisations mainly depends on the fitness, knowledge, expertise and the competencies of her employees. This suggests that organisational talents' creative minds are sharpened through training and development efforts in form of organised knowledge acquisition and creation through academic research and teaching activities. Takeuchi and Nonaka (1995) suggest that knowledge creation is a spiral process and include socialisation, internalisation, combination and externalisation. The knowledge creation process that supports creative talent knowledge development can be illustrated thus:

**Figure 1: The Knowledge Creation Process Model:**



*Culled from Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) Knowledge Creation process*

Figure 1 suggests that knowledge transmission is an interrelated process (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).

Contemporary researches on strategic human resource management (SHRM) suggests that

talent management can be a veritable strategic approach to achieving sustainable firm performance (Nwokocha, 2015). Thus, Talent management (TM) has been recognised by prior scholarships as a significant aspect of corporate human resource management studies in contemporary times (Barron, 2008). Armstrong (2006:580) suggests that the concept of talent management implies "management succession planning and development" or an integrated bunch of actions aimed at securing "the flow of talent in an organisation" as a valuable corporate resource. Scholarly works on talent management have consistently highlighted the need to engage effective talent management process to assuage the recent rise in business competitions. Ferguson and Brohaugh (2009) and Pollitt (2004) maintain that talent management practice and its strategic alignment with business strategy is a pre-requisite to gaining competitive advantage. Ashton and Morton (2005) have proposed that the accurate implementation of talent management is an essential strategic tool to achieve increased organisational performance. This suggests that the cause of poor business performances recently among many business organisations and Universities inform of poor academic performances and poor ranking can be attributed to a continuing shortage of available talents, which is known as brain drain. This has given rise to the initiation of the "war for talent" (McKinsey, 1997) - a human resource theory which lays emphasis on attracting and retaining high performing employees in organisations (Bhatnagar, 2008, Davies and Davis, 2010).

## 2.1 Empirical Review

Scholarly works aimed at integrating the emerging concepts of creativity, talent and knowledge management to achieve sustainable organisational performance in human resource management studies are rare (Nwokocha, 2015). However, there exist in reasonable quantity, studies particularly dedicated to creativity, talent management and knowledge management in relation to organisational performance and gaining an organisational competitive advantage. A few of the related studies that attempted to hybridise the tripartite concepts of creativity, talent and knowledge management include a recent research by Alma'aitah, Al-Shalabi and Aljamal (2013). Alma'aitah *et al.* (2013) researched on "Talent Management and Competitive Advantage: The Moderating Effect of Knowledge Integration". The main purpose of this study was to examine the effect of talent management on gaining competitive advantage with the view to analysing the role of knowledge integration, as a moderator, in the correlation between talent management and competitive advantage. The trio collected data through questionnaires from a sample of 235 employees working in top 10 firms in Jordan and deployed descriptive statistics, correlations and hierarchical regression analyses to test their hypotheses. The research considered the similarity of industry age, size, *etc.* as control variables and established that competitive advantage was significantly related to talent management and also to knowledge integration. This research study revealed that knowledge integration was a significant moderator in the correlation between the talent management and competitive advantage.

Alma'aitah *et al.* (2013) research relied on the prior scholarship of Whelan and Carcary (2001). Whelan, and Carcary (2001) researched on "Integrating talent and knowledge management: where are the benefits?" and established that talent management is correlated with knowledge management and that talent management has a positive effect on competitive advantages. They adopted qualitative methodology by reviewing extensively the body of KM and TM literature and developed a structured plan of how Talent Management (TM) can help in solving some challenges associated with Knowledge Management. Whelan and Carcary (2001) also adopted focus group approach using three KM practitioners who represented companies involved in the Innovation Value Institute (IVI) consortium and developed a conceptual framework of TM strategy and Absorptive capacity and their implications on Innovation capability.

Malawi, Aronson and McCarthy (2005) deployed qualitative methods and researched the resource-based view of KM for competitive advantage and produced a model that examined on the "how" and "why" application of knowledge management to achieve a competitive advantage of profit and non-private organisations. This research established that knowledge management is people based and is related to gaining a competitive advantage but did not report any statistical strength of correlation. This is a gap that needs to be filled.

Rudhumbu (2014) investigated talent management strategies of higher education institutions in Botswana with specific reference to private higher education institutions (PHEIs) that offer professional and academic qualifications up to degree level. This research adopted quantitative survey method and using 5-point Likert-scaled questionnaire to collected primary data from the academic, administrative and support divisions. The study adopted stratified random sampling and sampled the opinion of 300 academic, administrative and support staff out of a total population of 1,350 members the of staff of 5 private higher education institutions. Descriptive statistics was used in the analysis of primary data. Findings from the literature and data analysis show that talent management in higher education institutions in Botswana is a relatively new phenomenon and is still a work in progress despite its importance in offering these institutions a proven and practical way for achieving competitive advantage.

Habibi *et al.* (2015) adopted contextual analysis approach and reviewed organisational empowerment with emphasis on knowledge management and established that organisational empowerment depends on talented organisational employees knowledge-based i.e. intellectual capital competencies. The research indicated that investment on people and transformation of potential knowledge into actual knowledge will enhance productivity in organisations and communities. The research established through literature that knowledge and intellectual capital are involved in the empowerment of employees as 'talents' and that organisational empowerment can be achieved ultimately by knowledge acquisition and transfer promotion between among staff.

Lauzikas and Mokseckiene (2013) adopted the mixed method and researched the role of creativity in sustainable business in Lithuania. The research studied a set of creativity-related concepts, dimensions, patterns, different ways and techniques of generating ideas towards developing talents and protecting funded intellectual property rights, contribute to the economy and sustainable business. The research analysed quantitative primary data collected from 562 respondents sampled out of 2003 population sample. It established that creativity plays a significant role in solving business sustainability issues through the contributions of innovative research efforts of universities that open mutual relationship and synergies between arts and rapidly changing global business world based on a large number of talents.

An earlier work by Adindu, (2007) identified inadequate training and training facilities as well as low-level literacy level as some of the problems militating against the effective and efficient management of the human resources in business organisations. Although the approach to this study is scientific, the judgmental sample size of 99 respondents out of a total population of "3,150" is small. The research adopted Essient-Obot (1955:22) stand on sample size, which holds that "there is no magic about any particular sample size, and practical experience of research should be 5% of the population". Akabueze (2007) researched on this subject and identified that an ineffective use of human resources in the organisation leads to low productivity. This research only took a sample size of 35 workers. Empirical evidence reported by Onyebor (2007) in a similar study identified that human resource training by means of on-the-job training, in-service training programmes, management development seminar, part-time

adult education classes, are sure means of improving human resource utilisation through effective human resource planning. The research limited the study only to the private sector in Lagos State, using only eight research questions. This research did not adduce any previous empirical review content in the review of scholarship section. The research questions of only eight questions mainly focused on "Improving Human Resources Utilization". It only attempted to find out how to improve human resource utilisation in the private sector. These previous works did not attempt to consider studying public University Educational Institutions (UEIs) as knowledge-creating institutions. This is a significant gap in knowledge and which this research tried to fill. Hence, the need for a fully focused research that hybridises the emerging tripartite concepts of creativity, talent and knowledge management towards sustainable organisational performance.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This research adopted the survey method of investigation and adopted the mixed research methodological tradition (Saunders & Thornhill, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Qualitative research methodology on one hand is ideographic in epistemology and interprets a phenomenon using rich relevant texts and critical contextual analysis of existing relevant secondary publications. It enhances conceptual and theoretical clarifications and interpretations of the underlying abstract concepts of creativity, talent and knowledge management concerning our research. Quantitative research method, on the other hand, utilises empirical numerical data analysis to arrive at a verifiable scientific evidence. This helps to evaluate the value of Talent and creative Knowledge Management activities and the strength of their associated relationship being assessed in the Nigerian Universities statistically.

The source of qualitative data for the research included the review of all contemporary relevant rich secondary publications on Google scholar, Elsevier, Business Source Premier, Emerald and other assessable high star journals on the subject. Primary data was collected using research assistants who distributed and collected 5-point Likert-scaled questionnaire sampled across all the Federal and State Government owned Universities in the South-Eastern Nigeria. Stratified simple random sampling method was used to gauge the opinion of all the lecturers from the rank of Assistant Lecturers to Professors regarding how they are being managed as core-human assets and knowledge-workers (Talents) to create knowledge through teaching and research activities. The SPSS Version 20 was used to run the needed descriptive statistics cross-tabulation analysis on the demographic information concerning the respondents; perform regression and t-statistics analyses for the test of hypotheses.

### **4.0 Data Analysis and Findings**

Data collected for the research were analysed. Computation of correlation coefficients, t-statistic and factor analysis were done using the SPSS and Excel. From the test of hypotheses, the findings were as follows:

1. The test of Hypothesis one established that there are relative contributions of effective talent management factors to sustainable organizational performance in Nigeria Universities.
2. The test of Hypothesis Two showed that Nigerian Universities utilise extensively scientific laboratories and computer supported technologies to promote creative knowledge and research activities. Correlation coefficient,  $\rho=0.91$  indicates a very strong relationship.
3. The computed r value of 0.90 at 99% confidence level is a strong evidence that Nigerian Universities promote to a very great extent, talent and creative knowledge development though sponsoring T & D programmes.
4. The research also adduced a robust strategic creative talent management model based

on the result of Bartlett's test of Sphericity, which returned 0.650. This figure shows that Institutionalised Strategic Creative Talent Management (INCSTAL – Management) is a robust talent management model suitable for knowledge – creating firms.

## **5.0 Contribution to Research**

The research contributed to the body of research on talent and strategic talent management by exploring the existing literature on creativity, talent and knowledge management with the purpose of establishing their combined imperatives to effective organisational performance in the face of burgeoning business competitions.

The research benefits researchers as it is an on-the-hand reference scholarly work regarding the correlation between talent and creative knowledge management and sustainable organisational performance in the University Educational Industry in Nigeria. It also provides empirical evidence regarding the extent to which Nigerian Universities utilise scientific laboratories and computer supported technologies to promote creative knowledge and research activities. This research provides statistical evidence concerning the extent to which Nigerian Universities promote Talent and Creative Knowledge Development through sponsored T&D programmes. Another significance of the study is that it strengthens previous research by filling the identified gap in knowledge, on the intertwined subjects of human resource training and development, talent and creative knowledge management. It does this by contributing empirical evidence regarding the imperatives of talent and creative knowledge management to effective corporate performance within the Nigerian University educational industry.

## **5.1 Contribution to Theory, Business Management and Further Researches**

It is hoped that another major significance of this research is that it will adduce an integrated Institutionalised Strategic Talent Management (INCSTAL-Management) model, which business practitioners and innovation seeking firms can adopt to achieve sustainable effective performance through competitive advantage. This model lends support to prior existing talent management models. It reflects on prior models and demystifies the ambiguities associated with them by proffering an easy to follow approach. Our model is a significant contribution and pioneer the strategic talent management studies (STMS) as, it adumbrates major strategic approaches recognised by prior talent management models. This is expected to provoke further researches on the subject and be of immense use to students engaged in the study of the strategic talent management process and modelling.

The INCSTAL-Management Model will as well be of significance as it adds a different dimension to Talent Management (TM) studies by championing the idea that institutionalising TM can succeed smoothly under ambidextrous settings (Duncan, 1976). This stems from the prior proposition that organisational switching structures succeed in open systems that explore creativity and learning, which are necessary conditions for a successful strategic talent management implementation.

## **5.2 Contribution to the Government, Manpower Boards, the University Management, and General Business Organisations**

It is hoped that the research will be an eye opener to the Government regarding the perennial talent management challenges facing the higher educational institutions in Nigeria. This research will establish evidence to the national manpower board, various University Managements and other organisations on the degree to which the lack of effective talent management factors can lead to various forms of job loss. The outcome of this research will educate the government and the leadership of educational institutions on how strongly related is talent shortages and poor organisational performance in Nigerian Universities. Another significant contribution of this research is that it will establish the relative impacts of effective talent management factors to



achieve sustainable organisational performance in Nigerian Universities and general business organisations. The hallmark contribution of this research is that it will provoke the Government, in particular, to brainstorm on viable proposals that can bring about stable and favourable economic environment capable of stabilising the value of the Naira, providing enabling training grounds that assist existing knowledge-oriented academic institutions in Nigeria to attract, engage, train and retain valuable talents in the all-important educational industry.

## 6.0 Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the quality of knowledge being managed in South-East Nigerian Universities is a crucial factor determining their performance, status and ranking. The INCSTAL – Management Model is a suitable talent management model, which knowledge-creating organizations can adopt to gain competitive advantage and achieve sustainable performance. In addition, universities are talent and creative knowledge-producing organisations. Talent and creative knowledge management promotions are Human Resource Management (HRM) practices that have strategic imperatives to gaining sustainable organisational performance.

## 7.0 Recommendations

The Nigerian Government should take urgent and concrete action towards stabilizing the value of the Naira as well as provide adequate funding to all knowledge-creating institutions in Nigeria. This will minimize the issue of brain drain and enable such institutions to attract, engage, train, and retain valuable talents.

Universities and other knowledge – creating organizations should incorporate creativity, talent and knowledge management studies in their curriculum to enable their students benefit from this all-important facet of management.

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